



DIPARTIMENTO
ISTRUZIONE E CULTURA

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT



Malta
Further & Higher
Education Authority

EURASHE



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Qualifications Frameworks for trust, transparency and diversity – TPG A 2 (QUATRA – TPG A 2)
01.09.2025 – 31.08.2028

Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in HE of Latvia

Gunta Kinta
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Peer Learning Activity «Transparency as a Key Element for Operational QFs in Higher Education»

28 April 2026, Riga, Latvia



Co-funded by
the European Union

Developing the national system for VNIL

Research phase (2005-2007)

- analysis of other national systems for VNIL, validation methods and their applicability in accordance with the traditions of education

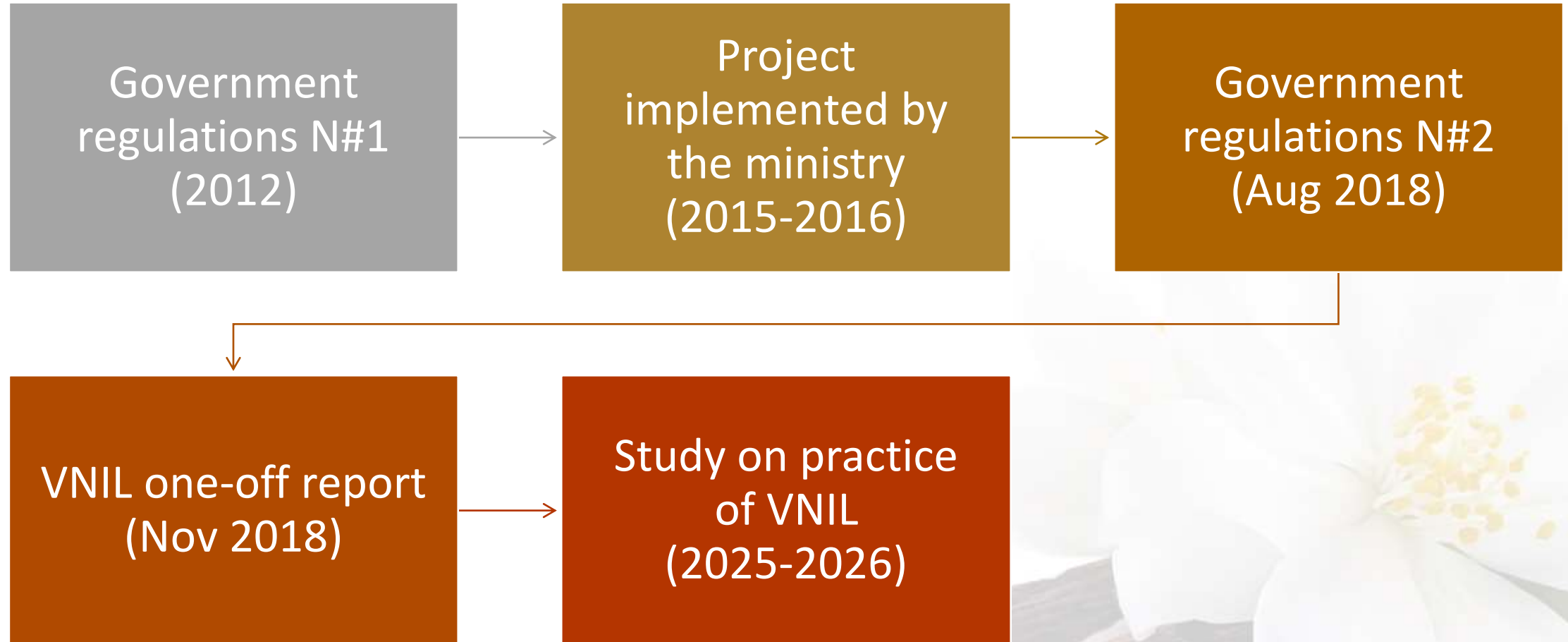
Legal framework development phase (2009-2011)

- Agreement within the Work Group of the Ministry of Education and Science upon guiding principles on the validation, distribution of responsibilities and rights of stakeholders in the respective regulatory acts, as well as development of the necessary legal regulations

Introduction phase (2011-2016)

- Implementation of arrangements to ensure procedures set out in the legal framework, provide support to the key stakeholders, and raise awareness of the possibility to validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes among inhabitants

Milestones



A background image featuring several white vanilla flowers with yellow centers and several brown vanilla pods, all set against a light, soft-focus background.

Legal framework of VNIL in higher education

Amendments to the Law on HEIs ([1.08.2011](#))

- Set duty of HEIs and colleges to validate learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience expressing them in the number of credits
- Learning outcomes achieved via professional experience may be validated max. 30% of the credit points of programme

Cabinet “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience” ([13.01.2012](#), with amendments on [28.07.2017](#))

Amendments to the Law on HEIs ([1.01.2018](#))

- Determine duration of validation procedures (4 months), introduce rights to appeal
- Remove limitation of 30% of programme that may be validated
- **Set two kinds of validation:** 1) validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education (**LO**), and 2) validation of any knowledge, skills and competences obtained outside formal education or through professional experience (**OF**)

Cabinet “Regulations regarding the validation of competences acquired outside of formal education or in professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in previous learning” ([17.08.2018](#))

- Set procedure for validation of VNIL in higher education (EQF level 5-7)
- HEIs are not obliged to inform other institutions about their decisions on validation
- HEIs register their decisions in their own information systems

A soft-focus background image featuring several white vanilla flowers with yellow stamens and several brown vanilla pods. The text is overlaid on this background.

Research and projects on VNIL in higher education

Erasmus+ KA3 project «Validation of Prior Learning» 2015-2016

Aim – to improve the **procedures for validating learning outcomes** acquired through non-formal and informal learning and professional experience at the HEIs of Latvia, as well as to improve the legal basis

Implemented by the **Ministry of Education and Science**, together with national stakeholders (incl. AIC)

Outcomes:

- Collected data on practice via **survey of HEIs**
- **Recommendations** on the assessment and validation of learning outcomes acquired outside of formal education or in professional experience (EQF levels 5-7)
- Proposals for amendments to five legally binding **legal acts**

Main conclusions from the survey (2016)

- Challenges to implement in practice Cabinet Regulations:
 - 1) Starting studies in later stages of studies (16.11.2004)
 - 2) Validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience (13.01.2012)
- Lack of common understanding of the procedures of VNIL to apply these practices at HEIs
- Guidelines on methodology of VNIL are not available; trainings should be provided for HEIs
- Practice training (professional experience) should be recognised in the amount more than 30%

Recommendations on VNIL (2016)

Target groups – HEIs, credential evaluators, candidates

- **For HEIs** – four steps of validation explained and recommendations about validation of refugees' prior learning
- **For evaluators** – validation methods, quality and analysis, conditions of validation, methods for testing previously achieved learning outcomes
- **For candidates** – role of VNIL in education, purpose and procedure of VNIL, conditions of VNIL, methods of testing previously achieved learning outcomes

Recommendations (in Latvian) available on the Latvian NCP website: https://nki-latvija.lv/storage/11_02_2026_atzisanas_seminars/ieteikumi_arpus_formalas_izglitibas_apgutaja_vai_profesion_alaja_pieredze_sasniegto_studiju_rezultatu_vertesana_un_atzisana_lv.pdf

VNIL one-off report of Latvia

Voluntary report describing national system of VNIL to EQF Advisory Group, presented in December 2018

Main points regarding HE sector (EQF levels 5-7):

- Prerequisites have been established for monitoring VNIL, but its implementation has not been initiated
- No actual data (statistics) on VNIL at HEIs is publicly available
- VNIL is not coordinated at the national level
- Each HEI develops its own approach and practice
- A single fee list for VNIL has not been developed

Academic Information Centre – National Coordination Point for EQF (2018). Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. Self-Assessment Report. https://nki-latvija.lv/storage/resources/vnil-report_lv_2018_final.pdf



Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia

Self-Assessment Report

Academic Information Centre
2018

Co-funded by the
European Union



A background image featuring several vanilla flowers with white petals and yellow centers, and several dried vanilla pods with their characteristic ridged texture. The image is softly blurred and has a light, airy feel.

Practice of validation of prior education and experience at HEIs of Latvia

Study of the Latvian NCP-EQF
2025-2026

Methodology

AIM – to explore the practice of VNIL in higher education institutions of Latvia in order to elaborate recommendations for improving the implemented procedures, promoting the availability of validation services

Tasks & data collection methods:

- Desk study (analysis of the HEIs' websites (N=49), self-assessment reports (N=45))
- Survey of HEIs (N=46) on their practice of VNIL
- Structured interviews with the representatives of HEIs (N=5)
- Focus group discussion (N=1) of the representatives of HEIs (N=9)

2 kinds of VNIL:

- 1) validation of learning outcomes achieved **in previous education (LO)**
- 2) validation of any knowledge, skills and competences obtained **outside formal education or through professional experience (OF)**

2025

2025 | 2026

Concept of the study and its planning

Procurement for data collection

Survey, interviews and focus group discussion with HEIs

Processing and analysing data

Workshop for HEIs (presentation of results)

Preparing study report

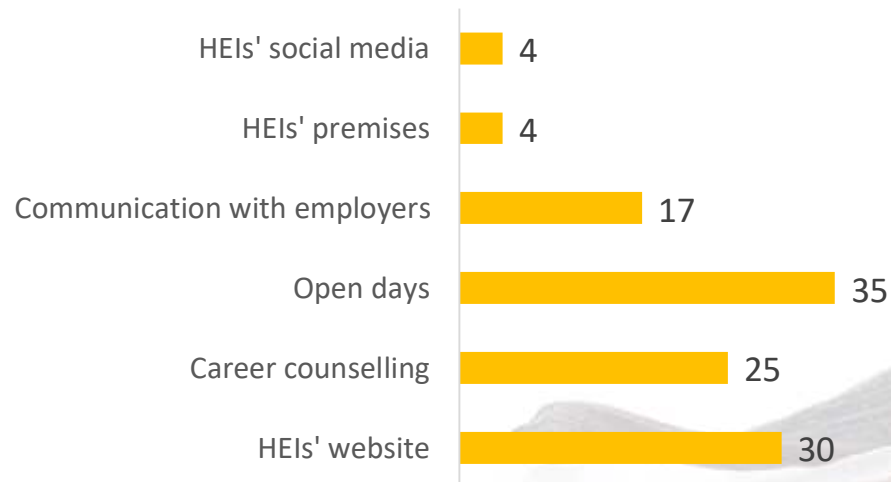
Publication of the study report

Main results I

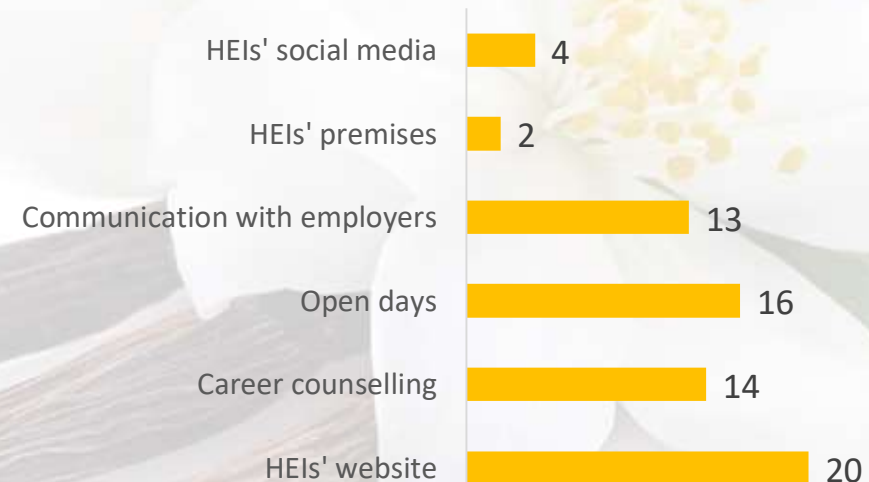
Reference period from
2018 to 2024

- According to **the survey**, HEIs clearly provide more **validation of LO** (91,3% respondents) than OF (56,5%), e.g. in 2024 – 3620 applications for LO and 436 applications for OF
- Mostly candidates are **informed about options of VNIL** during open door days, via HEIs' website, individual consultations

Main information channels on LO



Main information channels on OF



Main results II

Reference period from
2018 to 2024

	LO validation	OF validation
Main reasons for requesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• changing HEIs in Latvia• returning back to studies (the same or other programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognition of competences acquired during life• improving or changing qualification
Main obstacles for granting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inconsistent learning outcomes• differences of volume of learning outcomes• insufficient evidence of previous learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inconsistent content of study courses or practice training• insufficient evidence for previous learning or experience

Main results III

- In the **focus group discussion**, purpose of LO validation when a candidate's wished to **reduce volume of studies or start studies at a later stage**
- **Positive practices of LO validation** may be observed through the applied internal IT systems of HEIs, guiding materials for students, established communication events
- **Challenges of LO validation** are availability of course descriptions, administrative workload and seasonal applications, differences between digital and paper documentation, authenticity of documents
- **Obstacles for OF validation** may be classified as administrative (organisational matters), institutional (cooperation), technical (data bases), capacity (resources)
- In the **interviews**, **OF validation** may incorporate a dispute between validation as lifelong learning tool and responsibility for the quality of qualification
- According to the **interviews**, society is **poorly informed about OF validation**, in half of cases an **employer motivates** to apply for OF validation, but candidates often show **misconception regarding OF validation**
- **HEIs' websites** provide information about documents to be submitted or how to appeal, rather than explanation about procedure and its purpose

Main conclusions

- LO validation functions as **system**, while the using OF validation is **rather limited**
- OF validation requires **more personal and administrative resources** than LO validation
- Although national legislation has been established, approach to **VNIL in practice is rather varied by HEIs in terms of intensity and quality**, depending on the **size of HEIs** and **study programmes implemented by HEIs**
- The practice of LO validation is oriented towards the **principle of equality**, which is challenged by the availability of documentation, lack of time and uneven digitalisation
- OF validation is considered as a «**translation**» of experience into academic units, i.e. learning outcomes, credit points, which in practice depends on quality of evidence and organisational capacity; thus, functionality of the process and capacity should be improved
- Potential directions for improvement could be **information infrastructure, raising capacity, raising awareness of society**
- At policy level, development of VNIL system should be focused on **facilitating practice rather than elaborating legal regulations** (exchange of experience, OF for lifelong learning, user-friendly system, digitalisation of documents and procedure)



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