

## SKILLBRIDGE

# Skills Validation for Borderless Labor Integration into European Markets

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## WP2.1 Meta-analyse on skills assessment and validation approaches and elaboration of recommendations for migrants soft skills validation framework Synthesis Report

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## Introduction

### SkillBridge Project Overview

The SkillBridge project is a European initiative that aims to improve the validation of skills and competences among migrants and refugees in partner countries. Given the challenges migrants face in integrating into the labor market, particularly due to the lack of formal recognition of their skills — both formal and informal — the project aims to develop innovative tools, training models and policy recommendations to close these gaps.

Skills validation is crucial to improve the employability of migrants, enable fair recognition of their existing skills and support their integration into host countries' labor markets. This project is in line with EU priorities on migrant integration, labor mobility and skills certification and contributes to fairer and more efficient labor markets.

### Methodology of Meta-Analysis

The meta-analysis underpinning this report synthesizes research outputs from six partner countries: Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Germany, Tunisia, and France. The research approach combined desk research on labor market contexts and policy frameworks, field research through surveys and interviews with stakeholders such as employment service providers and skill evaluators, and comparative analysis across countries.

Data collection emphasized labor market statistics, existing skill validation mechanisms, digital tools, and stakeholder perspectives. This multi-method approach ensures a robust, comprehensive understanding of migrant skill validation challenges and opportunities within diverse European contexts.

In our analysis, we interviewed 42 participants from 6 countries as seen below. Participants included stakeholders such as employment agency representatives, vocational training providers, NGO staff working with migrants, and public authorities engaged in skills validation or labor integration. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online and transcribed for thematic coding and cross-country comparison. All participants informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical standards for social research. The data was analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring barriers, enabling factors, and policy patterns across contexts.

COUNTRIES	SAMPLE SIZE (NR. OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE RESEARCH)
France	7
Italy	7
Germany	8
Slovenia	11
Spain	7
Tunisia	2
<b>SUM</b>	<b>42</b>

## Chapter 1: Profiles of the Participating Countries and Organizations

### National Contexts Related to Migrant Labor Market Integration

Each partner country exhibits unique demographic, economic, and migratory profiles affecting migrant labor market integration:

- **Italy:** With a population of nearly 59 million, Italy hosts approximately 5.25 million foreign nationals (8.9% of the population), including over 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Migrants predominantly engage in sectors like personal and collective services, agriculture, hospitality, construction, and commerce. Unemployment among migrants is higher than natives (11.4% vs. 7.2%), and validation services remain fragmented regionally.
- **Spain:** Spain's diverse migrant population includes both EU and non-EU nationals, concentrated in agriculture, construction, and service sectors. Spain has introduced more structured regional and national skill validation frameworks, although challenges in recognition and digital tool adoption remain.
- **Slovenia:** Slovenia's smaller migrant population faces challenges of language barriers and limited validation services, with ongoing efforts to align national systems with EU standards. The country's labor market prioritizes health, construction, and manufacturing sectors for migrant employment.
- **Germany:** Germany, a key migrant destination, maintains relatively advanced national skill validation frameworks, including comprehensive recognition systems and integration programs. Migrants predominantly work in healthcare, engineering, IT, and skilled trades. The German system

benefits from strong digital infrastructures and employer engagement, though integration gaps persist.

- France:** France hosts a significant migrant workforce, with validation mechanisms that combine national certification frameworks and regional initiatives. The French context emphasizes language acquisition alongside skill validation, with sectors like healthcare, construction, and hospitality as main employment destinations.
- Tunisia:** With a population of around 12.6 million, Tunisia is both a country of origin and a transit country for migrants, particularly along the central Mediterranean route. Around 1.1% of the population are foreigners, including more than 12,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers. Migrants - mainly from sub-Saharan Africa - are largely employed in informal, low-paid sectors such as agriculture, construction and domestic labor. Legal barriers, a lack of formal work permits and limited mechanisms for recognizing qualifications severely restrict access to the formal labor market. Unemployment among migrants is estimated to be well above the national average (15.9%), due to legal barriers to formal employment, language difficulties, and limited recognition of prior skills and education, with inactivity rates exceeding 50% in some migrant communities. Although Tunisia has initiated pilot programs for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in collaboration with international organizations, a comprehensive national framework is still lacking. Most validation initiatives remain fragmented and have a limited reach. The government has prioritized improving employability and reintegration of both returnees and migrants through vocational training, although structural reforms are needed to align with international standards and support the integration of migrants into the labor market

We have noted these joint findings, researching the questions mentioned:

Country	Migrants % of Total Population	Unemployment Rate (Migrants)	Key Employment Sectors
Italy	>10%	11.4%	Personal services, agriculture, hospitality, construction, commerce
Germany	14.9%	15.0%	Construction, food production, care, retail, transport, metalwork
Slovenia	10.1%	6.1% (non-EU)	Manufacturing, construction, agriculture, tourism
Spain	15.5%	~20%	Agriculture, hospitality, domestic work, construction, care work
France	Not specified	Not specified	Hospitality, care, services (via VAE and regional support)

Tunisia	~0.5% (about 59,000 international migrants in 2020; Tunisia is primarily a country of emigration rather than immigration)	Not specified	Informal, low-skilled, physically demanding jobs across sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, construction, factory workers (with low pay) and manual labor (e.g. assistants, painters).
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## Overview of Participating Organizations and Their Role in Skill Validation

Participating organizations vary across countries but share a commitment to facilitating skill recognition:

- Chambers of commerce and industry bodies played key roles in Italy, Spain, and Germany, providing skill assessment and certification.
- Training providers and social cooperatives are active in the migrant’s reception and competency validation in Italy and Slovenia.
- National associations and volunteer service centers support non-formal skill recognition, especially in France and Slovenia.
- Digital platform developers and NGOs contribute to advancing online tools for validation in Germany and Spain.

## Chapter 2: Overall Policy Context for Skill Validation Among Migrants

### National and EU-Level Frameworks for Skill Validation

Skill validation policies reflect a mix of EU directives, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and CEDEFOP guidelines, and national/regional legislation. While countries like Germany have well-established national validation systems, others such as Slovenia rely heavily on regionally funded projects with limited coordination. For example, France has addressed this issue through implementation of several national policies aimed at facilitating the recognition and validation of skills acquired by migrants, which are integrated into broader strategies for professional integration and social inclusion.

EU-level efforts foster interoperability, establishing common standards for recognizing formal, non-formal, and informal skills. The CEDEFOP guidelines adopted in 2023 and 2024 have been critical in defining standards, codes, and common elements for validation activities.

When researching the countries, we noted the following situation in researched countries:

- **France:** France's key mechanism for the recognition of qualifications is the Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE), which enables certification based on professional experience. Programs such as "VAE sans frontières" support migrants in validating their skills to facilitate integration into the labor market. The French Office for Immigration and Integration (Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration, OFII) contributes through the comparability of diplomas, language courses and multi-stakeholder employment support. In addition to public programs, private and non-profit initiatives highlighted by France Stratégie offer vocational training, language courses and intercultural skills development for refugees. Regional centers (DAVA) provide tailored support, including personalized VAE guidance. France also participates in EU-wide initiatives coordinated by Cedefop to align national practices with European standards to improve mobility and integration. While there is no national program that certifies non-cognitive skills specifically for migrants, regional frameworks are increasingly recognizing transversal skills (e.g. adaptability, communication, teamwork) as part of integration efforts.
- **Germany:** Germany offers several state-supported pathways for skill recognition and labor market integration. The EU Blue Card targets highly qualified professionals, while the Western Balkan Regulation facilitates access for workers without formal qualification recognition. Despite high demand for skilled labor, third-country migration under employment permits remained low in 2023, suggesting current policies are insufficient (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024). Key official resources include: 1) Anerkennung in Deutschland – federal portal for recognition of foreign qualifications, 2) MYSKILLS – skill recognition tool by Bertelsmann Foundation, 3) Recognition Act (BQFG) and Europass – tools supporting qualification comparability. Private initiatives also play a key role, notably through the IQ Programme (Integration through Qualification), which provides guidance and validation support via NGOs, adult education centres, and chambers of commerce. Germany also supports the validation of non-cognitive and soft skills through tools like ProfilPASS, and certified training offered by providers such as IHK, TÜV, and Volkshochschulen. These programs help document life/work-based competences such as communication, teamwork, and time management—skills increasingly valued in the job market.
- **Slovenia:** The Slovenian approach to validating migrants' qualifications is still evolving. While the Ministry of Labor promotes a more comprehensive

integration strategy that goes beyond language acquisition, there is still a discrepancy between the recruitment of highly skilled migrants and the reality that most third-country nationals work in low-skilled sectors (EC, 2017). Employment services play a central role, but the recognition of foreign qualifications is often slow, unclear and difficult without documentation. Tools such as the ENIC-NARIC assessments and the EU Skills Profile for TCNs are used to identify and manage the recognition of qualifications and training needs. Non-governmental organizations and adult education centers support migrants with accommodation, translation, education and employment-related training. Organizations such as Slovenska filantropija, Humanitas, Amnesty International Slovenije and folk high schools (e.g. Jesenice) run integration and training activities, often funded by the EU (e.g. AMIF, IncludEU) and national sources. Projects such as IncludEU improve the digital and language skills of migrants and thus support integration and employability. Best practices from projects such as SCOUT and REC, in which Slovenia has participated, provide tools such as ProfilPASS to assess and document informal and non-formal skills. Examples from Austria, Italy and Spain provide models for NGO-led vocational training measures and integrated training initiatives aimed at migrants. While Slovenia recognizes formal qualifications, certification of non-cognitive skills (e.g. social and intercultural competences) remains limited. OECD and Council of Europe reports emphasize the need to promote the development of soft skills, supported by adult education guidance and tools such as the ProfilPASS.

- **Spain:** Spain offers validation mechanisms for professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal learning, coordinated by INCUAL and regional authorities within the National Qualification System. Programs such as Acredita and SEPE tools (e.g. statistical profiling) offer partial recognition opportunities, although soft skills are still insufficiently considered. Non-governmental organizations such as Accem and CEPAIM have developed inclusive but non-binding approaches to validating qualifications for migrants. Spain also draws on European best practices, including models from France (Passeport Orientation Formation), Germany (ValiKom) and Italy (Lombardy), which incorporate transversal skills and digital tools.
- **Italy:** In Italy, there is no national program for the validation of migrants' qualifications. The existing systems are regionally and unevenly developed and are largely funded by the EU. The certification of qualifications is officially recognized as a guidance service that often precedes job placement. Validation approaches vary across the 20 regions. Some commission public-private agencies, others rely on public experts. In regions

such as Friuli Venezia Giulia, the process is centralized and involves private actors. Non-governmental organizations and education providers support these efforts, and Erasmus+ projects (e.g. by IAL Trieste and SISSA) have piloted the certification of cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Although there is no national framework for the certification of soft skills, regions such as Lombardy have integrated transversal competences into their qualification systems.

- Tunisia:** Tunisia does not yet have a comprehensive national framework for recognizing and validating the skills of migrants. However, policy awareness is growing, especially as the country acknowledges its dual role as a country of emigration and a transit hub for sub-Saharan migrants. Several pilot initiatives, often supported by international actors such as the IOM, ILO, GIZ and the EU (notably through the THAMM program), have tested Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) approaches in sectors with labor shortages, such as agriculture, construction and domestic services. Although these efforts are promising, they remain fragmented and lack systematic legal and institutional integration. The National Migration Strategy (2022–2030) identifies skills validation as a key priority for both returning Tunisian migrants and foreign nationals in Tunisia and promotes inter-ministerial coordination. Key institutions such as ANETI and CENAFFIF have started to integrate competence-based models into vocational training, although implementation is uneven. In contrast to the EU countries, there are no standardized instruments in Tunisia (e.g. ProfilPASS or Europass) and there is still no systematic certification of non-cognitive or transversal skills. Civil society actors and non-governmental organizations play an important complementary role by providing informal assessments and integration support, but their initiatives often remain small and externally funded. Participation in the EU-Tunisia mobility partnerships could promote further harmonization with EU frameworks and mutual recognition standards in the future

We summarized the findings into the table below:

Country	Skill Validation Systems	Soft Skills Recognition
Italy	Fragmented, regional; no national system; EU-funded pilots	Included in some regional frameworks (e.g., Lombardy)
Germany	Structured via Blue Card, partial recognition; formal pathways limited	Limited; pilot projects exist
Slovenia	Partially structured; regional support; no specific system for soft skills	Limited; some regional frameworks include soft skills
Spain	Integrated (INCUAL, Acredita); good formal validation; limited soft skills	Limited; not systematically covered

France	Well-developed (VAE, OFII, DAVA); soft skills indirectly included regionally	No national system, but regional frameworks include soft/transversal skills
Tunisia	Pilot-based; no national system; initiatives led by international organizations (e.g., IOM, GIZ); early-stage policy integration	Very limited; soft skills not formally recognized; NGOs offer informal training and support

### Existing Support Mechanisms for Migrant Labor Market Integration

Support mechanisms include active labor market policies, language training, vocational education, and specialized reception services. Validation often precedes job placement, serving as a bridge to employment. Several countries have piloted Erasmus+ and national initiatives to enhance migrant skill certification, focusing on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned from National Policies

Researched countries are faced with the following challenges:

- France:** Migrants in France face numerous challenges when trying to validate their skills. A major obstacle is the lack of awareness of available mechanisms such as the Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) and related funding instruments such as the Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF). This information gap limits their access to validation services. The complexity and length of the procedures, which often require extensive documentation and the completion of administrative steps, further discourage participation — especially among migrants who face language barriers or do not have official documentation. Employers' limited knowledge of validation systems also reduces the value of certified qualifications in the labor market and weakens both acceptance and recognition. There is also a mismatch between qualifications: Migrants' qualifications are often not recognized, pushing them into underemployment and sectors that have nothing to do with their expertise. This not only affects migrants' careers, but also hampers the French economy, which is struggling with shortages in key sectors. Efforts to standardize validation procedures are hampered by regional and sectoral inconsistencies, insufficient coordination between stakeholders and fragmented service provision. While digital tools are being introduced, accessibility and digital literacy remain an obstacle for many migrants.
- Italy:** Many migrants are unaware of the skills certification system and the funding mechanisms available, which restricts access to validation services. Employers are also unfamiliar with these systems, which reduces recognition and acceptance in the labor market. There is a skills mismatch:

While migrants often have relevant experience, the Italian labor market increasingly demands profiles in IT, healthcare, engineering, construction and education. Employers are also looking for transversal skills such as teamwork, flexibility, time management and digital competence. Although Italy 2023-2024 has adopted national and CEDEFOP guidelines –to support standardization, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation across regional systems. While progress has been made in defining common activities, codes and standards, full interoperability between levels is still under development.

- **Germany:** Migrants face numerous obstacles in the validation of their qualifications and their integration. Employers report difficulties in assessing foreign qualifications, while language barriers, mismatched expectations and the limited use of migration routes — particularly for professionally trained women — further hinder employment. Although 51% of migrants with vocational qualifications are women (often in the care sector), they remain under-represented in areas such as engineering and international internships. Standardized validation is still difficult to implement. Although there are legal frameworks (e.g. the Recognition Act) and various residence permits, the bureaucratic complexity and uncertainty regarding qualification standards discourage employers from getting involved. To address these issues, the report recommends expanding international recruitment agreements, improving recognition procedures and supporting status transitions for migrants already in Germany — evidenced by a high number of moves from study/training permits to work permits, an avenue with untapped potential.
- **Slovenia:** Migrants in Slovenia — especially third-country nationals — face different challenges when validating their formal, non-formal and informal qualifications. These include limited access to information, language barriers, the lack of translated materials and the difficulty of obtaining adequate documentation, especially for those fleeing conflict. Many migrants come from systems that are not aligned with the European Qualifications Framework, making recognition processes lengthy and fragmented. The low level of awareness among both migrants and employers further limits the acceptance of validation and adaptation to the labor market. There is a persistent skills mismatch: Many migrants are overqualified for the low-skilled sectors (e.g. construction, hospitality, agriculture) in which they are employed. The lack of bridging programs, effective skills mapping and up-to-date labor market projections hinders their integration into suitable positions. National strategies emphasize the importance of recruiting skilled migrants, but implementation fails to match skills with market needs. Slovenia does not have a uniform validation

framework. Although the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF) and the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) system exist, they primarily serve domestic adult learners and are not adequately adapted for migrants. The system suffers from institutional fragmentation, limited coordination between stakeholders and insufficient linguistic and cultural adaptation. As a result, validation remains inaccessible, inconsistent and under-resourced, preventing effective integration of migrants' skills into the labor market.

- **Spain:** Spain offers formal pathways for the validation of professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal learning. They are managed by INCUAL and the Autonomous Communities and are integrated into the National Qualifications and Vocational Training System. Programs such as Acredita and tools from SEPE (e.g. statistical profiling) allow for partial recognition of skills, although soft skills remain largely unconsidered. Non-governmental organizations such as Accem and CEPAIM offer inclusive, non-binding approaches to validating migrants' qualifications. Spain also draws on European best practices, including the French Passeport Orientation Formation, the German ValiKom and the Italian Lombardy model, which focus on transversal skills and the use of digital tools in validation processes.
- **Tunisia:** Tunisia faces several structural and operational challenges in validating the skills of migrants. The most critical problem is the lack of a comprehensive national framework for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and informal skills. Existing initiatives are fragmented, largely driven by international organizations (e.g. IOM, GIZ, ILO) through pilot programs and are neither sustainable nor comprehensive. Migrants and asylum seekers in Tunisia often work in the informal economy, especially in sectors such as agriculture, construction and domestic work, where there are no formal mechanisms to certify or recognize their experience. A major obstacle is the legal and administrative exclusion of migrants: most have no regular status or work permit, which prevents access to formal training, employment or certification. Migrant inactivity is high (over 50% in some communities), exacerbated by language barriers, lack of documentation and fear of arrest or deportation. Even returning Tunisian migrants with work experience abroad face bureaucratic hurdles in converting their qualifications into state-recognized certificates. Institutions such as ANETI and CENAFFIF have limited capacity to process RPL on a large scale, and the regional offices often only act as intermediaries for centralized decision-making in Tunis. Recognition of soft and transversal skills is virtually non-existent. While some vocational training programs include soft skills modules, these are neither standardized nor adapted for migrants. Civil society actors and non-governmental organizations such as FTDES and Terre

d'Asile Tunisie provide informal support, including career guidance, life skills training and entrepreneurship programs, but there is a lack of formal mandates and consistent funding. There is also no national registry, interoperable database or coordinated stakeholder platform to facilitate validation processes. Rigid labor laws further restrict access to employment for foreign nationals, and even ANETI's placement services for employment abroad are limited to a few sectors and destination countries. Although there are bilateral mobility agreements with countries such as France, Germany and the Gulf States, these focus on emigration and do not address the integration of foreign workers within Tunisia. The skills mismatch is pronounced: Migrants' skills often remain unutilized due to a lack of legal recognition or validation opportunities. This leads to "brain waste" and missed economic opportunities for both migrants and the Tunisian labor market.

The joint results of the countries surveyed reveal the following common challenges:

- **Fragmented validation systems:** Processes for recognizing qualifications are often fragmented regionally or sectorally, leading to inconsistent implementation and limited access — especially for migrants navigating a complex administrative landscape.
- **Low awareness among stakeholders:** Both migrants and employers are often unaware of existing validation mechanisms and funding opportunities, which undermine the use and labor market value of certified qualifications.
- **Digital and language barriers:** The limited availability of user-friendly, multilingual digital tools restricts access to validation procedures, especially for migrants with limited digital skills.
- **Limited recognition of soft skills:** Although employers place great value on transversal and non-cognitive skills (e.g. communication, adaptability, teamwork), these competences are rarely integrated into formal validation systems.
- **Dependence on project-based funding:** Many validation services rely on EU-funded or time-limited pilot projects, which raise concerns about long-term sustainability and institutional commitment.
- **Mismatch between qualifications and labor market:** Migrants often have relevant professional or academic qualifications but are employed below their qualification level due to insufficient validation pathways and a lack of targeted training or job matching mechanisms.

- **Administrative and documentary hurdles:** Lengthy, bureaucratic processes and the need for formal documents are major obstacles, especially for migrants who do not have access to official documentation or who are fleeing conflict.
- **Weak institutional coordination:** Limited cooperation between employment offices, educational institutions and migrant support services reduces the coherence and reach of validation processes.
- **Gender inequalities:** Migrant women are underrepresented in key sectors despite having relevant qualifications and face challenges in accessing validation and employment opportunities.
- **Lack of formal channels for returning migrants:** In Tunisia, even returning nationals with international work experience face obstacles in converting foreign qualifications into nationally recognized certificates. This is a particular gap that is not always closed in the systems of other countries.
- **Centralized decision-making limits local capacities:** The regional labor offices in Tunisia have little authority and mostly act as intermediaries for the central offices in Tunis. This illustrates the problem of excessive centralization, which can also apply to other countries with similar administrative structures.

The key gaps include lack of national-level unified frameworks, inadequate digital tools, poor communication and training for operators, and absence of standardized methods for transversal skills validation. These inefficiencies hamper migrants' labor market integration and the recognition of their full skill sets.

### **Recommendations for improving national validation policies**

To strengthen the national validation system for migrants, a comprehensive, coordinated and labor-oriented approach is essential. The following key actions are proposed:

- **Developing a centralized national strategy:** Create a unified strategy for migrant integration and skills validation that includes both pre- and post-entry measures. Introduce a single point of contact for migrants seeking recognition of qualifications to simplify navigation through the system.
- **Improving awareness and accessibility:** Launch targeted information campaigns to make migrants and employers aware of available validation routes, funding mechanisms and support services. Translate relevant materials into multiple languages and improve communication channels for third-country nationals.

- **Standardization and streamline validation procedures:** Introduce standardized protocols across ministries, regions and sectors to ensure consistency and reliability. Simplify administrative steps and make procedures more transparent and user-friendly.
- **Strengthening stakeholder coordination:** Promote collaboration between ministries, adult education providers, NGOs and employers to create an integrated validation and employment support system. Strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation and establish a permanent coordination mechanism.
- **Investing in institutional and human resource capacity:** Expand the institutional capacity of recognition bodies and train counselors and examiners to work effectively with migrants. Equip professionals with intercultural and language skills and provide tools for individual counseling and support.
- **Introducing bridging and recovery programs:** Develop bridging programs to help migrants acquire missing qualifications, especially for regulated professions. Integrate language training and targeted counseling to facilitate a smoother transition into employment.
- **Utilizing digital infrastructure and tools:** Invest in digital validation platforms, including the EU Skills Profile Tool, to facilitate the documentation and validation of qualifications. Ensure that platforms are accessible to users with limited digital skills.
- **Aligning validation with the needs of the labor market:** Regularly assess labor market trends and use current data to adjust validation frameworks accordingly. Improve skills mapping and forecasting and ensure that validated skills reflect actual employment opportunities.
- **Exploring international cooperation:** Consider bilateral agreements with countries of origin to facilitate skills recognition and improve job placement. Support smoother integration pathways for migrants through coordinated international frameworks.
- **Decentralizing validation services:** empower regional and local offices with decision-making authority, training and digital tools to reduce bottlenecks and improve local service delivery.
- **Introducing bridging and recovery programs:** Develop targeted pathways for foreign migrants and returning nationals to convert informal or international experience into recognized qualifications.
- **Recognizing transversal and soft skills:** Include the assessment and validation of non-cognitive skills (e.g. teamwork, adaptability) in national

qualifications frameworks, using tools such as **microcredit cards/microcredentials** or digital portfolios.

## Chapter 3: Benchmarking and comparative needs analysis

### Soft skills

The most valued soft skills across researched countries are verbal and non-verbal communication, integrity, learning agility, problem solving, responsibility, active listening, creativity, teamwork/collaboration and adaptability.

### Benchmarking of Skill Validation Frameworks and Methods Used for Migrants

- **Italy** relies on regional validation frameworks, using competency-based interviews, candidate observation, and self-assessment. Regional disparities affect service availability.
- **Spain** implements practical skills tests, competency-based interviews, self-assessment tools, and formal certification equivalencies, while they mostly use a combination of these approaches.
- **Slovenia** employs competency-based interviews and observation, focusing on bridging linguistic and cultural gaps.
- **Germany** features competency-based interviews, practical skills tests, exams for formal recognition of certifications, employer-based evaluations and self-assessment tools.
- **France** balances competency-based interviews, employer-based evaluations, self-assessment tools and practical skills tests.
- **Tunisia** uses self-assessment tools, practical skill tests, competency-based interviews and formal certification equivalency.

Respondents pointed out that preferred features for skills validation tools are CV integration, multilingual support, employer feedback option and simple reporting.

### Challenges in Recognizing Non-Formal and Informal Skills Among Migrants

In all countries, the recognition of informal and soft skills remains a persistent challenge in the systems for validating migrants' skills. The main obstacles include the lack of standardization of skills assessment, employers' reluctance to use alternative validation methods, migrants' unfamiliarity with validation processes, high certification costs, insufficient digital tools for online validation, language barriers to skills assessment and limited access to professional networks. In contexts such as Tunisia, these challenges are exacerbated by the lack of legal

residency or documentation, centralized decision-making and non-existent national frameworks for the recognition of non-formal qualifications.

Many migrants find it difficult to translate their life and work experience into formal recognition, particularly in technical or professional fields, leaving them underemployed despite having the appropriate qualifications. Confidence issues — both for migrants who have to navigate opaque systems and for employers who have doubts about unfamiliar credentials — further complicate the process. The lack of a digital infrastructure and interoperable validation systems, as seen in Tunisia, exacerbates inequality in access.

Respondents from all countries suggested a number of targeted improvements to address these issues:

- Creating a clear, standardized system for the recognition of foreign qualifications, informal learning and work experience to reduce inconsistencies between countries and sectors.
- Simplifying and digitizing validation processes to increase efficiency, transparency and accessibility — especially for migrants with limited administrative or digital skills.
- Raise awareness among migrants and employers through targeted outreach, public campaigns and accessible multilingual guidance.
- Provide tailored advice and guidance to help migrants navigate the validation process, with culturally and linguistically appropriate support structures.
- Recognize skills in technical and in-demand areas more systematically and ensure that migrants' skills match the actual needs of the labor market.
- Build trust by involving employers, NGOs and migrant communities in the development of validation tools and criteria.

Together, these improvements would help create inclusive, equitable and employer-recognized pathways to validate the full range of migrants' skills — formal and informal — and improve their integration into the labor market.

### **Digital Tools Used for Skill Validation**

In Germany the majority of respondents stated that they currently do not use any digital tools or platforms for competency recognition. Italy and Slovenia have emerging platforms focused on administrative management but lack user-friendly interfaces or multilingual capabilities. For example, Italy uses regional SIUF platform for the administrative management of validation pathways and their

Chambers of Commerce has also developed an additional platform for the certification of the skills, but there is no dedicated access platform for users, nor is there sufficient support available for operators. France utilizes blended approaches combining digital and face-to-face validation, with room for improvement in platform sophistication. They use Plateforme Eva for basic competences. The majority of the respondents expressed interest in using the digital platform for skills validation in their countries. In Tunisia, no formal digital tools or national platforms are currently used for the validation of qualifications. The regional labor administrations do not have access to digital systems for assessment or documentation and act primarily as intermediaries for the central bodies. Validation processes are still paper-based and often inaccessible to migrants with limited digital skills. However, interviewees in Tunisia expressed a strong interest in the introduction of digital tools — especially those that are mobile and offline, with multilingual support and intuitive self-assessment features. In addition, platforms need to be adapted for less technically demanding environments and support informal skills profiles, as many migrants do not have formal documents.

Generally, participants expressed their interest in using digital tools that support validation, especially if they are multilingual, user-friendly and can integrate skills profiles with jobseekers' documents. Features such as feedback mechanisms for employers and automated reports were seen as valuable. Although most respondents had not yet used digital or blended platforms, there was a clear willingness to adopt such tools - particularly those that can support remote or mobile learning and assessment.

### **Alignment with ESCO and Other EU Certification Frameworks**

All European partner countries strive to align validation procedures with ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) and EQF standards to enhance interoperability and transparency. However, operationalizing these alignments at regional levels remains uneven. On the other hand, Tunisia does not currently have a formal national framework based on the ESCO or EQF standards. Although some pilot programs contain elements of EU best practice (e.g. under the THAMM program), alignment is still at a conceptual stage. There is no interoperable national qualification framework for migrants and recognition procedures are not yet linked to European certification structures. Efforts to harmonize with EU standards are mostly externally driven and limited to small initiatives without systematic institutional integration.

### **Digital/Blended Learning Methods for Migrant Skills Validation**

The most frequently suggested tools are e-learning modules, followed by microcredits, simulations and various blended learning methods. These responses

confirm a clear trend towards flexibility (e.g. asynchronous, self-paced learning via micro credentials), accessibility (e.g. multilingual mobile platforms and simulations) and recognition of different learning pathways — particularly important for migrants without formal certification.

In the Tunisian context, additional priorities include the need for tools that work offline or with low bandwidth and require minimal digital skills. Self-assessment features, multilingual content and simple user interfaces were strongly emphasized. Given the widespread prevalence of undocumented or informally acquired skills among migrants, digital platforms should prioritize the recognition of informal learning and allow users to create personalized skills profiles, even in the absence of traditional credentials.

### **Need for additional training or resources in skill validation**

The respondents emphasized the need for explanation of procedures, online training, in-person training sessions, policy guidance on skill validation processes, digital tools for skill validations, training in competency-based assessment and additional support from the employer's side.

## **Chapter 4: Summary of the country-related findings**

### ***France***

Skills validation for migrants in France exists but is fragmented and poorly understood by both users and employers. All interviewed organizations expressed readiness to engage in digital and standardized processes. Major obstacles include administrative complexity, lack of information, and language barriers. Respondents agree on the need for more inclusive, trust-based, and accessible validation practices.

### ***Italy***

The national research confirmed the fragmented and underdeveloped state of skill validation services for migrants in Italy. Despite a growing need for competent labor and increasing migration flows regulated through the "Decreto Flussi", current systems for recognizing and certifying the skills of migrants are:

- Regionally fragmented, without a unified national framework.
- Largely unknown to both migrant beneficiaries and employers.
- Underutilized, with only 3 out of 7 researched organizations offering validation services.

- Lacking adequate digital infrastructure for broad and multilingual access.

The research also highlights a clear mismatch between the skills migrants hold and the actual demands of the labor market, especially in sectors like construction, care, and ICT. Furthermore, non-cognitive and transversal skills, while highly valued by employers, are rarely validated in formal systems.

### ***Germany***

While Germany has numerous mechanisms in place for skills recognition, many of these systems are difficult to access and navigate. Additionally, non-formal and informal competences, which are highly relevant in both daily life and the labour market, are often overlooked. However, the field research in this study highlights promising practices at the local level, such as successful collaborations between job centers and educational providers. This report stresses the need for low threshold, multilingual, and culturally sensitive approaches to better support individuals from diverse backgrounds.

### ***Slovenia***

Although migrants' soft skills such as communication, problem solving and adaptability are generally recognized as important for employability, they are rarely validated in a formal or structured way. Most organizations rely on informal methods such as interviews or observations. There is a clear willingness among stakeholders to adopt digital tools and standardized assessment methods, but these are still underutilized due to systemic barriers, lack of training and limited employer engagement. The responses to the interview show a willingness to change and openness to implementing solutions at national and EU level such as the SKILLBRIDGE platform, provided the tools are multilingual, user-friendly and aligned with the needs of the labor market.

### ***Spain***

In Spain, the existence of a disconnect between formal skills validation systems and the real needs of the labor market in Spain, especially with regard to the migrant population, was noted. Soft skills, considered critical by employers, are not adequately integrated into current assessment processes. Bureaucratic, language and technological barriers aggravate the exclusion of migrants from effective professional recognition processes. In other words, the validation of soft skills in migrants in Spain is at a critical point: there are regulatory advances and institutional tools, but they are still far from the realities and needs of this population. Moreover, formal procedures do not always take into account non-linear trajectories or multicultural contexts, which leads to indirect exclusion. So the study confirms that interpersonal skills have a high value for access to

employment, especially in sectors such as customer service, social services, hospitality or health. However, their official recognition remains marginal.

### ***Tunisia***

Tunisia does not yet have a comprehensive or institutionalized system for validating the qualifications of migrants. National research confirms that current practices are limited to small, donor-funded pilot initiatives led by international organizations (e.g. IOM, GIZ) without an overarching national framework. Validation services are largely inaccessible due to centralized procedures and weak institutional capacity at regional level, not supported by digital platforms or tools, making access particularly difficult for migrants with limited digital skills or unstable internet access. There is also a lack of recognition opportunities for informal and non-formal learning, which is prevalent among both sub-Saharan migrants and returning Tunisians. The heavy reliance on paper-based documents, which most migrants do not possess was also emphasized by the respondents in our research.

The research shows a marked skills mismatch, with many migrants and returnees unable to have their skills recognized despite working in sectors such as agriculture, construction and domestic work. Interviewees emphasized the lack of tools to assess soft skills, although non-cognitive skills are important for employment. There is a clear interest in digital, multilingual and low-threshold solutions, provided they are easy to use and suitable for offline or mobile use. Coordination between ministries, training organizations and migrant support services remains minimal, and most regional offices only act as intermediaries for central decisions made in Tunis. However, field research shows that stakeholders are willing to engage in more standardized and comprehensive validation models — especially when supported by EU-compliant tools such as the SKILLBRIDGE platform.

## **Chapter 5: Recommendations for Skill Validation**

Stakeholders in partner countries have identified a number of policy, procedural and practical reforms that are needed to improve the fairness, accessibility and labor market relevance of migrant skills validation systems. The following key recommendations were highlighted by all partners:

### ***1. Standardization and simplification of validation procedures***

There is a broad consensus that validation systems need to be simplified, transparent and standardized both within and between EU countries. Clearer procedural steps, fewer bureaucratic hurdles and faster processing — especially in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, ICT and construction — are essential to improve user-friendliness and confidence in the system.

## **2. Recognition of informal, non-formal and micro-credentials**

Migrants often have skills acquired outside formal education through work, volunteering or daily life. The systems should:

- Support the partial recognition of such skills,
- Expand the use of microcredits and modular qualifications,
- Accept informal and experiential learning as valid credentials.

## **3. Improve digital tools and access**

Implement digital platforms that enable self-assessment, document uploading and real-time tracking of applications. These platforms should:

- Be multilingual and user-friendly,
- Include automatic translation, interactive guides and help functions,
- Provide remote access, especially for migrants with limited mobility or digital skills.
- Improving digital support for migrants and validation staff (e.g. through digital onboarding tools, tutorials and helpdesks) is equally important.

## **4. Early, individualized support and guidance**

Early support significantly improves outcomes. Systems should provide the following:

- Accessible advice and guidance models,
- A one-stop advice system to help with recognition, training and job placement,
- Staff trained in intercultural competence, language support and validation guidelines.

## **5. Investment in job-specific language and integration training**

Language is a key to success. Stakeholders recommend:

- Job-specific language courses, ideally offered alongside employment or internships,
- The combination of language training with validation and education to improve both employability and social integration.

## **6. Adapting the validation framework to the needs of the labor market**

Validation systems should be regularly updated to take account of evolving skills gaps. This includes:

- Stronger data collection and forecasting of sectoral needs,
- Development of bridging programs for migrants to acquire missing skills,
- Ensure that validation results are linked to real employment opportunities.

## **7. Strengthening employer engagement and public awareness**

Employers often lack understanding or recognition of validation systems. Solutions include:

- Awareness campaigns to promote recognition of validated skills,
- Incentives for employers to participate in validation schemes,
- Involvement of employers' associations and sector-specific bodies in the development of validation policy.

## **8. Promoting international cooperation and recognition before entering the labor market**

Cross-border cooperation can facilitate integration. Recommended measures include:

- Pre-departure training programs based on host country standards,
- Bilateral agreements to simplify the recognition of qualifications,
- Mutual confidence-building mechanisms between sending and receiving countries.

## **9. Removal of structural barriers: Discrimination and exclusion**

Validation efforts must be supported by a commitment to equality and inclusion. Important measures:

- Implement anti-discrimination measures in validation and employment,
- Combat racism, stigma and systemic bias through training, regulation and awareness raising,
- Create inclusive systems that value diversity and recognize the complex life journeys of migrants.

## **10. Ensuring sustainable public and EU funding for validation services**

To ensure long-term accessibility, validation services should be supported by stable national and European funding mechanisms. This will ensure affordability, equity and continuity of services for all migrants beyond short-term project cycles.

## **11. Supporting pilot projects as innovation laboratories**

Projects such as SKILLSBRIDGE should be supported as pilot projects to test, evaluate and showcase innovative validation procedures. These pilot projects can inform national policy, build trust with stakeholders and demonstrate the labor market value of validation programs.

## **12. Expand local and integrative support systems**

Improve the coordination of guidance and validation support at local level to ensure tailored assistance. Equip educational institutions with user-friendly tools to help individuals document and showcase their skills. Develop targeted approaches for specific groups, such as migrant women and older newcomers, to address their particular needs and improve access to validation and integration measures. Encourage greater collaboration between employment offices, chambers and education providers to create seamless systems for the recognition of qualifications.

## **13. Develop and pilot a framework for the validation of soft skills**

Create a specific framework - in collaboration with Acredita or ESCO — for the assessment and certification of transversal and non-cognitive skills such as teamwork, adaptability and intercultural communication. Develop these standards together with employers and integrate them into digital self-assessment platforms and regional qualification systems.

### **Suggested policy reforms**

Respondents highlighted several key areas where policy reforms could significantly improve the accessibility, fairness and effectiveness of skills assessment for migrants in [SloveniaEurope](#):

#### **1. Creating an inclusive national validation framework**

Develop a transparent, standardized national framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications and skills, aligned with CEDEFOP and EU instruments such as ESCO and integrated into the [Slovenian national Qualifications Framework \(SOK\)](#).

Ensure that the framework includes mechanisms for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, including life and work experience, caring responsibilities and volunteering.

Introduce a national "Skills Passport" to document and certify the skills of migrants that is recognized by employers and authorities.

## ***2. Streamline and simplify validation procedures***

Ensure that procedures are user-friendly, fast and accessible, especially for migrants who do not have official documents.

Introduce formal examination mechanisms and expand the use of micro-certificates to validate partial or sector-specific skills.

Appoint an independent ombudsman to oversee recognition practices and build user confidence.

In countries where regional offices lack autonomy, such as Tunisia, decentralization of the validation authority is essential to reduce bottlenecks and improve outreach.

## ***3. Support digital innovation in validation***

Invest in multilingual digital platforms that offer CV integration, AI-powered self-assessments, document uploads, employer feedback mechanisms and real-time tracking.

Provide NGOs, education providers and employment agencies with public funding and technical support for the introduction and implementation of these digital tools.

In environments with low connectivity, digital platforms should also offer offline or low-bandwidth access options.

## ***4. Strengthen the capacity and professionalization of validators***

Develop and fund training programs for validators, employment agencies and NGO staff that focus on intercultural competence, digital tools, policy frameworks and soft skills assessment.

Promote the certification of validators as a recognized professional role within the adult education system.

In contexts with centralized decision-making, the qualification of regional staff is a prerequisite for the provision of local services.

### **5. Improve employer engagement and trust**

Involve employers in the design of assessment criteria and validation tools.

Offer incentives to employers who participate in validation programs, including tax breaks or public recognition.

Promote success stories and case studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of migrant validation in recruitment and integration.

### **6. Promote accessibility, awareness and inclusion**

Expand communication about validation opportunities through multilingual channels.

Ensure the availability of interpreters, translated documents and culturally sensitive support throughout the validation process.

Integrate validation into broader migrant orientation, integration and employment support programs.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations often play a key role in public relations and should be officially involved in communication strategies.

### **7. Encourage multi-stakeholder and cross-sector collaboration**

Establish permanent consultation platforms (e.g. advisory boards or working groups) involving NGOs, employers, training institutions, municipalities and public authorities.

Promote territorial networks and cross-sectoral coordination to address regional inequalities in access to validation.

### **8. Promote international cooperation and recognition before entering the labor market**

Facilitate bilateral agreements and pre-departure training programs in countries of origin, especially in areas such as healthcare.

Ensure that these programs are in line with [Slovenian and European \(and where relevant international\)](#) qualification standards to facilitate validation upon arrival.

This is particularly important for countries such as Tunisia, which control both outward and return migration.

### **9. Ensure long-term funding and sustainability**

Secure public and EU funding for validation services and digital infrastructure and go beyond short-term projects.

Support the scaling of successful pilot initiatives, such as SKILLBRIDGE, as innovation labs for broader policy implementation.

In some countries, such as Tunisia, most validation efforts are still donor-driven and lack systematic follow-up

### **10. Targeted approaches for vulnerable groups**

Develop specific validation pathways for under-represented groups such as migrant women and older migrants.

Offer comprehensive support, including mentoring, language training and bridging programs to close sectoral gaps.

Returning migrants with informal or undocumented work experience also need customized support.

### **11. Roles and responsibilities**

- NGOs and training providers: Introduce standardized frameworks, train staff in competency-based assessment and ensure multilingual support.
- Employers: Recognize validated soft skills, offer internships and mentorships and embed validation in HR practices.
- Public authorities and policy makers: Fund tools and training, develop a national validation strategy and involve all stakeholders in co-design and monitoring.

## **Conclusion**

This meta-analysis in Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Germany, Tunisia and France shows that there are still problems with the validation of migrants' qualifications. These include fragmented systems, low levels of awareness, limited digital infrastructure and insufficient recognition of non-cognitive and informal skills. At the same time, promising practices are highlighted, especially in countries with more robust national frameworks, employer engagement and investment in digital tools.

The SkillBridge project directly addresses these gaps by developing an interoperable and accessible digital platform that promotes standardized soft skills assessment and supports cross-national collaboration between key stakeholders.



Through coordinated policy reforms, targeted training and inclusive technological solutions, Europe can improve the recognition of migrants' skills, unlock their full potential and promote fairer integration into the labor market.

