

## Background paper series

# New skills and tools for migrants with the Europass portal and EU good practices

## Europass

[Europass](#), the European career platform launched in July 2020, allows users to create a free profile - in one or more European languages - in a secure, online location, listing all their skills, qualifications and experiences. Users can also store diplomas, reference letters or other documents relating to their achievements in their personal Europass library, and make use of online employment, job seeking and education support. So far in 2021, the Europass platform has attracted approximately 500 000 visitors [weekly](#).

Europass has recently been renewed as part of the [EU Skills Agenda](#). This has involved the expansion of learning opportunities, an increase in the number of countries that share learning data, and the development of related national initiatives (e.g. via the [Global Study Choice Platform](#), which promotes 'study portals' for higher education). In addition, the EU's Joint Research Centre (JRC) is currently improving its [MOOCs database](#) in order to better target migrants and refugees.

## The EDCI

European Digital Credentials for Learning are electronically sealed digital records given to a person to certify the learning they have undertaken. They can be awarded for formal education, training, online courses, volunteering experiences and more. The [European Digital Credentials for Learning Infrastructure](#) (EDCI) is currently being further developed as a tool to support efficiency and security in how credentials - such as qualifications and other learning achievements - can be recognised. It has been integrated into the Europass platform.

### The EDCI will:

- Improve **transparency and portability of qualifications** and skills between countries;
- Reduce administrative burden for citizens, learning providers and employers;
- Make tampering and credential-fraud easily identifiable;
- **Empower people** to own and control their own credentials;
- Contribute towards digitisation of government processes.

The issuing of digital credentials ensures that certificates from one Member State can be understood and verified in any other: learners, employers, education and training providers

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and other bodies can use these digital credentials to check that qualifications are valid and authentic, and to easily access relevant background information. The initiative could also be linked to national developments, where digital credentialing will be covered by national platforms offering learning opportunities.

### *Third country nationals and the EDCI*

Already beneficial to mobile EU citizens the digital credentials tool could also be useful for migrants and refugees, allowing them to present and document their qualifications in a secure way. This can also support the process of recognition, which in many cases is reported to be difficult for third country nationals. The EDCI is not a recognition tool in itself, but facilitates the transparency and recognition of qualifications and can support mobility to and within Europe. Further, the EDCI has the potential to better understand the skills and qualifications of skilled third country nationals and to address skills mismatches in the EU.

EDCI verification would still need to go through national processes, but refugees could have their qualifications recognised by ENIC-NARIC networks and then effectively re-issued. Foreign networks and already established systems could also operate as special awarding bodies, and integrate their services with Europass (Futures, Andersen & Larsen, 2020). At present, third country nationals are able to document and map their skills and qualifications, in order to explore options for skills assessment, upskilling and employment through the [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#). This tool, which does not offer recognition or authentication of qualifications, will be integrated with the Europass platform early 2022.

## Facilitating labour market inclusion

Migration to EU Member States from third countries has been steadily increasing in recent decades. In January 2019 there were 21.8 million third country nationals living in the EU, and 13.3 million EU citizens living in another EU Member State. According to Eurostat data, between January 2014 and December 2020 there were also 5.1 million asylum applications made to EU countries, from people that arrived both legally and via unofficial channels.

### **Migrants with recognised qualifications are better able to contribute to the labour market of their host society by:**

- Filling gaps in low and high-skilled occupations;
- Addressing labour market imbalances;
- Contributing more in taxes or benefits than they receive;
- Spurring innovation, and, thereby, economic growth.

An EU survey in 2016 found that among economically active refugees in the EU, 1 in 5 was unemployed and 1 in 8 had been unemployed for over a year or longer. Further, refugees were found on average to take up to 20 years to reach an employment rate similar to that of the native-born population (OECD & EU, 2016). [Eurostat data](#) from 2020 show that the unemployment rate of third country nationals in the EU is twice that of native citizens (12.3% vs. 6.0%). In 2018, the OECD projected that by the end of 2020 unemployment will have

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increased by 6.1-6.7% in Germany and by 2-4% in Austria, Luxembourg and Sweden, due to these countries' positions as key destination countries for refugees (OECD, 2018). Germany, Spain and France receive nearly 65 % of all first-time asylum applications in the EU-27, meaning that they face particular pressure to promote and facilitate both the social and labour market integration of refugees.

The Europass platform and integrated tools could facilitate this integration: they can maximise the economic potential of migration flows by speeding up the qualification recognition process, and by ensuring that refugees have access to the information and knowledge needed for employment, skills matching and upskilling. For this purpose, [a dedicated page](#) has been launched providing all kinds of relevant information for third country nationals. The European Commission [Action Plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027](#) also places strong focus on 'improving employment opportunities and skills recognition'.

### Promising practices in migrant skills development and recognition:

The [Diversity Management and Integration of Migrants' Competences in the labour market \(DIMICOME\) project](#) provided guidelines on identifying and assessing the specific soft skills that migrants have acquired through their experiences. It contributes to migrants' economic integration by valuing their existing competences and fostering their positive impact on the competitiveness of companies.

[Refugee Start Force](#) in the Netherlands was created by refugees for refugees, and empowers participants to integrate more quickly into Dutch society and the labour market. The initiative connects refugees to a social and professional network, provides them with information on skills development, organises networking events, creates volunteering opportunities, and develops internships and learning programmes.

The city of Nuremberg's 'Erfolg' project focused on skills development in an integrated way, combining it with profiling, guidance services and job-matching.

The city of Stockholm offers more than 100 'fast track' adult education courses for skills development, for which migrants are eligible, working to fill available job opportunities.

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## Guiding questions for the workshop:

- How can use of the Europass portal by EU Member States be increased?
- How can participation in the Europass Digital Credentials for Learning by established institutions / systems in third countries be ensured (in order to better facilitate recognition of qualifications and certificates from these countries)?
- Which other barriers might refugees / third country migrants face when it comes to skills development and qualification recognition?

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