OECD Input: Implementation Guidelines for Practitioners

Establishing a validation system of prior non-formal and informal learning in Croatia

Foreword

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1 Introduction

The recognition of prior learning has the potential to support upskilling and reskilling of adults, by shortening the duration of training. It also supports labour market opportunities for a broader scope of adults, by giving them formal certification for skills and knowledge they may have acquired informally or through non-formal learning. Implementing and managing a successful system for recognition of prior learning involves many different actors with distinct roles working together. Providing clear guidelines to practitioners and effectively promoting recognition of prior learning (RPL) to potential candidates are crucial steps for ensuring a successful and high-quality implementation of a new system.

The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education is currently finalising the rulebook that will govern a new system of recognition of prior learning in the country. The Agency for VET and Adult Education is concurrently developing a methodology and guidelines for adult education institutions to follow in introducing and developing new validation programmes.

To support the development of the methodology and guidelines, the first chapter of this report describes the content and purpose of implementation guidelines for candidates, advisors and evaluators, referencing examples from Wallonia (Belgium), France, Spain and Germany. The second chapter of this report reviews approaches taken by a range of European countries to promote RPL, considering the role of employers and whether any approaches target specific vulnerable groups.

The information used to produce this report was gathered through desk research, online interviews with country experts, a peer-learning workshop that took place on October 18 2022, in Zagreb (Croatia), a study visit that took place in Paris (France) on October 20 2022 and a study visit that took place in Wallonia (Belgium) on November 9-10 2023.

OECD recommendations

To promote consistency and quality across all providers of validation programmes in Croatia, the OECD recommends developing implementation guidelines for candidates, advisors and evaluators. These guidelines should be communicated to all providers of validation programmes, and made available on a centralised website. As this website will be one of the primary ways to promote RPL to candidates, it should include information on what RPL is, what its benefits are, how adults can access it, which qualifications and micro-credentials are eligible, the steps in the process, who is eligible, the roles of advisor and evaluator, etc.

The OECD recommends that guidelines for candidates should be short and simple to follow and take into account that some candidates might not be familiar or confident with formal processes in education. The guidelines should include sections on how to write a CV and prepare a portfolio, as well as highlight the professional benefits of validating skills. To reduce anxiety that adults may have about assessment, the guidelines should provide examples of the types of tasks that they could be asked to perform during the assessment.

The OECD recommends that guidelines for both advisors and evaluators should prepare them for the diversity of candidates that may apply for validation. They should include concrete examples of different types of candidates, their potential needs and how best to support them through the process.

The OECD recommends that the guidelines for advisors include how to provide advice on training and professional opportunities after the candidate completes their assessment. This includes what advice to give if the candidate is unsuccessful in obtaining certification.

To promote RPL to a wider public, **the OECD recommends launching a national-level social media awareness campaign** which could be targeted at adults with low levels of formal education who could benefit from validation. It could include a slogan, branding material and video testimonies of adults who have participated in RPL and who have acquired better jobs or accessed upskilling opportunities as a result. Pamphlets could be distributed at the Croatian Employment Service, migrant guidance centres, chambers of commerce, etc. This campaign should wait until several adult education institutions are actively offering validation programmes.

The OECD recommends creating links with the Croatian Employment Services, migrant guidance centres, chambers of commerce, shelters, etc to raise awareness about RPL among adult populations who could most benefit from this service. Consider developing guidelines specifically for counsellors at the Croatian Employment Service to brief them on the RPL process so that they can refer and support candidates who want to undertake a validation process.

2 Recognition of Prior Learning implementation guidelines for candidates, advisors and evaluators

Implementation guidelines are a low-cost intervention to inform relevant stakeholders on how to implement a system of recognition of prior learning and how to maintain high standards. Implementation guidelines can also be used to train RPL providers, advisors and evaluators and help promote validation by increasing the transparency about the steps in the validation process.

This chapter is based on a review of implementation guidelines for candidates, advisors and evaluators collected from France, Spain, Wallonia (Belgium) and Germany.

Guidelines for candidates

Guidelines for candidates are usually provided via centralised public websites. The websites contain information about what validation is, how and where to obtain it. The websites serve as the main source of information for the candidate to learn about the RPL process in most countries. Having a centralised platform for information and awareness building makes the process easier to understand, helps the candidate to identify which qualifications and RPL providers might be relevant for the candidate, and allows them to assess their eligibility before applying.

In France, Spain and Germany, RPL is centralised, and a candidate needs to apply to a validation programme through the centralised online platform. In Wallonia (Belgium), there is a centralised platform explaining the system, however, each RPL provider has their own website where the candidate can contact the institution directly to apply.

In Wallonia, France and Spain, the websites contain information on:

- What is recognition of prior learning;

- What are the benefits of recognition of prior learning;

- Pre-requisites for enrolling in a validation programme;

- How to enrol (how to use the portal, which information to input);

- Information about the RPL providers and process.

In general, the information provided on the websites is not overly detailed to avoid overburdening the candidate. This is particularly the case if there is a mandatory advising component to the RPL process. One element that is often lacking from most RPL public websites is examples of assessments/exams which candidates can use to prepare for their actual assessment. Some websites provide an idea for the *type* of task a candidate might be expected to perform as part of their assessment, but they are unlikely to provide actual task sheets, or actual written exams, for instance. The Spanish website allows candidates to

download an Evidence Guide for every unit of competence that can be validated. The Evidence Guides detail in a general sense the type of tasks that could be applied to validate a given unit of competence.

On the centralised website for the Spanish system, candidates can download a PDF with detailed guidelines. This is in addition to the information available directly on the website[1]. The guidelines describe the RPL process in a concise way and explains to the candidate what they might expect at different points of the validation. It details the pre-requisites to enrol in a validation programme, shows the different phases of the process, and provides concrete instructions for the candidate on what to do if they are admitted to the validation. The guidelines explain the different roles and responsibilities in the process (advisor and evaluator) and gives a detailed overview on what the candidate should expect during both the consultation phase and on the day of the evaluation. A large part of the guidelines is devoted to explaining the certification, how to obtain it, what it entails, and how it can be used in the labour and training market, focusing particularly on the options for training after obtaining the certificate.

In Germany, candidates have access to two guidelines with simplified information to guide them through the initial steps of the validation process. A short two-page document informs the candidate how to populate their CV with relevant information in a clear and concise way and is intended to guide candidates who might not have experience in writing CVs[2]. The second document divides the whole validation process in 10 steps with short descriptions for each step, intended to make the process easy to understand and less intimidating[3]. Both documents are targeted towards candidates with less experience in formal education and/or limited German language skills and advertise the validation process as achievable and relatively easy – in line with Valikom's mission of targeting low-skilled adults.

The websites can be found here:

- Wallonia (Belgium): [CVDC | Site de la validation des compétences](#)

- Spain: [Bienvenido - Web incual - Incual (educacion.gob.es)](#)

- France: [Afpa: vocational training, adult education, continuing education, VAE // AFPA | Afpa](#)

- Germany: [Valikom - Startseite (validierungsverfahren.de)](#)

Guidelines for advisors

Advisors play an important role in guiding the candidate through the validation process. Candidates may not have had a positive experience with the formal education system or may not have participated in a formal education programme in a long time and might be sceptical of the RPL process or pessimistic about their own abilities. Good advisors can help these candidates feel empowered about their decision to undertake validation, help them prepare for the assessment, and support the evaluator by gathering important information about the candidate during both informal and more official conversations with the candidate.

Advising can take place both before and after the assessment. Before the assessment, an advisor's role is to inform the candidate about the process, gather information about their skills and work experience, and help them prepare for the assessment. Advising after the assessment can help the candidate understand the outcome of their assessment, how to use the certificate, post-RPL training opportunities, and what their options are in case of a negative outcome. Therefore, the role of the advisor depends

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[1] [Espacio para orientadores, asesores y evaluadores - TodoFP | Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes](#)

[2] [Hinweise_zum_Lebenslauf.docx (validierungsverfahren.de)](#)

[3] [In_10_Schritten_zum_Validierungszertifikat.docx (validierungsverfahren.de)](#)

substantially on how the RPL system is organised, and how responsibilities are divided among the advisor, evaluator, validation programme coordinator, and the candidate.

In Wallonia (Belgium) the advisor helps the candidate determine for which Skill Units to pursue validation and supports them in the preparation for the assessment[4]. The guidelines in Wallonia are not for the advisors themselves, but rather an overview of what types of support measures different stakeholders (employers, RPL providers and partner organisations) can implement together with the CVDC[5] to increase the likelihood of candidates succeeding in the validation programme. The CVDC, in cooperation with other support operators, are piloting pre-validation programmes that support candidates who have the required skills to pass a validation test but might face other barriers in obtaining a positive result, such as insufficient language skills, non-standard professional practice (not recent or not in compliance with regulations), lack of self-confidence or difficulties with stress management during examination. The modules (pilot programme) are meant to help the candidate mobilise the knowledge, know-how and behaviour skills linked to the Skill Unit/occupation, practice these skills in the context of an assessment, and learn how to express and promote their skills and knowledges during an assessment. The modules feature several sessions with an advisor that help the candidate gain confidence about the skills they possess, prepare for the mental and physical aspects of the assessment, and teach them how to formulate their experience and knowledge.

In Spain, the guideline for advisors details their role and function and puts them in the context of the validation process. Here, the advisors have to submit a competence portfolio of the candidate to the evaluation committee, alongside a professional opinion on whether the candidate possesses the necessary skills and competences to obtain validation. The guidelines detail how to assemble the portfolio and evaluate different types of evidence to form an opinion to be submitted to the evaluation committee. The candidate submits to the advisor an overview of their professional and training history, accompanied by evidence and supporting documents. It is then the advisor's role to verify the information and identify which evaluation criteria might be fulfilled through the portfolio. The advisor then consults with the candidate to collect further information and evidence, including through a self-assessment questionnaire. The initial meeting can be held in a group setting but is followed up with individual sessions with the candidate. The advisor's report to the evaluation committee contains their professional evaluation on whether the candidate possesses the skills to get validation; however, this is not binding, and the evaluation committee can choose to disregard the advisor's opinion.

Advisors in France's Afpa have access to a technical manual for the organisation and implementation of Afpa validation processes. The technical manual is intended for programme coordinators and those who are in charge of organising validation as well as guiding the candidate through the process. The manual clarifies the full process of validation and all the different access routes to receiving validation (both partial validation through professional training and full validation of acquired knowledge). It is a technical document that advisors can refer to when they are organising an assessment and guiding the candidate. The manual also details how to document the candidate's progression through the validation procedure and how to use the electronic portal that is universal for all RPL providers. It also contains instructions on what options to propose to the candidate if they do not obtain validation, including obtaining partial validation or not obtaining validation at all.

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[4] In Wallonia (Belgium) each occupation is divided into several Skill Units, and each Skill Unit is a separate assessment and validation process. If a candidate wishes to obtain validation for a whole occupation, they must undertake validation assessments for all the Skill Units for that occupation.

[5] The CVDC (Validation des Compétences) is the body overseeing the validation of professional skills in French-speaking Belgium. They are in charge of supporting the implementation of the RPL process in several training and education institutions through a range of activities.

In Germany, the guidelines guide the advisor through the different stages of the validation process, what support to provide a candidate, and offer concrete examples for different scenarios the advisor might encounter. The role of the advisor in the Valikom system is to determine the goals of the person seeking validation, inform them of the process and language skill requirements, and help them identify a relevant occupation for validation and fill out the self-assessment form[6]. The guidelines offer information on how to carry out the different steps, including how to aid a candidate in identifying a relevant occupation and understand the self-assessment form. It offers a matrix with key recommendations for candidates with different profiles and needs, such as recognition of foreign professional and educational qualifications, those who lack relevant professional experience, candidates who do not meet the age limit, and degrees acquired under the previous education system in East-Germany. The guidelines give in-depth descriptions of which type of profiles should be targeted for validation, such as individuals who do not have professional or educational qualifications or who work in a different occupation than their qualification.

Guidelines for evaluators

Providing evaluators with clear guidelines helps ensure the quality of the validation process and outcome. Evaluation committees are often comprised of experts inside the education institution but also external labour market or occupation experts, such as representatives from local businesses. Evaluation committee members are called upon for the final stage of the validation process and decide if a candidate fulfils the criteria to obtain validation. As such, they hold the decision-making power over the results of validation. What type of instruction evaluators members are given depends on how much autonomy they have in designing the assessments, how much training they have to undergo both before and during their role as evaluation committee member, and how involved they are in the implementation of RPL or related learning programmes.

Some guidelines for evaluators are general documents that advise about the validation process as a whole (as in Spain). Other guidelines for evaluators are specific to the qualification or occupation being assessed (as is the case in Wallonia (Belgium)). In France, a combination of these two approaches is used. Germany does not provide evaluators with guidelines; however, they do undergo in-person training.

When available, instructions for evaluators tend to be very detailed. However, they are not always organised as "guidelines" per se. For example, in Wallonia (Belgium) instructions for evaluators are available in evaluation grids which are occupation-specific, non-public documents that also contain the specific tasks that must be carried out in the examination, as well as detailed pass/fail criteria. The evaluators are given a detailed overview of all tasks and evaluation criteria, and instructions on how to interact with the candidate, such as questions they could ask as follow-up, prompts/hints that are allowed or not allowed, and ways to test whether the candidate has the skills required to handle challenges (such as providing the candidate with faulty equipment and observing how they respond). The documents also include instruction on when an evaluator is allowed to intervene in the examination.

In Spain, the guideline for evaluators is a public document that is not specific to the occupation. It details the role and function of the evaluation committee in a general sense and puts it in the context of the entire validation process. The guidelines have a candidate-centric approach, meaning that evaluation committee members are informed of the tasks and principles that guide the process and how these are put in place to empower candidates and ensure they have a fair and positive experience. The guidelines detail the examination process step-by-step with specific instructions for evaluators at each step. In Spain, the evaluators are tasked with developing an Individualised Assessment Plan for each candidate and with analysing the Advisor's Report before carrying out the assessment, and the guidelines provide support in

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[6] Valikom is a centralised validation service currently in the pilot phase. Other validation systems in Germany are decentralised and managed by different institutions in each region.

this process. The document also describes how to choose assessment methods to ensure that a wide set of competence units are tested during the assessment. It also describes how to use other tools (such as the evaluation criteria and activity tracking sheet) and how to accurately report the assessment and its outcomes. The guidelines also detail the post-exam quality control mechanisms, which help the evaluator understand the high-quality standards that are expected of them, and how to comply with them throughout the assessment.

In France, the validation through the Afpa system requires all candidates to carry out a practical examination to assess their competence, unlike the general VAE system where evaluation committees rely on the portfolio to make their decision.[7] The Afpa guide is very evaluator-oriented, with language like "Your role is to…" speaking directly to the evaluator and their role in each step of the assessment process. There is also a section that highlights what tools and support is available to the evaluators to enable them to carry out their role. For example, the guidelines advise the evaluator how to consult the Professional Practice Summary File (a document outlining the evaluation criteria) after the assessment and how to prepare for the post-test interview (which will assess additional skills and knowledges). The Professional Practice Summary File contains more occupation-specific instructions for the evaluator, similar to the guidelines in Wallonia (Belgium), and is not publicly available as it contains very confidential instructions regarding the assessment tasks and success criteria.

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[7] *Validation des Acquis l'Experiénce* (Validation of Acquired Experience, VAE) is the main validation system in France. The VAE system relies on candidate portfolios to carry out validation. *Agence national pour la formation professionelle des adultes* (National Agency for Adult Vocational Training, Afpa) is the agency offering validation of vocational qualifications in France, and offer validation only through practical assessments.

3 Approaches taken by European countries to promote Recognition of Prior Learning

Despite the potential benefits that RPL promises for adults, encouraging participation is a challenge. Many European countries report that awareness of their RPL service is low, and this can have a negative impact on participation. This chapter reviews approaches taken by European countries to promote RPL. It considers which methods are used to promote RPL, the role of employers in encouraging employees to validate their skills and whether any approaches target specific vulnerable groups. The country examples were gathered from a combination of desk research and exchanges with country experts over the course of this project.

What methods are used to promote recognition of prior learning in European countries?

Many of the European countries in this study take a multi-pronged approach to promoting RPL, and share information through different channels and at different levels. For instance, in the Netherlands, information about RPL is distributed at the macro-level, by the Ministry of Education through their website and through awareness campaigns. At the same time, social partners share information about RPL at the sectoral level. Within organisations, too, information about RPL is distributed through human resource departments and by internal "VPL ambassadors," who raise awareness of RPL opportunities within firms. Finally, registered RPL providers promote their validation programmes directly to potential candidates who might be interested in RPL. Similarly, raising awareness and providing information about RPL is the joint responsibility of different stakeholders in France and takes place at different levels (national, both inter-ministry and ministry levels, regional level, provider level, sectoral social partners level and company level).

This section provides examples of the various channels used to promote RPL.

Public websites

Most European countries disseminate information about RPL through public websites that outline the steps involved in the RPL process, requirements that RPL candidates must satisfy, where the RPL process can be carried out and for which occupations/qualifications/competences RPL can be performed. Websites about RPL are often an initiative of the Ministry or another institution offering validation or responsible for validation. The level of detail provided on these public websites varies. The Spanish website provides detailed information for candidates, but also for other actors involved in the RPL process, including advisors and assessors.

The role of public websites was already discussed in the previous chapter for Spain, France, Wallonia (Belgium) and Germany. Additional examples of European RPL public websites include:

- In **Denmark**, the Ministry of Education provides extensive information about RPL on their website (https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/recognition-guide/competence-assessment). Educational institutions are also encouraged to publish information on RPL opportunities on their institutional websites

- In **Italy**, the INAPP (National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policy, funded by the Ministry of Labour) web portal VaLiCo (Validation Libretto Competenze) (https://valico.inapp.org/) gives Italian administrators and operators a database of validation practices and experiences. It presents the standards and the common operational framework on which the National Skills Certification System is based. Users can access information about the functioning and status of the Identification and Validation services across Italy. The website also provides links to the public bodies which offer them.

- In **Portugal**, the National Agency for Qualification and VET provides information on RPL (*Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências,* RVCC) through its website (https://www.iefp.pt/rvcc).

- The **Swedish** National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is under a legal obligation to spread awareness and information about the possibilities for validation. Interviews, videos and explanations can be found on the website (https://www.myh.se/in-english).

Public employment service and career guidance networks

Even though information about RPL is available on a public website, potential beneficiaries may not be aware that RPL exists and may not think to go to the website. Public employment service (PES) counsellors and career guidance counsellors can play a key role in referring potential beneficiaries to RPL. For this approach to work, the institution responsible for RPL must have strong ties to public employment service and career guidance practitioner networks and must educate counsellors about their services and how they could support the adults they serve.

- In **France**, stakeholders from the public employment service, guidance providers and other sectoral social partners share information about RPL with candidates and direct them to the appropriate RPL contact points which are distributed across the country. Every region has a "VAE Counselling Centre" (*centre de conseil sur la VAE*) that provides a local contact point to provide individuals with information about how to proceed with their VAE project.

- In **Germany**, one of the many ways that Valikom raises awareness about their services is by encouraging guidance counsellors to promote the RPL procedure with their clients. Guidance counsellors may recommend clients to undergo a validation procedure and in some cases may support them throughout their validation procedure.

- In French-speaking **Belgium**, counsellors in the public employment service play a key role in informing potential beneficiaries that RPL exists. They share relevant information about where validation centres are located and what the process entails in detail. A guide for PES counsellors has been developed by the Consortium for the validation of skills (CVDC). Professionals working in the different public employment services also share targeted information with jobseekers about opportunities to conduct validation for specific occupations. The CVDC also cooperates with employers and "reconversion cells" during restructuring processes so that workers can pursue validation before they lose their job. They cooperate with firms and specifically with their human resources departments to identify the needs of employees and possible skills validation procedures they could undertake. CVDC produced a handbook in cooperation with actors in the

field to support reconversion cells and allow validation for experienced workers. CVDC has existed for 20 years but the system is still not very well known, even among public service employees. Active communication is needed to attract candidates and let the public know this service is available. CVDC has two people working full time on communication.

Awareness-raising campaigns

To raise awareness about the possibility of having one's skills validated among the general public, some countries invest in public awareness-raising campaigns through various formats including, video testimonials, documentaries and social media campaigns. These efforts are often targeted at adults with low levels of formal education.

- **Italy** experimented with a documentary to raise awareness about RPL (http://www.raiscuola.rai.it/articoli/lesperienza-vale/30043/default.asp). The documentary was called 'Valuing experience' (*L'esperienza vale)* and was produced by INAPP (National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policy, funded by the Ministry of Labour) in cooperation with RAI National Italian TV and with financial support from the European Social Fund.

- **In Portugal,** ANQEP ran a public awareness campaign about RPL that revolved around the advertising slogan "Take hold of yourself and invest in your future!" The campaign involved a series of video testimonies from adults who had participated in the RPL program (*Qualifica* Centros) (https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/noticias/289). One video reports the stories of an unemployed man, an office employee and a businessman who decides to invest in the qualifications of his team. The video draws a clear correlation between more qualifications leading to better jobs. The campaign emphasized the fact that skills already held and obtained throughout life, and in different contexts, could be capitalized upon to define an upskilling path, inviting adults who did not yet have the 12th year and/or of a professional qualification to go to their local Qualifica Center. By 2017, there was a network of 300 Qualifica Centers throughout the country and the website includes a locator tool to help identify the Qualifica Center located closest to you. There is also a hotline provided to contact the Qualifica Centers directly for information. The Qualifica Centers also conduct outreach information sessions in companies, as well as in other contexts, such as in parish councils and non-profit associations.

- The **Estonian** Adult Educators Association ran a social media campaign to invite adults back to education, funded by the Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Fund. The campaign targeted adults who were early school leavers and it involved circulating a series of videos on social media, each of which highlighted the personal experience of an adult with a different professional background (Figure 1). In the videos, adults provided testimonies about their experience going back to school and the benefits they experienced, such as higher wages, promotions, more opportunities. The campaign continues today as a website (http://www.jallekooli.ee) where all the videos can still be accessed. The website includes information about recognition of prior learning processes, as well as how to access secondary-level education, vocational education, higher education and continuing education as an adult.

Figure 1. Estonian "Back to School" campaign – video testimonies
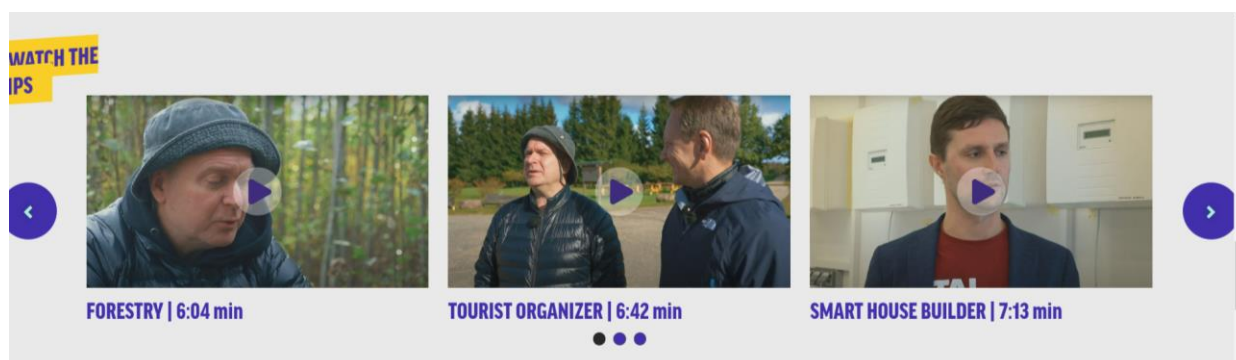
Source: Estonian "Back to School" website (http://www.jallekooli.ee/), Ministry of Education and Research.

Addressing time and cost barriers

In addition to not being aware of RPL, there are other barriers that prevent adults from accessing this service. Addressing these barriers can help to promote RPL participation. One key barrier is a lack of time, particularly for employed candidates. RPL processes can be time-consuming, involving multiple phases and taking between 3 months (in the case of Germany and the Netherlands) and up to 12 months (in France). To minimize this burden for employed workers, some countries offer the option of taking training leave to carry out some of the steps in the RPL process. In French-speaking **Belgium**, employees have up to eight hours of paid training leave that they can use the day of the RPL assessment. In **France**, given the validation process is longer, this training leave is up to 24 hours and can be used throughout the RPL process (such as for the preparation of the portfolio).

Another key barrier to participating in RPL is cost. Some countries offer RPL at no cost to the candidate (such as French-speaking Belgium). In other countries, such as France and the Netherlands, the cost may be covered depending on who initiates the RPL process. In **France**, if the Public Employment Service (PES) recommends that a jobseeker carry out RPL, then the PES covers the cost. If the employer recommends RPL for their employee, then the cost is covered by the employer. If the individual themselves initiates the RPL process, then they are responsible for the cost, but they can use their Individual Learning Account (*Compte de Formation Professionnelle*) towards the costs. Similarly, in the **Netherlands**, large employers often cover the RPL costs of their employees. Sectoral training funds, which are funded by groups of small employers, can also be used to fund RPL processes. The Dutch PES subsidises some RPL processes for unemployed workers and workers at risk of losing their job. Finally, RPL costs paid directly be the candidate can be deducted from taxes in the Netherlands.

How do employers play a role in encouraging employees to validate their skills?

Some countries encourage employers to promote RPL to their employees. Over the course of this project, we have heard that employers value RPL particularly when it can accelerate the process for obtaining skilled labour in shortage occupations. At the same time, employers may not want to encourage their employees to participate in validation as it makes their skills more portable and therefore increases the risk that they will quit and change employers, or put pressure on employers to increase wages.

- In **France**, the Law adopted on 5 March 2014 created an obligation for companies to carry out professional interviews with employees every two years to review their professional development and to inform them about RPL (*Validation d'Acquis d'Evaluation*, VAE).

- In French-speaking **Belgium**, employers in the public sector highlight opportunities for promotion that can be obtained by completing a validation programme. These are spelled out clearly on public sector job postings so that candidates know which validation programmes they must complete in order to be eligible for a promotion.

- In the **Netherlands**, employers, their Human Resources departments and designated internal "RPL ambassadors" raise awareness of RPL opportunities within firms. Social partners in the Netherlands also stimulate the use of RPL through collective labour agreements.

- Awareness raising in **Germany** is done mostly through the large pool of organisations directly involved in Valikom Transfer, such as Chambers of Commerce, social partners and firms. These organisations have used a variety of approaches in promoting Valikom: promotion videos, flyers, brochures, step-by-step explanation documents, search engine optimisation, news articles, a social media campaign, addressing companies directly and having guidance counsellors promote the RPL procedure.

- In cases of mass unemployment, employers may offer employees RPL as a way to demonstrate their transferrable skills for other occupations or sectors. While not European, a good example of this comes from **Australia**. During Australia's shutdown of the auto industry, car manufacturing companies like Holden, Toyota and Mitsubishi offered their employees free RPL as part of a wider Skills and Training initiative. The Australia Government co-funded this initiative. As a result, re-employment after the shutdown of the car manufacturing plants was quite high (84% of former Holden employees found work).

Do any methods target specific groups and the specific barriers they face to participating in RPL?

Ideally, RPL supports adults who have little or no formal education to improve their career prospects by giving them formal certification for skills that they already have and by reducing training time. However, we know from evidence on participation in adult learning that engaging low-educated and other vulnerable adults can be a challenge. These adults often face a combination of barriers that include financial and time barriers but also include lack of confidence and other complex barriers. There are several approaches that countries take to target their awareness-raising methods with vulnerable adults in mind.

- The **Netherlands**, special efforts are taken to target specific groups with information about RPL: minorities, jobseekers, youth groups, and special needs groups. For instance, to target migrants, they select social media platforms that are popular among migrant communities and ensure that their public websites are translated into the languages of migrant groups.

- In French speaking **Belgium**, specific efforts are dedicated to engaging groups that are particularly hard to reach, by conducting outreach with organisations working directly with these groups, such as the public employment service, women's shelters, etc. For migrants, they cooperate with organizations that are in touch with migrant groups such as migrant guidance centres, employment services, chambers of commerce, and professional associations.

In addition to the financial and time barriers mentioned above, other barriers that potential beneficiaries might encounter relate to lacking confidence and feeling insecure about embarking on an unknown and intimidating process such as a validation procedure. This is particularly a concern for low-educated beneficiaries, long-term unemployed and adults who have had negative previous experiences in the formal schooling system. As discussed in the previous chapter, the role of the advisor is therefore crucial to help candidates to feel at ease with the process. In addition to a strong advisor, countries also take steps to make the validation process more transparent, by providing clear and complete information about the various steps in the procedure. Providing examples of previous assessments,

either through written documentation or videos, recommending reading materials or providing detailed guidelines of how the process will go are some of the ways that countries try to make the process more transparent. For instance, as mentioned earlier, on the **Spanish** public website, candidates are provided with detailed guidelines about what to expect during the process, including the types of tasks they might be expected to carry out during the assessment.

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