
VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING - Development of a national strategy for validation in Austria

Stephanie Mayer

Policy Officer VET, Federal Ministry of Education

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informal Learning – Exchange of Countries' Experiences**

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The Vision

„A coherent learning outcomes orientation opens up new chances and prospects to all those people, who have acquired important competences outside of formal education, for them to participate and to succeed in education and employment. It enhances permeability of education and training systems.“

Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria, 2011

Starting Point

- Traditionally strong focus of education and economy on IVET (e.g. work-based learning in the dual system), **occupational profiles** and on **formally acquired qualifications** as proof of abilities and competences
- Well-developed provision of **second-chance education** and adult education
- **No uniform legal framework** regulating validation and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences
- **No general individual right** or legal entitlement to access validation arrangements

Starting Point

- **Acts and Regulations** defining mechanisms and arrangements that allow ET institutions to recognise learning outcomes acquired through NFIFL in the formal education system
- Numerous validation arrangements within the sector of **adult education**
- **De-centralized and bottom-up** development of demand-driven initiatives in the labour market or the third sector

⇒ **Fragmented validation landscape**

Types/Clusters of Existing Arrangements

- 1. Acquisition of a qualification/certificate of the formal ET system > „legally binding“**
 - External exams without attending programmes/courses (e.g. Hauptschulabschluss, Studienberechtigungs-/Berufsreifeprüfung)
 - Exceptional admission to the final apprenticeship examination
 - „Du kannst was“ – „You’ve got skills“
- 2. Acquisition of a qualification/certificate with no equivalent in the formal system**
 - HTL-Ingenieur
 - Academy of Continuing Education (wba)
 - Access to regulated professions
- 3. Procedures to identify and document competences**
 - Portfolio methods developed and employed in adult education, career guidance or the third sector

Main Objectives of Existing Arrangements

- Obtaining a qualification (formal or non-formal)
- Gaining access to education and training programmes
- Shortening programmes/exemptions
- Gaining access to regulated trades
- Making competences visible in individual portfolios and making them usable

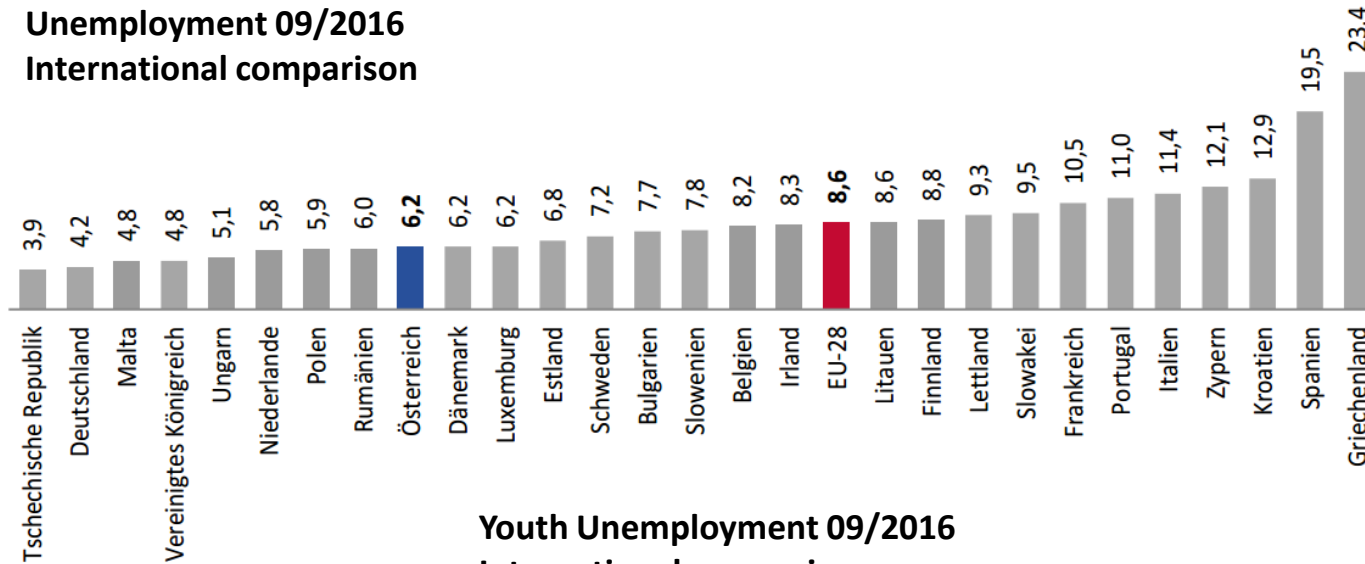
Target Groups of Existing Arrangements

Tailored initiatives serving the needs of **diverse target groups**:

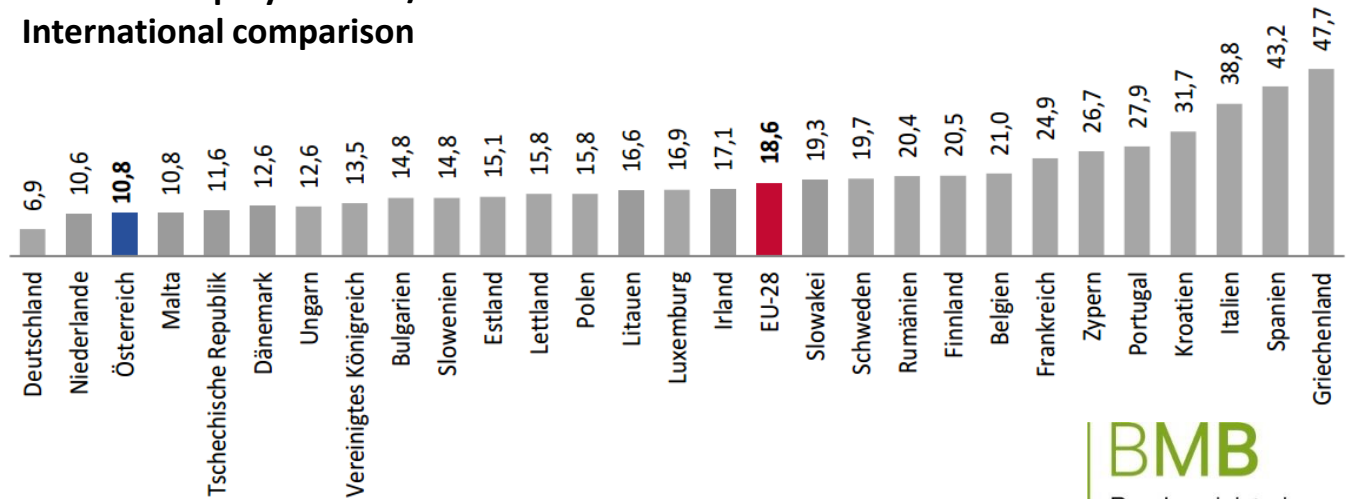
- **Unemployed** (09/2016: Total: 6,2%, Youth: 10,8% - Source: AMS)
- **Low-skilled/low-qualified** (Comp. Schooling: 15,0%; ESL: 7% - Source: Zahlenspiegel 2015 BMB)
- **Refugees/migrants** (1.619 asylum claims per 1.000.000 inhabitants in 2015 – Source: Eurostat)

Unemployment Rates 09/2016

Unemployment 09/2016 International comparison

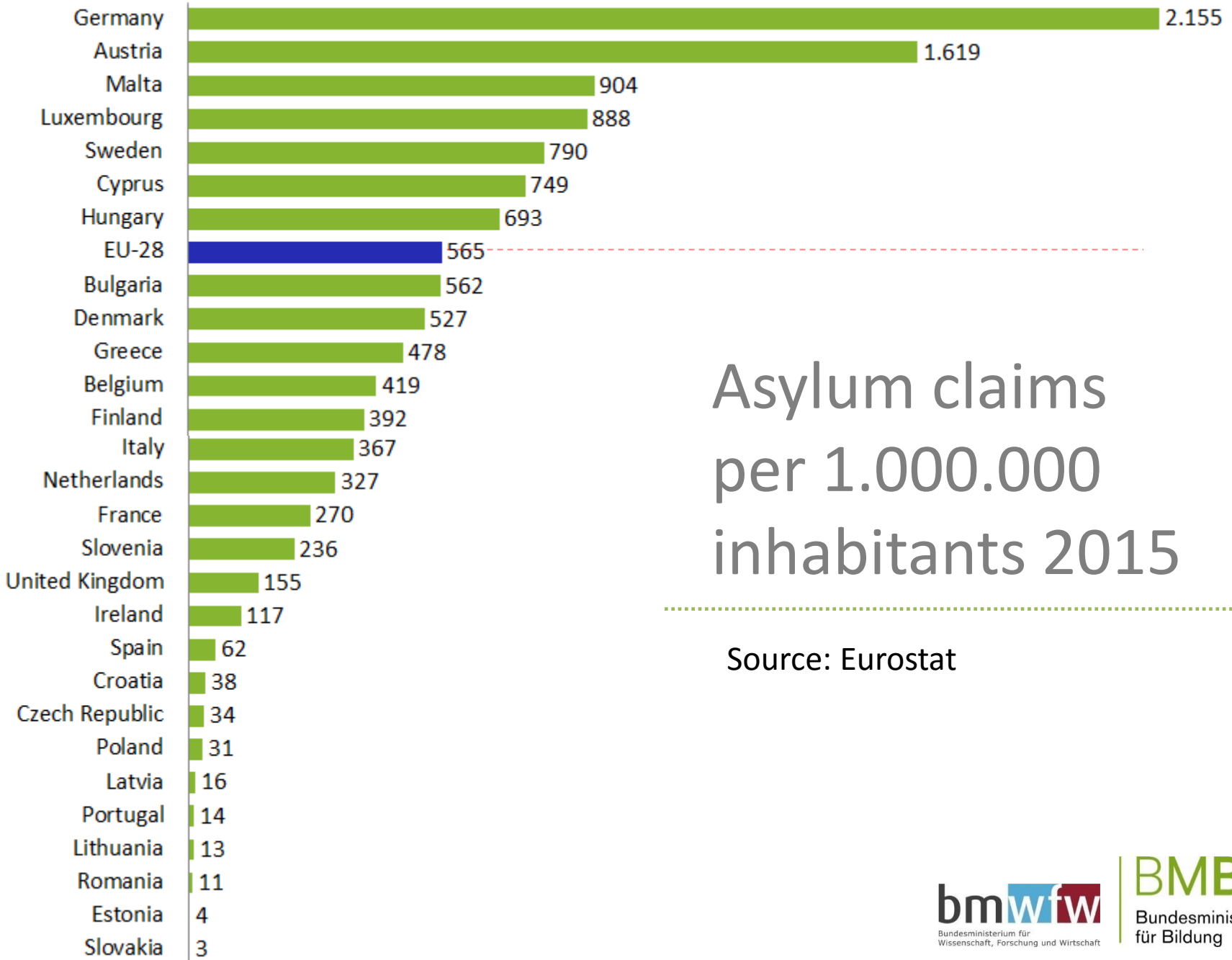


Youth Unemployment 09/2016 International comparison



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Asylum claims per 1.000.000 inhabitants 2015

Source: Eurostat

Main Challenges

- Fragmentation, lack of coherence
- Lack of overall regulation, widespread responsibilities
- Heavy focus on assessment and certification
- Identification and documentation less prominent/recognised
- Access barriers, lack of awareness
- Lack of specific professionalisation measures/programmes
- No overall quality assurance framework
- Linking validation and the NQF

Towards a National Strategy

- **2011: National Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria**
 - Joint strategy – 4 Ministries
 - Central objective: Coherent approach towards the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- **2012: Council Recommendation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning**
 - Member States to develop and implement validation arrangements until the year 2018, European Guidelines for Validation
- **2016: NQF-Act**
 - Comprehensive framework, including non-formal qualifications
- **2016: Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz**
 - Legal entitlement for refugees/migrants to have their competences validated and recognised

Development Process

- Developed within the overall framework of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy
- Strategy development process 2014-2016 in close cooperation with all relevant ministries, stakeholder organisations
- Building on in-depth analysis of existing validation arrangements and the results of a national consultation process carried out in 2015

Core objectives

- ⇒ Provide a platform and strategic framework for the (further) development, **coordination, cooperation, steering and quality assurance** of existing and future validation arrangements
- ⇒ **Transparency, visibility, accessibility** of validation measures in Austria
- ⇒ **Awareness and acknowledgement** of validation as one possible and recognized way of documenting competences
- ⇒ **NOT**: Establishment of a centralized system of validation

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: Up-grading non-formally and informally acquired competences

Strategic Objective 2: Facilitating access to validation

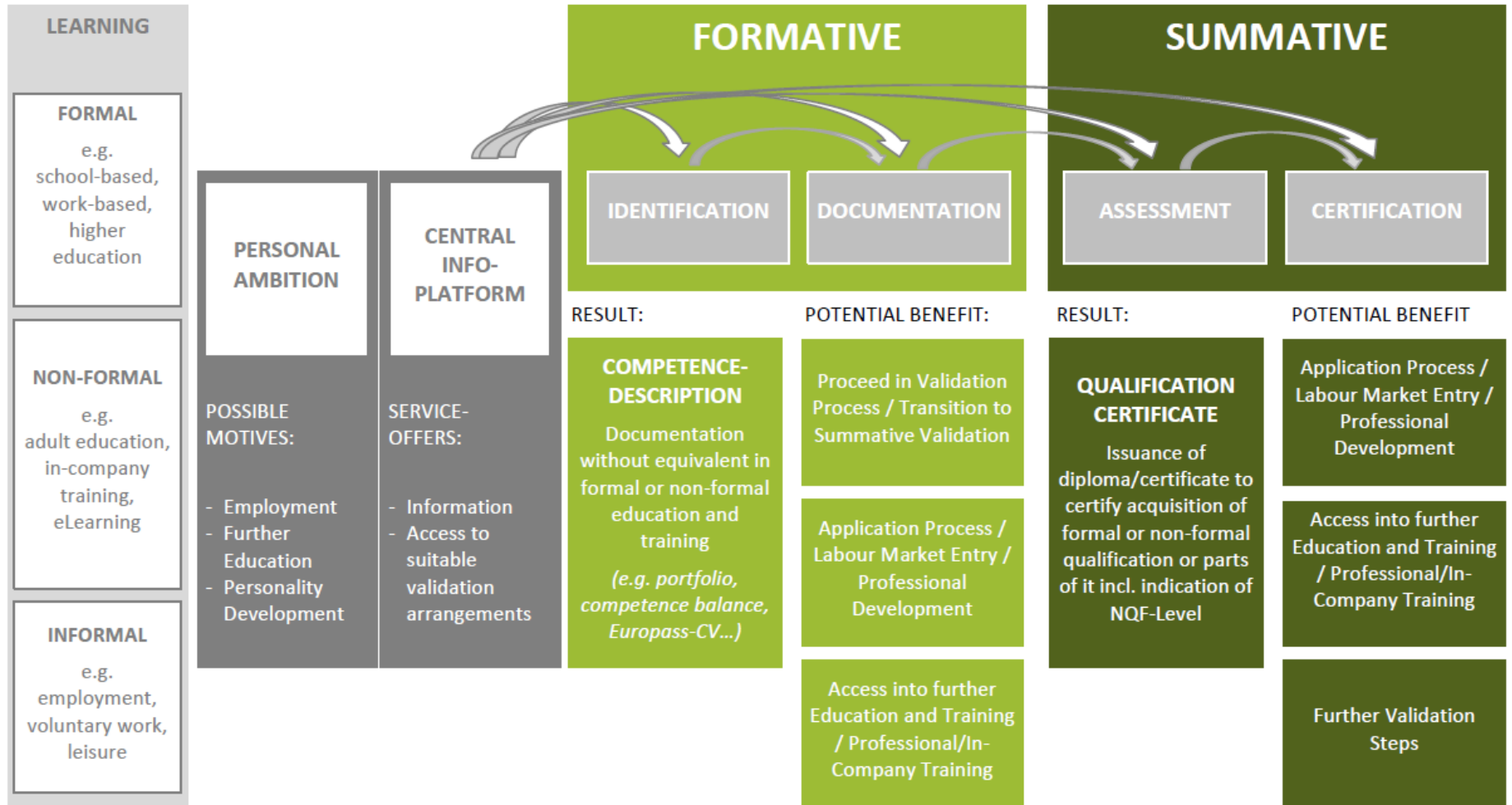
Strategic Objective 3: Enhancing prospects in education and employment

Strategic Objective 4: Fostering permeability within the Austrian education and training system

Strategic Objective 5: Establishing validation as an integral part of the Austrian education and training system

Strategic Objective 6: Strengthening learning outcomes orientation and quality assurance

Conceptual Pillars and Process Description



Thematic Foci and Measures 2016-2018

THEMATIC FOCUS 1: QUALITY	THEMATIC FOCUS 2: PROFESSIONALISATION	THEMATIC FOCUS 3: ONLINE-PORTAL	THEMATIC FOCUS 4: SYNERGIES
OBJECTIVE: Foster transparency, quality and recognition of validation procedures	OBJECTIVE: Develop skills and competences of personnel conducting validation	OBJECTIVE: Enhance visibility and accessibility of validation arrangements	OBJECTIVE: Improve coordination, networking, cooperation between existing and future initiatives
PRODUCT(s): 1- Quality-Criteria to describe „good“ validation procedures	PRODUCT(s): 1- Competence profiles for counsellors and assessors 2- Possibly Training courses	PRODUCT(s): 1- Online-Portal for transparent information on existing validation arrangements 2- Target group-oriented communication concept	PRODUCT(s): 1- Platform/Network for coordinated development and further development

Implementation



Validation and the Austrian NQF

- NQF-Act in force since 15th March 2016
- Comprehensive framework
- NQF-Act legally anchors inclusion of non-formal qualifications

⇒ **Vision: Acquisition of qualifications that have been included in the NQF by means of validation**

Validation and ECVET

- National ECVET strategy:
 - Permeability within the national ET system
 - Improved mutual recognition of previously acquired learning outcomes
 - Improved recognition of non-formal and informal learning
 - Improved employability through transparent documentation of learning outcomes
- Modularisation as one possible way to facilitate recognition and the shortening of learning programmes?
- The role of credits?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Stephanie Mayer
Federal Ministry of Education
stephanie.mayer@act.at