



NADINE

digital iNtegrAted system for the social support of migraNts and refugEes

Deliverable D10.3 – First Policy Brief:
*The importance of skills assessments for
migrants*
WP10
Task 10.2 Community building



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Abstract

This document contains the first policy brief for the NADINE project, task 10.2, deliverable 10.3 of the project. This includes an introduction to the research led by the NADINE team over the past year, its methodology and the findings and policy recommendations that were identified.

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Executive summary

As part of the NADINE project, creating a skill assessment platform for Refugees, Asylum seekers and Vulnerable migrants (RAVs), the team has over the past year led background research on unemployment among RAVs, including a review of the existing literature and mapping of existing skill assessments across Europe. It found that unemployment rates for RAVs appear to have grown higher in the past 10 years in EU Member States, affecting not only migrants but also economic growth in the EU – migration was indeed directly linked to human capital development of receiving countries and technological progress.¹

The current **policy brief** is providing insights into the topic and gives an overview of what some preliminary findings include. Research shows skills mismatch between RAVs and employers is directly linked to unemployment among RAVs. While the EU and Member States have created initiatives addressing skill mismatch between RAVs and employers, their review shows they only provide a partial response the issue and have yet to be widely implemented by Member States. The research led by the NADINE team identified the need for an EU-coordinated response to the issue. NADINE situates itself within this need and attempts to address some of the issues faced by existing skill assessments in the EU.

As part of the **community building activities**, the current policy brief will be used in line with the driver pilots in Work Package 9, for which it will serve to provide a background to the NADINE project aiming the communities that will be approached during the organisation of the driver pilot. In addition, the policy roundtables will be organised once preliminary insights from the driver pilots have been collected. Here as well, the policy brief in a shorter version will provide a useful guidance tool for the roundtables in order to provide the necessary background information on the project and its objectives.

¹ OECD, Is migration good for the economy?



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Description
RAVs	Refugees, Asylum seekers and Vulnerable migrants



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1/ Introduction and methodology

To promote integration of migrants in EU countries through quality policy recommendation, in line with NADINE's approach to facilitate smooth access to employment at EU level, as a key ingredient to successful integration, the team has conducted some background research on unemployment of the target group in the EU and reviewed existing skills assessment practise at both EU and Member State level.

The team coupled top-down and bottom up research to include all stakeholders' (Member States, the EU and RAV) perspectives and address them in their policy recommendations. To feed the bottom-down perspective, background research includes the mapping of existing skill assessment procedures in the EU, including interviews where necessary with relevant state authorities and skills assessment developers were led to gain invaluable stakeholder input into best practices. The team carried out desk-based research on the general state of RAV's access to jobs in the EU, using European Commission statistics on migrants' integration. It also led a review of policy recommendations from CEDEFOP and OECD – who have done significant work on the subject – and identified some key recommendations, relevant for EU stakeholders. To inform the bottom up perspective, the team led a survey with RAVs and employers to get primary data on the obstacles RAVs face when trying to integrate the job market.

Background research revealed that RAVs were particularly vulnerable to unemployment, interfering with their integration to their new country (2.1). When researching causes for such difficulties, the team found that skills mismatch was identified as an essential factor in the unemployment of migrants, to the detriment of both RAVs and Member States (2.2). While Member States and the EU have started addressing the issue (2.3), the mapping of existing skill assessments showed that lack of flexibility and user-friendliness that prevent the effective skill matching between RAVs and employers (2.4). EU policy makers have a key 'coordination' role in addressing this gap and making skills assessment more effective to cater to the needs of both migrants and employers (2.5). NADINE was created as a response to the concerns above. Through its serious-game approach and big-data technology, NADINE aims to provide an EU-wide solution to skills mismatch and to contribute to reducing unemployment among RAVs (2.6).

2/ Research findings

2.1/ Unemployment among Refugees, Asylum seekers Vulnerable migrants in the EU

Refugees, Asylum seekers and Vulnerable migrants are particularly subject to unemployment in the EU; in 2018 the unemployment rate for migrants in general is 12.2% (6.1% higher than for the native-born population)². Although unemployment numbers vary between the 28 EU countries, the trend can be observed across all of them, with different intensity. Several factors contribute to higher unemployment rates for RAVs. The global financial and economic crisis of 2008 significantly widened the gap between the employment of migrants and EU citizens, as economic precarity and uncertainty affected employers' trust in migrant

²https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Unemployment



workers.³ Although this gap has narrowed since 2018, the labour market has not fully recovered from the impact of the crisis and the gap between the employment of migrants and EU citizens remains.⁴

From the EU's perspective, integrating migrants to the European labour market is a solution for long-term structural issues⁵. For example, along with an aging population, skills shortages present a major obstacle to the existence of a stable employment market. Studies show that RAVs fill important niches in both fast-growing and declining sectors of the economy, and contribute significantly to labour-market flexibility in Europe.⁶ By better integrating RAVs into the labour market, they could provide an answer to both short and long-term difficulties that the employment market faces.⁷

Furthermore, the demographic crisis in Europe is expected to lead to considerable labour supply shortages – between 2015 and 2035, the segment of the population aged between 20 and 34 is expected to drop by 8 million. RAVs could provide at least a short-term solution to the aging population in Europe.⁸

2.2/ Skill mismatch – a recurring cause for unemployment among RAVs.

EU Commission⁹ and Cedefop¹⁰ studies show that the higher rate of unemployment among RAVs is to a large extent due to insufficient national recognition procedures of qualifications for third country nationals. When diplomas are available, they tend to be evaluated at different levels by universities and National Recognition Information Centres (NARICs). Indeed, NARICs often evaluate qualifications from migrants' country of origin at high standards, that do not allow for an accurate representation of the diploma's worth. This results in RAVs being awarded a lower level of qualification in their new country.¹¹

Often however, RAVs are not able to bring their diplomas with them, leading to further difficulties. Many highly skilled migrants are thus working in low-skilled, temporary and badly paid jobs.¹² Overqualified workers are expected to suffer a 17% wage reduction compared to well-matched workers; this penalty amounts to 26% for workers who are working in a sector unrelated to their field of study.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ CEDEFOP, Migrants, minorities, mismatch? Skill mismatch among migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe. Research paper No 16

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Cedefop; European Commission; ICF (2017). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning – 2016 update. Synthesis report. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

¹¹ Policy Briefing on the Assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications of refugees and migrants in Europe, NGO Network for integration Focal Points

¹² Ibid.

RAVs arrive to the EU with skills, and they contribute to spurring innovation and economic growth.

The OECD¹³ has found skills mismatches can negatively affect economic growth through lower labour productivity, losses in production associated to vacancies remaining unfilled and the implicit costs of higher unemployment rates.¹⁴ For employers, skills mismatches are also a significant issue. One in three employers reports difficulties in filling vacancies.¹⁵ As a result, the OECD recommends “recognising and valuing the skills immigrants bring with them as well as helping them develop the skills they need to work in their new homes”.¹⁶

In line with these findings, the EU has started addressing skill mismatch among migrants and creating policies to help value all migrants’ skills in its labour market.

2.3/ European response to skills assessment

In response to the prevalence of unemployed migrants in its Member States, since 2012 the EU has started to set up a framework to address the lack of validation of migrant workers’ qualifications. In 2010 the Commission released its Europe 2020 strategy, aiming to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive development. Two years later, in 2012, a Council recommendation asked Member States to establish validation arrangements by 2018 that allow individuals to identify, document, assess and certify their skills to obtain a qualification.¹⁷ The recommendation is complemented by the European guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which provide policy and practical advice to Member States and stakeholders on implementing validation.¹⁸

Skill assessment is widely recognised as an effective way of giving visibility to hard and soft skills that people have gained through life and work experience.¹⁹ Validation of non-formal and informal learning can make a major contribution to issues faced by the EU job market, and to achieving the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth set out in the Europe 2020 strategy.

Member States have either started or are in the process of planning validation arrangements of migrants’ competencies. They range from self-assessment tests to qualification recognition or skills tests. The presence of counsellors who follow the process and support candidates has proven essential in the success of the procedures. Framing the skills tests in a positive manner is an additional success factor. For example, the Open University named their test “am I ready for success”, rather than “can I study”.

¹³ OECD, Is migration good for the economy?

<https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ OECD, How can migrant’s skills be put to use <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-3.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

2.4/ Implementation gap between desired outcomes and actual results

While Member States and the EU have taken concrete steps to valorise RAVs' non-formal and informal qualifications through practices such as the EU Skills Tool for Third Country Nationals²⁰ and France's 'Accelair Programme'²¹, evidence shows that there is still work to be done.

Issues such as language barriers, the length of skills tests and the rigidity of processes create bottlenecks in the implementation of these practices which lead to gaps in terms of the desired goals and actual results that these practices want to achieve. Many programmes are still not widely used by stakeholders, thus limiting their efficiency and progress. So far, validation arrangements fail to receive widespread recognition by employers. Local and national authorities implementing the tool often fail to create the reception centres needed to host the tests. Furthermore, tools such as the EU Skills Profile Tool require lengthy and repetitive processes, that discourage stakeholders from using them.

2.5/ Policy recommendations

The EU has a strong interest in creating better validation arrangements to make better use of migrants' skills. Poor integration of migrants to national job markets is a recurrent issue in all EU Member States. A coordinated response would allow to ease the pressure on Member States while enhancing RAVs' self-reliance. Systematic reviews of the existing skills assessment methods lack necessary intelligibility and flexibility for a widespread use by Member States; leaving RAVs vulnerable to unemployment and job mismatch. The literature review on the topic also identifies where the EU can act to create a more effective skill assessment tool and improve access to the European job market for RAVs. While the review has shown that progress has been made on recognising qualification from non-EU states, the progress remains patchy. As stated by Cedefop in its 2011 study on Skill mismatch among migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe, 'common standards should be established, and Member States could be encouraged to follow best practice'.²² This would result in a coordinated, European response to skill mismatch and RAV unemployment, in line with the EU 2020 strategy goal of inclusive European development.

In line with the recommendations identified, NADINE seeks to create a common European standard for migrant's skills assessment.

²⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1223&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9308>

²¹ <https://www.forumrefugies.org/nos-actions/en-france/refugies/programmes-d-integration>

²² CEDEFOP, Migrants, minorities, mismatch? Skill mismatch among migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe. Research paper No 16

3/ Where NADINE comes in

NADINE considers best practices in order to become a reference point for skills assessment, and career guidance tools for migrants.

While developing NADINE, a consistent effort is being made to understand what needs to be improved upon in existing skills assessment tools. To do so, the researchers in charge of developing NADINE have interviewed key stakeholders about the factors enabling the success of such tools, and the challenges that are faced.

Soft skills assessment and serious games for optimal career guidance

As a result of this research, NADINE uses a flexible, serious games-based skills assessment method, coupled with Big Data technology. Data about local services and migrants will be used to provide quality career guidance to migrants whilst taking into consideration the needs of the local labour market, addressing potential skills shortages they face. Through its innovative approach, NADINE tests hard and soft skills using serious games, with the aim of matching these skills to a particular job profile.

Indeed, the NADINE Universal Skills Framework for migrants and refugees considers ten business-orientated universal skills (both hard and soft skills and sub-skills) suitable for migrant groups in the globalised labour market.

The NADINE Universal Skills Framework feeds the development of the NADINE Skills ICT-based standardised psychometric assessment tests, enabling a shift from existing, subjective self-assessment procedures to objective, large-scale qualitative and quantitative assessments, measurement and profiling of migrants' and refugees' skills across Europe. This methodology will enable a more effective skills matching to occur between migrants' and refugees' competencies and employers' needs.

By providing translations from and to as many languages as possible, NADINE also addresses accessibility and clarity issues faced by other validation arrangements. It uses visual indicators and imagery that are more appealing to both applicants and the receiver of the outcome (i.e. counsellors). Finally, to make sure NADINE is accessible to all and transcends cultural and language barriers, the pilot phases will test and consider migrants' inputs and advice.

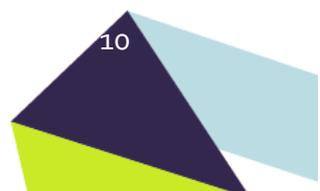
4/ Conclusions

As part of the EU 2020 strategy, successful integration of migrants into their host-country is key to maximising the economic, social and cultural value that immigration can make to EU development.

Research led by NADINE over the past year shows that to address RAVs unemployment, better skills matching through skill assessment is essential to provide solutions on both the supply and demand side of the job market. The EU has a crucial role to play in terms of coordination of an EU-wide initiative to support Member-States in implementing effective skill assessment methods.

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Well thought coordination would allow to for more effective skill assessments, easing the pressure on member states and enhancing RAVs' self-reliance.

NADINE provides a novel and promising method to valorise RAVs' hard and soft skills and make them more appealing to employers. It allows the EU to set a common standard for skills evaluation, easing pressure on member states while empowering migrants and employers to find a match for their needs. Throughout its development phases, NADINE is making a conscious effort to take into consideration stakeholders', including migrants', voices. This feedback and further testing by way of three pilot phases and a final evaluation will result in a tool that is fit for purpose and widely accessible. In the next phases of the project, roundtables (the first one planned for month 12 of the project) will be organised with EU stakeholders and contribute further to the recommendations of the project, and the issue of a new policy brief.



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