Eswatini
Recognition of Prior Learning
Policy Document – Draft

Stakeholders' consultation workshop

New demands, new opportunities and challenges

Mbabane, 13 May 2024

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Agenda of the workshop 13/05/2024 – 09.30 to 15.00

1. Opening and welcoming remarks

2. Introduction of the participants

3. Main presentation: the RPL Policy Document

4. Discussion in plenary and presentation of debates

5. Reactions and conclusions

6. Closing remarks.

Themes of the presentation

1. RPL in the international, African and SADC context

2. Eswatini: RPL Policy document

 2.1 Structure of the RPL Policy document

 2.2 Main points of the RPL Policy document – by chapter

3. Questions and answers

4. Working Groups discussion: guiding questions and approach

RPL

Make the invisible – visible

New opportunities, new flights
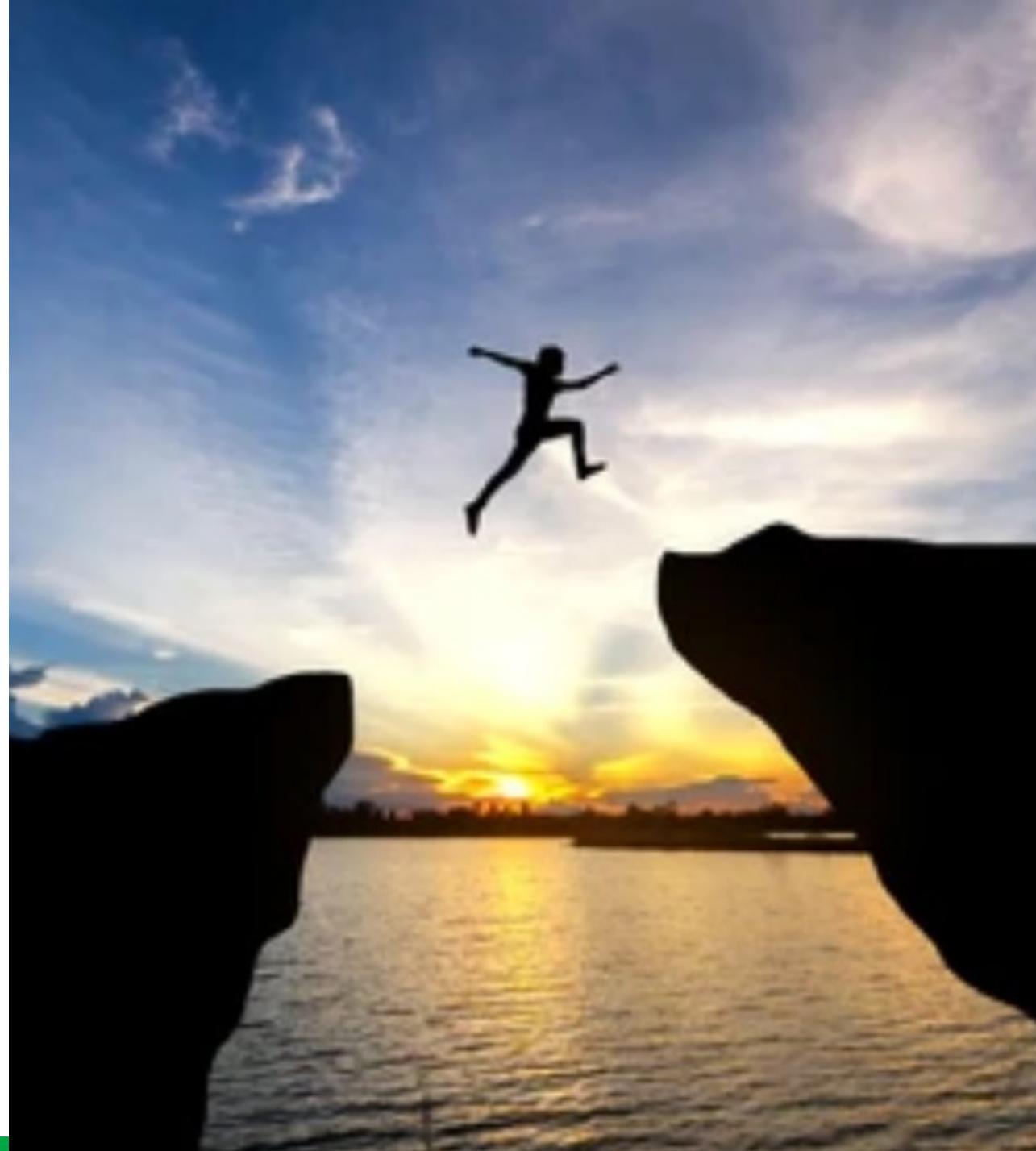
Learn: everywhere, anytime, anything, all modes

01

RPL in the international, African and SADC context

What is RPL?

- A process
- An assessment
  - ✓ (Not education and training, not in the first place at least)
- All education and training institutions assess and validate learning outcomes, but RPL is specific (mainly because <u>no curriculum</u>)

What is RPL - ILO (2018)

- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying formal, non-formal and **informal learning outcomes** against **standards** used in formal education and training.

- Thus, RPL provides an opportunity for people to acquire qualifications or credits towards a qualification or exemptions (from all or part of the curriculum, or even exemption from an academic prerequisite for entering a formal study programme) without going through a formal education or training programme.

What is RPL - ACQF Thematic Brief 1 (2021)

- The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process through which formal, non-formal and informal learning is measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace.

- The aim is to make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained throughout life, such as in workplaces and own reading or experiences. The RPL process also entails providing support to a candidate to ensure that knowledge is discovered and displayed in terms of a relevant qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Building blocks / Conditions for RPL

ILO (2018) Building blocks	European Guidelines for Validation (2015) – Conditions
- Regulatory framework - Institutional framework - **Stakeholder ownership and commitment** - **Quality assurance** - Financing	- Information, Guidance and counselling - Stakeholders' coordination - Links to national qualifications systems and frameworks - Standards and learning outcomes - **Quality assurance** - Professional competences of validation professionals / practitioners

A coordinated approach across policy areas

A coordinated approach to RPL explores the interfaces between RPL arrangements in education, employment and social policies and ways to reinforce them to achieve an integrated approach and impacts.
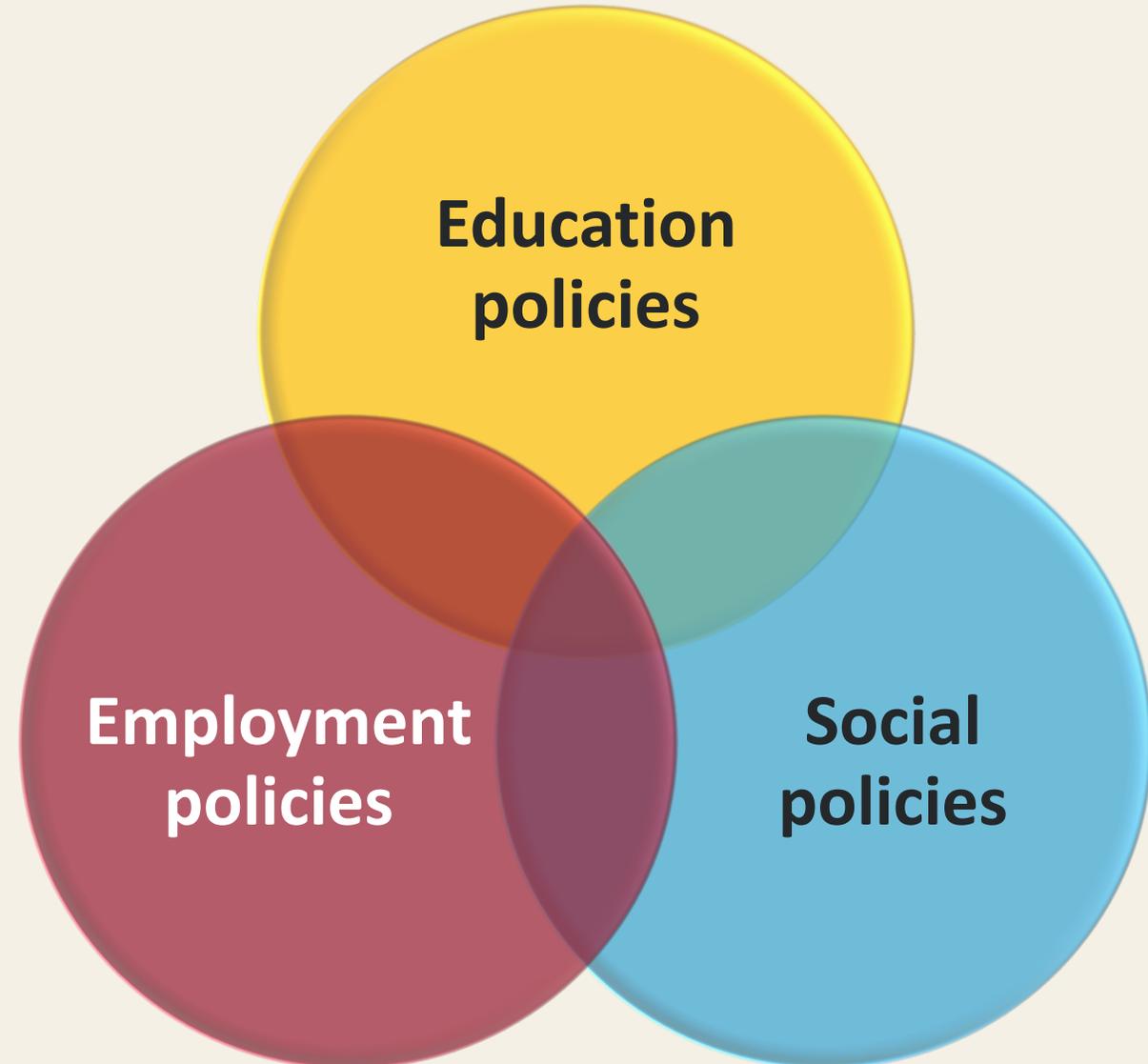
FUNCTIONS OF RPL IN DIFFERENT POLICY AREAS

Education policies

- Provide more flexible access to education and training
- Facilitate exemption from part(s) of an education and training programme.
- Provide the basis for awarding full qualifications.

Employment policies

- Use skills assessments in the recruitment process
- Support training and staff development strategies of employers
- Increase staff retention and motivation and supports career progression
- Allow individuals to re-direct their careers
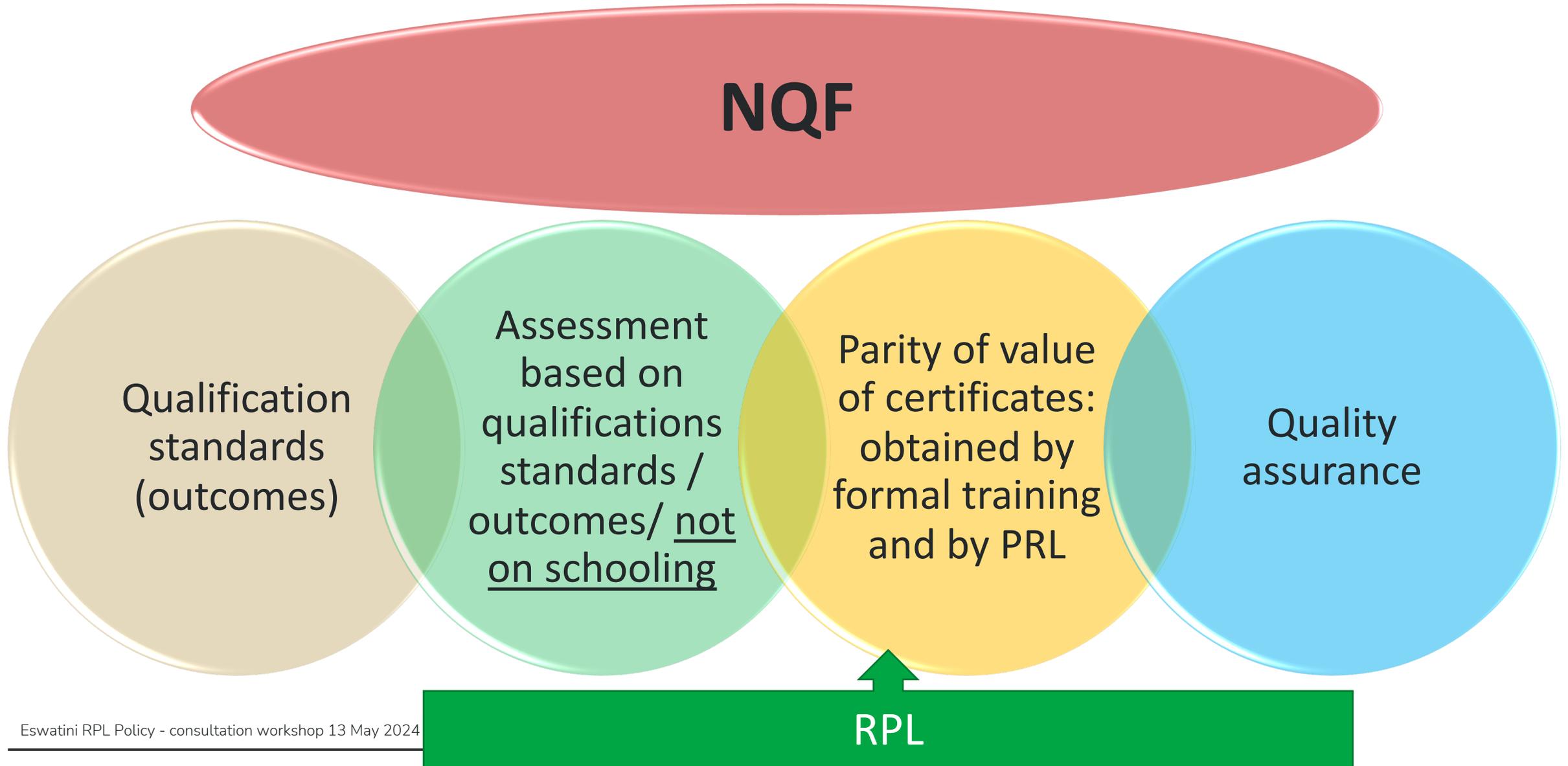- Support the development of tailored training offer.

Social policies

- Contribute to integration of individuals at risk of being marginalised
- Provide a process of self-reflection and contributes to increase individuals' self-esteem
- Contribute to make visible the learning from voluntary experience, youth work and civic engagement, especially for young people that lack work experience.

What connection with NQF?

What connection with NQF?

NQF

Qualification standards (outcomes)

Assessment based on qualifications standards / outcomes/ not on schooling

Parity of value of certificates: obtained by formal training and by PRL
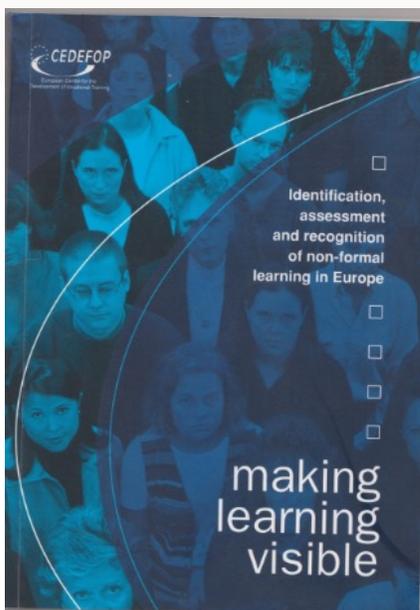
Quality assurance

RPL

1.1

RPL / Validation in Europe – *source: Cedefop*

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Cedefop working on validation for more than 20 years

www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation

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Storyline of validation in EU

1995

European Commission White Paper on Teaching and Learning

2000

Making lifelong learinng a reality

2004

European Principles

2008

EQF recommendation

2009

1st edition European Guidelines

2012

Council Recommendation on validation

2015

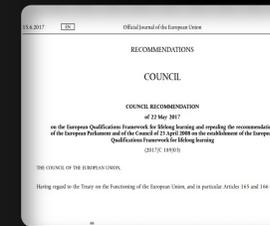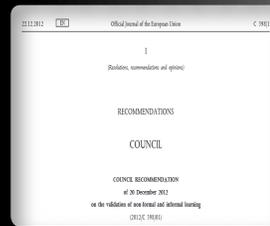Updated European guidelines

2016

Upskilling pathways recommendation

2017
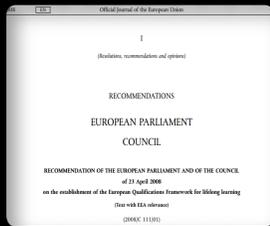
EQF new recommendation

European Pillar of social rights

2020

New skills agenda

2022

New updated guidelines

2004

1st EU inventory

2005

2nd EU inventory

2008

3rd EU inventory

2010

4th EU inventory

2014

5th EU inventory

2016

6th EU inventory

2018

7th EU inventory

Eswatini RPL Policy - consultation workshop 13 May 2024

Source: Cedefop

The fundamental values of validation

1 All learning, irrespective of where and when it takes place, is valuable for the individual and for society.

2 Formal education needs to be complemented by validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Source: Cedefop

ACQF

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

VALIDATION IS A PROCESS THAT CAN BE CARRIED OUT BY DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR, LABOUR MARKET AND THIRD SECTOR

FOUR DIFFERENT STAGES TO VALIDATION:
- **IDENTIFICATION**
- **DOCUMENTATION**
- **ASSESSMENT**
- **CERTIFICATION**

SELECT THE RIGHT VALIDATION TOOLS (E.G. PORTFOLIO, EXAMINATION, REPORT, CV, OBSERVATION, ETC.)

TRAIN PRACTITIONERS INVOLVED IN VALIDATION PROCESSES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION, ADVICE, GUIDANCE

RECOGNISE SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ACQUIRED IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS

PLACING THE LEARNER AT THE CENTRE OF THE VALIDATION PROCESS

VALIDATION PROCEDURES AND MATERIALS SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO ALL DIFFERENT NEEDS

INVOLVE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE VALIDATION PROCESS TO ENSURE THE QUALITY AND COHERENCE OF THE VALIDATION EXPERIENCE

- **EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS MIGHT USE THE FORMAL OUTCOME OF A VALIDATION (E.G. CERTIFICATE)**
- **THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF VALIDATION, IN PARTICULAR THE IDENTIFICATION STAGE, ALLOWS A YOUNG PERSON TO REFLECT ON THE COMPETENCES GAINED AND HOW THEY COULD BE USED IN THE FUTURE**

ENSURE THE CREDIBILITY OF VALIDATION BY EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS

FOLLOW-UP AFTER VALIDATION: KEEP TRACK OF THE PROGRESS AND MOBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF A VALIDATION PROCEDURE

The European guidelines

- Assisting stakeholders by clarifying the different option and possible steps they face when establishing and operating validation arrangements

- Follow the principles outlined in the Recommendation in 2012
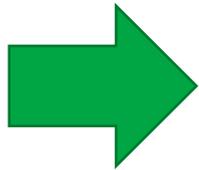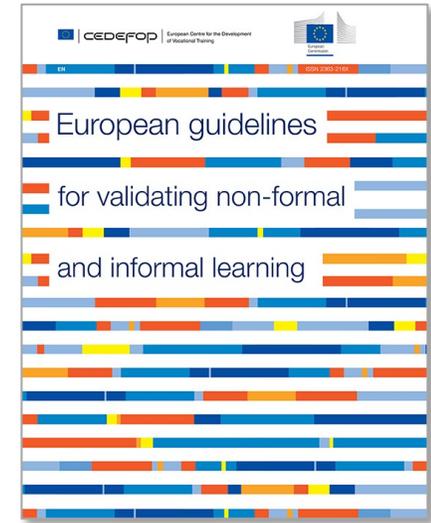
The guidelines acknowledge that any solution must be fit for purpose and that arrangements need to be designed according to the particular context in which they operate.
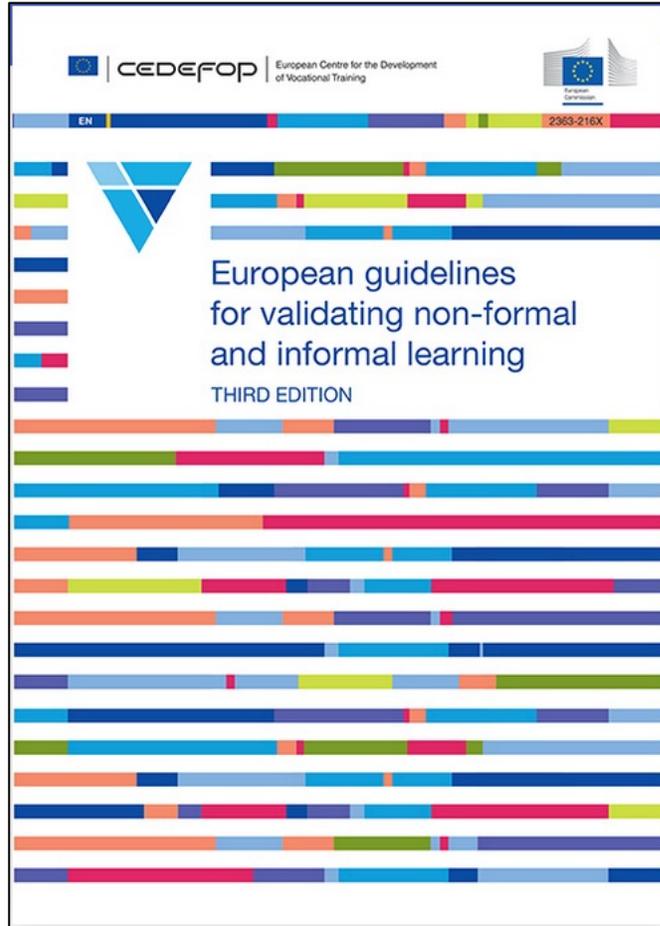
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3073

The main principles

1. **The centrality of the individual**

2. **Objectives of validation (4 phases)**

3. **Information, guidance and counseling**

4. **Stakeholder coordination**

5. **Links to national qualification frameworks**

6. **Standards and learning outcomes**

7. **Quality assurance**

8. **Professional practitioners**

9. **Validation in context**

10. **Validation tools**

European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

Source: Cedefop

European Guidelines: the new edition (2022)

European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

THIRD EDITION

#ValidationEurope

EU inventory - A rich source of information

- 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2018 editions
- 39 country reports (covering 36 countries)
- Providing detailed information by sector

  - ✓ Sub-sector of education
    - General Education
    - IVET
    - CVET
    - Higher education
    - Adult education
  - ✓ Labour market
  - ✓ Third sector

- Thematic studies
- International country cases
- A synthesis of main findings
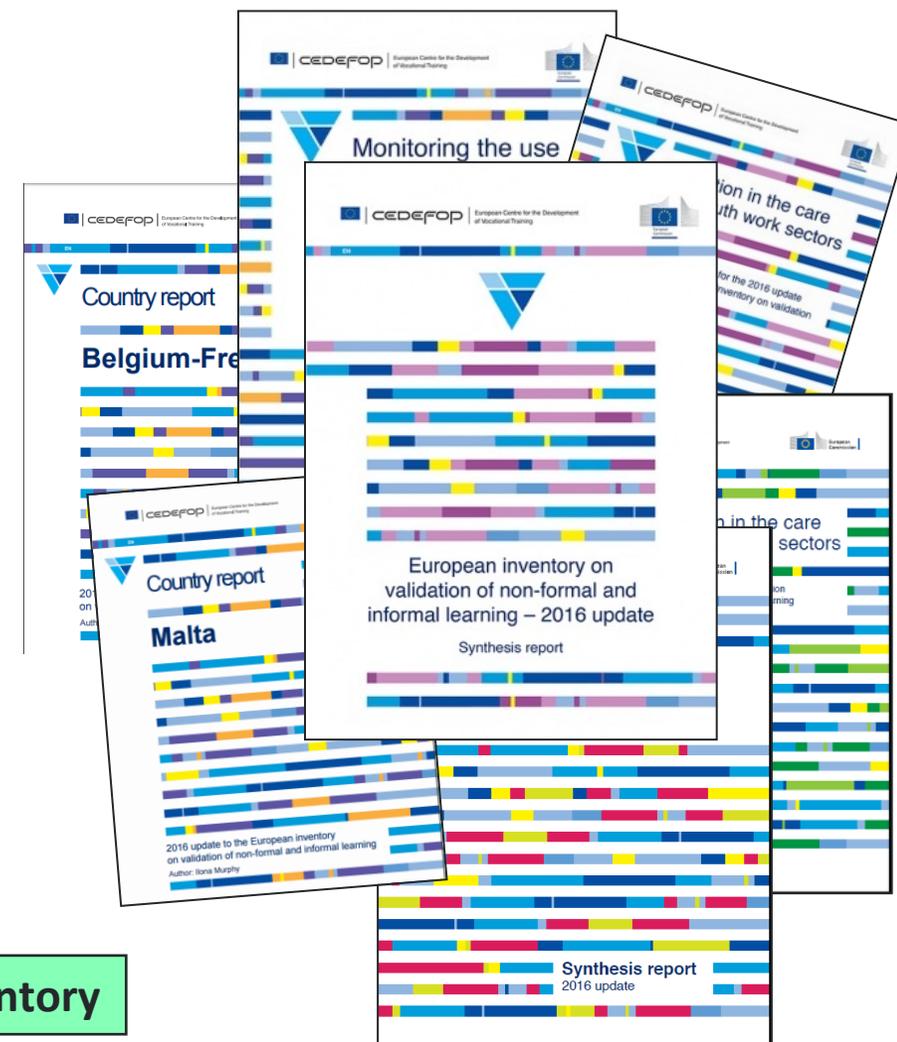
www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory

Lessons learnt

Some important elements

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Individual at the Center

- ✓ **Adequate SUPPORT**
- ✓ **GUIDANCE and counselling**
- ✓ **Clear GOALS of the validation system**

Sweden   **Iceland**
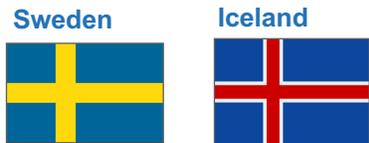
Stakeholder involvement

- ✓ **Strategic overarching approach**
- ✓ **Common understanding**
- ✓ **Networking and best practices**

Norway   **Ireland**
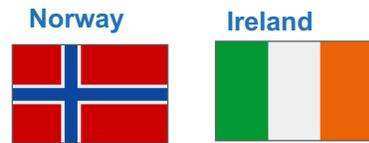
Using NQF and Learning outcomes

- ✓ **Standards clearly defined**
- ✓ **Quality assurance**
- ✓ **Using learning outcomes**

France   **Poland**
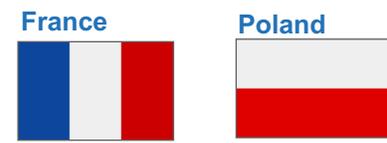
Source: Cedefop

CEDEFOP

Key Challenges

ACQF

Reducing complexity
- Diversity of stakeholders
- Diversity of sectors/contexts
- Diversity of individuals and needs
- Diversity of professionals and services

Valid and reliable tools
- Multiplicity
- Adaptable and robust

Assure agreed standards
- Reference points
- Learning outcomes approach
- Education and Labour market oriented

Digitalization and certification
- New land scape of qualifications
- Use of ICT

Source: Cedefop

1.2. RPL in Africa

New verb:
"To RPL"
"I was RPLed"

African regional RPL policies and guidelines

ACQF

- ACQF Policy document (2023)
- Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning
- Training Module 4: Validation of Learning
- Thematic Brief
- Website Resource: RPL gives us wings

SADCQF: RPL Guidelines

EAC: RPL Policy

1.2
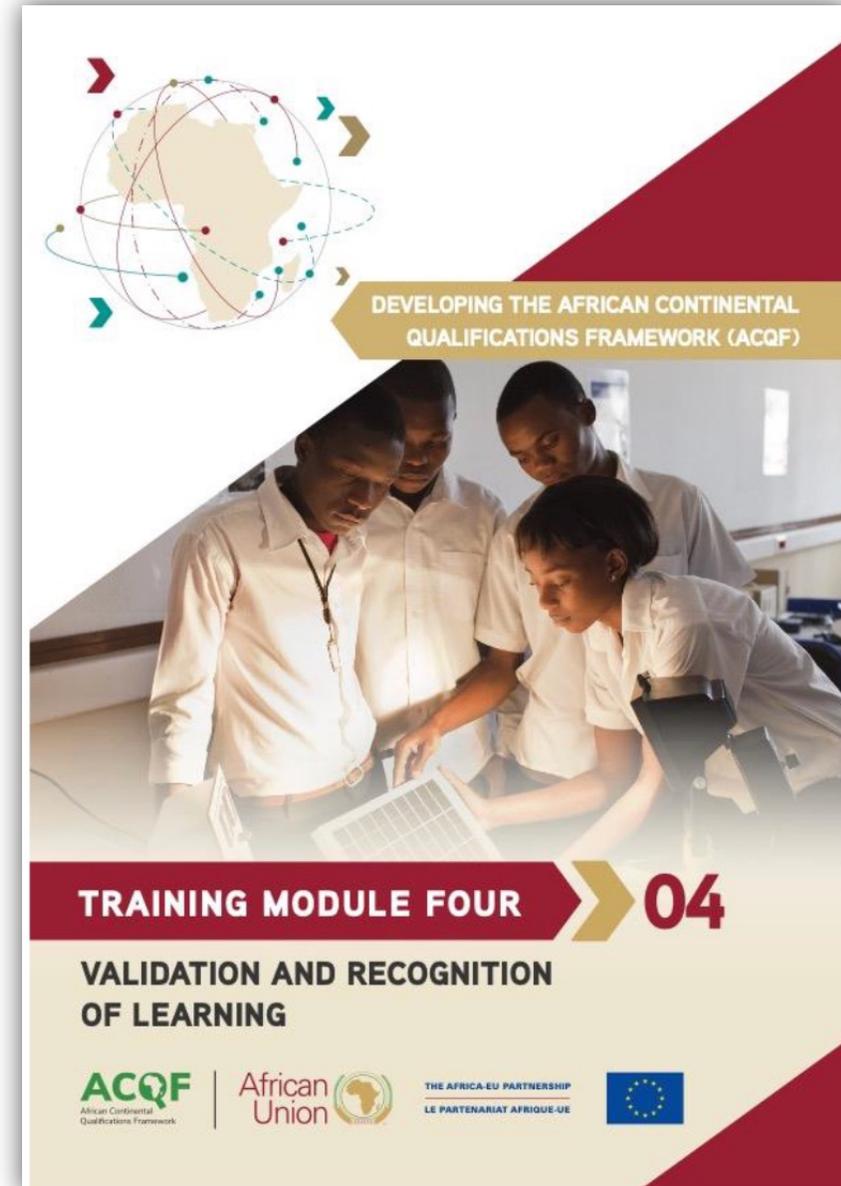
ACQF RPL Survey 2023: some results

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021 – 2022

THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS ›› 14

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING GIVES US
WINGS FOR TRANSITIONS TO DECENT WORK,
LEARNING AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY

ACQF
African Continental
Qualifications Framework

African
Union

THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

Main objectives of RPL

Objective	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Cannot answer / I don't know
Increasing employability of beneficiaries	47	12	0		
Ensuring possibilities for lifelong learning	43	13	3		
New opportunities for informal sector workers	41	15	3		
Increased labour market mobility	40	19	0		
Social inclusion of beneficiaries	39	13	4		■
Strenghtened qualifications systems	35	19	4	■	
Improved access to formal education or training	34	22	2		

■ Very important   ■ Important   ■ Unimportant   ■ Very unimportant   ■ Cannot answer / I don't know

Phases of RPL process

	Information and guidance	Identification	Documentation	Assessment	Certification	Other
Kenya	+	+	+	+	+	+
Malawi	+	+	+	+	+	
Morocco	+	+	+		+	
Mozambique	+	+	+	+	+	
Namibia					+	
Rwanda	+	+		+	+	
Seychelles	+	+	+	+	+	
South Africa	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tunisia						+
Uganda	+	+	+	+	+	
Zambia	+	+	+	+	+	

RPL education and training sectors
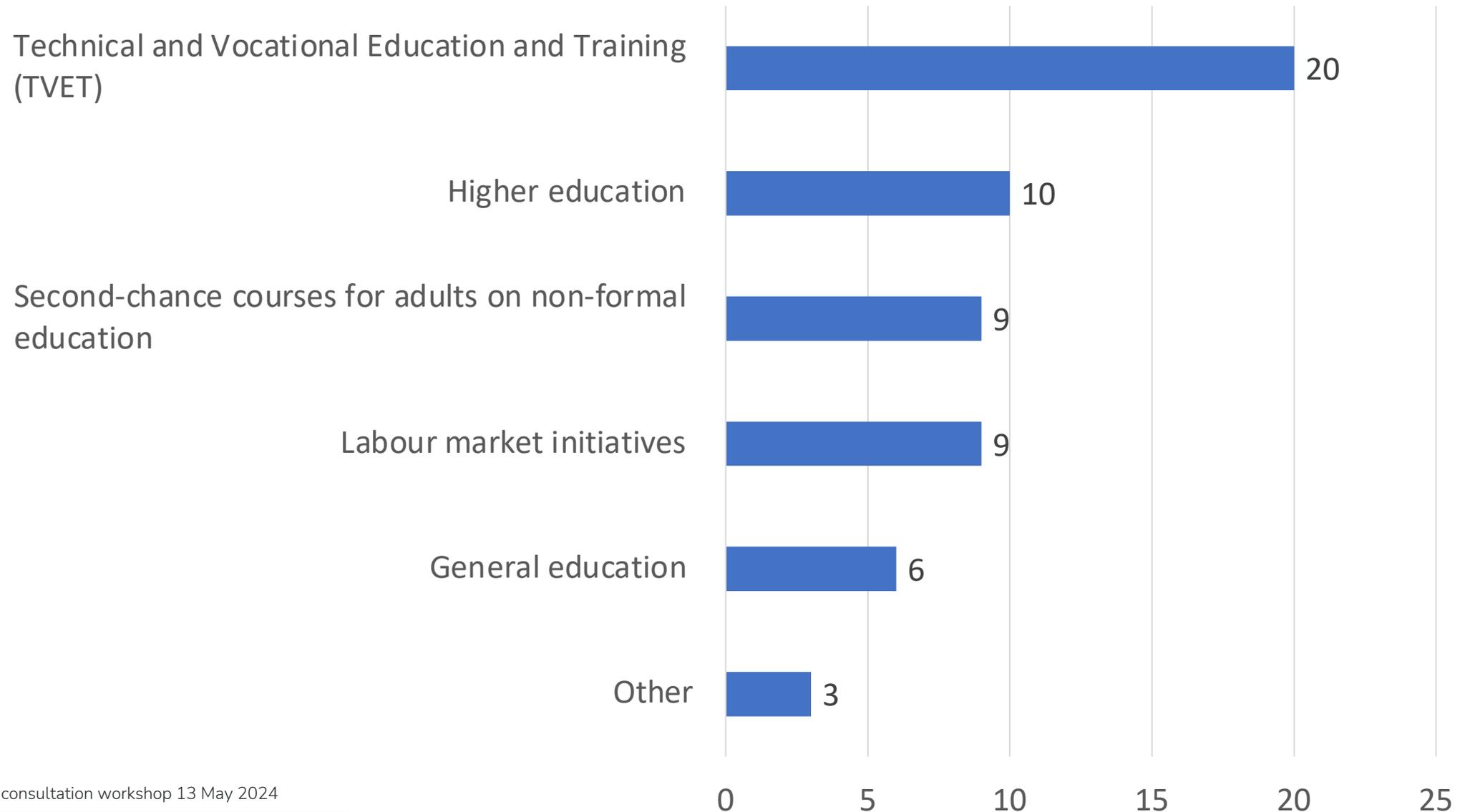
ACQF Survey: Types of learning outcomes accepted in RPL

Non-formal learning experience — 20
Acquired occupational skills or competences — 20
Portfolio/evidence of projects or work — 17
Prior work experience or employment history — 17
Formal education from other institutions — 13
Other — 3

ACQF Survey: outcomes from RPL processes

Recognition of credit towards a qualification — 18
Full qualification attainment — 16
Partial qualifications — 16
Credit transfer entry to an education programme — 15
Exemption from certain modules/courses — 13
No recognition — 3
Other — 1
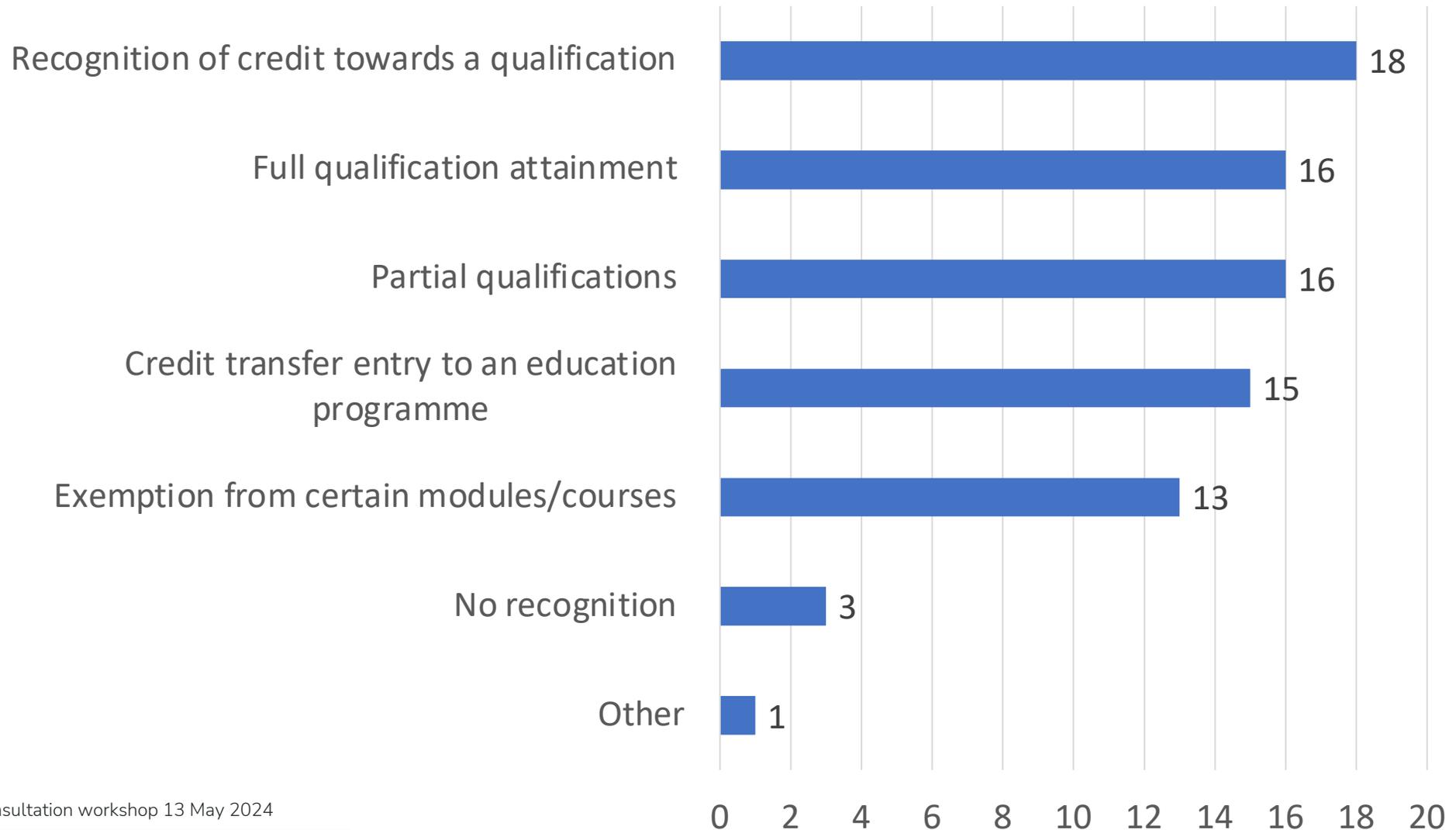
ACQF Survey: used assessment tools / modes
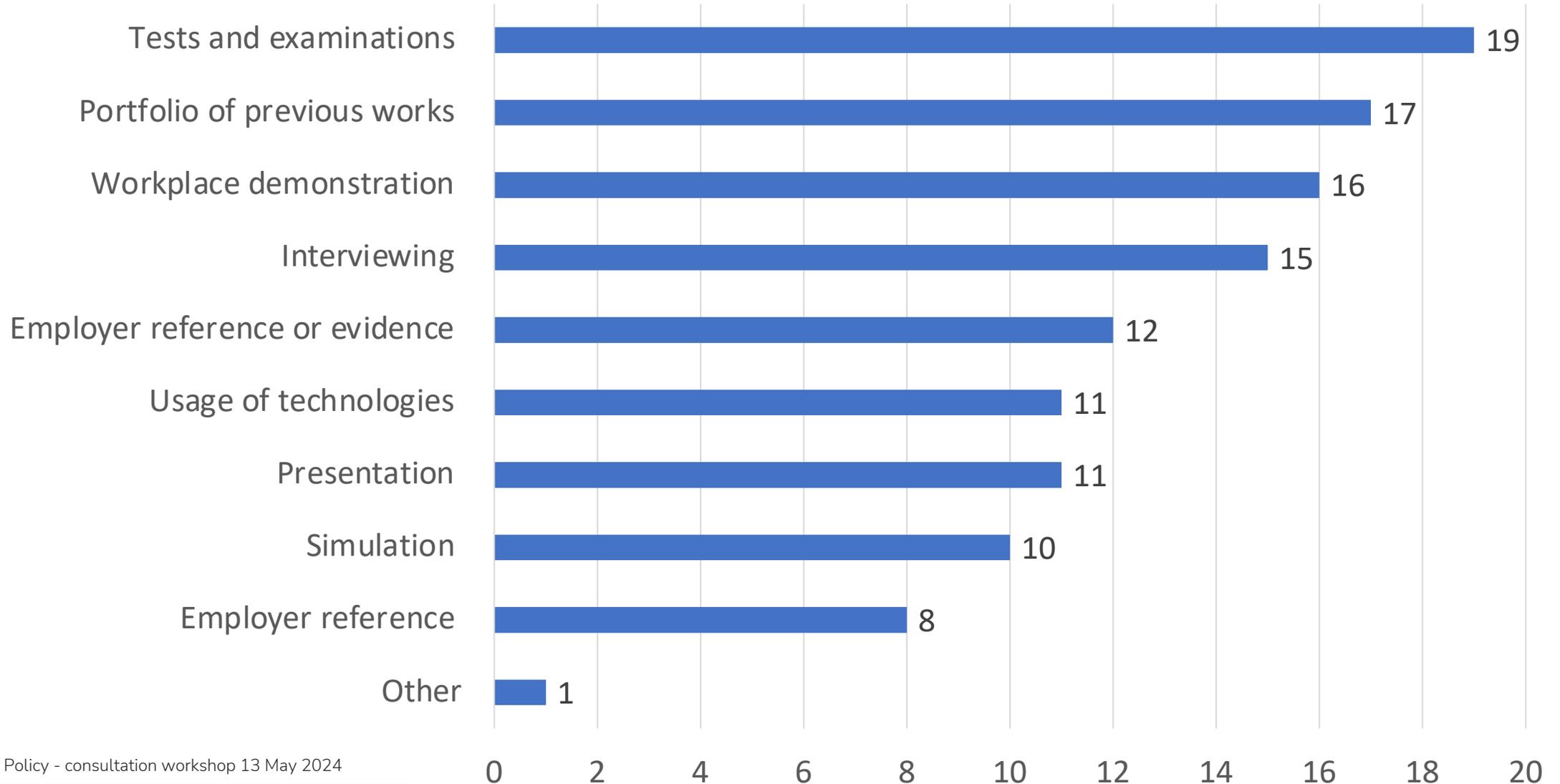
Assessment tool / mode	Value
Tests and examinations	19
Portfolio of previous works	17
Workplace demonstration	16
Interviewing	15
Employer reference or evidence	12
Usage of technologies	11
Presentation	11
Simulation	10
Employer reference	8
Other	1

Kenya: Comprehensive package of RPL policy and implementation tool

Kenya: KNQA
Comprehensive package of RPL policy and implementation tools
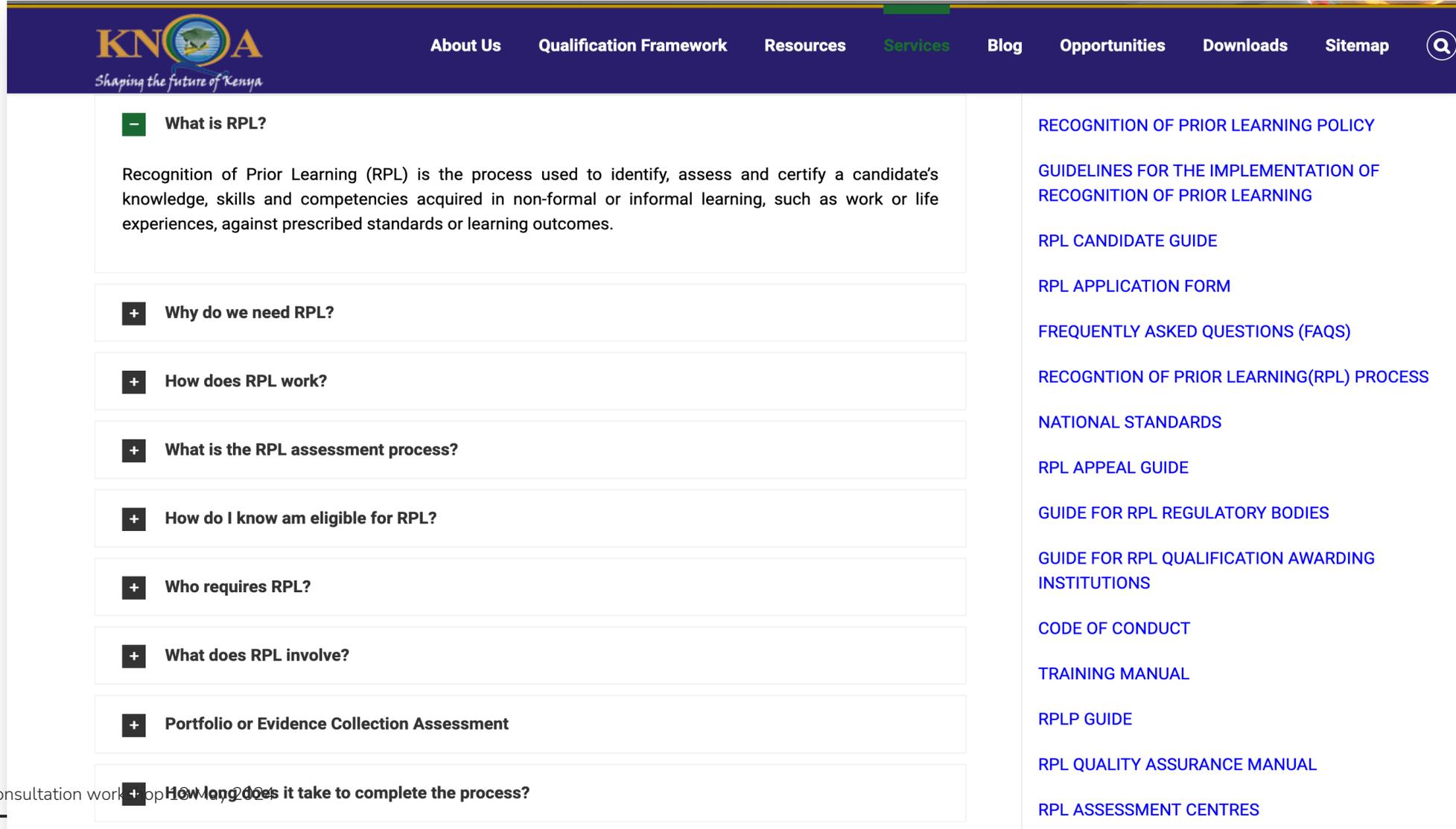
KNQA
Shaping the future of Kenya

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What is RPL?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process used to identify, assess and certify a candidate's knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in non-formal or informal learning, such as work or life experiences, against prescribed standards or learning outcomes.

+ Why do we need RPL?

+ How does RPL work?

+ What is the RPL assessment process?

+ How do I know am eligible for RPL?

+ Who requires RPL?

+ What does RPL involve?

+ Portfolio or Evidence Collection Assessment

+ How long does it take to complete the process?

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

RPL CANDIDATE GUIDE

RPL APPLICATION FORM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

RECOGNTION OF PRIOR LEARNING(RPL) PROCESS

NATIONAL STANDARDS

RPL APPEAL GUIDE

GUIDE FOR RPL REGULATORY BODIES

GUIDE FOR RPL QUALIFICATION AWARDING INSTITUTIONS

CODE OF CONDUCT

TRAINING MANUAL

RPLP GUIDE

RPL QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

RPL ASSESSMENT CENTRES

RPL: legal framework in African countries

RPL – implementation

Mozambique

Mauritius

Seychelles

02

Eswatini: RPL Policy document

2.1 Structure of the RPL Policy Document

Structure – chapters of the RPL Policy

- Preamble
- Context and recent reforms in the qualifications domain in Eswatini
- Benefits of RPL for individuals, employers and the country
- Policy issues – rationale for RPL in Eswatini
- Policy Statements
- Principles of RPL Policy
- Roles and responsibilities of main RPL actors
- Moderation and Quality Assurance for RPL
- Implementation Strategy for RPL
- Risks and Opportunities
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Piloting RPL

Gabi

2.2

Main points of the Eswatini RPL Policy document — by Chapter

Chapter 1: Preamble

Chapter 1: Preamble

- This (draft) RPL Policy document defines the scope, objectives, principles, main phases, and key technical orientations for the harmonised RPL system in Eswatini, coherent with the ESQF and responsive to other related national policies. RPL concerns the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of peoples' acquired skills and competences, independently of the context of learning (formal, non-formal, informal).

Chapter 1: Preamble (2)

Purpose:

- Enhance learner's progression into and among ESQF qualifications even those without a qualification achieved in the initial education and training system.

- Recognise that all learning has value and that the corresponding learning outcomes should be given currency in relation to qualification standards (or adapted occupational standards), and that learning can be formal, non-formal and/or informal.

- Stipulate broad guidelines regarding RPL implementation in Eswatini, for effective policy implementation.

- Provide a solid basis to pave the way for future improvements of the RPL system in Eswatini in the context of the ESQF and ACQF.

ACQF

Scope:

- This policy covers all education and training sectors that issue ESQF qualifications, and labour market occupations that use these qualifications, for recruitment, promotion in employment, and/or occupational mobility. This include self-employment, as a qualification is evidence for the skills and competences possessed by self-employed workers looking for customers.

Users of the policy:

- Organisations registered for awarding qualifications – typically education and training providers –, learners and public bodies interested in qualifications – e.g., sectoral ministries –, employers, industry sectors stakeholders, quality assurance authorities and other regulatory bodies who may use this policy as a guide to the best way to mobilise RPL for helping individuals accessing the formal education and training system, resuming studies and/or (re)entering the labour market.

- All individuals and bodies interested in giving value and currency to all learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired.

Monitoring and evaluation of the RPL Policy:

- The Eswatini Qualification Authority (EQA), with the assistance of the accrediting authorities in each education and training sector are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the use of this policy.

Chapter 2: context and recent reforms

Chapter 2

RPL: a top priority at regional (SADCQF) and continental levels (ACQF)

ESQF: "Increased scope for RPL"

Learning outcomes-based ESQF: in level descriptiors, qualifications types and specifications

Other ESQF implementation tools: CATS

Operationalisation of EQA – important premise for coherence and harmonisation of RPL policy and practices

Link between RPL and ESQF: learning outcomes assessment towards ESQF qualifications; comprehensive ESQF for lifelong learning – integration and articulation; micro-credentials

Chapter 3: Benefits of RPL for individuals, employers and country

Chapter 3: Benefits of RPL
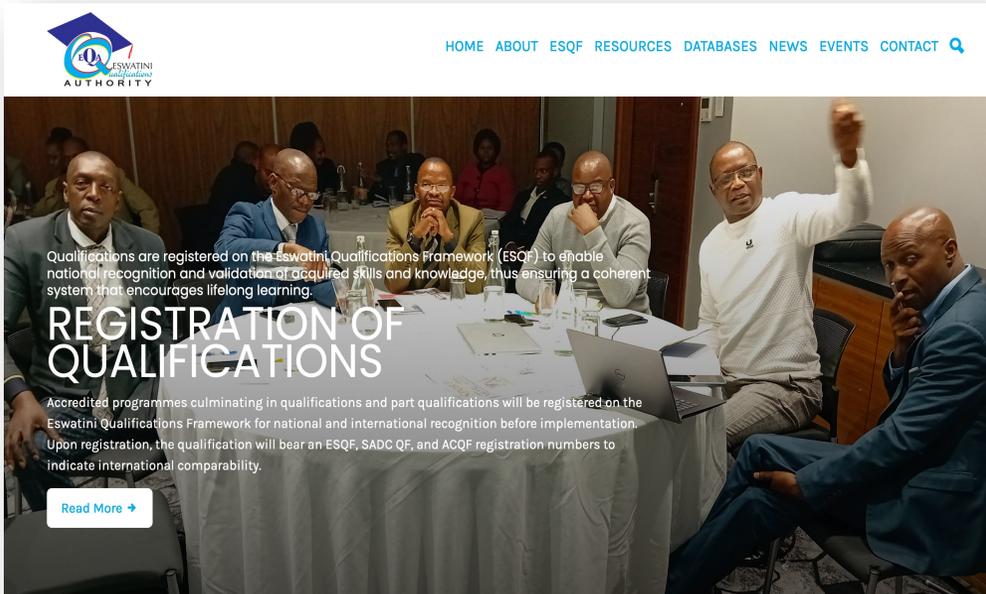
A. For individuals and country:

- Access to formal education and training – promoting LLL
- Remove barriers to education, training and learning - making it accessible for all demographics, professional roles
- Access to the labour market and workforce development
- Career progression

B. For individuals and employers:

- Saving time and reducing cost
- Mobility
- Meeting diverse learning styles

Chapter 3: Benefits of RPL (2)

Mainly for Country and employers

- Inclusivity and diversity
- Alignment with needs of the economy and labour market
- Social equity

Chapter 4: Policy issues - rationale for RPL in Eswatini

Chapter 4: Rationale for RPL

Qualifications vs skills and competences

Limited access to E&T and low completion rates

Lack of awareness on alternative routes to qualifications and limited access

Lack of harmonisation of RPL practices in HEIs

Quality and consistency of assessment

Recognition by employers and institutions

Alignment with industry needs

Professional development for RPL guidance professionals and assessors

Chapter 5: Policy statements on RPL

Chapter 5: Policy statements
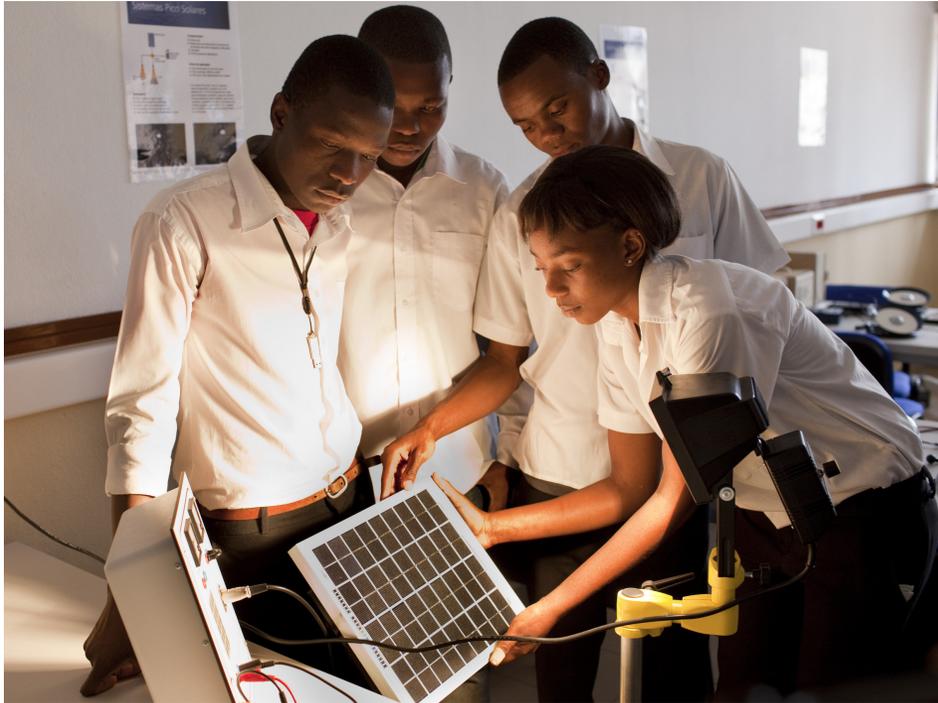
1. Target groups of the RPL Policy

2. Targeted Education and Training Sectors

3. Fairness and equity

4. Inclusiveness

5. Transparent Assessment procedures

6. Validation of learning outcomes against standards

7. Individualised assessment

8. Recognition of diverse learning experiences

Chapter 5: Policy statements (2)

9. Quality Assurance

10. Appeals procedure

11. Continued professional development of assessors

12. Promotion of RPL

13. Collaboration with stakeholders
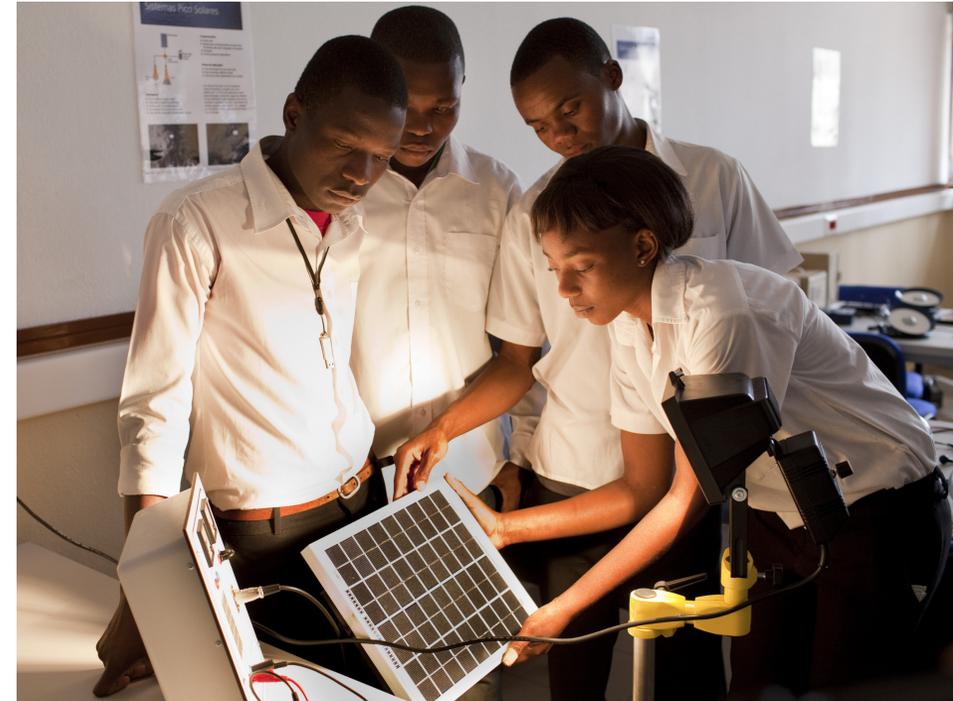
Chapter 6: Principles of RPL Policy

Chapter 6: Principles of RPL Policy

1. Broad principles
2. Operating principles

Chapter 6: Broad Principles of RPL Policy

Be inclusive, equitable, sensitive to social context of applicants

Learner-centered, and developmental - non-deficit approach to skills

Complement rather than compete with E&T

Protect integrity of qualifications standards, qualifications system and education and training institutions

Be oriented to qualifications that have currency in society and labour market

Encourage system developments and innovation (HE and TVET)

Encourage the registration of all *RPLable* qualifications on the NQF

Be set at the same standard as formal E&T

Equality and non-discrimination of certificates and qualifications awarded via RPL

Chapter 6: Operating principles RPL

The optimal functioning of a labour market requires competent individuals. Qualifications, registered on the NQF, signal that the holder has demonstrated skills and competences in specific occupational activities. In the context of the NQF, RPL can be used to:

- Obtain full qualifications that have currency in society as a whole and the labour market in particular.

- Obtain partial qualifications in the form of unit standards or credits, which can be augmented to full qualification in an agreed time period.

- Gain access to a learning programme (as an alternative to entry requirements based solely on educational attainment in the formal system).

- Gain exemption from part of a training programme.

Chapter 6: RPL Prerequisites

- Qualifications (or similar tools such as credits toward a qualification) and skills-based unit standards form the nexus of RPL.

- Industry involvement and commitment to the development of qualifications and unit standards that truly reflect the human resource development requirements of the Eswatini economy.

- Education and training (especially VET) provision will need updating in terms of infrastructure, qualifications, curricula and programmes, teaching quality, relevance to the needs of industry, modes of provision, assessment, and entry and exit points.

- RPL will need to have a clear workplace focus, whilst also encouraging further learning.

- Employers will need to plan for workforce development based on RPL and take account of demands for increased remuneration that are likely to result from successful RPL.

- The relationship between skill/competence-based unit standards and existing education and training curricula and delivery needs to be very clearly conceptualised in standards.

- All RPL providers (e.g., employers, colleges, private training organisations) will need to be NQF-accredited and equipped with guidelines, procedures and documentation to manage RPL in accordance with national imperatives e.g. applications, mentoring and advice, timelines, fees, assessment strategies and methods, recording results, perhaps appeals and quality assurance.

- Capacity will be needed at a range of levels – not only in industry, but also in education, training and skills and competences development, a guidance system, well-trained accredited assessors drawn from existing bodies in industry and education, mentors.

- High quality support materials for RPL will be needed e.g. application processes, guidelines for portfolio preparation, assessment instruments and materials, evidence requirements.

- RPL will need a firm financial base. This will require the Government to develop funding models and allocate resources for RPL within which providers can develop and implement their own funding strategies.

Chapter 7: The RPL process - operationalisation

ACQF

RPL Process

- **Preliminary step: Information and guidance**

- **Identification**

- **Documentation**

- **Assessment**

- **Certification**

- In short RPL is a process by which all the learning outcomes of an individual applicant are assessed against predefined standards, and a document is awarded to successful applicants.

- RPL is a process to make learning outcomes visible if they are consistent with a clearly identified objective – e.g., a qualification, credits toward a qualification, exemption for access – so that these learning outcomes may be used by the owner.

- RPL is therefore first and foremost an assessment process. It aims at identifying, documenting and validating outcomes from relevant prior learning gained through life (including formal, non-formal and/or informal), for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards.

- The learning outcomes have to be consistent with each other so that they may be reasonably grouped in order to constitute the building blocks to characterise a competence or a set of competences, so that the applicant may set a course toward the labour market (occupation) or toward further learning (another qualification than the qualification awarded in the context of RPL). In an RPL process, the learning outcomes cannot be taken in isolation but are assessed globally.

Key contextual operationalisation steps

- The different stages an individual applicant goes though when engaging in RPL may be summarised in six steps of unequal duration:

  - Initial information and guidance, and decision to apply,

  - Administrative registration of the individual applicant by the RPL authority,

  - Pre-screening by the RPL authority (eligibility),

  - Preparatory work by the applicant for final assessment (including for instance elaborating a portfolio of competences),

  - Assessment as such (or final assessment, including assessors reviewing all the pieces of evidence and the material provided by the applicant),

  - Validation and certification

- The full process is about assessment, but it is convenient to call this particular stage "assessment" as well, because this where this is where it all comes together. For the sake of clarity, this document will call this stage "final assessment".

Stages	Purposes
Initial information and guidance	Greeting learners (potential applicants)
	Information and guidance to the potential applicant (comprehensive, with information about the benefits, the process and its potential duration)
	Identification of the evidence to substantiate claim for application (partly with RPL staff)
	Decision of the individual to apply
Administrative registration	Provision of the administrative form
	Guidance 1 (light)
	Handover of the administrative form by the applicant
	Waiting time (Decision to accept the application by the RPL staff)
Application screening and eligibility	Guidance 2 (intermediate, including advice about evidence gathering)
	Handover of the eligibility portfolio
	Eligibility interview
	Waiting time (Decision to send the applicant to the assessment by RPL staff)
Preparation of the final assessment	Understanding what the final assessment is about
	Elaborating a portfolio of competences, and/or documenting learning outcomes
Assessment (of learning outcomes and competences)	Guidance 3 (comprehensive, especially concerning the preparation to the assessment)
	Handover of the portfolio of [self-analysed] competences.
	Waiting time (Analysis of the portfolio of competences by assessor(s))
	Waiting time (Convening notice send to applicants)
	Supplementary assessment (see Box 11)
	Interview with the panel of assessors
Certification (of competences)	Waiting time (Validation of the learning outcomes and competences)
	Waiting time (Making and stamping of the qualification) – Recording of outcome
	Awarding of a qualification to successful applicants.
	Explaining the reasons for failure to unsuccessful applicants.
	Suggestions for further practice, or formal education and training (top up learning).

Chapter 7: Assessment

Assessment may rely on several non-mutually exclusive approaches:

- Portfolio of competences.

- Practical test in a simulated working environment.

- Observation in a real working environment.

- Written examinations, including essays.

- Oral Examinations.

- Interview(s).

- Professional conversation or interview with the assessor(s).

- Challenge test.

- Case study, with a convincing narrative.

- A combination of any of the above (typically a practical hand-on test with a conversation with the assessors at the same time).

- Final jury/panel (always advisable regardless of the options chosen from the above).

Chapter 8: RPL Governance – roles and responsibilities key actors

Chapter 8: Governance (1)

- Government ministries

- Employers

- Workers

- Learners

- Sector Councils

- Unions / Organised labour / workers associations

- Eduarda sectors

- TVET

- Associations – professional, civil society

- Certification / awarding bodies

- RPL facilitators

- Career Counselling

- Traditional knowledge keepers

- Advocacy groups

- Researchers

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ACQF

- **The key RPL stakeholders, and their role, are:**

- Employers - Create an environment that is conducive to RPL

- RPL Providers - Provide RPL services that comply with statutory requirements.

- RPL Applicants - Participate in the RPL process and provide appropriate evidence to prove learning outcomes, skills and competences.

- RPL guidance officers – Support applicants.

- RPL Assessors – Subject specialists in occupational fields

Chapter 8: Governance (3)

- The different steps the Authority in charge of RPL should take to establish an RPL system may include:

- Establish a communication policy, inform about objectives and benefits, and reach out to the most in need stakeholders, whether they be individuals, employers, or organisations.

- Fund raise.

- Organise the social dialogue, influence stakeholders and organise a sense of ownership (for further commitment to accept the qualifications that will be awarded to future successful RPL applicants).

- Integrate universities and education stakeholders in the policy framework.

- Design the institutional framework (e.g., identify harbouring institution for the RPL system).

- Identify priority needs.

- Gauge commitment among stakeholders, and promote those who are definitely in.

- Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation.

- Create regulatory tools.

- Decide on eligibility criteria (to have the right to apply for assessment).

- Decide on assessment methods, with quality assurance.

- Decide on final outcomes of the RPL process (exemptions, credits, qualification, certificate).

- Consult and decide on pilots (preferably low hanging fruits, to attract investors and more stakeholders).

- Organise [vertical] pilots, either sector targeted or holistic according to the priority needs.

- Train staff and RPL practitioners, advisors and assessors in the first place.

- Identify top up education and training options, for unsuccessful RPL applicants that needs additional learning to meet the qualification standards.

- Elaborate learning outcomes and standards, following and initial assessment of the adequacy of learning outcomes for an RPL process (many programmes claim they are based on learning outcomes, but they are not actually learning outcomes – time consuming in the latter case).

- Prepare, create or adapt, tools, resources, materials and processes (e.g. information leaflets, assessor's manual or guidance procedures, applicants booklets, assessment procedures and tools, assessment standards…).

- Evaluate impact on formal education and training system (e.g. modularisation, curriculum).

- Compile results from Monitoring and Evaluation of the pilots.

- Organising the debate among key stakeholders for improving the RPL system.

- Feed back into the RPL system.

- Decide on a critical mass for implementing in a sector.

- Up scale.

- Learn from further Monitoring and Evaluation and feed back into the RPL system.

- Improve the education and training system so that it complements the RPL system (e.g., modular provision of formal education and training so that unsuccessful applicants may organise their top-up education and training).

- If at all possible, feed back into the formal TVET sector so that all TVET stakeholders benefit from the way the assessment is organised for learning outcomes acquired through experience.

Chapter 9: Moderation and Quality Assurance in RPL

Chapter 9: Moderation and QA

- Quality assurance in VET and RPL hinges on the use of unit standards and qualifications to inform assessment. The role of moderators (internal and external) is to sample and verify that all aspects of RPL adhere to accepted standards and principles.

- To instil confidence over time, all RPL activities will need to comply with Eswatini quality assurance and accreditation requirements as set out in existing policy documents. However, over-regulation of RPL can stifle creativity and innovation, especially in the early stages. Therefore, a light touch is recommended at the outset for notions of quality to be derived from contextual practice, rather than being imposed upon it.

Chapter 10: Implementation Strategy for RPL

Chapter 10: Implementation strategy

- **Features of the strategy**
  - Pragmatic
  - Incremental
  - Iterative
  - Enabling and consensus building

- **Principles**
  - Pragmatic – Realistic – Fit-for-purpose – Implementable
  - Iterative – Continuous Learning Informing Forward Movement
  - Enabling and Consensus-Oriented
  - Implications of Growing RPL in Eswatini

Chapter 10: Roadmap (indicative)

Phase 1: Scoping, model building and Preparing the Environment

- Phase 1a: Scoping Existing Practices
- Phase 1b. Model building and preparing the environment

Phase 2. Establishing an institutional framework (a legislative and a regulatory framework) and a governance system

Phase 3. Modelling RPL (assessment, quality assurance, standards, introduction of ICT)

Phase 4. Developing guidelines (especially for practitioners) and monitoring and evaluation system

Phase 5. Piloting (vertical pilots)

Phase 6. Scaling up for the entire country (implementation plan and timelines

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Chapter 11: Risks and opportunities

Chapter 11: risks and opportunities

Risks

- The potential risks are:

- High level: contradictory intent of agencies (incoherent policy, obstacles to cohesion)

- Lack of commitment of stakeholders

- Conflicting stakeholders

- Delay in publishing legal texts (laws, bylaws, regulations)

- RPL staff (assessors, guidance officers) not convinced nor properly trained, or burden on staff

- RPL stigma

- String attachment of the population to formal education and training

Mitigation strategy

- The mitigation strategy will be developed, and strategies will be elaborated to address the risks if they arise

Opportunities

- The opportunities for the RPL system are plenty, and they relate in particular to:

- Fighting poverty.

- Addressing migration issues, including returning migrations.

- Optimal skills and competences utilisation.

- Increased the size of the formal economy.

- Promote lifelong learning.

- Long term impact (e.g., confidence, self-esteem, as such and as predictors of future employment and economic development).

- Double currency of RPL qualifications, in the formal education and training system and in the labour market (for occupational mobility, promotion, pay raise, decent work.

Chapter 12: Monitoring and Evaluation

Chapter 12: M&E

- A monitoring and evaluation system will be proposed with:

- Objectives and indicators

- Monitoring and evaluation relevant to the RPL system and approach, interoperable with the M&E of the NQF

- Data for monitoring

- Monitoring for evaluation

- Opportunities for econometric modelling, provided data have been collected

Chapter 13: Piloting RPL

Chapter 13: Piloting

- Piloting RPL is a necessary condition for future success. A vertical approach to piloting RPL will be implemented.

- A **vertical approach**, in this context, consists of piloting RPL in a small number of industry sectors or trade jobs, but to do it extensively. Extensive piloting means to address all the issues, and draft all the relevant documentation, from the very bottom to the very top; from the choice of assessment standards to the adequate selection of applicants, with the elaboration of an eligibility condition, and to the Monitoring and Evaluation of the full pilot. This also means assessment of the eligible applicants, training of the guidance officers and of the assessors and drafting of the relevant manuals, validation, certification of competences and follow up on the labour market to evaluate the performance of recognition of prior learning graduates, compared to a control group (group of individuals with same characteristics but not having engaged in recognition of prior learning, or having failed at it).

- A **horizontal approach** would be to pilot recognition of prior learning in many sectors but without piloting the full process. It is not recommended for policy learning.

- **The different steps for organising the pilot are:**

- Choice of qualifications,

- Sourcing (selection of applicants),

- Identification of qualification standards,

- Preparation of guidance officers,

- Preparation of assessors,

- Initial information and guidance, and decision to apply,

- Administrative registration of the individual applicant by the RPL authority,

- Pre-screening by the RPL authority (eligibility),

- Preparatory work by the applicant for final assessment (including for instance elaborating a portfolio of competences),

- Assessment as such (or final assessment, including assessors reviewing all the pieces of evidence and the material provided by the applicant),

- Validation and certification

03

Discussion in working groups

Guiding questions

- 1) What are your main comments and questions on the chapters of your WG?

- 2) What are the specifics of national context to be better addressed / defined in the RPL Policy document?

- 2) Do you have specific contributions to finalise the document, such as additions, adjustments, clarifications or corrections to the chapters of your WG?

- 3) From RPL Policy to implementation: what are your main suggestions regarding the main steps, requirements and building blocks (for decision makers, implementers and actual users).
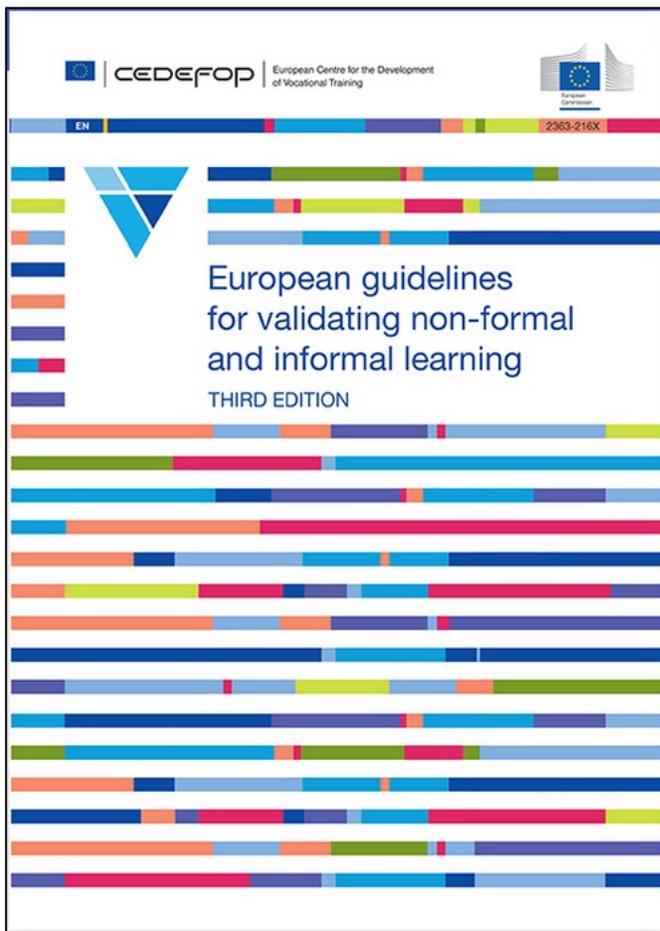
Thank you

ANNEX – REFERENCES
For further reading

European Guidelines: the new edition (2022)

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3093#group-downloads

#ValidationEurope

Key questions on validation

- Is the individual perspective considered in all elements of validation?
- Have the objective, purpose and expected outcomes of validation been defined and clearly communicated?
- Is the purpose of validation reflected in the organisation and emphasis of its different phases?
- Do possibilities for validation exist in different contexts and what is their role:
  - in education and training?
  - in the labour market?
  - in the third sector?
- Does validation work with other policies and services?
  - Are roles and responsibilities of stakeholders clarified?
  - What steps are taken to avoid fragmentation and ensure a coherent approach?
- Can individuals transfer and accumulate validation outcomes across different contexts?
- Has sustainable financing been provided, and cost-sharing mechanisms agreed?
- Have the professional roles of validation practitioners been clarified, developed and supported?
- Is information on validation being provided in ways which ensure awareness, outreach and access?
- Is there provision of guidance and counselling before, during and after a validation process?
- Are learning outcomes used to define reference points for validation?
  - Are reference points and standards agreed among stakeholders?
  - How does validation relate to different credentials?
  - Are there clear links to NQFs?
- Has the potential of ICT been considered for improving validation?
- How has quality been assured in the validation process?
- Which validation methodologies are available and how can they be used and potentially combined for specific policies and practices?
  - Are validation methods fit for purpose?
  - Are tools reliable, valid and scalable?

Key questions on the centrality of the individual

- To what extent are individuals aware of, and have access to, validation?
- Are validation arrangements designed to capture diverse (and unexpected) learning experiences or do they address a limited (and predefined) set of experiences?
- To what extent does validation serve diverse individuals at different stages of their life? To what extent does it address lifelong and life-wide learning, employment careers and volunteering?
- Is the privacy and personal integrity of the candidates protected throughout the validation process?
- Have explicit procedures been put in place to guarantee confidentiality?
- What arrangements have been put in place to guarantee fair and equal treatment?
- Are there possibilities for appeal?
- Have ethical standards been developed and applied?
- Are the outcomes of the process the exclusive property of the candidate?
- Can the individual, if the opportunity arises, transfer and accumulate results of validation?
- Are individuals supported before, during and after the process?

Key questions on identification

- Are there templates and systematic ways of identifying learning outcomes?
- Is the identification phase limited to predefined areas of prior learning? What is the starting point for the identification of skills?
- How are standardised (for example ICT-based) and open (for example dialogue-based) identification methods mixed and balanced?
- How is guidance and counselling supporting and interconnected with the identification phase?
- How is the identification process supported by professionals?

Key questions on documentation

- Is there agreement on which evidence to accept for validation?
- Have end-users, notably individuals, been made aware of what is accepted as evidence?
- Are the formats used for documenting non-formal and informal learning generally known and/or accepted?
- To what extent do existing documentation formats support the transfer and portability of evidence gathered in the context of validation?

Key questions on assessment

- Are assessment tools adapted to the individual's needs and characteristics?
- Are validity, reliability, accessibility and fairness assured?
- Can assessment results be contested?
- Have the conditions for assessment been clearly defined and communicated in terms of procedure, tools and evaluation/assessment standards:
  - to candidates?
  - to employers and education institutions?
- Is feedback regularly collected and analysed?

Key questions on certification

- Is the awarding body known?
- Is the process leading to the award transparent?
- To what extent can the outcomes of validation (qualifications, certificates, credentials, etc.) be exchanged into further education, job opportunities?
- Are certifications obtained through validation linked to NQFs?

Key questions on objectives and benefits

- Has the purpose of validation been defined and clearly communicated?
- Have the phases of the validation process been clearly defined to address the purpose of validation?
- Is the purpose of validation reflected in the structure and emphasis of the different phases of validation?
- Are benefits of validation clearly communicated to the individual?

Key questions on education and training

- Has the purpose of validation within education and training been clarified and clearly communicated to individuals?
- Is validation offered in all parts of education and training systems?
- Does validation offered in different parts of the education and training system build on similar or different principles? Is there coherence on validation across different parts of education and training?
- Can validation arrangements in different parts of education and training aid progress across types and levels of education? To what extent can validation results be used across different parts of education and training?
- How is validation linked to credit transfer and accumulation?

Key questions on labour market

- Are there systematic validation possibilities in the labour market?
- Is there a coherent approach to validation in the labour market across different labour market actors?
- Has the purpose of validation within the labour market initiatives been clarified and clearly communicated to individuals?
- Are there possibilities of connecting certificates obtained through validation in the labour market to formal education programmes?
- What is the value of labour market certificates and can they be acquired through validation?
- Is validation used and connected to up- and reskilling initiatives?
- Can results of a validation process in the labour market be used in other contexts, for example to access formal education programmes?

Key questions on third sector

- Are there systematic validation possibilities in the third sector?
- Have the objectives of validation within third sector initiatives been clarified and clearly communicated to individuals?
- Are there possibilities of connecting certificates obtained through validation in the third sector to formal education programmes?
- Can results of a validation process in the third sector be used in other contexts, for example to access formal education programmes?

Key questions on skill and lifelong learning strategies

- Have the role and purposes of validation within education and training, labour market and social policies been clarified?
- Are there guidelines or frameworks that govern the relationship of validation with other services, for example career guidance and public employment services?
- Are there forums in which diverse actors governing different policy fields can come together to discuss validation issues?

Key questions on stakeholder involvement

- Are different stakeholders aware and do they accept the validation outcomes?
- Are different stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and execution of validation arrangements?
- Is there dialogue between social partners, education and training institutions and civic society organisations on the role of validation practices?
- Have single or multiple legal framework(s) been put in place that govern the relationship between actors in relation to validation?
- What administrative processes are in place (contact and information procedures, recording and monitoring of results, shared quality assurance arrangements)?
- What networking possibilities are there for stakeholders? What are the forums in which validation can be discussed and agreed upon?
- Who is responsible for coordination at national, regional and local levels? How is consistency and coherence across levels assured?
- What mechanisms exist for the direct experience of validation system users to contribute to, inform and review national policy and procedures for validation?

Key questions on financing and cost

- Is there a sustainable model of financing validation?
- Are the criteria for the provision of funds incentivising the use of validation processes?
- Are there shared costing mechanisms in place for validation? Is it possible to reach an agreement on cost distribution among relevant stakeholders?
- What funding instruments are in place to incentivise and support individuals' uptake and institutional offers?
- Is information on the costs and benefits of validation clear and delivered to the individual in a timely manner?
- Have the elements that contribute to the cost of validation been defined?
- Are there elements in place to collect the information needed in terms of cost?
- Is it possible to carry out cost-benefit analysis of validation?

Key questions on validation professionals and their competences

- What requirements, if any, have been set for:
  - counsellors and guidance personnel?
  - assessors?
  - other practitioners involved in validation?
- Is there a strategy in place for the professional development of these practitioners?
- Is the professional development of validation professionals coordinated between different sectors and arrangements?
- Can a community of practice for validation professionals be developed, supporting networking and professional development?

Key questions on learning outcomes and validation

- Is the validation process using a reference point (standard, curricula, programme description) based on input or outcome expectation?
- What is the focus of the expected learning outcomes in terms of breadth (knowledge, skills and/or competences) and depth (levels and complexity)?
- Is the scope of the reference point sufficiently widely defined to capture the learning taking place outside formal education and training?

Key questions on learning experiences

- What kind of knowledge has been acquired?
  - basic knowledge (literacy, numeracy, etc.)
  - technical and specialised knowledge
- Which skills are covered?
  - practical skills (related to tasks, functions and/or occupations)
  - analytical skills
- Which wider, transversal skills and competences have been acquired?
  - self-management skills and competences (time-management, learning to learn, etc.)
  - communication skills and competences (oral and written presentations, etc.)
  - social skills and competences (teamwork, management of others, etc.)
- At what level of complexity (depth) has the individual acquired learning? Can the depth and complexity of learning be specified by referring to formal levels and/or with action verbs?

Key questions on standards and reference points

- Are the reference points for validation clearly identified?
- Is there stakeholder involvement in the development of the reference points? Are standards built on consensus and dialogue?
- Is the reference point for validation communicated with the candidate?
- Is the reference point opening up to the diversity of the individual's learning experiences, or does it require narrowing down?
- Is the reference point embedded in a limited education, training and/or occupation sector, and are the experiences gained outside this addressed?
- Are there feedback mechanisms in place for the development of the reference points?

Key questions addressing the validation link to credentials

- ❏ Can the content and profile of a credential or certificate be presented in terms of learning outcomes?
- ❏ To what extent can the content and profile of credentials and certificates be compared?
- ❏ How can the content and profile of credentials and certificates be more systematically captured and compared? Is digitalisation playing a role?
- ❏ How can the content and profile of certificates and credentials be included (reliably and validly) in validation?

Key questions on links to qualification frameworks

- ❏ Are stakeholders aware of, and do they understand, NQFs, their levels and descriptors?
- ❏ Are validation arrangements (all/only some) seen as an integrated part of the national qualifications system and as a normal route to qualifications?
- ❏ What is the relationship between validation and the NQF?
- ❏ To what extent can validation be used to support progression between all types and levels of qualification in the NQF?
- ❏ Is there a link between validation and (possible) credit transfer and accumulation arrangements?

Key questions on awareness raising, information and outreach

- ❏ What measures are in place to increase awareness?
- ❏ Is information on cost, benefits and the process available and easily accessible?
- ❏ How is the information made easily available?
- ❏ Do the different actors involved provide coherent, complementary information?
- ❏ How can public and private stakeholders cooperate to offer better information on validation?
- ❏ Are past users given a voice to promote validation initiatives?

Key questions on guidance and counselling

- ❏ Is there integration of career guidance with validation services and policies at a systemic level?
- ❏ To what extent are existing career guidance and counselling services (for example, in education and training, labour market and social services) connected and coordinated with existing validation services in different settings?
- ❏ To what extent is career guidance provided before, during and after validation processes?
- ❏ How can existing career guidance and counselling service networking be improved to address all potential target groups for validation?
- ❏ What kind of coordination mechanism is used to ensure that candidates are served where they live, study and work?
- ❏ Do guidance services provide information on the possibilities, costs and benefits of validation?
- ❏ Are guidance practitioners aware of, and trained on, existing validation possibilities?

Key questions on ICT and validation

- ❏ Are there existing ICT systems that can be connected to validation?
- ❏ Are digital technologies used to register and keep track of the learning achievements of individuals?
- ❏ Is there consensus on what fields the digital certification should provide?
- ❏ Are the costs and benefits of developing ICT systems considered?
- ❏ Are there mechanisms to control the quality and legitimacy of digital certificates?

Key questions on quality assurance

- ❏ Have explicit and integrated quality assurance measures been put in place for validation? If so:
  - ○ do these measures reflect an explicit and agreed quality strategy?
  - ○ how does the quality strategy address key objectives like reliability, validity and credibility of the process?
- ❏ Who are the actors involved, at different levels, in implementing this quality strategy?
- ❏ How are quality assurance arrangements divided between internal and external assurance and control?
- ❏ Are processes and outcomes being monitored and has a system for feed-back from users/customers been put in place?
- ❏ To what extent is research and evaluation of validation systems and processes supported?

Key questions on validation tools and techniques

- ❑ Does the choice of methodologies consider the individual circumstances and characteristics?
- ❑ Are methodologies fit for purpose and in line with validation objectives? Is their purpose clearly informed?
- ❑ Are methodologies free from bias and how is fair treatment assured?
  - ◯ In what way do methodologies balance the criteria of reliability, validity, scalability and cost?
  - ◯ Are validation methodologies reliable, valid and scalable?
  - ◯ Do validation methodologies capture the variety of learning outcomes of individual experiences?
  - ◯ Are methodologies predictable, transparent and repeatable?
  - ◯ Can methodologies be replicated and used in different contexts while maintaining validity and reliability?
  - ◯ Has the cost of developing and maintaining methodologies been considered?
- ❑ Have technical consideration related to nature of assessment, criteria constructs and learning domains been clarified and agreed among stakeholders?
- ❑ Which validation methodologies are available and how can they be used and potentially combined for specific policies and practices, and for specific purposes?
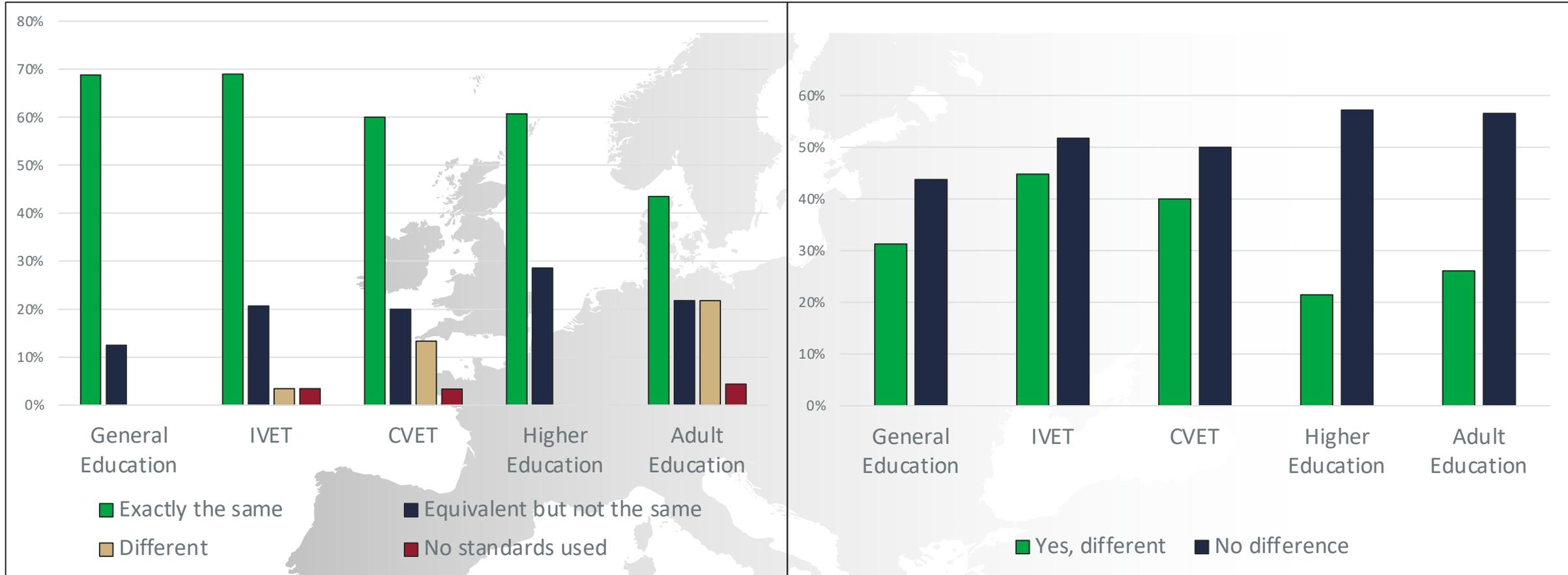
Evaluation of the 2012 Recommendation

- All **Member States have taken action**;
- On the whole **more people have validation opportunities** and can find better information and **guidance** on validation;
- Wide agreement that in general **validation benefits justify its costs**;
- Wide consensus that the Recommendation is **consistent** with other actions and tools;
- Overall, the Recommendation has had a certain **impact on national action on validation.**

Challenges
- Many people still have no access to validation – no information, not eligible, no means
- Validation arrangements are not comprehensive and not coordinated
- Guidance may not be effective (outreach)
- Need to involve more stakeholders
- Poor information on costs and benefits of validation

Connection to formal standards

Extent to which standards used for validation relate to those used in the formal education system (% of validation arrangements in E&T)

Certificates obtained through validation are different to those obtained through formal education (% of validation arrangements in E&T)

Legend (left chart):
- Exactly the same
- Equivalent but not the same
- Different
- No standards used

Legend (right chart):
- Yes, different
- No difference

Source: European Inventory 2018

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