

Annual National Review (AnaR) of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) in Switzerland 2010

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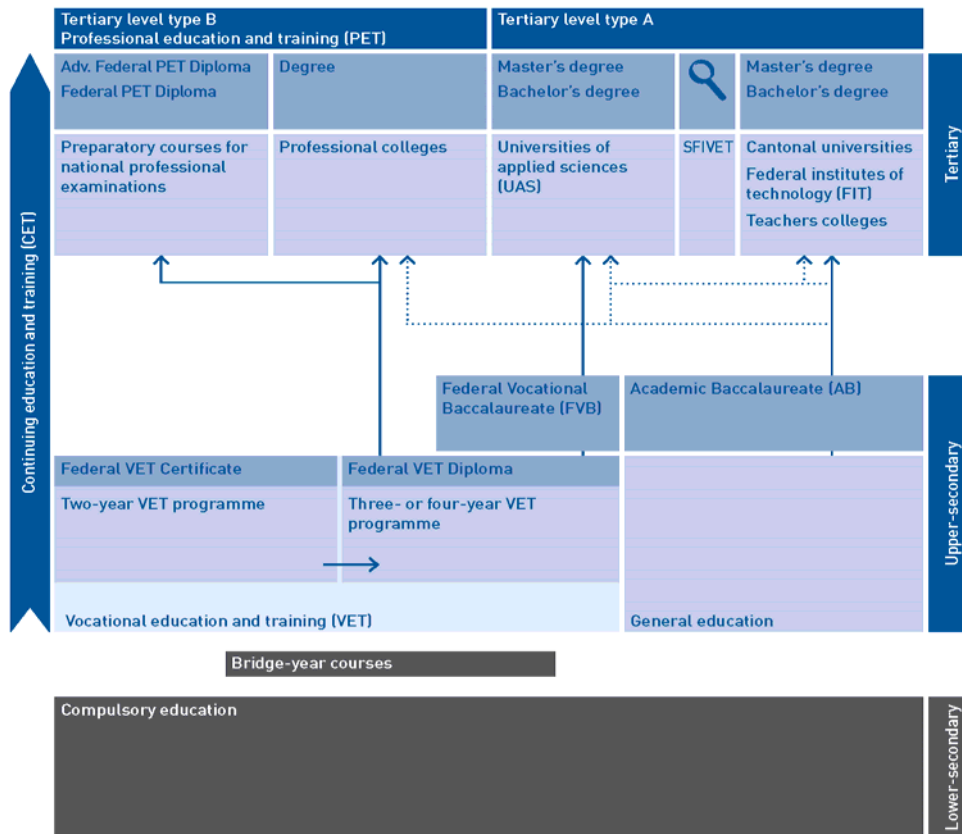
Note to readers

As already stated in the report for 2008-2009, the situation in Switzerland with regard to the validation of prior learning is still inconsistent and depends upon the different sectors and regions in which training is provided. The present report serves as a complement to the previous report, which provides a detailed account of the complex situation existing in Switzerland. The initial report is therefore essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the update that we are about to present below.

As a reminder and in order to make our report more readable, we have once again included a simplified diagram of the Swiss education system (see below), which presents the terminology used in the individual sectors where training is provided.

This report does not purport to be exhaustive, but rather presents a selection of experiences gained within the Swiss context. For the sake of greater conciseness and clarity, the various terms used to refer to this concept in other contexts and languages (e.g. VNF-IFL, RPLO, recognition, validation, *validation des acquis*, *validation des acquis de l'expérience*, etc.) are expressed in this report as the "validation of prior learning" (VPL). It is important to note that Switzerland draws a distinction between "recognition" of prior learning (i.e. does not lead to issuance of a formal qualification) and "validation" of prior learning (i.e. leads to issuance of a formal qualification). The occupation of "RVPL professional" (referred to outside of Switzerland as "RPLO professional" or "RPLO specialist") is a reflection of this distinction. Within the Swiss context, "prior learning" encompasses both "non-formal learning" and "informal learning".

The links mentioned in the present report were verified on 15 November 2010 and may have changed in the meantime. If you encounter any broken links, please check OPET's Web site for information regarding Swiss upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET): <http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/index.html?lang=fr> (information in German, French and Italian only)



-  Direct access
-  Additional qualifications required
-  Admission requirements vary: SFIVET offers certification programmes, degree programmes, advanced study programmes (CAS, DAS, MAS) and other courses as well as an MSc in vocational education and training.

I. General VPL situation

<p>1. National strategy: is there one? What VPL mechanisms are in place, at which level? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies?</p>	<p>1.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL) All VPL procedures are based on the national guidelines.</p> <p>German: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=de&download=NHZLpZeg7t,lnp6I0NTU042I2Z6ln1acy4Zn4Z2qZpnO2Yug2Z6gpJCDeXx_hGym162epYbg2c_JjKbNoKSn6A-- [11/15/10]</p> <p>French: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=fr&download=NHZLpZeg7t,lnp6I0NTU042I2Z6ln1ae2Izn4Z2qZpnO2Yug2Z6gpJCDexX_hGym162epYbg2c_JjKbNoKSn6A-- [11/15/10]</p> <p>The revised national guidelines also reflect the national strategy. Experience gained over the past few years is being incorporated. The guidelines have also significantly been reduced in length, namely by removing the glossary. Additional documents have also been produced, containing specifications on the various aspects of the VPL procedure and a series of checklists that are intended to ensure the quality of the VPL procedures implemented in individual Cantons. One such checklist is intended for the experts involved in VPL procedures (see "Développement et assurance de la qualité")</p> <p>German: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=de [11/15/10]</p> <p>French: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=fr [11/15/10]</p> <p>The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) commissioned a supervisory assessment to ensure that all aspects of the pilot phase of the VPL procedure (2005-2009) could be examined (See Appendix). The assessment, which relates to upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET), takes a snapshot of the current situation, examines the effects of VPL procedures and uncovers any potential difficulties and development potential. The supervisory assessment emphasises the fact that the guidelines have taken on a normative role. The national guidelines are regarded as having proven their value as a frame of reference and are already widely accepted as such by individuals responsible for managing VPL procedures.</p> <p>On a national policymaking level, a number of proposals relating to the validation of prior learning have also been submitted over the past few years. These especially call for VPL provisions to be included in the Unemployment Insurance Act. (http://www.parlament.ch/d/suche/seiten/resultate.aspx?query=Validierung [9/13/10]) and http://www.parlament.ch/f/suche/pages/resultate.aspx?collection=AB&query=20094258 [9/13/10])</p>
<p>2. Main responsibility for VPL, regulations, monitoring and assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is mainly responsible for VPL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? Who gives the main impetus and direction? • Who regulates monitors and assesses practices and who pilots new initiatives? • Or are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives? 	<p>2.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL) The national project entitled "<i>Validation des acquis</i>" (validation of prior learning) being conducted by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) was launched for the purpose of creating a framework for implementation of VPL procedures. This project came to an end in late 2009. Implementation of VPL, however, is now the responsibility of the Cantons (http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/20314.php [9/13/10]). With this in mind, the Swiss Conference of VET/PET Agencies is directing a working group comprised of representatives of the main VET partners. The aim is to ensure coordination between the Cantons and partners. One of the outcomes of this working group has been to establish recommendations regarding compensatory contributions to be paid for VPL procedures.</p> <p>German: http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/bin/19960-20858-1-empfehlung_pauschalen_validierung_von_bildungsleistungen.pdf [9/13/10]</p> <p>French: http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/bin/20314-20859-1-recommandation_forfaits_validation_des_acquis.pdf [9/13/10]</p> <p>As a result, the home Canton of someone who undergoes the entire VPL procedure in another Canton would be required to pay around €4 000.</p> <p>The national pilot phase underwent a <i>detailed assessment</i> in 2009 and the initial conclusions were then drawn (See Appendix). A further development that began to manifest itself in 2009 was the inclusion of general education in VPL procedures. Qualifications issued upon completion of vocational education and training in Switzerland normally encompass both specialist skills and general skills. Following this, OPET drafted a national general education profile.</p> <p>German: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=de&download=NHZLpZeg7t,lnp6I0NTU042I2Z6ln1acy4Zn4Z2qZpnO2Yug</p>

	<p>2Z6gpJCDeX12e2ym162epYbg2c_JjKbNoKSn6A-- [11/15/10] French:http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/01183/01184/index.html?lang=fr&download=NHZLpZeg7t,Inp6I0NTU042I2Z6ln1ae2IZn4Z2qZpnO2Yug2Z6gpJCDeX12e2ym162epYbg2c_JjKbNoKSn6A-- [11/15/10]</p> <p>The first VPL procedures were then conducted for occupations such as social care worker¹ in Zurich or health care worker in Neuchâtel. We have observed that guidelines are applied differently from Canton to Canton and from project to project. This is particularly the case for complementary tools developed by the Cantons.</p> <p>A further notable development is that OPET now requires professional organisations to develop the basic tools required for a VPL procedure (i.e. competency profile) for all new VET ordinances and corresponding training plans.</p>
<p>3. Sectors: where, which sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does VPL apply to all educational sectors? Or to specific ones (vocational education & training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc....) • Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3rd sector, private sector 	<p>3.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL)</p> <p>OPET's national <i>Validation des acquis</i> project was launched in the VET sector for the purpose of implementing VPL-related provisions contained in the Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (SR 412.10). Under the auspices of this national project, a number of pilot projects are being carried out in all parts of Switzerland. The link below shows what measures are currently underway in each Canton, the occupations for which validation of prior learning is possible, and where and whom to contact. In the case of certain occupations, intercantonal cooperation is possible. Reference documentation is also available.</p> <p>You can view a map of Switzerland, showing the location of the various projects, by visiting: http://www.validacquis.ch/angebote/index.php [9/13/10].</p> <p>The Federal VET Diploma is the main qualification awarded upon completion of vocational education and training. VET programmes in Switzerland are comprised of one part consisting of (job-specific) "occupational competencies" and one part consisting of "general education skills" (not specifically related to the occupation, in the vast majority of cases). While occupational competencies are clearly defined and are therefore relatively simple to validate, the same is not true for "general education skills", which are often less clearly defined within existing procedures.</p> <p>Including general education in VPL procedures</p> <p>General education subjects are a standard component of VET programmes leading to issuance of the Federal VET Diploma. Covering a total of 360 hours and serving as a complement to vocational instruction, the primary aim of general education subjects is to facilitate the acquisition of fundamental skills that will enable VET students to become well-rounded individuals who are both well-integrated in society and able to handle personal and occupational challenges (see Art. 2 of the OPET Ordinance of 27 April 2006 on Minimum General Education Requirements in VET Programmes (SR 412.101.241)). General education subjects may be broken down into one of two categories: "Languages and Communication" and "Society"</p> <p>The content of general education subjects includes knowledge and skills that will enable VET students to become part of society both on an occupational and personal level. In most VET programmes, general education is not an essential component needed in order to work in a given occupation. General education therefore provides young people with non-specific competencies that are not directly linked to the occupation that the individual will exercise in the future. As far as the remaining VET programmes are concerned (such as those for retail employees or certain occupations in the health and social care sector), the general education component is an essential component needed in order to work in the occupation. This is an interesting detail, since it indicates that in less technical occupations, general education competencies are becoming occupational competencies in their own right.</p> <p>Aware of the fact that general education requirements cannot be formulated in the same way for young people enrolled in a VET programme as for adults undergoing assessment in a VPL procedure, the VET partners have drafted a "general education profile" to be used with adults. This list is now being implemented and tested in different experiments relating to VPL in the VET sector. It serves as an additional reference alongside the competency profile.² The profile is subdivided into two main skill areas (see links above):</p>

¹ VET programme for those who take care of the disabled, children or senior citizens.

² The competency profile, assessment criteria and the general education profile form the basic tools for the validation of prior learning. The competency profile defines the level of operational skills that a qualified person must possess in order to exercise the occupation in a competent manner. Within the context of validation of prior learning, the competency profile is also useful to also helps candidates during the self-assessment phase since it

- 1) Linguistic and communication skills in the national language of the linguistic region;
- 2) Personal, social and methodological skills.

The inclusion of general education in VPL procedures is emblematic of the questions posed by this alternative route to formal qualifications:

- What precise form does general education take in the case of adults? In other words, what are the key competencies that are expected of an adult in a given socio-occupational context, compared to those of a young person starting out on the labour market or enrolled in a VET programme?
- How can we make the transition from a content-based approach a competency-based one and how can these approaches be assessed?
- Is non-formal or informal learning comparable to formal learning?

In 2010, a number of Cantons conducted an initial experiment involving the use of the general education profile and implementation of corresponding directives. One such example was the Canton of Zurich, which conducted an experiment in the social care field. Another example was the Canton of Neuchâtel, which conducted an experiment in the health care sector.

These new tools are now the subject of an assessment, the results of which are expected for the end of 2010. The initial findings show significant variations in the manner in which OPET directives are implemented.

3.2 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TERTIARY B)

Recognition procedure for VET/PET teachers

Specific qualifications are required of teachers wishing to work at professional colleges (tertiary-level B) or at VET schools (upper-secondary level), especially with regard to teaching methodology. For a variety of reasons, a certain proportion of teaching staff do not possess the required didactic qualification. They therefore need to either acquire new teaching skills or upgrade existing ones. In order to tackle this problem, a recognition procedure has been developed for professional college teaching staff allowing them to “prove” their level of competencies (by taking an examination and completing written assignments). Any competencies that they do not already possess can be added through supplementary training, enabling them to achieve the required didactic qualification. (<http://www.konferenz-hf.ch/de/aktivitaeten/projektdhf>). A prolonged pilot phase is being planned and the recognition procedure should be available for part-time teaching staff by mid-2010 and for full-time teaching staff by the end of 2010.

At the same time, another institution has developed a qualification upgrade procedure for the VET teachers. The qualification upgrade procedure pursues the same objective, namely to enable experienced teachers to obtain the qualification on the basis of skills they already possess. See <http://www.ehb-schweiz.ch/de/ausbildung/Seiten/nachqualifikation.aspx> and http://www.bch-folio.ch/public/001/folio-f/0210_burri_kuenzi-minder_franz.pdf [9/13/10]³.

In the Swiss German-speaking region of Switzerland, a number of professional colleges of applied sciences use equivalency procedures when admitting students to courses of study if the candidate does not possess the required qualifications.

Project to create a Federal PET Diploma in Management of Family-Owned SMEs <http://www.ecoa-europe.eu/index.php?id=2&L=1> [9/13/10]

The Europe of Craftsmen Spouses (ECO) project is intended to encourage female spouses involved in crafts-based enterprises to gain recognition for and validation of competencies gained from practical experience. The aim is also to provide them with an opportunity to attend supplementary training modules leading to issuance of a qualification recognised at a European level. (<http://www.s-o-l.ch/projets/projet.php?project=3>) [9/13/10]

enables them to compare their own knowledge and skills against the ones listed in the competency profile. The competency profile also serves as a frame of reference for experts reviewing the candidate's assessment portfolio, enabling them to determine whether the required levels of competency have been achieved. The general education profile provides an overview of the required skills. Presented in the form of a table and thematic examples, it serves the same purpose as the competency profile but focuses on general education rather than operational skills.

³ Künzi-Minder, R. & Burri, S. (2010). Apporter la preuve de son savoir et de son savoir-faire. Folio, 2/2010, 9-15

The project partner on the Swiss side is Swiss Occidental Leonardo, which mainly works with the Union Suisse des Arts et Métiers (USAM) and PotentialYse.

The project seeks to create a Federal PET Diploma in the Management of Family-Owned SMEs. Like the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education (cf. case study published in 2009), this new tertiary-level B qualification is intended to encourage the validation of prior learning. This initiative arose from a grass roots demand since many women (mainly spouses) work in family-owned enterprises, without receiving official recognition of the competencies acquired.

A competency profile will be developed in the summer of 2010 and a pilot project is expected to begin at the beginning of 2011.

<http://www.ecoa-europe.eu/index.php?id=29> [9/13/10]

3.3 UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES (TERTIARY A)

No genuine VPL procedures have (yet) been implemented in the universities of applied sciences located in the Swiss German-speaking region of Switzerland. Candidates who are unable to demonstrate that they possess the necessary qualifications may be accepted on the basis of application-based admission.

University of Geneva and the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland

In the French-speaking region of Switzerland, the University of Geneva (UNIGE) and the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (HES-SO) work together in partnership in order to offer a procedure designed to validate non-formal and informal learning. This procedure enables candidates to obtain advance credit towards specific Bachelor's and Master's degrees. While it is impossible for candidates to obtain all of the credits needed to obtain the corresponding degree, it is nevertheless possible to obtain **an adjusted study plan** (i.e. the candidate submits a file enabling him/her to obtain exemption from part of the degree programme and then complete his/her training by attending the remaining courses leading to issuance of the desired qualification). As mentioned earlier, it is not possible to obtain all of the ECTS credits needed for a Bachelor's or Master's degree using this procedure.

The Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes involved are as follows: Business economics, company management, socio-economics, political science, computer science, IT management, information management, social work, nursing care, performing arts (music and theatre), sociology, information systems and education science (specialising in adult education and training or analysis and intervention in education systems).

In order to be admitted to this VPL procedure, candidates are obliged to fulfil the conditions for admission or registration that apply specifically to the HES-SO or to UNIGE, or to the particular field of studies selected. They must be able to provide evidence of at least 3 years of professional experience for admission to UNIGE and 5 years for admission to the HES-SO (**experience gained from volunteer work or related experience can be taken into consideration within that 5-year period**). Candidates are also required to be at least 25 years old. The basic fees (procedure and support) are approximately €700. Depending upon the number of ECTS obtained, supplementary courses costs around €700 per year.

In the case of the University of Geneva, <http://www.unige.ch/vae/index.html> [9/13/10], the procedure is conducted in accordance with the ad hoc regulation http://www.unige.ch/vae/documents/Reglement_Final_VAE.pdf [9/13/10] and takes place in seven stages <http://www.unige.ch/vae/procedure.html#40> [9/13/10].

The University of Geneva has also created its own glossary <http://www.unige.ch/vae/documents/Glossaire.pdf> [9/13/10].

Please also see the following press article: <http://www.unige.ch/vae/index/VAE-FER.pdf> [9/13/10]

The procedure offered by the HES-SO is similar and the institution has also produced some directives <http://www.hes-so.ch/documents/showFile.asp?ID=3708> [9/13/10]. In order to gain an idea of what the procedure entails, one can look at the project for the Bachelor's Degree in Nursing at the HES-SO. This procedure is already at an advanced stage and has already led to the production of several VPL tools (assessment criteria, application template, procedure), which can be viewed here: <http://www.vae-formations.ch/formations.htm> [9/13/10].

OEC guidance counsellor qualification not issued by a higher education institution, but open only to holders of a tertiary-level A qualification.

A VPL procedure is also used as means of obtaining the protected title "Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor" awarded by OPET <http://www.sdbb.ch/dyn/2446.asp> [9/13/10]. This qualification is open to holders of a **tertiary-level A qualification** who are able to demonstrate **5 years of professional experience, at least 3 of which related specifically to the guidance counselling field**. Holders of this title are **authorised to work as OEC guidance counsellors**. An initial pilot project was conducted in 2009-2010 and was formally introduced in July 2010. A case study on this pilot project was

conducted and is available on the Observal Web site.

3.4 NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (THIRD SECTOR)

Diplomas in Leadership and Management awarded by the Swiss Managers Association (SKO/ASC) to Swiss army officers

The Swiss Managers Association recognises theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by officers at military academies and other institutions, as well as during advancement services and among troops <http://www.cadres.ch/fr/armee/> [9/13/10].

Recognition of volunteer work

Dossier Bénévolat Suisse - Schweizer Sozialzeitausweis: The aim of the recognition procedure is to give value and greater visibility to the experience gained from volunteer work. The recognition procedure is based on the candidate's prior learning as presented in an assessment portfolio. For further information, please visit: <http://www.dossier-benevolat.ch>

3.5 Cross-border projects

The two cross-border projects detailed below are difficult to link to a specific education training sector (they could in fact apply across several sectors). For this reason, they appear here in a category of their own.

Interreg Project - Italy-Switzerland: VALIDO – Recognition of prior learning to improve matching between supply and demand

Valido is an Interreg IVa project jointly promoted by a transnational partnership, including a wide range of institutions based in Ticino and Lombardy (Italy). The project deals with active labour market policies and continuing education and training. SFIVET's regional campus in Lugano (i.e. the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland) acts as project coordinator on the Swiss side, working directly with ECAP; Lecco Province acts as project coordinator on Italian side, working directly with a series of local training centres and labour agencies.

The project builds on the results obtained from a previous Interreg IIIa project (COGITO), anticipating an initiative currently being developed in Switzerland in relation to a pilot phase of the national VPL system. Professional organisations in the construction branch and the Canton of Ticino are working together to design a competency profile, standards and assessment procedures enabling validation for a Federal VET Diploma in bricklaying.

Valido seeks to develop a shared approach to recognition and validation of prior learning (RVPL), in order to improve matching between supply and demand, as well as transparency of qualifications in the regional cross-border labour market. This goal is furthered by considering how to define on a common basis for competency profiles and assessment procedures as well as by developing a training path focused on VPL methodologies, practices and tools. The project involves about 15 counsellors and advisers from partner institutions active in Switzerland and in Italy.

The project began in 2009 and will reach completion at the end of 2010. It is comprised of several operative working packages. It includes:

- A general comparative analysis of VPL procedures and experiences made in Switzerland (national guidelines) and in Italy (Regione Lombardia is currently testing a regulatory VPL system inspired by EU Guidelines for the validation of informal and non formal learning)
- The development of a comprehensive exchange of experiences in two economic branches – construction and tourism – selected on the basis of their importance in the regional transnational labour market
- A third pilot action aimed at exploiting VPL potentialities and methodologies for improving active labour market policies, facing the economical crisis.

Three transnational working groups were created to develop actionable research focused on two competency profiles (bricklayer, waiter). The aim is to test common competency descriptors, standards and assessment methods and tools.

SFIVET plans to introduce a supportive training path (160 training hours) based on the modular content and methods used to train RVPL professionals (leading to issuance of a Certificate of Advanced Studies or a Diploma of Advanced Studies, focused on VPL procedure support and management). This training path is jointly managed by partner institutions, on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding that is coherent with ECVET principles; at the end of the course, participants will receive a comprehensive attestation of their competencies in the form of credits that are mutually recognised by partner institutions on both

	<p>sides of the border.</p> <p>INTERREG IV PROJECT FRANCE-SWITZERLAND: Modularisation of a training scheme in the cross-border region of Geneva and the Upper Savoy Launched by the French Republic and the Canton of Geneva, this project is intended to provide a modular training structure covering two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Supplementary training needed to fill observed gaps in knowledge and skills for VPL procedures to obtain an upper-secondary level VET qualification (two-year qualification: Federal VET Certificate, three-year or four-year qualification: Federal VET Diploma in Switzerland; Bac Pro or CAP in France). b) Within the context of compulsory education (literacy, French as a foreign language, mathematics) in order to increase the opportunities for social and professional (re)integration, and if applicable, the awarding of a lower-secondary level qualification. <p>The modular training schemes will subsequently be implemented by training institutions in Switzerland and France, according to the systems in place within each institution.</p> <p>The objectives pursued by these projects will facilitate the movement of individuals and give rise to a more flexible cross-border labour dynamic for several sectors of the economy, such as the hotel, restaurant and catering sectors, industrial manufacturing, the socio-medical sector, commercial occupations or even the cleaning sector.</p> <p>This project uses VPL assessment criteria to help individuals obtain initial occupational qualifications. http://www.interreg-francesuisse.org/cms/documents/1/fichesProjets/modularisation_offre_formation.pdf [9/13/10]</p>
<p>4. Terminology: Is there a common definition of VPL, or are there specific terms used by different institutions implementing VPL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?</p>	<p>Please consult first national report.</p>

<p>5. National Qualification Framework: How do VPL practices or initiatives relate to NQF in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not?</p>	<p>5.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL) A national qualification framework for vocational education and training is currently under development under the auspices of OPET.</p> <p>5.2 UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES SECTOR (TERTIARY A) (taken from the following Web page: http://www.crus.ch/index.php?id=2001&L=1 [9/13/10]) <i>The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS), the Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (KFH) and the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education (COHEP) have adopted a common qualification framework for the three types of higher education institution in Switzerland for which each body is responsible. This qualification framework describes the learning outcomes delivered by the Swiss higher education sector at three different levels (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate). This approach is based on learning outcomes. It represents a paradigm shift in the way in which higher education studies are organised.</i></p> <p>More detailed information can be found here: http://www.crus.ch/information-programme/qualifications-framework-ngfch-hs.html?no_cache=1&L=2 [9/13/10].</p>
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II. Impact of Validation

<p>6. Impact on individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact has VPL had on individuals? On whom, in your opinion, has it had the most impact? • Validation candidates/ learners, practitioners, teachers/ academics/ tutors/facilitators in adult education, careers advisers, human resource managers...any more? • In what way has it had an impact: • in the actors/ stakeholders' attitudes, practices and methodologies, interaction with each other, understanding of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...? • Do you have evidence whether it is felt as a positive, negative, problematic impact? 	<p>6.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL)</p> <p>It is difficult to make a general statement with regard to the impact of validation in the VET sector, due to the small number of cases involved. If any information is available, it always relates to the candidates themselves.</p> <p>In line with the supervisory assessment (See Appendix, p. 30), it was observed that when existing skills were taken into account within the context of vocational education and training, the candidate's self-esteem and motivation to learn increased. This was especially the case with participants who possessed few qualifications. As VPL procedures often relate to typically female-dominated occupations, the concerns of re-entrants to the labour market are taken into account. This means that it is mostly women that make use of the VPL procedures.</p> <p>Though no statistical evidence is available, the supervisory assessment (See Appendix, p. 31) seems to indicate that companies are becoming more competitive. In addition, they also assume that VPL encourages transferability between individual courses of study and forms of education.</p> <p>As far as administrative aspects were concerned, a number of the cantonal procedures were simplified to make it easier for candidates to access the VPL procedure. This also reduced the amount of workload that the relevant authorities and experts had to deal with.</p> <p>Acceptance of the VPL procedure: based on experience with assessors (see section 8, Training of assessors), we can state that those who are directly affected understand what new learning is all about, understand the purpose of validation and mostly approve of it.</p>
<p>7. structural and institutional impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it had an impact on education and training (or lifelong learning) policies? • On other legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions? • On the negotiations between social partners (who are those anyway in your country?) • In the private sector, on staff qualification and training strategies within companies? • On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector? • On building bridges (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc? 	<p>Please consult first national report.</p>

III. Your appraisal of the national VPL situation

<p>8. Stakeholders' commitment: how would you rate the stakeholders' level of interest in VPL in your country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders in particular are very interested? • Which ones are not so/ not at all interested? <p>Why is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons?</p>	<p>Under the surface of a debate still limited to experts and specialists, VPL principles and experiences now seem to be gaining momentum within Switzerland's VET sector; the National Guidelines piloted in different occupational fields and in a growing number of Cantons over the past three years have considerably raised the visibility of opportunities to obtain formal qualifications on the basis of informal and non formal learning outcomes.</p> <p>8.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL)</p> <p>Cantons The national VPL project has been completed and responsibility transferred to the Cantons. (For details, please see section 2.1)</p> <p>VPL training for assessors SFIVET has provided VPL training to assessors in the VET sector. Between 2009 and 2010, VPL training was provided to assessors specialised in the following occupations: health care worker, social care worker, commercial employee and media informatics specialist. Assessors are trained in VPL procedures and shown how VPL may be applied to the relevant occupation in a practical manner, for example when reviewing assessment portfolios and conducting interviews.</p> <p>The trade union known as <i>Travail Suisse</i> (www.travailsuisse.ch [9/13/10]) provides VPL training to employees within regional trade union secretariats. At the same time, it maintains contacts with representatives of individual Cantons. The objective of the exercise is to make employees aware of the issues surrounding validation while at the same time facilitating contact with competent persons in each Canton. The most important trade union of the country – Swiss federation of trade unions – is also planning to introduce a similar training course for its representatives.</p> <p>8.2 UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES (TERTIARY A): Training of RVPL professionals Following development of a competency profile for RVPL professionals at SFIVET's regional campus in Lugano (see section 10), a pilot project for tertiary-level courses to train RVPL professionals was launched in the Canton of Ticino. The project involves a Diploma of Advanced Studies for RVPL professionals and is broken down into two CAS modules, the first focusing on guidance and support and the second on assessment. This spring, the first CAS (= guidance and support for the recognition and validation of prior learning" was completed to the full satisfaction of both instructors and participants. http://www.iffp-suisse.ch/it/attualita/manifestazioni/Documents/Prospetto%20informativo%20(VAE).pdf [9/13/10]. Starting in autumn 2010, a programme of "Guidance and support for the recognition and validation of prior learning" will also be offered in the French-speaking region of Switzerland. http://www.ehb-schweiz.ch/FR/FORMATIONCONTINUE/COMPETENCES/Pages/VAE.aspx [9/13/10].</p>
<p>9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VPL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it stimulated discussion on specific issues (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...) • On the nature of assessment, knowledge...? • Between which stakeholders mainly/or within which sector mainly? 	<p>At the moment, issues related to the recognition and validation of prior learning in Switzerland (as well as in other EU countries) are being discussed by experts, practitioners and researchers (and partially by institutional bodies responsible for designing and managing the system) to a much greater extent than by the main stakeholders. The role of the latter, however, should be particularly relevant if we are to create a wider consensus around VPL principles and mechanisms. In Switzerland primarily, social partners and education institutions in some sectors seem to be very cautious if not mistrustful of the potential that VPL offers. Moreover, they often mention the risk of creating an alternative qualification route that competes with, and might potentially undermine, traditional formal VET qualification routes based on the combined school/work-based model (i.e. dual VET). Nevertheless, as far as trade unions are concerned, a relatively growing interest and openness towards VPL can be found in recent documents. SGB / USS and Syna, as well as the most important Swiss Trade Union UNIA, now seem to be showing greater support for VPL approaches. They perceive VPL at least as a means to enable low qualified workers / migrants to obtain a VET qualification. They have nevertheless expressed some reservations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of VPL procedures would need to be publicly subsidised in order to make them more affordable; • Modular supplementary training and VPL support services would need to be established and made available; • A wide range of support measures would need to be implemented to develop basic skills and language, mainly to facilitate the integration of migrants.

<p>10. Research and VPL: Does research feed these debates?</p>	<p>A recent study by Deli Salini (IUFFP Lugano) discusses a pilot project to develop a training programme for RVPL professionals. This study is based on a vast documentary exploration and draws parallels with everyday practice. The study is worth mentioning because it has led to a more precise competency profile and corresponding training programme for those active in the VPL field.</p> <p>Salini, D., Ghisla, G. & Bonini, L. (2010). <i>La formazione di professionista VAE</i> http://ehbzsr229.ehb-schweiz.ch/it/attualita/manifestazioni/Documents/Rapporto_Formazione_Professionista_VAE.pdf [9/13/10]</p> <p>There is also the Interreg IV Project "Valido" (see section 3.5) and an ECAP Foundation silent partnership in a project (lead by Cambridge Assessment), which seeks to establish a training programme for RVPL professionals (learning units at EQF levels 5, 6 and 7 intended for adult trainers and training managers). The results of the above mentioned research are promoted by SFIVET at the local level and have benefited RVPL initiatives.</p> <p>Finally, we would also like to mention two other doctoral research projects, one of which is still in progress:</p> <p>Cortessis, S. (2010). <i>Formation du jugement et argumentation dans les jurys de VAE</i>. Thèse de doctorat en sciences de l'éducation, Conservatoire national des arts et métiers de Paris, Chaire de formation des adultes.</p> <p>The principle behind VPL is to provide candidates with an opportunity to obtain a formal qualification without having to complete formal education and training. This is achieved by submitting details of what one has learnt from one's professional experience to a jury (i.e. in the form of an assessment portfolio). Most VPL systems adopt a methodology whereby candidates are asked to first formulate and highlight their experience in a written portfolio and then defend that experience orally. The task of matching experience gained by the candidate with the competencies stipulated in the referential (i.e. the competency profile) requires both written and verbal arguments. This particular study regards VPL as a continuous process of discussion that is intended to establish the candidate's learning with certainty - from the candidate's self-assessment of his/her own experience through to official validation by the training institution issuing the formal qualification. The study seeks to determine whether there are any discrepancies between the aspects that jury members considered important in their decision and the aspects that jury members actually mention when justifying their decision in public. The study also examines the strategies and discursive practices used by the parties (the candidates and the jury) as they seek to express the candidate's experience in terms of the referential and assessment criteria. The area of investigation and our material is comprised of recordings and transcriptions of verbal exchanges taken from a VPL procedure for VET teachers used in the French-speaking region of Switzerland.</p> <p>Salini, D. (doctoral research currently in progress). <i>Accueil du présent et préfiguration du futur dans les situations d'information-conseil pour la VAE. Analyse de l'activité des conseiller-e-s et candidat-e-s et conception d'environnements de formation pour conseiller-s- en VAE.</i></p> <p>This field study seeks to identify the characteristics of initial VPL counselling situations using a signification (semiotic) process covering both the activities of guidance counsellors and candidates. Because it is being conducted at a Swiss VPL support office, the study ultimately serves multiple objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the nature and principal issues associated with this fundamental stage of any VPL procedure • To understand how the activities of guidance counsellors and candidates vary on the basis of their interactions. • To identify specific needs of candidates at this stage and determine how counsellors respond to those needs in a pertinent manner • To document guidance counsellor views on VPL training environments.
<p>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any emerging? • If so which ones? What type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...) • Is there resistance appearing? • At which level? • In which sector in particular? 	<p>VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING</p> <p>We should mention some threats and obstacles that could hamper the sustainability of VPL in the near future.</p> <p>The section below lists the existing challenges in the VET sector. A number of these were identified in the supervisory assessment.</p> <p>The transfer of responsibility from the national level to the Cantons, which we mentioned earlier, gave rise to a situation in which the further development of VPL does not appear likely at the present time.</p> <p>The National Guidelines serve as the frame of reference. However, all of the VPL procedures developed thus far on the basis of these National Guidelines deviate from them in at least one respect. Despite these departures, the National Guidelines as a frame of reference are not being called into question. In some cases, the departures relate to key aspects of validation. A summary of the departures can be found in the supervisory assessment, on p. 10f. (See Appendix)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From which category of actors/ stakeholders? 	<p>Even VPL procedures for occupational fields with the highest number of unskilled persons, such as in the VPL procedure for restaurant workers, the number of groups of people applying for validation is low compared to the number of those following the conventional training route. This therefore leads us to conclude – at least for the time being – that VPL is not a mass-market product and will not gather momentum on its own. This therefore begs the question as to whether VPL constitutes a marginal route towards achieving a qualification. In addition, assessing VPL demand is turning out to be a difficult undertaking. (See Appendix, p. 14 et seq.)</p> <p>The small number of VPL candidates is a problem for supplementary training since such training requires the development of complex, modular courses that are not sustainable in the absence of a critical mass of participants (alternative workplace learning schemes should be planned and assessed, but would need to involve host companies...)</p> <p>Resistance from professional circles has also been encountered. People remain sceptical of VPL procedures, particularly the reliance on assessment portfolios. People have doubts as to whether it is possible to demonstrate skills in this manner. (See Appendix, p. 24f)</p> <p>Among social partners, a certain mistrust seems to prevail, especially in relation to traditional industrial occupations. Generally speaking, much remains to be done in order to convince stakeholders that VPL could be an effective alternative route to a formal qualification that does not undermine the dual VET model (in which all social partners place so much trust).</p> <p>The supervisory assessment (p. 12) concluded that the amount of support given to candidates is a crucial success factor. In a number of VPL procedures, the amount of support provided is rather limited (See Appendix).</p> <p>From the standpoint of learners, the cost-benefit ratio of VPL remains difficult to define, with no clear and universal measure to encourage access (providing funding on one side and services on the other).</p> <p>A specific obstacle in Switzerland seems to be related to the lack of substantial validation of single learning outcomes (corresponding to specific skills normally achieved at the workplace, in a fragmented organisational pattern), if not in the framework of a formal qualification process; this means that it is possible to attribute value to partial qualifications (spending them as credits) for the sole purpose of gaining a full qualification.</p> <p>At present, the formal framework established by OPET for the VET sector is applied in accordance with established guidelines and procedural phases. We have nevertheless observed that implementation tends to vary, particularly as regards the complementary tools developed by the Cantons and professional organisations. Examples of this include different instructions given to candidates preparing their assessment portfolios. The methods used to assess competencies may also vary from one Canton to another or from one occupation to another.</p>
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Any other comments