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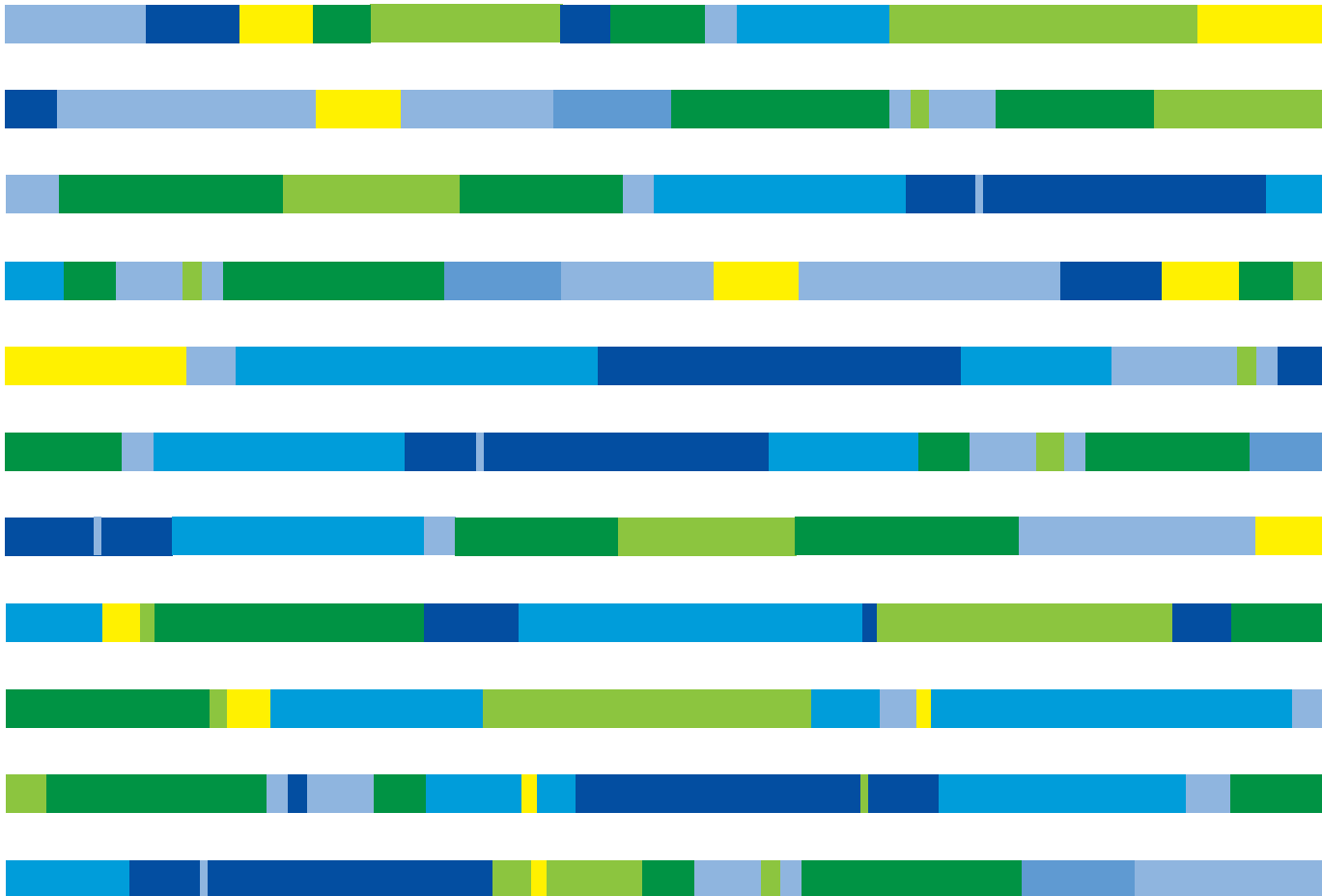
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

THEMATIC REPORT:

Validation initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees

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CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1. Background context

The Russian invasion on the 24 February 2022 in Ukraine has led to a significant displacement of people from their homes. Many Ukrainians, particularly women and children, have been forced to either relocate within the country or flee Ukraine to seek refuge in neighbouring European countries and beyond. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by August 2023, more than 5 882 million Ukrainians have been registered as refugees in Europe, and an additional 358 300 outside Europe (UNHCR, 2023). Most of them have applied for asylum or different forms of national protection in Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. **Number of Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection**

Country	Refugees from Ukraine who applied for temporary protection
Poland	1 639 725
Germany	969 040
Czech Republic	543 190
Spain	187 220
Italy	186 085
Bulgaria	164 470
Romania	139 995
Slovakia	122 480
Austria	101 560

Source: UNHCR 2023

NB: only listing countries hosting more than 100 000 Ukrainian refugees

Consequently, on 4 March 2022 (Council of the European Union, 2022), the European Union Member States unanimously agreed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time. The activation of this Directive has opened immediate employment opportunities in the EU for Ukrainian refugees. This allowed them to offer Ukrainian citizens immediate temporary residence and work permits to swiftly integrate into the labour market, providing them with greater opportunities for self-sufficiency and contributing positively to their overall integration process. The directive itself was designed to provide guidance to Member States in effectively managing and responding to a significant influx of refugees into the EU. Under this directive, Ukrainian refugees are granted temporary protection for a duration of one year, and this can be extended up to

three years. One of the significant benefits of this approach is that refugees are not subjected to lengthy asylum procedures, which often delay their access to services. In addition to the residence permits, Ukrainian refugees also gain access to various vital services and opportunities. These include social protection, healthcare, education, banking, and the labour market.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning, as well as recognition of foreign qualifications, are crucial to successfully integrate Ukrainian refugees, especially due to their specific socio-demographic profile, as discussed later in this report. The validation of skills is often crucial for refugees, as many of them possess work experience in their professions but lack formal qualifications, or evidence of those. However, this scenario is less common among displaced individuals from Ukraine (European Commission, 2023c). Ukrainian refugees often possess documentation and are highly educated. Nevertheless, many of these refugees might have knowledge, skills and competencies that are not recorded in their formal qualifications, without validation of these skills and competences, access to education and labour market is problematic. This can lead to an increased likelihood of underemployment, engaging in employment below their qualification levels. Validation of prior learning therefore holds immense significance for Ukrainian refugees, as it plays a vital role in their labour market integration.

This report maps the validation efforts by the EU and at the national level. Thanks to the European experience with migrant influx in the previous decade, many countries have some measures in place. However, as this report shows, specific measures targeted at Ukrainian refugees are scarce. European countries must recognise the potential that Ukrainian refugees bring to fill workforce shortages and contribute to their host societies. Focusing on the proper validation of informal and non-formal learning will not only benefit the refugees but also help address labour market mismatches and bolster the overall economy.

1.2. Demographic and socio-economic composition of Ukrainian refugees

The composition of refugees from Ukraine stands out from other refugee flows in various respects. The enforcement of martial law has prevented most men between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving the country. As a result, a very large majority of Ukrainian refugees are women and children: women count for at least 70% of refugees in nearly all host countries, whereas about a third are children. Additionally, around 4-6% of the refugee population comprises individuals aged 65 and above. The family composition of Ukrainian refugees poses a significant challenge to their integration into the labour market, as most of them are mothers

who fled the country with their children. The absence of their partners, childcare availability, and the exposure of their children to various stress factors in the new environment increase their caregiving responsibilities, making it difficult to balance family duties with work (OECD, 2023).

The demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees is unique, with a distinct socioeconomic background compared to other immigrant groups. While complete data are challenging to obtain, their education level tends to be relatively high (OECD, 2023), which could impact their integration into host countries' labour markets. Administrative data and information from public employment services provide the most accurate insight into the situation of Ukrainian refugees in destination countries. Although such data remains limited it shows that in Spain, 62% of adult refugees have a tertiary degree, 29% have completed upper secondary or professional qualifications, 8% hold a secondary degree, and only around 1% have primary education or less (OECD, 2023). Ireland also shows similar results, with 62% of nearly 33 000 refugees attending public employment support events having achieved qualifications at an EQF level 6 or higher, 31% between 4 - 6, and 7% with EQF level 2 or lower (CSO, 2023). In Belgium (Flanders), out of almost 6 000 Ukrainian refugees registered at the PES as of November 2022, 52% are recorded as tertiary educated (OECD, 2023). In Germany, 72% have a university degree, and 11% have a vocational degree (Brücker et al., 2023).

Several surveys also support these findings. Survey results indicate that 71% of Ukrainian refugees self-report having tertiary education, with a majority holding Master's degrees or higher qualifications (EUAA, IOM & OECD, 2022). Similar findings were seen in a German online survey, which reported that nearly 80% of Ukrainian refugees are tertiary educated (Panchenko, 2022). In-person surveys, however, report a lower percentage of tertiary educated refugees, at around 50% (UNHCR, 2022; NBP, 2022). Data from various countries, gathered by the EUAA, IOM, and the OECD, show that many displaced Ukrainians have a high level of education and prior work experience in various fields, including sales, management, education, and healthcare. Approximately half of these individuals are proficient in Ukrainian, Russian, and English, with smaller percentages being knowledgeable in other languages (8% Polish, 5% German, 3% French, and 2% Czech) (EUAA, IOM & OECD, 2022).

1.3. Labour market integration

The evidence indicates that displaced Ukrainians have achieved positive strides in accessing European labour markets in a notably faster pace than other refugee

groups, albeit with significant variation in employment rates between countries. This is also due to the presence of pre-existing Ukrainian immigrant communities in several countries, which has allowed the newcomers to benefit from their connections and experiences (OECD, 2023). In several European countries, a substantial proportion of working-age Ukrainian refugees is already engaged in employment, with rates exceeding 40% in countries such as the Netherlands, Lithuania, Estonia, and the United Kingdom. Similar rates may also apply in other countries, particularly Poland and the Czech Republic, when considering short-term jobs and informal employment. While in some countries, the employment share remains lower, it is gradually on the rise (OECD, 2023).

Facilitating integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labour market not only enhances employability but can also help address labour market skills mismatches and fills gaps in certain occupational fields where skilled workers are lacking. While uncertainties regarding the duration of their stay persist, there is a gradual increase in refugees seeking employment. Regarding labour force expansion, preliminary calculations suggest a median rise ranging from 0.2% to 0.8% in the labour force of the Euro area over the medium term (ECB, 2022). Poland, the Czech Republic, and Estonia, hosting the highest proportion of Ukrainian refugees relative to their populations, are likely to witness the most pronounced growth.

On the other hand, it seems that European countries have not fully capitalized on the opportunity to address workforce shortages presented by the arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees, even though a significant portion of those escaping the conflict possess high levels of education or essential skills that are urgently needed, as noted (Martinez, Szakas & Bahodal, 2023). A significant proportion of individuals under temporary protection consists of women with caring responsibilities, which often places them outside the conventional labour market (Desiderio & Hooper, 2023). Consequently, understanding gender dynamics is essential for effective labour market integration, highlighting critical aspects such as the availability of essential services like childcare.

Moreover, a considerable number of Ukrainian refugees have placed a higher priority on securing employment swiftly rather than pursuing positions that align closely with their skills, which leads to high share of them working in lower-skilled professions or accepting part-time positions (OECD, 2023; Martinez, Szakas & Bahodal, 2023; Desiderio & Hooper, 2023). This tendency is particularly noticeable when individuals have family members to support or when they intend to return to Ukraine as soon as possible (European Commission, 2023a). The underemployment arising from a mismatch between workers' skills and job requirements can have adverse consequences for both newcomers and their host societies. This situation poses a missed opportunity for European countries

grappling with both structural and cyclical job vacancies, as it fails to effectively address persistent labour shortages. For Ukrainian refugees, extended periods in lower-skilled and lower-wage positions could negatively impact their long-term career prospects, potentially leaving lasting effects on their professional trajectory (Desiderio & Hooper, 2023).

Therefore, to ensure smooth integration into the labour market, it is important to have measures in place to ensure validation and recognition of prior learning that can mitigate situations of underemployment, brain waste, and brain loss, where skills and talents of refugees remain underutilised.

CHAPTER 2.

Methodology

This report combined various sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic. First, the study used desk research and secondary data sources, drawing extensively from reputable secondary data sources, including reports and data from the OECD, EC, UNHCR and from national governments and NGOs. Moreover, the study used data collected by National Public Employment Services (PES), ENIC-NARIC and other data collection initiatives, such as surveys of Ukrainian refugees. PES administrative records, in particular, provided valuable demographic and labour market information, contributing to the study's empirical foundation. Furthermore, to gain in-depth insights and a scholarly perspective on the subject, academic papers and peer-reviewed studies related to Ukrainian refugees were identified and reviewed. These sources enriched the study by presenting nuanced analyses and critical assessments. However, due to usually lengthy peer-review process, such studies do not cover the latest developments on this issue. To complement this information, this report is also based on an analysis of data provided by the Inventory's network of researchers, including the detailed country reports and data provided in response to targeted questions related to the thematic topic. The insights gathered from these sources provided a deeper understanding of the policy landscape, the challenges faced by refugees, and the potential pathways for better integration and support.

The study employed triangulation, cross-referencing data from multiple sources, to enhance the accuracy and completeness of the findings. Combining information from various sources helped validate the results and ensure a more well-rounded perspective. The methodology considered both quantitative and qualitative data, to present a comprehensive picture of the situation.

CHAPTER 3.

EU level validation initiatives and their usage in Member States

There are several EU level validation initiatives and supporting documents that help the member states with validation non-formal and informal learning. These initiatives are important to facilitate the integration of displaced Ukrainians into the labour markets of the EU, and to ensure their ability to secure employment that aligns with their skills. The Temporary Protection Directive that was passed unanimously on March 2022 confers special rights to Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war, including the right to housing and employment in any EU Member State for up to three years.

The European Commission has also released directives to guarantee efficient recognition processes for validation and recognition of prior learning attained in Ukraine. A key document in this area is the Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine (European Commission, 2022a), supplying guidance and practical recommendations to ensure a prompt, equitable, and adaptable recognition procedure for both academic and professional intents. This recommendation deals among other topics with organising recognition of professional qualifications, specific requirements for certain professions, providing information and using electronic tools, making academic recognition more straightforward, or dealing with incomplete evidence on qualifications. The recommendation also indicates the importance of ensuring that "all relevant professional skills and competences of people enjoying temporary protection are assessed and taken into account, regardless of whether they have been acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning" (European Commission, 2022a, pp. L 107 I/7). The Commission encourages Member States to support people in recording their skills and qualifications, including by the provision of one-to-one support. To facilitate such collection and assessment of skills and competences [Europass](#), the [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#), a resource hub on Ukrainian qualifications, eTranslation tool, or a flexible approach (e.g. reissuing certificates digitally) to those not in possession of original documentation.

Directly related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in [March 2022](#), the European Commission introduced a Ukrainian version of the [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#), which serves as a valuable resource for simplifying the process of skill assessment. This digital platform is available free of

charge and is designed to assist individuals in identifying their skills, thereby facilitating their search for suitable employment opportunities and other prospects. This tool also provides personalised learning and employment recommendations to guide individuals. Some of our experts have reported that a few countries use the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals, to evaluate skills and qualifications of Ukrainian refugees. For example, in Italy, the EU Skills Profile Tool is widely used. However, in most of the countries, there is a lack of information regarding the utilisation of the tool, or the experts reported the tool not being widely used, i.e. in France.

CHAPTER 4.

Challenges related to validation

Ukrainian refugees stand out from previous refugee influxes in several ways. The sociodemographic profile of these refugees is distinct, with a substantial majority being women and children who have unique requirements concerning labour market integration. Many of these women need to balance childcare responsibilities, which can limit their opportunities in the job market. Moreover, a crucial aspect of labour market integration for refugees, especially pertinent to Ukrainians given their relatively high educational attainment levels, revolves around finding the right balance between early entry into the labour market and securing sustainable employment that matches their skill levels. Low-skilled occupations often present more immediate opportunities, as the transferability of skills and the mastery of the host country's language are less critical considerations in such roles. However, striking a balance becomes essential in navigating the integration process effectively and ensuring that their skills are optimally utilized for long-term, meaningful employment (OECD, 2023). Furthermore, a noteworthy aspect of the situation is that a considerable proportion of Ukrainian refugees do not intend to stay in the host country for an extended period and they aspire to go back home when conditions allow (Desiderio & Hooper, 2023), the motivation for validation of prior learning might therefore be lower, in particular in countries where they can access informal support networks and connections provided by earlier Ukrainian migrants.

The existing sources that provide information on the challenges related to validating the skills and qualifications of Ukrainian refugees are limited, and challenges can differ significantly across various countries. However, language barrier seems to be an important issue in many countries. This is supported by an ENIC-NARIC survey, which found that language barriers are a major challenge regarding validation activities (ENIC-NARIC, 2023). As discussed, only about 50% of Ukrainian refugees speak English and a very small proportion speaks other languages. This language barrier is problematic in number of ways in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning. For example, in the **Czech Republic**, there have been efforts to support Ukrainian refugees to validate their skills through National Register of Qualifications (NSK), however, according to the Act 179/2006 Coll. The exam must be done in the Czech language and the language could not be changed to Ukrainian due to legal specifications.

As a response to these challenges, several countries are offering language courses, often free of charge, to Ukrainian refugees to ease their social and professional integration. For example, in **Portugal**, the IEFPP has been participating in the organisation and implementation of Portuguese Host Language courses (Ordinance No 184/2022, Cursos de Português Língua de Acolhimento, PLA). Starting from July 1, 2023, **Swedish** municipalities are empowered to provide free Swedish language courses to Ukrainian refugees. Typically, individuals under temporary protection in Sweden do not have access to these language courses. However, Swedish municipalities that opt to offer such courses will have the opportunity to apply for additional state grants to support this initiative. Finally, in **Austria**, the [KomIn Kompetenzorientierte Intensivberatung – Modul Ukraine](#) (Competence-oriented Intensive Counselling - Module Ukraine) is offered by Migrare on behalf of the Public Employment Service. This program was initiated in response to the war situation in Ukraine and the associated challenges in the labour market. It is specifically aimed at people who are registered as displaced persons from Ukraine and are already registered with the Public Employment Service. Among other measures, the programme offers support in accessing education and training (including German language courses). Finally, **Romania** also offers free language courses through [territorial employment agencies](#).

CHAPTER 5.

National validation initiatives

In response to the rising number of migrants and refugees in Europe in the past decade, governments across Europe have recognised the need for proactive measures to support their integration into society and the labour market. The validation of refugees' skills has therefore been a prominent focus on the integration policy agenda even before the current influx of Ukrainian refugees (OECD, 2017). Consequently, various initiatives have been introduced in the past to identify, document, assess and certify the skills and competences acquired by individuals through formal, non-formal, and informal learning (Murphy, 2019).

The 2018 Inventory report on validation of non-formal and informal learning for migrants and refugees (Murphy, 2019) revealed that all countries covered in the study had at least some form of validation initiative for these target groups, albeit with variations in their scope and approach. While some countries had established systematic validation arrangements specifically tailored for migrants and refugees, others rely on project-based initiatives. Additionally, a few countries may not have specific measures targeted at migrants and refugees but provide validation opportunities to all citizens, including those who are newcomers.

The presence of already existing validation initiatives in numerous European countries has proven invaluable for Ukrainian refugees, providing timely support crucial for their integration. However, our research has revealed significant variations in the responses of different countries. While some rely solely on pre-existing validation measures, others have taken proactive steps to develop new initiatives specifically targeting Ukrainian refugees. Some countries have chosen a third approach, wherein they have not introduced entirely new initiatives but have instead customized their existing measures to assist Ukrainian refugees. These tailored measures encompass actions such as translating materials into Ukrainian, implementing fast-track validation and recognition processes, waiving fees for the validation process and other similar adaptations. Moreover, our study found that a significant number of countries provide information and guidance specifically targeted at Ukrainian refugees.

5.1. Information, awareness, guidance and counselling on validation opportunities

Offering guidance and information to individuals arriving from Ukraine, or any other country, is essential for their integration, economic contribution, and overall well-being in the host country (Cedefop, 2023). To address this, the dissemination of information should be complemented by offering comprehensive aid and individualised support to navigate the entire process and possibilities the country offers.

Table 2. **Information, awareness and guidance on validation for Ukrainian refugees**

Initiatives	Countries
Information website in Ukrainian, helplines in Ukrainian	AT, BE, BG, DE, EE, FI, LU, FR, IS, IE, LT, NL, PT, PL, RO, IT
Information sessions or trainings for Ukrainian refugees	BE, DE, EE, LU
No information on such measures, or not in UA language	HR, LI, MT, SI, ES, EL, LV, SK, DK

Source: European Inventory reports

As the table above illustrates, a large number of countries have established dedicated websites, translated to Ukrainian, specifically designed for individuals under temporary protection. These platforms serve as valuable resources, offering most frequently pertinent information on the procedures for attaining recognition of their professional qualifications and in few cases also on validation of non-formal and informal learning. These websites are available in almost all countries, and they are usually included in PES, ENIC-NARIC, or the Ministry of education or employment websites. Additionally, several countries, such as Ireland or Iceland, set up helplines for refugees to assist them to access education or employment. Moreover, some countries, such as Belgium, Estonia or Germany, provided specific information sessions for Ukrainian refugees, including, among others, information on validation of prior learning. However, in several countries such as Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Lichtenstein, Malta, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia or Spain, the study team has not been able to identify any specialised information websites related to validation of non-formal or informal learning for Ukrainian refugees.

5.2. Project based validation measures targeted to Ukrainian refugees

Validation measures targeted directly to Ukrainian refugees are rare across European countries. The only ones identified by this report are in Austria, Ireland, Finland, France, Romania, and Germany.

In Austria, three project-based initiatives stand out in supporting displaced Ukrainians. The [Femme! Empower, Employ, Emulate Me programme](#), operated by Diakonie de La Tour, is co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Federal Chancellery, and the Province of Carinthia. It specifically targets displaced Ukrainians, providing comprehensive support for further education and sustainable employment in Ukrainian and Russian. The program offers childcare during the course times, coaching, and support in the preparation of individual competence profiles, empowering participants to find educational opportunities or sustainable employment. As part of this initiative, The [Kärntner Bildungswerk](#) NGO accompanied its participants in creating individual competence profiles in January 2023. Second, the [MIKA: Ankommen mit Kompetenz! initiative](#), funded by the Austrian Young Workers Movement and the Federal Chancellery, offers personalised competence assessments, career guidance, language courses tailored to commercial and administrative vocations, and assistance throughout the recognition process for vocational qualifications. Notably, while the MIKA project has been in operation for several years and recently made available to Ukrainian refugees, the Femme! Empower, Employ, Emulate Me programme was specifically developed to address the needs of Ukrainians. Furthermore, the [Public Employment Service has developed a skills assessment form for the creation of placement profiles](#) for Ukrainian refugees holding a Blue Card, which serves as an identification document for displaced persons. This initiative assists in recognising the skills and qualifications of Ukrainian refugees, facilitating their job search and placement in suitable employment opportunities.

In Germany, two programs assist Ukrainian refugees with validating their prior learning. The [Erst-Check für Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine](#) (Initial Check for Refugees from Ukraine) is provided by the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHKs) and the Chambers of Crafts (HWKs). This program offers consultations on professional qualifications, helping specialists and companies connect more efficiently. Additionally, a [check.work](#) is a project of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Munich and Upper Bavaria, on behalf of the Bavarian Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce and funded by the Bavarian State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Regional Development and Energy. The check.work initiative, is a program aimed at assessing foreign professional qualifications. This initiative is designed to help individuals, including refugees and immigrants,

validate and showcase their skills and qualifications to potential employers and relevant authorities. By completing the check.work assessment, participants can make their talents and work experience visible, increasing their chances of successful integration into the German labour market. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between individuals with foreign qualifications and German employers by providing a comprehensive assessment tool. It offers valuable support for those seeking to have their skills and qualifications recognised and leveraged in the German workforce. Furthermore, the 'Assessing professional experiences' module is now available in Ukrainian. While these programs provide essential support, there are also enduring initiatives that have been mentioned in earlier reports. One example is the [Kompetenzkarten initiative](#) by the Bertelsmann Foundation, which continues to benefit migrants. This initiative comprises a set of paper cards used in counselling sessions and is freely available for download. Competences are displayed through a combination of pictures and text in nine different languages, with recent updates including card sets in the Ukrainian language. Another ongoing initiative is [the ProfilPASS](#), aimed at identifying skills and competences acquired throughout life. It offers both online and offline resources, with or without counselling. Recent additions to the ProfilPASS include versions in simple language and Ukrainian language, as well as versions tailored for self-employed individuals, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and those in transition to retirement. Importantly, all materials are available for download free of charge.

Finland offers a comprehensive range of initiatives and platforms to support Ukrainian refugees and other jobseekers in validating their skills and competences for successful integration into the Finnish labour market. One notable initiative is the [Työmarkkinatori or JobMarketFinland platform](#), provided by the KEHA Center and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM). This platform serves as a key working life platform, catering to jobseekers, professional employment services, employers, educational institutions, and job platforms. It is an invaluable tool that allows individuals to create digital skills profiles, encompassing both formal and non-formal competences. The platform leverages artificial intelligence features to offer personalized job proposals based on the jobseeker's competences, work experience, and expectations. Notably, these services are available in various languages, including Ukrainian, ensuring accessibility for a diverse range of users. Furthermore, the initiative [ForeAmmatti](#) is a digital cloud service developed by ForeData. This service focuses on competence mapping, job searching, and career planning, benefitting individuals, professional employment services, guidance professionals, and educational institutions. Services are available in Finnish, Swedish, and English, with competence mapping and

identification also offered in 30 languages, including Ukrainian. Regional and local employment services are increasingly adopting this service, offering skills mapping and job matching assistance free of charge. ForeAmmatti provides users with tools to identify and document their skills, enabling them to share the results with employment experts and potential employers. Furthermore, it offers daily lists of open job opportunities aligned with users' skills, labour market information, and various other support services.

In France, the [Expérience sans Frontières programme](#) aims to facilitate the validation of prior experience to aid Ukrainian refugees, as well as other groups, in securing long-term employment. This program is open to French citizens, statutory refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and stateless individuals, and is available in Ukrainian. Participants in the program can enhance their French language proficiency, participate in internships, or company immersions, engage in further training, and convert their experience professional and volunteer experiences into recognized diplomas, titles, or certifications in France.

Ireland hosts a small program focused on helping Ukrainian refugees validate their qualifications in childcare education. This initiative was born out of the need for certification to work in the childcare sector, where specific language requirements and qualification standards are in place. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Childcare project, undertaken by the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, covers eight modules and has helped two refugees validate their non-formal learning and experience.

Recently, Romania has implemented a national initiative aimed at providing Ukrainian refugees with a range of support services. These services include free counselling, validation and recognition of prior learning, and access to employment opportunities. Ukrainian refugees are granted the same privileges as Romanian citizens, including one free training session and one free validation service. Despite these efforts, it is worth noting that no Ukrainian refugees have so far availed themselves of this service, likely due to language barriers.

CHAPTER 6.

Conclusion: Support to Ukrainian refugees and future validation initiatives

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered a significant displacement of Ukrainian refugees, who sought refuge in various European countries. Ukrainian refugees, distinct from prior groups, primarily comprise educated women with their children, presenting significant potential for successful integration into European labour markets; however, they often face challenges leading to employment below their skill level, particularly among women juggling family responsibilities and work commitments (OECD, 2023). The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive by the European Union provided Ukrainian refugees with temporary residence and work permits, expediting their integration into the labour market. This report maps the validation of prior learning and skills at both the EU and national levels. The European Union's initiatives to support validation of prior learning of Ukrainian refugees serve as positive steps. Tailored measures used by countries, such as the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals or dedicated websites providing information on validation of informal and non-formal education, assist Ukrainian refugees in navigating validation procedures. However, and while many European countries have established some validation measures of informal and non-formal learning focused on migrants, specific initiatives tailored for Ukrainian refugees remain limited.

Variations in the responses of different countries have been observed, with some relying on pre-existing measures, others tailoring or developing new initiatives, and some customising existing measures to assist Ukrainian refugees. Additionally, some countries have developed project-based validation measures directly targeted at Ukrainian refugees, aiming to support them with the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The variations in responses highlight the importance of customisation and adaptation in addressing the unique challenges that Ukrainian refugees face in their host countries. Host countries should continually monitor and adapt their strategies to align with the evolving situation, ensuring that Ukrainian refugees can fully leverage their skills and educational backgrounds for the benefit of both the refugees and their host societies.

To ensure successful integration, initiatives should allow the validation of the knowledge and skills that many of these refugees bring with them. Key to unlocking Ukrainian refugees' full potential lies in preventing skill mismatch, resulting in a more inclusive and productive future. Acknowledging the specific circumstances of

Ukrainian refugees, such as the desire to return home when conditions improve, or their specific socio-demographic profile is crucial in designing effective integration policies.

Language proficiency plays a fundamental role in the successful integration of refugees into any society. In the case of Ukrainian refugees, language barriers have emerged as a common challenge across many countries. Providing language courses, as already initiated in some countries, is essential to overcome language barriers and enhance refugees' access to education and employment.

Finally, as the situation evolves, it is essential for host countries to continually monitor and adapt their integration policies and initiatives to align with the specific needs and challenges of Ukrainian refugees. This flexibility will help ensure a responsive and effective approach to their successful integration and the actual usage of these policies to avoid situation whereby validation initiatives are not used, which is happening in few countries.

Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ENIC-NARIC	European Network of Information Centres / National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Public employment service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VET	vocational education and training

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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

Validation and recognition of prior learning holds immense significance for Ukrainian refugees, as it plays a vital role in their social and labour market integration. This thematic report maps EU and national level validation initiatives to support the validation and recognition of skills and competences regardless of whether they have been acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning.

Current measures supporting validation opportunities for migrants and refugees across several European countries has proven invaluable for Ukrainian refugees, playing a crucial role in providing timely support for their integration. However, our research has revealed significant variations in the responses of different countries. While some rely solely on pre-existing validation measures, others have proactively introduced new initiatives tailored specifically to needs of Ukrainian refugees.

This report explores the availability of information, awareness, guidance, and counselling on validation opportunities for Ukrainian Refugees and provides insights into some existing project-based initiatives currently underway in Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Romania. It also explores key challenges related to validation specific to Ukrainian refugees and suggestions how validation opportunities can be enhanced to further support the integration of Ukrainian refugees into European societies.

This report is part of the 2023 update of the [European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) provides a comprehensive overview of validation practices across Europe, covering 32 systems in EU-27 Member States and EFTA countries.

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