

INVENTORY ON THE VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Country Factsheet 2023: Kosovo

Disclaimer

© European Training Foundation, 2023

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
CONTEXT AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	4
POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	5
INSTITUTIONAL SETUP AND COLLABORATION	6
BENEFICIARIES AND IMPACT	7
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	8

Context and stage of development

The Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) is an important instrument in a country's comprehensive development policy aimed at qualifying labour force. In Kosovo, it is at a relatively early stage, as it is implemented on a small scale. It has the necessary mechanisms and instruments, in terms of legal infrastructure and trained human resources, to extend the process which at the end benefits individuals in need of the VNFIL services. The VNFIL system which has been established in Kosovo aims to upskill the labour force and increase the employment rates and is defined as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The legislation for the RPL includes general principles, responsibilities and clear procedures for the implementation of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, at all levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), including not only vocational education and training (VET) but also higher education (HE), with the exception of general education (GE). However, the current implementation is limited to vocational qualifications up to NQF level 5.

Due to the country specifics, priority has been given to the VET sector over HE, and specifically to Continuous VET (CVET), in order to support individual's entry into or progress in the labour market, given the high unemployment rates and underdeveloped labour market. The official recognition of their skills and competences through the validation is expected to support their entry into the labour market and consequently the employment rates.

Adult Education is part of CVET in Kosovo, because even though the age group that can enter CVET are people of 16+ years of age who lost their chance to enter the formal long-term education, such as a general high school or a vocational school, or those who need requalification, people who participate in CVET are mainly adults.

The HE subsector has not advanced further with policy and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms for the VNFIL/RPL for HE qualifications.

The VNFIL/RPL is linked to the NQF through the qualifications standards, learning outcomes, the credit system and the modular curricula. The RPL process concerns qualifications that are included in the NQF. The certificates of the CVET qualifications that are awarded through the VNFIL/RPL are equal to those acquired after completion of a programme in the formal education and training system, up to level 5 of the Kosovo Qualifications Framework (KQF).

The RPL in Kosovo is considered one of the active labour market measures (ALMP) and included in the labour sector policies with dedicated budget lines assuring that it can be offered to the unemployed persons without charge.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

The Law No. 03 / L-060 on National Qualifications in the Republic of Kosovo, approved in 2008, aims to improve the assessment of qualifications, including preparations for the RPL. This law was followed by the endorsement of the NQF in 2011 and the development of the first Administrative Instructions issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in 2014, with the guidelines on the benefits and utilisation of the RPL.

In 2017 a comprehensive and detailed policy document on the RPL was devised and set the grounds for further work, such as the 2019 Administrative Instruction containing more details of institutional accreditation processes and completing the legal basis needed for implementation of RPL.

The Law (No. 04/L-205) on the EARK, Article 8: Duties and Responsibilities of VTCs, considers RPL as one of the tasks of these public institutions catering to the needs of unemployed.

During the last three years, several handbooks and guidelines were produced to train and prepare the network of RPL professionals, institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, etc. and several capacity-building and awareness-raising activities were organised with the support of development projects implemented by the DVV International (DVVI) and the European Union (EU)/ Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency (LuxDev).

Institutional setup and collaboration

The map of the main stakeholders in Kosovo involved in design, implementation and QA of the VNFIL processes is composed of various governmental institutions, but also other institutions which support the process of the VNFIL development.

The key stakeholders are: **the MEST** – which has the key role to approve the policy and legal basis on the VNFIL; the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) – which, as one of the key institutions, is leading the policy-making design and implementation of the VNFIL system within VET, including accrediting RPL providers; and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) – which is responsible for the implementation of the RPL in the HE sector.

Other contributing stakeholders are the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK) which operates Vocational Training Centres targeting primarily unemployed, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and national and international Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) as well as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the RPL service providers.

According to the 2019 Administrative Instruction, accredited RPL providers can be VET providers who offer qualifications at levels 1-5 of the NQF. Currently, there are seven (7) accredited RPL providers, including public and private ones. Further seven (7) Vocational Training Centres under EARK have applied to NQA for accreditation as RPL providers for qualifications at levels 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework.

Additionally contributing key stakeholders are projects and international development initiatives implemented by EU/LuxDev, European Training Foundation (ETF), DVVI, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), etc, who are providing support with their international experience and technical assistance. There is definitely a good level of coordination between the main stakeholders in the field of VNFIL, especially in the VET sector. One of the key established mechanisms of coordination is the Governing Council of the NQA which is composed of thirteen (13) members, approved by the Government of Kosovo, who represent ministries, social partners and universities.

Beneficiaries and impact

The RPL system is at the initial stage of its implementation. The regulatory framework of the RPL is designed and expected to offer services to disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, early school leavers, low qualified adults, etc. Currently, only a small number of individuals has been certified through the RPL, i.e. 24 people in 2022. The data for 2023 are not yet available.

According to the 2019 Administrative Instruction, Article 8, one of the criteria is that the monitoring of benefits will be performed by the providers themselves. One of the tasks of the NQA during their QA visits to the providers is to observe that this monitoring is carried out. However, even though the RPL benefits are stated in the regulatory framework and accepted by all the stakeholders through their engagement, there is no national-level or central system in place to collect data or evidence of these benefits yet.

Challenges and opportunities

The VNFIL/RPL system in Kosovo sets a good example for how planned and structural interventions can be developed gradually with the support of development partners and projects and with the ownership and leadership of the national authorities. Starting with the preparation phase and steps towards the legal framework, awareness raising among all stakeholders, capacity building of human resources, and finally piloting – all this contributed to the creation of a shared vision and understanding.

The noteworthy developments include the e-accreditation process for RPL providers, as well as the digital platform for pre-enrolment for individuals which aims at collecting information on the demand for RPL qualifications. These interventions can support scaling up of the validation system.

Another development is that RPL has been included as one of the Active Labour Market Measures. This is a very unique solution which assures additional, dedicated funding and supports reaching out to vulnerable target groups.

Nevertheless, these developments are accompanied by some challenges:

- Insufficient capacities of the NQA for the processing of qualifications and the process of including the on NQF (including the verification and approval of the professional standards) are an obstacle to answering quickly to the dynamic changes occurring in the labour market; This can be addressed by the strengthening of NQA and by the development of more streamlined and automated processes for those tasks that can be done independently by the providers and practitioners.
- Higher and more active involvement of the private sector (employers and employers' organisations) in the implementation of the RPL services for individuals can be advantageous, especially for the usage of their facilities and equipment.
- Higher and more active involvement of civil society organisations in the implementation of the RPL services for individuals can be advantageous, especially for reaching out to target groups which do not always have access to information or education and training.
- Accreditation of the public VET providers is considered a challenge by some stakeholders, due to the considerably high standards of the accreditation criteria which might discourage providers from applying.
- The price or cost of the RPL services for the individual candidates is left to the discretion of the accredited RPL provider, possibly making the RPL service too costly to afford. Furthermore, sustainable financing for the costs of the RPL practitioners (e.g. external assessors) and candidates coming from vulnerable target groups, especially in the public system remains a challenge. More financial support for the RPL services offered by the public providers is therefore needed. Including RPL as active labour measure under the employment services to be offered free of charge by the VTCs sets a good example in this regard.
- Implementation of the VNFIL/RPL in general education remains a challenge, as neither the secondary legislation nor the policy for validation addresses it, and no specific steps have been taken. However, the MEST first needs to investigate the demand for such a service.

Overall, the current progress in the VNFIL/RPL services in Kosovo is very positive and its challenges represent many opportunities for further developments in the VNFIL/RPL services provision.