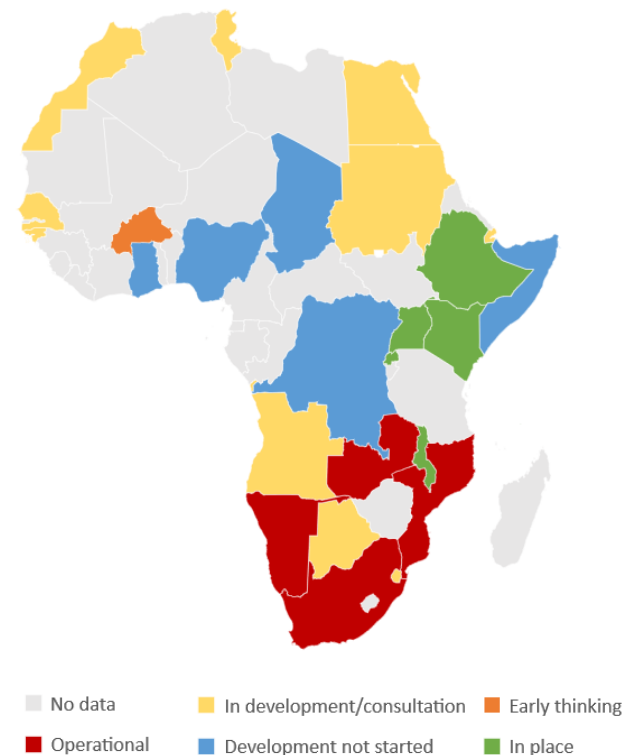# RPL Survey Report

▶ Main objectives of the Recogniton of Prior Learning survey (RPL)

The project African Continental Qualification Framework (ACQF-II), implemented in partnership with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the African Union (AU) continues the regular mapping of qualifications frameworks and related policies across the continent. The present report **summarises the state-of-play and main features of current RPL systems, and countries' needs related to RPL.**

▶ Key findings of the survey

▷ Stage of development

- No data
- Operational
- In development/consultation
- Development not started
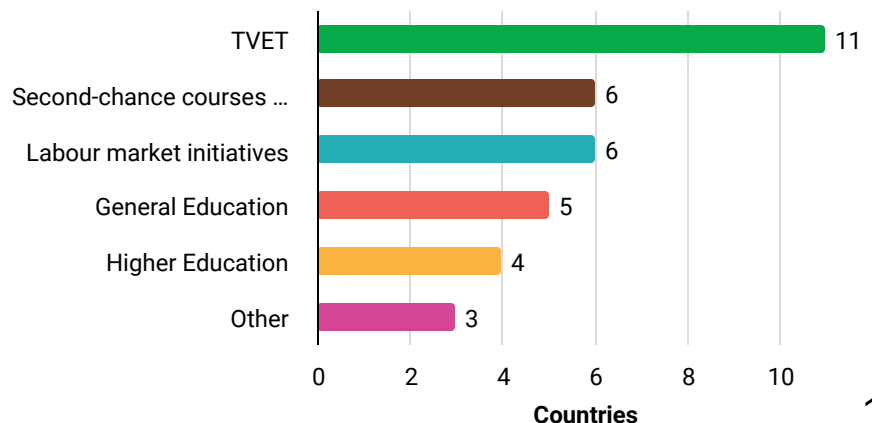- Early thinking
- In place

- The **majority of the responding countries do not have an RPL system developed** (16 countries). These are either in a phase of development or consultation (10 countries), in early thinking (1) or development has not started at all yet (5).
- Around **40% responded that their RPL policy is at least in place** (in either a specific learning and training sector or nationally). Half responded that the RPL policy is established but not yet functioning (6), while the other half reported that the RPL process is operational (6).

▷ Preparatory work

Among countries which at least have begun developing an RPL, the **most popular preparatory works were stakeholder consultations** (17 out of 22) and a **review of best practices** (15). More than half of the countries have also concluded needs assessments and pilot programmes
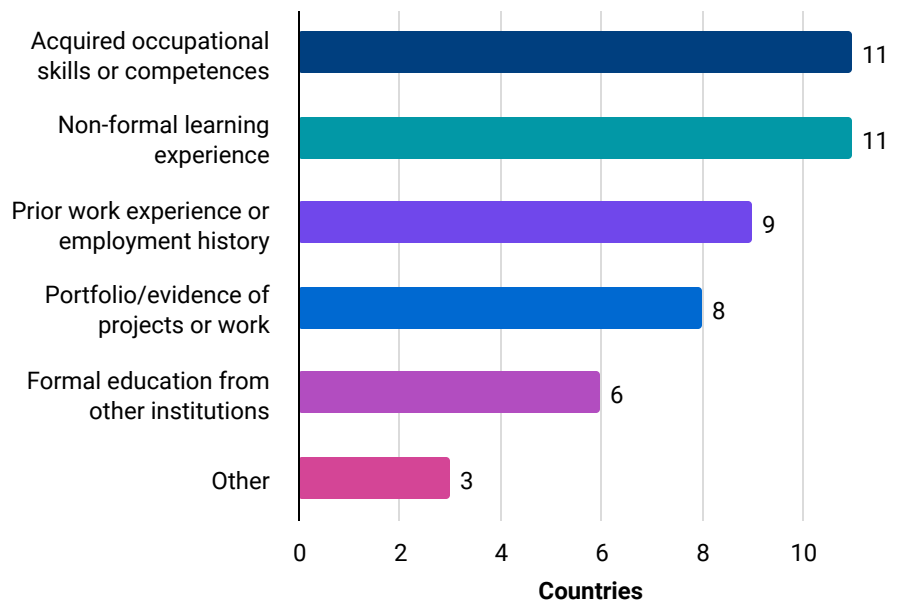
▷ RPL coverage of education and training sectors

- Among the developed RPL systems, **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an evident priority sector** in Africa. All 11 responding countries cover this sector.
- South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia have currently the most comprehensive RPL policies.
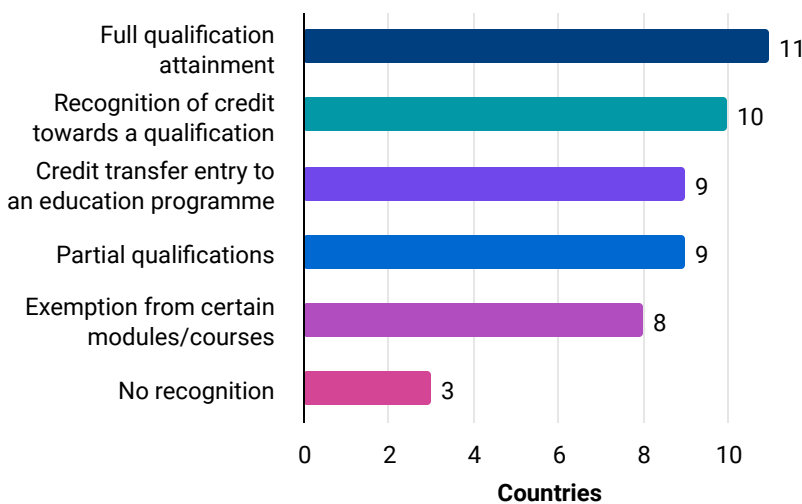

Sector	Countries
TVET	11
Second-chance courses ...	6
Labour market initiatives	6
General Education	5
Higher Education	4
Other	3

1

▷ Previous experience

- **All of the responding countries accept acquired occupational skills or competences**, as well as **non-formal learning experiences** during RPL assessments.
- Other types of learning outcomes are less universally accepted other countries, such as prior work experience, evidence of previous works.
- Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia accept the widest range for RPL assessment.

Acquired occupational skills or competences — 11
Non-formal learning experience — 11
Prior work experience or employment history — 9
Portfolio/evidence of projects or work — 8
Formal education from other institutions — 6
Other — 3

Countries

▷ Outcomes of RPL processes

Full qualification attainment — 11
Recognition of credit towards a qualification — 10
Credit transfer entry to an education programme — 9
Partial qualifications — 9
Exemption from certain modules/courses — 8
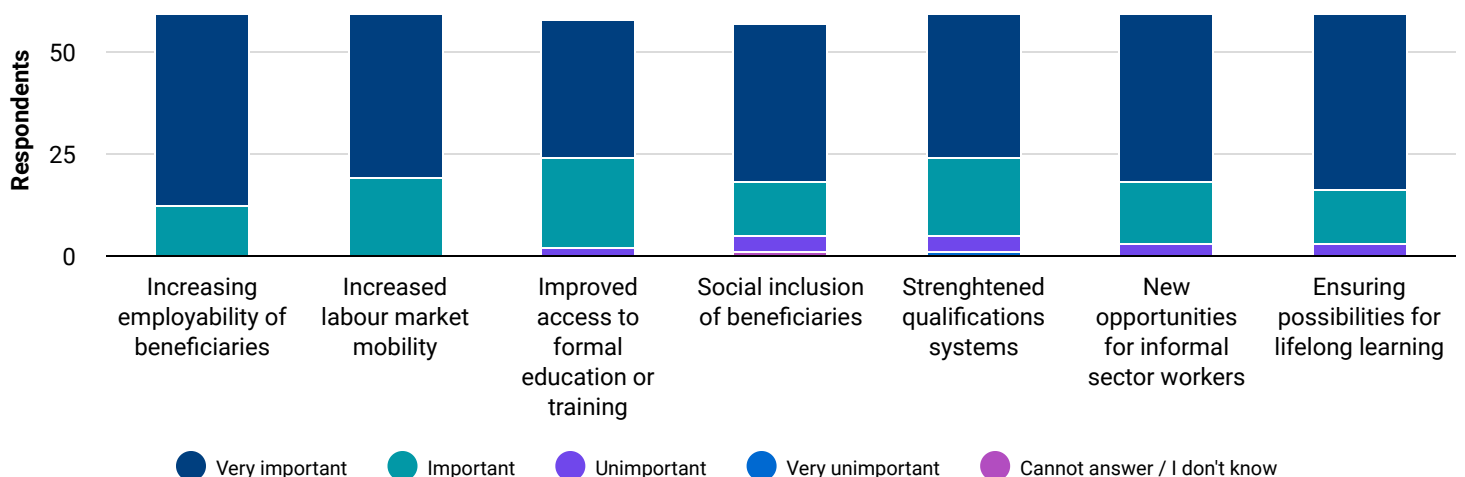No recognition — 3

Countries

There is much less variation across countries in terms of the possible outcomes of RPL. The **overwhelming majority provide various kinds of outcomes**, ranging from full qualification attainment to exemptions from certain courses or study modules, recognition of credits etc.

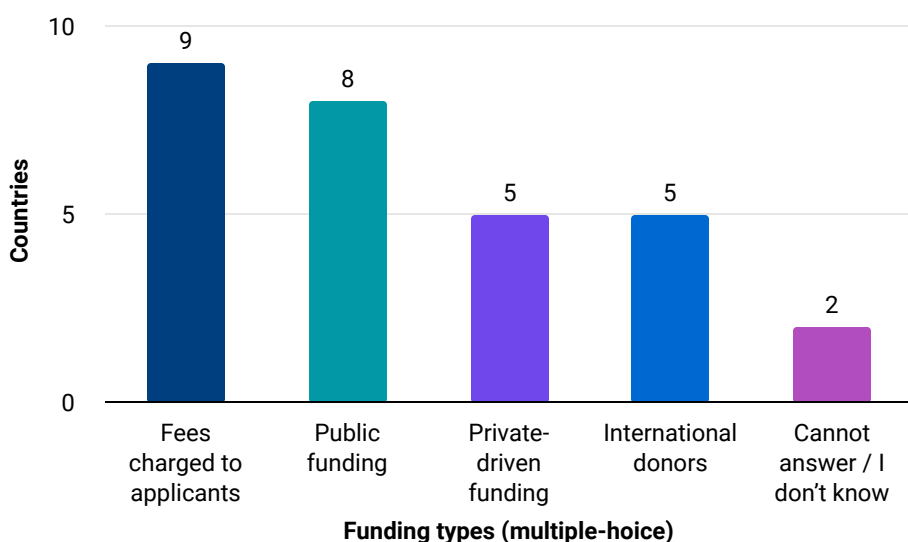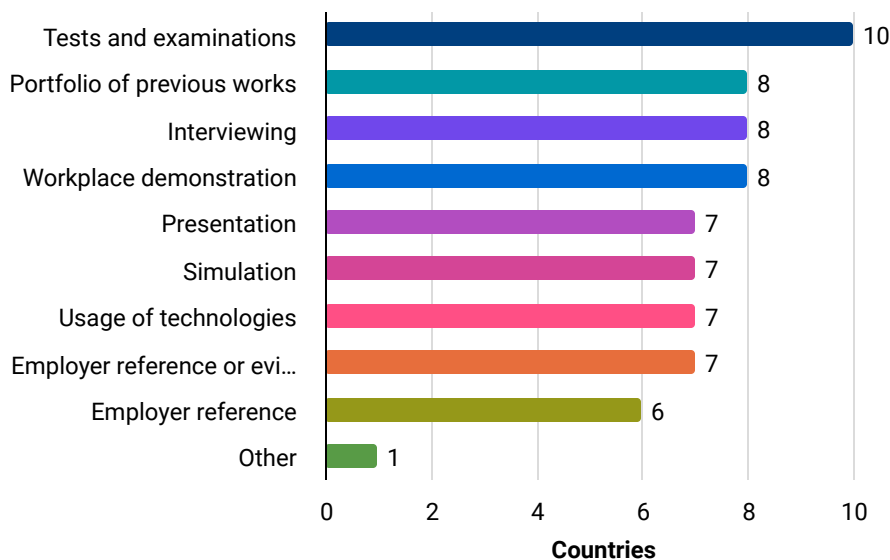One country also indicated that promotion in the workplace may also granted via RPL.

▷ Main priorities for RPL policies

Increasing the employability of the beneficiaries has been the most selected priority (47 respondents or 79.7%). The more systemic benefits that RPL policies, such as improved access to formal education and strengthened qualifications systems were ranked somewhat less important. Nevertheless, all the listed aspects were deemed to be very important by the majority of respondents, signalling that RPL is expected to have a great impact and should tackle many different areas.

Respondents

Increasing employability of beneficiaries
Increased labour market mobility
Improved access to formal education or training
Social inclusion of beneficiaries
Strenghtened qualifications systems
New opportunities for informal sector workers
Ensuring possibilities for lifelong learning

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

2

▷ Assessment tools

- A **wide range of RPL assessment tools** were reported to be used during the validation process. Overall, **fact-based or practice-oriented methods are more frequently used assessment tools**, while presentations and simulations are less used.
- Tests and examinations (10 countries), portfolio of previous works (8), workplace demonstrations (8) and interviewing (8) were the most typical assessment tools for RPL.

Tests and examinations — 10
Portfolio of previous works — 8
Interviewing — 8
Workplace demonstration — 8
Presentation — 7
Simulation — 7
Usage of technologies — 7
Employer reference or evi... — 7
Employer reference — 6
Other — 1

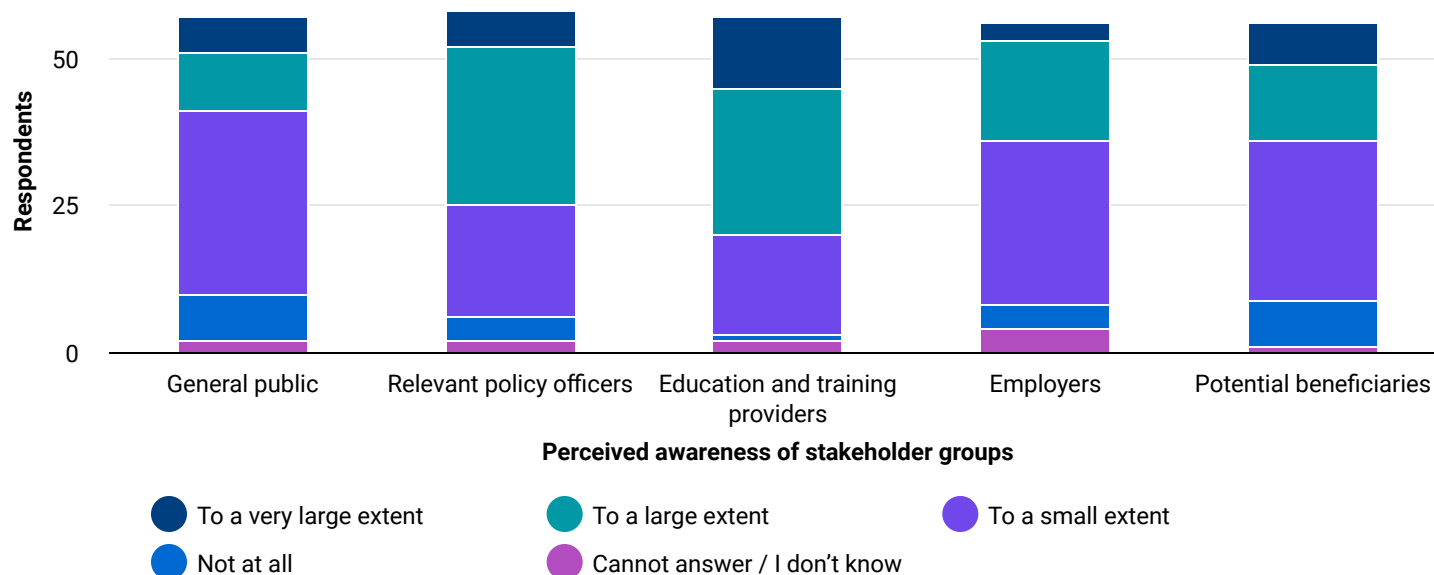**Countries** (0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10)

▷ Financing arrangements

- Financing arrangements are another crucial dimension when it comes to RPL, as many candidates may not be able to afford to pay for the validation by themselves. Yet, institutions often do not have sufficient financial resources to be able to sustain the policy.
- Most **countries operate with a mixed-funding model**, whereby most often a combination of fees charged to the applicant and public funding is applied. In a smaller group of countries private-funding is more dominant.

Countries

Fees charged to applicants — 9
Public funding — 8
Private-driven funding — 5
International donors — 5
Cannot answer / I don't know — 2

Funding types (multiple-hoice)

▷ Main beneficiaries

The survey has compared who the current main beneficiary groups are in the case of countries with a developed RPL vis-a-vis who the main beneficiaries should be, in the case of countries without an RPL.

- The current main beneficiary groups are low-qualified people (15 respondents have selected this group), workers in specific sectors or professions (10), and adult learners (10). A second group, less likely to be beneficiaries, are early school leavers (8), young people (7) and unemployed or economically inactive people (6).
- According to the result, low-qualified people (32 respondents selected this option) should be the main beneficiary group, which is in line with those respondents where an RPL is at least being implemented. Nonetheless, respondents, where an RPL is not yet implemented, would prefer to target migrants or refugees more (24 respondents selected the option) and unemployed or economically inactive people (24) which scored lower on the ranking of current main beneficiaries.

▷ RPL awareness

Respondents

Perceived awareness of stakeholder groups

Legend:
- ● To a very large extent
- ● To a large extent
- ● To a small extent
- ● Not at all
- ● Cannot answer / I don't know

- Based on the perception of the respondents, **none of the stakeholder groups are sufficiently knowledgeable of the possibilities of RPL**. This observation if further corroborated by respondents' qualitative feedback on the **significance of awareness-raising**. Only two of the five groups were reported to be aware at least to a large extent or very large extent of the possibilities of RPL.
- Education and training providers were rated as having the highest overall awareness, if ranked according to those who are aware of the various possibilities of RPL to a large extent (37 out of 57). Policy officers, working on a relevant area, were evaluated as having similarly high levels of awareness as education and training providers do.
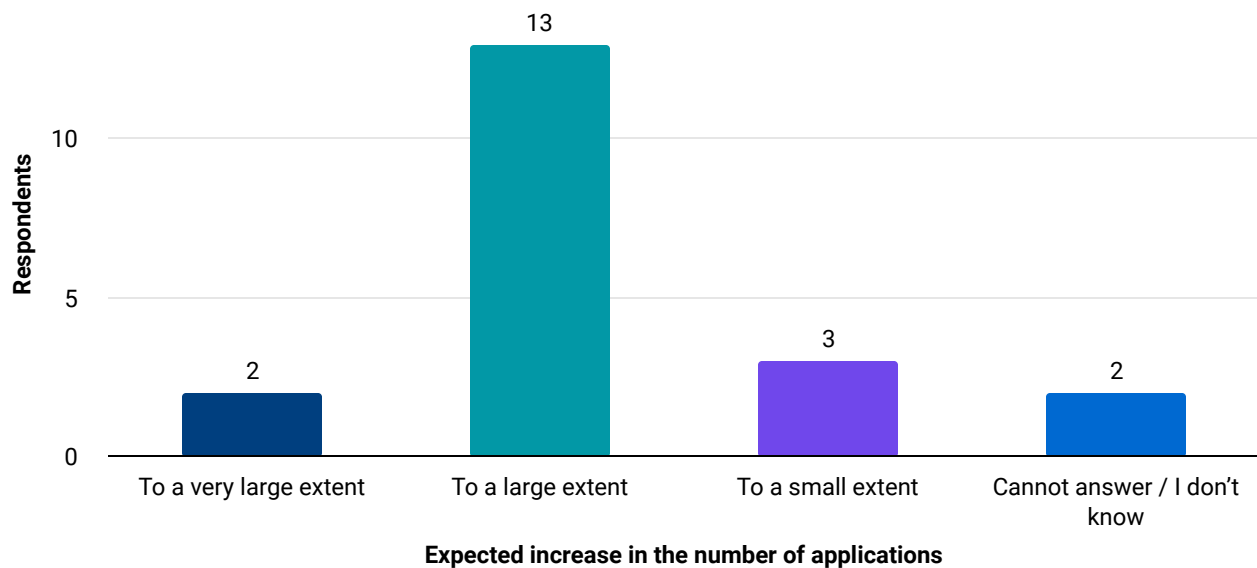
▷ Other stakeholder views

Challenges
- Securing **stable and sufficient funding** was one of the most mentioned challenges by the respondents
- Key stakeholder groups, such as end beneficiaries are **not aware of the benefits of the RPL process**, nor are other key groups.
- **Stakeholder involvement**, seen as a crucial part of RPL design, carries multiple challenges with it. Current low involvement, reaching a consensus between education and employment sectors, and developing a common vocabulary were seen as some of the main challenges here.
- Some noted a **lack of trust regarding certifications received through RPL**. Thus, establishing clear standards, a reliable evaluation system and quality assurance processes is crucial for success.
- **Multiple facets of accessibility** were pointed out, such as accessibility across various segments of society, local and regional contexts, as well as languages. Striking a balance between complexity and accessibility therefore is crucial.
- **Inter-ministerial and -departmental cooperation,** ownership of the program and coordination between various governmental bodies were seen as a hindering factor.
- **Competent human capital**, know-how, and challenges with the training of RPL assessors and facilitators were in some cases noted as hindering factors.
- Some noted a need to secure a commitment from the government. Other respondents mentioned that training institutions might be resistant to RPL, as there is a fear of losing hold of the sector.

4

▷ **Future expectations and monitoring**

Expected increase in the number of applications

- The **future prospects of RPL are seen very positively**. The overwhelming majority (15 respondents) think that yearly applications will rise at least to a large extent, while only a small portion (3) expect applications to rise to a small extent. No respondents said that applications will not rise.

▷ List of countries that submitted responses

Country	Response number
Angola	3
Botswana	1
Burkina Faso	4
Cabo Verde	1
Chad	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1
Djibouti	1
Egypt	1
Eswatini	4
Ethiopia	1
Ghana	1
Guinea-Bissau	4
Kenya	3
Malawi	1
Mauritius	1
Morocco	3
Mozambique	4
Namibia	1
Nigeria	1
Rwanda	1
Senegal	1
Seychelles	4
Somalia	1
South Africa	2
Sudan	1
Tunisia	3
Uganda	2
Zambia	7

Please see more information by clicking **here**.