Research Evaluation

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Project aim

- address the European policy priority of diminishing skills mismatch by making knowledge, skills and competences of adults more visible through consideration of the practice of validation of informal and non-formal learning and implementation of field trials in the partner countries.

- to make the skills of low-qualified adults, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees more visible, in order to enhance their employability, improve their access to education and training offers and support active engagement in society in four countries; Norway, Iceland, Flanders and Ireland.

Focus

- those who were deemed low-skilled/low-qualified, migrants or refugees with prior learning for which they could seek formal validation with a particular focus on access to the workplace and/or education opportunities.

Aim of VISKA Evaluation

- to inform the system and contribute to process development of validation for the target groups informed by existing processes and contexts.

- to consider the impact on all stakeholders involved in validation processes.

- to provide evidence to inform and influence future policy development in the field of validation of adult learning considering the National and European contexts

VISKA Project Partners

5 Interventions

Networks
- Developing and extending regional/national networks and partnerships to include policy makers, social partners and practitioners working on the validation of NFIL

Tools
- Extending / adapting tools used in the validation of NFIL – includes digitisation as well as customisation for use with specific beneficiary groups and enhanced quality assurance of validation processes

Transversal Skills
- Creating a common set of criteria for the documentation and assessment of transversal skills, able to be used with one or more adult learner groups
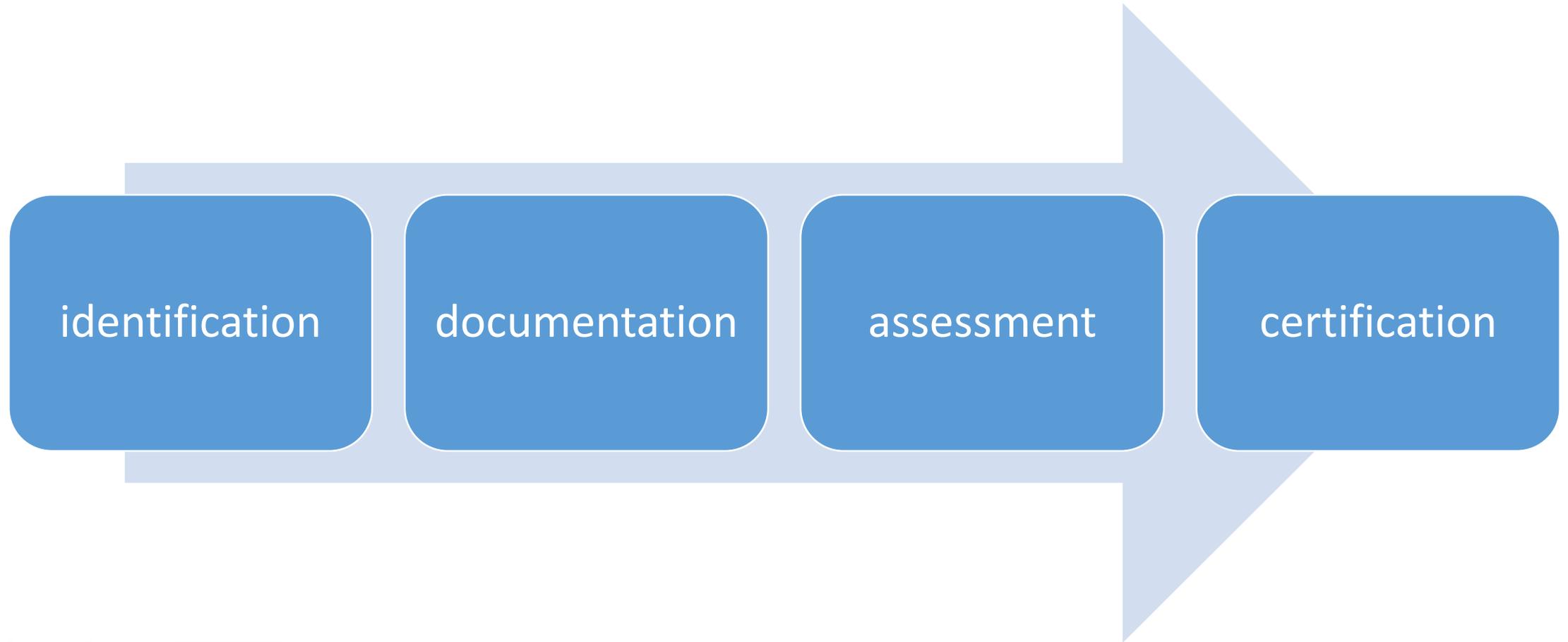
Training
- Training and/or capacity building for guidance counsellors and other frontline staff working on the validation of NFIL, including with specific adult beneficiary groups

Awareness
- Improving access to and awareness of validation services and support among specific adult beneficiary groups

4 Stages in the process

identification → documentation → assessment → certification

Shape of the project

Current Situation → Field Trials → Data collection → Analysis → Policy impacts

Interventions

Impacts for Policy, Practice,

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union
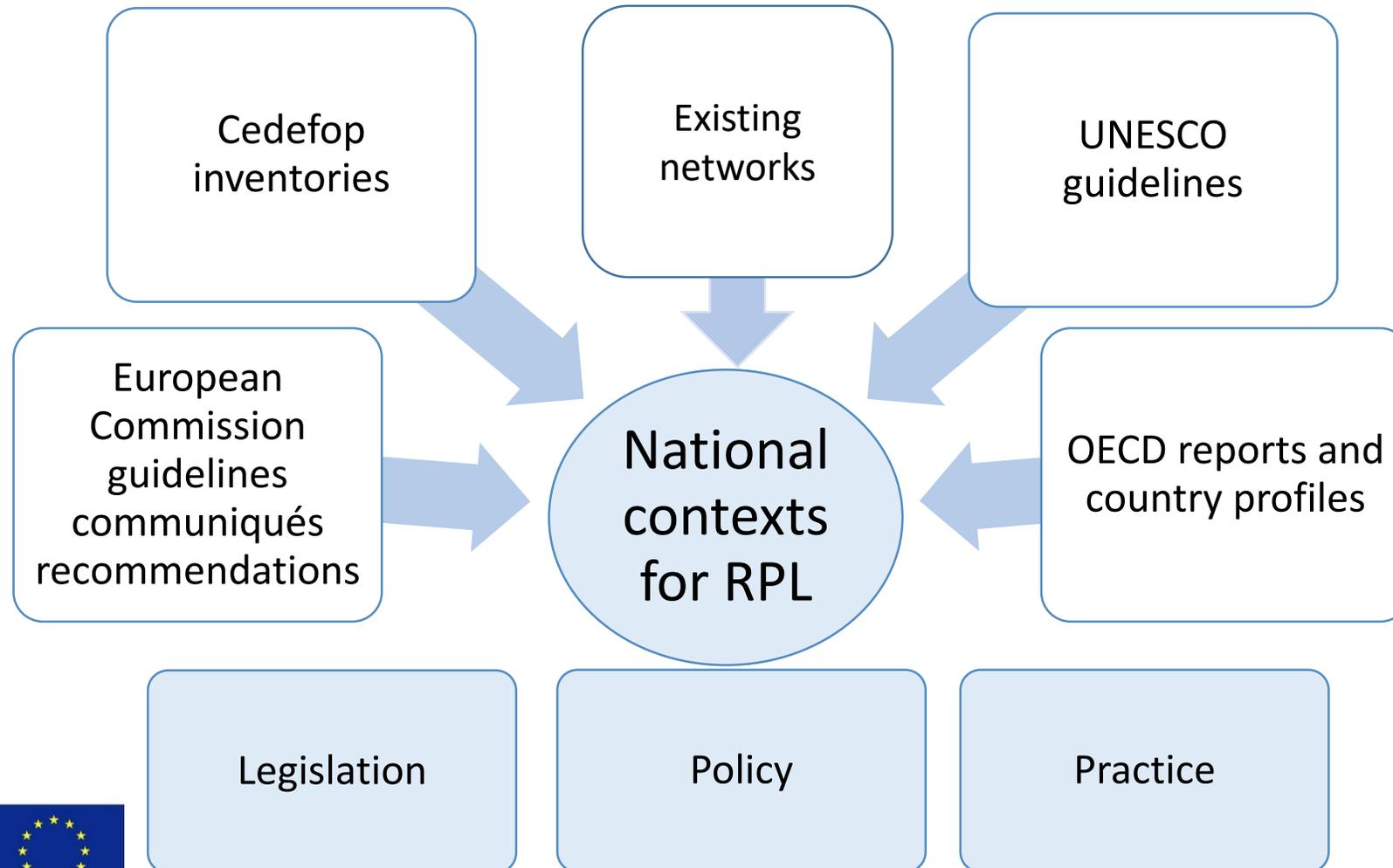
Target group per country

- **Norway**: refugees located in the integration centres of five counties

- **Iceland**: migrants from Poland with competence in trade areas seeking further education and employment opportunities

- **Flanders**: early school leavers

- **Ireland**: low-skilled, migrants and refugees

4 National Contexts

Field Trials – implementation plans

Country / Partner(s)	Cohort / Number	Interventions
Norway (Skills Norway)	150 Refugees (seeking asylum/ residence permits)	Training for front line staff Candidate self-registration using Digital tool Validation offered to candidates along with career counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to certification at upper secondary level
Iceland (IDAN, ETSC)	50 Polish Migrants	Participants reached through local groups. Translation services provided Validation offered to candidates along with career counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to certification in specific trade areas (eg carpentry, housepainting) or transversal skills certificate
Belgium (Flanders) DET	150 Adults (low-qualified)	Intake interviews followed by validation offered to candidates along with guidance counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to general education certification (Additional General Education)

VISKA evaluation considers

- **To what degree did partners achieve the implementation aim across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at local, regional and national and policy level appeared to influence the achievement of implementation aims?**

- **What outcomes were achieved for what groups, and to what degree?**

- **What factors were associated with the achievement of positive learner outcomes?**

- **What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of positive outcomes?**

Data gathering

Data was gathered via a range of quantitative and qualitative methods including;

- candidate monitoring data, satisfaction survey, exit survey;

- qualitative interviews with candidates, front line staff, guidance counsellors;

- interviews and focus groups with policy actors and influencers;

- national advisory groups (NAG) which incorporated policy makers/ influencers and practitioners.

The collection of candidates' monitoring and satisfaction results were conducted in Spring 2019 and Autumn 2019.

Field trials - implementation

Country/partner(s)	Cohort/ Number	Interventions
Norway (Skills Norway)	612	Training for front line staff Candidate self-registration using Digital tool Validation offered to candidates along with career counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to certification at upper secondary level
Iceland (IDAN, ETSC)	55	Participants reached through local groups. Translation services provided Validation offered to candidates along with career counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to certification in specific trade areas (eg carpentry, house painting) or transversal skills certificate
Flanders (DET)	474	Intake interviews followed by validation offered to candidates along with guidance counselling all 4 stages where applicable leading to general education certification (Additional General Education)
Ireland (QQI, ETBs)	32	Validation offered through the EU Skills profiling tool

The numbers represent

- A total number of 1173 Validation candidates which represents and increase of 823 candidates, over 200% increase on initial planned numbers

- A total number of 1425 applications for validation for made, multiple applications for different elements were made by some

Candidate profile

- Heterogeneous
    - Varied in age profile
    - Education background
        - VET
        - Higher education
    - Nationality
    - Previous employment
    - Language (spoken and familiarity with)

    - Profile in Flanders was more homogenous with 66% under the age of 26

VISKA candidates

- Low-skilled, early school leaver re-entering formal education to gain a high school diploma to enable further employment and educational opportunities. Exemption tests were the validation mechanism which was available to this group.

- Migrant and refugee with low or non-existent academic qualifications but extensive transversal and 'other' skills. Low to medium language proficiency of current resident country. Residency status varied amongst the participant group.

- Migrant and refugee with medium to high academic qualifications and extensive workplace experience and skills. Low to medium language proficiency of current resident country. Residency status varied amongst the participant group.

VISKA validation process

- provide a <u>system</u> which addressed the stages of validation as outlined in the EU Council Recommendation 2012 on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning;

- place the <u>learner</u> at the <u>centre</u>;

- focus on <u>employment</u> and education <u>opportunities</u>;

- <u>empower</u> the candidate to realise the extent of existing knowledge, skill and competence and the <u>autonomy</u> to determine the next steps which they would be interested in pursuing;

- help candidates to <u>understand</u> the national context of education, employment and society where necessary.

Findings

Developing and extending networks and partnerships

Networks and partnerships developed were multi-layered and varied considerably within the different national contexts.

- Increased collaboration and awareness

- Increased awareness about validation and the requirements in developing an effective system underpinned by quality assurance.

- Vertical and horizontal networking and learning within the national systems, policy, more effectively informed by practice.

- Opportunity to provide holistic systems and policies for migrants, refugees and low-skilled which were cross-sectoral and cross-organisational.

- providing a validation system and process for this target group requires a much **broader consideration** of the services required **pre and post validation** as well as specific enablers such as specialised language exemptions during validation.

- Importance of the **membership** of a network to influence and act as an enabler with a national context

Validation tools and Quality Assurance

- Variety of tools identified for use in validation – face to face and digitised
- Challenges with independent use of tools and language proficiency

Main reflections

- purpose of the tool
- managing expectations;
- data monitoring tools informs the system
- Validation tools should be integrated into the validation systems and processes;
- Briefing of guidance and front-line staff
- Adaptation or use of existing tools is sufficient to effectively capture prior learning of low-skilled, migrants and refugees;
- Data sharing enabled which adheres to general personal data protection standards
- tool selection is informed by the purpose of the validation process;
- Use of interpreters

Documentation and assessment of transversal skills

- Transversal skills are embedded in many standards and curricula

- Separate evaluation of these was trialled in Iceland

- Key reflections were that documentation and assessment of transversal skills require an additional skill set of the candidate to become introspective, to reflect on their own transversal skills and to identify how they could be applicable within a broader context.

- Guidance and Front-line staff must be enabled as to how to support the learner

- Ways in which prior learning should be identified, documented and evidenced in order for it to become measurable for validation.

Training and Capacity Building

- Context specific and strongly influenced by existing processes and infrastructure

  ➢ at an introductory familiarisation level to the concept of validation
  ➢ in the mentoring and support of a candidate seeking validation
  ➢ in the assessment of prior learning
  ➢ working with interpreters

Access and Awareness

- Pre-VISKA national awareness varied considerably
  - Existing national systems
  - Processes
  - Extant legal and regulatory framework(s)
  - Within networks
  - Candidate population

- National Advisory Group (NAG) other networks contributed to increased awareness
- Strategies were influenced by access to the particular target audience

Importance of…

- Early Intervention

- Language

- Engagement can be complex and difficult to resolve despite significant efforts

Candidate outcomes

- Key system requirement
    - Information
    - Support
    - Collaborative system

- 1425 validation applications

- Self awareness and empowerment

Recommendations for future development

Validation is one element of a much larger system

Embedded

Supported

Aligned

Implications for future programme and policy development

- Influence of organisations, national priorities, societal norms and economic drivers on validation

- Influence of candidate groups on validation

Influence of organisations, national priorities, societal norms and economic drivers on validation

- Composition of networks

- National standing or position of organisations

- Language

- Qualification or workplace standard

- Residency

- Willingness to find and implement solutions

- Culture

Policy impact

Through the VISKA field trials and interventions,

- two laws,
- one parliamentary resolution,
- two regulations,
- one strategy and
- one decree

were identified as requiring amendments to further support validation for low-skilled, migrants and refugees.

Need for greater collaboration, consultation and consideration in policy development, enabling access to and mobility of learners in education and employment

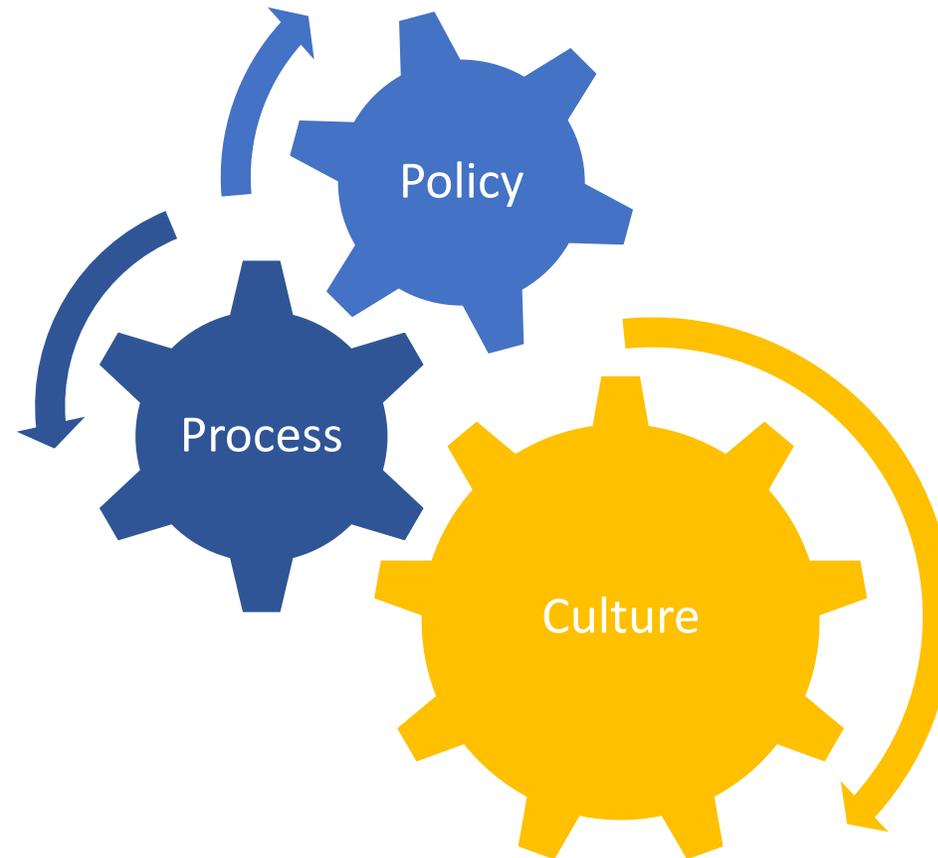# Influence of candidate groups on validation

- Validation programmes and policies need to place the learner at the centre
- Readiness to engage with validation
- Validation is an individual process
- Familiarity with national systems and the purpose of validation
- Rigid systems are tested

FUNDING

Model of Validation

Questions ?

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