



# Fostering sustainable labour market integration of third-country nationals: skills matching policies and instruments

## European Migration Network – OECD joint Study

July 2026

## Disclaimer

This study has been produced jointly by the [European Migration Network \(EMN\)](#) and the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#). The EMN comprises the [EMN National Contact Points \(EMN NCPs\)](#) in EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM, RS, MK, AL), the European Commission and is supported by the EMN Service Provider.

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## Explanatory note

This study was prepared on the basis of national contributions from 25 EMN NCPs (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK) collected via a Common Template developed by the EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. The information contained in this study refers to the situation in the abovementioned EMN Member Countries up to October 2025.

National contributions were largely based on desk analysis of existing legislation and policy documents, reports, academic literature, internet resources, reports and information from national authorities rather than primary research. Statistics were sourced from OECD, EUROSTAT, national authorities and other (national) databases.

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## For more information

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## List of definitions

Unless otherwise specified, and with the exception of terms relating to skills, the definitions refer to the **EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary**, online version.<sup>1</sup> The definition of skills are largely based on those of the **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)**.<sup>2</sup>

| Term                                           | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Beneficiary of international protection</b> | A person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Beneficiary of temporary protection</b>     | A person who enjoys temporary protection.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Employment</b>                              | The exercise of activities covering whatever form of labour or work regulated under national law or in accordance with established practice for or under the direction and/or supervision of an employer.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Labour market integration</b>               | The extent to which migrants will achieve the same range of labour market participation as nationals of European Union (EU) Member States by using their skills and realising their economic potential.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Labour matching</b>                         | The process by which the skills and qualifications of a worker are compared with the requirements of a particular job vacancy to establish whether they match wholly or partly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Migrant</b>                                 | <p>In the EU/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) context, a person who either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country; or</li> <li>■ having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU/EFTA Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in the EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months.</li> </ul> <p>N.B. For more information on the specific groups of migrants covered in the context of this study, see section 1.3 Study aim and scope.</p> |
| <b>Migrant worker</b>                          | A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which they are not nationals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Qualification</b>                           | The formal outcome of an assessment and validation process by a competent body determining that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. <sup>3</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Refugee</b>                                 | In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Article 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive) does not apply.                                                                                                         |
| <b>Skill</b>                                   | The ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Skills can be described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). <sup>4</sup> The term skills covers generic (skills that are not specific to a particular job or industry, such as problem-solving or communication skills) and specialised (e.g. technical expertise required for certain professions) skills. <sup>5</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 'EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary', v.10.0, 2025, accessed 11 July 2024.

<sup>2</sup> European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), 'Skills matching', n.d., <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-skills-index/skills-matching>, accessed 20 January 2025.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, 'European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations - Skill', n.d., accessed 24 March 2025.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, 'European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations - Qualifications', n.d., accessed 24 March 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Lise, J. and Postel-Vinay, F., 'Multidimensional skills, sorting, and human capital accumulation', *American Economic Review*, 2020 110 (8): 2328–76, 10.1257/aer.20162002, accessed 21 January 2025.

| Term                          | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Skills matching</b>        | A process by which individuals' skillsets are aligned with organisations' skill needs. <sup>6</sup> In the context of this study skills matching also includes when the educational qualification and/or field of study is aligned with the job performed/recruited for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Skills mismatch</b>        | <p>A situation of imbalance between the skills and/or (educational) qualifications possessed by the workforce (supply) and those needed by the labour market (demand).<sup>7</sup></p> <p>The term as used in this study includes mismatch in skills and educational qualification, as well as field of study:</p> <p><b>Vertical skills mismatch:</b> when an employee's <b>skills or education level</b> is either higher (overqualification) or lower (underqualification) in relation to their occupation, e.g. a nurse working as a nursing assistant.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Vertical skills mismatch can manifest in the following ways:<sup>9</sup></p> <p><b>Over-skilling:</b> the individual has more skills than required to perform a job adequately;</p> <p><b>Under-skilling:</b> the individual has less skills than required to perform a job adequately.</p> <p><b>Overeducation:</b> the individual has a level of education and training higher than that required to perform their job.</p> <p><b>Undereducation:</b> the individual has a level of education and training lower than that required to perform their job.</p> <p><b>Horizontal skills mismatch:</b> when the individual's <b>field of education or (vocational) training</b> does not relate to field of the occupation they work in ('out-of-field employment'),<sup>10</sup> e.g. a nurse working as a marketing manager.<sup>11</sup> Horizontal mismatch is usually measured by comparing an employee's attended field of study and the field required for the job the employee holds.<sup>12</sup></p> |
| <b>Third-country national</b> | Any person who is not a citizen of the EU within the meaning of Article 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and who is not a person enjoying the EU right to free movement, as defined in Article 2(5) of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

6 Joss, S., Collings, D. G., McMackin, J. and Dickman, M., 'A skills-matching perspective on talent management: Developing strategic agility', Human Resource Management, 63(1), 2024, p. 141, accessed 5 February 2025.

7 The definition of skills mismatch and the following forms of this phenomenon are based on CEDEFOP, 'Glossary – Skills mismatch', n.d., accessed 5 February 2025.

8 Albert, C., Davia, M. A. and Legazpe, N., 'Educational mismatch in recent university graduates. The role of labour mobility', Journal of Youth Studies, 26(1), 2021, p. 119.

9 The following definitions were developed by European Migration Network (EMN) Austria for the purposes of this study based on existing research.

10 Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Redmond, P. and Brosnan, L., 'Skills mismatch in Europe', 2024, accessed 20 January 2025.

11 Albert, C., Davia, M. A. and Legazpe, N., 'Educational mismatch in recent university graduates. The role of labour mobility', Journal of Youth Studies, 26(1), 2021, p. 119.

12 Somers, M. Cabus, S., Groot W. and Maassen van den Brink, H., 'horizontal mismatch between employment and field of education: evidence from a systematic literature review', Journal of Economic Surveys, 33(2), 2019, pp. 567-603.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- **Third-country nationals consistently experience higher rates of overeducation** than native populations in European Migration Network (EMN) Member Countries and disparities persist despite longer durations of stay. The study focuses on (legally staying) labour migrants from third countries (third-country nationals) and third-country nationals arriving via family reunification, beneficiaries of international protection (BIP) and BoTP. Applicants for international protection are not included in the scope.
- **The mismatch between qualifications and job requirements is influenced by various factors, notably limited language proficiency.** Challenges with the **recognition of qualifications** are also reported as a major driver, especially in regulated professions. Other drivers include demographic factors (specifically gender-related care responsibilities and older age at arrival) and discrimination against third-country nationals.
- **Multiple actors in EMN Member Countries<sup>13</sup> are involved in addressing skills mismatch at different levels.** The ministries responsible for employment and/or social affairs are one of the main actors responsible for promoting skills matching. At the same time, skills matching relies on a network that includes **subnational and non-state** actors, for example local and municipal actors, and social partners/support organisations. These provide support through localised initiatives such as information and counselling, mentoring, training, or supports for employers in identifying and hiring migrants.
- EMN Member Countries have implemented **a diverse array of national policies and instruments, including initiatives by subnational and non-state actors** to address skills mismatch and validate existing skills. These include policies to simplify the recognition of qualification and skills, policies and instruments providing employment information, language training, upskilling and reskilling policies, and policies and instruments that seek to better use migrants' skills to address labour shortages and skill gaps in specific sectors.
- Policy debates across EMN Member Countries have focused on addressing **language requirements**, the **complexity of recognising foreign qualifications**, and the strategic tension between **'skills first' versus 'employment first'** approaches. Debates have also addressed the activation of migrants' labour potential to fill critical sectoral shortages, expanding access to **adult learning and retraining**, and addressing the specific issue of skills (mis)matches among **Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTP)**, who often hold high educational qualifications. Several EMN Member Countries have addressed the topic through more general debates, rather than directly.
- Migrants with a humanitarian status, such as BIPs, can be particularly affected by skills mismatch due to the circumstances of their arrival in the EU. Most EMN Member Countries reported the **lack of documentation from countries of origin as a driver of skills mismatch**. This is a particular issue for BIP and forcibly displaced migrants who may lack or have limited documentation, diplomas or prior employment records.
- EMN Member Countries face persistent challenges in addressing skills mismatch, primarily driven by **insufficient advanced language support, complex recognition bureaucracy, and employer-side barriers** such as discrimination and a lack of awareness of hiring regulations.
- **Good practices include combining different types of measures to create an integrated approach** that addresses recognition of qualifications and prior learning, as well as language and job training. Labour market, employer-centred, and target group-specific measures are also identified as crucial.

13 Note for the reader: The key points/executive summary section provides a summary of the main information contained in the inform or study. For ease of reading, key points do not contain footnotes. Please note that EMN Member Countries referred to in the key points or executive summary are listed in the relevant sections.





## BACKGROUND/AIMS AND RATIONALE

More than half of European companies perceive skills shortages as their most pressing challenge as they cannot find workers with suitable qualifications and skills to fill existing vacancies.<sup>14</sup> The potential of migrant workers, particularly those with foreign qualifications,<sup>15</sup> is often underutilised in Europe, with many working in jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications.<sup>16</sup>

The European Union (EU) legal framework and other initiatives addressing skills mismatch are anchored in the European Skills Agenda and the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, as well as in initiatives such as the EU Talent Pool, Talent Partnerships, and the Union of Skills Strategy (2025).<sup>17</sup>

This study looks at the issue of skills matching of migrants in EMN Member and Observer Countries.<sup>18</sup> It answers two primary research questions: How and why are

different groups of migrants affected by skills mismatch? How do policies in EMN Member Countries respond to this?

The study aims to build knowledge on effective policy action for promoting skills matching and tackling skills mismatch among third-country nationals in EMN Member Countries.

Aimed primarily at national policymakers, it explores drivers, policies and initiatives that address skills mismatch and promote skills matching, and identifies challenges, best practices and lessons in promoting sustainable labour market integration of migrants through skills matching.

The findings are also relevant to practitioners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, and the general public engaged in this area.



## OVERVIEW OF SKILLS MISMATCH

This study uses data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to provide an overview of skills mismatch across selected OECD and EMN Member Countries (see section 2.1).

Skills mismatch refers to the gap between the skills and qualifications individuals possess and those required in the jobs they hold.

Several approaches are generally used to measure this mismatch: vertical skills mismatch and horizontal skills mismatch. Approaches to vertical skills mismatch can be distinguished between over/underqualification, over/undereducation, and/or over/under-skilling).

Across OECD and EMN Member Countries, foreign-born workers consistently display higher overeducation rates than the native population, with highly educated non-EU-born individuals experiencing the highest rates of overeducation. However, gradual improvements in labour market integration are visible, as overqualification tends to decline with longer time periods spent in the host country.

Although overeducation remains a challenge, a migrant's likelihood of securing high-quality employment is significantly influenced by their actual skills proficiency and language competence, with limited language proficiency recognised as one of the main drivers of skills mismatch.



## DRIVERS OF SKILLS MISMATCH

Limited language proficiency<sup>19</sup> is the main driver of skills mismatch, followed by challenges with the recognition of qualifications across EMN Member Countries.<sup>20</sup> Limited language proficiency can be viewed as a structural barrier that high educational qualifications often cannot overcome. This proficiency gap not only leads to vertical or horizontal skills mismatch but serves as a critical indirect barrier in regulated sectors (e.g. healthcare, education), where migrants are often in roles that do

not correspond to their education during the frequently lengthy process of language acquisition and recognition of qualifications.

Other drivers relate to migrants' personal situations, such as gender,<sup>21</sup> age-related factors,<sup>22</sup> limited knowledge of the labour market,<sup>23</sup> discrimination,<sup>24</sup> length of stay,<sup>25</sup> career gaps,<sup>26</sup> socioeconomic pressures, and psychological factors.<sup>27</sup>

14 European Commission, 'The future of European competitiveness Part B. In-depth analysis and recommendations', 2024, p. 258, accessed 20 January 2025.

15 European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 'Quarterly Review of Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) - January 2025', 2025, accessed 26 March 2025.

16 For example, an analysis of Eurostat's Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (2017-2022) across all EU Member States revealed that nearly half of tertiary-educated migrants in Europe are overqualified for their jobs and are almost twice as likely to be unemployed compared to natives; Informigrants, 'Unrealised potential: The challenge of "rain waste" among Europe's skilled migrants', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025.

17 Council of the EU, 'Council and European Parliament agree to establish a platform for non-EU job-seekers (EU Talent Pool)', Press release, 18 November 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.

18 Twenty-five EMN National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) contributed to this study (see disclaimer). As none were EMN Observer Countries, the responding countries will be referred to as EMN Member Countries hereafter.

19 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

20 AT, BE, CZ, CY, DE, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, SK.

21 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

22 BE, CY, EE, EL, ES, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK.

23 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK; TRAILS - Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 - REVIEW I - Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025; Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; European Network of Public Employment Services, 'Labour market integration of displaced people and refugees', 2023, accessed 4 March 2025.

24 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

25 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SK.

26 AT, BE, CY, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK.

27 AT, BE, EL, HU, LT, LU, NL, PL, SK.



Country-specific drivers for skills mismatch include migration and integration policies,<sup>28</sup> labour market<sup>29</sup> and employer specific drivers,<sup>30</sup> and education-related drivers,

such as disparities in education systems.<sup>31</sup> Additional drivers include housing<sup>32</sup> and eligibility for social assistance.<sup>33</sup>



## POLICIES FOR ADDRESSING SKILLS MISMATCH

Policy debates around key drivers such as language acquisition and the recognition of qualifications underline the importance of skills mismatch in EMN Member Countries. Addressing labour shortages in specific sectors through the activation of migrants' labour potential is also much debated. Other discussion areas include 'skills first' versus 'employment first' approaches, access to adult learning and (re)training to address skills mismatch, and specific debates on skills (mis)matches among Ukrainian BoTP.

Multiple actors at different levels are involved in addressing skills mismatch and promoting skills matching in EMN Member Countries. Chief among these are the ministries responsible for employment and/or social affairs.<sup>34</sup> Educational institutions and agencies are involved in the delivery or funding of language and adult training courses,<sup>35</sup> and, in some instances, asylum and migration authorities also play a role in addressing skills mismatch.<sup>36</sup>

Across EMN Member Countries, subnational authorities such as municipalities have an important role in promoting skills matching.<sup>37</sup> Services and support commonly provided by these actors include the assessment of skills,

support with job referrals, civic and labour orientation courses, and language training. Non-state actors such as social partners (e.g. chambers of labour/employees, chambers of commerce, trade unions)<sup>38</sup> and support organisations (e.g. NGOs) also support skills matching.<sup>39</sup>

Responding EMN Member Countries reported a total of 129 policies and selected instruments<sup>40</sup> to counter skills mismatch and/or promote skills matching. The majority target jobseekers generally,<sup>41</sup> while one-third target employers<sup>42</sup> and/or migrants who are already employed.<sup>43</sup> Fewer measures target professional bodies or institutions (e.g. recognition bodies, universities, other training institutions).<sup>44</sup>

The policies described address drivers of both vertical and horizontal skills mismatch. Some are general active labour market policies (ALMPs) or migration integration policies that foresee the provision of support to migrants in (re)accessing the labour market and indirectly address skills (mis)match, while others address specific drivers of skills mismatch (e.g. difficulties in the recognition of qualifications, language barriers, orientation gaps).

28 AT, BE, CY, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK, SI; Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, p. 11, accessed 10 January 2025.

29 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

30 AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, PT, SK. TRAILS - Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 - REVIEW I - Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, pp. 44-58, accessed 4 February 2025.

31 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

32 AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

33 BE, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, LU, SE, SK.

34 AT, BE (regional ministries), CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SI, SK.

35 BE, CY, DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, PT, SE, SK.

36 DE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, SI, SK.

37 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LV, SI.

38 AT, BE, DE, EE, FR, IT, LU, SE, SI.

39 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, SE, SI, SK.

40 Including both targeted and mainstream policies.

41 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR (policy instrument: vouchers for education of employed and unemployed), IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, MT, PL, SE, SI (94 policies/instruments), SK.

42 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, MT, PL, SE, SI.

43 AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR (policy instrument: vouchers for education of employed and unemployed), LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI (38 policies/instruments).

44 BE, CZ, DE, IT, LT, SI.



## CHALLENGES, GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS

EMN Member Countries report challenges in addressing the key drivers identified, including the provision of language support<sup>45</sup> and the limited or complex qualification recognition processes that hinder access to skilled jobs.<sup>46</sup>

In some cases, discrimination, stereotypes and lack of inclusive recruitment practices hinder EMN Member Countries' capacity to address skills mismatch,<sup>47</sup> with examples of employers' limited awareness and readiness to hire migrants.<sup>48</sup> Some EMN Member Countries mentioned institutional challenges related to the governance framework for addressing skills mismatch.<sup>49</sup>

EMN Member Countries have developed a diverse array of measures to address these challenges, with most

implementing a combination of measures to create an integrated approach.

Good practices include combined language and vocational training or mentoring.<sup>50</sup> Some EMN Member Countries stressed the importance of employer partnerships and tailored sectoral pathways,<sup>51</sup> as well as better coordination between employment services and employers.<sup>52</sup> They also emphasised validation of prior learning and the need to simplify and accelerate recognition of qualifications.<sup>53</sup>

Lessons across EMN Member Countries<sup>54</sup> include the need for better coordination of support, i.e. integrated, multi-actor approaches that connect language, qualification recognition, and employment support. Increased local presence and cooperation is therefore crucial to establish better coordination and engagement.

45 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SI, SK.

46 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SK.

47 BE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, NL, PL, SI, SK.

48 AT, BE, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, SI.

49 BE, DE, FR, LT, LU, SK.

50 BE, CY, FI, NL, MT, LU.

51 BE, FR, NL, PL.

52 AT, BE, NL.

53 AT, DE, FR, HU, LT, LU, PL, SK.

54 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

# 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the issue of skills matching among migrants in EMN Member Countries. It focuses on labour migrants from third countries (third-country nationals) and third-country nationals arriving via family reunification, beneficiaries of international protection (BIP) and BoTP.<sup>55</sup> Skills match in this study refers to **education**, i.e. a person's field of study and level of qualification, as well as to **skills**, i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.<sup>56</sup> The study analyses policies and initiatives that address skills mismatch and promote skills matching, and identifies challenges, best practices and lessons learned in promoting the sustainable labour market integration of migrants through skills matching.

According to data from the 2024 Future of European Competitiveness study, more than half of European companies perceive skills shortages as their most pressing challenge as they cannot find workers with suitable qualifications and skills to fill existing vacancies,<sup>57</sup> and these

skills shortages are predicted to grow.<sup>58</sup> Developments such as automation, action against climate change and its harmful effects (green transition),<sup>59</sup> and digitalisation combined with demographic ageing are transforming labour markets and the skills that are most needed<sup>60</sup> in Europe and beyond. While attracting foreign talent is one avenue to address skill shortages,<sup>61</sup> another key measure<sup>62</sup> is using the skills of migrants already living and working in the EU effectively. This is particularly relevant given widespread evidence that the potential of migrant workers, particularly those with foreign qualifications,<sup>63</sup> is often underutilised, with many working in jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications.<sup>64</sup>

Skills mismatch is not only costly for the affected person, but for businesses, the economy, and society overall. It negatively impacts earnings and, relatedly, migrants' remittances,<sup>65</sup> state revenue, productivity, innovation and economic growth.<sup>66</sup>

## 1.2. SKILLS MISMATCH IN MIGRANT GROUPS

This study is interested in situations in which migrants are unable to put their educational qualifications and/or skills to use in their countries of residence, as well as mismatches in skills and levels of education (vertical mismatch) and/or fields of education (horizontal mismatch). As a consequence, migrants can end up

in positions that are lower-paid and lower-skilled than those they might have held in their countries of origin. Mismatches can also manifest in higher rates of unemployment or underemployment<sup>67</sup> of migrants compared to similarly qualified/skilled residents without a migratory background or foreign qualifications.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>55</sup> When no particular group is specified, the study refers to these migrant groups.

<sup>56</sup> European Commission, 'European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations - Skill', n.d., accessed 24 March 2025.

<sup>57</sup> European Commission, 'The future of European competitiveness Part B: In-depth analysis and recommendations', 2024, p. 258, accessed 20 January 2025.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 261; European Commission, 'Flash Eurobarometer FL537: SMEs and skills shortages', 2023, accessed 26 March 2025; European Commission, 'Flash Eurobarometer 529 - European Year of Skills: skills shortages, recruitment and retention strategies in small and medium-sized enterprises', 2023, accessed 26 March 2025; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), Weber, T. and Adăscăliței, D., 'Employment and labour markets: Company practices to tackle labour shortages', 2024, accessed 26 March 2025.

<sup>59</sup> Green transition refers to a process towards environmentally sustainable and fairer societies. It aims to address human-induced climate change emergencies, environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity, and to build resilience and mitigate inequalities in our societies; European Training Foundation (ETF), 'ETF Policy Briefing: Skilling for the Green Transition', 2022, p. 2, accessed 20 March 2025.

<sup>60</sup> World Bank Group, 'Skills and Workforce Development', n.d., accessed 20 January 2025; European Migration Network (EMN), Labour Migration in time of Labour Shortages – EMN study, forthcoming.

<sup>61</sup> European Commission, 'Commission sets out actions to tackle labour and skills shortages', 20 May 2024, accessed 26 March 2025; European Migration Network (EMN), Labour migration in times of labour shortages – EMN study, forthcoming.

<sup>62</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), 'The role of migrant skills in shaping tomorrow's workforce', 2025, accessed 11 April 2025.

<sup>63</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 'Quarterly Review of Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) - January 2025', 2025, accessed 26 March 2025.

<sup>64</sup> For example, an analysis of EU-LFS (2017-2022) across all EU Member States revealed that nearly half of tertiary-educated migrants in Europe are overqualified for their jobs and are almost twice as likely to be unemployed compared to natives; Infomigrants, 'Unrealised potential: The challenge of 'brain waste' among Europe's skilled migrants', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>65</sup> McDonald, T. and Valenzuela, M.R., 'The impact of skill mismatch among migrants on remittance behaviour', SEDAP research paper, 242, 2009, accessed 4 March 2025.

<sup>66</sup> McGuinness, S., Pouliakas, K. and Redmond, P., 'Skills mismatch: concepts, measurement and policy approaches', Journal of Economic Surveys, 32(2), 2018, p. 985, accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>67</sup> Lighthouse Reports, 'Brain Waste Methodology – Section 2: Data acquisition and analysis', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>68</sup> Infomigrants, 'Unrealised potential: The challenge of 'brain waste' among Europe's skilled migrants', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025.

### Skills mismatch differs across migrant groups and across countries

Skills mismatch is more prevalent among certain migrant groups,<sup>69</sup> depending on factors relating to the country of origin (e.g. education system),<sup>70</sup> reasons for and circumstances of migration (e.g. labour migration/humanitarian reasons/family reunification),<sup>71</sup> conditions in the receiving country (migration status/visa, duration of stay, challenges related to the portability and recognition of qualifications, further education opportunities), and individual circumstances (e.g. age, gender, language proficiency). The extent of skills mismatch varies considerably across EMN Member Countries.<sup>72</sup> This variation is the result of different migrant integration and immigration regimes, as well as varying labour market, employment, housing, and education structures (see section 3 on drivers of skills mismatch).<sup>73</sup>

### Skills matching lens of the study

Skills matching in this study refers to the extent to which an individual's **skills and qualifications** are utilised in the labour market (see section 2.1). The degree of skills match is identified by looking at the compatibility between the individuals' (actual) qualification/skills and the labour market's skills/qualification needs. A skills match refers to a situation of high compatibility, while a skills mismatch refers to an imbalance.

A mismatch between a worker and their job may occur either in terms of their **(educational) qualifications and skills (vertical mismatch)** or in their **fields of study (horizontal mismatch)**. Skills mismatch can refer both to formal educational qualification (overeducation/undereducation)<sup>74</sup> or to individuals' skills<sup>75</sup> (over-skilled/under-skilled). A mismatch of educational qualifications can be measured<sup>76</sup> by checking whether educational qualifications exceed job requirements. It is more difficult to measure skills, as these are multidimensional.<sup>77</sup> To operationalise skills and make them measurable, the OECD Survey on Adult Skills (PIAAC) collects and analyses adults' proficiency in key information-processing skills – literacy, numeracy and problem-solving.<sup>78</sup> In recent years,

the European Commission and EU Member States have worked to map national qualifications with skills from the classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) using artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>79</sup>

### Link between overqualification and underskilling

Higher rates of overqualification (overeducation) among foreign-born migrants compared to native-born people tend to co-exist with their relative under-skilling, i.e. migrants tend to have higher formal education than required for their job but can simultaneously be under-qualified in the skills the job requires. For instance, an individual who holds a university degree in medicine, which is not necessary for their job as an assistant at a GP office, is overeducated in terms of qualification/degree. At the same time the individual may lack the technical skills to deal with the medical equipment needed for their job or may not meet the required language skills, making them under-skilled. One reason for this co-existence of overqualification and under-skilling may be that migrants often acquire their work experience in different languages and labour markets.<sup>80</sup> Determining the level, value and usefulness of skills that migrants have acquired through work experience and training in their countries of origin may prove challenging for employers and state authorities (e.g. public employment services, PES). Understanding the correlation of these two forms of mismatch (skills and qualification) is important if skills mismatch is to be addressed effectively.<sup>81</sup>

### Potential of policy action

**Mainstream policy measures** can contribute to tackling skills mismatch in the overall population, including migrants.<sup>82</sup> For example:

- **Labour market information:** Enhancing the availability and accessibility of online job portals and career guidance services.<sup>83</sup>
- **Training and education:** Life-long learning policies<sup>84</sup> that subsidise retraining for suitable groups or

69 European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 'Quarterly Review of Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) – January 2025', 2025, pp. 16–19, accessed 26 March 2025; Broschinski, S. and Heidenreich, M., 'Overeducation among EU and third-country immigrants in Europe: The role of institutions, policies and culture', European Societies, 27(4), 2025, 784–814, accessed 20 January 2025; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/European Commission, 'Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in', 2023, accessed 26 March 2025; Nikolov, P., Salarpour G. L. and David, T., 'Skill downgrading among refugees and economic immigrants in Germany: Evidence from the Syrian Refugee Crisis', 2022, accessed 31 January 2025.

70 Broschinski, S. and Heidenreich, M., 'Overeducation among EU and third-country immigrants in Europe: The role of institutions, policies and culture', European Societies, 27(4), 2025, 784–814, accessed 20 January 2025; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/European Commission, 'Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in', 2023, accessed 26 March 2025.

71 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/European Commission, 'Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in', 2023, accessed 26 March 2025, p. 88.

72 Eurostat, 'Migrant integration statistics – over-qualification', 2025, accessed 20 March 2025.

73 Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, p. 11, accessed 10 January 2025; TRAILS – Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 – REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, pp. 44–58, accessed 4 February 2025.

74 McGuinness, S., Pouliakas, K. and Redmond, P., 'Skills mismatch: concept, measurement and policy approaches', Journal of Economic Surveys, 32(4), 2018, p. 985, accessed 27 January 2025.

75 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)', 2024, accessed 31 January 2025.

76 Erdogan, B., Bauer, T. and Karaeminogullari, A., 'Overqualification in the Workplace', Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Psychology, 2017, accessed 26 June 2025.

77 Lise, J. and Postel-Vinay, F., 'Multidimensional skills, sorting, and human capital accumulation', Lise, J. and Postel-Vinay, F., 'Multidimensional skills, sorting, and human capital accumulation', American Economic Review, 2020 110 (8): 2328–76, 10.1257/aer.2016.2002, accessed 21 January 2025.

78 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)', 2024, accessed 31 January 2025.

79 European Commission, 'ESCO skills mapping pilot [Artificial intelligence for ESCO maintenance process]', n.d., accessed 26 March 2025.

80 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Do adults have the skills they need to thrive in a changing world? Survey of adult skills 2023', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025.

81 Bonacci, M. and Mineo, S., 'Social integration dynamics for migrants: PIAAC to measure skill and qualification mismatch', Universal Journal of Educational Research, 6(5), 2018, p. 970, accessed 4 February 2025.

82 TRAILS – Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 – REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, p. 59ff, accessed 20 January 2025.

83 European Commission, 'PES Network adopts 7 recommendations to guide employment services assisting refugees and persons displaced from Ukraine', 2023, accessed 4 March 2025, last accessed 4 March 2025; TRAILS – Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 – REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, p. 63, accessed 20 January 2025.

84 TRAILS – Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 – REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, p. 66, accessed 20 January 2025.



incentivise on the job training,<sup>85</sup> and the alignment of the education system with the needs of the labour market by modernising curricula and teaching methods.<sup>86</sup>

- **Unemployment insurance regulations:** If designed appropriately, they allow workers to search for better fitting jobs or provide incentives to acquire new skills before entering the labour market.<sup>87</sup>
- **Housing policies** (more affordable housing): High housing prices may force workers to relocate or to constrain their employment to specific localities, with a negative impact on skills matching.<sup>88</sup>
- **Family policies:** Access to formal childcare and parental leave policies promote the labour market participation of women and can contribute to reducing (involuntary) part-time employment.<sup>89</sup>

Reports emphasise that labour market **integration policies and initiatives that target migrants** may help to reduce skills mismatch by **providing support to access suitable jobs**, providing financial support during early integration and job search, or facilitating the **recognition of foreign qualifications**.<sup>90</sup> A 2021 study emphasised that **integration policies** can impact skills matching indirectly by influencing who migrates to a country in the first place.<sup>91</sup> Sustainable labour market integration efforts that tackle skills mismatch are not a quick fix,<sup>92</sup> but, rather, take time to show effects<sup>93</sup> and involve multiple actors.<sup>94</sup> As the drivers for skills mismatch are found at different levels (individual, family, employer, state),<sup>95</sup> responses involve government agencies, educational institutions, academic credential assessment services, employers, unions, professional regulatory and licensing bodies, NGOs, and skilled migrants and their associations.<sup>96</sup> This study will look at skills matching efforts implemented by different stakeholders to provide a comprehensive policy analysis.



### 1.3. EU LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

Ensuring that individuals have the right skills for jobs is a key component of the **European Skills Agenda**,<sup>97</sup> which aims to strengthen skills and support people in their lifelong learning pathways.

Overqualification is addressed in the **Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027**.<sup>98</sup> In view of skills needs in the EU, it emphasises the important role of migrants in the economy and society, while underlining the difficulties migrants often encounter with the recognition of their skills and finding employment that matches their skills and qualifications. The action plan points to the gender dimension of skills mismatch, highlighting that migrant women are more likely to be overqualified for their jobs.<sup>99</sup> It suggests concrete measures for EU Member States, including the use of the EU Skills Profile Tool

for Third-Country Nationals<sup>100</sup> and measures to prevent and raise awareness of discrimination in the recruitment process and in the workplace.<sup>101</sup>

In 2022, the European Commission published a **Communication on attracting skills and talent to the EU**<sup>102</sup> proposing several legislative and operational policy initiatives.<sup>103</sup> In November 2023, the **European Commission's Skills and Talent Mobility Package**<sup>104</sup> included a proposal for a regulation establishing the EU Talent Pool<sup>105</sup> and measures to simplify and expedite the recognition of third-country qualifications and skills at national level.<sup>106</sup> Talent Partnerships and the EU Talent Pool aim to match skills needs in Member States with foreign talents to address skills shortages (see section 1).

85 Ibid., p. 67.

86 Ibid., p. 68.

87 Ibid., p. 69.

88 Ibid., p. 65.

89 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'International Migration Outlook 2023', 2023, pp. 145ff, accessed 26 March 2025.

90 Council of Europe, 'Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved', 2017, accessed 5 February 2025; International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Skills mismatch of natives and immigrants in Europe', 2017, accessed 5 February 2025.

91 Limitations to integration policy measures may hinder migrants finding work in line with their qualifications and lead to skills mismatch; Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; Aleksynska, M. and Tritah, A., 'Occupation-education mismatch of immigrant workers in Europe: Context and policies', 2011, accessed 4 February 2025.

92 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Do adults have the skills they need to thrive in a changing world? Survey of adult skills 2023', 2024, p. 128, accessed 4 February 2025.

93 Ibid.

94 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final, p. 11, accessed 4 February 2025.

95 Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, p. 12, accessed 10 January 2025.

96 International Organization for Migration (IOM), 'Crushed hopes: underemployment and deskilling among skilled migrant women', 2012, p. 171, accessed 10 January 2025.

97 European Commission, 'European Skills Agenda', n.d., accessed 31 January 2025.

98 The action plan refers to the overqualification rate defined as working in low- or medium-skilled occupations despite having a high level of education based on Eurostat data (see section 1); Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final, accessed 5 February 2025.

99 Ibid, p. 11.

100 The EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals was developed in 2017 as part of the Skills Agenda for Europe. It supports early profiling of the skills of refugees, migrants and citizens of non-EU countries who are staying in the EU and can be used for job matching; European Commission, 'EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals', 2017, accessed 16 January 2025.

101 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final, pp. 2, 12f, accessed 5 February 2025.

102 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on attracting skills and talent to the EU, COM(2022) 657 final, p. 6, accessed 11 July 2024.

103 The proposals are based on three pillars: 1. Legislative pillar (revision of Single Permit and Long-Term Residence Directive); 2. Operational pillar (introduction of Talent Partnerships and EU Talent Pool); 3. Forward-looking measures (long-term care workers, youth mobility, entrepreneurship).

104 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on skills and talent mobility, COM(2023) 715 final, accessed 11 July 2024.

105 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU talent pool [SEC(2023) 716 final] - [SWD(2023) 716 final] - [SWD(2023) 717 final] - [SWD(2023) 718 final], COM(2023) 716 final, accessed 16 January 2025.

106 Commission Recommendation of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, COM(2023) 7700 final, accessed 16 January 2025.

The **European Commission's Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals** refers to overqualification and stresses that it can lead to economic losses for the individuals themselves and for the EU.

It sets out measures which aim to address the complexity and burden of recognition systems for third-country nationals. The measures also seek to develop the capacity of national recognition authorities to simplify and expedite procedures and develop understanding of third-country qualifications and education and training systems. This will allow for recognition decisions to be taken quickly and with confidence to fill vacancies in EU shortage occupations, particularly in priority regulated professions. The recommendation encourages EU Member States to reduce the gap in the overqualification rate<sup>107</sup> between third-country nationals and nationals by 2030 and advocates for a 'skills first' approach in qualification procedures, prioritising the assessment of skills and experiences.<sup>108</sup>

In March 2024, the European Commission published an **Action plan to tackle labour and skills shortages**.<sup>109</sup> A key deliverable of the European Year of Skills,<sup>110</sup> it forms part of the EU's strategy to boost competitiveness and enhance its economic and social resilience.<sup>111</sup> The action plan takes stock of existing initiatives by the EU, Member States and social partners, announces new EU initiatives, and calls on Member States and social partners to take further action in five different areas.<sup>112</sup> It underlines the important role of third-country nationals in addressing domestic labour and skills shortages, reaffirms the 'skills first' approach, and calls for effective job matching and integration policies, as well as equal and fair working conditions for migrants. In March 2025, the European Commission launched the Union of Skills as an overarching strategy for quality education and skills policies to improve high quality education, training, and lifelong learning.<sup>113</sup> In January 2026, the European Commission published a Recommendation on attracting talent for innovation in the European Union.<sup>114</sup>

## 1.4. STUDY AIM AND SCOPE

The **core objective** of this study is to build knowledge on effective policy action for promoting skills matching and tackling the (vertical and horizontal) skills mismatch of non-EU/European Economic Area (EEA) migrants in EMN Member Countries. Skills shortages were covered by an EMN study and are not included here.<sup>115</sup>

To provide comprehensive insight, the study analyses data from the contribution of EMN National Contact Points, which are based on a combination of desk research and expert interviews.

The study has the following objectives:

- To provide an **overview of** how migrants in EMN Member Countries are affected by the phenomenon of **skills mismatch** and outline existing **differences across migrant groups** (selected categories of labour migrants from third countries, and third-country nationals that arrived via family reunification, BIP, BoTP), as available;
- To highlight the **underlying causes of skills mismatch among (different groups of) migrants** in EMN Member Countries and identify different **policies and instruments** in EMN Member Countries that specifically promote skills matching and address skills mismatch for (different groups of) migrants;

- To identify **challenges** in addressing skills mismatch/promoting skills matching;
- To highlight **lessons** for overcoming identified challenges and **good practices** in addressing skills mismatch/promoting skills matching.

The study identifies and analyses:

- **National trends and underlying causes** of skills mismatch among migrants (i.e. the prevalence of skills mismatch among different groups of migrants and individual and country-specific drivers).
- Major **policy developments and the current state of play of policies and instruments at national level** to counter skills mismatch/facilitate skills matching/address the drivers of skills mismatch.
- **Challenges, lessons and good practices** in tackling skills mismatch among third-country nationals, including specific groups such as female migrants or older migrants (see section 6).

The study examines key policies/initiatives in place as of June 2025 (study launch date) by national and sub-national public actors/institutions (including municipalities), actors/institutions acting on behalf of or in partnership with public authorities, and relevant initiatives taken by

107 The recommendation refers to the overqualification rate defined as working in low or medium skilled occupations despite having a high level of education based on Eurostat data as presented in Section 1. European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals', COM(2023) 7700 final, p. 2, accessed 16 January 2025.

108 European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals', COM(2023) 7700 final, p. 10, 18, accessed 16 January 2025.

109 European Commission, 'Commission sets out actions to tackle labour and skills shortages', 20 March 2024, accessed 11 July 2024.

110 The European Year of Skills began on 9 May 2023 and covered a period of 12 months during which a number of different actions and initiatives were launched and promoted. Its main objectives were (1) promoting investment in training and upskilling, enabling people to stay in their jobs or find new ones, (2) ensuring that skills match the needs of employers by closely cooperating with social partners and companies, (3) matching people's aspirations and skillsets with opportunities on the job market, especially for the green and digital transitions and economic recovery, and (4) attracting people from outside the EU with the skills needed; European Commission, 'European Year of Skills', n.d., accessed 16 January 2025.

111 European Commission, 'A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness', 2024, accessed 16 January 2025.

112 These areas are: (1) Supporting the activation of underrepresented people in the labour market; (2) Providing support for skills development, training and education; (3) Improving working conditions in certain sectors; (4) Improving fair intra-EU mobility for workers and learners; (5) Attracting talent from outside the EU; European Commission, 'Commission sets out actions to tackle labour and skills shortages', 20 March 2024, accessed 16 January 2025.

113 European Commission, 'Union of skills, Investing in people for a competitive European Union', accessed on 26 June 2025.

114 European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation of 29 January 2026 on attracting talent for innovation', C(2026) 462 final, accessed 10 February 2026.

115 European Migration Network (EMN) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Labour migration in times of labour shortages – EMN study', accessed 29 December 2025.

interest organisations, employers' associations, inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and NGOs.

The statistical data used for the study are based on the latest available (study) reports and data (EU-Labour Force Survey (LFS), OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC), Eurostat).<sup>116</sup>

Given its focus on skills mismatch in the labour market, the study looks particularly at migrants working in jobs that do not match their qualification and skill profiles. These are (legally residing) **labour migrants**, i.e. third-country nationals moving to an EMN Member Country for the purpose of employment, but excluding circular, short-time work (e.g. seasonal workers and other workers falling under schemes of circular migration, posted workers, and workers hired out as labour<sup>117</sup>). It covers **third-country nationals arriving via family reunification, BIP and BoTP**. Although the study focuses on third-country nationals, key data sources (e.g. OECD PIAAC) do not provide information based on citizenship, but, rather, on country of birth.

**Applicants for international protection** are not included here as their access to the labour market varies in EMN Member Countries and different restrictions/waiting periods apply.<sup>118</sup> Seasonal workers and other forms of temporary workers (e.g. for harvesting) and posting of workers and hiring out of labour are also outside the scope. International students are excluded, as their primary motivation for moving to EMN Member Countries is the pursuit of higher education degrees, and not employment.<sup>119</sup>

This study is the first EMN output dedicated to the topic of skills mismatch. It complements existing outputs on labour migration and (labour market) integration, such as the EMN-OECD *Study on labour migration in times of labour shortages*, the EMN-OECD *inform on Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine*,<sup>120</sup> the EMN *Study on integration of migrant women*,<sup>121</sup> and the EMN *inform on Recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals: an overview of procedures and challenges in relation to regulated professions*, which will be published in 2026.



## 1.5. KEY QUESTIONS

In light of existing evidence that skills mismatch disproportionately affects migrants (see section 2), the study answers the following primary research questions: How and why are different groups of migrants affected by skills mismatch? How do policies in EMN Member Countries respond to this?

To answer these questions, the following sub-questions were asked:

- Based on available data (Eurostat, EU-LFS, OECD PIAAC) how, if at all, are (different groups of) migrants affected by skills mismatch in EMN Member Countries?
- What are the main underlying causes for skills mismatch among (different groups of) migrants in your country?
- What policies and initiatives are in place to counter skills mismatch and/or promote skills matching of (different groups of) migrants?
- What challenges exist in implementing policies to counter skills mismatch/facilitate skills matching for (different groups of) migrants?
- What are the lessons and good practices in overcoming these challenges, tackling skills mismatch, and facilitating skills matching?

<sup>116</sup> Eurostat, 'Overqualification by citizenship', 2024, accessed 5 February 2025; European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2023; for OECD data, see section 2.

<sup>117</sup> International hiring out of labour refers to a situation in which an employer wishes to employ foreign labour for one or more periods of less than 183 days and therefore recruits the foreign personnel through an intermediary established abroad who purports to be the employer and hires the personnel out to the user; Bourguignon, J., 'International hiring-out of labour - a comprehensive overview', *Jura Falconis*, 2017, pp. 103-129.

<sup>118</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), *Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market – EMN study*, 2023, <https://www.emn.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/emn-study-labour-market-integration-2023.pdf> accessed 24 March 2025; for OECD data, see section 2.

<sup>119</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), *Attracting and retaining international students in the EU – EMN study*, 2019, p. 6, accessed 11 July 2024.

<sup>120</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), *Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine – joint EMN-OECD inform*, May 2024, accessed 9 January 2025.

<sup>121</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), *Integration of migrant women – EMN study*, 2022, accessed 16 January 2025.



## 2. MEASURING SKILLS MISMATCH



### 2.1. INDICATORS OF OVEREDUCATION AND SKILLS MISMATCH

In the context of labour market integration, skills mismatch refers to the gap between the skills individuals possess and those required in the jobs they hold. Narrowing this gap through timely credential recognition, targeted training, and effective employment services is essential to enhance productivity and support workers' well-being. The effective design and targeting of such policies rely on the accurate measurement of skills mismatch and a nuanced understanding of its patterns, drivers, and distribution across population groups. There is no single measure of skills mismatch; rather, several approaches are generally adopted, each capturing different dimensions of the phenomenon. These are, most notably, vertical skills mismatch (when an individual's skills or education level is higher (overqualification) or lower (underqualification) than that required by their occupation) and horizontal skills mismatch (when their field of education or (vocational) training does not relate to the occupation in which they work). Vertical skills mismatch can refer to over/under-qualification in terms of education (over/undereducation) and skills (over/under-skilling). The figures in this section are drawn from OECD data and thus also cover OECD member countries outside the EMN.

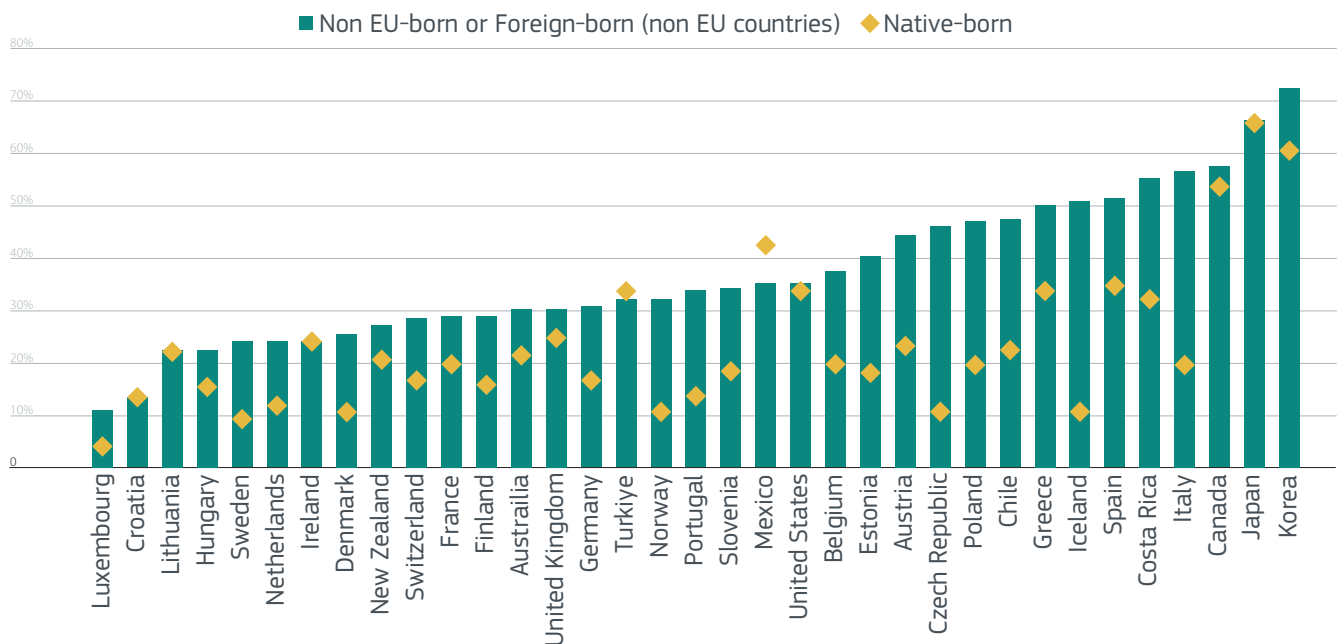
#### 2.1.1. Overeducation

Overeducation occurs when a worker has higher educational qualifications than those typically required for their job.<sup>122</sup> It is usually assessed by comparing an individual's highest level of completed education to the formal qualification level required in their occupation.

Figure 1 presents the share of tertiary-educated individuals employed in jobs that require low or medium levels of qualifications, disaggregated by place of birth: non-EU born (or foreign born) and EU-born (native born). Across OECD and EMN Member Countries, foreign-born workers consistently display higher overeducation rates than their native-born peers. However, disparities depend on the country of birth. In nearly all countries, highly educated non-EU-born individuals experience the highest rates of overeducation, with shares exceeding 50% in several cases, most notably in Italy, Spain and Greece. However, while overeducation is also prevalent among native-born people in Spain and Greece, in Italy overeducation is significantly higher among the foreign population and among non-EU-born migrants. Migrants born within the EU also experience elevated rates of overeducation, but fare better than their native-born peers, EU-born migrants fair relatively well in most countries – the exceptions being Italy, Norway, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden.

<sup>122</sup> Using classification schemes such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

**Figure 1: Share of highly educated workers aged 15–64 working in a low- or medium-skilled job, 2023 or latest available year.**



Notes: Overqualification rate is the share of highly educated workers (with tertiary education, ISCED levels 5–8) in a job classified as low- or medium-skilled (ISCO levels 4–9). Countries are sorted in ascending order of the share of overqualified non-EU-born or foreign-born (non-EU countries) workers. Source: EU-LFS 2023; OECD, 'Settling in' 2023 for non-EU countries.

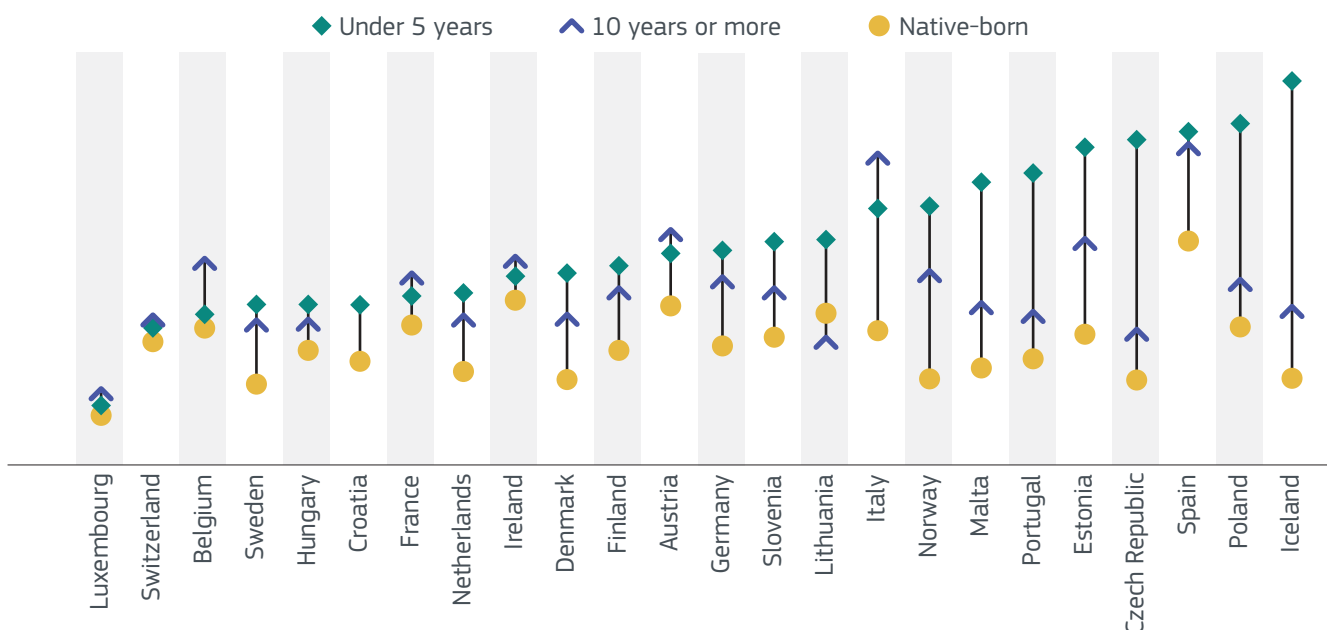
Overqualification among foreign-born workers tends to decline with the number of years spent in the host country, reflecting gradual improvements in labour market integration. Upon arrival, many migrants, particularly those from outside the EU, face substantial barriers, such as non-recognition of foreign qualifications, a lack of local networks, limited local work experience, and language difficulties, which often lead to employment in roles below their qualification level (see section 3). Over time, these barriers may lessen as migrants acquire host-country specific skills, build professional networks, and gain familiarity with local labour market practices. Nevertheless, overqualification rates for long-settled migrants often remain higher than those of native-born workers, indicating that structural challenges persist even after many years of residence. Addressing this long-term skills mismatch requires sustained policy efforts, including early intervention through pre-arrival information, streamlined qualification recognition, and targeted support for bridging and career progression.

Figure 2 presents overqualification rates across selected European countries in 2023, disaggregated by length of stay: recent arrivals (less than five years), long-settled

migrants (10+ years), and native-born. With few exceptions, recently arrived migrants (under five years) exhibit the highest rates of overqualification, with shares more than double those of native-born workers in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Malta, Portugal, Poland and Sweden. However, these data are not longitudinal and do not permit the impact of length of stay to be disentangled from cohort effects.

While overqualification rates tend to be lower among migrants with longer durations of stay (10+ years), they remain well above native-born levels in most countries, indicating the extent to which barriers to full skills utilisation persist. It is important to note, however, that these data are not longitudinal and do not permit the impact of length of stay to be disentangled from cohort effects. As a result, lower overqualification levels among those with longer durations of stay may also reflect differences in the characteristics of migrants that arrived 10+ years ago. In Luxembourg, Spain and Switzerland, the higher use of qualifications among those with 10 years residence is minimal, while long-settled migrants in Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland and Italy see even higher rates of overqualification than those who have arrived more recently.

**Figure 2: Share of highly educated workers aged 15-64 working in a low- or medium-skilled job, by length of stay, 2023**



Notes: Overqualification rate is the share of highly educated workers (with tertiary education, ISCED levels 5-8) in a job classified as low- or medium-skilled (ISCO levels 4-9). These data are not longitudinal and do not permit the impact of length of stay to be disentangled from cohort effects. As a result, lower overqualification levels among those with longer durations of stay may also reflect differences in the characteristics of migrants that arrived 10+ years ago. Countries are sorted in ascending order of the share of overqualified recent arrivals (less than five years).

Source: EU-LFS 2023.

Although labour market integration tends to improve over time, convergence between the labour market outcomes of foreign-born and native-born is slow in some countries. This points to the need for early and sustained policy interventions.

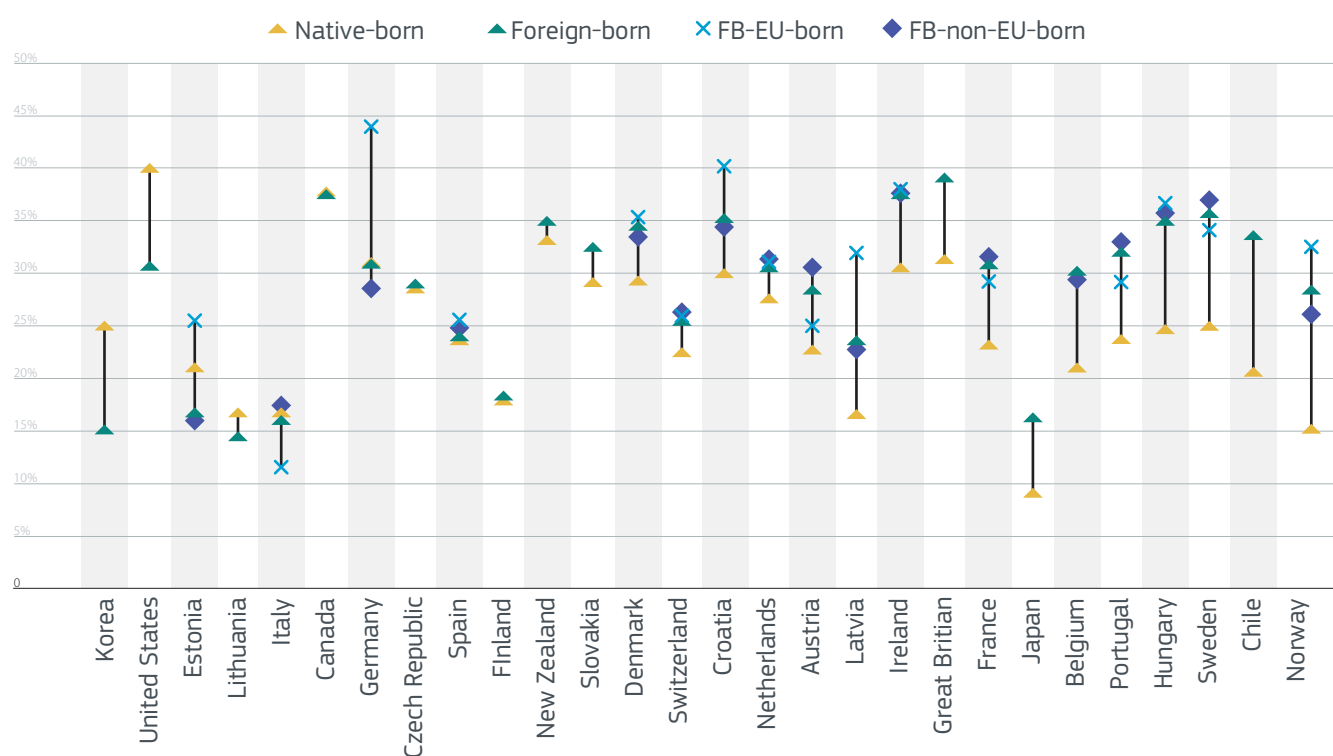
Underutilisation of educational qualifications extends to those individuals whose skills remain unused due to barriers to labour market participation. This includes highly educated individuals who are unemployed and those who are inactive, having become discouraged and exited the labour force, or whose time is spent in unpaid care responsibilities. This broader view of unutilised potential highlights the structural barriers beyond recognition of qualifications, such as a lack of affordable childcare and insufficient targeted support for labour market entry.

### 2.1.2. Over/underskilling

Unlike overeducation, over/under-skilling is based directly on the discrepancy between the skills a worker holds – irrespective of formal education – and those that are used or needed on the job. This distinction is particularly relevant for migrants, for whom measures of skills mismatch based on educational qualifications alone can be plagued by issues of comparability, including differences in the standards and recognition of foreign qualifications. Based on the assumption that workers are

best placed to report on their own skills and the requirements of their own job, alongside traditional measures of overeducation, the most recent OECD PIAAC (2023) asked respondents, “Overall, which of the following statements best describes your skills in relation to what is required to do your job?” Those who answered “Some of my skills are lower than what is required by my job and need to be further developed” were classified as under-skilled in their job, while those answering “My skills are higher than required by my job” were classified as over-skilled. Respondents who answered “My skills are matched to what is required by my job” were considered well-matched. Across the majority of OECD countries where PIAAC data were available, foreign-born workers – both those born in the EU and outside the EU – reported higher levels of over-skilling than native-born workers, although the gap varies substantially (see Figure 3). While the highest subjective skills mismatch rates among foreign-born workers were found in countries with larger migrant populations (e.g. Germany), the disparity in subjective skills mismatch between foreign-born and native-born workers was largest in Belgium, France, Hungary and Portugal. These countries tend to be characterised by delayed or complex recognition procedures, labour market segmentation limiting the scope of upward mobility, or a lack of integration infrastructure.

**Figure 3: Subjective over-skilling workers aged 16-64 who report skills higher than those required for their job, 2023**



Notes: Countries are sorted in ascending order by the size of the gap between native-born and foreign-born respondents.

Source: OECD PIAAC, 2023.

This subjective assessment of over-skilling may be subject to some bias, notably perception biases such as under/over-confidence among respondents. To overcome this potential bias, PIAAC data enable a measure of over-skilling that combines information on self-reported mismatch with quantitative information on skills proficiency.<sup>123</sup> According to this methodology, workers are classified as mismatched if their skills proficiency scores fall outside the 25<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentile scores of workers in the same occupation (based on 1-digit International Standard Classification of Occupations codes, ISCO codes) who perceive themselves to be well matched. Respondents whose scores fall outside the bounds are classified as over/under-skilled, irrespective of self-reported mismatch. According to this measure, the disparity between the proportion of foreign-born and native-born who are over-skilled for their occupation disappears. This is consistent with the findings of a previous OECD study *Skills on the Move*,<sup>124</sup> that implies that skills – rather than country of origin in and of itself – are decisive in securing jobs that match proficiency. Even though outcomes may vary by country of origin, the primary driver of the over-skilling gap is the distribution of skills, rather than the country of origin itself.

### 2.1.3. Drivers of overeducation

While the pattern of overeducation among foreign-born workers prevails across OECD countries, there

is significant variation in its prevalence, depending on various migrant-, employer- and country-specific drivers. While disentangling these various factors is far from straightforward, they can strongly influence the probability of overeducation.

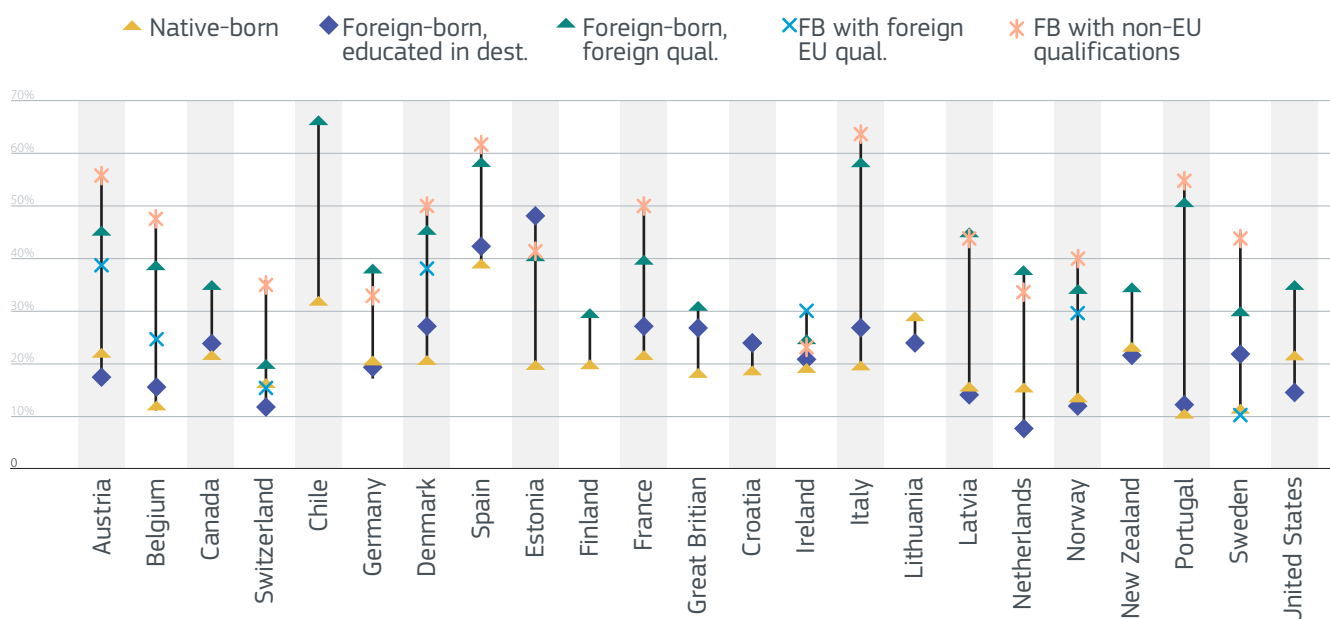
#### Transferability and credential recognition

Many foreign qualifications are not fully recognised in the host country, especially for regulated professions (see section 3). As a result, migrants often take jobs below their qualification level. Among foreign diploma holders, the country where their qualification was obtained also matters. Results from the 2023 OECD PIAAC show that disaggregating by the place of qualification among tertiary-educated foreign-born workers reveals considerable differences in the overeducation rates of those whose highest qualification is from another EU country as opposed to a non-EU country (see Figure 4). Those with non-EU qualifications tend to show much higher rates of overeducation, while those with a diploma from another EU country tend to be much closer to native-born and locally educated foreign-born tertiary-educated workers. The consistently higher overeducation rates among those with foreign degrees highlight ongoing challenges in the recognition and valuation of international qualifications. Figure 5 shows that only a minority of migrants apply to have their qualifications recognised.

<sup>123</sup> Skills-based measures of mismatch are complicated by the fact that skills proficiency and skills use are calculated by using structurally different types of information: indicators of skills proficiency are based on cognitive tests (such as those captured in PIAAC data), whereas indicators of skills use exploit survey questions on the frequency with which specific tasks are carried out.

<sup>124</sup> OECD 2018 “*Skills on the Move*”, 2018, accessed 18 November 2025.

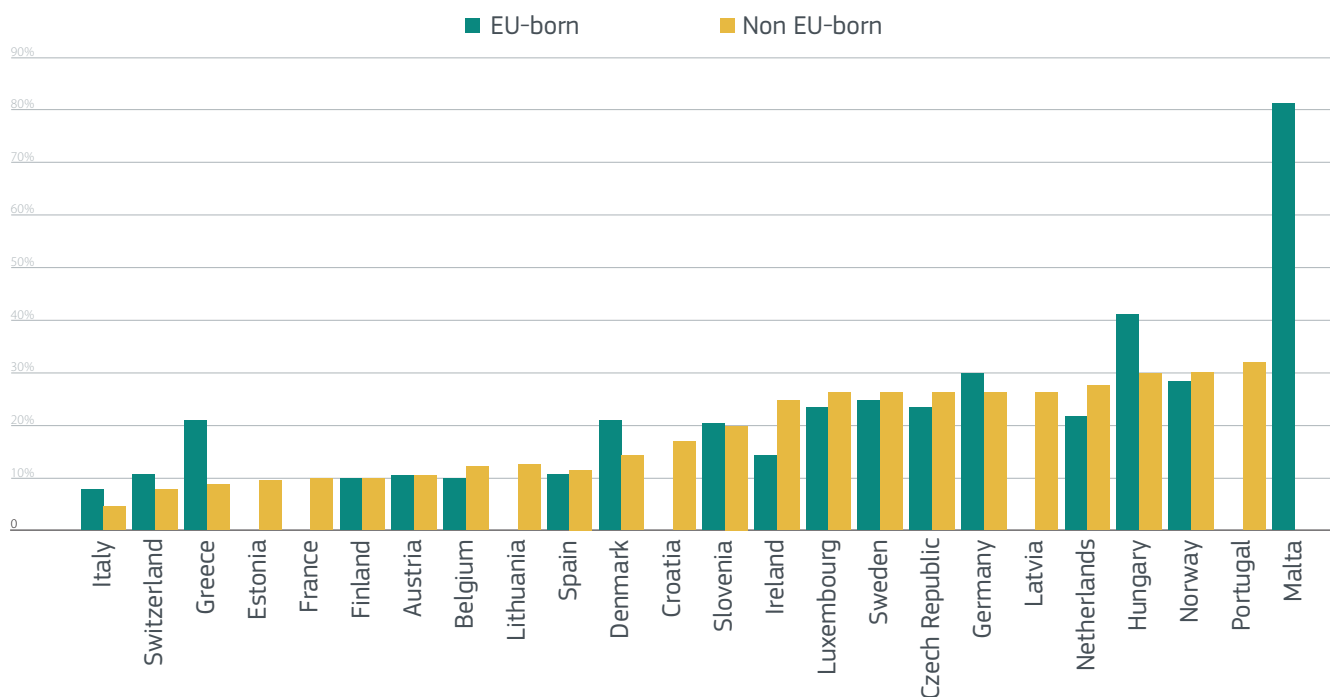
**Figure 4: Share of highly educated workers aged 16-64 in a low- or medium-skilled job, by place of qualification, 2023**



Notes: Overqualification rate is the share of the highly educated workers (with tertiary education, ISCED levels 5-8) in a job classified as low- or medium-skilled (ISCO levels 4-9). Place of qualification is based on country where highest educational degree was obtained. Countries are sorted in ascending alphabetical order.

Source: OECD PIAAC, 2023.

**Figure 5: Share of foreign-born workers aged 15-64 educated abroad who applied and had their qualifications recognised, 2021**



Notes: Countries are sorted in ascending order of non-EU born recognition of qualifications.

Source: EU-LFS, Ad-hoc module (AHM), 2021.

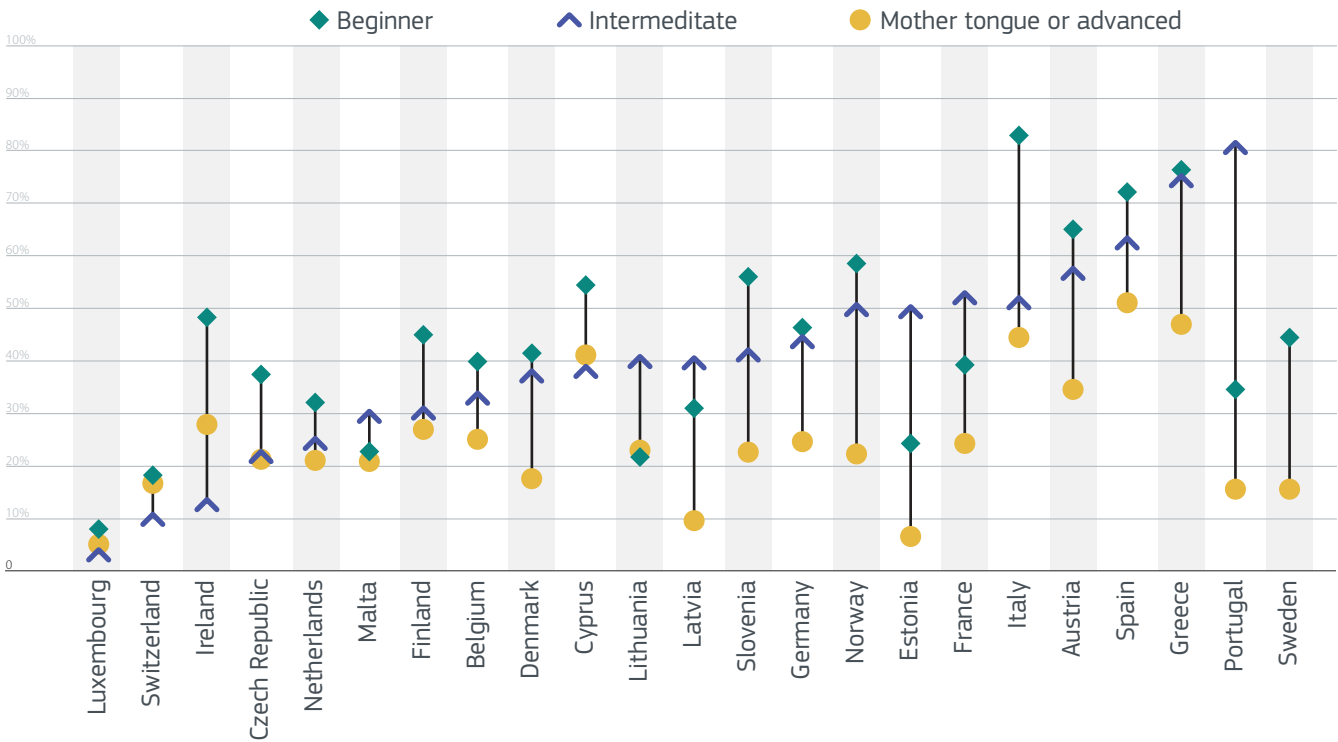


### Language

Insufficient command of the host-country language can hinder access to jobs commensurate with migrants' education and skills (see section 3). Figure 6 highlights the extent to which host-country language proficiency shapes the incidence of overeducation. In the majority of countries shown, overeducation rates decline markedly with improved language skills. Individuals with beginner-level proficiency experience the highest rates of overeducation, exceeding 70% in countries such as Italy, Spain, and Greece, while those with mother tongue

or advanced proficiency report substantially lower rates. The gaps are particularly pronounced in countries with linguistically demanding labour markets or where access to skilled jobs is more tightly linked to language requirements. For example, in Nordic countries, the overeducation rate among those with intermediate language skills is more than double that of those with advanced language proficiency. By contrast, countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands exhibit relatively smaller disparities, suggesting more inclusive labour market structures or greater use of widely spoken languages such as English and French.

**Figure 6: Share of foreign-born highly educated workers aged 16-64 in a low- or medium-skilled job, by language proficiency, 2021**



Notes: Share of highly educated corresponds to those with tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8). Countries are sorted in ascending order of beginner-level language proficiency. Foreign-born refers to both those born inside the EU, and those born outside the EU.  
Source: EU-LFS AHM, 2021.

# 3. DRIVERS OF SKILLS MISMATCH



## 3.1. MIGRANT-SPECIFIC DRIVERS OF SKILLS MISMATCH

This section analyses the main migrant-specific drivers of skills mismatch based on responses from EMN Member Countries. The analysis reveals limited language proficiency to be the most important/pertinent driver. Additional drivers include gender and age-related factors, limited knowledge of the labour market, discrimination, length of stay, career gaps, socioeconomic pressures, and psychological factors.

### 3.1.1. Language proficiency

**Language proficiency** is identified as a main driver and a key barrier to finding employment commensurate with qualifications across almost all responding EMN Member Countries (see section 2.1.3).<sup>125</sup> A lack of knowledge of the language(s) of the country of residence increases the likelihood for skills mismatch (i.e. overeducation), as appropriate qualifications often cannot compensate for language barriers (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2).<sup>126</sup>

Bulgaria and Hungary do not explicitly identify language proficiency as a driver. Although Bulgaria identifies a general lack of language knowledge as an issue, there are insufficient data to draw concrete conclusions. Hungary notes that third-country nationals holding a residence permit for the purpose of employment for a fixed duration can proceed without language skills in many roles, thus language is not generally viewed as a significant barrier.

Overall, limited host-country language skills are a direct driver of skills mismatch and push third-country nationals into lower-skilled jobs or unrelated occupations (horizontal mismatch). In Austria, OECD data<sup>127</sup> show that 69% of foreign-born workers with beginner-level German work in jobs for which they are overqualified; this falls to 35% for those fluent in German.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, in France, 44% with poor French have roles below their qualification, compared to 31% among fluent speakers. In multilingual contexts such as Belgium and Luxembourg, all workers, including third-country nationals, must have a certain

minimum level of proficiency in multiple official languages.

Language proficiency is also an indirect driver, as it can limit access to certain professions or sectors. Most regulated professions have strict language requirements, which can lead to long delays in accessing the professions and to skills mismatches in the meantime.<sup>129</sup> For example, in the Irish health sector, a high level of English is required for certain roles, preventing early arrivals from putting their skills to full use. Frequently, migrants address this issue by taking on roles that are below their skill level (e.g. dental assistant instead of dentist; carer instead of medical practitioner) until their English language skills improve. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, strict national language requirements are a major cause of skills mismatch, preventing many highly qualified migrants (e.g. teachers, doctors) from working in their professions. In Lithuania, certified Lithuanian proficiency (A2–B2) is legally mandated for most jobs, and the declining prevalence of the Russian language has further reinforced language as the main barrier to qualified employment. In Estonia, language requirements are particularly stringent in the healthcare and education sectors, where professionals such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers and other specialists must demonstrate B2 to C1-level proficiency in Estonian to ensure patient safety and effective communication in the classroom.

### 3.1.2. Age- and gender-related drivers

Previous studies found that gender and age impact skills mismatch.<sup>130</sup>

**Age at arrival** is reported to play a role in shaping migrants' integration and skills-matching outcomes in 14 EMN Member Countries.<sup>131</sup> Older arrivals can face particular barriers, such as slower language acquisition, difficulties adapting to new technologies or work systems, and

125 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

126 Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, pp. 1-13, accessed 10 January 2025.

127 Data provided by OECD on 1 September 2025. These data are based on the EU-LFS AHM 2021 for people aged 15-64.

128 Data provided by OECD on 1 September 2025. These data are based on the EU-LFS AHM 2021 for people aged 15-64.

129 AT, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SK.

130 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Skills mismatch of natives and immigrants in Europe', 2017, accessed 4 February 2025; Visintin, S., Tijdens, K. and van Klaveren, M., 'Skill mismatch among migrant workers: evidence from a large multi-country dataset', IZA Journal of Migration, 21(4), 2015; Birgier, D. and Bar-Haim, E., 'Language used at home and educational-occupational mismatch of migrants by gender', Social Indicators Research, 170, 2023, p. 265; Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, pp. 1-13, accessed 10 January 2025.

131 BE, CY, EE, EL, ES, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK.

lower confidence in pursuing retraining. This may result in their taking up low-skilled jobs. Among nationals, the 18-34 years category is the most affected by skills mismatch, compared to the 35-64 age bracket for third-country nationals.<sup>132</sup>

Age brackets vary across EMN Member Countries. Belgium and the Netherlands note that those above 45 years of age may have more trouble integrating into the labour market. In France, those aged 50 and over tend to be more affected by skills mismatch compared to other age groups. Italy notes that those over 35 encounter more obstacles in relation to language or digital reskilling. Younger arrivals (particularly those who arrive at school age, according to Luxembourg) tend to achieve better linguistic, educational, and labour market integration. In Sweden, research shows that young people who arrived from the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s have integrated well, especially those who were younger than seven at the time of their arrival. After a stay of 25 years, they exhibit few differences from native-born Swedes.<sup>133</sup>

**Gender-related drivers** are a key factor shaping skills mismatch across most responding EMN Member Countries.<sup>134</sup> Women are generally more affected by skills mismatch than men, which is often attributed to care and family duties, as well as less favourable opportunities for their career development.

Traditional gender norms and unequal care responsibilities disproportionately constrain migrant women's labour market participation and access to suitable employment. This leads to persistent gender gaps in labour market participation, with women more likely to work part-time, accept jobs below their qualifications, or remain outside the workforce. Austria, Germany, France, and the Slovak Republic report that traditional gender norms and childcare responsibilities may prevent third-country national women from pursuing language training or qualification recognition. This is even more visible in the case of single mothers. Similarly, Cyprus, France, Ireland and Spain highlight that limited access to affordable childcare (see section 3.2.4.) and the absence of support networks force many third-country national women with children to accept low-skilled jobs despite holding higher qualifications. Qualified migrant women often face a double disadvantage due to both to their gender and migrant status (see section 3.2.1). That can exacerbate<sup>135</sup> skills mismatch for migrant women, for example when they are tied to a spousal residence permit or experience higher childcare constraints compared to native-born women.<sup>136</sup> Migrant

women are recognised as the group most vulnerable to overqualification.<sup>137</sup> Childcare responsibilities, and unstable job conditions that hinder labour market re-entry after parental leave may lead this group to experience a significant downgrade compared to native women and men (see section 2.1.1). Women BIP are seldom in programmes for professional integration, as these require a high level of availability that may not be compatible with their family obligations.<sup>138</sup>

### 3.1.3. Limited knowledge of the labour market/employers

#### Limited knowledge of the labour market

(e.g. opportunities for jobs and networks) is a key driver for skills mismatch.<sup>139</sup> This affects third-country nationals (particularly those newly arrived) across the majority of responding EMN Member Countries.<sup>140</sup> Barriers exist where migrants are unable to access relevant information<sup>141</sup> due to limited language knowledge, low awareness of job search channels and employer expectations, as well as the inability to access professional networks that mediate information flows. Ten EMN Member Countries<sup>142</sup> note the importance of a variety of networks to access information or jobs. For example, the Czech Republic reports that some groups of migrants rely on information from relatives or acquaintances. Finland and Sweden highlight the issue of unfamiliarity with local recruitment practices and the dominance of hidden job markets, which disproportionately disadvantage those lacking such networks. In some EMN Member Countries, network-based recruitment amplifies inequalities, as migrants' limited social capital may reduce their access to certain information or jobs that might not be advertised.<sup>143</sup> Seven EMN Member Countries note that asymmetries in information and knowledge are exacerbated by administrative complexity, difficulties in accessing digital services, and limited institutional outreach.<sup>144</sup> The Slovak Republic notes that insufficiency of relevant information increases the vulnerability of third-country nationals in the labour market.

### 3.1.4. Length of stay, career gaps, and other drivers

The **length of stay** is an important driver across EMN Member Countries.<sup>145</sup> Skills mismatch tends to decrease over time, but the speed and extent of improvement varies significantly, depending on factors such as language acquisition, recognition of qualifications, and legal status.<sup>146</sup>

132 Eurostat, 'Migrant integration statistics – overqualification', n.d., accessed 4 February 2025.

133 Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), Liljeberg, L., Roman, S. and Åslund, O., 'The long-term integration of refugee children', Working paper, 12, 2023, accessed 25 February 2026.

134 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

135 Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; Riaño, Y., 'Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and non-migrants', Population Space and Place, Special Issue Paper, 2021, pp. 1-13, accessed 10 January 2025.

136 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'International Migration Outlook 2023', 2023, pp. 145ff, accessed 26 March 2025.

137 Akgüç, M. and Parasnis, J., 'Occupation-education mismatch of immigrant women in Europe', Social Indicators Research, 170, 2023, p. 75; Eurostat, 'Migrant integration statistics – overqualification', n.d., accessed 4 February 2025.

138 Bilong, S. and Salin, F., 'L'emploi des personnes réfugiées. Des trajectoires professionnelles aux politiques de recrutement des entreprises (The employment of refugees. From career paths to corporate recruitment policies)', Ifri Studies, 2022, accessed 4 April 2026.

139 TRAILS - Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 - REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, accessed 4 February 2025; Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; European Network of Public Employment Services, 'Labour market integration of displaced people and refugees', 2023, accessed 4 March 2025.

140 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

141 AT, BE, CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

142 AT, BE, CZ, ES, FI, IE, LU, NL, SE, SK.

143 DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, NL, PL, SE.

144 CY, FR, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE.

145 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

146 BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SK.

Generally, newly arrived third-country nationals often accept low-skilled ‘survival jobs’ due to financial pressure and unfamiliarity with the host labour market.<sup>147</sup> Longer residence allows for better language proficiency, social networks, and familiarity with local job systems. Seven EMN Member Countries report that this gradually improves job matching.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, **career gaps** were named a key driver across 14 EMN Member Countries.<sup>149</sup> Finland notes that career interruptions are often penalised by employers, who generally view career gaps negatively. Migration journeys, long asylum, residence or recognition of qualification procedures, and care obligations contribute to such gaps. Ten EMN Member Countries report that this can lead to downgrading of job level, position, or pay grade, as well as difficulties in maintaining skills up to date.<sup>150</sup>

Nine EMN Member Countries<sup>151</sup> mentioned **other driver** such as socioeconomic pressures and psychological factors. The individual family and financial situation may also play a role, as migrants who need to support their families (either in the country of origin or the receiving country) are likely to prioritise quick labour market entry over a job that matches their skills and/or qualifications.<sup>152</sup> Psychological factors include reduced self-confidence after failed attempts and long periods of search and are a barrier to finding skill-matched jobs.<sup>153</sup> Trauma inflicted in the country of origin and/or during the journey and other mental health issues may hamper labour market integration. Luxembourg notes that trauma from gender-based (domestic) violence, or gender-based discrimination (in countries of origin, transit, and destination) can have a strong impact both on whether (migrant) women are mismatched in terms of their skills and also on their overall career trajectory.



## 3.2. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC DRIVERS OF SKILLS MISMATCH

Migration and integration policies, labour market and employer-specific drivers, education-related drivers such as differences in education systems, the recognition of qualifications and strict requirements for regulated professions emerge as the main country-specific drivers. Additional drivers include housing and social assistance and childcare availability, as well as employers’ limited experience of managing diversity and inclusion.

### 3.2.1. Migration laws, policies and practices, and lack of integration policies and practices

Most responding EMN Member Countries report migration and asylum regulations and migrant integration policies (see section 4), or their fragmentation, as drivers.<sup>154</sup>

EMN Member Countries report that **policies in relation to residence and work permits** can act as a major driver of skills mismatch.<sup>155</sup> Restrictions on work permits might lead to third-country nationals being tied to one employer,<sup>156</sup> one sector/occupation,<sup>157</sup> or one region, placing barriers on overall job mobility (e.g. Spain). EMN research on the labour market integration of BoTP from Ukraine indicated that uncertainty about the duration of their stay – based on the temporality of their legal status – contributes to skills mismatch, as early employment in low-skilled jobs is prioritised (by state authorities and/or BoTP themselves) over employment corresponding to their

qualifications.<sup>158</sup> **Migration status** is another important factor, with studies showing that migrants with a humanitarian status tend to be particularly affected by skills mismatch. As refugees’ trajectories are marked by seeking shelter and protection, they are constrained in choosing their country of destination, reducing the likelihood that their prior educational qualifications and professional experience corresponds to the labour market conditions and needs in the receiving country. They may lack preparation for the labour market (e.g. documentation of qualifications) and its requirements (e.g. language skills).<sup>159</sup> Similar observations can be made for family migrants, who also have weak attachments to the labour market of the host country upon arrival.<sup>160</sup>

Over half of EMN Member Countries report **a lack or fragmentation of integration services** as drivers.<sup>161</sup> In Cyprus and Slovenia, support remains NGO-driven and fragmented. In Belgium, institutional fragmentation across federal and regional levels linked to a complex multi-level governance structure create additional barriers and sustain mismatches. Challenges include insufficient language training, lack of tailored counselling, and geographical variations in the delivery of integration programmes. Sweden reports that case officers at the PES are each responsible for a very high number of job-seekers and a significantly lower number would facilitate their work. Lithuania and Poland note that inadequate integration policy with an emphasis on ‘cheap’ labour can contribute to skills mismatch (see section 4).

147 AT, BE, CY, EE, EL, FR, IE, LT, SK.

148 DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, MT, SE.

149 BE, CY, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK.

150 BE, CY, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, SK.

151 AT, BE, EL, HU, LT, LU, NL, PL, SK.

152 Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., ‘Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources’, Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132.

153 AT, BE.

154 AT, BE, CY, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

155 AT, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, SE, SK.

156 AT, LT, SK.

157 FI, IE.

158 European Migration Network (EMN), *Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine* - joint EMN-OECD inform, 2024, [www.emn.at](http://www.emn.at), accessed 9 January 2025; European Network of Public Employment Services, ‘Labour market integration of displaced people and refugees’, 2023, accessed 4 March 2025.

159 Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, Flinders University of South Australia, Gamble, H., Cebulla, A. and Tan, G., ‘Migrants skills mismatch analysis of Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) data’, 2023, accessed 4 March 2025.

160 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/European Commission, ‘Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in’, 2023, accessed 26 March 2025.

161 BE, CY, DE (partly), EL, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.



**Gendered aspects** emerge because women are overrepresented in regulated professions (e.g. healthcare, education, social work) where formal recognition is mandatory.<sup>162</sup> Nine EMN Member Countries<sup>163</sup> report that women face hurdles in accessing integration and language services. In Ireland, women were historically overrepresented among Stamp 3 holders, an immigration permission for dependents that provides no access to work or training. Recent policy changes in 2024 and 2025 have addressed this issue, as spouses, de facto partners and minor children (above 16 years of age) of employment permit holders are now being registered on a Stamp 1G permission that grants them an automatic right to work.

### 3.2.2. Economic, labour market, and employer-specific conditions

**Economic and labour market conditions** are a key driver of skills mismatch across EMN Member Countries. **Economic volatility** plays a role, with third-country nationals particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, facing higher unemployment and greater job instability during recessions.<sup>164</sup> Luxembourgish stakeholders remark that the current situation of acute labour shortages and recession may on the one hand lead to more openness to hiring third-country nationals but on the other hand may potentially result in skills mismatch if employers are forced to hire migrants quickly, even though they might not fully match the job requirements. A recession can also lead employers to look for motivated and reliable people, regardless of their migration status.

Five EMN Member Countries<sup>165</sup> report the impact of **labour market structure**. Belgium's rigid labour market (e.g. high employer costs, strong employee protection, wage structures) and the high value placed on local certification constrain entry into skilled professions. Austria and Germany share similar challenges due to their dual training systems (see Box 1) and a strong emphasis on sector-specific qualifications, making it difficult for migrants to transfer skills or gain recognition without formal qualifications earned in the country of arrival.

Ten EMN Member Countries<sup>166</sup> report **sectoral demand** as a driver, noting that economic structures, employer practices, and related policies channel migrants into sectors with persistent labour shortages (e.g. construction, hospitality, logistics, manufacturing). These jobs offer quick entry but few advancement opportunities, entrenching vertical mismatches and low mobility. Austria, Belgium, Germany and Finland point to **regional differences**, with labour shortages often located outside major urban

centres, while migrants concentrate in cities where opportunities do not necessarily align with their qualifications.

**Employer-specific determinants** refer to recruitment practices, on-the-job adjustments (e.g. promotions), and opportunities for employee skills development, as well as employers' limited experience with managing diversity and inclusion.<sup>167</sup> While these drivers have an impact on all workers, they can impact migrant workers differently. Fourteen EMN Member Countries<sup>168</sup> highlight employer-specific conditions. Challenges such as **company size and institutional capacity** impact the ability to employ third-country nationals.<sup>169</sup> For example, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often lack capacity, resources, or experience to recruit and integrate migrants and SMEs also rely more strongly on informal networks for recruitment, which disadvantages third-country nationals (see section 3.1). Lack of **employer awareness of administrative complexity** is another challenge, as many employers lack knowledge of migration and labour access rules, leading to hesitation or misinformation about employment regulations for third-country nationals. Together with complex administrative procedures (work permits, recognition systems), these can deter employers from hiring migrants.<sup>170</sup> In the Slovak Republic, third-country national workers contracted via temporary employment agencies are less protected from major layoffs than core/permanent employees.

Existing research emphasises the impact of **discrimination**, stereotypes and negative public attitudes towards migrants on skills mismatch.<sup>171</sup> Public discrimination and stereotyping against (certain groups of) migrants emerged as a relevant driver for 20 EMN Member Countries.<sup>172</sup> The main issues are rooted in **structural discrimination**,<sup>173</sup> with migrants facing unequal treatment in recruitment, scepticism towards foreign qualifications, and the undervaluing of work experience gained abroad. Several EMN Member Countries report biases due to 'foreign-sounding' names or non-European backgrounds, implying that these individuals receive fewer interview invitations regardless of their qualifications.<sup>174</sup> This discrimination is intersectional, with categories such as gender, religion, and race mutually reinforcing exposure to discrimination, notably for women wearing headscarves.<sup>175</sup> Seven EMN Member Countries report that negative stereotypes and xenophobia can reinforce ethnic segmentation of the labour market, with media and public discourse perpetuating stereotypes.<sup>176</sup> Five EMN Member Countries<sup>177</sup> report that a lack of diversity and inclusion policies or weak implementation of such policies exacerbates these challenges.

162 AT, DE, FR, IE, IT, LT, NL, SE, SK.

163 CY, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, SE, SI, SK.

164 BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

165 AT, BE, DE, FR, LU.

166 AT, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FR, LT, LV, PL, SK.

167 TRAILS - Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 - REVIEW I – Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, pp. 44-58, accessed 4 February 2025.

168 AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, PT, SK.

169 AT, BE, DE, ES, IE, IT, LU.

170 BE, DE, ES, FR, IE, LU, SK.

171 Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', Gender, Work and Organisation, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; Sparreboom, T. and Tarvid, A., 'Skills mismatch of natives and immigrants in Europe', 2017, p. 13, accessed 22 January 2025; Aleksynska, M. and Tritah, A., 'Occupation-education mismatch of immigrant workers in Europe: Context and policies', 2011, accessed 4 February 2025.

172 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

173 AT, BE, DE, FI, FR, IE, LU, NL, SE.

174 BE, FI, IE, NL, SE.

175 AT, CY, FI, FR, LU, PL, PT.

176 CZ, EE, ES, LT, LU, PL, PT.

177 BE, ES, LU, NL, SK.

### 3.2.3. Drivers related to education and recognition of qualifications

#### Lack of documentation

Almost all EMN Member Countries report **the lack of documentation** from countries of origin as a driver of skills mismatch. For BIP and forcibly displaced migrants, in particular, limited or missing documentation, diplomas or employment records impede recognition of prior learning.<sup>178</sup> Finland notes that it can be difficult to assess the **reliability of documentation**, as it can be purchased by a person not actually possessing the required skills. Ireland, Lithuania and Spain report that in some cases, institutions in countries of origin cannot issue or verify credentials due to conflicts or a lack of administrative infrastructure (e.g. Afghanistan). Spain points out that technological and regulatory deficits due to a lack of digital records or certification structures can further impede verification. According to the Slovak Republic, BIP often have years of experience in a certain profession in their country of origin and may have the necessary abilities and skills to perform a similar profession in the Slovak Republic but never acquired formal education from their country of origin.

The issue of missing documentation is especially acute in **regulated professions**, notably healthcare, where strict evidentiary requirements and language skills are often the norm.<sup>179</sup> In some cases, EMN Member Countries<sup>180</sup> have implemented **adaptive recognition measures**. Estonia provides qualification assessments even with partial documentation. In Latvia, the recognition procedure of professional qualifications for regulated professions does not require the competent authority to request all the documents usually necessary in the case of Ukrainian civilians.

#### Disparities in education systems and recognition of qualifications

**Disparities in education systems** were frequently cited by EMN Member Countries as a driver of skills mismatch.<sup>181</sup> The main differences are variations in curricula, quality standards, and a strong vocational focus in receiving countries that is not present in countries of origin, making assessments complex and inconsistent. Estonia highlights that Ukrainian nurses and midwives cannot continue working in their professions in Estonia because their home country training programmes are shorter and less comprehensive than EU standards. Similarly, Italy and Luxembourg report the need for

migrants to familiarise themselves with local (technical and safety) norms, tools, and compliance requirements (in addition to their existing foreign qualifications) if they are to pursue their desired profession. Receiving countries with strong vocational education and training traditions report particular issues, as there is a lack of these elements in many qualifications from third countries (see Box 1). According to France, the labour market's general emphasis on formal degrees over professional experience can cause skills mismatch and lead to deskilling. Similarly, Luxembourg notes that cases when third-country nationals have informally acquired technical job-related skills and experience in their countries of origin without a formal education, can pose an employment challenge and drive skills mismatch.

Another major driver is the bureaucracy surrounding **policies on recognition of qualifications**, especially for regulated professions (see section 2.1).<sup>182</sup> The literature suggests that recognition of qualifications acquired abroad may be hindered by a lack of transferability of qualifications, for example due to differences in study programmes/education systems between the country of origin and the country of residence, the kinds of technologies used in the country of origin and country of destination, specific (legal) criteria for practising specific professions (e.g. need for requalification through additional studies/training), and high costs associated with recognition and requalification procedures. However, less institutional (non-policy) dynamics can also be at play.<sup>183</sup> Simply not knowing how to evaluate qualifications acquired abroad and compare them to the credentials of workers trained in the destination country might manifest in risk aversity by employers, leading to downgrading of migrants' credentials.<sup>184</sup> How easily skills can be transferred between countries' systems can therefore impact the scale of skills mismatch. To simplify these processes, Austria has begun to implement 'pre-check-registers' in cooperation with third countries.<sup>185</sup> Countries in need of workers have also used Skills Mobility Partnerships to prepare workers abroad and enhance the matching of (future) migrant workers, as well as establishing schools abroad that teach in line with the curricula and skills needed.<sup>186</sup>

Four EMN Member Countries<sup>187</sup> highlight recognition of qualifications as employer-specific. Ireland reports that employers appear to prefer Irish work experience and qualifications, even where no formal barriers to recognition exist. Belgium reports that regional disparities in recognition systems slow skills utilisation.

178 CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

179 FR, IE, LT, LU, SK.

180 EE, LT, LV, NL, SE.

181 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

182 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, SK.

183 Sanroma, E., Ramos, R. and Simon, H., 'Portability of human capital and immigrant overeducation in Spain', *Population Research and Policy Review*, 34(2), 2015, pp. 223-241, in Perry, A., 'Are over-qualified immigrants mismatched according to their actual skills? An international comparison of labor market placement in OECD countries', 2017, p. 7, accessed 4 February 2025.

184 Bolzani, D., Crivellaro, F. and Grimaldi, R., 'Highly skilled, yet invisible. The potential of migrant women with a STEMM background in Italy between intersectional barriers and resources', *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 18(6), 2021, p. 2132; Sparreboom, T. and Tarvid, A., 'Skills mismatch of natives and immigrants in Europe', 2017, p. 13, accessed 22 January 2025; Perry, A., 'Are over-qualified immigrants mismatched according to their actual skills? An international comparison of labour market placement in OECD countries', 2017, p. 6, accessed 4 February 2025.

185 International Organization for Migration (IOM), Hadj Abdou, L. and Ebner, P., 'Labour migration in times of labour shortages in Austria', 2024, p. 37, accessed 4 April 2026.

186 Ibid.

187 AT, FR, IE, IT.



### Box 1: Germany's dual vocational education system

Germany has a strong vocational educational focus, which can affect the transferability of qualifications and skills. For example, it can lead to implicit down-skilling of third-country nationals who completed a university education in their country of origin for a job qualification that is attained through vocational training in Germany (e.g. nursing). In Germany, formal certification is common after training for vocational jobs, which in some cases may not be formally certified in countries of origin (e.g. construction, beauty and hygiene). Austria has a similarly dual vocational education system.

#### Skills requirements for specific professions and regulated professions

##### Skills requirements for specific professions

between country of origin and receiving country differ significantly in EMN Member Countries.<sup>188</sup> Formal recognition, safety compliance, and language standards are often most stringent for healthcare (see Box 2), teaching, engineering, logistics, and construction.<sup>189</sup> Italy and Slovenia highlight that healthcare and engineering professions need to adhere to language standards and often involve formal licensing procedures. Malta and the Slovak Republic note that medical and technical credentials from abroad are frequently not accepted without additional certification exams or additional training. Luxembourg reports that while third-country nationals may have practical skills, they often lack familiarity with local norms, tools, and compliance requirements.

### Box 2: Recognition of nurses' qualifications in Sweden

In Sweden, nurses trained abroad must have their degrees assessed by the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and complete a complementary programme before practising. Many lack full documentation of clinical hours or diploma transcripts, often due to conflict or institutional gaps in their home countries. Swedish language proficiency at C1 level is also required, alongside mastery of medical terminology, local patient safety standards, and digital record systems (e.g. electronic patient journals). More autonomy and independent decision-making is expected in the Swedish nursing profession compared to many countries of origin, all creating a need for requalification and adaptation processes.

Belgium and Finland state that the level of a country's technological development can have a significant impact on skill requirements in information technology (IT)-related tasks. In Ireland, some evidence suggests that third-country nationals with skills in unregulated

vocational trades (e.g. hairdressers, builders, carpenters, seamstresses, nail technicians) are less likely to experience skills mismatch and can integrate more easily, as these roles rely on practical skills and frequently require lower levels of English proficiency. By contrast, regulated vocational trades (e.g. electricians) continue to be associated with skills mismatch because workers must undergo the full recognition procedure before labour market entry, similar to other skilled professions.

Most EMN Member Countries report that complex recognition processes lead to low recognition rates for **regulated professions, particularly** in healthcare, teaching, engineering, law, and skilled trades, driving skills mismatch.<sup>190</sup> This can create structural barriers for those who are trained outside the country and lead to compensatory training or, in some cases, retraining. Estonia and Lithuania note that EU-level harmonised systems for medicine and nursing in general facilitate automatic recognition within the EU but require compensatory training or exams for third-country applicants whose training was completed outside the EU.

Germany, Finland, Ireland and the Slovak Republic report that third-country nationals often have to navigate lengthy, costly, and fragmented processes for recognition or practice rights for regulated professions. In Ireland, during the seven/eight months it takes to complete a conversion course for medical doctors (four/five months for nurses), qualified third-country nationals may end up working in the same sector but well below their skill level, for instance as healthcare assistants, leading to a vertical skills mismatch. Other migrants may choose to abandon the recognition process altogether due to financial, bureaucratic and time barriers. In Luxembourg, the number of highly regulated professions can create barriers for third-country nationals. Migrants have reported to supporting NGOs that they find it **challenging to fulfil the prerequisites to access professional training** (e.g. language and maths requirements), which are only offered through public bodies and not by private entities. To be eligible to register for such professional training courses, applicants are required to have already contributed to the social security system for 12 months. In addition, some migrants may have worked in professions in their countries of origin, such as the police or military, professions in which they are not permitted to work in Luxembourg, as they are reserved for Luxembourgish citizens.

### 3.2.4. Structure of housing markets, social assistance and childcare

Housing policies and relocation costs can impact skills mismatch, as they may be a determinant for employees' ability to find affordable housing close to suitable work opportunities.<sup>191</sup> Most EMN Member Countries report challenges with **housing**,<sup>192</sup> mainly related to affordability,<sup>193</sup> lack of availability,<sup>194</sup> and regional imbalances.<sup>195</sup> Overcrowding in cities, concentration in specific regions, and a lack of housing in rural labour-demand areas

<sup>188</sup> BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LV, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>189</sup> DE, ES, FI, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>190</sup> BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK.

<sup>191</sup> TRAILS - Enabling data analytics for actions tackling skills shortages & mismatch, 'D1.1 - REVIEW I - Theoretical and empirical questions for tackling skills shortages and mismatch in Europe', 2024, p. 44-58, accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>192</sup> AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>193</sup> AT, CY, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>194</sup> LU

<sup>195</sup> AT, BE, IE.

contribute to geographical immobility and underemployment. In Austria and Ireland, individuals accommodated within the international protection system often face hurdles when accommodation conflicts with employment opportunities. This might lead to a choice between maintaining state-provided housing in isolated areas or facing the high costs and limited availability of the private rental market to remain near a workplace.

**Regional disparities** in housing supply and labour demand can lead to migrants clustering in areas with limited job opportunities or being unable to move to regions with higher labour demand.<sup>196</sup> In the Netherlands, BIP are placed where housing exists, rather than where jobs can be found, and relocation hinders stable careers.

**Institutional features of housing markets** such as small rental sectors, bureaucratic barriers, or restrictive asylum accommodation have the potential to reduce migrants' labour mobility.<sup>197</sup> Spain notes that **discrimination** by landlords can create restrictions in accessing housing, while Luxembourg reports that high rental prices and low availability of (affordable) housing are often problematic for migrants.

Ten EMN Member Countries<sup>198</sup> identify eligibility for **social assistance** and administrative complexity hampering access to services as drivers. **Restricted or conditional access** to welfare, benefits and public services, based on legal status, duration of stay, or residence permits, can lead to low-skilled or unstable jobs, as some third-country nationals might not be eligible to receive income support during job searches or training periods.<sup>199</sup> In Finland, the complexity of social security rules and the fear of losing benefits when increasing working hours create

incentive traps that discourage migrants from seeking better-matched employment.

Childcare availability is often limited due to **high costs** and **eligibility conditions** (e.g. linked to residence status or employment) and thus emerges as an important driver of skills mismatch (see section 3.1.2.).<sup>200</sup> This prevents migrant women, in particular, from entering or advancing in the labour market, participating in language or training courses, or taking jobs aligned with their qualifications. In Austria, the shortage of childcare places, especially for children under three, prevents many women, including those displaced from Ukraine, from taking up employment or training that matches their skills. Similarly in Luxembourg, limited childcare access and complex application procedures make it difficult for migrant mothers to enter the labour market, or force them to forgo the language courses needed to access qualified employment. Hungary highlights that at the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, childcare access was a challenge for some BoTP, prompting the PES to support the use of childcare institutions.

There can be a gendered care burden in the absence of extended family or flexible childcare systems. In Ireland, migrant women reportedly accept flexible, lower-skilled jobs (e.g. in the healthcare sector) that do not match their own professional background to balance childcare duties more effectively. This dynamic is exacerbated where the high costs and long waiting lists of private care providers make full-time employment unfeasible. In Spain, the lack of flexible childcare services means that mothers cannot take evening or shift-based jobs common in available sectors, reinforcing gendered employment gaps.

196 AT, BE, FR, LV, NL, SE, SK.

197 CY, ES, FR, IE, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE.

198 BE, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, LU, SE, SK.

199 ES, FR, IT, LT, LU ( student status is not compatible with receiving a social inclusion income; Article 3 k) of the [Law of 28 July 2018](#)), SE.

200 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, SK.

# 4. NATIONAL POLICIES PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION BY ADDRESSING SKILLS (MIS)MATCH

This section presents an overview of the main actors responsible for addressing skills (mis)matching in EMN Member Countries, as well as existing national policies and instruments to address the issue. It also presents some examples of initiatives implemented by subnational

authorities and non-state actors (e.g. international organisations, NGOs) to tackle skills mismatch among migrants and outlines the relevant policy debates in EMN Member Countries.



## 4.1. KEY ACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADDRESSING SKILLS (MIS)MATCH

EMN Member Countries report multiple actors as responsible for addressing skills mismatch/promoting skills matching.

**Figure 7: presents an overview of the main actors involved in addressing skills (mis)match and their main responsibilities.**

| Key actors involved in addressing skills mismatch            |                                                                          |                                                                                                             |                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ministries for Employment and Social Affairs (including PES) | Labour market activation                                                 | Recognition of prior learning                                                                               | Development and implementation of labour market and labour integration policies |
| Ministries for Education and Culture                         | Overall responsibility for the organisation of courses and training      |                                                                                                             | Coordination of the recognition of foreign qualifications                       |
| Asylum and migration authorities                             | Supports the recognition of qualifications                               | Planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes for the social integration of third-country nationals | On-the-job language classes                                                     |
| Education and training institutions and agencies             | Vocational and entrepreneurial training                                  | Apprenticeships                                                                                             | Language courses                                                                |
| Local municipal actors                                       | Assessment of skills                                                     | Civic and labour orientation courses                                                                        | Language training                                                               |
| Social partners                                              | Services and supports to migrants to access jobs that match their skills |                                                                                                             |                                                                                 |
| CSOs, IGOs & NGOs                                            | Services and supports to migrants to access jobs that match their skills |                                                                                                             |                                                                                 |
| Countering skills mismatch and promoting skills matching     |                                                                          | Supporting the social integration of third-country nationals                                                | Providing or coordinating language and adult training                           |

*Notes: Actors' key responsibilities are sorted into the areas of (a) countering skills mismatch and promoting skills matching, such as recognising prior learning or foreign qualifications (b) supporting social integration of third-country nationals through civic and labour orientation courses and (c) providing language and adult training, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurial training. Most actors' responsibilities span several areas and responsibilities often cannot be slotted fully into a single area.*

In most responding EMN Member Countries, the **Ministries for Employment and/or Social Affairs**<sup>201</sup> are primary actors responsible for countering skills mismatch and promoting skills matching for migrants. Some of their main responsibilities include the development and implementation of labour market and labour integration<sup>202</sup> policies and legislation, labour market activation, recognition of prior learning,<sup>203</sup> and funding labour integration projects. Ministries of Employment are also responsible for steering the general functioning of PES, which play a key role in addressing skills (mis) match.<sup>204</sup> These services are generally responsible for the operational implementation of labour integration policies, for example through providing information, counselling, support with job search, skills profiling, matching skills with opportunities in the job market, and/or identifying training opportunities.

The **Ministries for Education and/or Culture**<sup>205</sup> are also key actors for addressing skills mismatch, primarily due to their role in coordinating the recognition of foreign qualifications (see Box 3), and their overall responsibility for the organisation of courses and training.

### Box 3: Key actors in the recognition of foreign qualifications

The types of actors involved in the recognition of qualifications vary considerably between countries, depending on the sector and whether the recognition applies to regulated or unregulated professions.

The Ministry for Education is often in charge of the overall coordination of recognition procedures.<sup>206</sup> The European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) are the main actors responsible for providing information and recognising diplomas and training completed abroad.<sup>207</sup>

Sector-specific regulatory bodies (e.g. national health authorities, national agencies for education) and professional chambers also play a role in the recognition of qualifications.<sup>208</sup>

NGOs and local authorities provide support in the recognition procedure, primarily through information and guidance.

matching.<sup>209</sup> In France, Skills Operators (OPCO)<sup>210</sup> contribute to combating skills mismatch among migrants by funding language and pre-qualification training courses and supporting work-study programmes. They also help companies to manage diversity and participate in projects targeting professional integration of migrants. In Sweden, the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is tasked with ensuring that programmes for higher vocational education meet the labour market's needs for a qualified workforce. Luxembourg has a number of public and private entities that organise adult training and professional development for the entire population, including migrants.

In several EMN Member Countries, **asylum and migration authorities** have a role in addressing skills (mis) matching.<sup>211</sup> In Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is responsible for providing on-the-job language classes to third-country nationals. In Greece, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (through the Social Integration Directorate) is responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring programmes for the social integration of third-country nationals (including skills management and skills matching). In Slovenia, the Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants coordinates integration programmes, activities and initial integration measures. In France, the Ministry of the Interior (through the General Directorate for Foreign nationals in France) steers policies for the integration of third-country nationals into the labour market and supports the recognition of their qualifications via interministerial projects. The French Inter-Ministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (DIAIR) also contributes to coordinating actions to support access to employment for BIP by acting as an intermediary between companies and qualified refugees.

Municipalities are often the first contact point for newcomers seeking to access integration support and labour opportunities. Nine EMN Member Countries highlight the important role of **local and municipal actors** in promoting skills.<sup>212</sup> Some of the services and supports commonly provided by these actors include the assessment of skills, support with job referrals, civic and labour orientation courses, and language training (see section 4.3).

**Educational institutions and agencies** involved in the delivery or funding of language and adult training courses (e.g. vocational and entrepreneurial training, apprenticeships) can play a role in promoting skills

201 AT, BE (regional ministries), CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SI, SK.

202 In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living together and Reception is responsible for labour market integration.

203 In Luxembourg and the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education is responsible for recognition of prior learning.

204 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

205 CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU (higher education), LV, MT, NL, PT, SI, SK.

206 DE, EE, FI, FR, IT, LU, LV, NL, SI, SK.

207 BE, EE, FR, IE, LV, SK.

208 DE, FI, IT, LV, SE, SK.

209 BE, CY, DE, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, PT, SE, SK.

210 OPCO are state-approved structures that support companies with skills management and training. They play a strategic role in supporting companies to define their employment and skills needs and improve access to training for their employees.

211 DE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, NL, SI, SK.

212 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LV, SI.



In several EMN Member Countries, **social partners** (e.g. chambers of labour, chambers of employees, chambers of commerce, trade unions),<sup>213</sup> **civil society**

**organisations (CSOs), IGOs and NGOs**<sup>214</sup> offer services and support to migrants to access jobs that match their skills (see section 4.3).



## 4.2. POLICY DEBATES ON SKILLS (MIS)MATCH AMONG MIGRANTS

Most responding EMN Member Countries report holding policy debates around skills (mis)matching of migrants between January 2023 and June 2025.<sup>215</sup> In some cases, the policy discussions did not address the issue of skills (mis)matching directly, but, rather, focused on issues related to the labour integration of migrants more broadly (e.g. general employment situation of migrants, challenges in accessing the labour market, needs for support services),<sup>216</sup> labour shortages and/or labour migration needs.<sup>217</sup>

Existing **language requirements** to access the labour market and overcome language barriers are some of the main topics of policy discussion in 10 EMN Member Countries.<sup>218</sup> Estonia has discussed how strict language requirements can delay or even prevent the use of migrants' professional skills, leading to horizontal mismatches. Slovenia's policy debates (and subsequent legal changes) have focused on improving access to Slovenian language learning. In Lithuania, debates have focused on the possible impact of stricter language rules for customer-facing work on migrants, who might be pushed into back-office or lower-skilled positions until they reach the required language level (see Box 4).

### Box 4: Lithuania – policy debates on the underutilisation of migrants' human capital

The underutilisation of migrants' human capital and how this constrains growth is at the centre of policy debates around skills (mis)matching in Lithuania. In 2022–2024, public discussions intensified around Ukrainian doctors and teachers working in low-skilled jobs due to licensing and language requirements. In 2024, Central Bank monitoring highlighted distinct integration profiles across migrant groups, showing that many are concentrated in medium- and low-skilled occupations despite holding higher qualifications. This widespread overqualification and skills underuse is often rooted in language barriers, difficulties with qualification recognition, and limited pathways into regulated professions. Policymakers and researchers have framed the consequences in terms of lower wages and slower career progression for migrants, and, at the macro level, lost productivity and slower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for the economy. Experts and CSOs have repeatedly warned that this kind of underutilisation is not sustainable: without better recognition of qualifications, more intensive language training, and targeted integration into high-skilled professions, both the

individuals and the Lithuanian economy will suffer long-term losses.

Another point of policy debate in connection to skills mismatch is the **(non) recognition of foreign qualifications and the complexity of recognition procedures** as a barrier to access jobs that match migrants' skills.<sup>219</sup> Six EMN Member Countries have discussed how to improve the recognition of qualifications, particularly in the health sector.<sup>220</sup> In the Netherlands, the parliament has discussed how to simplify lengthy procedures for vetting healthcare workers. Belgium has discussed how to use alternative routes such as validation of prior learning to overcome challenges in the recognition of foreign diplomas. Slovenia has debated the need to speed up recognition and more 'skills first' approaches so foreign qualifications and experience can be used in its labour market. Spain has also discussed skills development and the recognition of qualifications for migrants (see Box 5).

### Box 5: Spain - EUROCITIES mutual learning meeting on skills development and the recognition of qualifications for migrants

In June 2023, Spain held a EUROCITIES<sup>221</sup> mutual learning meeting on skills development and the recognition of qualifications for migrants.

During the two-day conference, participants learned about Madrid's approach to skills development for migrants and people with a migration background. They discussed cooperation between different levels of governance on skilling initiatives and the recognition of existing qualifications. Participants also provided ideas for future actions that could help to improve effective and adequate labour market integration, according to migrants' skills profiles and aspirations. The event fostered exchanges, updates, peer learning and policy transfer between cities on effective approaches to tackling skills mismatch and unequal labour market access for migrants and people with a migration background. They also developed recommendations for the EU to include an urban dimension in skilling initiatives for migrants and the recognition of qualifications for third-country nationals.

Several countries have held policy debates on how to address **labour shortages in specific sectors through**

213 AT, BE, DE, EE, FR, IT, LU, SE, SI.

214 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, SE, SI, SK.

215 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, MT, NL, LT, LV, SE, SI, SK.

216 AT, CY, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IE, LV, NL.

217 EE, EL, FI, FR, SK.

218 AT, BE, EE, EL, FR, LT, MT, NL, SI, SK.

219 AT, BE, CZ, EL, ES, FI, FR, LT, NL, SI, SK.

220 BE, EE, FR, LT, NL.

221 Eurocities is a network of over 200 European cities representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries, from within and outside the European Union.



**the activation of migrants' labour potential.**<sup>222</sup> The Netherlands has discussed how to activate the labour potential of migrant groups for specific shortages within the Dutch labour market (e.g. teaching, healthcare). Lithuania has discussed how to align migrant labour inflows with its skill needs to reduce skills mismatch, steer third-country nationals into occupations with verified demand, and fund re/upskilling programmes where needed. Slovenia has debated matching migrants' skills to address shortages in healthcare, construction and IT.

Austria, Belgium and Slovenia have debated the '**skills first**' versus '**employment first**' approaches. Austria is giving increasing weight to the 'employment first' approach for the labour market integration of migrants, while Slovenia has discussed enhancing 'skills first' approaches to best use foreign qualifications and experience in its labour market.

Belgium, the Czech Republic and France have all held policy debates on **access to adult learning and (re) training** to address skills mismatch.

Other examples of policy discussions include the provision of support to early integration as a way to reduce skills mismatch,<sup>223</sup> lack of access to childcare,<sup>224</sup> introduction of work permit reforms,<sup>225</sup> the need to improve data collection on migrant employment and skills profiles,<sup>226</sup> and how to enhance access to municipal support services.<sup>227</sup>

Six EMN Member Countries<sup>228</sup> have had specific policy debates around skills (mis)matches among **Ukrainian BoTP**, who often hold high educational qualifications. In Lithuania, debates have included the persistent underutilisation of human capital, especially among Ukrainians, and the economic losses associated with qualified professionals working in low-skilled roles.



### 4.3. NATIONAL POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS ADDRESSING SKILLS (MIS)MATCH

Virtually all EMN Member Countries have national policies and instruments (mainstreamed or targeted) to counter skills mismatch and/or promote skills matching for migrants.<sup>229</sup> The majority of these policies target job-seekers,<sup>230</sup> with less than one-third targeting employers<sup>231</sup> and/or migrants who are already employed.<sup>232</sup> Several measures target professional bodies or institutions (e.g. recognition bodies, universities, other training institutions).

Most of the policies and instruments either target all third-country nationals<sup>233</sup> or are mainstreamed policies or instruments<sup>234</sup> accessible to third-country nationals under the same conditions as the local population and EU citizens. A small number specifically target BoTP,<sup>235</sup>

BIP<sup>236</sup> and/or migrant women.<sup>237</sup> Five EMN Member Countries report policies and instruments targeting migrants in the pre-departure phase.<sup>238</sup> The policies and instruments described address drivers of both vertical and horizontal skills mismatch. Some are general ALMPs or migration integration policies that foresee the provision of support to migrants to (re)access the labour market and indirectly address skills (mis)match, while others address specific drivers of skills mismatch (e.g. difficulties with recognition of qualifications, language barriers, orientation gaps). Figure 2 presents an overview of the main thematic areas covered by the policies and instruments addressing skill (mis)matches.

222 BE, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, LT, NL, SI, SK.

223 SI.

224 BE, NL.

225 SE.

226 CZ.

227 BE.

228 AT, DE, EE, LT, LV, SK.

229 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

230 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, MT, PL, SE, SI, SK.

231 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, MT, PL, SE, SI, SK.

232 AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

233 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

234 AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, NL, SE, SK.

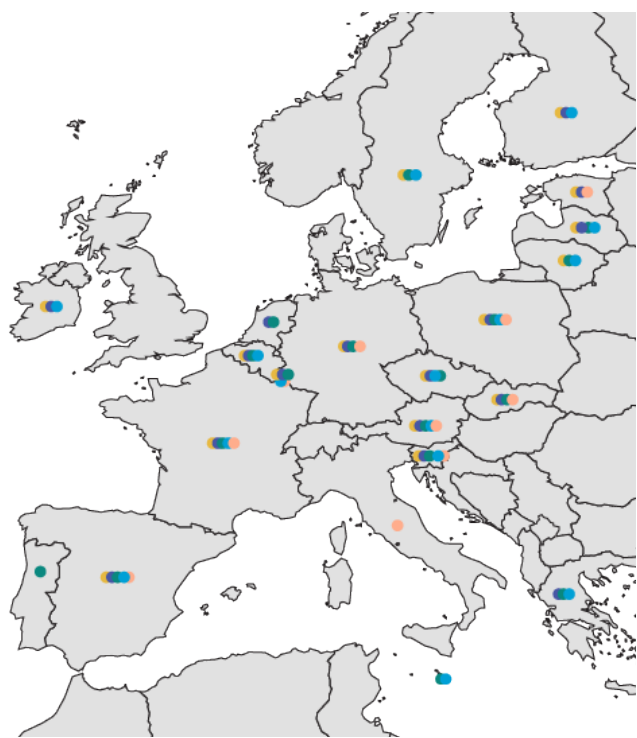
235 AT, ES, FR, IE, IT, LU, NL, SE.

236 AT, CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LU.

237 BE, ES, FR, IT, PT.

238 BE, EE, ES, IT, PT.

Figure 8: Main types of thematic areas covered by EMN Member Countries’ policies/instruments addressing skills (mis)match



| Thematic area                                   | EMN Member Countries                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recognition of qualifications and skills        | AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, PL, SE, SI, SK.                    |
| Provision of information and career orientation | AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, SI, SK.                    |
| Language training                               | AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK |
| Adult upskilling and reskilling programmes      | AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SE, SI.                |
| Addressing labour shortages and skill gaps      | AT, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, LU, PL, SI, SK.                                            |

Recognition of qualifications and skills

Most responding EMN Member Countries report policies and instruments for the **recognition of foreign qualifications** as tools to address skills mismatch among migrants.<sup>239</sup> Austria and France report simplified procedures for the recognition of qualifications of BIP and BoTP (see Box 6).

**Box 6: Facilitating recognition of qualifications of BIP and BoTP**

In Austria, the law foresees simplified recognition procedures for BIP to promote their labour market integration in jobs that match their skills. For these groups, where it is not possible to submit the documents required for recognition, the law states that the competent authorities must establish formal qualification by other means (e.g. practical or theoretical examinations, sample tests, work samples or expert opinions). In 2022, a legal amendment extended the application of these procedures to BoTP.

In France, recognition procedures are free of charge for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection. For refugees, France (and other European countries) issues the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR),<sup>240</sup> a standardised document that explains the qualifications a refugee is likely to have based on the evidence available (e.g. information gathered through interviews). Although this document does not constitute a formal act of recognition, it summarises and presents the information available on the applicant’s level of education, professional experience and language skills.

This tool was developed by the Council of Europe and partner organisations to facilitate the recognition of refugees’ qualifications in view of frequent absent or incomplete documentation. This process facilitates integration into the host country and prevents unnecessary reassessment of the same qualifications when the passport holder moves to another country in Europe.

Several EMN Member Countries<sup>241</sup> have specific policies and instruments in place to **recognise prior learning**. These facilitate entrance and progress in the labour market (e.g. through upskilling pathways) by overcoming challenges related to the lack of formal qualifications or recognition difficulties (e.g. due to lack of documentation). Austria reports several instruments to assess migrants’ competences outside of formal recognition processes for qualifications, including work trials and competence checks for BIP (see Box 7). In Ireland, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme allows for the recognition of non-formal and informal pathways to skill development and accreditation, including learning that takes place in the home, the workplace, and in broader societal contexts (so-called experiential learning). France’s Job Simulation Recruitment Method (MRS) allows employers to test candidates’ skills through situational exercises adapted to the job instead of recruiting using the usual prerequisites such as professional experience or qualifications. The MRS is available to migrants and non-migrants alike. France’s Experience Without Borders support programme also specifically assists migrants to integrate into the labour market with minimal skill devaluation (see Box 8). In Spain, the 2022

239 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, PL, SE, SI, SK.  
240 Council of Europe, [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#), n.d., accessed on 31 October 2025.  
241 AT, BE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, SE.

Law on the Organisation and Integration of Professional Training allows for the accreditation of competences acquired through work experience or other informal/non-formal channels.

### Box 7: Austria – Instruments for the recognition of prior learning

Austria has established work trials to assist employers in assessing the competences of migrants. Implemented by the PES, these are used to assess a person's professional suitability, with the potential for conclusion of a specific employment relationship. The target group includes registered unemployed persons (including migrants) who are unable to provide proof of their qualifications and competences.

Austria also undertakes 'competence checks' for persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. These checks record the qualifications, professional experience and competences of persons granted international or subsidiary protection registered with the PES. The formats differ between federal provinces and may include counselling and information, psychological tests, and – where available – short work trials (see above). A final report is prepared based on the assessment, describing the person's competences and the types of work they are qualified to perform. The PES then supports the target group with job search and through (re)qualification measures.

### Box 8: France – Experience Without Borders programme (Expériences sans Frontières)

'Experience Without Borders' project is a specific support programme that provides tailored support to newly arrived non-EU migrants with prior professional experience, aiming to minimise skills devaluation and facilitate labour market integration. The programme is implemented by a consortium of 27 partners<sup>242</sup> and it is organised in the following phases:

- **Diagnosis:** a diagnosis is made at the start of the course using a practical tool designed to promote employability by recognising cross-disciplinary skills and matching them with professional qualifications (Reconnaître les Compétences Transversales en lien avec l'Employabilité et les Certifications -RECTEC).
- **Assignment of a personal advisor:** each participant in the programme is assigned a personal advisor, who provides support from the outset right through to employment, including individual and group interviews, and draws up a personalised support plan and mutual commitment contract with them.

- **Provision of support:** Provision of support: the support provided to migrants to enhance and recognise their experience is based on the mobilisation of various mechanisms, in particular: the recognition of Prior Learning (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)*); training in French as a foreign language tailored to beneficiaries' career plans; vocational training courses; and work placements or periods of work-based learning within the company

In the two years of experimentation (2023–2024), the programme has supported 639 beneficiaries from 77 countries.

Austria and Germany have recently introduced legislative changes to speed up and facilitate the recognition of qualifications and skills. Austria has introduced a requirement in the care sector to take professional experience into consideration in the recognition process. In Germany, the 2024 Vocational Validation and Digitalisation Act facilitates the recognition of skills acquired on the job without a formal qualification.

### Provision of information and career orientation

To address challenges related to limited labour market information and orientation gaps among migrants, 16 EMN Member Countries<sup>243</sup> have policies and instruments to support this group to access relevant employment information and find jobs that match their skills (see sections 3.1 and 3.2). In a number of cases, these services are offered as part of general ALMPs implemented by the PES.<sup>244</sup>

Some EMN Member Countries have established dedicated online platforms to provide information on job opportunities, work-related requirements (e.g. qualifications, experience, skills), recognition procedures, labour laws, and training paths.<sup>245</sup> Spain organises information sessions on the labour market for migrants.

Thirteen EMN Member Countries offer individualised employment support services to promote better labour market (re)integration and skills matching.<sup>246</sup> This support is commonly provided by PES<sup>247</sup> and primarily consists of job-matching services (connecting jobseekers with employers),<sup>248</sup> general career counselling, and orientation services (e.g. job opportunities, skills mapping, recognition of qualifications, training pathways).<sup>249</sup> In Austria, the Integration Service for Professionals promotes skills matching among migrants through counselling (job profiling, information on the recognition of qualifications) and cost reimbursement for recognition of qualifications. Germany's Integration through Qualification (IQ) Funding Programme offers counselling and support to migrants for the recognition of qualifications and labour market integration (see Box 9). In Greece, the PES is implementing pilot integration

242 These partners include: public interest groups (eg. in Corsica, Nancy-Metz, FIPAN, Normandie, Paris, Reims, Versailles, Aix-Marseille, Créteil, Lille), group of local public educational institutions (eg. in Lorraine Centre, Côte-d'Azur, Rouen Maritime, Portes Normandes, Côtes Normandes, CFA Marseille Méditerranées, Grand Artois, Oise, Grand Hainaut, Grand Littoral, Lille Métropole, Ain, Rhône, Loire, Lyon Métropole), the Public Interest Group of the Academy of Lyon – Training and the apprentice training center of Marne.

243 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, PL, NL, SI, SK.

244 AT, BE, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, SK.

245 AT, CY, DE, EE, FI, FR, LU, NL, SK.

246 AT, BE, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, MT, SI.

247 AT, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, LU, LV, MT, SI.

248 AT, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, MT, SI.

249 AT, BE, DE, EE, EL, IE, LU, LV, MT, SI.

programmes for refugees, asylum seekers and unemployed migrants, featuring information services, support in finding a job, and access to vocational training and apprenticeships. In Finland, the Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland (SIMHE) career guidance and counselling service for migrants offers a variety of support services to access the labour market (see Box 10).

### Box 9: Germany - Integration through Qualification (IQ) Funding Programme

The IQ network is a nationwide integration programme for migrants including asylum seekers with a work permit. It offers counselling and qualification measures for people of foreign origin in order to improve the access to the labour market in Germany adequate to their qualification and skills earned abroad. Furthermore, it offers support for companies that want to hire (skilled) workers. The Programme helps in the field of skills shortages whilst the potential of migrants still is unused. The Federal ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is funding currently 59 advisory centres for questions on the recognition of qualifications. 21 “Regional Integration Networks International Workers” with around 97 sub-projects that offer vocational training (including compensatory and adjustment measures) for persons with qualifications earned abroad. 17 “Regional Integration Networks Welcome and Recognition Culture of International Workers” with 45 sub-projects are helping small and medium enterprises to find new talents and to prepare the staff to better cooperate with the new colleagues. 9 projects with around 30 sub-projects are aiming at improving information among the migrant communities about the labour market, its basic functioning, its institutions and legal changes and the recognition of qualification.

The IQ network is funded by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) in the years 2023 - 2028.

### Box 10: Finland - Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland (SIMHE) services

SIMHE offers a variety of services and opportunities for educated migrants, including assistance with identification and recognition of prior learning, as well as individual and group career guidance. The service supports migrants to map their skills and find suitable study or career opportunities, including tips for networking and ideas on how to learn and practice Finnish.

About half of the responding EMN Member Countries have policies and instruments providing information and support to (prospective) employers seeking to hire foreign talent.<sup>250</sup> In Austria, the PES offers enterprises free advisory services on the integration of persons with a migration background. In Spain, the international

protection reception system, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has developed information materials for companies on hiring applicants for international protection and BIP (e.g. recruitment procedures, benefits, profiles). France's Ministry of the Interior has published a leaflet on its website, *Recruiting a foreign national living in France*, which encourages employers by presenting the business benefits of employing third-country nationals, the legal framework for recruitment, and information on recruitment assistance services available for identifying or supplementing skills in the absence of qualifications or experience. A specific version for refugees has also been published.

### Language training

Eighteen EMN Member Countries<sup>251</sup> offer access to free language training to address challenges related to insufficient language proficiency and support migrants to access jobs that match their skills (see section 3.1). Four EMN Member Countries<sup>252</sup> have developed online language learning programmes to enhance the accessibility and flexibility of language courses. The Austrian Integration Fund also offers training at off-peak hours and courses with childcare options.

Five EMN Member Countries<sup>253</sup> report programmes to support work-based language learning (e.g. co-funding or subsidising the courses). In Poland, employers willing to invest in vocational and language skills of their foreign employees can receive financial assistance from the National Training Fund. In 2024, Luxembourg introduced a new apprenticeship programme format, combining work-based learning with intensive French language training. This initiative aims to improve the inclusiveness of vocational education and training, reduce language barriers, improve accessibility for young migrants (especially newcomers), and increase their chances of sustainable labour market integration.

Austria and Malta support occupation-specific language courses in the healthcare and construction sectors, respectively. Portugal is implementing a pre-departure pilot project supporting the learning of Portuguese in the country of origin.

### Adult upskilling and reskilling programmes

Most EMN Member Countries have upskilling and reskilling policies and programmes (e.g. vocational education and training (VET), on-the-job learning, apprenticeships) that contribute to tackling disparities in educational and skills requirements between migrants' countries of origin and receiving countries (see [section 3.1](#)).<sup>254</sup> Upskilling and reskilling programmes also help to direct migrants towards sectors facing skills shortages. In most cases these programmes are accessible by migrants under the same conditions as the local population. Four EMN Member Countries<sup>255</sup> have specific programmes to support the upskilling and reskilling of migrants. Lithuania is implementing the project, increasing access to VET for third-country nationals, led by the Qualifications and

250 AT, BE, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, LU (all prospective employees), NL, SI.

251 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE (language classes are free for migrants depending on their status in the country), EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

252 AT, BE, EE, LU.

253 AT, BE, FR, LU, PL.

254 AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SE, SI.

255 EL, LT, LU, SE.



Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. It supports several activities to promote access to VET among third-country nationals, including methodological guidance for VET schools, staff upskilling programmes, and the creation of 10 adapted non-formal VET programmes. In Luxembourg, the government supports the upskilling and reskilling of BIP through vocational training pilot projects (see Box 11).

#### Box 11: Luxembourg - vocational training pilot projects

In Luxembourg, the government supports upskilling and reskilling of BIP through vocational training pilot projects. The two branches of the National Centre for Continuous Vocational Training (*Centre national de formation professionnelle continue*, CNFPC) in the communes of Esch-sur-Alzette and Ettelbruck organise training courses for 'cleaning agents' and 'cook assistants', combining professional training with French language courses. Upon completion, participants are placed with employers, including through job days<sup>256</sup> organised specifically for this target group, as well as within the framework of individual guidance by the National Employment Agency (ADEM).

#### Addressing labour shortages and skills gaps in specific sectors

Ten EMN Member Countries<sup>257</sup> report policies and instruments that seek to better use migrants' skills to address labour shortages and skill gaps in specific sectors. Austria, France and Luxembourg have simplified the process to access certain occupations in shortage sectors. Austria has introduced measures to allow nurses with a foreign education to start working (for a maximum period of two years) while they complete the supplementary examinations required to recognise their qualifications and acquire the German language skills necessary for professional licensing. In Luxembourg, the ADEM publishes

an updated list of occupations in serious shortage each year, with employers allowed to hire third-country nationals more quickly by bypassing the labour market test for professions facing acute labour shortages.

#### Other areas

Other policies and instruments reported by EMN Member Countries include supporting access to childcare<sup>258</sup> and housing,<sup>259</sup> enhancing knowledge about existing (and future) skills needs,<sup>260</sup> addressing challenges posed by the lower socioeconomic status of some groups of migrants (e.g. financial support to access education),<sup>261</sup> or promoting self-employment (see sections 3.1 and 3.2).<sup>262</sup>

Four EMN Member Countries<sup>263</sup> offer different types of subsidies to employers that hire migrants and/or BIP. Slovenia offers wage subsidies and reimburses training costs for employers hiring migrants. Greece offers wage subsidy and apprenticeship programmes for employers who hire unemployed people from vulnerable groups, including legally residing migrants and refugees. The Netherlands offers subsidies to employers who offer long-term employment to BIP.

#### Box 12: Policies and instruments addressing skills (mis)matches among migrant women

Seven EMN Member Countries<sup>264</sup> have specific policies and instruments to address skills (mis)matches among migrant women. Germany is implementing a programme to promote the labour market integration of newly arrived migrant women by supporting them to access jobs, become self-employed, or access vocational training. Slovenia has social activation programmes that specifically target migrant women, while Sweden is implementing initiatives to shorten the path to employment for migrant women (e.g. language training, study, career guidance).



## 4.4. INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS SKILLS (MIS)MATCH IMPLEMENTED AT SUBNATIONAL LEVEL OR BY NON-STATE ACTORS

Subnational authorities and non-state actors play a key role in addressing skills (mis)matches among migrants (see section 3.1). EMN Member Countries report several initiatives implemented by these actors that (directly or indirectly) contribute to tackling skills mismatch or promoting skills matching,<sup>265</sup> such as comprehensive

integration support,<sup>266</sup> information and counselling,<sup>267</sup> mentoring,<sup>268</sup> training,<sup>269</sup> or supporting employers to identify and hire migrants.<sup>270</sup> Table 1 presents some examples of common types of initiatives implemented by different actors.

<sup>256</sup> Jobdays are themed job fairs organised by the National Employment Agency (ADEM).

<sup>257</sup> AT, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, LU, PL, SI, SK.

<sup>258</sup> DE, ES, NL.

<sup>259</sup> CZ, ES.

<sup>260</sup> EE, LU.

<sup>261</sup> AT.

<sup>262</sup> ES.

<sup>263</sup> EE, EL, NL, SI.

<sup>264</sup> BE, DE, EL, ES, MT, SE, SI.

<sup>265</sup> AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>266</sup> CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FR, LT, LU, NL, SK.

<sup>267</sup> AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, SK.

<sup>268</sup> AT, BE, CY, DE, FI, FR, LU, SI.

<sup>269</sup> CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI.

<sup>270</sup> BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, IE, NL, SE, SK.



**Table 1. Examples of initiatives implemented, by type of actor**

| Type of actors                                                                                                                                | Examples of initiatives implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>International organisations</b> <sup>271</sup>                                                                                             | Integration support (e.g. profile mapping, language learning, facilitating access to the labour market, integration counselling, vocational training)<br>Support with job placement<br>Awareness-raising and information for companies                                       |
| <b>NGOs</b> <sup>272</sup>                                                                                                                    | Integration support<br>Information and counselling for migrants (including mentoring programmes)<br>Language and adult training<br>Support for employers to identify and hire migrants<br>Support with recognition of qualifications                                         |
| <b>Interest organisations (e.g. chambers of commerce, economic chambers, sector-specific associations, trade unions, etc.)</b> <sup>273</sup> | Support for employers to identify and hire foreign workers<br>Delivering or financially supporting training<br>Raising employers' awareness<br>Promotion of more inclusive recruitment policies<br>Information and counselling for migrants (including mentoring programmes) |
| <b>Regional and local authorities</b> <sup>274</sup>                                                                                          | Comprehensive integration support<br>Information and counselling<br>Support for employers to identify and hire migrants                                                                                                                                                      |

Fourteen EMN Member Countries<sup>275</sup> report examples of initiatives implemented by subnational authorities, NGOs or international organisations that contribute to addressing skills (mis)matches by **providing general integration support to migrants** (e.g. information and civic orientation, counselling (CV writing, interview preparation, assistance with job search, etc.), psychosocial support, referral to vocational training, language learning).

### Box 13: Lithuania's "Towards a Professional Path programme" and Estonia's "the Edge Up Employability Programme"

In Lithuania, the non-profit organisation Diversity Development Group is implementing the project, **Towards a Professional Path** project, which aims at enhancing the integration of migrants into the labour market in Lithuania. The project offers: personalised assistance to migrants who are higher-skilled work candidates; Lithuanian and English language learning courses to pass language exams; lectures on work culture, labour law, social guarantees and the pension system; professional qualification recognition and job search processes; as well as motivational group meetings with a psychologist. Fifty migrants participated in the pilot project between 2022 and 2023.

**The Edge Up Employability Programme** was a year-long initiative aimed at helping people with a refugee background in Estonia to enter the local labour market or transition to more suitable jobs. The programme included employability training, skills

development, and opportunities for work practice or job-shadowing with participating organisations. It was designed to support refugees regardless of their prior work experience or employment status, and most activities were delivered in English and Russian. Registration and participation were free. The Edge Up programme was concluded in June 2025. In autumn 2025, the Estonian Refugee Council has also launched Start Smart – Be the Next Gen, which started in autumn 2025. Start Smart is aimed at young people aged 15–29 with a migrant or refugee background and focusing on entrepreneurship and the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Through workshops and a final hackathon, participants learn how to apply AI tools in business development, marketing, and career planning.

Seventeen EMN Member Countries<sup>276</sup> report some examples of initiatives to **improve access to information** on the labour market, recognition of qualifications and career and employment opportunities (e.g. through career orientation, counselling services, information sessions). In Estonia, the Estonian Refugee Council (an NGO) provides counselling and employment/entrepreneurship support for refugees (e.g. labour market orientation, workshops for legal questions and work skills). In Germany, the La Red e. V Association provides counselling and job market orientation to migrants upon arrival in Berlin (e.g. support for occupational recognition, finding adequate employment, guidance on social law, coaching). In Austria, the

271 EL, ES, FR, LT, SK.

272 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, SK.

273 AT, BE, CY, ES, FR, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI. These include for example Chamber of commerce, economic chamber, sector-specific associations, etc.

274 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, SI, SK.

275 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SK.

276 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, SK.

Check in plus project supports the recognition of qualifications and job search for migrants with intermediate and higher qualifications (see Box 14).

#### Box 14: Austria – Check in plus

The project is implemented in Vienna by the Counseling Centre for Migrants with funding from the PES. It supports migrants with recognition of their qualifications and preparing for job search. The programme includes individualised advice, planning suitable training measures, and information on professional networking opportunities (job fairs, mentoring programmes, etc.). Requirements to participate in the programme include registration as a jobseeker with the PES and German language skills at level B1. Each year 400 people receive counselling through the project.

Eight EMN Member Countries<sup>277</sup> report initiatives to support migrants to access jobs that match their skills through **mentoring programmes**. The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, together with the Austrian Integration Fund, the Chamber of the Economy and the PES, implement the Mentoring for Migrants project, which assigns migrants a mentor for a six-month period. In Finland, the Auroras project offers mentorship to migrant women (see Box 15). In Germany, Caritas implements the BEGIN project, which mentors refugees to promote their sustainable integration into the labour market. In Slovenia, Slovene Philanthropy is implementing a programme to provide migrants with individual mentoring, support in job search, networking with employers, help with recognition of qualifications, and informal Slovene language practice.

#### Box 15: Finland – Auroras mentoring programme for highly educated migrant women

In Finland, the Auroras project supports highly educated migrant women with their Finnish language skills to advance their careers and find employment in Finland.

The programme is implemented by the Auroras Network,<sup>278</sup> which forms part of the Finnish Federation of Graduate Women (FFGW),<sup>279</sup> a non-governmental organisation promoting gender equality in higher education and working life. Auroras is currently funded by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA).

Mentoring sessions are led by volunteer women professionals with first-hand experience of Finnish working life, offering participants valuable insights, peer support, and networking opportunities. In addition to mentoring, participants can attend targeted workshops and events aimed at enhancing specific skills and building career confidence.

By combining peer support among international women with guidance from experienced Finnish professionals, Auroras creates a strong bridge to

employment and meaningful participation in Finnish working life.<sup>280</sup>

Four EMN Member Countries<sup>281</sup> report examples of initiatives that offer **direct job matching services**. In Belgium, the Regional Integration Centre of Verviers has created a system where migrants' competences are mapped at intake and matched directly with local employers via a contact person at the company. Each placement includes a workplace tutor to support integration and typically starts with a four-week internship. In Lithuania, the Refugee Fellowship Initiative is implemented by the UNHCR, the Lithuanian Diversity Charter and the Lithuanian Red Cross. It offers fellowships to place professionals with a refugee background into Lithuanian companies, providing a structured pathway to rebuild careers and prove skills to employers.

Some initiatives offer **training and upskilling opportunities** to migrants to enhance skills matching (e.g. vocational training, apprenticeships, training in CV writing and interviewing, language training).<sup>282</sup> In Ireland, the EPIC programme is implemented by the NGO, Business in the Community (BITC). It offers training to vulnerable migrants to increase their chances of finding employment matching their skills (see Box 16). In Greece, the Bridging the Skills Gap project is implemented by the NGO, Odyssey. It seeks to enhance the professional opportunities of asylum seekers, BIP and BoTP by providing workshops on the development of social and digital skills, as well as vocational training services.

#### Box 16: Ireland – EPIC programme

EPIC is a free, six-week training course available to vulnerable migrants (predominantly refugees and asylum seekers holding a labour market access permission) to increase their chances of finding employment in Ireland by matching their skills and experiences. The NGO-led course offers participants individual coaching as well as online training in groups educating learners on standard hiring practices and Irish work culture. It also provides networking opportunities with businesses, interviewing techniques, and information on reskilling and upskilling options. EPIC particularly aims to address migrants' lack of social capital and information on the Irish labour market and hiring practices that may prevent them from putting their skills and experiences to full use.

Some EMN Member Countries provide examples of initiatives **supporting employers to identify and hire migrants**.<sup>283</sup> This includes raising awareness of inclusion practices, the requirements to hire migrants, and supports available, such as job-matching. In Slovenia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia are implementing pilot projects to support companies to hire foreign workers by providing training on intercultural management and facilitating direct matching of migrant skills with labour shortages in SMEs.

277 AT, BE, CY, DE, FI, FR, LU, SI.

278 For more information visit: <https://auroras.fi/en/> accessed 26 February 2026.

279 For more information visit: <https://akateemisetnaiset.fi/en/> accessed 26 February 2026.

280 The Auroras Network offers a group mentoring model structured around four core themes: identifying strengths and competencies, job search in Finland, working life in Finland, and self-management.

281 BE, NL, LT, SI.

282 AT, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK.

283 BE, CY, DE, ES, FR, IE, NL, SE, SI, SK.

# 5. CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING SKILLS MISMATCH

This section outlines the main challenges reported by EMN Member Countries in addressing skills mismatch among migrants. Key challenges include provision of language support, the complexity of processes to recognise foreign qualifications, challenges related to discrimination,

stereotypes and lack of inclusive recruitment practices, limited readiness and awareness among employers to hire migrants, and institutional challenges (e.g. lack of coordination, insufficient resources).



## 5.1. CHALLENGES

Most EMN Member Countries report challenges in addressing skills mismatch among migrants.<sup>284</sup> Often, these challenges are common to all groups of migrants, with some challenges specific to groups such as highly skilled migrants or migrant women.

The majority of responding EMN Member Countries report **challenges in the provision of language support**.<sup>285</sup> Although most countries have different initiatives in place to support migrants to acquire or improve their language skills (see section 3), these are often insufficient to tackle language barriers, which continue to pose challenges to access jobs that match migrants' skills. This is mostly due to the high demand and limited availability of (free) language courses, especially for intermediate and advanced levels, which lead to waiting lists,<sup>286</sup> as well as difficulties in reconciling work and language learning.<sup>287</sup> Ireland reports that the high demand for language courses means that local service providers tend to prioritise learners with low language proficiency, resulting in low availability of intermediate and advanced classes. According to an NGO in Luxembourg, several private companies refuse to allow their employees to learn Luxembourgish during their working hours, despite existing legal provisions regarding accessing language leave. Belgium similarly highlights the lack of work-based language provision as a challenge. In Germany, the bureaucracy involved for funding classes on the job discourages smaller companies from enrolling in these initiatives. Other challenges include gender barriers (e.g. lack of access to childcare),<sup>288</sup> insufficient funding for language courses,<sup>289</sup> and differences in quality of the courses offered.<sup>290</sup>

Despite existing procedures to recognise foreign qualifications, many EMN Member Countries still face **challenges**

**related to limited or complex recognition processes that hinder access to skilled jobs**.<sup>291</sup> These challenges primarily affect highly skilled migrants. Austria reports that even though there is a strong awareness of the complexity surrounding the recognition of foreign qualifications, no fundamental simplification of the system has been achieved, and recognition remains difficult for many groups. The Czech Republic, Ireland and Poland report that the fragmentation of information and absence of a single contact point for the recognition of foreign qualifications has posed challenges. Lithuania notes that the lack of tailored linguistic support in recognition procedures and clear, multilingual, centralised information on the recognition of qualifications creates barriers for migrants to access these procedures.

In a number of cases, **discrimination, stereotypes and the lack of inclusive recruitment practices** challenge EMN Member Countries' capacity to address skills mismatch.<sup>292</sup> In Belgium, the weak enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and policies challenge skills matching efforts. Luxembourg points out that the limited availability of data and indicators on discrimination in the labour market based on nationality, race, skin colour, real or perceived origin, or citizenship status makes it more difficult to build evidence-based arguments, evaluate progress, and design targeted interventions to promote equal opportunities.

Some countries note challenges related to **employers' limited awareness and/or readiness to hire migrants**.<sup>293</sup> Employers often lack knowledge about processes to hire migrants and are unaware of foreign qualifications or the fact that they can employ migrants without formal recognition of their qualifications. Austria highlights

284 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SI, SE, SK.

285 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SI, SK.

286 AT, EE, IE, LT, SI.

287 AT, BE, FR, LT, LU.

288 BE, EE, FR, LT, LU, SK.

289 BE, IE.

290 AT, CZ.

291 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SK.

292 BE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, NL, PL, SI, SK.

293 AT, BE, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, SI.

that labour market policy measures are primarily aimed at employees, with comparatively fewer focusing on employers, perhaps contributing to these challenges.

Some EMN Member Countries mention **institutional challenges** related to the governance framework for addressing skills mismatch.<sup>294</sup> France and Lithuania report the fragmented governance system and lack of coordination between the different actors involved in addressing skills mismatch as a challenge. Belgium notes the decentralised governance of integration and labour market policies as a challenge, as rules and available resources differ across regions. Luxembourg mentions that insufficient resources and knowledge of the actors involved in addressing skills mismatch can hinder the implementation of strategies developed at institutional level.

Cyprus, Finland, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic report that addressing skills mismatch is **not a policy priority** in their countries. Luxembourg, Poland and the Slovak Republic mention the **lack of data** on skills matching as

a challenge. France reports that there is little follow up with those who receive support after they have been hired. Similarly, Belgium points out that migrants often lose access to integration and training measures once they are formally employed or shortly after, even when they are employed in jobs below their skill level, as many skills support measures are linked to unemployment status.

#### **Box 17: Challenges addressing skills mismatch among migrant women**

Some specific challenges are reported in addressing skills mismatch among migrant women. Austria notes the limited outreach of existing initiatives to migrant women arriving through family reunification, who are often not registered with the PES. Luxembourg and the Slovak Republic mention the lack of access to childcare as a challenge affecting single mothers in particular, while Belgium, Estonia and Lithuania highlight challenges in accessing language courses due to the limited availability of childcare.

294 BE, DE, FR, LT, LU, SK.

# 6. GOOD PRACTICES

EMN Member Countries have developed a diverse array of measures to address skills mismatch and promote skills matching among migrants. The following analysis draws on recent national inputs to provide a synthesis of good practices and lessons, highlighting innovative approaches and recurring themes. These are presented

by type of measure: i) recognition-related measures, ii) training measures, iii) labour market and employer-centred measures, and iv) counselling measures. In addition to the lessons in each of the four areas of action, this section also presents cross-cutting lessons to address skills mismatch (v-vii).



## 6.1. RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS AND PRIOR LEARNING

Recognition challenges remain a persistent driver of skills mismatch among migrants (especially third-country nationals) (see section 3), making it crucial to identify innovative and effective policies and programmes that facilitate timely recognition. Several EMN Member Countries<sup>295</sup> acknowledge that **current recognition procedures need to be simplified and accelerated** if they are to become more effective and accessible. In fields where labour shortages are particularly pressing (e.g. licensed jobs in the health sector), several countries<sup>296</sup> allow third-country nationals to bypass labour market tests or apply fast-track recognition schemes for certain professions. However, these are often limited to highly qualified migrants from select countries of origin (see section 6.4.1). One award-winning good practice example is Austria's initiative of contact points for people with foreign qualifications (see Box 18).<sup>297</sup>

### Box 18: Austria – contact points for the recognition of foreign qualifications

These contact points<sup>298</sup> address the barrier of recognition costs and access issues by providing free-of-charge multilingual counselling, guidance and support to applicants in the process of having their qualifications assessed and recognised. The contact points coordinate with the PES and other authorities. Their services encompass determining the necessity and feasibility of formal recognition, supporting applicants throughout the entire recognition process including application and securing certified document translations, and offering guidance on further education and counselling resources.

Poland has taken steps to address the challenge of costs related to recognition/compensation. While recognition procedures are not free of charge, financial support is offered for the process. Enhancing information on recognition procedures is another approach to improve accessibility. In France, the NGO, Jesuit Refugee Service is providing multilingual factsheets to inform migrants about recognition procedures in the health and education sectors.

Some EMN Member Countries point to digitalisation and the use of databases allowing pre-checks as central to simplifying and defragmenting procedures.<sup>299</sup> Austria and Lithuania have expanded their databases or moved towards a single multilingual online entry point with clear pathways for recognition, live status tracking, and document checklists. However, these tasks remain complex and efforts are still limited in scope.

In line with the European Commission's Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals,<sup>300</sup> stakeholders in EMN Member Countries<sup>301</sup> stress that **professional experience and skills acquired through non-formal education should be given greater consideration** to activate migrants' skills effectively. In Lithuania, Government Resolution No. 21 treats professional experience as equivalent to higher education for highly skilled roles. Additionally, a pilot programme on work-acquired skills recognition in the Lithuanian transport sector has demonstrated that competence-based assessment is feasible when supported by standardised methods, trained assessors and clear occupation profiles. In France, the NGO, *La Fabrique Nomade* runs an integration workshop that offers a specific programme dedicated to refugee and migrant artisans with

295 BE, ES, FI, FR, SI, SK.

296 FR, IT, LT, LU.

297 Austria's contact points scheme won the Global Validation of Prior Learning Award (Panek 2022).

298 Government of Austria, 'Foreign Qualifications Contact Points', n.d., accessed 18 November 2025.

299 AT, ES, IE, LT.

300 European Commission Recommendation of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, COM(2023) 7700 final, accessed 29 October 2025.

301 AT, DE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, SK.



a work permit. This 11-month programme recognises experience and qualifications acquired in the host country and aims to minimise devaluation, including technical training, arts and crafts sector-specific language classes, and individual social and integration support to develop

professional networks. In Lithuania, Ukrainian medical staff receive temporary practice supervision and support after their qualifications are recognised. This pilot project may be scaled up to bridge transitions from recognition into work practice.



## 6.2. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRAINING, AND SKILLS TRAINING

Across Europe, training offered to migrants focuses on language skills, as language barriers remain a key cause of underutilised migrant skills (see [section 4](#)). There is a multitude of approaches to offering language courses, from language cafés in Estonia, to pre-departure Italian courses offered by Italy, and the development of an online platform for tailored language acquisition in Luxembourg. EMN Member Countries broadly agree that it is good practice to offer accessible job- or sector-focused language courses.<sup>302</sup>

**Sector-specific classes** are often offered for sectors experiencing labour shortages.<sup>303</sup> A related approach is to combine language training with labour market orientation and employer networking, such as municipal integration projects in Slovenia.

A programme in Sweden<sup>304</sup> offers positively **evaluated, intensive on-the-job language training**, where three-month work placements are accompanied by bilingual case workers supporting the migrant's native language (with longer-term follow-up support). Germany also offers on-the-job language classes. Poland has focused

on providing grants to enterprises offering on-the-job language training. Malta identifies its PES-led project, Supported Employment Services for Migrants, (originally part-funded by the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF)) as a good practice, as it combines languages courses with job brokerage, job search assistance, work exposure, and labour market training.

**Labour market training is another focus of training measures.** Spain reports a positive experience in addressing skills mismatch between applicants for international protection and the demands of the Spanish labour market through vocational training offers in sectors with identified skills demands. France's successful *coup de pouce* workshops offered by the NGO, *La Cravate Solidaire* explain socio-professional codes, offer coaching and provide material resources needed for job interviews (e.g. business clothing). While some countries follow the approach of getting migrants into employment as quickly as possible, mainly offering only short-term training, Sweden has also invested in higher education of migrants first, with a comparative study finding positive long-term results.<sup>305</sup>



## 6.3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYER-CENTRED MEASURES

The importance of early involvement of employers is a recurring lesson shared by a majority of EMN Member Countries. Ideally, training and integration pathways should be designed with employer input to ensure alignment with labour market needs, while mentoring and upgrading pathways require sustainable funding and embedding in public employment systems.

**Employer awareness and incentives**, such as financial supports for hiring apprentices, are seen as necessary to overcome reluctance and discrimination. Ireland offers information and support courses for employers (by the NGO, AkiDwA Network of Migrant Women), as does Finland (Finnish Refugee Council's Sauma project, supported by IKEA<sup>306</sup>). Diversity awards and a diversity charter<sup>307</sup> aim to increase enterprises' engagement with the topics of migration and skills matching. Fairs and job days<sup>308</sup> also facilitate networking between migrants and employers to find matches.

France identified the Tent Partnership for Refugees<sup>309</sup> as a good practice that illustrates the value of direct employer engagement, internships, and mentoring. It is a network of 50 large companies committed to recruiting refugees and improving their employability by connecting businesses with refugee talent. It organises job fairs dedicated to refugees in partnership with the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry and *Les Entreprises s'engagent* – Club de Paris, and the Employment Network, each bringing together around 350 candidates and multiple companies from diverse sectors. These fairs provide translation, guidance and support services, raise employer awareness of refugee challenges, and promote inclusive recruitment focusing on potential and soft skills.

**Employer cooperation and work placement or work-based learning measures** are reported as critical components of successful integration strategies. In Belgium, partnerships with sector funds enable SMEs to

302 AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

303 CY, HR, LT, MT.

304 Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), Ottosson, L. and Vikman, U., 'Bilingual caseworkers and on-the-job training: A pathway to integration', Working paper, 9, 2025, accessed 13 November 2025.

305 Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), Liljeberg, L., 'Arbetsmarknadsetablering bland flyktingar och deras anhöriga i Sverige, Norge och Danmark', Report 18, 2023, p. 43, accessed 5 January 2026.

306 Finnish Refugee Council, 'Promoting employment and livelihoods', n.d., accessed 5 January 2026.

307 LU.

308 AT, FR, IE, LU, LV.

309 French Ministry of the Interior, 'La DIAIR et Tent France officialisent leur partenariat', 2024, accessed 4 April 2026.

recruit and retain migrant talent. Luxembourg and France take a labour market-centred approach to activate third-country nationals' underutilised entrepreneurial skills, with the NGO, Singa<sup>310</sup> developing incubation and co-creation programmes in Luxembourg.

**Mentoring and coaching programmes**, such as DUO for a Job in Belgium<sup>311</sup> and France, and the Slovene Philanthropy Mentorship Programme, have enhanced

social capital and improved employment outcomes.<sup>312</sup> Slovenia's PES skills profiling tool and counselling service systematically evaluate migrants' educational backgrounds, competencies, and previous work experience during registration, enabling the provision of tailored guidance and referrals to relevant training opportunities or employers.



## 6.4. COMBINING SKILLS MATCHING MEASURES AND MOVING TOWARDS HOLISTIC STRATEGIES AND A FOCUS ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

A diverse range of drivers cause skills mismatch among migrants which, in turn, require a set of responses (see section 3). Most EMN Member Countries **combine different types of measures to create an integrated approach**. For instance, some programmes combine employer support with work placements,<sup>313</sup> while others integrate recognition and counselling.<sup>314</sup>

The ESF+-co-funded IQ Network<sup>315</sup> in Germany is designed as an integrated programme that combines several types of measures to support migrants' labour market integration and effective skills matching. It offers counselling and assistance with the recognition of foreign qualifications, ensuring that migrants can validate their professional skills and credentials. Alongside recognition, the IQ Network provides targeted training and upskilling opportunities, including language courses and sector-specific qualifications, to bridge gaps identified during the assessment process. These measures are complemented by advisory services for employers and migrants, creating a coordinated approach that links recognition, training, and employment support within a single framework.

Reports from several EMN Member Countries recognise that addressing migrant skills mismatch requires more than isolated interventions or combining different skills matching interventions<sup>316</sup>. Accordingly, Finland and Spain aimed to adopt more **holistic strategies** that also try to address discrimination against migrants.

Spain's policies combine labour activation with legal safeguards, notably through Law 15/2022, which enforces **anti-discrimination** in recruitment and workplace practices. This is complemented by housing support and mediation services that help migrants to overcome structural barriers to employment.

### 6.4.1. Specific target group support

EMN Member Countries have developed supports and interventions for specific target groups to address skills mismatch.

Groups targeted include women<sup>317</sup> (e.g. through the municipal integration agency Atlas, the *Taalbubbelst* projects in Belgium, which offers language and soft skill training and parenting support for low-literate women), migrants from specific countries of origin (often Ukrainians)<sup>318</sup> or from specific professions,<sup>319</sup> or targeted measures for migrants from a specific profession and/or country of origin (i.e. fast-track recognition measures for Ukrainian healthcare professionals in Lithuania).

### 6.4.2. Collaboration with migrant organisations

**Migrant organisations and civil society actors** in Finland, France and Germany play an important role in bridging information gaps, providing outreach, counselling and support, and fostering peer learning and community networks, all helping to reduce isolation and build employability.

A Finnish interministerial working group notes that organising information meetings in spaces offered by organisations accepted in migrant communities is a good practice. The German federal state of Berlin supports migrant networks to both formalise their work and to provide them with labour market integration knowledge.<sup>320</sup>

310 Singa Luxembourg, [website](#), n.d., accessed 4 April 2026.

311 DUO for a Job, [website](#), n.d., accessed 5 January 2026.

312 Bagnoli, L., Estache, A and Fourati, M. (2021) *Mentoring as a pathway to labour market integration: Evidence from a Belgian programme*. ECARES working paper 2021-11, accessed 5 January 2026.

313 AT, IT.

314 BE, DE, FR, SI.

315 IQ Network, 'Integration through Qualification', n.d., accessed 18 November 2025.

316 ES, FI, LU.

317 AT, BE, DE, FR, LU, SI.

318 EE, IE, LT, LV.

319 FR, IT, LT, SK.

320 La Red – *Vernetzung und Integration, Über uns*, 2025, accessed 18 November 2025.

# 7. CONCLUSIONS

**Skills mismatch is widespread and persistent** across all reporting EMN Member Countries,<sup>321</sup> with variations in the groups most affected. Overall, highly skilled third-country nationals are most affected and most often work below their qualification levels: several EMN Member Countries<sup>322</sup> report that the overqualification rates of highly skilled third-country nationals are nearly double those of the native population. Malta and Poland note that that skills mismatch is especially common upon arrival and declines over time as migrants gain language skills and recognition of qualifications. BIP are also strongly affected, due to missing documentation (see section 3).

The main **drivers** are found across different integration areas in EMN Member Countries.<sup>323</sup> **Language barriers** are reportedly a major driver<sup>324</sup> that can act as a gatekeeper to skilled employment, according to Luxembourg. Similarly, Finland reports that despite strong qualifications, many migrants are overqualified because employers demand fluent Finnish and tend to discriminate based on foreign names.

Fourteen EMN Member Countries<sup>325</sup> report **recognition of qualifications** as a major issue, especially in regulated professions. Other drivers include gender-related care responsibilities and the limited availability of childcare,<sup>326</sup> discrimination and employers' biases,<sup>327</sup> large distances between housing and employment, and public transport issues,<sup>328</sup> weak access to labour-market information, and pressure pushing migrants into low-skilled jobs (Poland).

**Policy responses** to the phenomenon of skills mismatch among migrants vary. Most EMN Member Countries implement language and integration training as targeted supports.<sup>329</sup> The Czech Republic highlights an ongoing need to set clear quality standards for these courses to ensure consistent learning outcomes, and to focus language courses towards specific groups.

Another frequent response is the demand for reform or expansion of systems for the recognition and validation of skills.<sup>330</sup> Austria is planning and developing a number

of measures, such as an integration database designed to improve coordination between institutions and enable customised labour market integration pathways, as well as enhanced cooperation with third countries to establish qualification databases facilitating the comparability of credentials.

Some EMN Member Countries report measures for job matching, employer engagement, and specific support initiatives.<sup>331</sup> Finland and Ireland report measures for employers and jobseekers, such as digital matching tools and personalised counselling. For example, the Work in Finland website offers support and information for both foreign talent and Finnish employers. For jobseekers in Ireland, the PES, Intreo, assists jobseekers to find employment matching their skills and experiences. Intreo may also connect migrant jobseekers with individual case workers who can advise on upskilling/reskilling options and recognition of foreign qualifications. Hungary reports indirect support measures where the PES provides support for BoTP to access childcare, helping to maintain labour market participation and improve practical matching outcomes.

Lessons learnt across the EMN Member Countries<sup>332</sup> include the need for better coordination of support, i.e. **integrated, multi-actor approaches** should connect language, qualification recognition, and employment support.

**Good practices** include combined language and vocational training or mentoring.<sup>333</sup> Several EMN Member Countries note the need to expand occupation-specific language training.<sup>334</sup> Some stress the importance of employer partnerships and tailored sectoral pathways,<sup>335</sup> as well as better coordination between employment services and employers.<sup>336</sup> They also highlight validation of prior learning and the need to simplify and accelerate recognition.

321 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

322 AT, BE, DE, FI, NL.

323 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

324 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SK.

325 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, PL, SK.

326 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, FR, HU, IE, LU, LV, SK.

327 BE, CY, DE, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, NL.

328 IE, NL, LT, LU, LV, SK.

329 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

330 AT, DE, FR, LT, LU, PL, SK.

331 BE, EE, NL, FI, FR.

332 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

333 BE, CY, FI, LU, MT, NL.

334 FI, LT, LU, SK.

335 BE, FR, NL, PL.

336 BE, NL.



## For more information

EMN website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

EMN LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network>

EMN X account: <https://x.com/emnmigration>

EMN YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@EMNMigration>

## EMN National Contact Points

Austria [www.emn.at/en/](http://www.emn.at/en/)

Belgium [www.emnbelgium.be/](http://www.emnbelgium.be/)

Bulgaria [www.emn-bg.com/](http://www.emn-bg.com/)

Croatia [emn.gov.hr/](http://emn.gov.hr/)

Cyprus [www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/emnncpc.nsf/home/home?opendocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/emnncpc.nsf/home/home?opendocument)

The Czech Republic [www.emncz.eu/](http://www.emncz.eu/)

Estonia [www.emn.ee/](http://www.emn.ee/)

Finland [emn.fi/en/](http://emn.fi/en/)

France [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2)

Germany [www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html](http://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html)

Greece <https://migration.gov.gr/emn/>

Hungary [www.emnhungary.hu/en](http://www.emnhungary.hu/en)

Ireland [www.emn.ie/](http://www.emn.ie/)

Italy [www.emnitalyncp.it/](http://www.emnitalyncp.it/)

Latvia [www.emn.lv](http://www.emn.lv)

Lithuania [www.emn.lt/](http://www.emn.lt/)

Luxembourg [emnluxembourg.uni.lu/](http://emnluxembourg.uni.lu/)

Malta [emn.gov.mt/](http://emn.gov.mt/)

The Netherlands [www.emnnetherlands.nl/](http://www.emnnetherlands.nl/)

Poland [www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network](http://www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network)

Portugal [rem.sef.pt/en/](http://rem.sef.pt/en/)

Romania [www.mai.gov.ro/](http://www.mai.gov.ro/)

Spain [www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home](http://www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home)

The Slovak Republic [www.emn.sk/en](http://www.emn.sk/en)

Slovenia [emnslovenia.si](http://emnslovenia.si)

Sweden [www.emnsweden.se/](http://www.emnsweden.se/)

Norway [www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#](http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#)

Georgia [migration.commission.ge/](http://migration.commission.ge/)

The Republic of Moldova [bma.gov.md/en](http://bma.gov.md/en)

Ukraine [dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html](http://dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html)

Montenegro [www.gov.me/mup](http://www.gov.me/mup)

Armenia [migration.am/?lang=en](http://migration.am/?lang=en)

Serbia [kirs.gov.rs/eng](http://kirs.gov.rs/eng)

The Republic of North Macedonia <https://mvr.gov.mk/>

Albania

The United Kingdom