

Learning outcome-oriented wba curricula

The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (*Weiterbildungsakademie*, wba) is a certification body, which was set up in 2007. It validates and recognises formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences of adult educators according to defined standards and awards a two-stage degree: a wba certificate and, for certificate holders, a wba diploma (in four special fields, i.e. teaching, guidance/counselling, educational management or librarianship and information management). In this way, wba aims to contribute to the professionalisation of the field of adult education in Austria without offering continuing education and training itself. In May 2015 the wba registered its 2,000th application since its foundation. This shows on the one hand the need for professional adult educators, on the other hand it demonstrates the great acceptance of this form of competence validation.

As of January 2015 the new, learning outcome-oriented wba curriculum finally entered into force.¹ The development of learning outcome-oriented curricula was triggered not least by debates on the European and National Qualifications Framework. These curricula, which are now termed “qualification profiles”, describe the competences which are demanded of adult educators in more detail than before. They make informally acquired competences more easily visible and enhance their value. Both qualifications have now been rated with 60 ECTS credits (previously 30 ECTS).

With financial support from the European Social Fund, the objectivity, validity, reliability and practicability of this recognition and certification system will now be examined and its further development supported by academic experts. In addition, the wba website will be revised to improve clarity, transparency and comprehensibility while taking the Cedefop criteria into account (the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning).

An application is currently pending for a peer review project under ERASMUS+: Transnational Peer Review for Quality Assurance in Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) Extended.

The wba is one of a number of procedures used for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Austria. So far, however, an all-encompassing strategy to the validation of these forms of learning has been missing. In implementing the Recommendation of the European Council for the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012/C 398/01) of 20 Dec. 2012 and the measurement 10.3 of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning in Austria (LLL:2020) a national consultation paper for the compilation of a national VNFIL strategy has just been worked out. On 15 June 2015 this consultation paper was sent for consultation by the Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs. Stakeholders have now time to comment on this paper and give their feedback until 30 Sept. 2015, so the national VNFIL Strategy can be compiled as of October this year.

¹ The new curriculum was introduced on 1 Jan. 2013, with a transition period of two years applying for those who had registered at wba beforehand. Those who had not finished by 1 Jan. 2015 had to switch over to the new curriculum.

Sources:

Latest [press release](#) of wba, May 2015

wba website: <http://www.wba.or.at>

Discussion with the wba director Karin Reisinger.

Reisinger, Karin/Wagner, Giselheid (2011): Die lernergebnisorientierte Beschreibung der wba-Curricula. Ein Praxisbericht aus der Weiterbildungsakademie. In: Magazin erwachsenenbildung.at (14-2011). Online im Internet: http://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/11-14/meb11-14_12_reisinger_wagner.pdf (retrieved on 22.6.2015).

Reisinger, Karin/Steiner, Petra (2014): Zwischen gemeinsamen Standards und flexiblen Bildungswegen. Die Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich als Modell eines offenen Berufsabschlusses. In: Magazin erwachsenenbildung.at (21-2014). Online im Internet: http://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/14-21/08_reisinger_steiner.pdf (retrieved on 22.6.2015).

Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria (LLL:2020) – [Information](#)