



Recognising the skills of immigrants and refugees: a European perspective

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Outline

1. Credential recognition and labour market integration
2. Refugees: potential and obstacles
3. Best practices from European countries (national and local level)
4. What role for the EU?
5. Conclusions and way forward

Recognition of qualifications is critical for labour market integration (I)

Regulated professions:

Formal recognition mandatory for access to profession

- *Public safety concerns*



Denial/restrictions of access to professional practice

Unregulated professions:

Formal recognition not mandatory

- *Employers' unfamiliarity with foreign qualifications*
- *Information costs/perceived risks*



Hiring disadvantage

Recognition of qualifications is critical for labour market integration (II)

- Large untapped potential among third-country nationals residing in the EU
- Substantial positive effects on employment and wages

*Evidence from Germany:**

- *26.7 percentage points more likely to be employed*
- *13.2 percent higher hourly wages*

* H. Brücker, A. Glitz, A. Lerche, A. Romiti (2016): 'Occupational Recognition and Immigrant Labor Market Outcomes'. Paper for CESifo Area Conference on Employment and Social Protection, 8-9 April 2016

... but on its own,
it is no silver bullet.

Take account of **other barriers**:

- Lack of familiarity with local business and workplace norms
- Missing social and professional networks
- Inadequate language skills
- Employers not trusting foreign qualifications
- Discrimination

Obstacles in the recognition of foreign qualifications

Prior to recognition process:

- Lack of awareness, information, and guidance
- Restricted access to procedures, lack of entitlement
- Costs

During the recognition process:

- Complex and lengthy processes
- Limited resources and capabilities of recognition bodies

Follow-up stage:

- Lack of compensatory measures in case of partial recognition
- Little monitoring on effects of recognition

Source: ECORYS UK (2016). "Study on Obstacles to Recognition of Skills and Qualifications"

National practices to improve the recognition of foreign qualifications

- Facilitate access to information on recognition procedures
- Ensure early and timely recognition
- Tailored compensatory measures promoting early access to professional practice
- Combine supplementary training for recognition with occupation-specific language instruction and other integration measures

Refugees in Europe: potential

Qualifications of recent cohorts of refugees?

- Little data as of yet...

Germany, IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2016:

- Very few have a university degree, even fewer hold vocational qualifications *
- Many have vocational skills acquired through on-the-job training, work experience *

* H. Brücker et al. (2016): 'Forced migration, arrival in Germany, and first steps toward integration'. DIW Economic Bulletin 48.2016

Refugees: specific obstacles

- No documentary proof of qualifications
- Slow asylum procedures, uncertain legal status, service limitations
- Little awareness of credential recognition
- Language barrier hinders access to information, counselling

National practices: Refugee-specific approaches

- Early assessment of skills in reception centres, already during the asylum procedure
e.g. **Finland**
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL)
e.g. **Norway**
- Alternative validation and recognition procedures in case of missing documents
e.g. **Germany**
- Engaging and involving employers
e.g. **Sweden**
- Measures to improve information and create transparency
e.g. **Netherlands**

Local practices to improve the recognition of foreign qualifications

Cities' advantages:

- Detailed knowledge of local employers and their needs
- Build local partnerships with education/training providers and employer associations to strengthen trust in foreign qualifications



*Building bridges between
formal recognition and the local labour market*


What role for the EU?

Commit political capital, soft law instruments and funding

New Skills Agenda for Europe (2016)

- **Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals (June 2017)**
- Cooperation with national authorities
- Support recognition-specific training of staff in reception facilities
- Promote the sharing of information and best practices
- Review the European Qualifications Framework

Conclusions and way forward

- ‘Lessons learned’ in the recognition of professional qualifications?
- What role for new technologies in how qualifications are viewed and assessed?
  e.g. *digital badges**

* M. Benton, A. Glennie (2016): *Digital Humanitarianism: How Tech Entrepreneurs Are Supporting Refugee Integration*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute

For more information: recent MPI publications

M.V. Desiderio (2016): *Integrating Refugees into Host Country Labor Markets: Challenges and Policy Options*

V. Rietig (2016): *Moving Beyond Crisis: Germany's New Approaches to Integrating Refugees into the Labour Market*

K. Hooper, M.V. Desiderio, B. Salant (2017): *Improving the Labour Market Integration of Migrants and Refugees – Empowering Cities through Better Use of EU Instruments*

THANK YOU!

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