

## Day 1

### Session 3

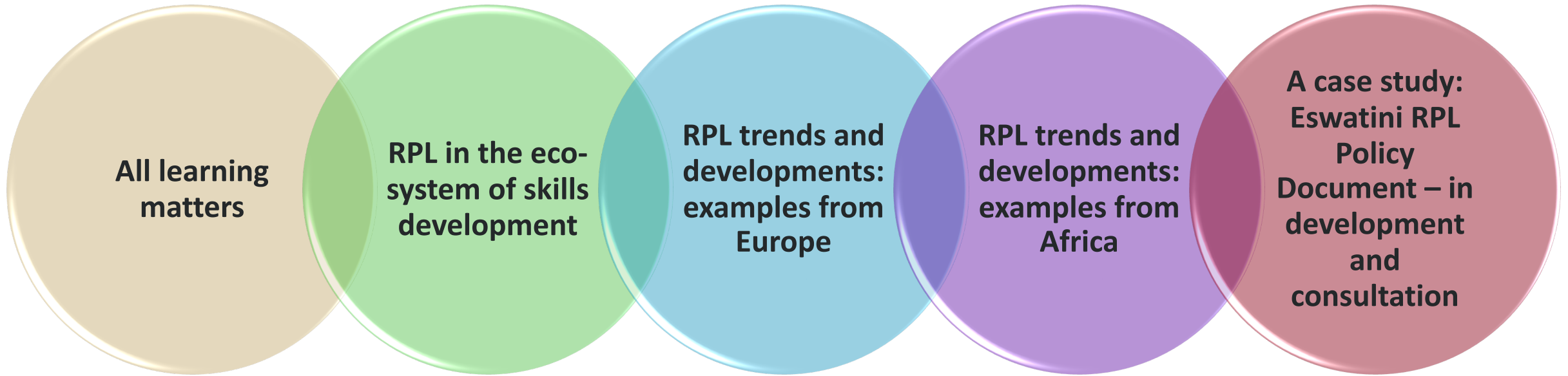
# RPL: evolving, attracting, creating new opportunities

New demands, new opportunities and challenges

Freetown NQF Consultation Week  
22-24 May 2024  
Euarda Castel-Branco



# Topics of the presentation



01

All learning matters

# RPL

## Make the invisible - visible

### Topics of the Presentation:

1. Why RPL
  2. RPL in the eco-system of education and training
  3. RPL in Europe
  4. RPL in Africa
- 





## A time of deep and multi-dimensional change requires:

- Learning
- Upskilling
- Reskilling
- Certification
- Lifelong learning
- Lifewide learning

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills>

## Reskilling needs

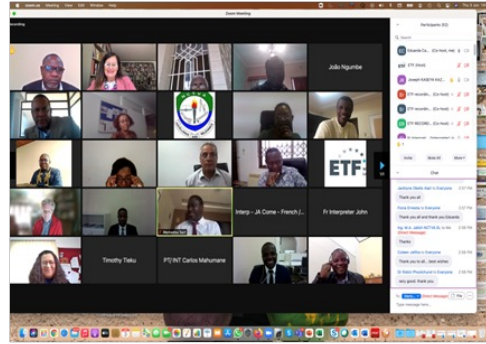
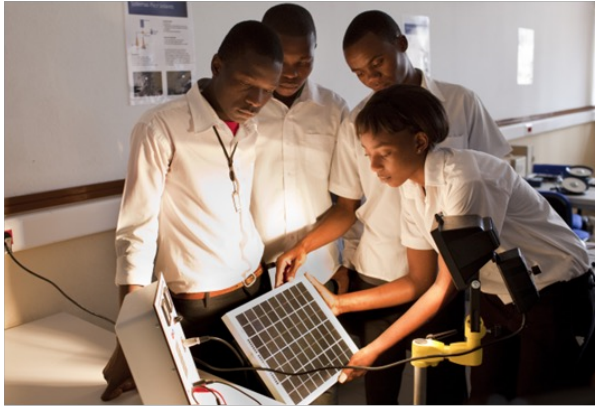
# 44%

of workers' core skills are expected to change in the next five years



Source: World Economic Forum,  
*Future of Jobs Report 2023*.

# Learn: everywhere, anytime, anything, all modes



## Make the invisible - visible

Non-formal and informal learning are key parts of **lifelong learning**

**People need RPL:** employees, informal sector workers, people in labour migration, refugees, school drop-outs

Knowledge, skills and competences acquired in all contexts and modalities of learning (incl. experience) can be **identified, documented, assessed and certified.**

NQF supports RPL; RPL supports NQF

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- 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.



# ACQF RPL definitions: 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).
-



- 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 no curriculum)

# 02

**RPL in the eco-system  
of skills development**

# Building blocks / Conditions for RPL

## ILO (2018) Building blocks

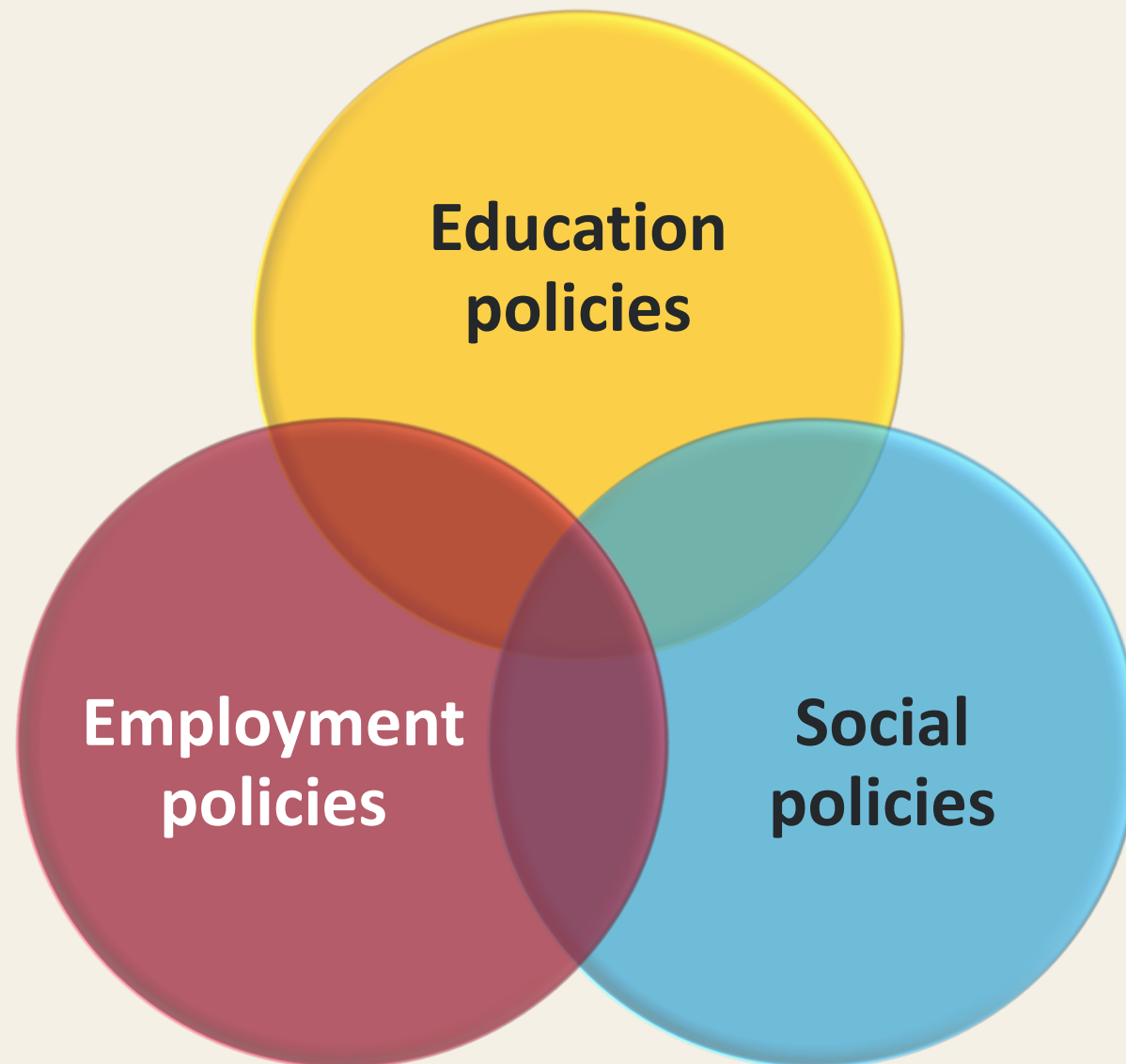
- Regulatory framework
- Institutional framework
- **Stakeholder ownership and commitment**
- **Quality assurance**
- Financing

## European Guidelines for Validation (2015) – Conditions

- 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

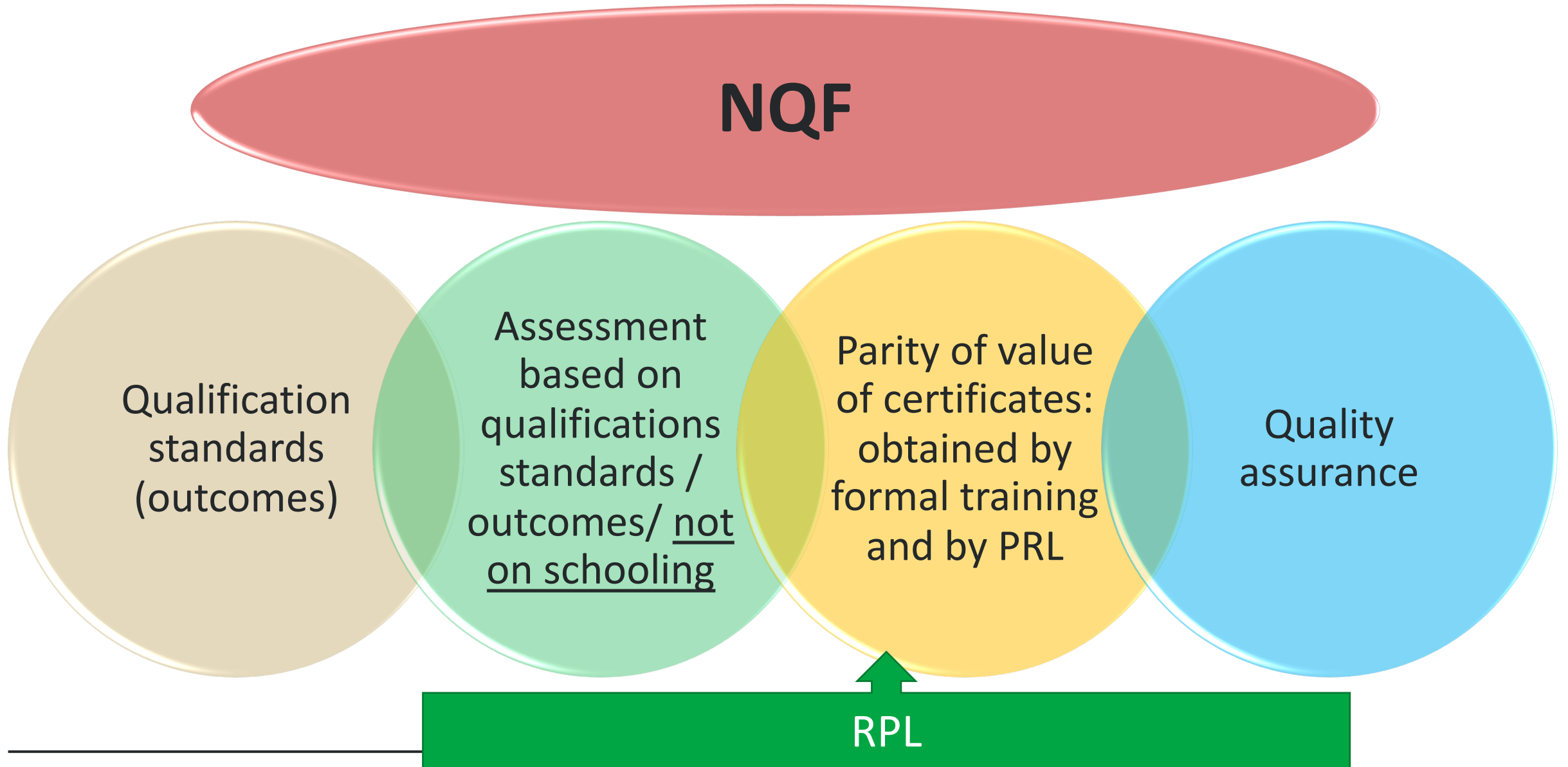
- Contribute to integration of individuals at risk of being marginalised
- Provide a process of self-reflection and contributes to increase individuals' self-esteem
- Contribute to make visible the learning from voluntary experience, youth work and civic engagement, especially for young people that lack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



# What connection with NQF?



# What connection with NQF?

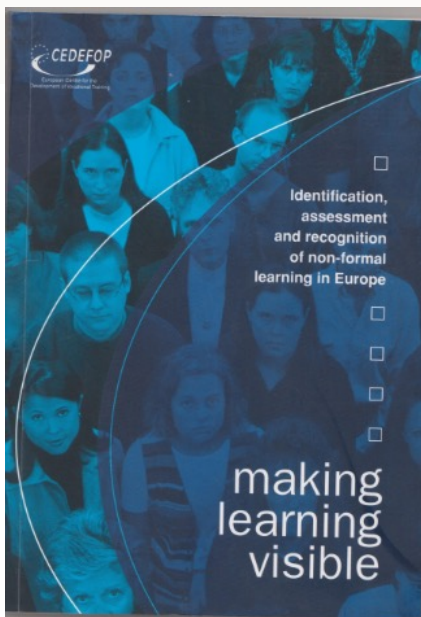


# 03

**RPL Trends and developments:  
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](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation)



# Storyline of validation in EU

1995

European Commission White Paper on Teaching and Learning

2000

Making lifelong learning 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

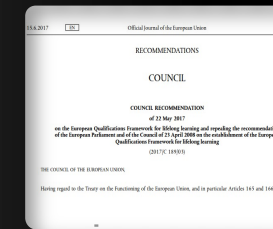
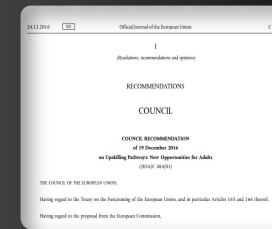
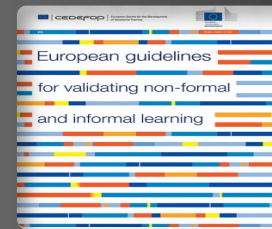
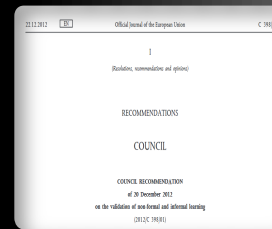
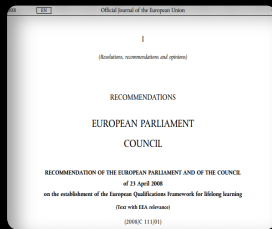
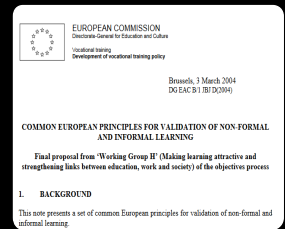
European Pillar of social rights

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





**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.**

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# 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

ENSURE THE CREDIBILITY OF VALIDATION BY EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS

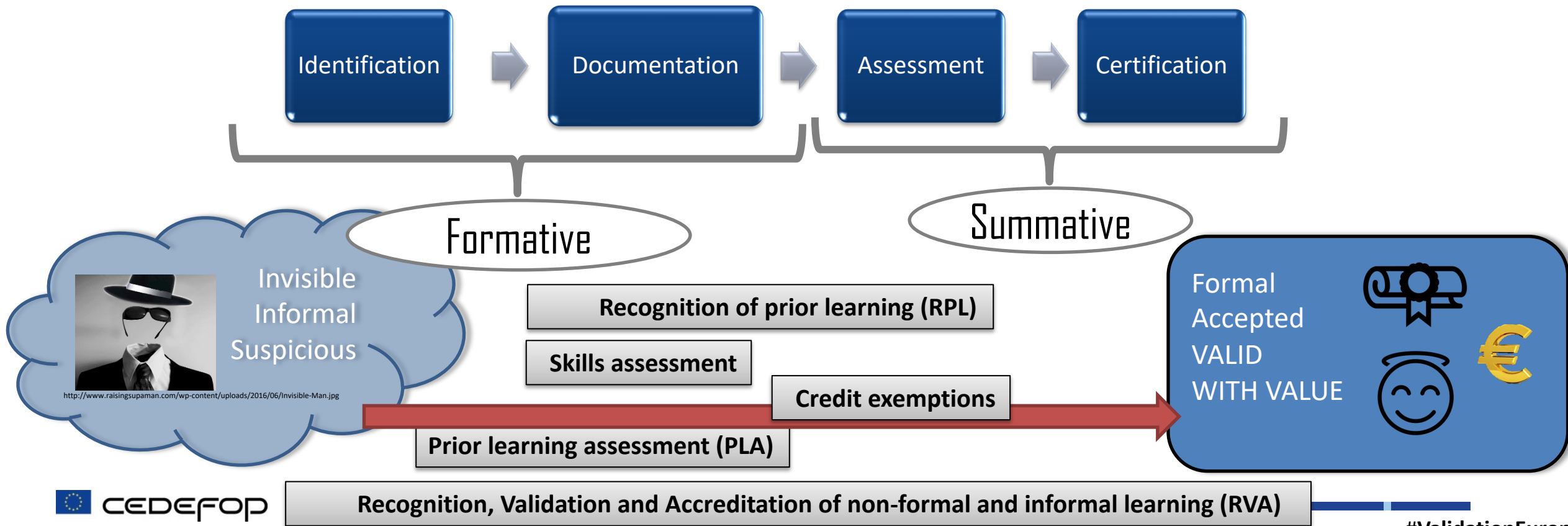
- EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS MIGHT USE THE FORMAL OUTCOME OF A VALIDATION (E.G. CERTIFICATE)
- THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF VALIDATION, IN PARTICULAR THE IDENTIFICATION STAGE, ALLOWS A YOUNG PERSON TO REFLECT ON THE COMPETENCES GAINED AND HOW THEY COULD BE USED IN THE FUTURE

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



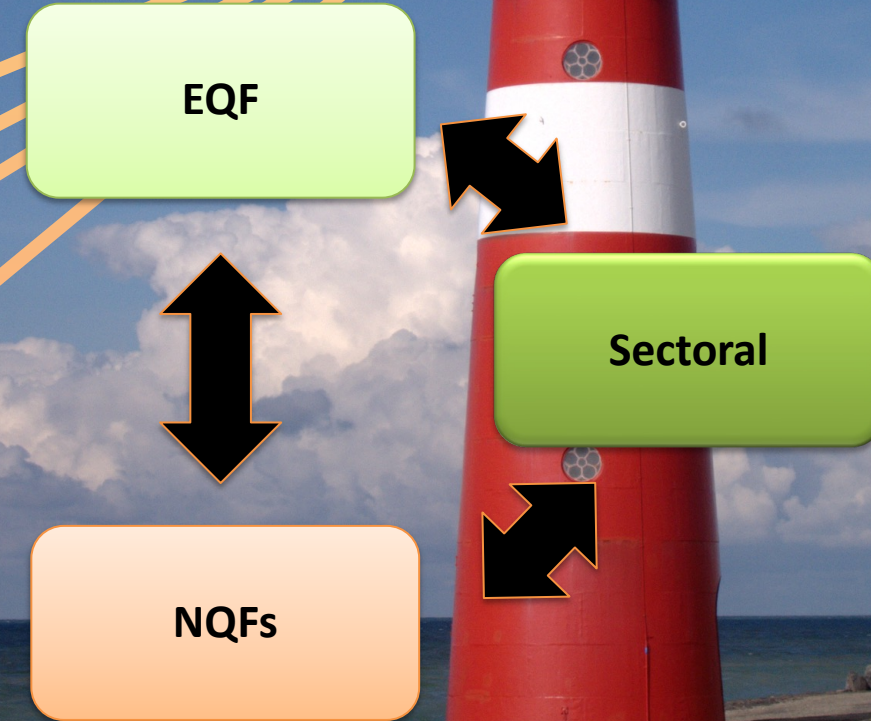
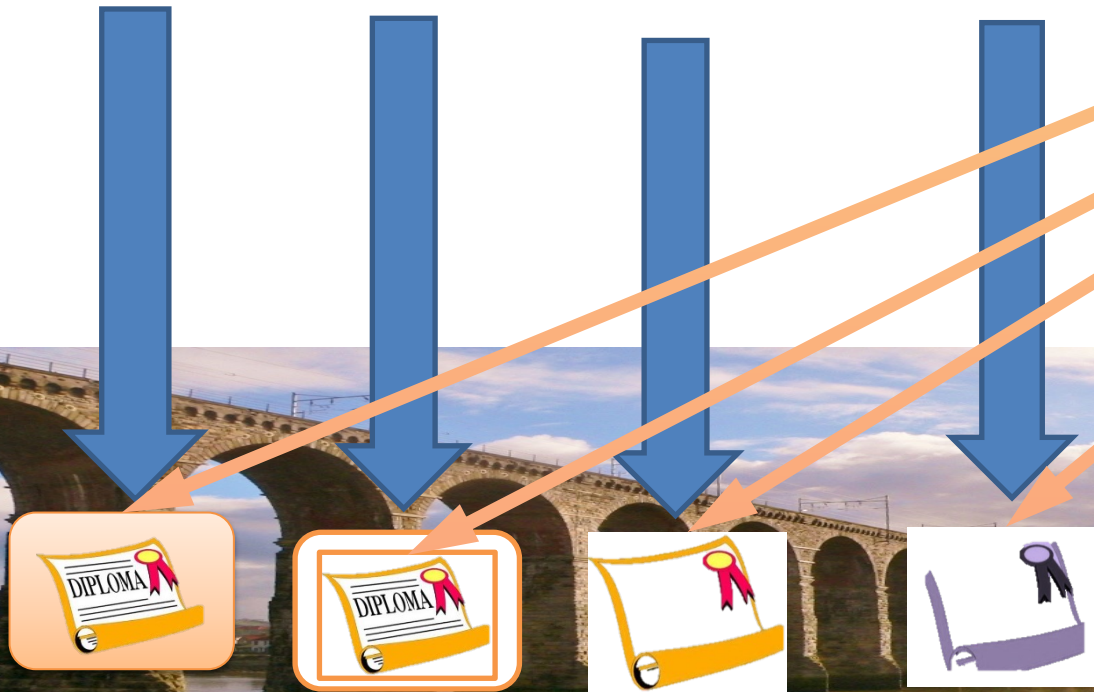
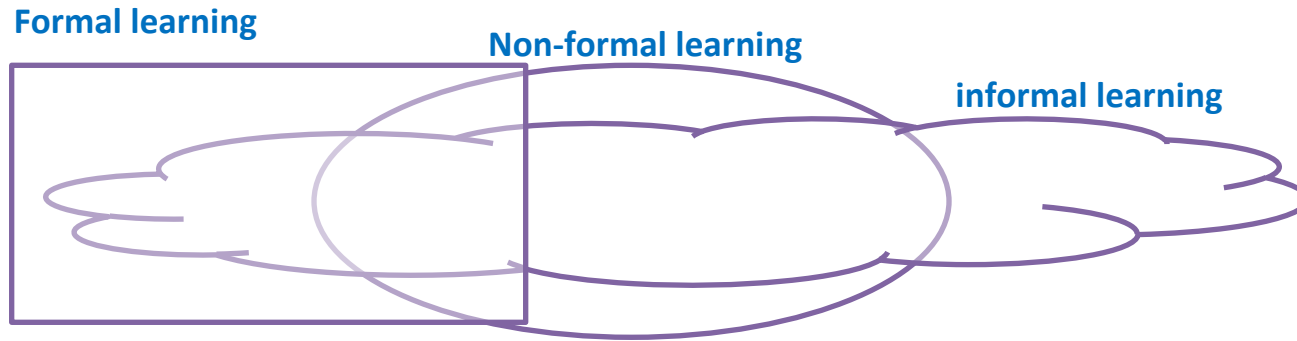
# VALIDATION of non-formal and informal learning and its objectives

**Validation** means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard



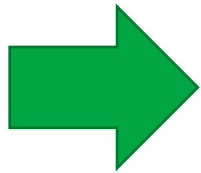
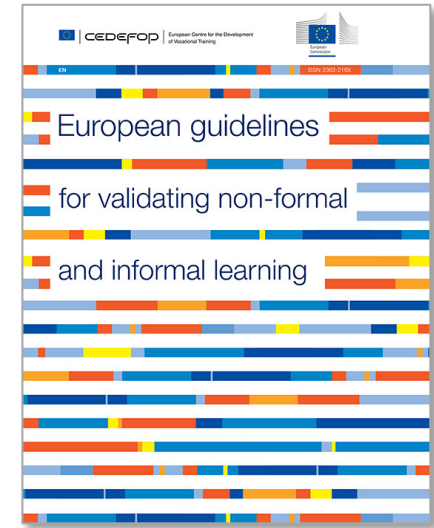


# RPL and National qualification systems and frameworks



# The European guidelines

- Assisting stakeholders by clarifying the different options and possible steps they face when establishing and operating validation arrangements
- Follow the principles outlined in the Recommendation in 2012



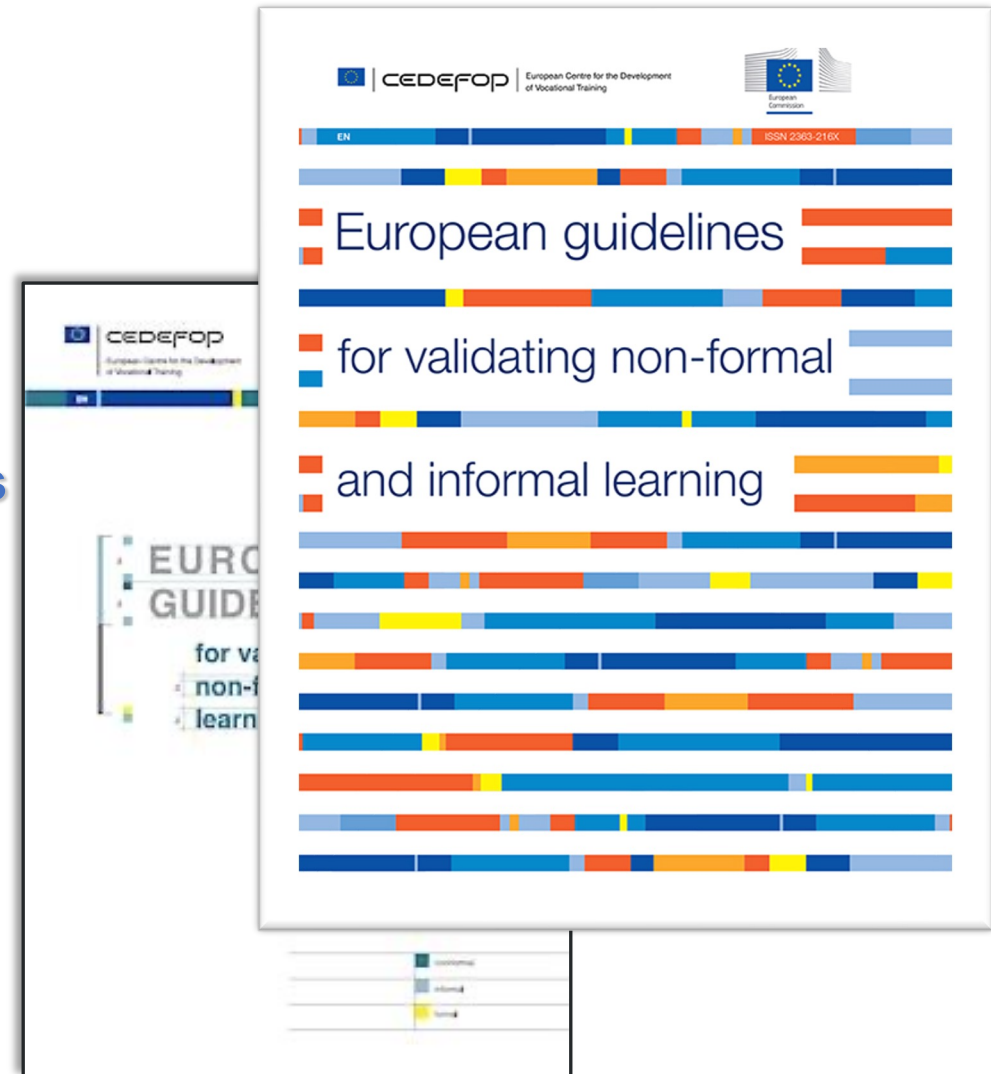
The guidelines acknowledge that any solution must be fit for purpose and that arrangements need to be designed according to the particular context in which they operate.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3073>

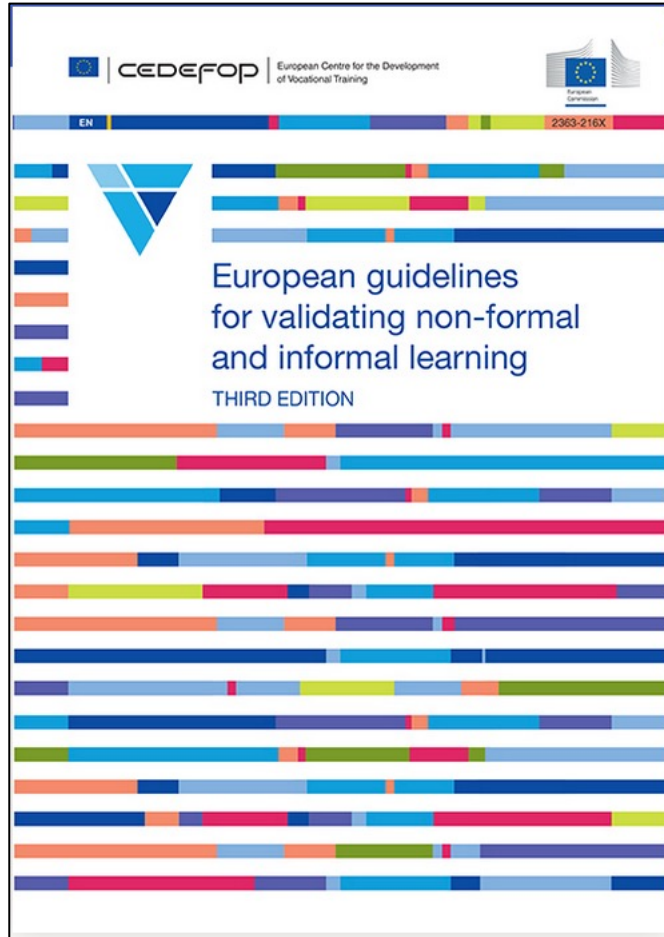


# The main principles

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: the new edition (2022)



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

## Chapter 1

### Purpose of the European guidelines

## Chapter 2

### A strategic vision: the individual at the centre

- 2.1. Centrality of the individual
- 2.2. Four phases of validation
  - 2.2.1. Identification
  - 2.2.2. Documentation
  - 2.2.3. Assessment
  - 2.2.4. Certification
- 2.3. Different purposes and benefits of validation

## Chapter 3

### Validation as a facilitator of individual, lifelong and life-wide learning

- 3.1. Validation contexts and transferability
  - 3.1.1. Validation in education and training
  - 3.1.2. Validation in the labour market
  - 3.1.3. Validation in the third sector
- 3.2. Validation in skills and lifelong learning strategies
- 3.3. Stakeholder involvement and coordination
- 3.4. Financing and cost
- 3.5. Validation professionals and their competences
  - 3.5.1. Counsellor/advisor
  - 3.5.2. Validation assessor
  - 3.5.3. Validation managers, administrators and external observers

## Chapter 4

### Validation provision elements

- 4.1. From learning outcomes to certification
  - 4.1.1. Learning outcomes
  - 4.1.2. Learning experiences, reference points and standards
  - 4.1.3. Validation in the context of changing qualifications and certificates
- 4.2. Information, awareness raising and outreach
- 4.3. Guidance and counselling
- 4.4. ICT and validation
- 4.5. Quality assurance

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### 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?

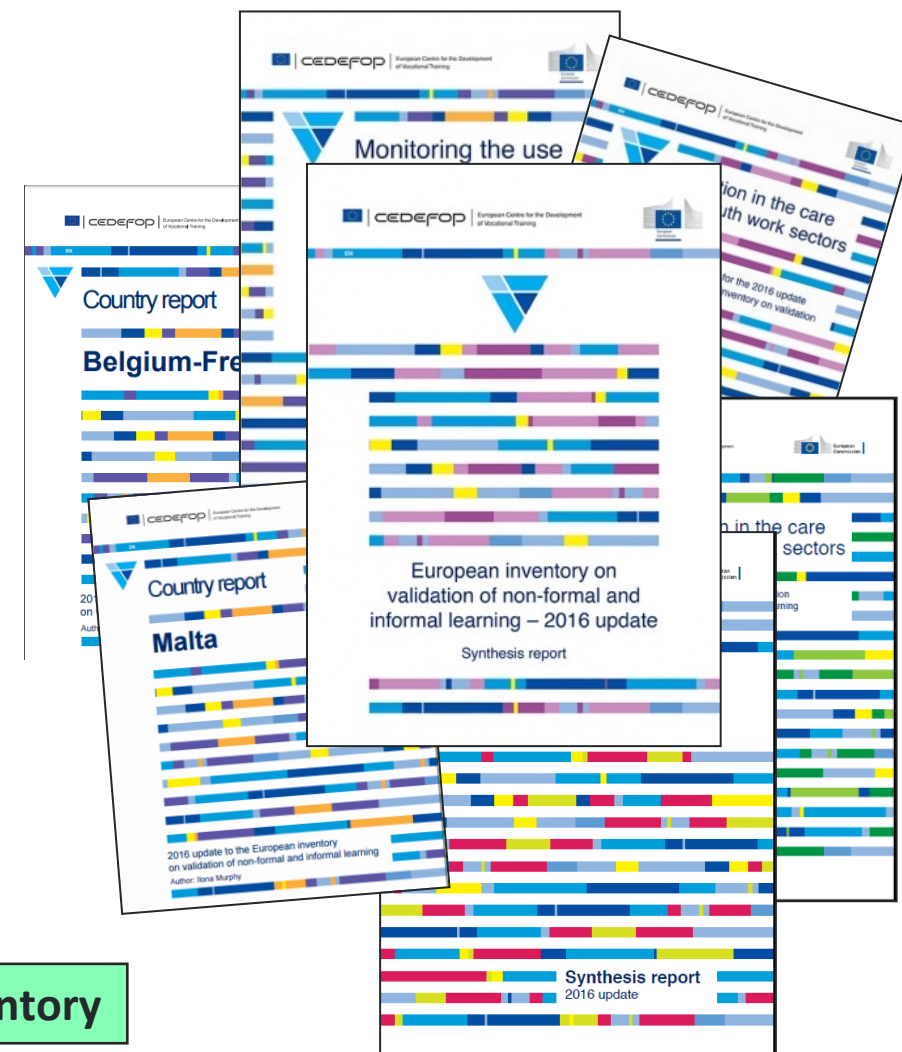


## Key questions on validation tools and techniques

- ❑ 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?

## 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](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory)

# Evaluation of the 2012 Recommendation

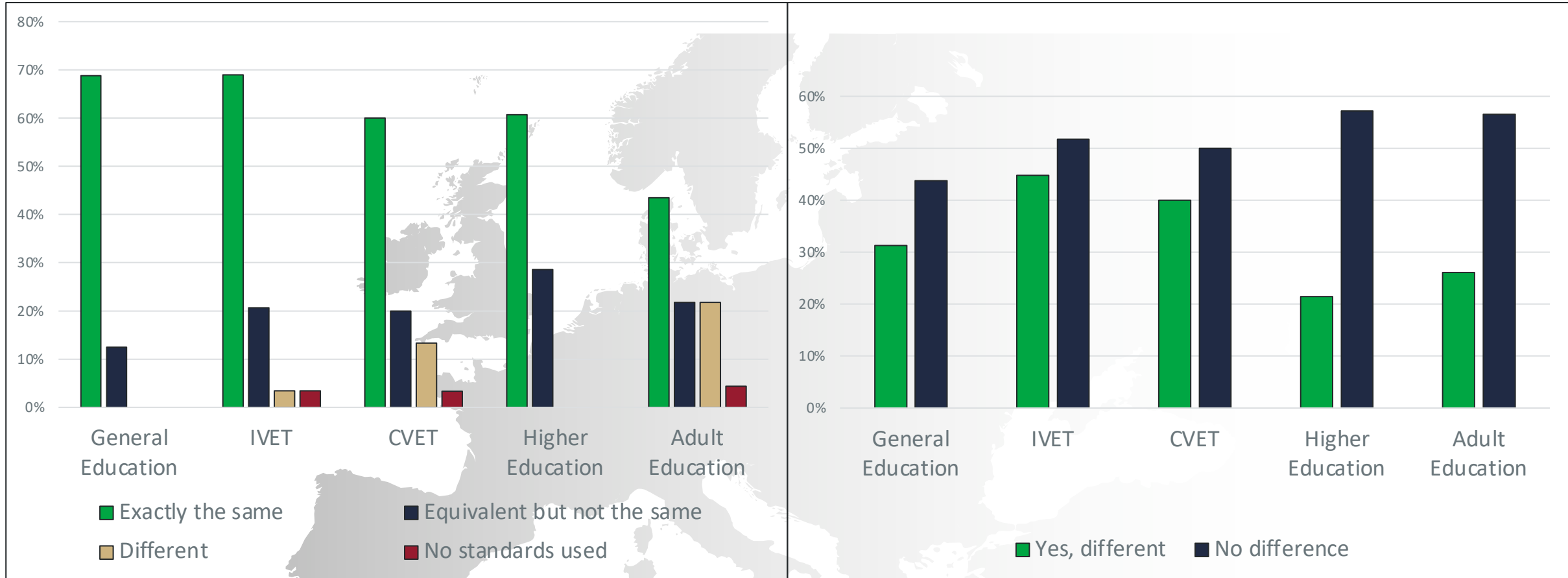
- All **Member States** have taken action;
- On the whole **more people** have **validation opportunities** and can find better information and **guidance** on validation;
- Wide agreement that in general **validation benefits justify its costs**;
- Wide consensus that the Recommendation is **consistent** 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

*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)*



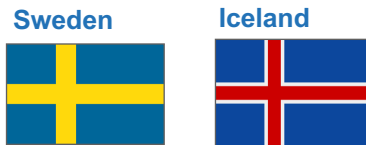
Source: European Inventory 2018

# Lessons learnt

*Some important elements*

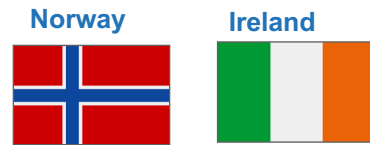
## Individual at the Center

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



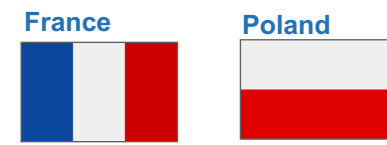
## Stakeholder involvement

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



## Using NQF and Learning outcomes

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



## Key Challenges

### 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





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- Villalba-García, E. (2021a). Validation of non-formal and informal learning: A next stage of development in Europe? Special issue for the *European Journal of Education*, 56(3). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12470>
- Villalba-García, E. (2021b). Validation of non-formal and informal learning: The hero with a thousand faces? *European Journal of Education*, 56(3), 351-364. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12468>
- Villalba-García, E. (2016). The Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning: implications for mobility, *Journal of international Mobility*, 4(1), 9-24. doi: <https://10.3917/jim.004.0009>
- Villalba-García, E., & Bjornavold, J. (2017). Validation of non-formal and informal learning: A reality in Europe? In Cedefop, ETF, & UNESCO (Eds.), *Global Inventory on NQFs, volume 1: Thematic chapters*. (pp. 72-82). <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/2221>

04

**RPL in Africa**

# RPL in Africa

*New verb:*

*“To RPL”*

*“I was RPLed”*

---







# African regional RPL policies and guidelines

## ACQF

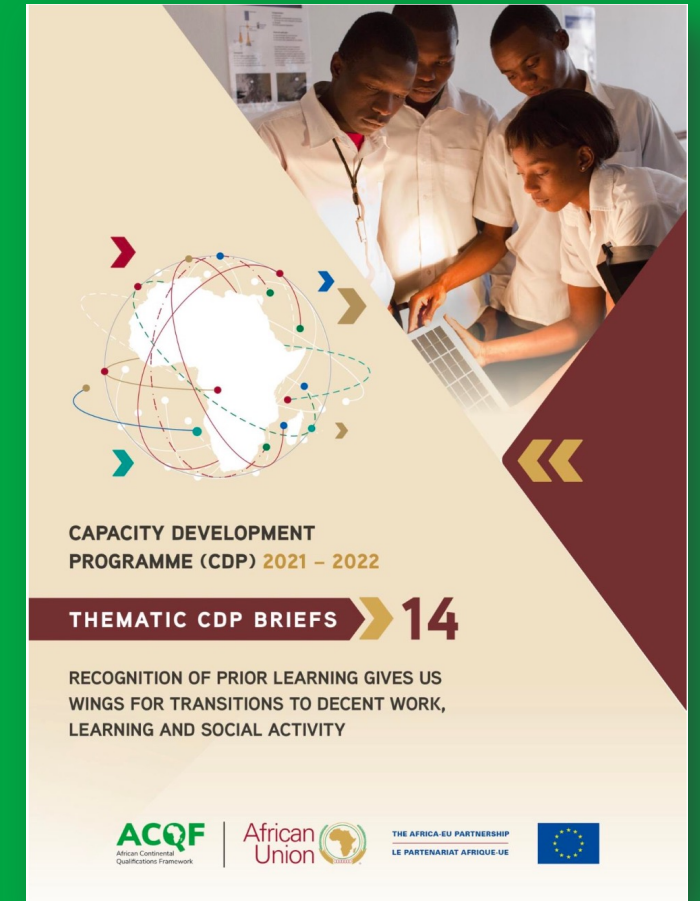
- ACQF Policy document (2023)
- Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning
- Training Module 4: Validation of Learning
- Thematic Brief
- Website Resource: RPL gives us wings

## SADCQF: RPL Guidelines

## EAC: RPL Policy



# ACQF RPL Survey 2023: some results



The image shows the cover of a thematic CDP brief. At the top, there is a photograph of four people (three men and one woman) in white shirts looking at a laptop. Below the photo is a graphic of a globe with a map of Africa in the center, surrounded by colorful dots and lines. To the right of the globe are several right-pointing arrows in red, blue, and green. Further right is a large double-left-pointing arrow in gold. The text on the cover is as follows:

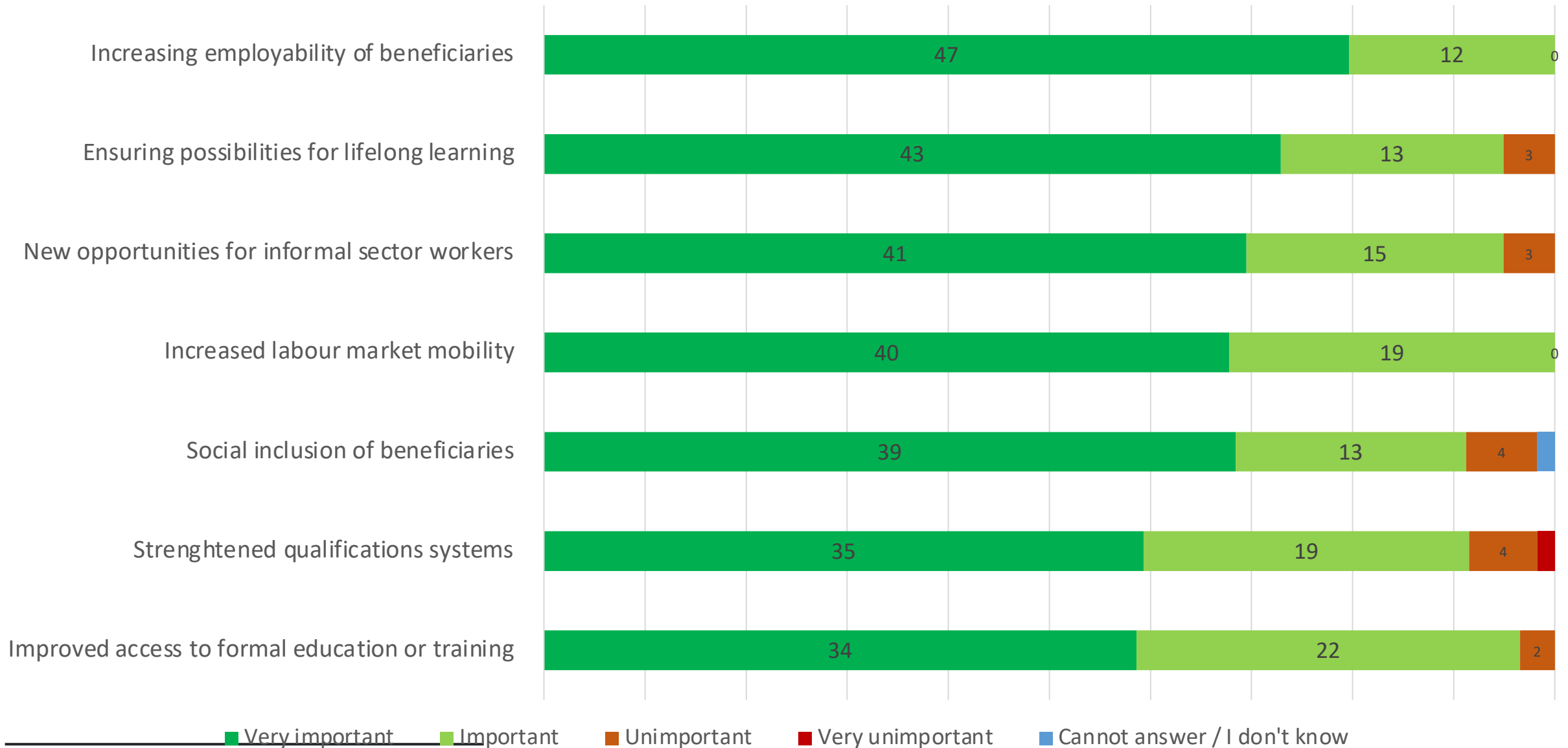
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021 – 2022

THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS >> 14

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

At the bottom, there are four logos: ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework), African Union, THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP / LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE, and the European Union flag.

# Main objectives of RPL

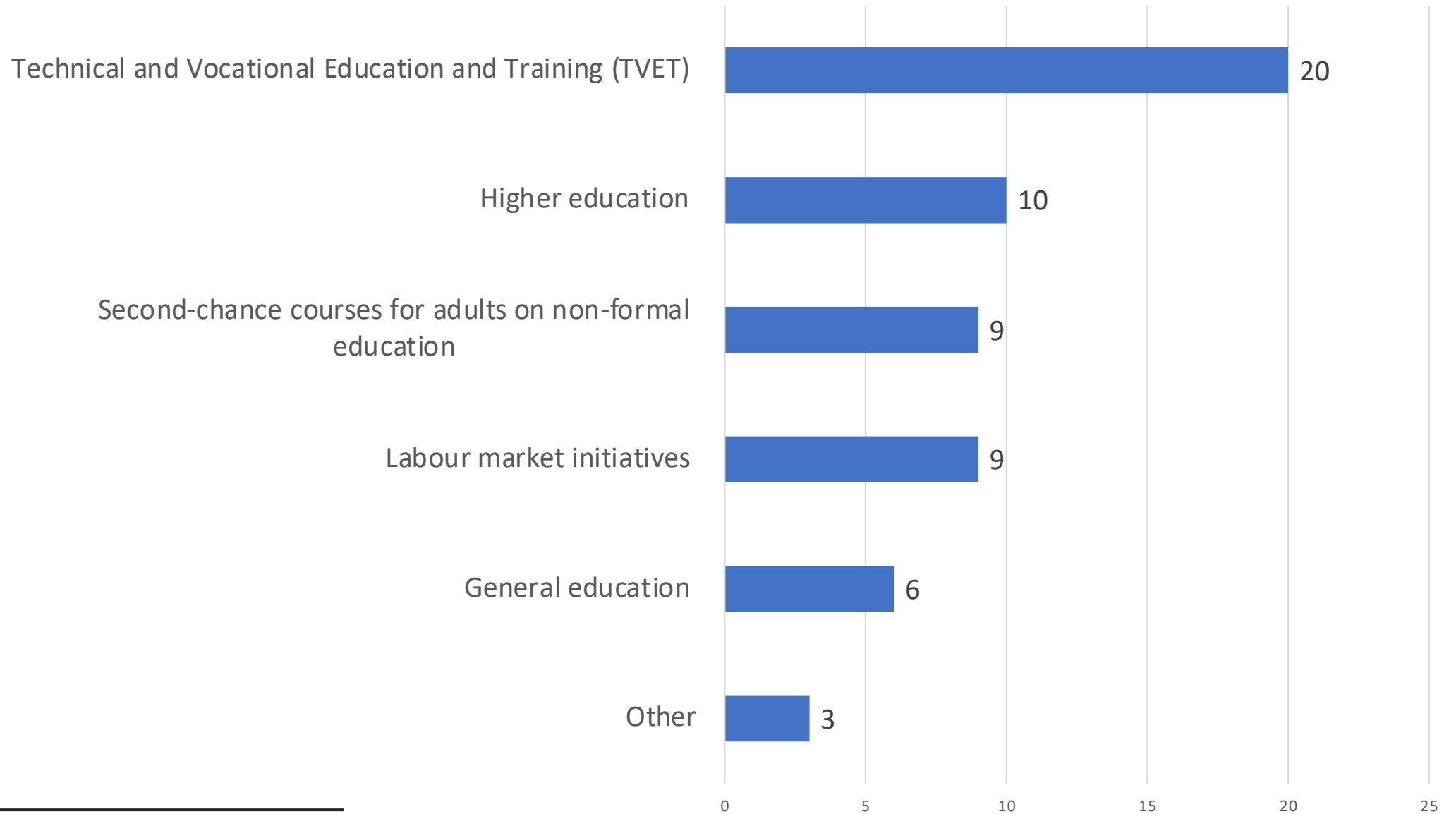




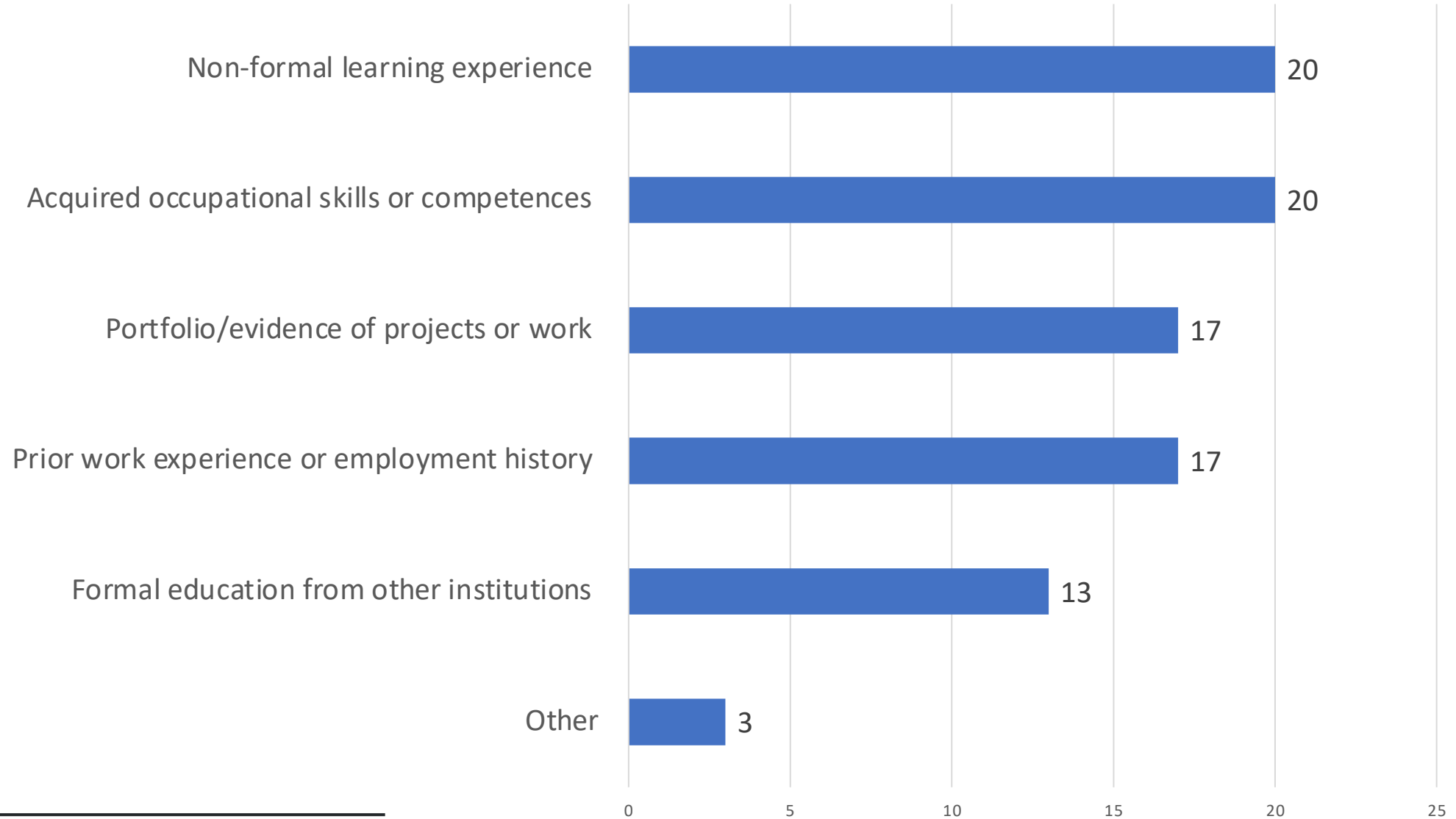
# Phases of RPL process

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

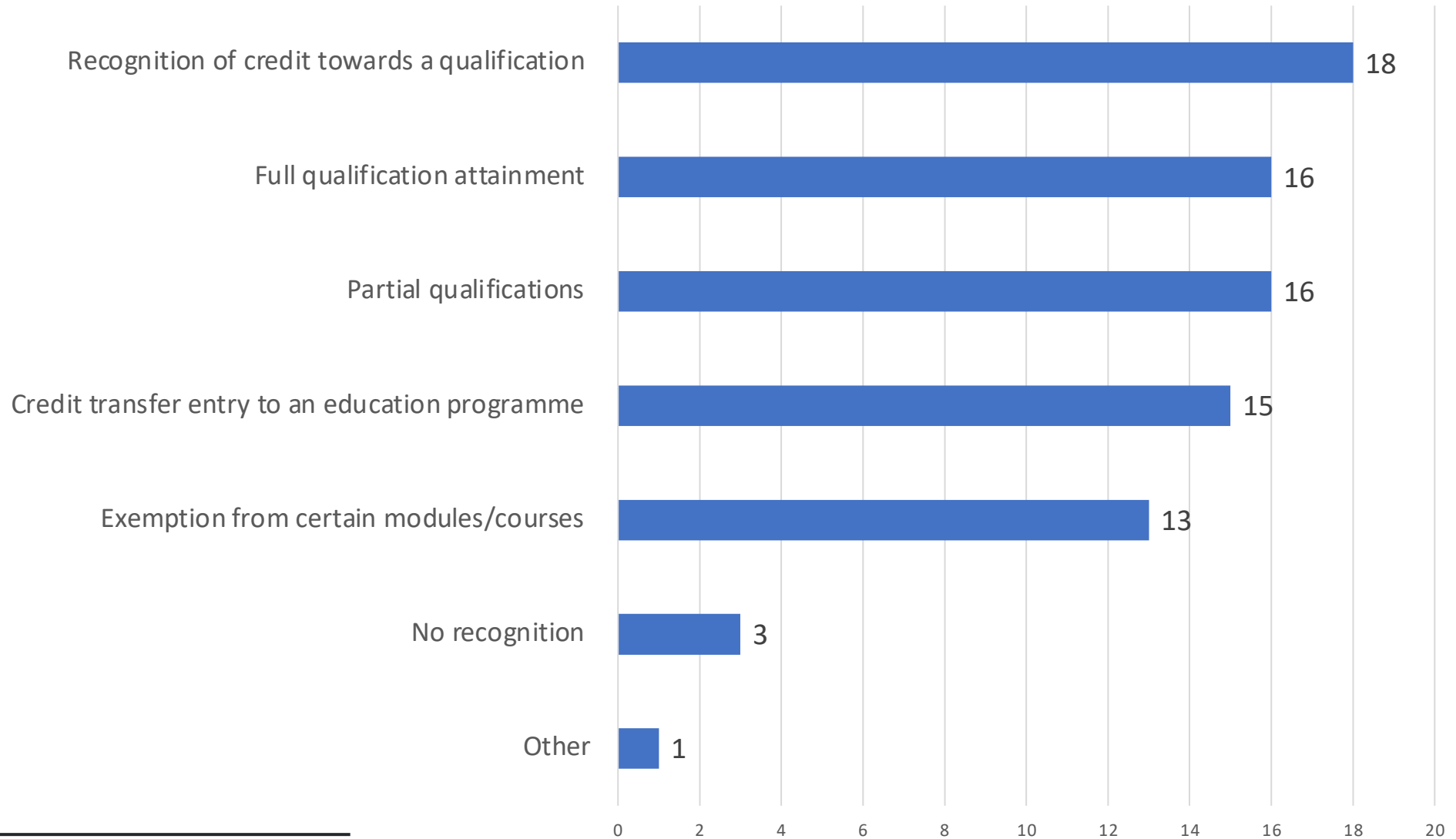
# RPL education and training sectors



# ACQF Survey: Types of learning outcomes accepted in RPL

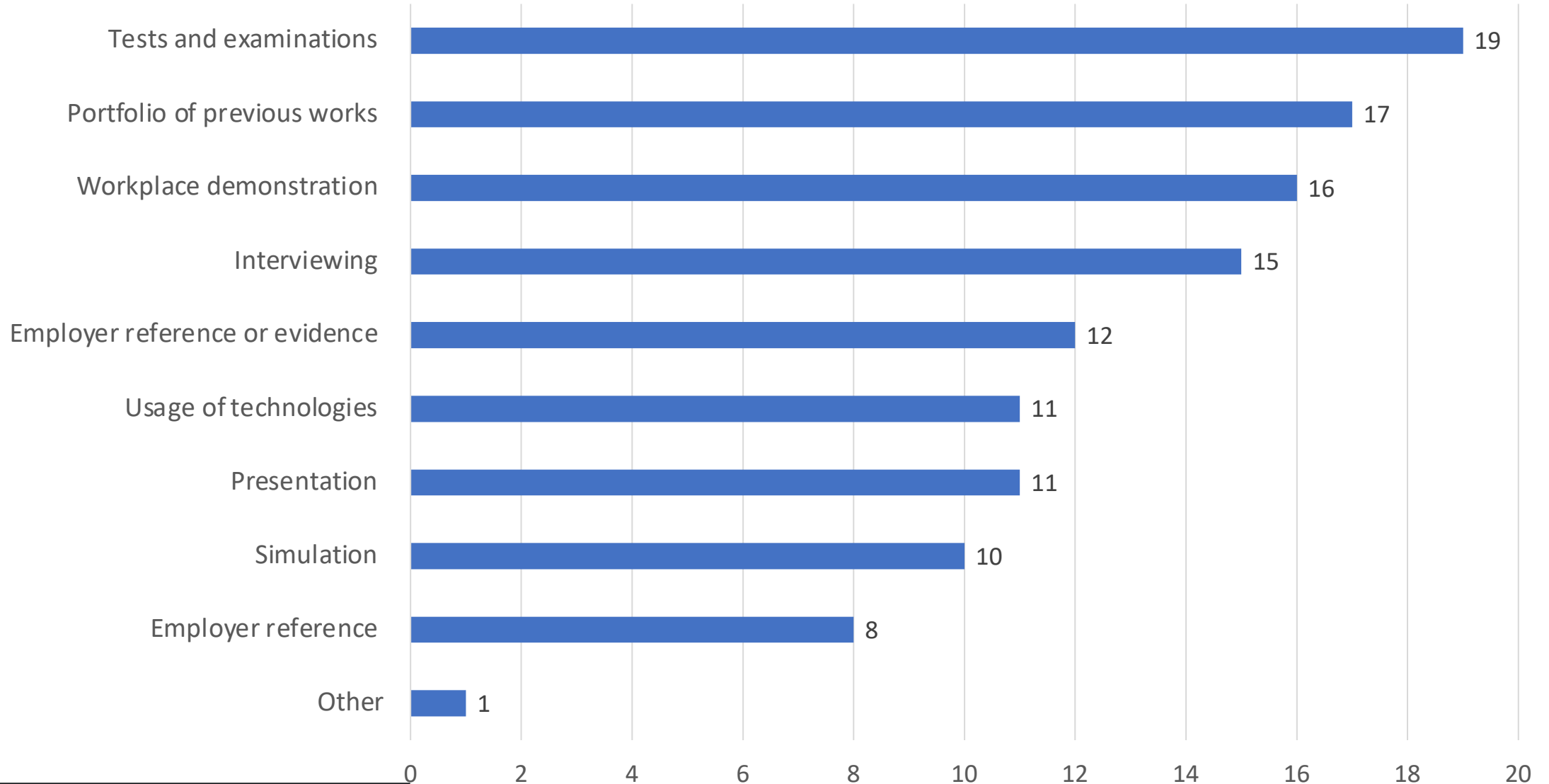


# ACQF Survey: outcomes from RPL processes





# ACQF Survey: used assessment tools / modes



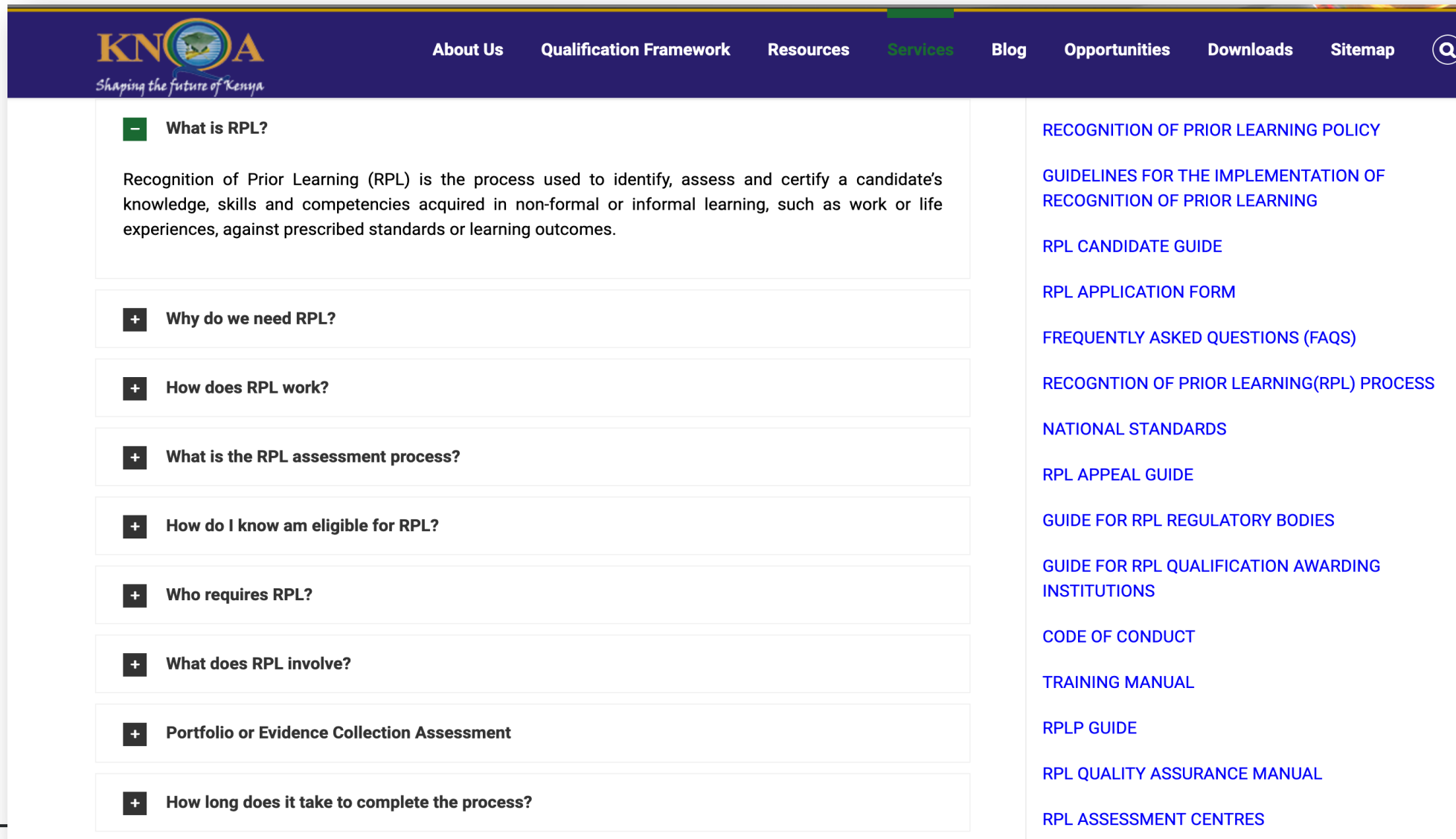
Kenya:

Comprehensive package of RPL policy and implementation tool





## Comprehensive package of RPL policy and implementation tools



The screenshot displays the KNQA website's navigation menu and a list of RPL-related topics. The navigation menu includes: About Us, Qualification Framework, Resources, Services, Blog, Opportunities, Downloads, Sitemap, and a search icon. The main content area features a list of topics, each with a plus sign icon, and a corresponding list of implementation tools on the right side.

**KNQA**  
Shaping the future of Kenya

[About Us](#) [Qualification Framework](#) [Resources](#) [Services](#) [Blog](#) [Opportunities](#) [Downloads](#) [Sitemap](#) [Search](#)

**- 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 \(FAQS\)](#)

[RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING\(RPL\) PROCESS](#)

[NATIONAL STANDARDS](#)

[RPL APPEAL GUIDE](#)

[GUIDE FOR RPL REGULATORY BODIES](#)

[GUIDE FOR RPL QUALIFICATION AWARDDING INSTITUTIONS](#)

[CODE OF CONDUCT](#)

[TRAINING MANUAL](#)

[RPLP GUIDE](#)

[RPL QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL](#)

[RPL ASSESSMENT CENTRES](#)

SEYCHELLES QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

National Guidelines for the Implementation of  
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

July 2017



Terça-feira, 17 de Agosto de 2021 I SÉRIE — Número 158



**BOLETIM DA REPÚBLICA**

PUBLICAÇÃO OFICIAL DA REPÚBLICA DE MOÇAMBIQUE

**Decreto n.º 58/2021**  
de 17 de Agosto

Havendo necessidade de dotar o Subsistema de Educação Profissional de normas e procedimentos, aplicados ao processo de reconhecimento de competências adquiridas, através de aprendizagem ao longo da vida, em contextos de trabalho, formação não formal e informal, ao abrigo do disposto no n.º 2 do artigo 15, da Lei n.º 23/2014, de 23 de Setembro, Lei de Educação Profissional, alterada e republicada pela Lei n.º 6/2016, de 16 de Junho, o Conselho de Ministros decreta:

ARTIGO 1

É aprovado o Sistema de Reconhecimento de Competências Adquiridas, abreviadamente designado SRCA, em anexo, que é parte integrante do presente Decreto.

ARTIGO 2

Compete ao titular superintende a área do ensino técnico profissional aprovar o Regulamento do Sistema de Reconhecimento de Competências Adquiridas, no prazo de 60 dias, a partir da data da publicação do presente Decreto.

ARTIGO 3

O presente Decreto entra em vigor na data da sua publicação.



**ORIENTAÇÕES METODOLÓGICAS PARA A  
IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO SISTEMA DE RECONHECIMENTO  
DE COMPETÊNCIAS ADQUIRIDAS (SRCA)**



Junho 2022



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR  
LEARNING GUIDELINES**



MAURITIUS QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

**Recognition of Prior Learning  
Guidelines**

June 2016



**National Policy and Criteria for the  
Implementation of  
Recognition of Prior Learning  
(Amended in March 2019)**

SEYCHELLES QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

National Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

February 2017



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

**RECOGNITION OF  
PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)**

**ASSESSORS GUIDE**



POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION OF  
PRIOR LEARNING IN ZAMBIA

JUNE 2016

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (VETA)



**GUIDELINES FOR  
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR  
LEARNING ASSESSMENT  
(RPLA) IN TANZANIA**



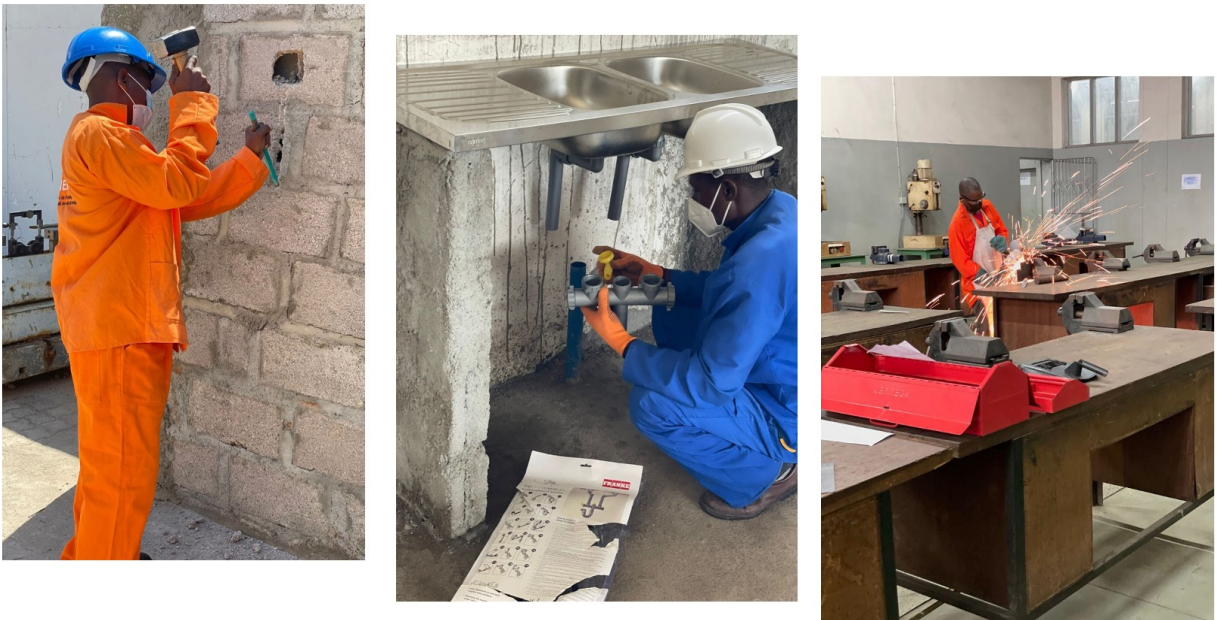


RPL is not only assessment! It is process...

RPL in Mozambique – NQF Professional

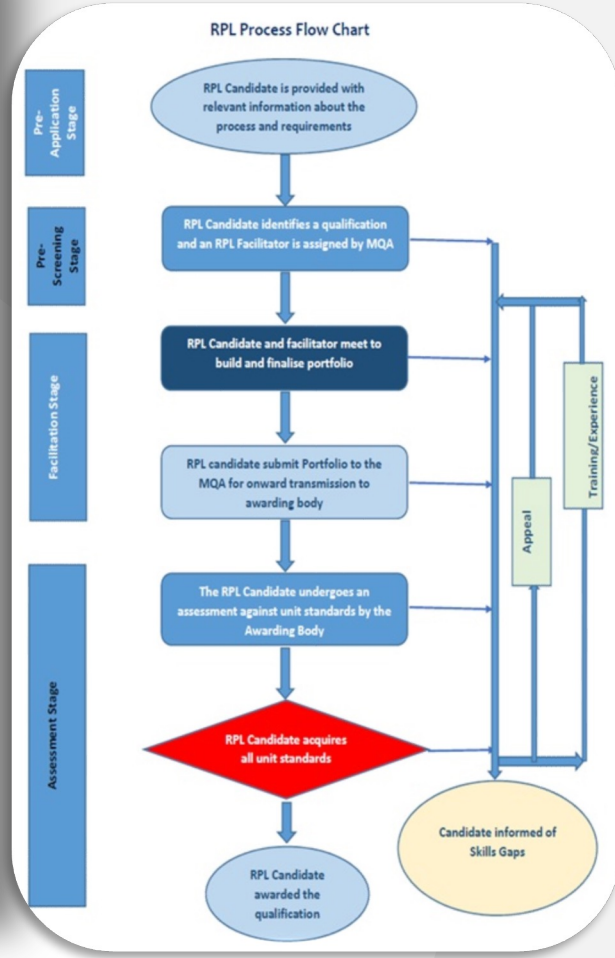


Assessment Tests in the Pilot Project:

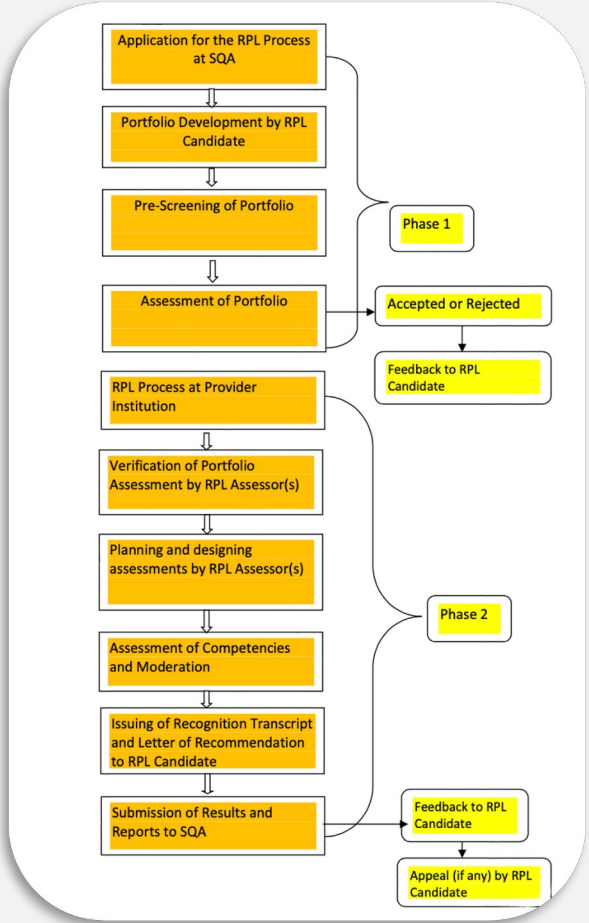


POR UMA EDUCAÇÃO PARA O TRABALHO E DESENVOLVIMENTO DO PAÍS

Mozambique



Mauritius



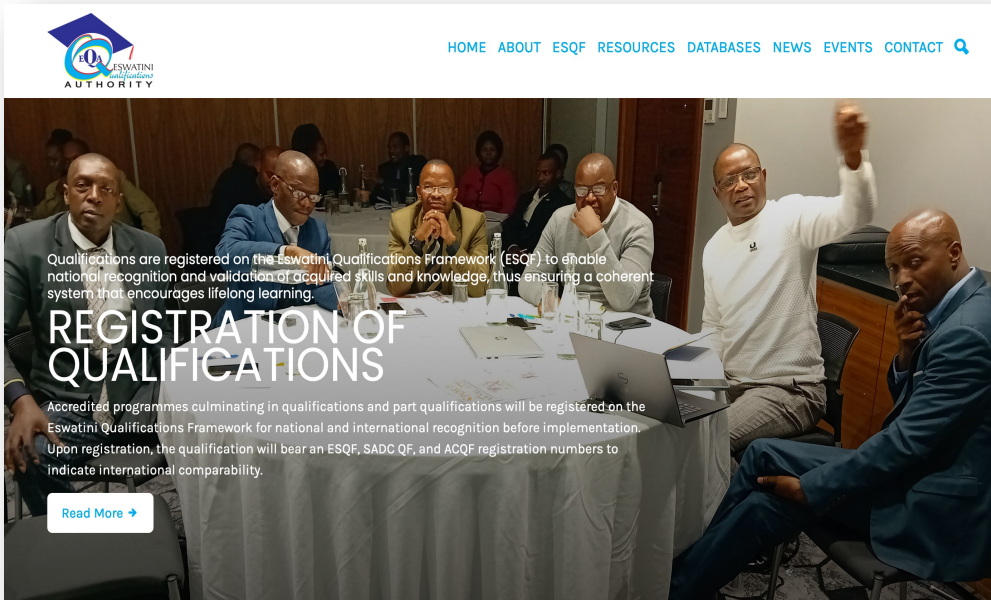
Seychelles



**Example: Eswatini RPL Policy Document – in consultation**

# 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

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# 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

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# 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)

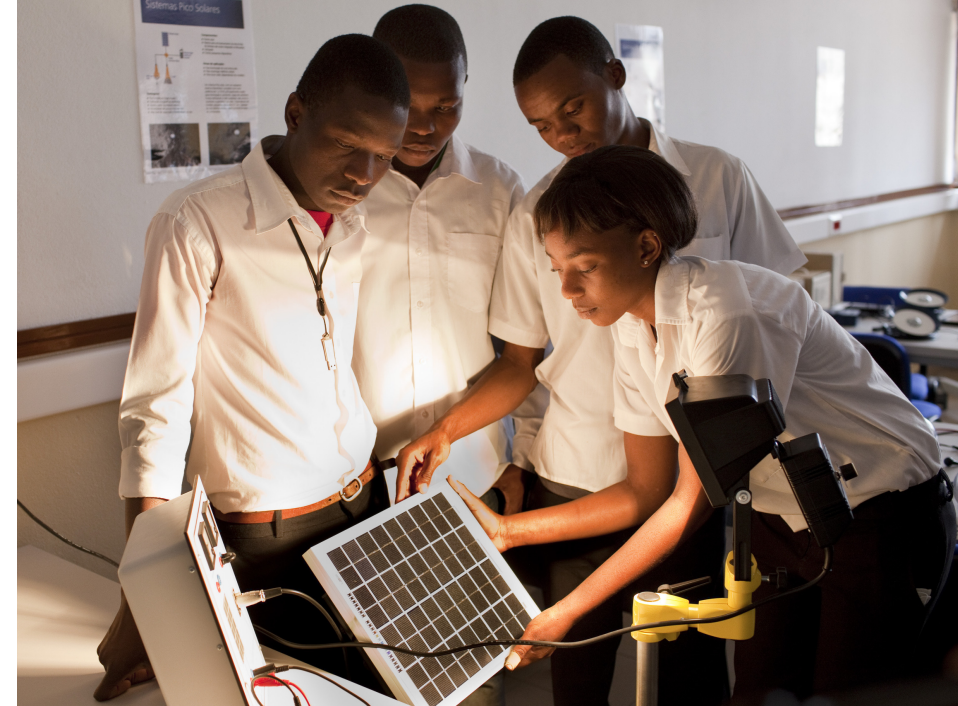
9. Quality Assurance

10. Appeals procedure

11. Continued professional development of assessors

12. Promotion of RPL

13. Collaboration with stakeholders



# Chapter 6: Principles of RPL Policy

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# Chapter 6: Principles of RPL Policy

1. Broad principles
2. Operating principles



# Chapter 6: Broad Principles of RPL Policy

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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

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# 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.

- 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

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# Chapter 7: RPL process (1)

## 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.

# Chapter 7: RPL process (2)

## Key contextual operationalisation steps

- The different stages an individual applicant goes through 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 is where it all comes together. For the sake of clarity, this document will call this stage “final assessment”.
-

Stages	Purposes
<b>Initial information and guidance</b>	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
<b>Administrative registration</b>	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)
<b>Application screening and eligibility</b>	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)
<b>Preparation of the final assessment</b>	Understanding what the final assessment is about
	Elaborating a portfolio of competences, and/or documenting learning outcomes
<b>Assessment (of learning outcomes and competences)</b>	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)
<b>Certification (of competences)</b>	Interview with the panel of assessors
	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 10: Implementation Strategy for RPL

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# Chapter 10: Implementation strategy

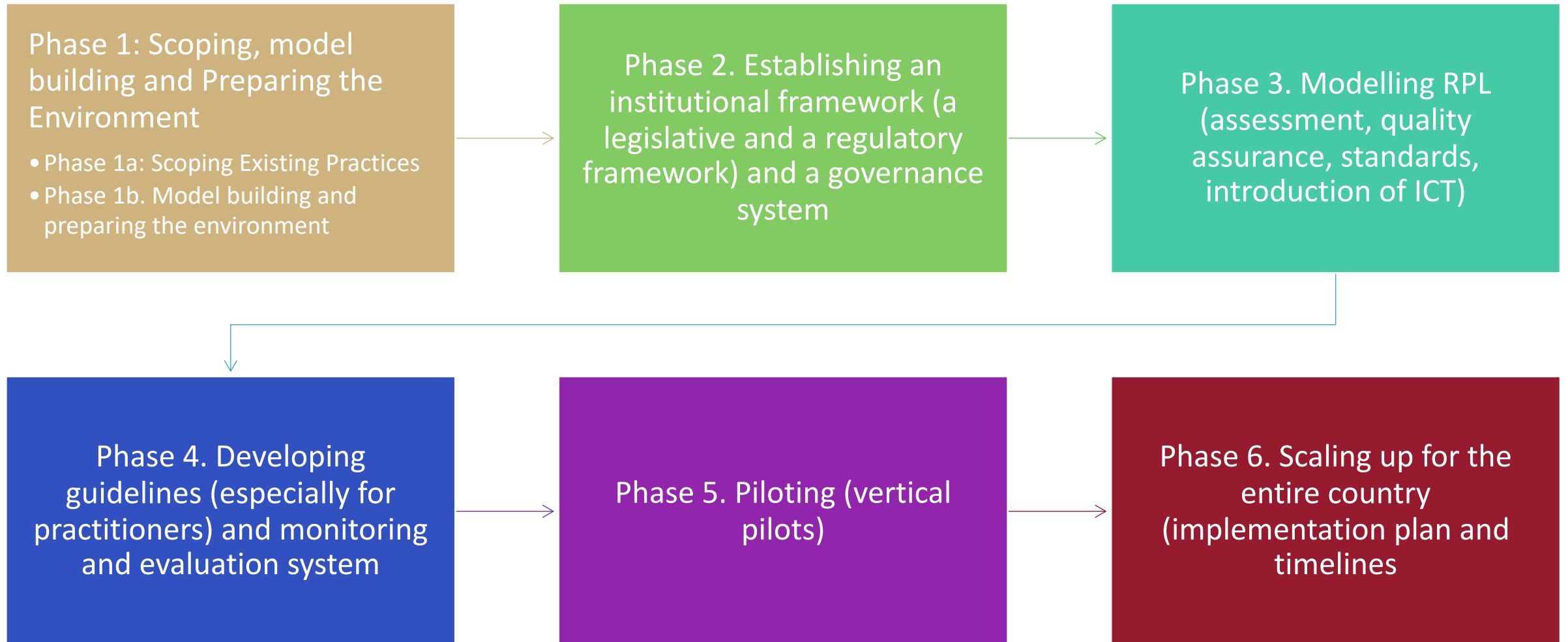
## • Features of the strategy

- 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)



# Chapter 11: Risks and opportunities

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# 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 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.

# Chapter 13: Piloting (2)

- **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

# Thank you

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Qualifications Framework