

European tools to foster non-EU nationals' skills

MED NEC Cluster

The international migration context

Eurostat data present a picture of the progressively increasing migration in Europe. As of 1 January 2024, 44.7 million persons born outside the EU were residing in an EU country, representing 9.9% of 449.3 million people living in the EU (+2.3 million compared with the previous year).

More than 158,000 new arrivals of non-EU nationals came to Europe in 2024: 2/3 of these came from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, whose destination was mainly Italy and Greece[1].

Add to this the fact that the war in Ukraine has resulted in some 6.2 million Ukrainian refugees across Europe (as of October 2024) while Turkey has hosted some 3 million Syrians under temporary protection.

The phenomenon of migration, outlined here in brief lines, is structural as a result of climate change and the unjust exploitation of environmental resources. It affects the whole world, and even in Europe, it is certainly not going to decrease.

In this view, it is to be carefully considered that Europe's working-age population is declining (from 265 million in 2022 to 258 million in 2030) and the EU faces persistent labour shortages in a variety of sectors at all skill levels[2]. Without intervention measures, current trends may negatively impact green and digital transitions, undermine the EU's competitiveness, and weaken those public services that have long suffered from labour shortages (e.g. health and long-term care).

While the 2015 European Agenda and the entry into force (2024) of the Pact on Migration and Asylum redefined migration measures and policies, on the side of socio-occupational integration of non-EU nationals, the Skills and Talent Mobility package was adopted, which includes the proposal for an EU talent pool platform[3]. The aim is to support the matching of EU employers and jobseekers from non-EU countries, also thanks to measures that simplify qualification recognition procedures, contained in a special Commission Recommendation (2023), mainly to promote labour market mobility.



HOW NON-EU CAN HELP EUROPE

Non-EU nationals can help address labour shortages, as skills shortages persist in several sectors in Europe that are crucial to its wellbeing and competitiveness.

It is therefore crucial to promote a quality matching and to recognise the competences acquired by non-EU nationals in Europe and during the migration path, as well. To do this, common tools are needed to support operators and migrants in recording and documenting their experiences and skills acquired both in countries of origin and because of their learning and/or work experiences in host countries after the international protection applications.

The European tools for the transparency of non-EU nationals' skills

In European documents concerning [the EU talent pool](#) and [the Recommendation on measures to facilitate the recognition of the qualifications of non-EU nationals](#), two European tools are mentioned together to facilitate the verification and transparency of the experiences, competences and qualifications of people with a migration background: the [EU Skills profile tool for third country nationals](#) and the new [Europass portal](#) with its web-based services and tools.

Created in 2017, it has been successively modified to make it more user-friendly, easy to use, and functional.

The aim is to profile the skills of newcomers at an early stage[1], also to direct them, based on knowledge data, to guidance, study, and work paths possibly congruous and in line with non-EU nationals' needs. The EU skills profile tool beneficiaries are mainly refugees, migrants, and citizens of non-EU countries with the willing to stay in the EU countries.

It can be used by services and operators that assist citizens, such as national authorities responsible for the reception and integration of refugees, reception centres, employment assistance services, education and training advisers, social services, NGOs, and charitable organisations.

The tool is web-based and multilingual: it is possible to display two languages at the same time on one screen, consequently reducing language barriers between operators and third-country nationals. It is also available in all EU languages (except Irish) and in Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Sorani, Somali, Tigrinya, Turkish, and Ukrainian. It lends itself to be used voluntarily, and it's free of charge, including via smartphones. Completed profiles can be exported as PDF, Word, Excel, or XML files.

In addition, it is flexible, in the sense that one can choose the sections and items, so that it can therefore be more or less long depending on the case. The EU tool contains personal information, expectations (language objectives, training, obtaining self-employment or employment), and identification of competences are requested. The resulting dossier, at the end, embodies free space for an overall evaluation by the practitioner and future recommendations. Compilation may also take place in several stages.



STRENGTHS OF THE EU SKILLS PROFILE

The strengths of the EU skills profile tool are several:

- Enhances transparency of competences and helps assess individual needs (e.g., additional training, job placement, language instruction).
- Facilitates personalized counselling and guidance.
- Supports international mobility by collecting information in a standardized format, including relevant supporting evidence.
- Allows the profile to be saved in various formats and shared with public and private support services, with the individual's prior consent.
- Places individuals with a migrant background at the center of the process.
- Helps document and reconstruct the individual's experiences and skills in a structured dossier.
- Tracks potential personalized development projects and how they can be implemented.

The Europass portal: tools and services for Skills Transparency

Europass is a valuable platform for anyone interested in learning or working in Europe, whether you're an EU citizen or a third-country national (TCN). It helps document the competences of TCNs and supports both individuals and practitioners in skills development and job placement

It is a free, digital platform designed to help citizens document qualifications, skills, and experiences in a standardized format recognized across EU countries.

By bridging gaps between non-EU credentials and European labor market standards, Europass enhances EU and non-EU nationals' employability and supports their integration into diverse sectors. Its multilingual interface, available in vehicular and all EU languages (Ukrainian language too), ensures accessibility for end users and practitioners.

Europass focuses on early profiling of users' skills to guide them toward education, training, or employment. While the Skills Profile Tool creates an initial dossier, Europass enables ongoing documentation, allowing end users to update and share profiles with employers, NGOs, and employment services. This synergy supports the 2023 Recommendation's aim to simplify qualification recognition, fostering labor mobility and addressing persistent skills shortages.

For stakeholders/policymakers, reception centers, and training providers, Europass offers a robust framework to validate and leverage users' competencies and qualifications, including informal and non-formal learning pathways.

Among the Europass services and tools, the E-Portfolio section, in particular the Europass profile, allows users to compile education, work history, and skills into a digital portfolio, which can be exported as PDF, Word, or XML files for sharing with employers or advisers. The platform's profile and the digital Skills self-assessment test aligned with frameworks like ESCO and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, enabling a thorough evaluation of digital and language skills.

For stakeholders, these tools streamline the validation process. Europass can help them to map non-EU qualifications to EU standards, increasing employer trust and reducing recognition barriers. For example, a TCN with informal healthcare experience in their home country can document these skills in a standardized format, making them more visible to EU health sector employers facing shortages.

This process empowers TCNs to articulate their value while providing practitioners with data to tailor guidance, ensuring a stronger alignment with labor market demands.



THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS & EUROPASS

Addressing skill gaps is critical to integrating EU and non-EU citizens into Europe's labor market, particularly in sectors impacted by the projected 7 million decline in the working-age population by 2030.

Europass assessment tools identify areas for improvement, such as digital competencies or language proficiency, guiding TCNs toward targeted upskilling opportunities. By linking to opportunities of training programs and resources, Europass ensures that users can acquire skills relevant to high-demand sectors like green technology and long-term care.

Stakeholders play a pivotal role in this process. Training providers can use Europass data to design programs tailored to TCNs' needs, while employment services can recommend courses aligned with sectoral trends. For instance, a TCN identified as needing digital skills training can access courses through Europass connections to EU-wide educational platforms, enhancing their employability in technology-driven industries.

This targeted approach supports the EU's green and digital transitions, addressing labor shortages while fostering TCNs' career development.

A comparative view

After analyzing the tools, their usefulness is evident due to their common European scope and because of the specificity of some of their aspects.

Europass is an essential tool for fostering TCNs' skills transparency and labor market integration, complementing the EU Skills Profile Tool and aligning with EU policies like the 2023 Recommendation and Skills and Talent Mobility package.

In a comparative perspective, the Europass tools and services can be of support in the more advanced phase of the reception and permanence of TCNs in a Member State, especially refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of other types of international protection. While the EU skills profile tool seems to have a more purely formative and cognitive character for the person, the Europass tools can instead be used by operators and by the users themselves for the phase of job placement. In this sense, the EU skills profile tool helps create and realize a personalized study/training and work orientation plan, while the Europass web based tools can be a valid help in making paths already followed more transparent, it can support a further mobility and help to document experiences and competences acquired in the study and work paths realized in the member Countries (a fundamental element also for the residence permit).

From an ideal perspective, the EU skills profile tool could also be used at an early stage, if possible, by reception services, in particular towards asylum seekers and refugees. The necessary presence of an operator to manage this tool would also respond to the need, on the part of a highly disadvantaged target group, to make use of a service that, if not mentoring, would at least provide personalized care. This is considering the variety of migrant reception systems and the different types of governance implemented in the Member States.

The Europass E-Portfolio, on the other hand, seems to be more appropriate for migrants with a higher level of educational profile and/or at a more advanced stage of integration in a Member State, since the use of the portal requires sufficient digital and literacy skills and can be used without the presence of a local PES operator. However, it should be borne in mind that Europass also lends itself to use for progressive difficulties. One could start from access as a guest from a smartphone to create a very simple CV and presentation letter, to a slightly more complex use as a registered user (guided by a practitioner, if the case), to create a short (permanent) profile, a CV/presentation letter and archive the documents in the library. This digital space avoids the loss of certificates and evidence, given the unstable living conditions of applicants and refugees in many countries.



These are the main differences and complementarities, therefore, of the two European tools. If used together, they could first and foremost strengthen the reception phase, structuring and personalising it, as well as the socio-occupational integration of migrants. They could also help reduce the phenomena of skill gaps and labour shortages that are increasingly widespread in Europe.

REFERENCES

[1] As reported by UN refugee Agency: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/europe-arrivals-and-displaced-populations-figures-9896>. As for 2025 statistics: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/europe-sea-arrivals>

[2] For more details: see the Commission's report, "[Employment and social developments in Europe 2023](#)".

[3] The commitment to create an EU Talent Pool was first raised in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the idea was then developed under the 2022 Skills and Talent package.

[4] Therefore, the EU Skills profile tool is not intended to be used for formal recognition or authentication of skills. It represents, however, the basic tool for identifying skills.



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