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Review of *Policies* and *Praxis*

related to VNFIL/RPL

in the Republic of Moldova,

with Recommendations

Preface

In 2020-21 Ministry of Education and Research in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and the UNDP "Migration and Local Development" Project have led the pilot program on Validation of Nonformal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) - named in certain policy-making contexts – or known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), in UNESCO terminology. At the request of Ministry of Education and Research, by the end of 2021 DVV International office in Moldova invited a tandem of two international experts to take a "birds eye look" on the developed processes and try to formulate a more or less semaphore-type overview of the proceedings from two distinct perspectives (1) regulatory framework of the VNFIL/RPL in Moldova and (2) outputs of first validation experiences; i.e. **policy** dimension and **praxis** dimension. The intention was to promptly respond to the request from Ministry of Education and Research and persuaded the international experts to accept the challenge of conducting the assessment on the short notice and in the limited timeframe. Thus, the proposed analysis cannot be considered as exhaustive, it is rather an assessment of how piloted processes fit into country's educational protocol, as well as comparison with similar processes across European areas.

It should be mentioned, that the conducted assessment exercise was not meant play the role of or replace the external evaluation of the project, that is, probably, planned outside this mission. It was rather perceived and structured as an expert scrutiny of first steps in VNIL/RPL in terms of collecting quick findings and making recommendations to support better adjustment of VNFIL/RPL to rapid growing demand of stakeholders.

DVV International Moldova had played the role of liaison between invited experts and structures in Moldova as well as in creating access to policy documents in Moldova, relevant to research area.

This proposed version of review report is structured into three parts:

Part 1 presents a review and analysis of policy aspects of VNFIL/RPL in Moldova, authored by Dr Anne Murphy (Ireland).

Part 2 presents an analysis of implementation and current practice (praxis) of VNFIL/RPL with particular reference to the pilot phase from 2019 – to December 2021, authored by Ms Mikaela Kets (Romania).

Part 3 offers prioritised recommendations in relation to both policy and practice.

List of Abbreviations

Cedefop	European Centre for Development of Vocational Training
CoE	Council of Europe
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EQF	European Qualification Framework
MER	Ministry of Education and Research (Rom: MEC)
NEA	National Employment Agency (Rom: ANOFM)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RPL	Recognition of the Prior Learning
TDNEA	Territorial Divisions of the National Employment Agency
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

PART 1

Review of VNFIL/RPL Policy in Moldova with Recommendations

Dr Anne Murphy, International Consultant

PART 1: Policy Review and Analysis

1.1 Terms of Reference for conducting the Policy Review

In the area of policy review:

- *Desk review of existing policy documents on VNFIL in Moldova*
- *Interviews with key stakeholders in RPL Pilot Projects during a study visit to Moldova*
- *Meeting with other supporting stakeholders including Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, International Organisation for Migration, UNDP*
- *Structuring a state-of-the art review on Moldova's regulatory framework with an analysis of possible protocol gaps, mismatch between intended objectives and currently set requirements, and possible responses to identified shortcomings*
- *Preparing a Draft Analysis and Recommendations Report.*

1.2 Introduction and Review Process

This part of the review report focuses particularly on the main policy documentation associated with the pilot phase which was essentially *instrumental* in orientation i.e. the pilots arose from a specific, externally funded initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research rather than *organically* from evidence-based local practice.

The key policy documents referenced in this part of the review report are listed in 1.3 below.

The schedule of consultation meetings efficiently organised to contribute to the review, and facilitated by DVV International Moldova Office during a study visit from 6 – 10 December 2021, is attached as Appendix A rather than included here. Key points from consultations are included below.

No meeting was possible with stakeholder UNDP Moldova during the study visit, though their relevant literature was taken into account.

Another significant international body active in Moldova – The Council of Europe (CoE) – was not included in the schedule of meeting as they were not directly involved in the VNFIL/RPL Pilots. While CoE policy focus in Moldova is not specifically on traditional education, adult education or lifelong learning, there are synergies to be explored with them with regard to

capacity building for civic engagement, gender equity, linguistic inclusion and economic participation at local community level as an enabling context to familiarise hard-to-reach citizens with the potential of RPL both for individuals and for families.

Cognisance was taken of adult education material produced by EAEA for this policy review as it represents a particular paradigm struggling to compete with a more dominant neoliberal RPL paradigm of credentialism and human resource development as frequently articulated by the OECD.

This review report accepts that Moldova has already selected and piloted a particular paradigm of VNFIL/RPL, as evidenced in its documentation and design of pilots. The authors of this review report do not seek to orient Moldova to a particular legislative or operational model. Rather, the authors concede that RPL has multi-faceted possibilities to serve a range of educational and societal purposes that are specific to Moldova at this time which are best decided by subsidiarity to the local level, informed and enabled by external supports as appropriate. The authors do, however, broadly locate the Moldova model within the range of models internationally. Legislative arrangements and providers of VET and Adult Education, for example, in France are in no way similar to the Moldova context. Nor does Moldova organise occupational standards through Sector Skills Councils as in Poland, or organise non-formal education through a fully developed adult education sector as in Macedonia or Serbia. Moldova does not seem to explicitly link its VET system to the EQF or to Cedefop guidelines in its documentation. These comparators are in no way a negative criticism: rather they are an indication of the application of understanding of international paradigms which dovetail with the local Moldova context and apply the principle of subsidiarity of decision-making.

What is not quite clear from the documentation reviewed is the consequences of close relationships with Romania with regard to travel and work access to the EU and the consequences for mutual recognition of qualification achieved through RPL in both countries in this regard.

Nor is it clear if qualifications from Moldova, with or without a VNFIL/RPL element, are recognised equally in the main migrant work-destination countries such as Russia, Turkey and Italy.

These aspects could usefully be considered in future, long-term policy development of VNFIL/RPL, but are outwith the scope of this report.

1.3 Key policy documents reviewed (translated to English)

Policy documents of immediate and direct relevance were reviewed, as follows:

a. Regulation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning
b. Practical Guide for validation of acquired skills in non-formal and informal education contexts
c. Education Code No. 152/2014 of The Republic of Moldova

d. 2021-2030 Education Development Strategy 'Education 2030' Working Draft, September 2021, Ministry of Education & Research.
e. Profile and current challenges of Moldovan migrant workers, UNDP and IOM
f. Social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova, UNFPA & UNDP, November 2020
g. The phenomenon of the informal economy and employment in the context of Covid-19 in Moldova, UNDP, November 2021
h. Council of Europe Action Plan of the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024
i. OECD: Key issues affecting youth in Moldova 2015/'16
j. EAEA, Manifesto for Adult Learning in the twenty-first century
k. EAEA, Moldovan strategy for adult education 2020
l. DVV, Adult learning and education in the Republic of Moldova: legal, financial and governance framework: presentation of results, September 2021
m. Cedefop (2018) European inventory on validation and non-formal and informal learning
n. Cedefop (2009) European Guidelines for Validation of non-formal and informal learning

1.4 Meetings with key stakeholders in VNFIL/RPL Pilot projects in Moldova

The tables below capture the main points from meetings with stakeholders. Key VNFIL/RPL policy-relevant points are highlighted for efficiency of reading and analysis.

	Meetings with…	Date	Key points about the RPL Pilots relevant to this policy review report
1	Centre for Excellence in Construction	6/12/'21	- Earlier RPL model implemented - Experience of teaching adults - Experience of responding to specific industry demands and in work-based training - Experience of preparing adults for work abroad - Experience of 'assessing and certifying' returning workers to recognised standards - Experienced in occupational profiling and writing of standards - Curriculum approval slow and costly - Assessment by RPL complex - Divided opinions on best types of assessments and on QA procedures for both process and outcomes - On-demand RPL possible on small scale for Pilots: larger scale might need more scheduled schema

			- Costs of RPL for pilot agreed – larger scale may need different schema
2	National Employment Agency	7/12/'21	- Grey economy workers excluded? - Employers may not benefit directly or reward qualifications acquired by RPL - Low wages not logically solved by RPL - Future skills need not estimated in long term by Observatory to inform MER and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection - Soft legal requirement for unemployed to re-train or up-skill - Work with VET providers to organise training requested in growth sectors such as textiles - Worker rights not well protected by Unions or strong labour laws - Benefits of legal employment not sufficiently attractive - Few requests for RPL though the 2019 validation law permits it - Returning workers request RPL for sectors such as social care, childcare. - A legally approved voucher system for training may be considered which could include and RPL element - Training Centres need more capacity building to promote and implement RPL beyond Continuing Education Departments - Many training centres are not seeking authorisation and accreditation to offer qualifications by RPL due to the expense of the process of accreditation - Mapping of where RPL is provided in Centres and in what fields is required for the Agency to be more supportive of unemployed in high demand sectors - Small scale of demand for RPL makes it difficult to make a policy or budget case - VET Centres may be at optimum with regular students - NGOs prefer to work with donors rather than Agency

			- Agency branches link local employers and local training centres to organise training. - To secure quality, RPL should be performed only by approved education providers, not by private providers.
3	Centre for Excellence in Food Processing Services	7/12/'21	- RPL more demand-driven and supply led - Employers supportive for cooks and bakers being formally trained - All assessments in VET Centre - Additional pay for RPL advisors and assessors - More awareness-raising of RPL needed - Challenge of individualising assessment
4	College of Continuing Education in Pedagogy	8/12/'21	- Challenge of equivalence of standards related to learning outcomes - Requests for specific sectors: class assistants, social care, law, sports and physical training, kindergarten teachers - Documentation to design assessment of experiential learning in pilot - Challenge of separating out competences, values and attitudes in particular occupations (holistic versus atomistic assessments) - Learning deficits for accreditation need to be facilitated - RPL centralise in Chisinau too-costly for many- regional provision necessary - Occupational standards and job profiles not available for all contexts - Combing training with RPL is more ideal for adults and easier to QA - Credit system used for RPL needs clarification by Ministry - Teachers using RPL need in-service/CPD training in pedagogies for adult learners, group work, groups assessment, individualised

			assessment, used of language and terms, etc - Online training not fully suitable – blended learning models better. - Possible trainers of Master Trainers for RPL assessment could address the regional problems - RPL Pilot candidates funded by Employment Agency - Possible involvement of City Halls at local level for RPL candidates - Networks of Pedagogical Colleges could lead in capacity-building for teachers at a national level.

1.5 Meetings with supporting stakeholders

To maximise the efficiency of the online meeting with the Ministry during the study visit, three policy-related questions were sent forward in advance, as follows:

Question 1:
Will the **Order** on the validation of non-formal and informal learning be extended beyond the Pilot Phase with a view to a national VHFIL/RPL policy for VET & TVET?

Question 2:
Will there be a **review of the Practical Guide** with a view to a more permanent, approved document?

Question 3:
How will the Ministry and other Ministries support wider use of RPL in the future in a sustainable way regarding *inter alia:*
- i. enabling legislation,
- ii. annual budget allocations,
- iii. provision of resources,
- iv. capacity-building,
- v. information campaigns,
- vi. support for RPL candidates?

Responses from the Ministry addressed the questions generally, without specific commitments at this time.

Relevant points from the consultation are included below. Key points are highlighted.

	Meetings with…	Date	Key policy points (term RPL used for space efficiency)
1	Ministry of Education and Research	9/12/21	- The Ministry is currently working with the NQF in finalising 49 qualifications and exploring the inclusion of RPL in programme design in each case. - A Template for a Certificate achieved by RPL is already being developed. - High-demand industries/sectors will be prioritised - It is not possible to delegate assessment of RPL to employers - Departments of Education and Labour will lead - The lack of public knowledge about RPL is a challenge - For QA purposes, qualifications already accredited will be the starting point - Assessments will ideally mirror existing assessments in VET - Returning Moldovans who are registered with Territorial Divisions of the National Employment Agency (TDNEA) will be offered cost-free RPL if possible - Employers will be better informed and invited to send candidates…and asked to cover some costs - Not all high-demand occupations have agreed standards yet such as nanny, driving instructor, homecare assistant - Data on labour market trends are weak, so it is difficult to target the most likely users of RPL - Costing RPL is difficult and there is no on-going, post-Pilot funding for RPL in Centres - A package of revised documents will be needed and possibly new legislation - Chisinau is well served but regional Centres are less so. - The process of validating Centres to perform RPL is lengthy - Assessing competences is easier than assessing theory – a holistic, system-wide approach is necessary - The Education Code allows for a validation system - RPL should become normalised by Government decision - The currently in-development NQF should generate an RPL advisory page - RPL should be performed only by institutions with accredited programmes and standards

			- Access routes to RPL may be different but the certification should reflect the same required standard - Financial support for candidates from the state budget will vary depending on the different conditions - Vulnerable groups should be highly supported - Ideally, when RPL is supported by the state it should be in relation to NQF qualifications and its legal parameters in the first instance. Thereafter the state could extend the reach of RPL based on evidence of sustainable economic and societal needs. - Private and Corporate Certs may exist outside the NQF, and indeed be considered in relation to the NQF when an agreed process is developed and agreed. - The RPL Guide seeks synergies between education and the world of work. Ideally a dual approach of in-college and in-work learning should become more 'normal' aspects of programme design were appropriate, including integrating RPL arrangements into programme design and equipping Centres appropriately to do so. - More accurate training needs assessments for both the labour market and for society should guide RPL policy at state level.
2	International Organisation for Migration	8/12/'21	- Moldovan citizens working abroad may need skills recognition to work in the formal economy in their country of work. - Returning Moldovan citizens may need formal certification of skills to work abroad again in the same field of work. - Private labour markets exploit un-certificated workers both in Moldova and in work-destination countries. RPL could better protect such workers by achieving an internationally recognised standard of qualification linked to wage rates. - Outreach to vulnerable groups in Moldova is essential as vulnerable groups are less likely to be pro-active in this regard, or aware of possibilities to achieve a qualification. This is of additional importance where Romanian is not the first language. - Centres of Excellence need greater support for outreach so that local communities and individuals

				with in them become aware of possibilities from RPL.
				- All Moldovan are potential migrants who would be more secure with certification: this concept should drive wider public information campaigns. - Language and IT skills for mobile workers are essential to minimise exploitation. - Information campaigns for potential migrants and returning workers are necessary in highly visible ways. - Preparation and orientation for potential migrants with web pages and modules in both Romanian and Russian text are necessary - Employment Agency does some of this work and should be further supported for vulnerable returners during Covid-19 with more 'adult education' type activities suitable for local areas - Dual citizenship could mask the challenges of migrant workers, but it also offers the potential for dual-certification, or at least wider recognition of qualifications across the EU. - Fear of vaccination could restrict mobile workers for 2022 and '23 at the very least. - 'Home town' associations could be used for vulnerable groups. *(IOM advised at policy meta-level only – not at operational level)*

1.6 Findings and Analysis

1.6.1 **Review of VNFIL/RPL REGULATION/ORDER to facilitate RPL Pilots** (translated version)

General review remarks

Overall, this temporary policy document to facilitate the RPL Pilots in Moldova is an excellent model of good practice for a pilot phase in its national context and relative to other national models as outlined in 1.6 above.

Finding A - *embeddedness*

Embedding the temporary Order document within Education Code No. 152/2014 is a judicious arrangement for a predominantly 'top-down' or 'instrumental' document as compared to a document which might arise from 'organic' activities of practice in a 'bottom-up' process. This approach ensures support for RPL at the highest level thereby instilling confidence and trust among stakeholders and users. *Recommendation follows.*

Finding B - *contextualisation*

It is clear that the Order document is not simply a replication or imposition of arrangements and practices from elsewhere though it is obviously informed by international experiences. Specifying initial roles for the pilot phase within the competences, existing roles and responsibilities of the key actors, particularly the Centres of Excellence, is wise. Centres, though geographically fixed, are in a position to work with their associate providers at national level, thus ensuring wider geographic access both for workers and for vulnerable groups.

Recommendations follow.

Finding D – *time limit on the Order*

The time and resources invested in developing the Order and implementing the pilots would suggest that the Order should be 'legally' extended for at least three years and possibly five. This would allow for post-Covid recover time and enable additional cycles of RPL to better identify any weaknesses experienced so far and to extend the model in light of new demands for the labour market and the economy. As Europe and the wider geographic region recovers from Covid 19 it is likely that the local demand for RPL in Moldova will also change when mobility of workers resumes.

Recommendation follows

Finding E – *focusing on existing VET occupational standards initially*

International experiences of VNFIL/RPL indicate that focusing initially on VET qualifications linked to national occupational standards is likely to result in an RPL model that has the widest reach in relation to the needs of individuals and of the labour market. It also has wide potential to pilot RPL recruitment, assessment and support systems within existing arrangements, and to work immediately with Employment Services and employers in an evidence-based direction – as has been the case in Moldova.

Recommendation follows

However, it is the case in Moldova, as in many other countries, that occupations currently in demand of qualified workers may not have fully agreed occupational standards against which to organise VNFIL/RPL for experienced/'unqualified' workers. It is also the case that experienced workers currently employed might not reach the full occupational standard through RPL assessment alone, and that new learning will be required to meet those standards. This then, leads to a context where Centres of Excellence are going beyond the remit of RPL assessment alone and into the sphere of additional up-skilling for existing workers to meet newly-developed occupational standards. This in turn requires new thinking about programme design, pedagogies and assessment methods outwith the 'normal' model of programme delivery and accreditation. This scenario has already emerged through the RPL pilots. And is likely to be more significant in the future, particularly for provision of adult education.

Recommendation follows

Finding F – *when to extend VNFIL/RPL beyond VET*

Clearly defining the parameters of RPL within the formal VET system at this stage, and excluding the school system and higher education, is important for clarity, trust and acceptance by all stakeholders until it is fully embedded and operationalised. It also enables good management of expectations and clarity regarding the benefits of the process to individuals, employers and the wider labour market at a specific level of qualification. However, Centres of Excellence in Moldova have unique relationships with higher education and access routes to HE qualifications. Invariably this scenario will require clarity with regard to full or partial qualifications achieved through RPL. This is a n excellent opportunity to develop a lifelong learning pathways system.
Recommendation follows

1.6.2   Chapter 2 of the Order

While Chapter 2 is relatively short, it is the pivotal chapter with regard to VNFIL/RPL practice itself. It was a wise decision to develop an RPL Guide to support this chapter as much capacity-building is required within each and every Centre to achieve the expectations included in the chapter.

The Guide is reviewed further below.

1.6.3   Chapter 3

Finding G – *dependence on Validation Centres (Centres of Excellence)*

Validation Centres essentially carry responsibility for RPL generally, as well as for the Pilots. Demands on them for systems change and capacity-building is considerable.
Recommendations follow

It is not quite clear how 'strategic areas' are selected by the Ministry for RPL, though it makes good sense that Validation Centres have recognised excellence in specific occupational areas, teachers, equipment and general capacity. Should the scale of RPL be extended, then sustainable capacity and resources should follow with additional state budget allocation.
Recommendations follow

While Centres of Excellence for teaching purposes makes good sense, their geographic location may limit wider access for RPL purposes and thereby exclude many potential candidates. In such cases, there may be wisdom in partnering with other Centres attached to them for assessment purposes.
Recommendations follow

It is likely that Centres will synthesis RPL functions efficiently and thereby advise new Centres on efficient RPL organisational ad administrative matters.

Recommendations follow

Section 1 on the Evaluation and Certification Committee is greatly detailed and very specific. This may be the norm in the Moldova context and is likely to be evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness on completion of the Pilots.
Recommendation follows

Likewise, Section 2 is greatly detailed and with multiple tasks included. Again, an evaluation of the Pilots will indicate if and where these tasks are appropriate or not. However, it is easier to reduce points of responsibility following an evaluation than to add to them after practice has been established.
Recommendation follows

1.6.4   Chapter 4

Findings as comments and questions, elaborated in Part 2 related to VNFIL/RPL practice

i.   It is wise to associate RPL with existing training programmes which have approved standards, levels, units/modules and possibly a credits system as these are the tools for RPL assessment.

ii.   Permitting RPL candidates to be examined with conventional students is efficient provided that the candidates have been equally prepared in advance.

iii.   The steps in advising and preparing candidates is logical and as good practice models. Training of advisors is essential here.

iv.   It is not quite clear if assessment criteria for RPL are different to criteria for the standard generally. This is a much-debated challenge for RPL pedagogies in general with regard to transparency and equity. In general, subject-matter experts advise and pedagogies become clearer.

v.   Permitting partial qualifications is wise on several levels. How a candidate achieves the total qualification – if necessary – can be a challenge. When and where to provide assessment – on-demand or at fixed dates in the teaching year – is an important consideration with regard to practical logistics, to economies of scale and to reducing recurring costs.

vi.   Advising on further training to achieve a full qualification is wise, but may not always be achievable in a real sense if logistics for teaching and assessment do no coalesce in a VET or training venue. Much planning and co-ordination is required if individual rather than cohort or sector RPL is provided.

vii.   Item 60 is interesting as it permits partnership in RPL assessment in certain circumstances. This could be greatly extended in the future as additional occupational and professional standards are included and demand changes.

viii.   Item 71 is complex in that it implies a differentiation of how RPL assessment outcomes are recorded on a formal Certificate. The impact of this decision would be interesting to evaluate! It is a much-debated matter internationally.

ix.   It is not clear if item 73 matches item 71 in practice or not.

1.6.5 Chapter 5 – policy related to costs and budgets, and equity matters

Supporting a pilot phase with state and external funding is normal practice.

How to estimate costs and to impose fees in a sustainable way after the Pilot Phase is a difficult matter in all cases of RPL and examples vary greatly. Imposing fees can exclude deserving candidates. Yet, RPL requires resources and budget need to be allocated.
Multiple Ministries could contribute to address specific needs for training, up-skilling or straight-forward credentialising/validation on a needs-based arrangement that could change rapidly over time.
Recommendations follow

Involving unemployment centres and migration centres is probably necessary to ensure some equity of opportunity, to address immediate needs and to safeguard individuals. Again, needs could change rapidly for post-Covid recovery, economic development or emergence of specific new areas of employment from re-location of multinational companies. In this regard it is essential that multiple agencies use shared foresight analysis of employment trends both in Moldova and in the main destination countries. It may not be possible for VET Centres of Excellence to keep themselves sufficiently informed in this regard, or to respond sufficiently fast to new demands for VNFIL/RPL without over-arching bodies with competence to act and resources to implement and budgets to maintain momentum.
Recommendations follow

1.6.6. Relationship with the EQF

Linking RPL practice to both the Moldova NQF and the EQF – at least in principle - ensures a degree of compatibility and comparability for both local and mobile candidates and employers. How this is actually achieved beyond declarative intent is not quite clear.

Recommendation follows

1.7 Review of Practical Guide, Annex to Order of the Minister of Education, Culture and Research, No 1096 of 7 October 2020

Since the Practical Guide mirrors arrangements in the policy instrument for Validation Centres above, it is reasonable to comments upon it generally in this policy review.

Again, from the outset, the authors and working group are commended on an excellent document which is a model of good practice equalling best international exemplars. Likewise, the funders are commended for supporting production of the Guide to support the RPL Pilots.

This part of the review report does not attempt commentary on each and every aspect of the Guide. Rather, attention is drawn to relevant policy-oriented points which emerged in

meetings with stakeholders and points in the text which may require additional capacity-building and support.

1.7.1 Part 1 wisely advises that each Centre estimates its capacity to undertake RPL, accurately records the resources consumed, and accurately briefs all staff on the minute details of the Guide and implications for their areas of work. These first steps diverge from most institutional practice where a specific function/office within the institution is tasked with developing and implementing RPL, thus setting it apart from 'normal' teaching and assessment practices. Informing and consulting all staff is likely to embed RPL more organically in the day-to-day operations of the institution and gain more support and trust among colleagues.

1.7.2 Mapping internal capacity with specific RPL tasks (1.2) is an essential exercise both to allocate budgets initially and to estimate sustainable costs for a larger scale provision of RPL services in the future.

1.7.3 Working with work-places and employers to estimate on-site capacity for practical assessments is wise in relation to costing equipment etc. (1.3 and 1.4) It also helps buy-in to the process by employers and workers who can witness the process in reality.

1.7.4 Estimating future skills and qualifications needs over a medium and long term is a difficult task for Centres without the support of wider Government services and policy makers.

1.7.5 Centres are likely to know the immediate context and to plan accordingly. However, expecting Centres to act as competent labour market analysts is a little unreasonable in terms of policy development. (1.5)
Recommendation follows

1.7.6. The matter of budgets and staff costs is addressed in STAGE 3. However, Centres might consider that this matter is not fully articulated or sufficiently robust relative to the risks involved. This may require more consideration at national level, Ministry level or among two or more Ministries.
Recommendation follows

1.7.7 STAGE 4 related to curricula is a very challenging stage for teaching and assessment staff, and will invariably generate much divided opinion and pedagogical debate. It is likely that additional training/capacity building will be required in this regard: the questions that arises are – Who should lead in this matter? Who is competent to train staff?
Opinion is divided regarding whether such competence should be developed locally and a team of Master Trainers organised, or, if such training should be related to models of practice used in other countries. There are good arguments in support of both options, of course, keeping in mind the principle of subsidiarity of decision-making to the local level in Moldova and the local level of Centres of Excellence.
Recommendation follows

1.7.8 STAGE 8 deals with information and awareness-raising among appropriate users of RPL. Again, inter-Ministry co-operation is required here. In addition, care needs to be taken of the most vulnerable citizens who may not use the majority language or script, or who may not have access to electronic media. In this regard, there may be a good case for Outreach activities to geographically-distant areas far from the main cities, and indeed distant from Centres offering RPL. In this regard, there may be a good case for information about RPL and capacity-building to engage in it, to be provided at the local level in community-based premises where local families normally access social and economic supports. In such instances, RPL may not always be initially related to gaining qualifications: rather it might relate to the initial stage of identifying skills and knowledge acquired in a general way for sustainable local life, for migration, or for reintegration into local life and economic activity. This paradigm of RPL is perhaps a hybrid of community education, family support, enterprise support, support for active citizenship and gaining of qualifications.
Recommendations follow

1.7.9 Part 5 deals in detail with the roles and responsibilities of Validation Centre staff, which are significant, extensive and complex.

An evaluation of the Pilots in this regard will be necessary to estimate the capacity of Centres to continue to carry their roles and responsibilities without additional staff allocation or additional budgets after the Pilot phase. Commitments from the Ministry were not given during our meeting with them in December 2021, nor could such a commitment be expected without wider evaluation and agreement across multiple functions. But this is an urgent matter to avoid a hiatus in development trajectory of VNFIL/RPL form 2020 onwards.
Recommendations follow

The remainder of the Practical Guide outlines the many processes involved in RPL practice. Since this element is the subject of Part 2 of this review report, it is not covered in this policy review.

1.8 Review of Education Code No. 152/2014

Since the Regulation for Validation of non-formal and informal learning was developed 'pursuant to Article 123 paragraph 10 of the Education Code', it can be assumed that the regulation is procedurally correct.

For the purpose of this policy review, note will be taken only of aspects of the Education Code which could be further leveraged to include more extensive RPL practices without the need for additional enabling legislation.

The extracts below are in the page order as they occurred in the Code (translated to English).

The extracts begin with definitions which could be interpreted as supportive to wider RPL provision. Analytical comments are probably not required for all extracts for an understanding by organisations, or consortia interested in inclusive adult education models.

Extract from Education Code	Policy-related Comment
Equivalent study document – study document issued for similar educational levels in the country or abroad	Essential for recognition of prior certificated learning
Educational alternatives – educational institutions or study and professional training programmes, different for traditional ones which meet the state educational standards	Useful for outreach activities
Community learning centres – multifunctional institution with educational destination	Useful for capacity-building and easy access for vulnerable groups
Consortium – association of educational institutions and organizations which carry out educational, research, development, innovation, artistic creation activities, based on a partnership agreement concluded according to the legislation in force	A useful mechanism to pool resources and to provide a range of RPL services
Inclusive education – the educational process, complying with the diversity and individual needs for development offering equal opportunities and chances to benefit of human fundamental rights to development and quality education in common areas of learning	A key principle for outreach
Non-formal education – set of pedagogical actions signed and fulfilled within extra-school institutionalised framework, established to bridge the knowledge acquired during lessons and the knowledge accumulated informally	This definition may need to go beyond the term 'extra-school' since it implies that no-formal education relates to children and youth without including adults
Informal education – the totality of instructive and pedagogical influences, exercised spontaneously and continuously on individuals in the family, locality, district, street, (micro)-social groups, social environment (current professional, economic, religious, etc), community (national, zonal, regional, local), mass-media (printed press, radio, television etc)	Permits a variety of outreach models
Adult education – a component of lifelong learning, ensuring human being's continuing access to science, information, culture, for flexible adjustment to the new constantly changing social and economic realities …	Useful mechanism for developmental RPL
Alternative educational institutions – other educational institutions than the ones ensuring the compulsory functional structure of the educational system. These provide, as a rule, alternative educational programmes or services.	Useful model and term if extended to explicitly include

	education activities engaged in by adults
Dual education – education, in which the theoretical training is carried out at the educational institution and the practical one at the enterprise	
Standard package of educational services – system of educational offers and programmes focused on achieving some concrete outcomes and acquiring knowledge, developing competences according to the educational standards	
Individual educational plan – tool to organise and fulfil n a co-ordinated way the educational process for the beneficiaries …..	Frequently used alongside RPL

Partnership in the education system
  1. The social dialogue and partnerships between the educational institutions in the research area, trade union, businesses, civil society and mass media are encouraged in the educational system, in accordance with the legislation in force
  2. The Ministry of Education shall design and apply the national development strategies of the education system, consulting the central and local public administration authorities, as well as the social partners.
	Possible method of sharing resources and costs

Access to education The citizens of Moldova shall have equal rights to education, and to initial ad continuing professional training through the national education system, according to the present Code	
The state can guarantee the training and development of efficient communications skills in the Romanian language, in the national minorities' languages, as appropriate, and in at least two languages of international circulation	Important that dual languages are formally supported for adults and used for RPL awareness raising campaigns and for outreach.
The state shall promote and support lifelong learning	
At the initiative of the local public administration authorities, central public administration authorities, and public institutions and with the Ministry of Educations' approval, depending on the local needs, the education structures with no legal personality – these being subordinated to the same budget executor, under the law	
Lifelong learning shall be carried out in formal, non-formal, and informal education contexts	
Lifelong learning in the non-formal education context represents the integrated learning within the framework of some planned activities, with learning objective, which do not follow explicitly the curriculum	

Lifelong learning in the informal context represents the result of some daily activities related to work, family environment, free time, and is not organised or structured from learning objectives, duration or supported point of view	Useful for developmental RPL
The certification of the knowledge and competences acquired in the non-formal and informal education contexts may be carried out by the authorised structures based on a regulation approved by the Ministry of Education	
Lifelong learning in the non-formal learning context may be carried out in the following institutions or organisation: … extra-school institutions, … enterprises, cultural institutions, professional, cultural and trade union organisations, non-governmental organisations, other organisations	Permits multiple venues for outreach
Lifelong learning in the informal context shall be carried out through activities organised in the family, at the workplace, in the community, within social networks, volunteering activities, sport, cultural or other activities of the same kind, and may lead to the building of competences and skills	Permits multiple venues for outreach
The state shall guarantee access to and shall support, including financially, lifelong learning	Aspirational
The financing of lifelong learning shall be carried out from public and/or private sources, based on public-private partnership, through financing and co-financing by employers, non-governmental organisations, non-reimbursable funds from international programmes and through beneficiaries' contributions	Worth considering for sustainable models of RPL
Career counselling and guidance centres may be established by local public administration authorities, National Agency for Employment, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, and other private providers.	Training will be required for RPL

1.9 Review of 'Education 2030' relevant to RPL and adult education provision

This draft document is stark and challenging. As an outside reader it seems remarkably frank in style and tone. Its usefulness in terms of this policy review report is that it presents both the **aspirations** for education and the **risks** inherent in the current landscape after two years of a pandemic, added to economic inertia and complicated by a county being in transition status.

What follows are extracts from the document in the page sequence as they occurred. The extracts are selected to illustrate the rationale for flexibility regarding provision for the education and support of adults in context. No value judgement is implied or intended on any matter in the document. Highlighting is for emphasis only.

The first extract indicates an understanding of the need for a responsive and dynamic system of education which is acutely aware of the specific Moldovan context.

Extract from 'Education 2030'	RPL Policy implications
The need to develop an education system resilient to social, demographic, economic, ecological and pandemic shocks by building individual skills that help people to face them within formal, non-formal and informal education.	This highlights awareness in Moldova that education policy needs to be responsive to rapidly changing contexts and that individuals are likely to need continuous re-skilling and upskilling.
The education system is confronted with the following problems: inconsequential societal accountability towards education, ineffective community involvement in education, decreasing social services for disadvantaged groups, as well as corruption and lack of anti-corruption education.	This extract is seriously concerning if the sentiment is based on evidence. It would raise questions about the possibility of RPL becoming a priority policy issue, about public confidence in it, and about the likelihood of budgets being effectively allocated to it.
The system (subsystem) of non-formal education does not provide, for the most part, the pupils, young people and adults' needs and options.	It is not unusual that a state focuses on the formal education system, particularly if resources are limited. How a 'non-formal sector' is defined, of course, varies across countries and such definitions determine policy.
The regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova does not regulate clearly enough the concept, structure and organisation of non-formal adult education	This statement clearly indicates that there is a lack of legal definition of what constitutes 'non-formal adult education'. If this is the case, VNFIL/RPL is unlikely to be solidified in policy outside VET in the near future.
Low level of funding for the adult education system.	As with regard to the former extract, adults are unlikely to be prioritised for funding outside the VET system. This makes outreach, community education and developmental RPL more difficult to achieve.
● The insufficiency of comparative statistical data on vocational and general adult education creates an impediment in defining strategies for the development of the (non-formal) education system. ● The low level of research in the field of non-formal adult education.	These three extracts suggest that more quantitative data on adult education needs to be gathered so that RPL may extend beyond the credentialist model developed for the Pilots.

Establish the 'Monitoring Centre of adult education' – which will provide statistical data and scientific research in the field.	
Develop youth and adult informal education as a factor that has a strong influence on human personality development by training and developing orientation skills in the current information space of learners through the specific use of informal education sources: media, church, professional associations, interests, etc.	This extract shows a policy-oriented understanding of the need to extend developmental models of RPL, and/or pre-RPL capacity building, through more locally-based organisations and networks. This would represent an 'introductory' step to RPL at local level and could be a means of informing and involving marginalised groups, groups geographically distant from the cities, and groups with traditional languages and communications systems.
Priority directions of actions: The actions regarding the achievement of this strategic object are generated by the following factors: the importance of non-formal education as a complementary factor in formal education, as well as a means of ensuring lifelong education; the low level of functionality of the non-formal education system in the Republic of Moldova. Hence, the system of actions will consist of: - Develop the adult learning and education system by setting up facilities, by diversifying the forms and services of ongoing professional and non-professional training for adults, by enhancing the effectiveness of professional and personal adult training institutions/centres. • Expand and strengthen the process of professional skills validation acquired by adults through non-formal and informal means in view of ensuring their integrity on the labour market and reintegration	'Education 2030' provides a suggested framework for the development of an adult education system in Moldova which would enable RPL to be further developed. This does not seem to exclude working with existing formal education systems including VET Centres, Centres of Excellence etc. in the manner of the RPL Pilots. Rather is suggests more synergies across systems, structures and budget allocation.

of Moldovan migrants into the country's social-economic life. • Reconceptualize and develop the funding of education system and formal and informal adult education. • Develop the conceptual and regulatory framework of various adult learning and education forms.	
Consequences and risks Failure to address the problems of non-formal adult education will result in lower access to and motivation of adults for continuous vocational and general training; decrease in professionalism, as well as in the general culture of a large group of adults; decrease in quality and performance in different areas of society; dysfunctionality of the non-formal adult education system.	This assessment of risks is self-explanatory and requires no further comment here.
VALUE – *Accessibility* The principle of equity and accessibility will be fundamental for educational policies, because all learners must have equal opportunities to obtain a quality education regardless of the environment: urban-rural, woman-man, family welfare, target groups of pupils, etc. **VALUE – *Adaptability*** The education system will be open to internal and external changes, to the development trends of education at international and national level. **VALUE – *Flexibility*** A flexible education system will respond promptly to the requirements and options of those involved in this process: pupils, students, managers, educational	The Principles and Values recommended here apply equally to the conditions and environment required for a nationwide RPL system.

supervisors, educational counsellors, school psychologists, but also the community. At the same time, this value implies: the flexibility of the educational curriculum, the flexibility of the initial and on-going professional training routes, the flexibility to promote changes, etc.	

4.7. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7. LIFELONG LEARNING – QUALITY OF LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATION
 	
Ensure learning opportunities for all citizens over the course of their lives and in all life situations so that at least 47% of adults participate in non-formal training activities.
Create a functional system of non-formal education for young people and adults by 2030.
 	
Expected outcomes following the achievement of the STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7:
• The system of non-formal education of young people and adults will be developed so that, by 2030:
   (1) the number of providers of adult education services will increase by 20%;
   (2) the number of on-going training programs, learning programs for young people and adults will increase by 10% annually;
   (3) the conditions of vocational training and retraining in various fields, first of all, in the educational field will be ensured by 100%;
   (4) the number of adults employed in non-formal education activities will increase by 10% annually;
   (5) the efficiency and quality of in-service vocational
	All aspects of this Objective are significant. However, the final extract explicitly recommends a system of RPL accessible to all.
	
	• **Expand the number of acknowledgment, validation and certification centres for the skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, covering 100% of the needs in this respect.**
	
	The challenge in relation to 'Education 2030' will be to bring a largely aspirational and principles-based document to operational policy decisions.

training for teachers, managers, other categories of educational staff, carried out in a formal and non-formal way will increase (increase the learning outcomes of pupils/students, increase motivation for learning, etc.). • **Expand the number of acknowledgment, validation and certification centres for the skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, covering 100% of the needs in this respect.**	

1.10 SWOT Analysis of findings related to RPL in Moldova

It is likely that a formal evaluation of the RPL pilots and the associated documents considered above will be conducted by the Ministry and funders later in 2022. Policy instruments and the Practical Guide for Operationalising RPL in VET are likely to be revisited in light of that evaluation, and improved subsequently.

What might be useful at this stage of the policy review in this report is to synthesis findings with a view to framing 'practical and operable' policy recommendations to contribute to future development of sustainable RPL provision in Moldova.

A SWOT analysis of current policies is offered below as a starting point for discussion of the situation in December 2021 when the Covid 19 pandemic was still a significant threat.

No value-judgement is intended or implied. The exercises are for analytical purposes only.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Education Code	Ministerial Order is time-limited
Past experience of RPL	No definite post-pilot phase
Donor support for Pilots	Lack of accurate data on labour force needs
Expert advisory support	Uncertain funding post-pilot
Competent working group	Lack of evidence of return on investment
Excellent Practical Guide	Informal recruiters of mobile worker with little
Cross-Ministerial support	regard for qualifications or strict demand
Supportive employers in relevant sectors	Grey economy still attractive
Both demand-led and supply driven RPL	No definite value to successful candidate in
examples in Pilots	terms of wage increases or security of
Competent, open-minded teaching staff	employment
Obvious need by mobile workers and returning	Difficult to raise awareness
workers	Most marginalised excluded

	Adults not always visible in education legislation
Visionary documents such as 'Education 2030' which sets out a possible long-term roadmap.	Non-formal education for adults under-developed
	Over-demand on Centres of Excellence/Validation Centres
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Training of Master Trainers in Centres	Pandemic continues
Closer links of Validation Centres with Local Employment Services nationally	Labour market not improving
	Migrant workers obliged to return
Closer links with employers in the formal economy	Priority slips in national discourses
	No national budget allocated as a priority
Visible benefit for workers	Costs too-high
Community education centres at local level	Funding re-directed
More involvement of local administration	Trust in system diminishes
More outreach to distant areas	
Consortia of different organisations.	

1.11 Recommendations related to VNFIL/RPL Policy

While the documentation prepared for the RPL Pilots are appropriate for the specific pilot context, they do not sufficiently indicate how RPL might be extended within the lifelong learning and non-formal adult education paradigm contained in the Education Code and 'Education 2030'. Nor can one pilot project be expected to address the multi-faceted requirements of all Moldova citizens for validation of competences, and the requirements of the most vulnerable in particular. What emerges then, are expectation from a model of RPL which is essentially a **credentialising process** contrasted to a model of RPL which has a **developmental intent** at individual level which is envisaged in 'Education 2030'. This is a normal area of tension as a state struggles to develop and operationalise a national RPL model. Strategic decisions had to be made. If validation of competences for migrant and returning workers is the main priority, then the model developed for the Pilots is appropriate for the near future. If the focus includes validation of work-related skills to achieve a national certificate related to an occupational standard, or a partial certificate, the model is also efficient.

If, however, a priority is the inclusion of already marginalised groups into modern society in Moldova, then the model of RPL would be more extensive and more inclusive, as envisaged in 'Education 2030'.

Selecting VET level and its occupational standards as the starting point for RPL at a national level is undoubtedly wise for Moldova at this time, and no value-judgements are intended in the recommendations below.

A more inclusive model which includes non-formal adult education could emerge in the near future.

1.11.1 Recommendations on The Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning

As stated earlier, this document is well written with due attention to the Education Code and to good practice in RPL both locally and internationally.

It is recommended that the **lifetime of the current temporary Order/Regulation is extended for at least three years,** and possibly five years, to enable further cycles of implementation beyond the Pilot phase.

It is recommended that arrangement for **RPL continues to be fully** embedded within education systems and does not become a separate process in itself.

1.11.2 Recommendations on the Practical Guide

Again, this document is logically written with due attention to the Regulation above.

It is recommended that a **detailed evaluation** should be conducted after the pilot phase and that the **experiences of Pilot stakeholders** considered to inform any changes to the Guide.

1.11.3 Recommendation for Capacity building for RPL after the Pilot Phase

It was clear from meetings with stakeholders that specific types of capacity building and training of pedagogical, assessment and operational aspects of RPL are necessary if it is to become a wider element of education and training.

While the Practical Guide is detailed with regard to implementation, it does not sufficiently 'train' teaching staff on curriculum design, teaching and assessment variations required for an RPL paradigm. In any case, the Pedagogical College is likely to be central to an appropriate and sustainable model.

How best to organise training could include the following:

i. Webinars with RPL pedagogical experts
ii. Participation in online training modules
iii. Workshops with international experts in appropriate pedagogies
iv. **Training of Master Trainers in Centres of Excellence** who would deliver training to associated VET colleges and in other appropriate sites.
v. Training of career advisers for adults in RPL matters
vi. Training for work-based learning practitioners and HRM staff in how best to include RPL in their training model
vii. Online information and training videos of different levels for teaching staff, employment service staff, employment sites, etc

viii.   Online videos for potential applicants and for migrant workers on multiple sites.
ix.   Assessment templates for specific occupational standards
x.   Simple method of recording RPL results for individual learners and for providers
xi.   Efficient method of quality monitoring and reviewing RPL practices at Centre level.

1.11.4. Recommendations for focusing on RPL for vulnerable adults through Outreach

It is clear that RPL is centred on two cities with the highest potential for candidates.

This situation, of course, is likely to neglect the most marginal individuals, families and communities.

If RPL is considered a key element of a lifelong learning and adult education paradigm, then it will be essential to make the best use of existing laws and structures to bring services to the most vulnerable. The Education Code and 'Education 2030' allow for/recommend 'alternative' adult education arrangements at local level, involving schools, Mayor's offices, NGOs, sports facilities etc. to engage adults in educational activities, which could include RPL. Partnerships and consortia are permitted for such purposes, provided activities are conducted within existing laws.

1.11.5 Recommendations on Financial support

It is likely that state budgets will prioritise the most urgent needs of citizens at any time, including during Covid-19. Deciding which sectors of the population are the most 'worthy' recipients of support for RPL is a local decision, having regard for the central involvement of the Employment Agency, and advice regarding the vulnerability of migrant workers and returning migrants.

However, Validation Centres require a certain level of sustainable financial support to continue RPL services after the Pilot Phase.

It is recommended that Cross-Ministerial central funding, and other sources, be allocated post-Pilot **for at least three years** to embed VNFIL/RPL and to build sufficient capacity to sustain it.

Dr Anne Murphy, *February 2022*

APPENDIX A:
Schedule of study-visit consultations
6 – 10 December 2021.

Monday, December 6, 2021

Visit to Centre of Excellence in Construction. Meeting with:

- **Pelivan Valeriu** - Director of the Centre of Excellence in Construction, Chairman of the Validation Centre
- **Coceaș Sergiu** – Chief of the Department of Continuing Education (secretary of Validation Centre)
- **Grosu Veaceslav** – Vice Director for Practical Training (chairman of the evaluation committee)
- **Zestrea Lilia** - head of department (chairman of the evaluation committee)**Dragan Andrei** - prof de specialitate (președinte comisie de evaluare)

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Meeting with National Employment Agency (NEA) = ANOFM:

- **Raisa Dogaru**, Director of NEA
- **Valentina Lungu**, Vice Director of NEA
- **Cristina Arapan**, head of the department implementing the employment policy
- **Tatiana Cristafovici**, direction of implementation of employment policy

Meeting in Balti in the Centre of Excellence for Food Processing Services

- **Lilia Mahu**,; Deputy Director of Training and Production;
- **Dina Mocan**, head of practical department;
- **Ludmila Țurcanu**, teacher of specialized disciplines;
- **Corina Cebanu**, Teacher of specialized disciplines

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Visit to CE in Pedagogy College Chisinau

- **Victoria BERCU**, director
- **Elena BOAGHE**, vice director in charge with quality insurance

Thursday, December 9th, 2021

Meeting online with Ministry of Education and Research:

- **Galina Rusu**, state Secretary
- **Marcelina Baleca**, Chief of LLL Syrvice
- **Anatol Gremalschi**, expert in Education

Review of VNFIL/RPL praxis in Moldova

Mikaela KETS – international expert for education, training, and validation

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This review report is structured as follows:

1 – Background information
2 – Context of the project
3 – Methodological approach to the review process
4 – Conclusions and recommendations

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1. Background information

Before the commencement of my mission in Moldova, upon suggestion by DVV International, I was invited to participate in the online event held on December 2, 2021 entitled "Certification of professional competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts: opportunities for employees and employers", organised under the project "Migration and Local Development" (MIDL) implemented by UNDP and IOM, with the financial support of the Swiss Government. It is precisely the event on the RPL pilot project, implemented in Moldova in 2020-2021. More than 150 participants, representing both the public and the private sectors, took part in this event, more specifically, all decision-makers and the main stakeholders involved in the pilot stage of the project on the validation of learning outcomes. UNDP and IOM presented the project background and highlighted that almost a quarter of the Moldavian population is currently living abroad, either in temporary or in permanent long-term arrangements, with the intent to return to the Republic of Moldova or to remain in their respective host countries.

The goal of the event was to raise awareness on RPL actions taken in Moldova and to promote good practices in the field of certification of professional competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, and to strengthen the efforts of all stakeholders involved in creating new opportunities for citizens who want to have their learning outcomes validated, regardless whether they were acquired on the job, in Moldova or abroad. In the pilot project, as of December 2, 2021, 263 candidates went through the whole RPL process (as designed for the pilot stage), and 75 candidates are still waiting for the final results. From among professional areas, it looks like construction professions were on highest demand. It is also a probability that the Validation Centre in this area (http://ccc.md/) might have been very proactive.

The project "Migration and Local Development" implemented by UNDP Moldova, is part of a multiannual intervention of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development entitled "Moldova – Making the Most of Migration".
The following project objectives were mentioned:

- Potential, current and returned migrants in the Republic of Moldova benefit from complex employment support services. To that end, national and local authorities will be fully

equipped to respond to the needs of all categories of migrants at every phase of migration (pre-, post-migration);
- Community members including the migrants are significantly involved in local development processes. Hereby, activities are focused on close cooperation with public authorities, other local actors and migrants on the efficient implementation of local development initiatives that refer to the enhancement of local services and provision of income generating opportunities at local level.

Among the project accomplishments, the following were mentioned:

- A more coherent and evidence-based legislative, policy framework in labour migration endorsed and enabling a safer migration;
- Outlining a profile of the Moldovan migrants in six destination countries: Poland, Germany, Great Britain, France, Israel, and Spain which highlighted the fact that 3/4 of migrants are under 45 years old, that the percentage of men is higher than women, that most of them are married, and over half of them have children up to 14 years old;[1]
- Establishing the profile of migrants and the reasons for labour migration is a starting point for reorienting and improving future education and employment policies and strategies;
- Informal and non-formal skills recognition mechanism successfully piloted and prepared methodologically for extension to other areas;

The participation in this conference was highly useful to understand the context and the stage of the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, and to draft an agenda for the visit to Moldova.

The conference also had the role of disseminating information on the activities implemented under the Pilot project for the evaluation and certification of competencies acquired in informal and non-formal contexts.

The information about the process of assessment and validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts was disseminated by visiting employers' offices, by editing information materials, by posting information on the NEA website, through social networks, on the web pages of the Centres of Excellence.

Next, it is important to highlight some aspects worth considering for the pilot project such as: the organization of the process, the counselling of the applicant, the costs of the evaluation as well as the medium- and long-term benefits of the competency validation system.

In general, there are 6 important steps in organizing the VNFIL/RPL process:

Step 1 - The applicant approaches a validation centre to submit his/her file;

Step 2 - The applicant is assisted by a secretary or counsellor to prepare the necessary documents;

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[1] Profile and current challenges of Moldovan migrant workers (main findings), Chisinau, 2020

Step 3 - The applicant presents a file with documents confirming his/her experience and degrees, diplomas, certificates and so on;

Step 4 - The applicant is assessed by a special committee;

Step 5 - The committee validates the applicant's competencies based on the file and the assessment results;

Step 6 - The qualification certificate is issued with a supplement specifying the competencies.

The applicant is at the heart of the whole process and for this reason he/she is supported throughout the entire process, from the beginning to the end.

For a start, the applicant is informed by state institutions or social networks about the possibility of having his/her skills and experience validated. And once arrived at a competency validation centre, the applicant is guided/advised from the stage of file submission until the final stage of issuing the certificate.

As can be seen, the Counsellor of the Validation Centre plays a very important role in the process of validation of competencies. The legislation in force does not establish explicit requirements for the qualification of the counsellor, but from his/her responsibilities suggest the following requirements:

- educational background: at least ISCED level VI;

- professional experience in the respective occupational field;

- pedagogical experience in providing initial and continuing vocational training services;

- experience in adult education.

Given that the counsellor interacts with adults who have acquired skills by practicing an occupation and not by completing a course, it would be necessary for him/her to have certain adult-specific guidance and counselling skills, perhaps even some basic knowledge of andragogy.

The costs of skills assessment and validation services were covered by the project budget.

The piloting the skills assessment and validation showed that the costs may differ from one occupation to another, because different consumables are used. Also, the costs may differ from one person to another, within the same occupation, if there are differences in the number of competencies that are assessed and certified.

After the end of the project, it is hoped that all interested parties will be able to pay the costs of a competency assessment and validation process. A mechanism for establishing and calculating costs has not yet been established, but there are discussions in this regard. There are also discussions on the possibility that for certain categories of people (unemployed, people with disabilities) the costs of the process of assessment and validation of skills to be paid from the state budget.

Even though we are talking about a pilot project and an incipient phase of the VNFIL / RPL system implementation, I believe that it is successful, and it is very well received both by institutions and by the people who benefit from it. In fact, there are various categories which stand to gain here:

- individuals gain recognition and the opportunity to access a job;

- companies gain better qualified people and more efficient production processes;

- the government gains a stable economy, with flexible and mobile workers.

2. Context of the Project

The international cooperation in area of education, as well as the in-country framework document on education, the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, set up new dimensions for the schooling system in the country. The Lifelong learning approach is being adopted in public discourse and treated as an overall goal. More specifically, some areas are being tackled in terms of legislative modernisation and praxis piloting. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) will be used in a kind of synonymous relationship in the present report, correlating international terminology RPL (UNESCO terminology) and VNFIL that is a more common usage in the Republic of Moldova. RPL is an area that was piloted in 2019-2020 with support of the international donor community (UNDP Moldova, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and IOM).

By several consecutive orders issued by the Ministry of Education and Research (MEC), the pilot period initially set for March 1- October 1, 2019 was extended until April 30, 2022. On January 24, 2019 the State Secretary in Education issued Order no. 65 approving the Regulation on the validation of non-formal and informal education, which entitles educational institutions to start the process of providing assessment and certification services for professional competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. Also, a step-by-step Practical Guide on the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal educational contexts was issued in early 2020.

In an exchange with the Ministry of Education and Research (MER, https://mec.gov.md/), conducted by DVV International Office in Moldova on September 21, 2021 support in this process was articulated as a need by the leadership of the Ministry. There was special emphasis on assistance in bringing in international expertise in training coaches, who are supposed to guide applicants through all stages of validation process. In order to propose relevant training courses, it was suggested that an Assessment of progress should be conducted on 2 dimensions: 1. Existing regulatory documentation 2. Implemented praxis and need for further interventions – training, guidance for coaches, evaluators, etc.

In my capacity as praxis expert, I was involved in the following tasks:
- Desk review of existing praxis in Moldova on VNIL: DVV International office in Moldova facilitated access to documentation in place, translation into English, offering explanations and contact to relevant local expertise;
- Short-term visit to Moldova and observing VNIL processes in the pilot institutions
- Interviews with key persons involved in VNIL – directors of Centres of Excellence, evaluators and coaches for the applicants, participants in validation processes;

- Interviews with other relevant stakeholders with support from DVV International Office that facilitated contacts and access;
- Drafting the Final Review of Existing procedures and making specific recommendations on further developments: material development, tools and methodology gaps, training programmes for assessors and other relevant staff involved, cost analysis and suggestions for long-term sustainable development of VNIL;
- Submitting the review for possible comments;
- Incorporating received comments into the analysis and recommendations.

3. Methodological approach to the review process

The analytical approach of this process of reviewing VINFIL / RPL practices determined the choice of methods such as: desk research, meetings, interviews, and on-site visits. The combination of research methods led to much clearer and deeper opinions, as well as to the formulation of much more specific recommendations.

3.1. Desk research

After a thorough analysis of VNIL documentation, the most relevant documents with information on the praxis in the field are the "Regulation on the validation of non-formal and informal education" and the "Practical Guide on the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal educational contexts" (levels 3, 4, 5 of NQFRM)".

The Guide was developed with financial support provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation under the project "Migration and Local Development" implemented by UNDP Moldova and IOM Moldova.

The Guide targets the technical and vocational education and training institutions which intend to deliver or already deliver validation of non-formal and informal learning services. Also, the Guide is useful for all applicants, i.e., VNFIL/RPL Centres, willing to offer such services, providing them with templates and helping them understand the logic and the necessary steps of the processes involved in the assessment and certification of professional competencies.

According to the Guide and to the legal provisions in force, the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts (VNFIL/RPL) is performed by the following institutions:

- Secondary technical and vocational education and training institutions (professional schools);
- Post-secondary and non-tertiary post-secondary technical and vocational education and training institutions (colleges) which provide authorised/accredited initial training programmes;
- Technical and vocational education and training institutions which provide combined programmes (Centres of Excellence).

In order to provide VNFIL/RPL or validation of non-formal and informal learning services, an educational institution should take the following steps:

- An evaluation of the capacity of that educational institution to perform as a Centre for validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts.
- Submit an application to the Ministry of Education and Research to set up the Centre for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The application should include the following information:
  - o Information on the Validation Centre: the head of the educational institution shall issue an order which should include the following mandatory information: qualification levels for the occupations/professions/specialties for which the Centre will provide validation of non-formal and informal learning, last name and first name of the manager, of the coordinator and of the secretary of the Validation Centre, means of remuneration of persons providing validation services;
  - o The Working Groups to develop the assessment programmes (examinations) for the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts;
  - o The Working Groups to develop the assessment and certification tests;
  - o The Committees for the assessment and certification of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts;
  - o The Appeals Committee;
- Promote the services provided by the Validation Centre and attract applicants;
- Carry out the validation process;
- Issue the certificate of qualification.

Mention should be made that there are legal provisions in place regulating the qualifications, the training levels and the obligations of the persons employed by the validation centre to perform activities in this field.

Mention of the international expert: Particular attention should be paid to the promotion of services in accordance with the target group.

For the Validation Centre, the validation procedure entails the following steps:

- the applicant is referred to the Validation Centre Secretariate;
- The applicant submits the applicant file, including all documents required to initiate the validation process;
- An advisor is appointed to assist the applicant throughout the validation process;
- An assessment coordinator is appointed; this person will be in charge with the applicant's assessment and is selected from the Assessment Committee members;
- The decision to accept/reject the application to initiate the validation procedure is communicated to the applicant;
- The applicant acknowledges the decision to initiate the validation procedure or appeals against a negative decision made by the Assessment and Certification Committee;
- An Assessment Plan is drafted;
- The Professional Competency Assessment and Certification Plan is consulted;
- Completion of Registration Form;
- Assessment Plan implementation;
- The assessment result is established and communicated;

- submission of appeal (in case the applicant does not agree with the final result of the assessment process);
- Drafting the Certification of Qualification;
- Issuance of the Certification of Qualification.

For the applicant, the validation procedure entails the following steps:

- Collect all documents
- Draft the application
- Documentation check (performed by the Validation Centre secretary) and
- Fill in the Registration Form
- Sign the Health and Safety Form acknowledging compliance with health and safety procedures throughout the assessment process.
- Submit the applicant file including all necessary documents
- Decide on how to proceed after receiving the acceptance/rejection of the application to initiate the validation procedure.
- Acknowledge the acceptance/rejection of the application to initiate the validation procedure.
- Consult the Professional Competency Assessment and Certification Plan
- Completion of Registration Form
- Professional Competency Assessment and Certification Plan implementation
- Receipt of Certification of Qualification.

Mention of the international expert: A greater involvement of the applicant in establishing the evaluation plan and the ways in which it is carried out would be desirable.

The competency validation process shall comply with the following principles: validity, flexibility, reliability, transparency, quality assurance.

Validity refers to the fact that the assessment relies on competency evidence derived from the activities described in the occupational standard.

Flexibility refers to the fact that assessment is adapted to the applicant's needs and to the workplace specificities.

Reliability refers to the fact that the assessment is performed using methods which lead consistently to the same result.

Transparency refers to the fact that all stages and instruments of the validation process are known.

Quality assurance refers to the fact that the assessment procedure, the assessors and the assessment instruments comply with national and international standards.

The validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts requires the use of the following documents: occupational profile, occupational standard, qualification standard and the curriculum developed for the occupation/profession/specialty targeted by the validation.

All documents were designed with the goal to link the existing labour market requirements and the training provision, including competency assessment services, regardless the contexts in which such competencies were acquired. This is obvious from their design/structure. More specifically:

- The goal of the **occupational profile** is to describe the *functional roles* and the work tasks, as well as the knowledge, skills and practical abilities, professional qualities, the equipment, the tools and the working materials necessary to carry out occupation-specific activities;
- Building on the occupational profile, the **occupational standard** describes the *relevant key competencies*, general competencies and specific competencies for an occupation, as well as the performance indicators or, more specifically, the quality requirements associated with the successful performance of the activities described by the competencies and required by the labour market;
- The **qualification standard** describes the *requirements in terms of learning outcomes necessary to carry out a given activity* related to one or several workplaces, included in a given category. The qualification standard comprises information on: training field, description of qualification-relevant competencies, description of specific professional competencies in terms of learning outcomes, comprehensive description of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility, autonomy and minim level of competency required for recognition, and in terms of learning outcome assessment requirements/criteria to award the qualification.
- The **curriculum** for the examinations held for the purposes of validation of professional competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning builds upon the specific curriculum of the trade/profession/specialty and lists the specific professional competencies, the assessment objectives which detail the most relevant specific knowledge and skills the applicant should be able to demonstrate.

Although a Regulation on the validation of non-formal and informal education was approved by Minister Order in 2019, developments in the field have been rather poor, either due to a lack of initiatives, or due to a lack of information mechanisms targeting potential beneficiaries.

In this case, the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova established a deadline and appointed several institutions to pilot validation processes in compliance with the above-mentioned Regulation. Thus, the following centres piloted this process:

- Centre of Excellence in Constructions, Chișinău Municipality;
- Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing, Bălţi Municipality;
- "Alexei Mateevici" College, Chișinău Municipality;
- Ecological College, Chișinău Municipality;
- Centre of Excellence in IT, Chișinău Municipality;
- Centre of Excellence in Light Industry, Chișinău Municipality;
- Centre of Excellence in Transport, Chișinău Municipality;
- "Mondostud-Art" College, Chișinău Municipality;
- Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo"

> **The difference between COLLEGE and CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**
>
> Although both types of institutions provide education and training services, there are significant differences in terms of mission, roles and duties.
>
> An important difference is that, while there can be several colleges in the same field of activity, there can only be one centre of excellence for each field of activity. Moreover, a college may provide education and training services solely for ISCED level 4, while a centre of excellence may provide education and training services for ISCED levels 3, 4 and 5.
>
> According to law, centres of excellence have various duties, among them: to coordinate the vocational schools and colleges attached to them, to provide continuing specialist teacher training, to develop and implement partnership programmes to ensure the quality and relevance of educational services, to develop methodological guidance in the specific field of the centre of excellence, to develop own research programmes, to facilitate teaching staff mobility from technical and vocational education institutions to the centre of excellence for such purposes as exchange of good practices, strengthening the teaching and management capacity.

3.2.   Meetings and interviews

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: **Adela Scutaru-Guțu**, Country Director DVV International Moldova together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets**, international experts on validation of competency.

The following persons participated on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research: Rusu Galina – State Secretary, Marcelina Baleca – Chief of Lifelong Learning Service, Anatol Gremalschi – international expert on education.

DVV International experts submitted a list of 6 questions to guide the discussions. The 6 questions were as follows:

1. Will this Order on validation on non-formal and informal learning be reviewed and extended beyond the pilot phase with a view to a national VNFIL/RPL policy for VET and TVET?
2. Will there be a review of the Practical Guide with a view a more permanent, agreed and approved document?
3. How will the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, and other Ministries, support wider use of RPL in the future, in a sustainable way, regarding *inter alia* the following: enabling legislation; annual and longer-term planning goals; allocation of budgets; provision of resources; capacity building; information campaigns; support for RPL candidates, etc…?
4. How are you going to support the financial costs of assessment after the pilot project?
5. Do you think that VNFIL/RPL system is attractive and visible enough for people?
6. Will it be necessary to have an RPL quality assurance system in the future?

The discussions during the meeting highlighted the following:

- given the success of the project, especially of the pilot phase which focused on the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, there will be extended efforts to support the implementation of the RPL system;

- following all conclusions and lessons learnt during the pilot implementation of the validation system, all documents requiring improvement or review will undergo such processes;
- the Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Ministry of Labour and with other stakeholders understood the usefulness of the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, both for job-seekers and for returnees. NEA refers the unemployed to the validation centres and bears the costs of the competency validation services. In the future, there will be a focus on improving information mechanisms on the validation process and its benefits;
- upon completion of the pilot competency validation phase, the financial mechanisms for the operation of the competency validation system will be re-designed to provide better support for persons with poor financial means;
- the Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Ministry of Labour and with other stakeholders strongly promote the benefits of the competency validation system, using various communication channels;
- from the very beginning the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts built upon quality assurance principles. In the future, the RPL quality assurance system will be developed building on existing international best practices.

Discussions between DVV International and the Ministry of Education and Research representatives were very fruitful. This meeting was especially useful due to the openness demonstrated by the Ministry representatives to understand and embrace international RPL practices, so as to improve the already existing mechanisms in the Republic of Moldova.

DVV International representatives provided suggestions on improving policies and practices inspired by the visits to the validation centres and by the discussions with the validation centre directors and with the members of the assessment committees. They are included in the Recommendations section of this report.

Mention of the international expert: It is very important that the VNFIL/RPL system be made known to the students from the period of compulsory education. Appropriate career counselling could also help students later to combine practicing an occupation with further study.

Internal meetings

Adela Scutaru-Guțu together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets** reviewed the most important moments of the mission, the specificities of each validation centre, the legal provisions underpinning the RPL system and the challenges faced by assessors and by the members of the evaluation and certification committees during the assessment processes.

Anne Murphy and **Mikaela Kets** identified new opportunities for DVV International involvement in improving the training and competency validation system in the Republic of Moldova. All these are included in the final two sections of this report, more specifically: "Conclusions and Recommendations"

Mention of the international expert: The permanent communication between the members of the DVV team led to the orientation and focus of the research on the objectives: the benefits of the

VNFIL/RPL system, the ways to promote the system, suggestions for improvement and the identification of new project development opportunities in this field.

3.3.   On-site visits

Case 1. Centre of Excellence in Constructions

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: Adela Scutaru-Guțu, Country Director DVV International Moldova, together with Anne Murphy and Mikaela Kets, international experts on validation of competency.

The following persons participated on behalf of the Centre of Excellence in Constructions: Pelivan Valeriu - Director of the Centre of Excellence in Constructions, Chairman of the Validation Centre, Coceaș Sergiu – Chief of the Department of Continuing Education (Secretary of Validation Centre), Grosu Veaceslav – Deputy Director for Practical Training (Chairperson of the Assessment Committee), Zestrea Lilia - Head of Department (Chairperson of the Assessment Committee), Dragan Andrei – Specialist Teacher (Chairperson of the Assessment Committee).

Description of the Institution

The Constructions College of Chișinău was founded in1932 as Special Technical and Industrial School.

During 1940-1949, the institution was re-organised under the name Electromechanical and Constructions Technical School, and in the following years it merged with another constructions high school.

The institution enjoyed some stability starting from 1991, when it became the Industrial and Constructions College.

Currently, it operates under the name Public Institution Centre of Excellence in Constructions; it enrols 1700 students who benefit from well-equipped classrooms, workshops and laboratories, wi-fi connection, scientific and technical library, reading room, events hall, gym, sports field, dormitories, canteen and medical services.

The presentation of the institution mentioned that the college provides initial training services for ISCED levels 3 and 4 and continuing training services.

In the field of continuing training, the Centre of Excellence provides recognition and certification of competencies for the following qualifications: blacksmith-concrete mixer, Installation of heating and solar equipment, stonemason-mason, plasterer, slab cladding, painter, installation of plasterboard walls and ceilings, asphalt-concrete mixer, roofing manufacturer, installer of installations, appliances and ventilation equipment and carpenter, plumber, welding-fittings, production operator (concrete plant), rolling or sheeting materials, electrician under construction, boiler room operator.

The discussions during the visit highlighted the following:

- there was a great deal of interest in construction occupations and qualifications;
- it was a difficult enough process to adapt the written test to the level of understanding of each candidate;
- the written exam lasts 1 hour, and all candidates are in the same examination room, but each candidate receives different questions;
- the practical skills demonstration takes 3 hours;
- the competency validation process generally lasts 1 day when both theoretical knowledge and practical skills are assessed;
- the assessment programme is the same for the validation of the competencies obtained after graduating a training course as well as for the validation of the competencies acquired in non-formal or informal contexts;
- it was a real challenge for high school teachers to work with adults and adapt assessment tools for each candidate, given that working with adults is different from working with students;
- all the teachers involved in the process of validation and assessment of competencies have felt the need for additional courses to improve the services of communication, counselling, interactive presentations, capturing attention, especially in the case of adults who have work experience.

The institution obviously positions itself as a leading training and expertise-disseminating institution with intentions to further develop into a leading actor in the area of VNFIL/RPL. The staff involved in VNFIL/RPL do possess certain experience and have gone through additional training (including based on personal initiative). One of the institution representatives mentioned interest in receiving certification as evaluator of professional competencies and mentioned having already passed a course in neighbouring Romania. He mentioned that such an experience, extended to other potential specialists in evaluation, would create a pool of highly qualified specialists, able to provide further training to other VET and TVET professionals who are going to specialize in VNFIL/RPL. It was also implied that the Institution as a whole has potential to become a training centre in the field of VNFIL/RPL, provided that relevant training is be provided, possibly, on national level.

Mention of the international expert: The lack of experience in working with adults was highlighted, as well as the difficulty of adapting the assessment tools to the level of understanding of some adults who interrupted their studies a long time ago. Assessors at this centre are aware of their limitations and take personal care of their own training.

Case 2. National Employment Agency (NEA)

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: **Adela Scutaru-Guțu**, Country Director DVV International Moldova together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets**, international experts on validation of competency.

The following persons participated on behalf of NEA:

Raisa Dogaru – NEA Director
Valentina Lungu – NEA Deputy Director,
Cristina Arapan - Head of the department implementing the employment policy and
Tatiana Cristafovici - director of implementation of employment policy.

Description of the institution

The National Employment Agency (NEA) carry out tasks in the following fields: implementation of employment policies; labour migration; unemployment insurance.

NEA beneficiaries are: companies looking for employees; job-seekers; citizens of the Republic of Moldova who leave abroad for work; foreign citizens employed in the Republic of Moldova.

NEA covers the entire country, with its 35 territorial employment agencies, providing outmost territorial access to the workforce available in the Republic of Moldova, as well as visibility in the labour market and opportunities to promote employers.

NEA plays a crucial role in the certification of knowledge and competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, as provided by various legal provisions in force. Thus, unemployed persons who have competencies which may be validated approach the Validation Centres which, in turn, should cooperate closely with NEA.

NEA involvement in piloting the competency validation process has been crucial, because this institution connects employers and job-seekers. Moreover, NEA provides information and career guidance and counselling services for the unemployed.

Job-seekers willing to certify the competencies they acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts are referred to the Validation Centres which include those competences in their portfolio.

Until December this year, NEA referred 36 persons to the Validation Centres. They benefited from certification of competencies as follows:

- 14 persons were certified by the Centre of Excellence in Constructions;
- 13 persons were certified by the Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing;
- 7 persons were certified by the Centre of Excellence in Light Industry;
- 1 person was certified by the Centre of Excellence in Transport;
- 1 person was certified by the Centre of Excellence in IT.

The plan for 2021 includes 50 beneficiaries of services leading to the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts recruited from among job-seekers, including unemployed persons, referred by NEA. Mention should be made that the validation costs are covered by IOM Moldova – International Organisation for Migration, from the project budget.

The discussions during the visit highlighted the following:

- NEA provides services to all persons registered as unemployed; VNFIL/RPL for unemployed is being conducted, based on the Law 105 from 2018, art. 35[2] that explicitly states the right of unemployed persons to benefit from career guidance and counselling and have their competences certified, based on guidance contract signed with the unemployed.
- There are areas with higher demand for certification – child care (baby-sitting services), home care for elderly, housekeeping and other areas that are not covered by formal education system.
- There is concern for the development of a methodology to forecast competency needs in priority economic sectors;
- The validation of competencies becomes complicated against the background of informal employment; the demand and interest are extremely low from both employers and potential or de-facto employees;
- There should be a special focus on returnees;
- The fear of becoming jobless made people willing to have their competencies validated and to obtain a certificate;
- Payment for unemployed to get their competencies validated will be a challenge after pilot stage; a voucher-based system to support professional training and validation has been discussed for years, there have been explicit proposals in the legislation on public procurement, but there has never been political will to finalise this process.
- Given the relatively low interest in training and validation manifested by the unemployed, NEA appreciates that shorter-term courses, focused on a more reduced area of competencies could sell better. As for now, 6-month courses are considered to be short courses. In reality, more flexible options, of shorter duration could be an alternative that could be embraced by unemployed and by the agencies supporting them.
- In the NEA opinion, maintaining the VNFIL/RPL process within state-regulated institutions and structures could support quality insurance aspects.

There is a need for short-term training programmes or programmes targeting the development of specific competencies.

Mention of the international expert: It is important for the NEA to conduct a more intensive information campaign at the national level, especially for the economic agents for industry.

Case 3. Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing (CESPA) in Balti

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[2] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105474&lang=ro

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: **Adela Scutaru-Guțu**, Country Director DVV International Moldova together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets**, international experts on validation of competency.

The following persons participated on behalf of the Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing:

Lilia Mahu – Deputy Director of Training and Production,

Dina Mocan – Head of Practical Training Department,

Ludmila Țurcanu – Specialist Teacher and Corina Cebanu - Specialist Teacher.

Description of the Institution

The City Technical and Vocational School was founded in 1966. The school underwent various re-organisation processes, and in 1997 it became Polyvalent Vocational School no. 2, enabling students to complete their high school studies, and sit the examination for the baccalaureate diploma and the technician-constructor diploma. Later on, the school merged with Vocational School no. 7 and became Vocational School no. 2, which trained professionals for the food industry and constructions.
In 2015, Vocational School no. 2 of Bălți was re-organised to become a Public Institution - Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing - CESPA.
CESPA provides training programmes ISCED levels 3 and 4 in the fields of services and food processing.
Currently, the Centre provides services leading to the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts for the following occupations: cook, baker, confectioner, waiter and cashier.

The discussions during the visit highlighted the following:

-        There was a strong interest both for the validation procedure, in general, and for the validation of competencies in the field of services and food processing, in particular; such interest is from the side of both employers, who want to develop their businesses, and employees, targeting higher salaries and recognition.

- The oldest applicant who participated in the assessment was aged 55 years old;
- There were persons who registered to have more competencies assessed but, following discussions with the advisor, they entered the assessment process for fewer competencies; the effort for counselling and guidance is manageable on pilot stage, however, if the VNFIL/RPL is be scaled, the staff involved in VET teaching will be overloaded with tasks.
- Teachers/assessors have made additional efforts to customize assessment tools for the particular needs of each candidate who entered the assessment process.
- For the assessment and validation of competencies in the food field, a rigorous estimation and management of raw materials is needed, considering the fact that they work with perishable materials.

- The perception of participants in the pilot stage (authors of assessment tests, assessors, advisors) is that their work has been insufficiently remunerated, given the input of time and effort. Moreover, their main concern is the post-pilot stage, when the project funding will no longer be available and the demand for VNFIL/RPL might increase.
- There were persons who registered for the assessment of all competencies and managed to have them all validated; Obviously, training for assessors on mechanisms to make valid judgments while streamlining the necessary duration, efforts and costs would be very helpful.

- Also, making assessment tools available for further use is a dilemma: authors of VNFIL/RPL instruments deserve remuneration, especially in the context of permanent update and improvement, while always starting from scratch may keep the process slow and ineffective.
- The procurement, management and storage of raw materials for the practical part of the assessment becomes a difficult process, since they are perishables;
- The website of the institution provides information on the validation process stages, the validation committees, prices and process duration;
- The members of the validation committees faced some difficulties in interacting with adults and in the adaptation of assessment instruments, and they were not always certain that they took the right approach;

Mention of the international expert: Also, mechanisms of work quantifying and remuneration should be put in place, teachers and masters cannot cover unlimited number of extra hours for VNFIL/RPL within the same remuneration scheme they currently work.

Case 4. "Alexei Mateevici" College of Chișinău

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: **Adela Scutaru-Guțu**, Country Director DVV International Moldova together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets**, international experts on validation of competency.

The following persons participated on behalf of "Alexei Mateevici" College: **Victoria Bercu** - high school principal and **Boaghe Elena** – quality assurance coordinator

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Description of the Institution

The college was founded in 1980 to train staff for kindergartens in Chișinău; the City Pedagogical School was founded the same year. During the academic year 1981-1982 they started training 60 primary school teachers.

In 1990, the institution was reorganised under the name of the Pedagogical School of Chișinău.

Currently, the institution bears the name of "Alexei Mateevici" College and is one of the most prestigious post-secondary technical and vocational education and training institution in the Republic of Moldova; its mission is to train professionals for the national economy, able to adapt to any circumstances and prepared for ever changing economic conditions. The educational provision of the college includes the following qualifications:

kindergarten teacher, assistant kindergarten teacher, conductor, primary school teacher, court clerk, social pedagogue, social worker, sports animator and physical education instructor.

The discussions during the visit highlighted the following:

- The college management expressed interest and willingness to become part of the project Migration and Local Development, as the qualification of assistant to kindergarten teacher is highly necessary, there is demand and there are many workers who still do not hold the necessary certification; the profession is on big demand across the country and skilled personnel is a very scarce resource;

- Obviously, the Education Code includes minimal requirements any person should meet to be employed as assistant to kindergarten teacher, but they cannot cover all details of such a diverse and complex occupation. Although they work with the same children and repeat the same activities, there are changing contexts and many unpredictable situations, which require rapid-response capabilities and strong improvisation skills;
- The assessment and validation of competencies for the "assistant to kindergarten teacher" qualification is different from other qualifications due to the fact that all competencies are interlinked. Therefore, all 8 competencies described in the qualification standard must be assessed and certified, not just 2, 3 or 5 of them; Given this context, a basic training programme for applicants is a must.
- Another peculiarity of the assessment and validation of competencies for the "assistant to kindergarten teacher" qualification is that the training was combined with the validation process as follows: for the last training day, the trainees bring their observation form filled in and signed by the school principal or methodology coordinator where they work. The theoretical examination (written test) is the same, both for the completion of the course and for the certification of competencies;
- Upon completion of the "assistant to kindergarten teacher" course, the trainees receive a training certificate with 5 credit points and a qualification certificate issued after validation of non-formal and informal learning, because they carry out both processes simultaneously;
- The Assessment Committee members stated that they needed training both on adult training and assessment and on the adaptation of written tests for applicants who start the process of validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts.
- Given the expected increase in demand, the cost calculation issue arises. The institution has experience in diversifying sources of income, but further support in elaborating more sustainable formulas is still needed.

Mention of the international expert: It has been shown that early childhood education is very important for the further development of an individual. Staff involved in early childhood education should benefit from numerous training and specialization courses so that they are able to provide quality services.

Alexei Mateevici's College adapted the assessment process to the specifics of the occupation, thus offering a model of integrated approach to skills assessment. This is a good example that can be replicated.

Case 5. IOM Moldova headquarters

The following persons participated on behalf of DVV International: **Adela Scutaru-Guțu**, Country Director DVV International Moldova together with **Anne Murphy** and **Mikaela Kets**, international experts on validation of competency.

Mr. Vitalie Varzari – senior programme assistant participated on behalf of IOM Moldova

The discussions during the visit highlighted the following:

- According to the NEXUS survey performed in 2013 „Census Survey: Country Migration Profile (2013)", 411,566 persons were abroad, of which 30% came from urban areas and 70% from rural areas; (www.moldova.iom.int)
- Temporary workforce migration remains the most widespread type of emigration in Moldova. Consequently, the data provided by yearly Labour Survey undertaken by the National Statistics Bureau indicate an increase in the number of migrant workers from 138,000 in 2000 to 341,900 in 2014, including of persons aged at least 15 years old who left abroad for work or for job-seeking, at the time when the survey was performed;
- Since the end of the '90s, migration from Moldova was channelled towards two main regions: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), mostly Russia (more than 55% of the

Moldavian migrants in 2014), and to the Western Europe, especially Italy (more than 15% of the Moldavian migrants in 2014);

- The main influencing factor for the Moldavian migrants is the economic factor: poverty, lack of employment opportunities and low wages, while the living standards abroad are much more attractive;
- The Government, through its national migration policy, currently focuses more on the migration phenomenon (both to emigration and to immigration), because of its substantial impact on the development of all sectors in society and because of its crucial importance for the compliance with all targets set by the Republic of Moldova in view of its EU accession;
- Migration flow management in the Republic of Moldova is a major challenge for the Government and for its international partners, including IOM. This explains the IOM Moldova involvement in the project "Migration and Local Development" (MIDL).

Mention of the international expert: It is obvious that it is important for migrants to have a certificate attesting to their competencies regardless of where and how they were acquired. But it is even more important that these certificates are recognized abroad. This can be achieved through mutual recognition agreements concluded in partnership with the countries in which Moldovan citizens migrate in order to work.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions of the praxis review process:

- The existing legislation enables coherent implementation of the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal contexts.
- There is remarkable involvement of the Ministry of Education and Research in promoting and supporting the competency validation system.
- The project "Migration and Local Development" (MIDL) was truly useful, both logistically and financially for the implementation and piloting of the competency validation system.
- The cooperation between ministries and governmental agencies/authorities for the pilot implementation of the competency validation system is a strength.
- The citizens showed relative interest for the pilot implementation of the competency validation, for 2 reasons: the validation costs were paid by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation under the project, and they had a strong interest to obtain a certificate, for fear of losing their jobs or willing to get career advancement either in Moldova (mostly in food processing industries) or abroad (in areas of home care, construction etc.)
- The validation process is transparent, the applicants have access to all information on standards and assessment stages.
- The final competency certification examination is the same, regardless how the competencies were acquired: formal or non-formal/informal learning.
- A different assessment committee is appointed for each qualification.
- In the case of validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, the theoretical examination (written test) is adapted for the level of understanding of adult applicants, sometimes adaptation targeting each and every applicant.

- Applicants are counselled and guided from the very beginning of the validation process, in terms of number of competences, validation stages and duration.
- On average, the assessment process takes only 1 day. The theoretical test lasts, on average, 1-2 hours, and the practical tests lasts 3-5 hours.
- The qualification of "assistant to kindergarten teacher" entails the assessment of all competencies, and observation (practical test) takes 4-5 days.
- The validation process would have different prices, depending on the number of competencies to be assessed and certified.
- It is difficult for the members of the assessment committees to develop written tests for each applicant and to adapt them to the level of understanding of each applicant.
- Applicant counselling is a real challenge, because it is difficult for them to self-assess what competencies they already acquired, according to the qualification standard.
  It is quite difficult to assess applicants who are not employed or who live in another locality than the location of the assessment centre.

4.2 Challenges and topics to be considered for the subsequent implementation of the process

- Access to validation centres for people living far away from them;
- Government's interest in financing the VINFIL / RPL system for the unemployed and migrants;
- Employers' interest in promoting the VINFIL / RPL system among employees;
- Employees' willingness to pay for the validation and certification of the competencies obtained in other contexts than the formal ones;
- A fair balance between costs and benefits (not only money, but also time);
- Availability of staff employed in the validation centre to allocate additional time and resources to carry out all necessary activities at high standards.

4.3 Recommendations

Following the assessment of the practical component of the pilot stage of VNFIL/RPL in Moldova, research on the procedures applied for validation of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal contexts in the Republic of Moldova, we recommend the following:

- To improve quality assurance processes by introducing regular external evaluation mechanisms for the validation centres, by developing an internal procedure mechanism focused on the assessment stages, by introducing self-assessment mechanisms both for the applicant and for the validation centre;
    o Specific regulation regarding validation processes and procedures should be approved for providing by VET and TVET institutions and, possibly, by higher education institutions via their Continuing Education Centres; a role distribution mechanism to avoid overlapping should be considered, based on ISCED classification levels;
    o Competencies and qualifications that are part of regular curriculum of the institutions are to be authorized and accredited within the whole package of programs delivered by this particular institution;

- o Innovative occupational units, that are from among associated/related areas can be submitted to separate authorization and accreditation processes, given that they do not fit into existing/developed occupational profile or occupational standard;
  - o The VNFIL/RPL unit in the institution develops a clear Monitoring and Evaluation system and keeps records of periodic results assessments and reports to MER or other entity, responsible for VNFIL/RPL.
- To improve financial mechanisms aimed to support system operation and system accessibility by all categories of people;
  - o Conduct cost-benefit analysis;
  - o Develop specific price-value systems, based on recourse-consumption for each VNFIL/RPL Centre, taking into consideration: staffing needs, spaces allocation, needs for equipment rent or purchase, storage spaces (including for perishable materials, etc.;
  - o Establishing a single calculation formula for determining the amount to be paid for the evaluation and validation of a single competency. The calculation formula should include both the time spent by the validation commission and the necessary consumables;
  - o Despite expenses incurred by VNFIL/RPL Centres, a system of incentives for applicants should be developed and applied, to increase interest in recurrent VNIL participation, as stimulus for continuing upgrade and for validating more permanently increased number of competence units;
  - o For unemployed – strong cooperation with NEA is emphasized: this state structure has genuine interest in fostering VNFIL/RPL and supporting quality insurance via existing and possible-to-develop mechanism. An education-support voucher system is worth being closely considered and piloted, involving state-budget money and other contributions;
  - o For disadvantaged in communities – multiple-input models of funding should be developed, including allocations from social support services and NEA allocations, if available. These sources of funding will impose following public state procurement rules; these resources can be supplemented with private support or investments - businesses, international donor support projects, other sources;
  - o For those who are already employed, the costs of assessing and validating skills could be covered by the employer by accessing externally funded projects or by allocating a percentage of the company's profit;
- Develop a management system enabling the administration of consumables used in the practical assessment of competencies;
  - o Develop a system of scaling cost-assessment, calculating variables of efficiency at various levels and assessment schedule models to implement most effective variants;
  - o Developing resource management: just-in-time supply possibilities, storage management (short-valid products), alternatives for usage;
- Develop more occupational profiles, occupational standards and qualification standards for growing industries and expanding job-offers to enable the validation of competencies for more occupations/trades/qualifications;
  - o Organize consultations with stakeholders interested to support the process and distribute tasks and "areas of responsibility and support";

- o Consider conducting additional training or mentoring on developing occupational standards and qualification standards to optimize costs;
- Develop more assessment programmes, both for already existing standards and for new standards;
  - o Conduct a target-group analysis and create templates for a variety of possible groups by levels of knowledge and understanding;
  - o Consider developing modules for "theoretical" or "terminological„ clarifications for applicants;
  - o Create examination "simulations" to help applicants train themselves to perform assessment tasks;
- Enhanced training for the members of the assessment committees to better equip them to work with adults and to adapt the assessment instruments;
  - o Offer modules on "Specifics of Adult Learning";
  - o Commit a national approach in selecting and training a group of "core"-evaluators of competencies that could later work in cascade to train and mentor necessary assessors per occupational field;
  - o Select and contract a company from EU, most simply from Romania, given cultural and linguistic proximity to develop and conduct a nation-wide certified program as "evaluator of professional competencies". Possible models are already in use by a number of companies across Romania:
    - ▪ https://www.calificat.ro/detalii-curs/calificare-prin-evaluarea-experientei.html
    - ▪ https://training-romania.com/curs-evaluator-competente-profesionale/
    - ▪ https://www.euroacademia.ro/curs/specializare/evaluator-competente-profesionale
    - ▪ https://www.centrul-athena.ro/cursuri/evaluator-competente-profesionale/
- Enhanced teacher training on andragogy concepts, career guidance and counselling for adults;
  - o a module-structured course can be offered to assessors from across Moldova;
- Enhanced teacher training on development of manuals, guides, methodological guidance, curricula, descriptors, indicators;
  - o a customized course with many practical applications can be offered to evaluators depending on the specific field of each validation centre;
- Enhanced teacher training on soft skills;
  - o modular courses can be offered to improve communication, empathy, active listening, assertiveness;
- It would be advisable that the assessment duration should take several days, so that the applicant may be observed in various contexts;
  - o There should be some difference between the validation of the competencies acquired in a formal context and the validation of the competencies acquired in non-formal and informal contexts;
- Regular review of the assessment items, depending on the technological developments;
  - o A permanent and very close connection with employers should be maintained in order to be up to date with all the technological changes.
- Creating the premises for introducing the VNFIL/RPL system in the area of higher education;
  - o Discussions should be initiated with universities to identify various opportunities;

- Review of occupational profiles, occupational standards and qualification standards in accordance with legislation in force;
- Train the management staff on the management of training and assessment centres by involving local suppliers or through internationally funded projects;
- Establishing a single calculation formula for determining the amount to be paid for the evaluation and validation of a single competency. The calculation formula should include both the time spent by the validation commission and the necessary consumables;
- Creating a database with different variants and combinations of tests so as to reduce / streamline the time allocated to adapting the assessment tools for the needs of each candidate;
- Improve the quality of the professional training services offered by private providers by implementing a quality system and periodically verifying the stage of implementation of quality standards;
- Concluding bilateral agreements for the recognition of diplomas and certificates with the countries preferred by Moldovan migrants;
- Implement a quality assurance system for private adult training providers by developing guides and methodologies.

PART 3

Prioritised recommendations arising from the review of VNFIL/RPL Policy and Praxis in Moldova
Anne Murphy & Mikaela Kets

Resulting from the reviews of both policy and practice of VNFIL/RPL in Moldova in Parts 1 & 2, the following sets of recommendations are proposed:

  i.   practical and operable recommendations for the immediate and short term
  ii.   more strategic and 'visionary' recommendations for the longer term.

Given the volatility of the economic, political and societal contexts in Moldova, in wider Europe and globally at this time, all recommendations are contingent on the capacity of local stakeholders and donors to implement them in a coherent roadmap appropriate to the local context at this time.

Recommendations are addressed to three readerships which have discrete remits and vested interests in the further development of VNFIL/RPL in Moldova, as follows:

  i.   Ministries of Government
  ii.   Centres of Excellence and their VNFIL/RPL partners/networks
  iii.   Other local stakeholders, NGOs and the international donor community.

The basis for each recommendation can be found in the text of the reviews in Parts 1 and 2 of this Report. Here we present an agreed set of prioritised and synthesised recommendations.

Practical and Operable recommendations to avoid a hiatus in momentum of development

  i.   Recommendations to Ministries

  FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION (within six months)

  a.   It is recommended that the Ministry of Education extends the operational term of the temporary **RPL Order by three years,** effective immediately, and with an option to extend it, with any amendment identified, to five years if demand justifies it. Thereafter, it is recommended that VNFIL/RPL be fully embedded in the appropriate policy legislation/s as a permanent feature of access to partial and full qualifications.
  b.   It is recommended that the Ministry of Labour continues to develop **supports** and allocate **funding** for VNFIL/RPL as individual demand and labour market needs require it, in co-ordination with Centres of Excellence and other relevant Agencies.
  c.   It is recommended that the Ministry of Labour leads in developing a co-ordinated, cross-Ministry, cross-sectoral and cross-agency system of estimating and **forecasting future skills needs**, both to plan VET, Adult Education, work-based learning *and* to inform VNFIL/RPL policy development and allocation of budgets to Centres of Excellence and their associated providers for its support.

d. It is recommended that Ministries and Centres of Excellence develop a **costing/budgeting formula** that realistically reflects the cost to Centres of delivering RPL at individual case level, and per partial qualification, and that budgets are allocated accordingly for at least three years.

e. It is recommended that the formula developed in d. above be the basis of calculating delivery of RPL to **cohorts of 5, 10 and 15 candidates** seeking validation for the same partial qualification, and that cohorts of candidates be tested at fixed times during the teaching year, both for economy of scale and for opportunities for peer learning. Such arrangements might form the basis of additional budgetary allocation from central Ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIUM TERM IMPLEMENTATION (within 18 months)

a. That central Ministries, together with key Agencies and NGOs, plan and implement **occasional review and evaluation** to track trends in demand for VNFIL/RPL for both existing qualifications and for qualifications in newer areas of work. Results of such trends should ideally extend the qualifications/occupational standards available through VNFIL/RPL, lead to updating of others and lead to development of standards in newer areas of work.

b. Plan a co-ordinated, state-wide approach and **strategic campaign** to: information dissemination, advertising, recruitment and initial supports for VNFIL/RPL opportunities, and pro-actively promote it through Employment Services, Centres of Excellence, workplaces, migrant support services, social media etc.

c. Support and fund the Centres of Excellence for Teacher Training/Pedagogies in developing and gaining academic approval for a formal **Train the Master Trainers for VNFIL/RPL** who will form a panel of expert practitioners - in co-operation with all other Centres of Excellence with a remit to provide such services. Such training should be at postgraduate or equivalent level and be of at least three months, part-time duration, involving both theoretical understanding and demonstration of pedagogical and assessment competences. Key personnel involved in the VNFIL/RPL pilots should be invited to participate in the Master Trainers course and be acknowledged as subject-matter and assessment experts in specific fields.

d. Develop appropriate, agreed and shared **paper-based and online materials** to support the future work of the Master Trainers.

e. From Autumn 2022 onwards, **begin to cascade training of RPL practitioners** in both work and teaching settings (advisors, assessors etc) by the Master Trainers.

f. Monitor existing legislation to identify any barriers to further development of VNFIL/RPL and make minor changes to laws/bye-laws/instruments to remove any such barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONGER-TERM IMPLEMENTATION

a. Include VNFIL/RPL practices in **academic quality assurance** regulations at all levels.

b. Extend VNFIL/RPL fully into **higher education.**

c. Continuously revisit occupational profiles and qualification standards with a view to **'normalising' VNFIL/RPL** as a legitimate and trusted route to qualifications within them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE STRATEGIC AND VISIONARY PARADIGM OF VNFIL/RPL

a. Set up a multi-representative **Consultative Group as an Observatory and Think-Tank** on emerging practices of VNFIL/RPL at national level, identifying trends in demand, inviting submissions on specific initiatives etc to better inform policy direction and maximum impact from investment of budgets.

b. **Liaise closely with key NGOs** currently active in Moldova in this space, including Council of Europe Adult Education Section, so as to maximise co-ordinated impact in priority labour market *and* societal areas, and to prevent replication of effort and dissipation of experience.

c. Actively **monitor any ideological policy tensions** or strategic 'fuzziness' among NGOs and the donor community so as to maximise benefits for the actual needs of citizens of Moldova at this time of uncertainty on many levels.

d. Actively consider appropriate **quality assurance oversight of private providers** offering VNFIL/RPL service.

e. Actively maintain a **database of the most highly sought qualifications** through VNFIL/RPL and how best to align them with equivalent qualifications internationally for mutual recognition and mobility purposes.

ii. RECOMMENDATIONS to Centres of Excellence and partners/networks

a. It is recommended that Centres continue to develop sustainable, appropriate and cost-effective **routes** through which candidates who are awarded partial qualifications can progress to achieve a full qualification, using appropriate pedagogies and modalities.

b. It is recommended that key personnel involved in the Pilots be offered an opportunity to become **Master Trainers and/or Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** in the proposed cascade model of training and capacity building referred to in recommendations to Ministries above.

c. It is recommended that Centre staff involved in additional work for VNFIL/RPL be **appropriately rewarded** within professional development and promotional systems.

d. It is recommended that SMEs in specific subjects collectively develop **banks of competence tests** and theory tests appropriate for assessment through VNFIL/RPL with updating at least every three years to maintain currency and transparency.

e. It is recommended that Centres of Excellence **extend their geographic reach** to deliver VNFIL/RPL through partner arrangements with a range of schools, Centres, City Halls, NGOs etc

f. Centres of Excellence should be central to the proposed **Consultative Group** advising Ministries on VNFIL/RPL matters.

g. Centres should be central to **revision/up-dating** of existing occupational standards and development of new ones so that standards are expressed in modes that facilitate VNFIL/RPL.

h. Centres of Excellence with baccalaureate provision should explore where and how VNFIL/RPL could feature in **access routes to and progression routes** within higher education in a lifelong learning paradigm.

iii. RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS, NGOs AND THE DONORS

i. Contribute **individually and collectively** to the proposed VNFIL/RPL Consultative Group and to occasional Think-Tanks.

ii. **Collaborate** in joint VNFIL/RPL initiatives rather than in several, discrete initiatives *ab initio* and as a strategy to maximise positive impacts for Moldova.

iii. **Jointly** promote and advertise VNFIL/RPL to multiple target groups.

iv. Collectively aim to **prevent gaps between initiatives/projects** so as to avoid both loss of momentum and loss of capacity.

v. Continue to closely **monitor changes** in migration patterns and labour demands, and advise competent authorities on immediate policies and strategies to respond to changes, with accurate quantitative data where possible.

vi. Continue to foster effective working relationships and joint supports with partners in **states continuous to Moldova** so as to best protect migrant and/or continuously mobile workers.

vii. Maximise **ideological coherence** across initiatives funded by donors and monitor **coherence of resource developments.**