

**Implementation
of the 2012 Council
Recommendation on validation of
Non-formal and informal Learning**

One-off report Luxembourg

LEARNING

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Introduction

As the validation procedure was introduced in Luxemburg in 2003 as regards Higher education and in 2008 as regards the education system, including VET, this report is on one side related to the development and implementation of the concept and on the other side an analysis how the existing procedures are or are not in line with the 2012 recommendation.


Luxemburg decided during the first decade of the new century to start reforming the education and training system. Influenced by the socio-economic reality of the country and in the light of the European developments as regards the Lisbon strategy and especially the Lifelong learning strategy the review of the different sub-systems started. After years of being a higher education system consisting mainly of short cycle studies, the University of Luxemburg becomes a European university centred on research with an international, multilingual and interdisciplinary character. The primary school is in depth reformed with the aim to give each child the tools for success. In parallel the VET system is undergoing a change towards a “competence” based unit system and finally a discussion as regards secondary (general and technical) education begins.

The key element in this reform work was the term “competence-based approach”. While this wording is varying according to the needs of the various sectors of education, the general understanding is nevertheless common to all, namely an organised set of knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes the learner needs to have in order to be able to complete a task, whether in a school context or in life in general. This definition ties up with the definition of learning outcomes, which is “what the learner knows, understands and is capable of achieving on completion of a learning process”.

This element, besides some others, was the one that made the implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning possible.

Having this background in mind, the report, in a first step, will try to explain the way we developed and put in place the validation procedure in the technical (now: general) secondary education including VET and the master craftsmanship diploma.

Concerning the validation in higher education, this was done by law leaving the implementation to the University.



However one can say that the underpinning principles are the same but that the procedure is adapted to the logic of the sector.

I. Development of the validation model as a concept and a process in the education and training sector.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning (Validation des acquis de l'expérience, VAE) is implemented in the general secondary sector as well for the craftsmen diploma in Luxembourg since 2010. The law that introduced this practice was the bill on the VET reform 2008.

The development of this procedure and the agreement on principles needed a certain time of discussion and consultation that can be split up in three phases.

The first step can be characterised as a kind of “feasibility study” through a consultation among the different stakeholders. The question was: what are the views of the social partners in relation to the principles, methods and institutions concerning the validation of non-formal and informal learning? Beside the agreement that validation is an instrument for career management and social treatment, the social partners put forward, in the context of the Luxembourg situation, that validation can be a major tool to solve the shortage of qualified workers and consequently fight unemployment.

The possibility for young people who hadn't had the opportunity to qualify to arrive at a recognition of their experience, and for adults who, for multiple reasons, did not have a diploma, to arrive to validate their achievements, creates the situation in Luxembourg society that the social partners referred to as the “principle of social justice”.

At the same time, as the different stakeholders and particularly the social partners supported the idea to introduce the validation of non-formal and informal learning, they asked to be involved in the setting up of this new approach. They even insisted that a legal basis was necessary to avoid any contesting as regards the validity and credibility of the process.

The next step was creating a work group comprising representatives from the social partners as well as people from the formal education and training area, in short, all the people responsible for formal qualifications. This result of the validation process was the first principle that was agreed upon: the validation procedure has to lead to a formal certification. Indeed on one side it would not make sense to deliver parallel or another type of certifications as a result of non-formal and informal learning and on the other side only the formal qualifications have a value on the labour market. Starting from this principle the discussion around the following questions took place: who can ask for a validation? how can we measure the learning outcomes? how can we create trust in the results? Who has to be involved in the evaluation? All these discussions ran in a controversial but constructive atmosphere.

Furthermore the discussions were sustained by exchanges and visits mainly with French experts and practitioners because it was the system that fitted the most to our vision of the validation procedure. One of the major outcomes of these exchanges was the shift from a validation limited to the professional experience to the validation of all non-formal and informal learning, including even the formal learning. It emerged from

the discussions that it was important not to skip the part of formal learning in this process of validating all the learning experiences of the individual.

The concluding elements of these discussions found their expression in one chapter of the bill of law concerning the reform of the VET system. The decision to include the regulatory elements of the validation procedure in this law and not in a separate one was a purely political decision.

During the legislative process, discussion in Parliament and advice by the Council of State, a working group continued to discuss the implementing regulations.

Elements like the minimum duration of the learning experience to introduce the request, definition of the content of the dossier (admissibility, on the merits) or the line up and work procedure of the validation commission were discussed. The outcomes were put down in the regulation of 2010.

In the meantime the training of the counsellors and the members of the commission was undertaken, the dossiers were finalised and a webpage was created. As regards the training of the different actors this happened through a training-research approach by an interuniversity Institute of the Universities of Nancy and Strasbourg.

2010 was the year where the VAE came into force. The procedure was officially launched by the minister and information meetings were held around the country. The first persons went through the procedure.



Testimony of Nadine G. graduate educator, Early childhood education school Kayl¹

Nadine begins her professional life with casual jobs. She then stops working in order to bring up her 2 children. In 2000, she enters the socio-educational department of Dreiborn to take care of young delinquents and then becomes a part time teacher, where she continued to make replacements.

In 2001, she joined the municipality of Remich, as an employee in an early childhood education programme class, a position without a diploma nor appointment on a permanent basis.

In 2004, the law on the early childhood education imposes in every class a teacher and a qualified educator. Nonqualified staff have 6 years to regularize their situation and obtain the required diploma.

The end of the transitional period is approaching. Still without a diploma, she risked dismissal. At the beginning of 2010, Nadine heard about the VAE which was being set up. In April she attended the first information meeting on the subject. Fifteen people were present: “There were a few trades: hotel business, gastronomy, secretariat ...” she remembers.

The great unknown

At the time, everything was still new, to be constructed and put in place in this field. “To my questions, they answered me: we will see this in due time. For everyone it was really the great unknown,” she says.

She receives her dossier by post; it contained a biography, a questionnaire, with a checklist of the knowledge and competences of linguistic, educational, social ... subjects to justify in order to obtain the final diploma of the educator’s curriculum.

A guide is appointed to accompany her in her steps. For her too, it is a 1st. She tells Nadine: “your objective is to draft the educational textbooks. It is a question of describing your work for one person who knows nothing, but by reading your dossier, will know how to execute all the tasks required to realize this work.”

She starts a journal, and jots down diagrams, texts, ideas, reflections, memories ... All of which can illustrate the practices and the competences acquired during these ten years of experience. To complete the missing experiences, she was advised to make internships or to dive back into her memories of voluntary work and helping relatives.

“Being a mother was a form of self-education, just like the support of my grandmother during the last 15 years of her life ...” she says. “I also described my experience of voluntary work with disabled people and then my experience in Dreiborn ... When I established the plan of my dossier, I realized that I had all the required experiences ...”

The first draft of the dossier, written in 3 languages, contained 800 pages she then reduces it to 300 pages. “I took a year to build it, every night after work, weekends and during my holidays too,” she continues.

¹ Accessed September 17 on <http://www.lifelong-learning.lu/> in French



A revenge on life ... A compliment to oneself ...

The whole represents for her the assessment of an already well filled professional life. A work of personal memory and introspection, carrying a strong emotional charge.

“It was a research on my career, where I understood a lot about myself,” she observes. “I also realized that the lack of recognition and valorisation often marked my career, I was considered worthless because I had no diplomas or rights but rather obligations and duties.”

The dossier is introduced in January 2011: unanimously, the validation commission gives its ratification. In May, the diploma of educator is officially given to her. And while being at it, the upper secondary school-leaving certificate.

“I thought that finally having the diploma would reconcile me with the past. I noticed that it represented for me a moral recognition of my experience and of my work of educator carried out throughout these years”, she is pleased to say.

The diploma also opens doors to her: next July, she will begin a 3-year cycle of studies of systemic therapist and supervision at the Kannerschlass Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Essen (Germany).

If she could do it again, Nadine would reintroduce her application for validation: « I advise everyone to make this VAE, because life is long; professionally, we can do a lot of things, and today it is time to change jobs several times. The most important is to make something which means a lot to you ».



II. Legal, institutional and financial background

The legal framework on validation consists of different laws, depending on the responsibility for the respective qualification:

- The law of December 2008, amended in December 2016, and the Règlement grand-ducal of 11 January 2010 define the frame and procedure of the validation for the certificates and diplomas at the secondary level including VET, except the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires).
- The law of 19 June 2009 concerning the organization of higher education specifies the validation procedure for the higher technician certificates (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur).
- The 2003 legislation creating the University of Luxembourg includes different articles concerning the elements for the validation in the area of the higher education.

The elements of these laws are mostly the same with however sometimes nuances.

Without mentioning them all, some examples:

- The conditions as regards the access. In all three legislations, the person has to proof a minimum experience of three years related to the aimed qualification. Whereas experience is defined in the law from 2008 as learning outcomes obtained through formal, non-formal and informal settings, the two other laws mention salaried, non-salaried or voluntary activities. However both ideas overlap, the difference is that the learning outcomes are broader because taking in account all learning settings not only those related to work.
- The evaluation is carried out by a “validation jury/commission”. The composition between the three providers:
 - Education and training: composed of employers and employees representatives proposed by the professional chambers concerned, as well as representatives from education and training;
 - Higher technician certificate: an ad hoc commission for each training program concerned which is specified in the vade mecum : comprises between four and six members, at least two of whom have a principal activity other than education and are competent to assess the nature of the learning outcomes, in particular the professional ones, which are sought to be validated;
 - University: comprises, in addition to the teacher-researchers who constitute the majority, competent persons to assess the nature of the learning outcomes, in particular the professional ones, which are sought to be validated.
- Whereas the validation as regards education and the higher technician is focussing on the qualification, the University is mainly focussing on the access.
- The most outstanding difference between the three procedures is the right for the person to make a VAE in the education and training sector contrary to the two others where the person may make a VAE.

Beside the validation regulated by the above mentioned laws concerning the formal qualifications, the training department of the Chamber of employees offers, together with either French universities or the University of Luxembourg, higher education certifications. For these certifications the validation is applied following the respective procedure in place i.e. the different French models of validation are possible and for the University of Luxembourg their procedure is used.

As the previous examples show, the responsibility of carrying out the process is under the responsibility of the relevant providers. Each institution responsible for a formal qualification is responsible for its validation.

Thus, although the Ministry of higher education is responsible for the maintaining of the law, the University, because of its autonomy, is in charge of the concrete implementation.

Concerning the higher technician certificate the different secondary schools responsible for the specific Higher Technician's Certificate have developed together with the Ministry of higher education a vade-mecum setting out the conditions for the validation under Article 12 of the Act of 19 June 2009.

Finally as regards the VAE in the general secondary sector as well as for the craftsmen diploma the responsibility is, as most of the qualifications are VET qualifications, in the VET department of the Ministry of education. The department of secondary education is responsible for the technical upper secondary school-leaving certificate.

Beside this aspect of responsibility the whole procedure is managed by the VAE unit of the Ministry of education.

As the validation procedure in the formal sector is another way to obtain a qualification, the financing of the different procedures is in line with the principle of free education. The whole procedure as well as the different people involved are covered by the State budget. The only expense for the candidate in the validation procedure is a stamp duty of 25 €. This is required when the application for eligibility is submitted.

III. The different stages of the procedures.

Meanwhile the VAE has become a known procedure to obtain a formal qualification based on the formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes or in other words, based on the individual life and work experience of the person. And even if the procedure is still not perfect the path one has to follow is set up.

The first step is the information about the procedure and the requirements, described on several webpages. Besides several briefing sessions take place during the year and across the country. During these sessions the different procedures are explained, examples are shown, general questions are answered. Potential candidates are able to get a first idea about their possibilities as regards a VAE and turn either towards a counselling service or directly to the VAE provider.

- www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Diplomes/validation-des-acquis-de-l_experience/en
- www.guichet.public.lu/entreprises/en/creation-developpement/projet-creation/diplomes/validation-acquis/index.html
- www.vae.men.lu
- www.en.uni.lu/etudiants/informations_utiles_de_a_a_z/validation_d_acquis
- www.bts.lu/informations/validation-des-acquis-de-l'experience/

However a certain number of people contact directly the provider or are directed towards the provider after a skills audit (PES) or another evaluation by another external body. As regards the education and training validation the specific unit can support the person to take the appropriate decision.

All these possibilities aim at identifying the learning outcomes and taking a decision what type and level of a qualification fits the experience.

The next step is the documentation of the learning outcomes and here the approach differs between the providers even though they have the dossier as the main tool.

University: as already said, even if the law foresees in article 9 the validation procedure towards parts or the full qualification and in article 12 the access to the studies, the University mainly focusses and informs on article 12 (cf. website).

The internal regulations² are very clear about the validation result. Art. IV.8.101. states:

“Applications for the validation of professional or acquired experience or advanced studies already completed are submitted for the sole purpose of accessing studies at the University of Luxembourg. A decision in favour of such a request does not give rise to the award of the diploma specified in section 12 (1) or (3) of the Act.”

The applicant has to register online and submit his complete application to SEVE (Student Service). It is indicated which documents, including those concerning the experience, must be attached to the application file in accordance with the pre-selected degree program.

² Internal rules University of Luxembourg, version 3 February 2017

The requested documents are:

- Letter of motivation with specification of the training for which the validation is requested,
- a detailed CV,
- the attestations of the training courses,
- the diplomas obtained, and in case of higher studies completed abroad with the certificate of recognition,
- certificates of continuing training activities,
- certificates of professional activities and experience (duration, type, employment, employer's certificate, etc.).

Higher technician certificate: The candidate has to apply for the validation to the head of the school that offers the specific BTS. It has to be mentioned that some BTS are not yet accessible through VAE. For those who offer this opportunity the application consists of two documents: the registration for enrolment with the institution and the application for validation. This application must state, by reference to the diploma applied for, the knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes that the candidate has acquired through experience. It has to include the documents attesting the experience and the duration of the various activities in which the candidate has acquired the learning outcomes, and where appropriate, the attestations corresponding to the training courses and diplomas obtained previously.

Education and Training: the validation in this procedure is a portfolio for documenting the experience with two files. After the candidate is clear about the qualification he can seek, he has to fill in a first dossier, the admissibility application. This application specifies the diploma the candidate wants to obtain through VAE. Furthermore the person has to indicate why he/she wants to make the process and provide the information on his/her professional, voluntary or private experience, as well as the education and training path. The proofs consist of official documents (certificate of social security affiliation, copy of the employment contract; pay slips proving the salaried activities, certificates issued by the president of the association for the voluntary activities in associations, an affidavit for private activities and photocopies of any certificate as regards education and training). One important element in this procedure is proof of the minimum duration of the experience.

The applicant, 18 years old at least, has to prove a minimum of 5000 hours (+/- 3 years) of experience. The VAE unit in the Ministry checks this information and the supporting evidence to see whether the person is entitled to take the next step in the validation application for fundamental recognition. Through its guided questionnaire, this validation application should allow the candidate to inventory and describe in detail his/her knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes relevant to the requirements of the qualification for which he/she is applying. The candidate has to describe his/her «path» «jobs» and «activities illustrated with concrete examples as regards the experiences. In order to be able to do this he/she receives the documents with the outcomes of the relevant qualification.

As regards the assessment a general issue for the three procedures concerns the deadlines. Even in general the candidates can prepare their dossiers as long as they need, each of the providers has a deadline to introduce the application.

For the University this coincides with the inscriptions for the semesters:

- before 1 December for possible admission to the summer semester
- before 1 May for possible admission to the winter semester

For the Higher technician certificate: in principle in coherence with the school year, for 2017/2018 it was 15th of May 2017. The interview takes place end May, the decision is taken during June so that the candidate, who gets no full validation can register for the course at the latest on 31st of August.

For Education and Training two validation sessions are foreseen per year where the different commissions evaluate the files. For the session between May/June the application has to be introduced in February and for the sessions October/November in July.

Concerning the assessment, beside the fact that the three processes use the dossier for documenting the outcomes of different learning situations, the approach, even if the result may not be the same, the principles for the assessment are very similar.

University: The completed application submitted to the Dean of the Faculty concerned, is examined by a jury whose members are appointed by the rector, on the proposal of the dean. The jury analyses the file, interviews the applicant and where appropriate, evaluates the applicant in a professional setting. The jury motivates its decision on the basis of all the information obtained in a written report and transmits it to the dean. The dean informs in writing the person who has introduced the demand, of the decision of the jury. At the same time the SEVE informs the candidate about the decision with all the information to complete his/her registration.

Higher technician certificate: Once the application is introduced and verified administratively the minister on proposal of the director of the school, appoints an ad hoc commission for each training program concerned. Any ad hoc validation commission consists of between four and six members. At least two members should have a main activity other than education and be competent to assess the nature of the acquis, in particular professional qualifications, whose validation is sought. Persons belonging to the enterprise or organisation in which the candidate has carried out his activity cannot take part in the deliberations concerning that candidate. The ad hoc commission examines the candidate's file and has a discussion with the candidate. Depending on the outcomes the commission can go for a real or reconstituted situation.

The commission assesses the experience gained in relation to the program of the diploma concerned on the basis of the following criteria:

- the length of work experience;
- the progress of responsibilities;
- the level of responsibilities exercised at the time of request;
- the complexity of entrusted missions and of knowledge and mobilised competences;
- the nearness of activity with the training or the postulated certificate;
- correspondence between level of experience and level and type of asked certificate.

Based on the result of the assessment the commission takes a decision as regards the degree of the validation.

Education and Training: The validation dossier is submitted to the members of the validation commission for analysis and decision. The commission is composed of six members: two employer representatives, two employee representatives and two representatives from the school community. There is a validation commission for each qualification. The commission compares the competences indicated in the application with those required to obtain the qualification requested. If necessary, the processing of the file can be followed, if the validation commission so requests, by an interview or a real/reconstituted professional situation. The outcomes of this evaluation are transmitted to the unit of the Ministry. The validation unit uses this document to inform the candidate and if necessary to justify the decision. If the outcome is a full validation the unit passes on the documents to the responsible certification body.



Testimony of JP. Ochem, President of the Federation of Master Caterers of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Chairman of the Validation Committee of the VAE³

“You must be sure to know the trade”

When he was asked to participate in the implementation of the validation procedure in his branch, Jean-Paul Ochem admits to have been sceptical as for the legitimacy of such an approach.

“At the beginning, when we were told about the VAE, we were not very reassured: how is it possible to believe and to judge anybody on a dossier and not in situation, without having seen him ever practising?”, remembers the President of the Federation of Masters of Catering.” We wish to maintain a high level for the trade, we do not want the master’s certificate to be sold off.”

“The valorisation of the experience gained gives an equivalence that leads to the certificate of mastery of caterer, the training of entrepreneur in the craft par excellence. The three-year program focuses on the acquisition of knowledge in business administration and technological skills to create and run one’s own business or to exercise responsibilities with an employer.”

“We recognize immediately if the person is qualified or not”

“The examination of mastery is very advanced”, notes Mr. Ochem,” It covers indeed nutrition, knowledge of goods, of menus, calculations... It also includes modules of general theory, political economy, wage calculations, microbiology ... You can be a very good cook, but you also have to know how to run a business,” he says.

“As the number of professionals in the branch was limited, it was only natural that he was appointed to head the Commission of Validation composed of an average of 6 persons from education, employers and employees.”

With the arrival of the first applications, he quickly realized that the VAE procedure was quite different from what he was apprehending: “Right away we realized that a dossier review was feasible. We recognize immediately if the person is qualified or not, knows how to make purchases, the different menus proposed (those for the holidays in particular), how to manage a kitchen or the staff ...” he details.

“In practical terms, the members of the committee read the file on their own. Then meet to exchange their opinion. If it appears that the applicant clearly does not have the required qualifications, the application is rejected.”

« If there is a lack of information, if there are omissions, the candidate will then be convened for further information: “If, for example, he does not speak of hygiene, salary calculation, or cost price... It is not known whether he knows these areas or not, “says Mr. Ochem.

“In a way, we are also here to protect the candidate”

³ Published 04-11-2015 on <http://www.lifelong-learning.lu> in French



“He may also be invited to a situation scenario. For example, he is given a practical examination, as for that of the master’s certificate: he draws a menu by lot, which he must realize,” detailed the President of the Federation of Master Caterers.

“Since the introduction of the VAE, two or three dossiers have passed each year in the first selection. In the absence of a sufficient theoretical and practical level, however, most of the applications are incomplete and have yet to be completed by the candidates.”

“In the end, only one dossier was validated: that of a restaurateur who wanted to pass his VAE to teach cooking in a public establishment. Only condition: have the master craftsman diploma. “He had worked a lot in the trade, but also abroad, he had set up his own restaurant and wanted to stop. He chose this route rather than the longer one of the master’s craftsman diploma. We were conquered.” remembers the Chairman of the Validation Committee.

What is the outcome of the VAE scheme? “If my team and I award the master craftsman diploma to someone, we feel he has the capabilities to do it,” he says. “In a way, we are also there to protect the candidate, so that he does not act foolishly and especially that he succeeds in his business.”

So, for Jean-Paul Ochem, “the applicants are not really aware of the knowledge and competences which are required to obtain a VAE: “the dossier it is a lot of work; and when we put them in a situation, they quickly realize that they miss the experience or even the knowledge.”

Therefore, the first advice he would like to give them: “Preparing your dossier is a long-term job, and the formalities are not so simple. So, before you start editing your dossier, think carefully! You must be sure you know the whole trade. Otherwise, the best alternative is still to learn it and to complete it by the traditional way of the master craftsman diploma” he concludes.



IV. Results of the validation

Even this phase of the process is part of the four phases, it is however important to underline that in the different procedures this is a formal step. As the validation represents beside the normal education training path another way to obtain a formal qualification it is important to point this step out. This can take different forms.

It can be a possibility of having access to an education and training pathway or reducing it like for the University. As regards the access the validation can enable the candidate to start a bachelor programme without being in possession of an upper secondary school-leaving certificate or equivalent. On the other side the validation can allocate ECTS points in the context of training. However these credits have no marks.

Concerning the Higher technician certificate the commission, after having determined the knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes that the candidate has acquired, decides to validate the totality or only certain modules as regards the Higher technician certificate. In case of a total validation the candidate gets the certification, whereas the partial validation leads to the exemption of attending the validated modules. The candidate has four semesters after getting the notification to register for the certificate.

The validation procedure for the qualification of the Ministry of education leads, as for the Higher technician certificate to a total validation or a partial one. In case of a total validation the competent certification body issues the qualification. For VET this body is the national authority for VET certification. This authority is composed by the director for VET, the professional chambers (employers and employees) and school directors.

If the applicant is granted only a partial validation he has three years to obtain the missing competences. This period can be extended by the commission on request. To acquire these he has the possibility to choose the most appropriate formal and informal setting. This can be attending a course or getting the experience in a work situation. After having obtained the missing knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes the person goes back to the validation commission with the proofs (certificates or description of the experience) of his learning. Based on this complementary information the commission normally decides a total validation.



Marc, a mechanic, would like to take over the family business⁴

Marc, 33, has worked at his uncle's garage as a mechanic for 13 years, and holds a Technical and Vocational Training Certificate in car and motorcycle mechanics. He also helps his uncle with the day-to-day running of the business.

Keen to take over the business one day, Marc obtains information from the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth as to the possibility of obtaining the Master Craftsmanship (Brevet de Maîtrise) in automotive electronic mechanical engineering.

The Ministry replies that based on his years of experience, he can submit a validation of non-formal and informal learning (VAE) application for the Master Craftsmanship.

This application is broken down into two stages. First, Marc submits an admissibility application to the Ministry together with the required supporting evidence, stipulating the Master Craftsmanship that he wishes to obtain. Then, having received a positive reply, he submits his validation application based on content, through which he provides evidence that he has gained the knowledge, aptitude and skills required for the Master Craftsmanship in matters relating to employment and social security laws, company law, salary calculation, accounting tools and financial analysis, cost price calculation, communication techniques, staff management, running a business, setting up a business, vocational training reforms, applied educational theory and professional theory and practice in the relevant trade.

He is granted only partial validation, as the Validation Commission deems his salary calculation, accounting tool, financial analysis and cost price calculation competences to be incomplete. Marc decides to attend evening courses in these areas. He has three years to obtain the missing competences.

A third result of the validation procedure can be a complete refusal. In that case the applicant can introduce a new application. Nearly half of the applications on fundamental recognition are refused after the evaluation by the validation commission. There are several reasons for this situation. The major one is the mindset of the people that, based on their experience they are entitled to get the qualification. They do not really understand that they have to prove that they have the knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes required for the qualification. Even the goal of the admissibility application is to verify if the candidate fulfils the formal preconditions (having gained the experience for the aimed qualification) to go to the next step this gives not a real insight in the range of knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes of the candidate. This has to be elaborated in the validation dossier. To realise this, the person has the possibility to get support of a specially trained counsellor. However this is only an offer and the person can accept it or not. The experience shows that those that use this opportunity have a greater chance of passing.

⁴ Accessed on September 2017 <http://www.lifelong-learning.lu/> in French

V. Supporting and acting environment

As already indicated in the previous chapters the different validation procedures, even founded on a common ground and related to the formal qualifications referenced to the NQF, do not follow the same processing. This is due on one side to the way they were developed and on the other side to the attitude of the different providers as regards the validation. Whereas the University, even if it is foreseen in the law, is not in favour of a full validation, the two others are focussing on this result. Whereas the validation in the education field is open to all types of experience wherever and however made, this is not necessarily the case for the others.

These differences make it difficult to inform the candidates what would be the best solution for them. Even though there are regular general information sessions organised by the Ministry of education together with the national institute for the development of continuing training (INFPC) and the professional chambers, the information can guide the person only towards the respective provider for more information. Even though these people know fully well the different procedures it is not always a simple thing to explain the differences to the candidates. It is not easy either to define in such a short time which qualification fits the individual experience. The only provider that has a more or less efficient procedure to go further is the validation unit of the Ministry of education. The unit can rely on different experts to analyse the experience and to look together with the person for the right qualification to aim for. This however is only possible for those who ask for advice. The other persons that try do go through this procedure without asking for advice can see their request refused because of the choice of an unsuited qualification.

The next step as described above is the preparation of the validation dossier. To do so the education and training procedure, in contrary to the other two, offers a support to complete the dossier. This support is made by specially trained counsellors.

The aim is to accompany the person in the construction of his file to “build a mirror of his competences”. The guide is not a “specialist” of the aimed certification, does not write the validation file. He/she respects the terms of the contract with the candidate and keeps the confidentiality of the discussions.

The support itself can be characterised as a maieutic process. During clarifying conversations, the guide works on three levels which should not be considered as linear, but developmental.

The first level is one of advice: “How to start, how to structure, what experience to choose to describe, and what evidence.”

The second level can be qualified by the term help: after the first excavation work, it is necessary to make the candidate understand that it is important to choose the elements that matter, to put them in words while questioning the choices made.

The last part to produce the file: the file constitutes the centrepiece, the result of all the introspection work. In

this work of drafting it is necessary to take into account a few elements: no approximations, no undertones, relate in a pertinent way the task and the context; to establish the link between the experience and the reference, the learning outcomes of the qualification.

This way to support the person is the translation of the regulation and was developed during the preparatory phase during the training by the interuniversity Institute of the Universities of Nancy and Strasbourg. The training was a journey towards an understanding and design of a new role, a new professionalism. For everyone, it was a question of passing from its present (or past) functions to this new function. One had to realise that he/she did not necessarily know, even if things seemed clear, that there were behaviours to be acquired, positions to be consolidated, points of reference to be given, “tricks” to learn. The outcome was not only a position, a way to proceed but too the Implementation of the support “charter” that defined exactly the commitments of each. The underlying principle being that the support provides a guarantee of means and not a guarantee of result.

A similar training was organised for the first validation commissions. As already mentioned these commissions are composed for each qualification by the responsible stakeholders. This is important for the credibility of the results of the validation procedure. Their analysis of the dossier in relation to the outcomes of the qualification has to be conducted seriously to avoid any doubt about the outcomes. As this outcome is a formal qualification there is no place for the feeling that the certification is sold off cheaply.

Therefore it was important that the members of the commissions, similar to the counsellors, became aware of their new role. This role is different from their normal evaluation role where they ask questions and get an answer. During the validation procedure, an assessment is made of the conformity of the evaluated outcomes with those expected, present in the reference system.

This is not without raising certain questions. The school training programs which lead to the diploma are expressed in “general” terms that are knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes. The outcomes from experience, however, are individual and relate to a single professional career. To bring together both is the task for the members of the commission. The writing of the reference/qualification in learning outcomes facilitates this task.

The key element to compare the outcomes towards the standards of the qualification is an evaluation grid. This frame of the grid was developed during the first training session of the members of the commission. Before the first dossiers were analysed, each commission had and has to adapt the grid to the respective qualification.

The main categories of the grid⁵ are according to the level of reading:

- the overall coherence of the dossier -
- the presented outcomes of the experience
- the reflexivity of the candidate
- During a first step each member analyses individually the application and fills in the grid including his/her comments. In a second phase the members discuss their findings together and have to complete a common grid that represents their decision.

The filled document together with the record of the deliberation is transmitted to the unit of the Ministry. The unit following the decision proceeds accordingly.

All these procedures and tools for support and validation developed during the first training in 2008 have undergone a fine tuning over the last years. For the new members of the two groups training is organised by the Ministry and carried out by members of the staff of the University Institute.



⁵ Annex 1

VI. Evaluation and monitoring

The monitoring of the three procedures is unequal developed. Whereas for the University there are no data available, there are numbers for the Higher technician certificate and a three levels follow-up for the education and training procedure.

For the Higher technician certificate the validation procedure remains confidential. There are two areas that are outstanding. The management and business school had in 2016 32 applications but only 3 validations. The school for healthcare had 71 applications, 26 validations (21 on hold) and 24 withdrawals.

As regards the education and training validation process it has 3 approaches for monitoring. The first one, without prioritising and to be in line with the previous sectors, concerns the numbers. But before coming to these it has to be said that the figures are continuous, there is no real annual breakdown possible. This is due to 2 reasons: first even if the admissibility application is accepted the applicant has the possibility to introduce the validation dossier within 2 validation sessions. Concretely this means, you introduce your admissibility application during the month of January 2017 then you can introduce your validation dossier either for the 31 July 2017 (commission analyses the dossiers between (October and November) or for the 28 February 2018 (commission May-June 2018). Second reason: if the candidate gets a full validation, then he will have an answer at latest in December 2018. If he gets a partial validation, then he has until 2021 (3 years) to complete his dossier.

The following numbers show the situation as of August 2017⁶.

a) Admissibility application

2283 requests until 22 August 2017

Year	Number
2010	299
2011	226
2012	239
2013	291
2014	334
2015	308
2016	366
2017	220

Out of these 2.283 applications, 1.695 were declared admissible, 52 were incomplete, and 536 inadmissible for different reasons, not 5000 hours of experience, application for a higher education diploma etc....

⁶ Source Ministry of Education September 2017

b) Validation dossier

From the 1.695 admissible dossier

- 697 candidates didn't introduce the 2nd dossier
- 14 candidates withdrew
- 1 candidate introduced a dossier that was inadmissible
- 731 dossier were analysed by the respective commission:
- 237 full validations
- 57 partial validations (53 candidates didn't complete their dossier)
- 384 refusals
- 72 applications still in progress
- 180 candidates are working on their validation dossier

c) Support

669 candidates out of the 1695 received the coordinates of a guide for support

Beside the statistics there exists a steering committee whose mission is to follow the organisation and to support the implementation of the validation process. This committee is, as several times mentioned as regards the way in Luxemburg to work together, composed by all the relevant stakeholders from the education and training side, as well as from the employer and employee side.

Finally, as foreseen an external evaluation was made in 2015 by an Institute of the Universities of Lorraine. The study was based on the numbers and the answers to a questionnaire addressed to the different actors.

The main outcomes of the study concern the following elements: the evaluation grid, the support of the candidates, the systematization of the interview and the digitization of the dossiers. Concerning the grid the main the improvement of the criteria as regards the items related to the outcomes of the qualification need to be revised. The differences among the different commissions are evident and a common work is necessary to develop a common vision. The support outcome is related to the high number of refusals. Here two possible solutions are proposed; on one side the systematisation of the support has to be improved and more generalised, on the other side the trust from the side of the commissions can be improved through the quality of the dossier. This can be done by raising the awareness of the candidates to argue convincingly. The suspicion of some members of the commissions towards the validation only through a dossier could be diminished through the contact with the candidate. The interview is one of these tools that should however be more worked out and formularised. Finally the digitization relates to the fact that the paper copies are difficult to handle and to read (volume). A digital version delivered by the candidate could bring more reading comfort, not to forget the possibility to have a tool against plagiarism. However this is again depending on the quality of the support and the availability of equal access to the tool.

The report further points out that the credibility and the continuation of the validation process depends on the creation of a real pool of guides and the necessity to develop a greater linkage between the practices of the guides and the commissions.

And finally from the point of view of the candidates themselves, would give a real insight of the social perception and effects of the validation in Luxembourg.

This report shows that however the procedure is functioning there are several elements of the procedure (fine tuning of the grid, creating a poll of guides, etc.) that need to be re-examined, defined and consolidated. These elements are emphasised by another report. The 2015 report by the University of Luxembourg was a general report as regards the VET reform. Besides this report underlines another topic. It states that low-educated applicants have serious problems to draft the dossier.



VI. Final considerations

This one-off report about the validation landscape in Luxembourg tried to give an insight about the development and the implementation of the procedures. The report tried to show that the conceiving of the frame and the decision of the principles took not only a certain time but that the implementation, the real functioning is not easy as far as the education and training area is concerned. The numbers, especially about the refusals, and the reports show that there is a need to revise certain elements, to discuss again certain procedures, to adapt the system to low qualified people and to increase the support to the applicants. These topics are ongoing discussions for the moment. As an example the idea to set up a unique service for information and support for the applicants for the three processes is discussed. But this is subject to the agreement of the different providers.

Concerning the providers the report shows that despite a common understanding of the basic principles the concrete implementation differs among the three providers. This difference is partly conditioned by the mindset of the different actors. For higher education there is a certain apprehension that the result will be decrease the number of learners or that it is impossible to establish a link between the outcomes of the experience and a qualification or the discussion through the centuries whether experience is conceived as a source of knowledge or as a routine. Referring to these questions a recent bill concerning the University was introduced to the parliament. In this bill the validation, contrary to the current legislation, is limited to the access to studies leading to the Bachelor's and Master's degrees and to partial exemption of certain elements of the relevant curriculum. Notwithstanding the partial exemption, the candidate must take up University courses corresponding to at least 60 ECTS credits of the relevant program of study.

But this report is not only depicting the situation in Luxembourg but is the attempt to produce a one-off report in the context of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning and this following the agreed structure. As regards the developments and the situation in Luxembourg this was not a simple undertaking. Even if most of the points are covered they are not necessarily following the given structure. This was made in order to avoid, at least in our view, misunderstandings. As an example, the role of stakeholders: explaining their role only in one specific chapter would not have shown clearly their involvement in the development of the procedure, their participation in the information of the possible candidates and their role in the validation commissions, not to mention their involvement as a core principle. Another point is related to the links to recognition or transparency tools. As the validation, at least that one of the education and training sector takes in account all learning purposes may they be formal, non-formal or informal and this independent of the national or non-national context it makes no sense to deal with these issues in a separate chapter.

Annex 1. Grid Template

Indicators	Item dossier	Criteria	Scale	Comments assessor	To re-specify during an interview or situation scenario
Consistency of the career in relation to the professional sector covered by the certificate or diploma	Fiches P1 P2 P3	Do the jobs correspond to the level of employment covered by the certificate or diploma?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
Do the activities that the candidate has chosen to describe correspond to those of the jobs usually performed by holders of the certificate, diploma or certificate?	Fiches E1 E2 E3	Do the conditions of exercise of jobs or activities correspond to this employment level concerned?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
Coherence between the described career and the annexes	Heading of the fiches A Annexes	Do the activities that the candidate has chosen to describe correspond to those of the jobs usually performed by holders of the certificate, diploma or certificate?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
Overall readability of the file	In general	Do the appendices provide useful information to understand the career? Is the file structured? Is the wording comprehensible and related to the requested level of validation?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		

**1st level of reading:
The general consistency of the dossier**

2nd level of reading: the outcomes of the experience presented

Indicators	Item dossier	Criteria	Scale	Comments assessor	To re-specify during an interview or situation scenario
Relevance of description	Fiches A1 A2 A3 A4 A5 A6 A7 A8 A9 A10 A11	Is the professional context accurately described?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
	Pages 1/ 11	Are activities and tasks accurately described?	1 2 3 4		
	Fiches A in general	Does the vocabulary used by the candidate correspond to the vocabulary commonly used by practicing professionals in employment?	1 2 3 4		
	Fiches A1- A11	Do the experiences described by the candidate correspond to the competences defined in the reference program?	1 2 3 4		
	Fiches A1-A11 Pages + Annexes	The compulsory competences which the candidate must show are present.	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
	Highlighting of the central and peripheral competences				
	Highlighting of the central and peripheral competences according to the profile of the professional competences relating to the trade X				

3rd level of reading: Reflexivity of the candidate

Indicators	Item dossier	Criteria	Scale	Comments assessor	To re-specify during an interview or situation scenario
The identification of transversal, social and personal competences	Fiches E1, E2 E3 Page 2/2 + Annexes I	Does the candidate show a degree of autonomy corresponding to that generally requested in jobs aimed by the certificate or diploma?	1 2 3 4		
The identification of transversal, social and personal competences	Fiches A1- A11	Does the candidate identify the responsibilities generally required in the positions covered by the certificate, diploma or certificate? Did the candidate demonstrate initiative in the various activities he / she carried out?	1 2 3 4		
Coherence of the validation project	Fiches A1-A11 Admissibility file Motivation	Does the candidate mention in his file the constraints specific to the exercise of the required competences? Is the validation project linked to the career path?	1 2 3 4		
Analysis of the candidate's activities described in the file	Fiches A1 A2 A3	The activities are described on 3 levels: simple description: the candidate describes what he is doing abstract: he explains how is doing reflexive: he why he doing like this The description and the analysis of the activities realised by the candidate do they mention explicitly the realised learning?	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
			1 2 3 4		



Decision of the commission

Validation : Total * Partial * Refusal

Unanimous decision: yes no **if no : for** _____ **against** _____

Place & date

.....

Name and signature of the commission members present

.....

* If the validation is partial please mention the complements to provide
If it is a refusal, please explain the reasons precisely and in detail.



Arguments and complementary remarks by the commission

Following the evaluation of the file produced by X, the commission asked for an interview with the candidate on thein.....

During the interview with the candidate the commission asserted all the competences that remained vague during the reading and during the evaluation of the file.

Following unanimous deliberation, the Committee decided as follows:

The candidate has demonstrated that he/she meets the qualifications required to obtain



LEARNING

TECHNOLOGY

INTELLIGENT

STUDY

EDUCATION

SKILLS

APPROACH

VALUES

E-LEARNING

INFORMATION

SENSITISATION

TRAINING

THEORY

BEHAVIOR

TANGENTIAL

TRANSFER

COMPUTER

DIALOGIC

CLASSROOM

EXPERIENCE

KNOWLEDGE

PROGRESS

PEDAGOGY

LEARN

DEVELOPMENT

PREFERENCES

EDUCATION

INFORMAL WORKSHOPS

DEVELOPMENT

NONFORMAL TYPES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

AN AWARENESS

MEANINGFUL

INFORMAL WORKSHOPS

NONFORMAL TYPES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

PREFERENCES

INNOVATION

PERSONAL

FORMAL

HUMAN

HABITUATION

ASSOCIATIVE

E-LEARNING

BEHAVIOR

TANGENTIAL

TRANSFER

OBSERVATIONAL

PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY

SHOOLING

LEARN