Annex

Agreed definitions concerning RPL within the project RPL in practice

(The focus of the definitions and of the project is on Higher Education)

Formal learning
Learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and which typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education. (CR)

Non-formal learning
Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers, such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public. (CR)

Informal learning
Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner’s perspective. Examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills or organisational skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child). (CR)

Qualification
A formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. (CR)

Learning outcomes
Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. (CR)

(National) qualifications framework
An instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society. (CR) There are different Qualification Frameworks, related but established in different contexts:

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1 This project and the survey concern only RPL from non-formal or informal learning; not formal learning.
2 COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2801%29
European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)
The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is a common European reference framework which enables countries of the European Union to link their qualifications systems to one another. It was adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 23 April 2008. The EQF uses eight reference levels based on learning outcomes that are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. It shifts the focus from input (lengths of a learning experience, type of institution) to what a person holding a particular qualification actually knows and is able to do. It makes qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in the European Union. (ECTS Users’ Guide, 2015)

Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
In the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks are found at two levels. An overarching framework (QFEHEA) has been adopted in 2005 and all member countries committed themselves to develop national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with this overarching framework. A national qualifications framework for higher education encompasses all the qualifications in a higher education system. It shows the expected learning outcomes for a given qualification and how learners can move between qualifications. The aim of QF-EHEA is to organise national higher education qualifications into an overarching European-wide qualifications framework. Within this framework, qualifications are defined according to levels of complexity and difficulty (Bachelor, Master, Doctor). (ECTS Users’ Guide, 2015)

Validation
A process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual.  
   A model to identify knowledge, skills and competences of a potential candidate for RPL.
2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual’s experiences.  
   The provision of evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences.
3. A formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences.  
   and the phase in which the documented evidence of the individual’s knowledge, skills and competences are compared against specific standards/Learning outcomes.
4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.  
   The official recording confirming the achievement of learning outcomes against a specified standard.

Recognition of prior learning
The validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired before requesting validation. (CR)

From the Lisbon Recognition Convention
Access (to higher education)  
The right of qualified candidates to apply and to be considered for admission to higher education.

Admission (to higher education institutions and programmes)  
The act of, or system for, allowing qualified applicants to pursue studies in higher education at a given institution and/or a given programme.