



**Autoriteti Kombëtar i Kualifikimeve
Nacionalni Autoritet za Kualifikacije
National Qualification Authority**

*Implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on
Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning*

One-off report: Kosovo



Written by:
Teuta Danuza

Edited by:
Milot Hasangjekaj

The process of developing the one-off report was supported by:
European Training Foundation – ETF





Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	4
Introduction.....	5
General features of the validation arrangements.....	6
Legal Framework.....	6
Institutional Framework.....	7
Target group.....	8
Benefits from the RPL.....	8
Support to individuals and process of validation.....	9
Financing and Costs.....	14
Coherence of validation arrangements and results of validation including full qualifications/partial qualifications.....	16
Role of stakeholders in the validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	18
Quality assurance and monitoring.....	20
Challenges and next steps.....	24
References.....	26
Literature:.....	26
Sources:.....	27
Participants at the validation workshop:.....	27



Abbreviations and Acronyms

BC	British Council
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
DVVI	DVV International
EARK	Employment Agency of Republic of Kosova
ETF	European Training Foundation
GE	General Education
HE	Higher Education
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
KAA	Kosovo Accreditation Agency
KQF	Kosovo Qualifications Framework
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning



Introduction

The process of design of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) system has commenced in Kosovo in 2011, with the endorsement of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the development of the first guidelines on the benefits and uses of so-called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) based on the legal infrastructure.¹ It aims to upskill the labour force appropriately and increase employment rates.

Since then the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) with the support of the European Training Foundation (ETF), British Council (BC) and DVV International (DVVI), has developed national policies, secondary legislation and training modules for the implementation of RPL. The developed policies and secondary legislation have been approved at national level. ETF has been closely involved supporting this process since 2015 up till now specifically for the implementation of validation in Vocational Education and Training (VET), given it is the priority sector in Kosovo. While, BC and DVVI have been involved in developing capacity building activities for the implementation of the RPL. The developed policies and secondary legislation have been approved at national level. The validation system has been developed as a result of close cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders and in line with the Council Recommendation on VNFIL² taking into account the country context.

Currently, Kosovo is at the beginning of the implementation of validation in VET.

The report outlooks at the current state and initiatives taken in regard to the validation system in Kosovo. The structure of the report is designed based on the recommendations proposed by the European Qualifications Framework - EQF advisory group³ and consists of six chapters.

The process of drafting the report was conducted in close consultation with different stakeholders interviewed during the drafting process and a joint workshop with all the relevant stakeholder in Kosovo to discuss the final report. Furthermore, the report was reviewed by national and international experts.

¹ The development of the NQF was supported by an EU funded project KOSVET V - Development of VET quality assurance, accreditation and development of the National Qualifications Authority and the National Qualification Framework.

² Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)

³ AG41-5 Note on VNFIL

General features of the validation arrangements

Kosovo has developed a national policy on VNFIL that covers VET and Higher Education (HE) but excludes General Education (GE). GE is not yet ready to move ahead with validation, as the development of a learning outcome-based curriculum was only initiated in 2011, followed by the start of the full-scale implementation in 2017.

Priority has been given to the VET sector over HE, and specifically to Continuous VET (CVET) in order to support individual's entry or progress in the labour market given the high unemployment rates and underdeveloped labour market. The latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS Q1 2019) indicates that 51.3% out of 26.9 % of unemployed, were without formal education.⁴ Therefore, official recognition of their skills and competence through validation is expected to support their entry to the labour market and consequently the unemployment/employment rates.

With the support of ETF, policy has been developed specifically for the implementation of the validation in VET covering both Initial (IVET) and CVET. As CVET is given priority in Kosovo, secondary legislation for accreditation of these VET providers has been developed first. With the endorsement of this secondary legislation in June 2019 the implementation of RPL is expected to commence this year with the accreditation of interested providers. The existing policy is compliant with the Council Recommendation on VNFIL.


Legal Framework

VNFIL is regulated by the Law Nr. 03/L-060 on National Qualifications in Republic of Kosovo endorsed by the parliament in 2008. One of the main objectives of the law stipulates the need to improve assessment, including the recognition of prior learning. The term for validation used in the law is "Recognition of Prior Learning - RPL" and it is defined as a process of assessing knowledge, skills and competence of an individual acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Considering the post-war context, the formal learning is incorporated for the individuals who are not able to evidence their formal learning through certificates, diplomas or other relevant official documents.

Deriving from the law, two bylaws were developed and endorsed by the Minister of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology as follows:

- Administrative Instruction No 31/2014 for recognition of prior learning endorsed in 2014. It outlines scope, general provisions, principles, responsibilities and procedures for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, within all the levels of the NQF including VET and HE as well.

⁴ Agency of Statistics in Kosovo, 2019 <http://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/labor-force-survey-in-kosovo-q1-2019>

- 
- Administrative instruction No. 09/2019 on criteria and procedures for the accreditation of institutions that implement recognition of prior learning in Kosovo, endorsed in 2019. It outlines principles, responsibilities and procedures for accreditation of VET providers to implement RPL. However, it includes only the accreditation of CVET qualifications and does not cover IVET qualifications.

Both administrative instructions are in alignment with the Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning.

Institutional Framework

The institutional framework of implementation of RPL in Kosovo is quite complex and shared between a numbers of stakeholders.

When it comes to policy making, NQA is the main overarching body responsible for the design and development of the national RPL policies for all the types of qualifications in the NQF. It has a central role in coordinating all the relevant stakeholders involved in RPL concerning the development of the legal provisions based on the national policies. Whereas MEST is responsible for the endorsement of the legal framework developed by the NQA, the minister of the MEST endorses the bylaws developed by the NQA.


When it comes to the quality assurance of implementation of RPL in different educational subsectors, the responsibility is shared among the following institutions:

The NQA is responsible for the development of a quality assurance mechanism for RPL arrangements in VET. The policy for the implementation of RPL in VET and by law for the accreditation of VET providers to implement RPL have been developed and endorsed.

The KAA is responsible for the development of a quality assurance mechanism for RPL arrangements in HE and is in charge for overseeing RPL practices in the respective subsector. As RPL is not a priority in this subsector at this moment no initiatives have been taken to develop quality assurance mechanisms.

The MEST is responsible for the development of a quality assurance mechanism for RPL arrangements in the general education and is in charge for overseeing RPL practices in the respective subsector. As in HE there are other priorities in this subsector and therefore up to date no initiatives have been taken to develop these quality assurance mechanisms.

The implementation of RPL in VET and HE subsector based on the legal provisions is exclusivity of providers accredited to implement RPL. Providers accredited by the NQA/KAA to implement RPL in VET/HE are responsible for awareness raising, providing information, advice and guidance, supporting the candidate in the process of documentation of evidence and organising the assessment of the candidates.



Potential providers of RPL are public and private training providers, companies, enterprises, VET schools and other providers that meet the accreditation criteria to implement RPL based on National Vocational Qualifications.

Related to RPL, the EARK is responsible to run an instrument called “Unemployment Card” targeting registered job-seekers. It includes data about the employment and education-training background of the candidate but it lacks data on competences gained outside formal system. Furthermore, outcomes of skills audit are not so visible nor credible to the employers.

Target group

According to the regulatory framework the implementation of RPL aims at the following individuals:⁵

- adults returning to the education and training process;
- persons who need to have their skills, obtained through informal and non-formal learning, at work or in their community, formally recognized;
- candidates intending to update their qualifications;
- candidates seeking re-training on a specific qualification;
- candidates who have qualifications issued by the NQA that are not included in the NQF;
- candidates intending to be certified in qualifications that are included in the National Qualifications Framework.

Benefits from the RPL

Implementation of RPL aims at the following benefits for different stakeholders:⁶

Benefits for learners:

- entry to a programme of study as an alternative route to normal entry requirements;
- exemptions from modules in a training programme;
- entry to a programme at the most appropriate level for their knowledge and skills;
- supports transfer from informal to formal learning;
- increased opportunities on the labour market;
- supports visibility of skills and knowledge gained;
- increased self-confidence and motivation towards learning;
- RPL can help learners identify possible progression routes to build on prior learning.

Benefits for providers:

- improved relevance of the training programmes for learners;
- supports responsiveness of the training programmes to demands of the labour market (teachers can learn about developments in the workplace from students and social partners involved in RPL);

⁵ Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Republic of Kosovo, page 11

⁶ Administrative Instruction No 31/2014 for prior learning recognition

- improved access to vocational training for more learners;
- supports diversity of the learners (learners with work experience);
- increased attractiveness of VET;
- supports partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders and institutions responsible for enabling access to employment and education and training pathways.

Benefits for employers:

- employees knowledge and skills are identified, and can form the basis for planning further skills development and workforce development;
- employees may have their skills officially recognized at national level;
- supports motivation and interest of employees;
- shortening of the training programme (time away from the workplace is reduced).

Support to individuals and process of validation

Candidates interested to claim achievement through the RPL route will need to approach providers accredited to implement RPL. One of the roles of accredited providers is to employ specific awareness raising campaigns in order to reach out to individuals who are not yet or less aware of RPL opportunities. After approaching a provider accredited for the RPL, candidates will be supported by the RPL practitioners. RPL practitioners are employees in the accredited providers with appropriate experience to support the RPL process. Different roles of RPL practitioners are distinguished throughout the process:

• RPL coordinator

The RPL coordinator is in charge of coordinating the development of internal institutional policies and regulation in regard to the RPL process such as: description of the RPL process and its phases for the candidate, short description of the qualification with the modules and outcomes for the candidate to enable them to better prepare the documentation and get ready for the assessment, internal assessment regulation that contains clear instructions in regard to the assessment process, internal quality assurance processes etc. Furthermore, the coordinator is responsible for raising awareness on RPL opportunities and provide general information on: identification, documentation of the evidence, assessment process and instruments, certification, appeals procedures, confidentiality and personal data treatment and costs of RPL.

• RPL mentor

The RPL mentor is responsible to mentor the candidate throughout the entire process of RPL by advising and guiding the candidate on gathering and organising the evidence of the portfolio according to the learning outcomes of the modules assessed and validity of the evidence prior to the assessment. After the assessment, the mentor will inform the candidate on the results achieved and on the further steps to follow.

• RPL internal and external assessor

The assessors are responsible to assess the evidence gathered and claimed by the candidate required for the module or qualification the candidate would like to acquire through RPL. Furthermore, they are responsible to design the final assignments that will assess all learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) of modules/qualification and assess the candidate's performance during the final assignment.

Internal assessors support the process of compiling the portfolio by validating the evidence gathered against the learning outcomes of the respective module/qualification while the external assessor assesses the submitted portfolio and final assignment against the learning outcomes specified for the module/qualification.⁷

The above-mentioned RPL practitioners must have sufficient levels of field expertise in the respective modules/qualifications being assessed, in addition to sufficient RPL training provided by the NQA. NQA as a regulatory body with support of the DVV international has developed a three-module training on the role of RPL coordinator, mentor and assessors and it is responsible to deliver the training to the providers that apply for accreditation to implement RPL in VET. Furthermore, providers in order to get accredited need to develop and implement a specific policy on capacity building of the RPL practitioners including specific trainings in the field expertise related to the qualifications, quality assurance etc.

The RPL process can be defined into four main stages as follows (see figure 1):

1. Awareness, information and guidance for candidates

At this stage a candidate approaching providers accredited to implement RPL should be informed by the RPL coordinator about the entire process of claiming achievement through RPL including: possibility of obtaining a full qualification or partial qualification through RPL; criteria and standards; the necessity to present a portfolio of evidence; sources of support and guidance available to the candidate; timelines; appeals procedures and financial implications.

2. Documentation of evidence

If the candidate decides to undergo the process of RPL, the candidate will need to collect viable evidence sufficient to claim the achievement with the support from the relevant RPL practitioners – RPL mentor and RPL internal assessor - during this stage. The evidence will be structured in form of a portfolio of evidence of achievement against the standards defined. The portfolio shall contain at least the following:⁸

- up-to-date version of the CV;
- description of candidate's experience in relation to the results of qualification/modules (and learning outcomes) for which he/she applies for certification;

⁷ 2018 Update of the European inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning – country report for Kosovo, page 10

⁸ Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Republic of Kosovo, page 11

- evidence (diplomas, certificates, grades' report, etc.) on completion of formal education and training programmes;
- evidence on non-formal education and training experiences (certificates of attendance, reports, group work);
- evidence on the work experience gained in the relevant field or in certain topics related to the selected qualification;
- ether relevant evidence supporting the candidate's work and life experience;
- a statement of authenticity for the submitted portfolio/ documents.

The evidence that need to be submitted by the candidate can be:

- Direct, which presents what the candidate is able to demonstrate (e.g. a written article, a piece of work created), and
- indirect, which is based on the evidence of others and presents the candidate's skills and competence (e.g. contracts/letters of recommendation from employers or clients, awards and acknowledgments, articles about the candidate, photos, videos, diary, reports, book of records etc.).

The evidence should confirm the candidate's skills and abilities at three levels:


- at the level of theoretical knowledge;
- at the level of skills for practical work;
- at the level of competence in various working situations and environments.

To assure validity of the evidence in the portfolio all the provided pieces of evidence need to be linked to the relevant learning outcomes of the module/qualification, and supported by a brief explanation. E.g. when pictures are used, the work process in the picture(s) should be elaborated and linked to the relevant part of the module/qualification.

• **Assessment**

At this stage, following the compilation of portfolio, the candidate will undergo the assessment of the evidence submitted to claim the achievement through the RPL by the panel of RPL assessors. The panel should consist of at least three RPL assessors, one of them should be an external assessor.⁹ The composition in terms of number of assessors in the assessment panel is determined during the accreditation process by the NQA, depending on the type and size of qualification. A candidate must be enrolled in the RPL route at least 20 working days prior to the assessment, this is the time required for the candidate to compile sufficient and authentic evidence for the portfolio. Besides submitting evidence through the portfolio, the candidate will have to take a final assignment that will assess the skills and competences required by the learning outcomes acquired by prior learning. In other words, the submission of the portfolio is prerequisite for the candidate to be able to undergo the final assignment. Portfolio of evidence should be submitted for assessment to the assessment panel at least five working days prior to the assessment, unless otherwise agreed.

⁹ A practitioner that is not employee of the respective accredited provider – it could be somebody from the businesses, associations or a RPL assessor coming from another accredited provider.



The final assignment must be designed to assess all the learning outcomes of the module – knowledge, skills and competences. Therefore, if a candidate would like to claim the achievement for the full qualification, the final assignment must be designed to assess the learning outcomes of all modules in the qualification. The duration of the final assessment varies depending on the type and size of the module/qualification (E.g. the construction sector may have some modules that require a lot of preparation and time to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and competences, whereas e.g. hairdressers may be able to demonstrate multiple modules in one day.) The instruments are the same as for candidates who follow a formal learning route to assessment such as practical skills demonstration, observation, simulation, etc. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the qualification and of the RPL system.

The assessment decision on the final assignment accomplished by the candidate can be:¹⁰

- "passes", where the candidate is assessed to have fulfilled sufficient assessment criteria to have achieved the full module or qualification; or
- "passes partially" where the candidate is assessed to have fulfilled the assessment criteria for a part of the learning outcomes within the selected module or qualification;
- "does not pass" where the candidate is assessed to not have met the required assessment criteria.

The assessment panel informs the responsible person of the provider for the assessment decision and it is the responsibility of the provider to inform the candidate about the decision no later than 5 working days from the date of the assessment.

3. Certification and appeals procedure

Following the assessment decision that a candidate has provided sufficient and appropriate evidence against the standards and learning outcomes being claimed for full or partial qualification, the accredited provider will issue a certificate/diploma accordingly to the candidate's achievements.

When a candidate has been awarded a partial certification and wishes to receive full certification for a qualification this must be done within a period of not more than 3 years from the first assessment date. The three-year limitation is applied as qualifications and modules might need to be revised based on innovation and other developments in the field of the qualification. The mentor will advise the candidate about further training needed and training opportunities to obtain full certification.

Certificates/diplomas received through RPL are the same as those obtained through a certification via formal or non-formal learning route.

¹⁰ See reference 1

If a candidate wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment, they need to follow the standard provider appeals procedures. The complaint will be reviewed by independent internal and external assessors. If the appeal remains unresolved, then the provider will refer it to the NQA for investigation.

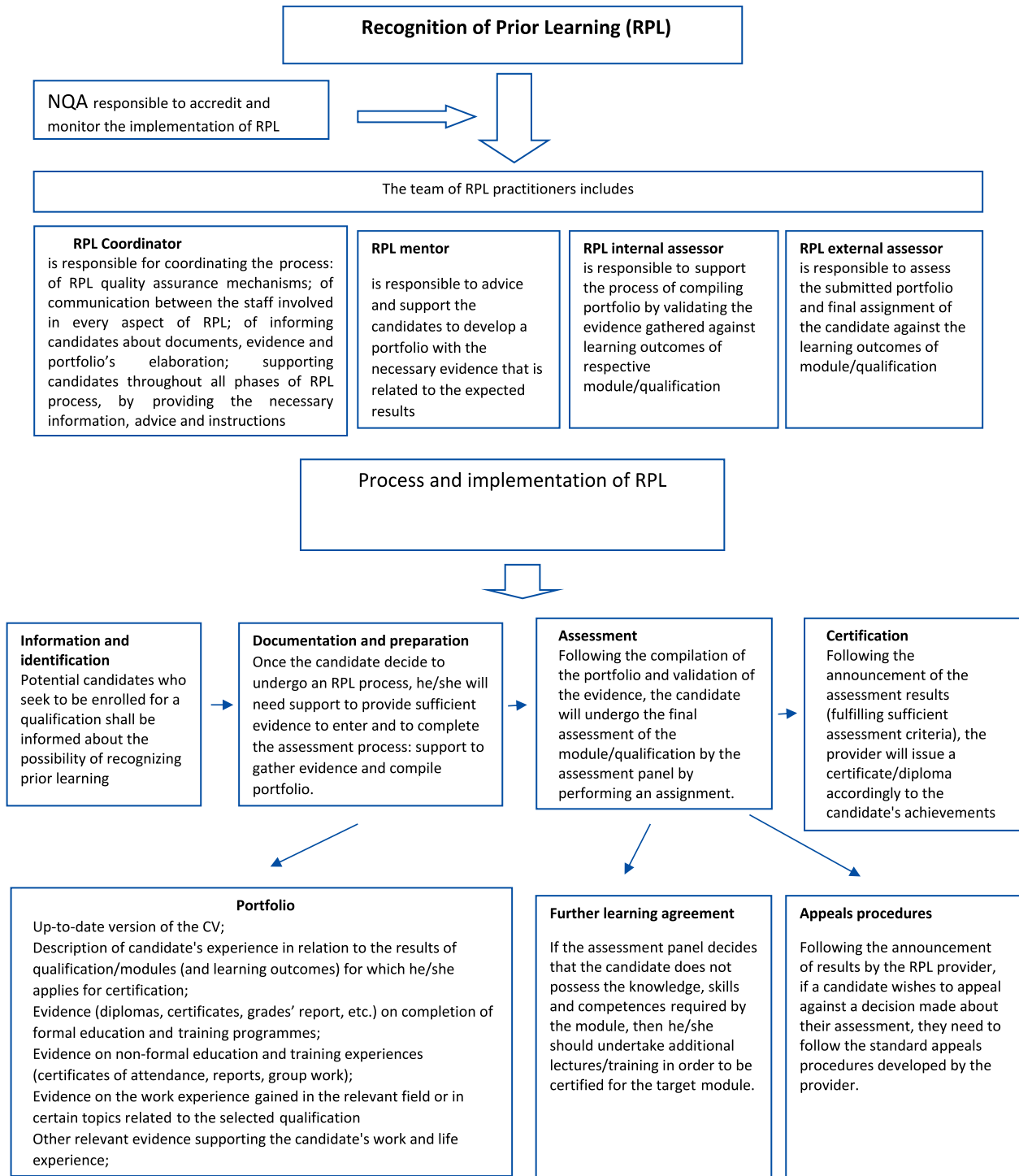


Figure 1. RPL process diagram

Source: Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Republic of Kosovo, 2017

Financing and Costs

The public budget is the main source of funding for the NQA as regulatory body, the budget is allocated for the expenses of accreditation of the providers to implement RPL including delivery of the training modules for the RPL practitioners. Furthermore, there are donor-based initiatives to finance the process of the implementation of RPL by supporting NQA such as EU-funded project “Aligning Education with Labour Market Needs” phase II.

All the providers (both private and public) will need to pay a fee to the NQA for the process of accreditation. The costs of the accreditation process are calculated by the NQA executive based on the size of the panel of experts (3 or more experts) and type of experts (national, regional or internationals). The costs for the process of accreditation of providers are as follows:

- Initial accreditation of the institution that implements RPL is 300 Euro;
- For local experts, providers should pay 100 Euro per working day per expert (This means the minimum fee for a panel would be 900 with three experts working for three days each, and the maximum 1200 Euro with four experts working for three days each);
- For regional experts, providers should pay 200 Euro per working day per expert (This means the minimum fee for a panel would be 1800 with three experts working for three days each, and the maximum 2400 Euro with four experts working for three days each);

Total costs would range from 1500 to 2700 Euro for one accreditation depending on the factors mentioned above. NQA will initially seek for local experts to organize and coordinate the accreditation process only when there is a lack of local expertise the NQA will seek for regional expertise in the required field.

As seen from the above, the NQA generates revenues however, the generated incomes flow back in the broader budget of the government and NQA is not able to use incomes generated for the RPL. Hence, this restriction might hinder the process of accreditation for RPL.

In regard to the RPL process, candidates approaching future accredited private providers will have to cover the expenses of the process of RPL themselves. When it comes to the public providers, it depends on their internal regulatory framework and funds available whether the costs of the process of RPL will be covered by the provider or the candidate. There is an exception for candidates registered as job seekers in the vocational training centres sitting under the Employment Agency, for these candidates the expenses will be covered by public funding.

When it comes to the costs of the RPL process, the fees will be calculated by the accredited providers based on the type and size of modules/qualifications to be assessed, in line with the principles of the European guidelines and internal procedures.¹¹

¹¹ See reference 1



The European Guidelines provide three options for calculating the cost of the RPL process:¹²

- Tariffs based on the time spent for completing the assessment;
- Common fees, regardless of the time spent or the number of certifications;
- Tariffs based on volume and level of certificates.

It is up to the providers to decide which option they choose from the above to calculate the expenses of process. Conversely, there is no detailed guideline on how to calculate the costs of the process that will support the providers to choose between the most cost-effective options (both -for candidate and provider itself). The NQA, in the near future will need to develop such a guideline.

¹² *European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP, 2009*

Coherence of validation arrangements and results of validation including full qualifications/partial qualifications

The NQF, as the main reform tool aiming to link the provision of education and training with the needs of labour market, was officially adopted by the NQA in 2011. It is on the early implementation stage¹³ and it has been referenced to the EQF in 2016.

The NQF comprises of eight levels of learning outcome descriptors in alignment with the EQF levels, at which qualifications and modules, acquired in different learning context (formal, informal and non-formal) can be placed. Six types of qualifications are specified in the NQF according to the following criteria:

- external requirements which constrain the structure and/or content;
- typical purposes;
- typical content and outcomes;
- the range of levels in the NQF to which qualifications of this kind can be allocated;
- any rules of size (credit value) which relate to the kind of qualification;
- the legal basis of the qualifications;
- the body responsible for quality assurance.

The types of qualification are as follows:


- Higher Education Qualifications;
- General Educational Qualifications;
- National Combined Qualifications;
- National Vocational Qualifications;
- Qualifications based on International Standards;
- Tailored Qualifications.

Four types of qualifications in the NQF can cover the subsector of VET: National Combined Qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications, Qualifications based on International Standards, and Tailored Qualifications. All vocational qualifications are made up of modules which incorporate the relevant occupational standards.

All the types of qualification besides the General Educational Qualifications¹⁴ in the NQF have a credit system attached. Higher Education Qualifications use a credit system that is compatible with the ECTS while the other 4 types of vocational qualifications use a credit system that is compatible with the ECVET.

¹³ Overview of national qualifications framework developments in Europe 2019, Cedefop

¹⁴ They are a learning outcome-based qualifications however they do not have a credit system attached



Even though the existing national policy foresees that HE qualifications and all types of VET qualifications can be obtained through RPL; the quality assurance procedures have only been developed for National Vocational Qualifications. Therefore, at the moment, RPL will be only implemented for these qualifications

National Vocational Qualifications are developed based on National Occupational Standards and designed to be delivered in the workplace or in a practical setting suited to the acquisition and assessment of the relevant Occupational Standards. Their purpose is for learners to acquire and/or achieve the professional knowledge, skills and competences associated with a specific occupation or work role. These qualifications are situated at levels 2 and above in the NQF and have a range of credit values (ECVET) according to the modules which make up the qualification. A module needs to have at least 1 credit or 10 notional hours in order to be validated and registered in the NQF. There is no minimum of modules or credits for National Vocational Qualifications to be validated and registered in the NQF.

Both, full and partial National Vocational Qualifications can be obtained through means of RPL. However, rules of combination of modules within the qualification can place restrictions on how much credit can be awarded to a qualification via RPL. Rules of combination of modules is primarily concerned with the nature of the modules and how they relate to each other to form a distinct qualification such as clear identification of which modules are mandatory and which are optional or elective. During the identification stage of RPL candidates will be informed on the number of modules and credits that can be awarded through RPL.

RPL is only possible for National Vocational Qualifications that are quality assured by validation ¹⁵ and approved on the NQF. Currently, there are 62 validated and approved National Vocational Qualifications at the NQF, that can be acquired through RPL. However, the interested RPL providers can apply to validate and register qualifications that are not part of NQF yet. After validation and registration of the qualification in the NQF the provider can start RPL procedures for the newly registered qualification.

¹⁵ Validation is process of evaluation of qualification against the quality criteria set by the NQA for the inclusion of the qualification in the NQF.

Role of stakeholders in the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The NQA led the development of the overarching national policy (legal provision for the implementation of the RPL in HE and VET) and involved the following relevant stakeholders:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare,
- Kosovo Accreditation Agency,
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning,
- Employment Agency in Republic of Kosovo,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- Ministry of Finance,
- accredited VET providers,
- accredited HE providers,
- field experts,
- and relevant donors in VET.

When it comes specifically to the development of the policy for the implementation of RPL in VET and bylaw for the accreditation of VET providers to implement validation, a working group has been appointed and invited by the NQA to work on those two separate processes. The working group consisted of representatives of the following institutions:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- Ministry of Finance,
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning,
- Employment Agency,
- accredited VET providers,
- international and national field experts and
- relevant donors.

The working group for the development of policy on implementation in VET consulted the following relevant documents:

- The European Guidelines for Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning, published by Cedefop, in 2015.
- The administrative instruction 31/2014 for Prior Learning Recognition, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo (MEST)
- The instruments and instructions developed during the "Training of Trainers" activities for implementing a RPL system in Kosovo



Furthermore, the development of the policy has been piloted in three (3) VET providers in three occupational profiles (welding, electro-installation and hairdressing) by enrolling candidates for the RPL. The pilot implementation in three selected occupations consisted of the following phases:

- selection and enrolment of candidates for the RPL procedure;
- identification and documentation of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning; (jury session with the participation of the external assessors, combining demonstration exercises and theoretical assessment);
- formal certification (partial or full certification) and awarding public ceremony.

Findings coming from the pilot were incorporated in the policy prior to the endorsement. Both processes – the development of the RPL policy on VET and bylaw for the accreditation of the VET providers to implement RPL, have been supported with national and international experts by the ETF.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders implementing the policy and bylaw have been described under the “Institutional Framework” (page 7).

Looking specifically at the role of social partners as relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of RPL, social partners were fully involved in the design of national policies and legal provision. Furthermore, they are responsible for the development of the occupational standards: occupational standards are the starting point for the development of qualifications and consequently the implementation of RPL in VET. When it comes to the RPL practices in VET, there is a possibility for the social partners to be engaged as RPL external assessor according to the regulatory framework. However, since there are still no accredited providers their direct involvement as RPL practitioners remains to be seen.

Quality assurance and monitoring

Transparent and robust quality assurance mechanisms are developed for RPL in VET. They consist of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.

The internal quality assurance mechanisms are developed by the provider based on the NQA guidelines.¹⁶ Providers are required to appoint a Quality Assurance coordinator who will lead and organize an annual self-assessment process of the organisation's effectiveness, and produce a self-assessment report for the NQA, for review and supportive feedback. The outcome of this process will enable the provider to:¹⁷

- Make judgements about all aspects of provision set against NQA Quality Principles/Criteria.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, and the actions to be taken to sustain and improve these.
- Write and produce an annual Improvement Plan.

As part of external quality assurance, providers that are interested to implement RPL in VET have to undergo the process of accreditation by the national regulatory body, the NQA. If the applicant provider is not previously accredited to offer the qualifications in the NQF through non-formal or formal route, simultaneously while applying for implementation of the RPL the provider will have to undergo the process of validating qualifications in the NQF.

The provider, wishing to offer an RPL route must apply for accreditation directly to the NQA. Then, NQA organizes the external expert evaluation panel consisting of 3 field experts who evaluate the application and other additional documents submitted and visits the applicant provider for inspection. In the next stage the expert panel based on the field visit and evidence recorded will draft an external evaluation report and based on the report will advise the governing board of the NQA to approve or disapprove the request for accreditation (see figure 2).

The accreditation criteria that has to be met by the applicant provider to implement RPL accreditation are as follows:

- The provider must have developed a written RPL policy, in line with the national policy document approved by the NQA. The policy should take into consideration the requirements of the following:
 - potential candidates;
 - qualifications offered;
 - NQA/KAA;
 - funding and funders;

¹⁶ A practical guide to implement quality assurance in VET institutions, NQA, 2011

¹⁷ Ibid


- provider resources and growth targets;
- equal Treatment;
- data protection;
- quality Assurance and monitoring.

- The provider must have developed a system to support and record RPL assessment for each candidate (relevant regulation, guidelines, manuals, etc.).
- The provider must have developed an internal system to quality assure RPL assessment and certification for each candidate (relevant regulation, guidelines, manuals etc).
- Has designated personnel, with appropriate qualifications to support and assure the RPL process (RPL coordinator, RPL mentor, Internal Assessors and External Assessors).
- In addition to designated personnel, the provider must have a training scheme in place for all personnel involved with any aspect of RPL.
- The provider must have an appeals process in place, along with details of how the provider ensures that the candidates are aware of how to access the appeals process.
- The provider must have an institutional and financial stability, detailing how the RPL process is sustainable.

The accreditation is valid only for the specific VET qualification and for a specific period, up to 3 years for the first time. The providers will need to apply for the re-accreditation.

Providers required to validate and approve qualification in the NQF, according to the Administrative Instruction (MEST UA 01/2011) “Criteria and procedures for the validation of national qualifications and the accreditation of qualification awarding bodies in Kosovo”, have to proof and meet the following requirements:

- The rationale for the qualification
- Sector support for the qualification
- The specification of the structure and content of the qualification
- The time needed to achieve the qualification
- The level and credit value of all components of the qualification
- Entry requirements for the qualification
- Non-discriminatory provisions
- Assessment methods - Evidence specifications for the assessment of practical performance, including amount and types of evidence
- Built-in arrangements for quality assurance
- The relationship to industry or sector need
- The relevant national occupational standards agreed by Council for Vocational Education and Training - CVET
- The accessibility of its learning outcomes
- Progression opportunities (employment or learning)



Until 2021, the right to apply for accreditation to implement RPL has been limited to providers that are interested to assess candidates in the three piloted occupations (welding, electrical installer and hair-dressing). Prior to upscaling to other occupations, it is crucial that the government will use the time to support the NQA in capacity development in terms of human, technical and financial resources, considering the extra responsibilities that come with the implementation of RPL.

Monitoring procedures following the accreditation (post accreditation) are integral part of the quality assurance of RPL implementation. Monitoring is foreseen to be carried out annually on the basis of the analysis of self-assessment reports submitted by the accredited providers. If based on the analysis of self-assessment reports and other documents submitted by the provider, NQA suspects irregularities in the process of implementing RPL, it can further organize site visits.

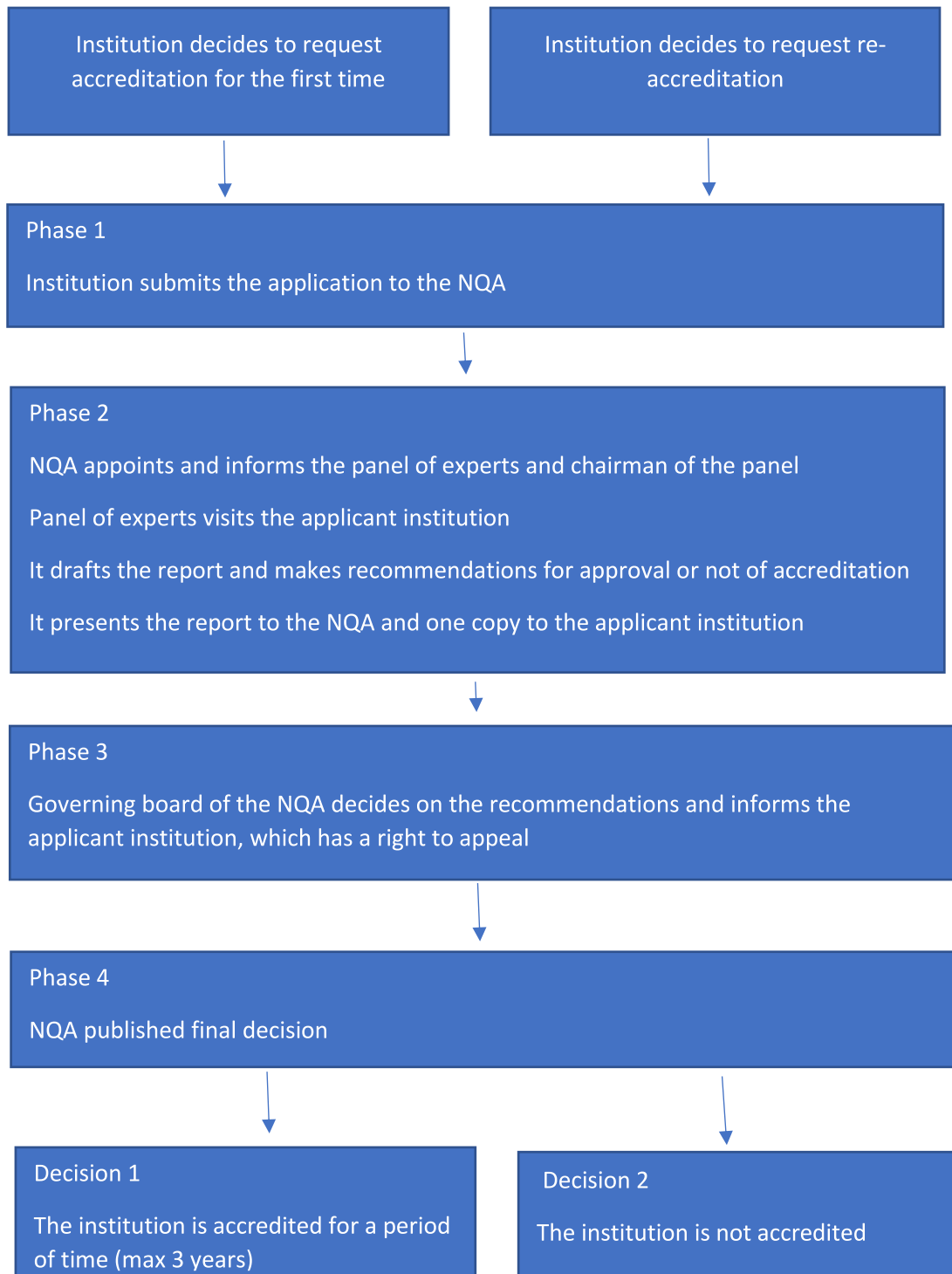
During the site visits, the NQA panel will review a sample of the candidates' portfolios, and will seek to validate the assessment decisions, ensuring that the evidence on which the assessment decisions were based are valid, reliable, sufficient, current, consistent and authentic. Verification also involves assuring the quality of the systems and procedures used for assessment and evaluation, by:

- Monitoring the conduct of assessment to ensure that assessment and recording procedures are correctly followed in a consistent and fair manner;
- Ensuring that assessment and verification records are up-to-date and available for analysis by the organisation providing the assessment and by NQA as the institution responsible for externally verifying the assessment process.

If during the monitoring the NQA finds that provider has failed to comply with the requirements to implement RPL, it can revoke the accreditation.

Considering that the bylaw for the accreditation of providers to implement RPL in VET has been recently (June, 2019) endorsed by the respective minister, there are no accredited providers up to date.

Figure 2. Process of accreditation of VET provider to implement RPL



Challenges and next step

In the light of continuous reforms in education and training, the decision of government to start implementing RPL in VET is a clear policy decision towards more holistic and systematic development of human capital. During this year, the first providers are expected to apply for accreditation to implement RPL. Especially, the providers that have been part of the piloting are expected to apply, since they developed their RPL capacities, both in human and other resources, during the pilot.

However, the amount and complexity of the work still to be done for the successful implementation of the RPL should not be under-estimated.

Awareness raising from all the relevant stakeholders is pivotal for the successful implementation of the RPL, considering it is a new mechanism introduced in the country. NQA will need to launch an awareness campaigns in regards to the process of accreditation to inform potentially interested providers (both public and private) to implement RPL. Future accredited providers will need to employ awareness campaign in regard to the benefits of the RPL targeted at the potential candidates and employers. Furthermore, capacity building of the social partners to raise awareness among business for the benefits of RPL is required as well.

Considerable commitment and practical support to the relevant stakeholders will be needed for the successful implementation of RPL in VET. Support to NQA human resources (both in terms of number and capacity building) for the efficient delivery of the RPL process, developing guidelines on the calculation of cost and promoting the involvement of social partners, specifically business, in RPL process as practitioners (external assessors).

Along the same line, support to the potentially interested providers to implement RPL will be required to tackle similar challenges such as finances, human resources, cooperation with business, implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and calculation of cost of the process of the RPL.

Donor support, specifically EU funded projects are foreseen to tackle challenges mentioned above such as support to NQA, support to providers and awareness raising.

On the system level, the EARK, should improve measures targeted at disadvantaged groups such as unemployed by revising and updating the "Unemployment Card" used for the registered job-seekers. Competences gained outside formal system should be included in this card. It should aim for the visibility and credibility of the outcomes of skills audit to the employers. Furthermore, it would be useful to include RPL as an active labour measure in order to support the further implementation of the RPL.

Next, there is need to expand RPL in IVET besides CVET by developing a legal framework for the implementation of RPL for "national combined qualifications", the qualifications that combine modules based on National Occupational Standards with outcomes related to the Kosovo Curriculum Framework and are delivered in the VET schools.



Principal tasks in the near future for the development and implementation of RPL in other educational subsectors such as HE should as well include the development and piloting of the specific policy and legal provision for the quality assurance of the HE institutions to implement RPL.

Upscaling RPL to General Education will not be feasible in the near future since the learning outcome curricula is only at the early stage of implementation.

References

Literature:

Administrative Instruction No 31/2014 for prior learning recognition (MEST):

http://akk-ks.net/uploads/ua_31-_2014_per_njohjen_e_mesimit_paraprak.pdf

CEDEFOP (2017). Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2017. Volume II: National and regional cases. CEDEFOP: 2017

https://infoeuropa.euroid.pt/files/database/000064001-000065000/000064736_2.pdf

CEDEFOP (2012). Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)

Law Nr. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency of Republic of Kosovo. http://apr.krs-gov.net/Uploads/Publications/2/LAW_NO_04_L205_ON_THE_EMPLOYMENT_AGENCY_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_KOSOVO_11630.pdf

Law Nr.03/L-060 on National Qualifications, available at:

http://www.gazetazyrtare.com/egov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=288&lang=en

Law Nr.04/L-083 for Registration and Records of Unemployed and Jobseekers, available at:

<https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Law%20for%20registration%20and%20records%20of%20unemployed%20and%20job%20seekers.pdf>

National Qualifications Authority (2011). Developing and verifying occupational standards. Prishtina: NQA. https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/developing_and_verifying_occupational_standards.pdf

National Qualifications Authority (2011). Guideline on using occupational standards in development of learning modules. Prishtina: NQA.

https://akkks.rks.gov.net/uploads/guideline_on_using_occupational_standards_in_development_of_learning_modules.pdf

National Qualifications Authority (2014). Qualifications types in Kosovo. Prishtina: NQA.

National Qualifications Authority (2017). Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Republic of Kosovo. Prishtina: NQA.

National Qualifications Authority (2011). National Qualifications Framework. Prishtina: NQA. https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national_qualifications_framework.pdf

Regulation (MLSW) No: 01/2018 on Active Labor Market Measures. [http://mpms.rks-gov.net/Portals/0/Ligji/Sekondar/Rregullore%20\(MPMS\)%20nr.%2001-2018.pdf](http://mpms.rks-gov.net/Portals/0/Ligji/Sekondar/Rregullore%20(MPMS)%20nr.%2001-2018.pdf)

Websites:

<https://akkks.rks-gov.net/>

<http://apr.krs-gov.net/>

<http://masht.rks-gov.net/>

<http://mpms.rks-gov.net/>

Sources:

Ms.Jehona Rexha, National Employment Agency
Ms.Radica Berishaj, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Ms.Aferdita Jaha, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Mr.Milot Hasangjekaj, National Qualification Authority
Mr.Lah Nitaj, National Qualification Authority
Ms.Bleta Kadriu, National Qualification Authority
Ms.Ferdeze Agaj, Vocational Training Centre- Gjilan
Mr.Sinan Gashi, Vocational Training Centre - Prizren
Mr.Skender Berisha, Training Centre-KEK
Mr. Besim Mustafa, Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Agim Shahini, Alliance of Businesses
Ms. Fikrije Zymberi, Agency for Vocational, Education and Training and Adult Education

Participants at the validation workshop:

Ms. Nesrete Juniku, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Vocational Training Centre
Ms. Luljeta Doroci, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Vocational Training Centre
Mr. Sinan Gashi, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Vocational Training Centre
Mr. Qamir Maçkaj, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare -Vocational Training Centre
Ms. Ferdeze Agaj – Mehmeti, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Vocational Training Centre
Mr. Fadil Avdyli, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Vocational Training Centre
Mr. Besnik Skenderi, Expert
Ms. Blerina Vula, Post and Telecom of Kosova (PTK) -Vocational Training Centre
Ms. Vildane Kelmendi, Cactus Private provider
Mr. Blerim Haliti, Lux Development-Donor
Mr.Vehbi Neziri, Expert
Mr. Skender Berisha, Vocational Training Centre KEK
Ms. Aferdita Jaha, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology-VET
Ms. Radica Berishaj, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology - VET
Ms. Ryve Prekorogja, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology - VET
Mr. Muhamer Ibriqi, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
Ms. Jehona Namani, Employment Agency in Republic of Kosovo -Vocational training department
Mr. Gani Ismajli, Employment Agency in Republic of Kosovo -Vocational training department
Mr. Daniele Passalacqua, Lux Development project - Donor



Mr. Ramadan Alija, Dvv International - Kosovo Office- Donor
Ms. Sauda Pantinaj, Vocational Training Centre Sauda
Mr. Fitim Pantinaj, Vocational Training Centre Sauda
Ms. Entela Ademi, Diaconie Training Centre - Vocational Training Centre
Ms. Ylberina Morina, RIT American University - Training and Development Institute
Mr. Lah Nitaj, National Qualifications Authority
Ms. Donjeta Nimani, National Qualifications Authority
Ms. Kaltrina Mulliqi, National Qualifications Authority
Ms. Bleta Kadriu, National Qualifications Authority
Ms. Ylber Alija, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Mr. Besim Mustafa, Chamber of Commerce - Vocational Training
Mr. Agim Shahini, Alliance Businesses - Social Partner
Mr. Milot Hasangjekaj, National Qualifications Authority
Ms. Teuta Danuza, University of Prishtina
Ms. Jolien van Uden, European Training Foundation - Operations Department
Ms. Mariavittoria Garlappi, European Training Foundation - Operations Department
Mr. Avni Gashi, Kosovo Accreditation Agency
Mr. Avni Rexha, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology General Education
Division
Ms. Rozeta Hajdari, ADA/ ALLED Project-Donor
Ms. Drita Januzi, Diaconie Training Centre- Vocational Training Centre
Mr. Stergios Tragoudas, EU Office-EU Policies Education
Ms. Lumnije Ajdini, Alliance Businesses-Social Partner
Ms. Melihate Pllana, KAB