

▶ TESTING THE EUROPEAN UNION SKILLS PROFILE TOOL FOR TCNs

AN EVALUATION REPORT BASED ON PILOT
TESTING EXERCISES CONDUCTED IN AUSTRIA
AND GREECE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
EXPERT GROUP OF SKILLS AND MIGRATION
OF THE LABOUR INT 2 PROJECT

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▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Labour market integration is a key facet of the broader issue of social inclusion of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. As shown by an expanding literature, these categories face a specific 'refugee gap' that justifies the concentrated efforts made by the EU institutions in this area.

Given the scarcity of formal qualifications of a significant share of refugee populations in Europe, special attention was given to the identification and recognition of skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training systems. In this framework, the EU Skills Profile Tool¹ created with the Skills Agenda launched in 2016 is still an important component of the New Skills Agenda presented on 1 July 2020.

Against this evolving background, the LABOUR-INT PROJECT 2² that started in January 2019 has the evaluation of the implementation of the EU Tool as one of its central goals. The evaluation has been based on ad hoc national testing exercises that have been carried out in specific localities situated in two member states Athens (Greece) and Tyrol (Austria).

More specifically, the EU Tool has been tested with a specific category of beneficiaries, i.e. asylum seekers and refugees by two LABOUR INT 2 partners, i.e. the Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH (TSD) and the Centre of Athens Labor Unions (ERGATIKO KENTRO ATHINAS- EKA). FIERI (Forum of International and European Research on Immigration) has been in charge of the evaluation of the testing exercises.

This report presents the evaluation exercise, its methodology and key results. The specific objective of the exercise and of this report has been to answer the following driving questions: "did the intervention work?" and, more specifically, "did things work as expected to produce the desired change/result? And if not, why?".

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>

² <http://www.labour-int.eu/the-labour-int-project-2/>

Moreover, in line with the original LABOUR INT 2 project document, the evaluation had the additional goal of analysing pre-existing local tools for skills assessment (if any) and comparing them with the EU tool also in order to find synergies and margins for amelioration.

The collected data allow us to formulate some reflections concerning the implementation of the EU Tool and some recommendations for its future use and for some possible improvements.

In particular, the analysis of the two national pilot actions has highlighted, on the one hand, the need to make the Tool even more user-friendly and responsive to counsellors' needs. On the other hand, the evaluation has showed the crucial influence of the local context in shaping the implementation and determining the actual impact of the EU Tool.

Since its launch, the Tool was especially meant to provide guidance and support to those local contexts and organisations with less previous experience in the field of skills assessment for migrants and refugees.

Our evaluation exercise demonstrates that successful implementation especially in those less experienced contexts requires targeted accompanying measures. These should be aimed, for instance, at providing training on skills assessment or at fostering coordination with and active involvement of local labour market services (public or private). If integrated in a more systemic approach of this sort, the EU Skills Profile Tool can indeed contribute to an overall improvement of migrant and refugee integration at the local level as well as it can offer an added value in the ongoing epidemic crisis. Being an online tool, it allows to make skill assessment not only in an office but also in open spaces or any other location. Otherwise, the Tool runs the risks of not being able to really improve the situation of its beneficiaries and to fall prey of local structural weaknesses.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to **assess the implementation of the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals** (from here on *EU Tool* or the *Tool*) in the two national pilot actions (i.e., in Athens and in Tyrol) realized in the framework of the project LABOUR INT 2.

The **LABOUR INT 2 project** aims to promote employment as a key part of the integration process of third-country nationals (from here on TCNs) in their host society, strengthening existing practices of integration into the labour market and developing new ones. Adopting a multi-layered and multi-stakeholder approach, the project involves employers, chambers of industry and commerce, trade unions and associations in different EU countries: Germany, Italy, Belgium, Austria and Greece. Based on the cooperation and dialogue among all these actors, the project aims to support the integration paths of recently arrived migrants and refugees from arrival up to the workplace, passing through education, training and job placement. Particular attention is addressed toward possible ways to improve TCNs' employability through the recognition of credentials and the assessment of formal and informal skills.

In this framework, the project decided the testing on the ground of the EU Skills Profile Tool for TCNs, comparing it with existing local tools for skills assessment, finding synergies and exploring margins for improvement. Two national pilot actions (i.e. Austria and Greece) were involved in the testing. The following organizations were the national pilot action managers and as such they were in charge of the testing of the EU Tool:

- **Austria-Tyrol:** *Tiroler Soziale Dienst GmbH* (from here on **TSD**) is a publicly owned no profit company (State of Tyrol).³ Created in 2015 to deal with the "refugee crisis", its main purpose is to give asylum seekers and refugees' accommodation and support, including in form of food and other primary necessities, health insurance and language classes. Most of the 215 TSD counsellors and case workers have a front office role and work directly with beneficiaries. The TSD headquarter is located in Innsbruck, but there are also small and middle-size offices all over Tyrol.
- **Greece- Athens:** The Greek pilot action is managed by the Centre of Athens Labor Unions - **ERGATIKO KENTRO ATHINAS** (from here on **EKA**) with the cooperation of the Vocational Training Centre of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchant (from here on **KEK GSEVEE**). EKA is a regional Trade Union Organization (set up in 1910). Set up in May 2006, the Migrant Point EKA aims to help and support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to have equal access to labor and social rights.⁴ According to the proposal of the LABOUR INT 2 project, the Greek pilot action has taken place in Athens and activities have involved two specific categories of migrant, i.e. asylum seekers and refugees.

Although the EU Skills Profile Tool has been conceived to deal with all categories of TCNs, in the framework of the LABOUR INT 2 project **it has been tested on two specific categories of migrants i.e. asylum seekers and international protection holders**. These two categories are the most vulnerable since they encounter greater disadvantages in the labour market access as compared with other categories of migrants and natives (on the 'refugee gap', see for example Perino and Eve 2017; Becker and Ferrera 2019; Brell, Dustman and Preston 2020, UNHCR 2013; Fasani et al. 2018). Conducting a cross-sectional survey across several EU countries and over time, Fasani et al. estimate "refugees are 11.6 percent less likely to have a job and 22.1 percent more likely to be unemployed than migrants with similar characteristics" (Fasani et al. 2018). The refugee gap does not only involve access to the labour market but also income and occupational quality. Moreover, according to the researchers, the gap persists until about 10 years after immigration. Several researches confirm a reduction of the negative 'refugee entry effect' over time although refugees remain more likely to be unemployed compared with other immigrants and with natives, with one notable exception i.e. United States (Brell et al. 2020).

³ <https://www.tsd.gv.at/wer-wir-sind.html>

⁴ <http://www.eka.org.gr/>

All these elements make the testing of the EU Tool with these specific categories particularly valuable.

BOX 1: EXPLAINING THE REFUGEE GAP

Refugees find more difficult to integrate into the labour market, not only compared to natives but also to other migrants. Unemployment remains higher while employment rate and wages remain lower even several years after their arrival in the new country (Perino and Eve 2017). Along with the difficulties that all migrants have to deal with (e.g. limited command of the language of the host country, discrimination issues), refugees suffer from additional shortcomings.

Economic migrants decide to relocate to another country based on the relative opportunities afforded abroad compared to the ones at home; refugees have less opportunities to prepare their migration trajectories (Becker and Ferrera 2019). Refugees often have limited personal networks in the host country compared to economic or family reunification migrants. Limited planning also implies that asylum seekers and refugees are likely to start at significantly lower levels of wages and employability (Brell et al. 2020).

Along with the absence of broad family and social networks, refugees have to deal with additional barriers linked to their specific status and to the reception system itself, including status uncertainty, restrictions on labour market access, ineligibility for some programs while their application is processed, dispersal policies, dependency on the host country reception services (Perino and Eve 2017; Fasani et al. 2018; Brell et al. 2020, Desiderio 2016). All these elements impact on refugees' work opportunities and integration pathways.

A few introductory words are due also to explain the nature of the **process evaluation** exercise conducted for this report. Process evaluations look at how a programme or an intervention is implemented and managed. Although implementing a programme may seem a straightforward concept, in practice it is often difficult (Rossi et al. 1999). Original weaknesses in the programme design may hamper the implementation. Furthermore, external elements may influence or compromise even well-intentioned attempts. Even if the expected outcomes are achieved substantial discrepancies between the programmes as originally intended and as actually implemented may turn out. Monitoring offers information about how well a programme performs, and it could be especially useful for relatively new programmes attempting to establish their organization, target and services. Moreover, evaluation may offer useful elements to identify external problems or internal weaknesses and distinguish cases of ineffective intervention design from poor programme implementation.

The report is structured as follows. In the first chapter, we present the European Skills Profile Tool for TCNs after introducing the framework within which the Tool has been formulated. In the same chapter we also introduce the substantive policy issue, i.e. the difficulties in refugee labour market integration, and the growing political relevance of skills assessment as a central aspect to ensure refugees and TCNs' swift access to the labour market. The second chapter describes the adopted evaluation strategy and the analytical tools that we deemed necessary to analyse the implementation of the tool in the two national pilot actions. In the third chapter, the analysis starts with the discussion of the logical framework leading to the adoption of the EU Skills Profile Tool. In the following chapter, the two national case studies will be presented introducing first the national context, then describing the testing. In the fifth chapter, the main features and challenges in the implementation of the Tool will be presented and discussed. A final remarks section concludes the report.

1. THE ISSUE AND THE EU TOOL

1.1 THE ISSUE: INCREASING ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES' EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH THE ASSESSMENT OF FORMAL/INFORMAL SKILLS⁵

Following the sudden and massive influx of asylum seekers in 2015, the integration of the newcomers quickly came to the fore as a key issue, notably at the EU level. Since social inclusion is closely linked to successful labour market integration, the question of how to ensure swift access to and integration in the labour market has become a prominent issue (Eurofound 2016). Even before the so-called 'refugee crisis', the need for labour market support measures for refugees had already been stated at the EU level by the Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU), together with the relevance of a swift access to the labour market by the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU).⁶ In June 2016, the European Commission presented the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals introducing some actions that specifically target refugee integration in the labour market. The New Skills Agenda (July 2020) and the New Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (November 2020) has demonstrated that these issues remain Key priorities for the Commission.

Early labour market integration is a key predictor of future outcomes in the long-run and therefore early intervention is crucial (Degler et al. 2017:9; see also European Commission, 2016; Konle-Seidl and Bolits 2016; OECD 2016). For low skilled refugees, labour market integration is often a long term process. In Sweden, for example, in 2014 less than 30% of low qualified refugees were in employment five years after their arrival in the host country, for a number of reasons: "Many refugees are highly motivated to enter the labour market quickly. Prolonged absences from the labour market also entail a depreciation of skills, which – combined with gaps in employment history – can produce severe scarring effects later on." (Degler et al. 2017:7) Several studies conducted in different countries reach similar conclusions: long periods of inactivity have detrimental effects on the labour market integration (for *The Netherlands*: De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2010, Bakker et al. 2014; for *Switzerland*: Hainmueller et al. 2016; for *Denmark*: Hvidtfeldt et al. 2018; For *Germany*: Marbach et al. 2018, Brücker et al. 2019). In a consultation realised in Austria in 2013, many stakeholders denounced the limited access to the labour market during the asylum procedure, which usually takes a long time; many refugees lose confidence in and knowledge of their original field of work (UNHCR 2013).

⁵ European Union makes the distinction between formal learning, informal and non-formal learning. Formal learning is "provided by education or training institutions, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification" and it is intentional from the learner's perspective. Non-formal learning is "not provided by an education or training institution and typically it does not lead to certification. However, it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view". Finally informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured and it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most of the case is incidental non intentional. (CEDEFOP 2007, p. 15)

⁶ Member States "shall ensure that applicants have effective access to the labour market no later than 9 months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged"

Moreover, a large number of asylum seekers and refugees cannot provide any documentary proof of the qualifications and competencies they have acquired before reaching the host country.⁷ In the European job markets, which are highly focused on academic qualification and proof of previous experience, this situation engenders relevant difficulties. The literature largely demonstrates that refugees have a higher probability than natives and other migrants of being overqualified for the positions they work in (Rosenberger and König 2012; UNHCR 2013; Kirilova et al. 2016). According to the results shown in the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey *ad hoc* module: “60% of employed tertiary educated refugees in the EU are overqualified for the jobs they occupy, more than twice the level of the native-born and also well above the levels for other migrant groups” (EU-OECD, 2016).

According to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) definition “skill means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. They can be described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)” (European Commission, 2017). Therefore, skills correspond to the combination of knowledge and experience required to perform a specific task. Broadly speaking, there are two ways of skills validation:⁸ a) the formal recognition of qualifications and b) the recognition of prior learning by validating informal and non-formal skills.⁹

The identification and the assessment of the possession of specific skills is particularly essential for people with professional skills acquired mainly through work experience or informal learning. This activity is complex but nonetheless essential to make migrants visible in the labour market. Approaches change across EU countries, and difficulties exist due to a lack of standardised tools and limited national regulation of the recognition of work experience and informal qualifications (Konle-Seidl 2017). The European Commission has paid particular attention to this aspect. In 2009, the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning¹⁰ were adopted, while in December 2012 the Recommendation of the Council on the validation of non-formal and informal learning put pressure on Member States to develop national system and services. In the European Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals (2016),¹¹ along with the actions aimed to assist TCNs, some interventions specifically target refugees. Among them, funding fast-track insertion into the labour market and vocational training – skills assessment, employment-focused language training and on-the-job training (Eurofound 2016). In this framework, the Skills Agenda for Europe¹² announced the development of the EU Skills Profile Tool¹³ (June 2016). From then onwards the European Commission has kept focusing on this aspect: in the recent Communication of 14 January 2020 [COM (2020) 14 final] it reaffirmed the need for further efforts to validate the skills and competences acquired outside the formal education and training systems.¹⁴ Also in the Newly European Skills Agenda (July 2020)¹⁵ the European Commission underlines the importance of supporting migrants in showcasing their skills and qualifications as well as recognising their previous experience and calls for a “paradigm shift on skills”.¹⁶

⁷ See for example the analysis of the “Labour Market Integration of Third Country Nationals in EU Member States- The synthesis report for EMN Study” February 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_labour_market_integration_final_en.pdf

⁸ With regard to the distinction between recognition and validation, both terms of reference can vary according to context and use. In this report, we refer to the definitions adopted by CEDEFOP according to which validation is adopted both as formal recognition of qualifications as well as a generic term to describe the identification and assessment of experiential learning of knowledge (informal and non formal), skills, and competences (CEDEFOP 2007). Therefore, in the context of experiential learning, validation corresponds to the valorisation of individual skills and competences.

⁹ For distinction between formal, informal and non formal skills see note 3.

¹⁰ A revised edition of the European guidelines for validating of non-formal and informal learning has been published end of 2015 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3073>

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/integration/action-plan-integration-third-country-nationals_en

¹² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/607334/IPOL_BRI%282017%29607334_EN.pdf

¹³ The relevance of the issue is also underlined by the development of others projects focusing on migrants and refugees’ skills assessment e.g. the project ESPOR that has created the Skills audit model <https://www.espor.it/progetto/?lang=en> and European Qualifications Passport for Refugees <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>

¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A0014%3AFIN>

¹⁵ For an analysis of the Newly European Skills Agenda, look at ETUC Position on the European Skills Agenda and future skills strategies <https://www.etuc.org/en/document/etuc-position-european-skills-agenda-and-future-skills-strategies>

¹⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9723>

In the process of validation of informal and non-formal skills, identification represents the first step, referring to the processes by which knowledge, skills and competences already achieved by individuals are made visible (CEDEFOP 2015). Often, these competences are made visible first of all to the same individual. “The process of identifying personal informal/non-formal learning requires individuals to engage productively in the processes of learning from experience. The capacity to do so cannot be assumed, since such identification is itself a learned activity.” (CEDEFOP 2007:24) In the process of identifying informal and non-formal learning the role of the counsellor is critical. “Such a role is not simply one of providing information, but of eliciting information from the candidate and inducing reflection, by the individual, upon and across the range of experience identified as relevant. To that end, the support offered must enable the individual to articulate what has been learnt from experience” (CEDEFOP 2007:25). Different mechanisms are adopted to identify skills and competences, i.e. tests and examinations, dialogue or conversational methods, observations, simulations, declarative methods. The European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning draws attention to the need to develop and share appropriate tools for validation according to the different approach, i.e. formative or summative.¹⁷ Recognition, instead, is the last step of the process and refers to the outcome resulting from the assessment of experiential learning measured against external standards, requirements, or criteria.

Existing national approaches on the validation of non-formal and informal learning are mostly not designed to take into account specific needs of migrants/refugees (CEDEFOP 2017). Traditional tools are too reliant on written tests, very time consuming, overly complex and hardly scalable to large numbers of asylum seekers (Konle-Seidl 2017).

Recently, more pragmatic and easy-to implement tools have started to be developed (Konle-Seidl 2017). These new tools include for example videos and image-based skills identification techniques; self-assessment tests (often in the refugee’s first language) with the help of online-guides; individualised approaches by practical testing and expertise-checks carried out on the workplace or in training contexts. In particular during the identification of the soft skills, a growing attention is addressed to the empowerment of the beneficiaries and to support them in their professional choices.¹⁸ Considering the peculiarities of refugees and asylum seekers, counsellors play a key role in “identifying individual barriers and providing the necessary information so that refugees can understand how certain procedures work” (Konle-Seidl 2017:21). Using interviews and dialogue-based approaches can be more costly but more useful to identify and value the particular combination of skills and competence of an individual (CEDEFOP 2015).

Preliminary skills assessment is often offered in reception facilities: while in some cases (e.g. Norway, Sweden) public reception authorities are directly involved in providing these services, elsewhere (e.g. Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal) the main role lies with civil society organizations (Desiderio 2016).¹⁹ However, the services provided are often quite basic, while more structured programmes are only piloted in few states (e.g. Germany, Norway, Finland, France). Often lacking a cooperation and dialogue between actors involved in the reception and in the employment support, the result of the skill assessment are not taken into account by relevant services (Desiderio 2016).

¹⁷ In formative approaches to assessment the aim is to provide feedback to the learning process or learning career; in the summative approaches to assessment and validation the goal is formalising and certifying learning outcomes. (CEDEFOP 2015)

¹⁸ For example Diego Boerchi, Maura Di Mauro, Annavittoria Sarli, Guidelines for the identification and assessment of migrants’ soft skills, Dimicome project, Ismu Foundation, (2020) https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-migrants-soft-skills_Boerchi-et-al.pdf

¹⁹ The relevance of the role that third sector plays is also stated by the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning Cedefop (2015).

1.2

THE EU TOOL AND ITS GOALS

After contextualising the adoption of EU Skills Profile Tool for TCNs, we now move on to the analysis of the instrument.

Following the European Commission *Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals*, DG Employment in cooperation with DG Home launched the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals. The EU Tool is a **multilingual online editor** intended for use by organisations (e.g. national authorities responsible for reception and integration, reception centres, employment assistance services, education and training advisers, social services, NGOs and charities) working with third country nationals (notably migrants and refugees entering Europe). “The goal is to **make** the skills and work **experience** of Third Country Nationals **visible** and help understand their needs, and ultimately to facilitate their integration into the labour market.”²⁰

According to the EU Tool User Manual, it helps to **map out an individual's profile of skills, qualifications, and work experiences** and it can be used during **interviews** between counsellors and recently arrived third country nationals (so-called “early contact situations”). Designed as the basis to issue **personalised advices** for further steps towards labour market integration (e.g. validation of skills, language or other training), it can be accessed from several devices (e.g. desktop, mobiles and tablets).²¹ Finally, it can be filled in one or several sittings according to the adviser's choice: the form can be saved and re-upload.

The EU Tool aims to **help bridging communication** difficulties providing different language versions. Two languages, selected by the users, appear on the screen at the same time so that the form can be filled in by the case workers together with the TCNs. Alternatively, TCNs can complete some sections such as “personal information” or “skill identification” on their own. Other sections, such as the “Overall appraisal and recommended next steps”, are reserved to the counsellor.

A **certain flexibility** is provided: a) the user can create his/her own tailor-made questionnaire, by hiding certain sections; b) organisations may use only parts of the Tool; thanks to Open Source Code they can make fundamental changes or build entirely new tools using the EU level instrument.²² The EU Tool has been **designed to support especially those Member States that have less experience** with the integration of migrants, or organizations with fewer resources to develop their own skills assessment tools. It is also developed to suggest questions that might not be usually considered by less experienced organizations, e.g. soft skills.

²⁰ European Commission, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION, State of Play on the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals, Brussels, May 2019, Unpublished

²¹ U Tool User Manual <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>

²² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1412&langId=en>

Composed by different sections, the online form is structured as follows:

- ▶ Personal information: including general information, contact information and migration information
- ▶ Expectations: next steps towards integration the interviewee would like to take
- ▶ Skills identification: language, education and training but also professional skills and transversal skills such as mathematical skills or digital skills or caring the children
- ▶ Overall appraisal and recommended next steps: case worker underlines key TCNs' strengths and weaknesses and provide concrete advice
- ▶ Consent and data protection
- ▶ Summary: mono-lingual but language can be change according to need.

To sum up, the EU Tool has three main objectives:

- ▶ To map and document skills, qualifications and work experiences
- ▶ To issue personalised guidance
- ▶ To present skills qualifications, experiences in a way that is understood across the EU

BOX 2: RECENT UPDATES TO THE EU TOOL

Based on user feedback and in order to improve users' experience, some change were recently made to the Tool. These improvements occurred after the evaluation missions which is why they are described in this box and are not considered for the purposes of the evaluation exercise:

- ▶ more Bertelsmann Stiftung competences cards* have been added to the questionnaire in order to simplify use for the less literate;
- ▶ the configuration feature of the Tool has been expanded with an option to hide questions. It was already possible to hide certain sections of the questionnaire that might be irrelevant in specific settings. With this additional hiding feature, users can create their own tailor-made questionnaire.

In addition, according to the European Commission's website, the EU Skills Profile Tool will soon become an integral part of the new Europass platform, launched on 1 July 2020 in the context of the updated European Skills Agenda.**

* for further information on Bertelsmann Stiftung Competences Cards see section 5.1 Improving Userfriendliness and making the Tool even more responsive to counsellors' needs of this Report; see also: <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/careers-via-competences/project-news/immigration-counseling-for-adult-immigrants>

** for further information on the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=it&catId=89&newsId=9723&furtherNews=yes> and on the Pact for skills <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

2.

THE EVALUATION STRATEGY

The goal of this report is to answer the question “did the intervention work?” and, more specifically, “did things work as expected to produce the desired change/result? And if not, why?”. These are typical questions of process evaluation.

The evaluation focused on the implementation of the Tool in the two pilot actions, Tyrol and Athens. The research has analysed how pilot actions’ partners were implementing pre-existing local tools for skills assessment and compared the existing ones with the EU Tool in order to detect problems, find possible synergies and margins for amelioration. The analysis focuses mainly on case workers’ opinions and experience, without forgetting third country nationals’ perceptions.

The whole evaluation was based on an Evaluation Strategy that was presented in July 2019 to SGI Europe, Labour-INT Project Manager, EC Policy Officer and to national pilot action partners for validation ([ANNEX I The Evaluation Strategy flyer](#)).

The background research for the evaluation was articulated in the following phases:

First Step: two in-depth skype interviews with both pilot actions’ partners, TSD and EKA, were conducted to collect information and validate the evaluation strategy (in July 2019 and September 2019). During the interviews, information has been collected on objectives, planned activities as well as expected results. These interviews provided essential information functional to analyse the intervention logic and to create the so called *logical framework of the intervention*;

Second Step: two questionnaires were addressed to counsellors to collect information concerning usability and user-friendliness of the EU Tool;

Third Step: two evaluation missions in Tyrol and Athens have been carried out (January/February 2020). The missions were realised during the testing in order to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the EU Tool with the implementers.

During each of the missions, the following activities were carried out:

Athens (28-30 January 2020):

- ▶ a **focus group** was organised addressing all EKA's staff involved in the project (3 people) as well as 2 counsellors of the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee issues of the Municipality of Athens.
- ▶ a **brief questionnaire** was addressed to third country nationals who have already tested the EU Tool (11 people out of 15; the groups were composed of Farsi and Francophone speakers). Conceived as a questionnaire, it was submitted at the end of training, in one-to-one interviews and in a focus group. Interviews were realised in English and French with the support of interpreters, provided by EKA.
- ▶ Thanks to EKA's collaboration, a **participant observation** has been realised during an advising meeting with an asylum seeker.

Innsbruck (3-5 February 2020):

- ▶ **interviews with counsellors** (3 persons) and with one person who tested the Tool were conducted
- ▶ a visit on the site where asylum seekers and refugees are hosted was arranged, followed by the presentation of the skills assessment procedure used by TSD. TSD's staff made themselves available to illustrate the TIK (Tyrolean Integration Compass) and the Hamet test as well as to explain how they work.

Finally, preliminary findings and first reflections were presented and discussed in the framework of the Expert Group of Skills and Migration of the LABOUR-INT 2 project in February 2020 (Brussels).

3.



THE ANALYSIS OF THE LOGIC BEHIND THE ADOPTION OF THE EU TOOL

In the following section the logic behind the adoption of the EU Tool will be explained from the specific point of view of the LABOUR INT 2 PROJECT. This is a standard step in a process evaluation and it is functional to analyse and compare the expected and the actual activities and results. This approach (technically defined “logical framework approach”) helps to understand whether things have worked as expected or not, and why. Therefore the description provided in this section will drive the analysis throughout the rest of the report.

In the process evaluation literature, the so called theory of change is the description and the illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen and it helps to explain how an intervention is expected to produce a particular result. Similarly to a stylised representation of a programme, the logical framework helps illustrate problems, objectives, activities, and results clarifying the expected outcome.²³ Figure 2 presents the logical framework of the testing of the EU Skills Profile Tool.

²³ Regio, D. G. (2011). Guidance document on monitoring and evaluation. European cohesion fund, European Regional Development Fund. Concepts and recommendations.

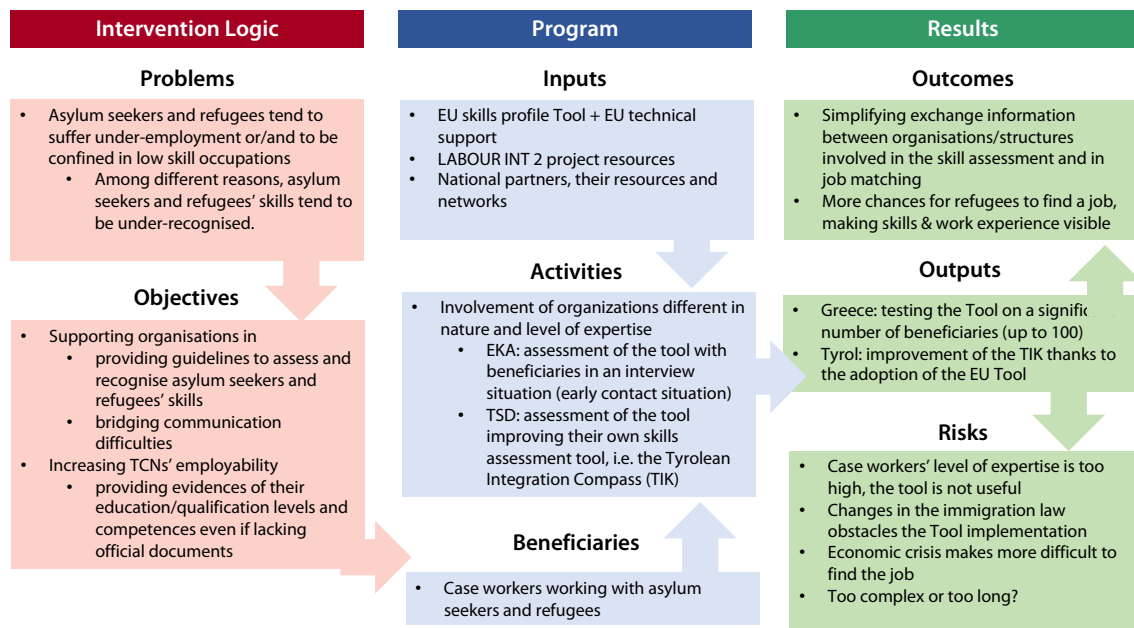


Figure 2: The logical framework of the testing of the EU skill profile tool –Kellogg's Foundation model

INTERVENTION LOGIC

Problem The LABOUR INT 2 project aims to promote employment as a key part of the integration process of third-country nationals, central to the participation of migrants in the host society. *Personal, social, legal and policy-related barriers hinder the access to labour market and therefore the integration of TCNs. TCNs' skills tend to be under-recognised* and despite their experience and skills they *tend to suffer under-employment or/and tend to be confined in low skill occupations* in specific economic sectors such as logistic, cleaning, catering, construction or agriculture. Among different categories, refugees and asylum seekers are the most vulnerable because they have had less opportunities to prepare their migration trajectories and they usually cannot resort to broad and well-established family networks. In addition, their opportunities are restrained as consequences of their status and the constraints introduced within the national reception system. Therefore, their difficulties turn out to be more acute and they have even more need of help compared to other migrant categories. This situation engenders a gap in the access to the labour market but also in income and occupational quality that persists until numerous years after immigration (refugee gap).

Objectives Due to refugees' vulnerability, the **validation of their formal, informal and non-formal competences** becomes even more important in order to make them visible for the labour market. The decision to test **the EU Skills Profile Tool** was taken to **facilitate the communication** between refugees and organisations in charge of reception and integration, and to support the same organisations. The Tool is thus expected to provide **guidelines** to assess and recognise refugees' skills and to **bridge communication difficulties**. Moreover, it is supposed to be more useful for organisations with less experience.

Specific objectives: Supporting EKA in the skills assessment of asylum seekers and international protection holders; supporting TSD in improving its skills assessment tool.

PROGRAM

Inputs The EU skills profile tool is an open source on line tool, therefore organizations are free to use it whenever and wherever they need. As far as the implementation is concerned, the European Commission does not provide any binding guidance or specific training. Organisations are free to structure the skills assessment and the testing, as they prefer. If needed, an email contact (EMPL-E2-SKILLS-PROFILETOOL@ec.europa.eu) is provided to ask for technical support.

In order to implement the tool, the two partners employ a part of the budget of LABOUR INT 2. In the implementation of the tool, the two organisations can rely on their personal networks.

Activities As already mentioned, in the LABOUR INT 2 project, two organizations are involved in testing the tool, EKA and TDS. Following EKA's design, the EU Tool was supposed to be tested with asylum seekers in one-to-one interview contexts.

Whereas, TSD decides to use the EU Tool in order to improve their own skills assessment tool, i.e. the Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK).

Beneficiaries. Caseworkers are the main beneficiaries of the testing.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Expected Outputs In general terms, according to the adopted logic, organizations are expected to be able to more easily and effectively support asylum seekers and refugees that will thus have more chances to find a job. In particular, EKA's expected output was to have its case workers conduct 100 interviews using the Skills Profile Tool for TCNs. As for TSD, the adoption of the EU Tool was expected to help caseworkers to improve their own skills assessment tool, i.e. TIK. The different level of expertise of partners determines the differences regarding the expected outputs.

Expected outcomes According to the proposal, the expected outcomes are the following:

EKA - Athens: supporting caseworkers in understanding asylum seekers' skills and needs in order to improve their employability. The adoption of the EU Tool aims to facilitate refugees' integration into the labour market, ultimately increasing their chances to find a job.

TSD - Tyrol: improving the Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK). The implementation of the EU Tool aims to support the elaboration of the follow up phases of the Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK) 2.0. The EU Skill profile Tool is supposed to provide useful suggestions to improve the skills assessment tool that TSD is fine-tuning. In particular, the EU Tool is expected to make skills and work experience more visible and to simplify the exchange information between organisation/structures involved in the skill assessment and in job matching.

Risk The theory of change approach focuses also on the potential risks. It reflects on the factors that might hinder the implementation of the intervention. For example, external factors, such as an economic crisis, changes in the immigration law or indeed a pandemic, might undermine organizations' efforts. In similar cases, despite the adoption of a new tool, migrants would have less chances to make the most of a thorough skills assessment.

Also internal factors may have an impact. For example, in the case of organizations with high levels of experience in skills assessment, the improvement might be less relevant. Finally, technical problems might hinder the implementation of the Tool itself.

4.

▶ THE TWO NATIONAL PILOT ACTIONS

The EU Tool has been designed to support different types of organizations and notably those with fewer experience and resources to develop their own skills assessment tools. Consistently, the Labour-INT2 project decided to EU Tool has been tested by two organizations, i.e. TDS and EKA Migration Point, different from one another in nature and level of expertise and working in two different contexts, i.e. Austria (Innsbruck-Tyrol) and Greece (Athens).

In the following chapter, we analyse the two contexts and the way in which the EU Tool has been tested.

4.1

▶ THE ASYLUM/MIGRATION LEGISLATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT IN ATHENS (GREECE)

From a major migrant-sending country in the 20th century, Greece became a migrant receiving country. Indeed, since 2015, following the closure of the Western Balkans transit corridor, Greece became a country of destination or prolonged stay (Civic Plus 2018). Large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers forced to remain in Greece by EU's "Dublin regulation" and, since 2016, by the EU-Turkey statement, challenged the quite recent and still weak Greek reception system. The Hellenic state had to face with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis as well as management crisis (Ceaseval 2019).

The Greek reception system had to overcome numerous problems, starting with the scarcity of reception places.²⁴ Under the pressure of the emergency and of the European institutions (both the European Court of Human Rights²⁵ and the European Commission), a formally highly centralized reception system has been created but the implementation still remains largely fragmented and mainly in the hands of international organisations and NGOs (Ceaseval 2019).

In this framework, some cities have arisen as pioneers in the effort to contribute to refugees' integration. Among the most active cities, the municipality of Athens that got involved in the national reception system in 2015 and, in the absence of a national coordination, has proven quite active in the autonomous raising of international funding to finance its reception and integration services (Ceaseval 2019).

²⁴ The emergence of a national reception system in Greece dates to the last decade (Ceaseval 2019)

²⁵ M.S.S. vs Greece and Belgium - ECtHR 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

With regard to the **participation to the labour market**, until 2016, the main obstacle for TCNs and refugees was the requirement for them to pass a 'labour test' (Karantinos 2016). According to this condition, they were allowed to obtain a work permit only if no Greek or EU citizen was available for a job. Nowadays, asylum seekers have access to the labour market 6 months after the moment in which their asylum application has been formally lodged and they have obtained an "asylum seeker's card".²⁶ "This right is granted only if no first instance decision has been taken by the Asylum Service within 6 months of the lodging of the application, through no fault of the applicant".²⁷ Moreover, at the time of the pilot action, the economic conditions in Greece and the high unemployment rate, compounded with administrative obstacles, seriously hampered migrant employment rates.²⁸ Among member states, Greece has the highest unemployment rates: TCNs reach almost 30%, the double of native-born (Eurostat data 2019).²⁹ High unemployment in sectors such as construction, transport and retail where migrants are traditionally mainly employed, led to a growingly unfavourable environment for labour market access. In 2018, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe underlined a number of administrative barriers, including the difficulties encountered by asylum seekers in obtaining the Tax Registration Number without which one cannot legally work (Council of Europe 2018).

According to the MILE (Migrants Integration in the Labour market in Europe) project, the main integration challenge is that "TCNs are pushed to the underground economy and illegal work for particularly extensive periods".³⁰ Moreover, the MILE research outlines that the situation has been particularly hard for migrants with lower levels of education. "TCNs are mainly unskilled workers and as such they have suffered more from the crisis. Since more highly educated nationals lost their jobs (more than 500,000 Greeks have moved to other EU countries to find a job) it is only natural to assume that a highly educated TCN will face great difficulties in finding a suitable job."

With regard to measures aimed at facilitating migrants' access to the labour market, researches underline an absence of standards on how laws are implemented. Although asylum seekers are legally entitled to work while their application is pending, in the absence of a national plan on reception they are treated differently depending on the public services they are dealing with (e.g., tax offices, bank services and social security services).³¹ Divergent practices are reported not only across cities but also within cities (Ceaseval 2019).

The recent **immigration reform** introduced substantial changes in the immigration system (2019). Following the July 2019 national elections, the new government announced a more restrictive policy on migration and asylum. The International Protection Act/IPA (L. 4636/2019) entered into force on 1 January 2020. Among the new measures in the field of asylum, the government delayed access to the labour market for the asylum seekers and resettled refugees from Athens to the mainland.

In addition, local elections were held in the same year in Athens. According to our interviewees, the election marked a change in the migration governance approach at local level.

²⁶ Article 71 L 4375/2016; Article 15 L 4540/2018.

²⁷ https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-labour-market#_ftn7

²⁸ Council of Europe, Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Dunja Mijatović following her visit to Greece from 25 to 29 June 2018, CommDH(2018)24, 6 November 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lwG4EG>, paras 54-55

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4187653/10321599/Unemployment+indicators+of+non-EU+citizens_2019.jpg

³⁰ Mile, (Migrants Integration in the Labour market in Europe), VOICES OF EUROPEAN EMPLOYERS: challenges and benefits of the inclusion of migrants in the labour market. Evidences from Italy, Austria, Greece and Spain. July 2019. <https://projectmile.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-ENG-DEF.pdf>, p.147.

³¹ Ceaseval 2019

4.2



THE TESTING OF THE EU SKILLS PROFILE TOOL IN ATHENS (GREECE)

THE EU TOOL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL PILOT ACTION

According to the Labour-INT2 project design, the Migrant Point EKA coordinates the Greek pilot action, in cooperation with ACCMR (the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee issues) of the Municipality of Athens, IME GSEVEE and the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute.

In the Greek pilot project, the assessment of EU Skills Profile Tool plays a central role since it constitutes one of the three pillars composing the pilot action, together with integration training and the provision of digital seminars. The latter two activities were carried out in the form of taught lessons. The training was structured as follows: 12-hours of integration seminar plus 50-hours digital training. At the end of the seminars the EU tool was planned to be tested in a one-to-one interview context. According to the proposal, 100 individuals were supposed to be selected and involved in the training sessions. Selected candidates were supposed to be divided in groups according to their language; translation from Greek to English, Arabic, Farsi and French were provided through cultural mediators.

EKA was in charge of the selection of refugees, in cooperation with the ACCMR of the Municipality of Athens and local NGOs. As an interviewee explains, the involvement of the ACCMR of the Municipality of Athens had a key position in the project also due to its coordination functions in the Athens urban area and its influence in the national debate. As the actor in charge of providing accommodation and other services (i.e. a charge card for everyday needs, interpreters, access to a day centre and social hub, job counselling, legal support), ACCMR has been selected as particularly fit for reaching out to migrants and refugees to involve them in the project.

Nevertheless, the Greek partners met some difficulties in the implementation of the pilot action. Despite the relatively large group of selected participants (125), the final beneficiaries for the seminars of EKA were 84. As the Greek project manager explains, “as a result of the relocations of refugees in the mainland, we lost a lot of participants during all stages of the training activities on labour integration, namely pre-selection, selection and implementation of both seminars on labour rights and digital skills.” According to the project manager, the involvement of 84 people still represented a significant achievement that required great efforts to replace non-available candidates with new ones.

The Pilot testing of the EU Tool started in November 2019, according the project timetable. The evaluation mission took place on 28-30 January 2020 and at that stage, two language groups (French and Farsi) had already finished the training. Instead, the Arabic-speaking group was suppressed: only few of the original participants were able to continue in the Digital training of GSEVEE as they were transferred before the start of the course. Consequently, they did not participate in the testing of the Tool. It is worth underlining that the immigration reform and the reallocation of asylum seekers (see 4.1) have led the Greek partners to a reorganisation of their activities with an overlapping of training and testing activities. Another practical obstacle was represented by urban mobility as no ad hoc budget was foreseen to provide bus tickets to beneficiaries. Before the immigration reform, beneficiaries were considered unemployed and thus they had access to free bus passes but this was not any more the case after the restrictive policy change.

As for the implementation of the EU Tool, it was tested in one-to-one contexts and using the PC version. The staff of EKA finalized the test with 15 people out of 25 persons invited (5 Farsi and 10 French speaking), “the rest either did not appear or they decided not to complete the test.”³² As for the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency³³ of the Municipality of Athens, also involved in the activity, only 4 EU Tool forms were completed before they decided to interrupt the testing. Overall, both the duration and the complexity of the test discouraged the caseworkers to explore the Tool further.

THE TESTING OF THE EU SKILLS PROFILE TOOL

Before focusing on the process, we will describe the profile of the caseworkers involved in the testing referring to the data collected through the questionnaire addressed to the counsellors to collect information concerning usability and user-friendliness of the EU Tool (i.e. five case workers filled it in, respectively 3 EKA’s caseworkers and 2 officials of the Unit on Migration of the Municipality of Athens) and through the focus group organised during our evaluation mission in Athens.

Based on the data that we have collected, the case workers involved in the exercise have different profiles but overall their primary area of work is integration with the exception of one IT officer. The latter was also in charge with the technical problems (notably frequent crashes and internal errors) that the staff encountered during the testing. None of them is an expert in skills assessment but 4 out of 5 respondents affirmed to have previous experience in skills assessment: they usually devote up to 30% of their working hours to this activity and three out of 5 have already employed skills assessment tool before.

Apparently, no specific training on the EU Tool has been organised – at least at local level- since all case workers involved in the testing declared not having participated, with the exception of one person.

Regarding the modality of administration of the EU Skills Profile Tool, as planned, asylum seekers took part to one-to-one interviews and none of the case workers asked them to fill in the online form by themselves. Among the 15 asylum seekers involved by EKA, only one francophone participant was able to fill autonomously all the fields. With the others, the case workers preferred to read the questions to the asylum seekers and fill in the online form based on their answers. In 40% of the cases, the questions of the EU Tool were just adopted as guidelines.

60% of the interviewees underline that in some cases the support of a cultural mediator was needed, notably with illiterates or people with low education profile. During the researchers’ mission in Athens, the Tool was tested with a man with very poor understanding of both Greek and English and a low level of education, accompanied by his son (who could speak a little more Greek) and in the presence of a cultural mediator who was very careful in identifying questions potentially triggering or difficult to understand even with the translation provided by the Tool itself. Among the case workers who tested the Tool without the support of a cultural mediator, one of them specified that she/he was a cultural mediator her/himself.

Almost all interviewees appreciated the on line version (80% agree about the utility of the on line version of the EU Tool) and overall recognize a certain flexibility of the EU Tool for what concerns the different profiles of refugees and asylum seekers, e.g. low skilled and high skilled, women and men etc. Nevertheless, they still expressed some reservations about the time needed to complete the tool (in their case, over 3 hours in average), the existence of redundant sections, and the necessity to improve some sections. In addition, 80% of interviewees affirmed to have encountered technical problems and that some asylum seekers refused to use the EU Tool. Multiple elements were presented to explain the refusal: the compilation of the Tool is too time-consuming, too many difficulties in understanding the questions (meaning and connection with reality), lack of trust in the usefulness of the Tool to facilitate labour market insertion.

³² Interview Greek counsellor (29/01/2020)

³³ <https://www.developathens.gr/en/the-agency/profile>

When asked about the user-friendliness of the EU Tool on a scale from 0 to 4, only one person declared to have felt comfortable (3 out of 4). Instead the majority of interviewees expressed serious reservations. They showed to be doubtful about two specific functions of the Tool: i.e. *information sharing among case workers and other services*; and *job matching*.³⁴

In particular as far as the matching is concerned, the Greek case workers showed a high expectation concerning the employment of the EU Tool to create an effective CV, expectation which was disappointed: "There are too many thing inside...I don't know who Ali [i.e. made-up name] is after having read the document" "Young people of the new generation are good at writing a CV". They assign, instead, a better judgement to other two functions, i.e. *take note of suggestion in terms of education and training* and *data management*. In particular, three people rate 3 in a scale from 1 to 5 the first function, i.e. "take note of suggestions in terms of education and training".

Moreover, interviewees were asked whether they would suggest the Tool to other caseworkers. 60% of them (3 interviewees) answered yes.

Finally, it is worth underlining that Greek caseworkers felt particularly uncomfortable about dealing with asylum seekers' expectations (and frustrations): "I feel bad because I know that beneficiaries have expectations (on the testing)",³⁵ especially regarding future employment. Case workers worried about disappointing them, especially when considering the crisis of the labour market in Greece. The frustrations were expressed also by asylum seekers during the focus groups: "what is the added value [of this exercise]?",³⁶ they asked. The main concern they expressed was that their chances to find a job in the Greek labour market did not increase. Specifically, they underlined that the document that they received once the filling in of the Tool was completed was not fully comprehensible for them, since it was written in Greek, and that potential employers appeared confused when receiving such a long document together with (or in place of) a CV.

4.3

▶ THE ASYLUM/MIGRATION LEGISLATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT IN TYROL (AUSTRIA)

Austria has a long experience in immigration management but more recently it had to reshape reception and integration policies to deal with the spike in "new" arrivals. Indeed, in 2015, the number of asylum seekers quadrupled from 2014 levels (UNHCR and BMI as of January 2016) and Austria became the third main receiving country among the EU-28 per head of population, after Germany and Sweden (Martini et al. 2016). The unemployment rate (6.0%) below the EU average (8.6%) contributes to explain the attraction towards the country (Eurostat 2017). The new refugee inflow arrived mainly from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran and then it declined from 2016 onwards up to the end of 2018 (Jestl et al. 2019). In 2018, 15.7% of the resident population of Austria held foreign citizenship and 10.5% from a non-EU country (Jestl et al. 2019). A positive self-selection of refugee flows in terms of educational attainment has been observed. The educational level of displaced persons is high compared with the average level in their country of origin (Buber-Ennsner et al. 2016)³⁷ and "the share of respondents with no or minimal formal education is low, higher among Afghans while very low among Syrians and Iraqis" (Rengs et al. 2017: 20)

³⁴ In order to inquire the perception of the case workers, it was asked them about the use of the EU Skills Profile Tool. They were asked about four different functions: 1) information sharing among case workers and other services; 2) job matching; 3) take note of suggestion in terms of education and training; and 4) data management

³⁵ Interview Greek counsellor (29/01/2020)

³⁶ Focus group realised with beneficiaries the end of training

³⁷ Quoted by Rengs, Bernard et al. (2017)

In Austria, reception is quite structured and asylum seekers are dispersed throughout the country according to a quota system based on the population of each federal province (Galera et al. 2018). For what concerns integration, access to the labour market has always been complicated for asylum seekers while recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection enjoy the same regulations as nationals (Martin et al. 2016). The only way for asylum seekers to access the labour market is seasonal work after a waiting period of three months, starting from the submission date of the asylum application (Jestl et al. 2019). A special decree of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (2004), the so-called Bartenstein Decree, restricts access to selected occupations with quota-regulated work permits, i.e. tourism, agriculture and forestry; in addition, the labour market test (*Ersatzkraftverfahren*) requires proof that the respective vacancy cannot be filled by an Austrian citizen, a citizen of the EU or a legally residing TCNs with access to the labour market (Martin et al. 2016, MigrEmpower 2018). These seasonal jobs are in addition limited by a yearly quota for each federal province and cannot be issued for more than six months (Martin et al. 2016). More recently (October 2018), further restrictions have been put in place making it impossible for asylum seekers below the age of 25 to start an apprenticeship in occupations with labour shortages which provided a possibility of labour market access (Jestl et al. 2019) or to access the labour market for training purposes, as counselors of TSD informed us.

Although the authorities should decide within 6 months, asylum seekers have to wait for considerable periods until their cases are decided by responsible authorities. The average duration of the procedure is 16.5 months (The Expert Council for Integration, 2018) and if the application is rejected and the asylum seeker appeals to the courts, the procedure can last up to two years (Jestl et al. 2019).

Three consecutive reforms of asylum legislation (2016, 2017, 2018) have occurred following the massive new refugee flows. The Austrian government introduced a more restrictive policy (i.e. Integration-Year-Act for refugees in 2018. *Integrationsjahrgesetz IJG*).

As soon as an asylum seeker receives the international protection status, he/she is obliged to sign it and the provision of welfare benefits is linked to the signature. The Integration Year focuses on provisions of active labour market policy measures for refugees. By signing the agreement, refugees commit to learn German up to an advanced level (A2) within two years, and to attend the prescribed classes on Austrian values and orientation classes. The Integration Year is modularly composed of different integration measures: competence clearing, language courses, clearing of qualifications and certificates, support for their recognition; value and orientation classes in cooperation with the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF); job orientation and job application training; job preparation measures; vocational training. None of these measure was completely new but some of them have been developed for refugees (e.g. competence clearing) others were traditional labour market measures adapted for refugees (e.g. job orientation). From the perspective of this report, it is worth to underline that competence clearing activities are described as 'formative' validation of competencies (Pfeffer 2017). Taking place as a training measures in classes, these activities focus on the identification and documentation of formal qualifications and vocational experiences, but also provide introductory knowledge on the Austrian labour market and placement training.³⁸

In 2018 the budget for funding the integration year was cut, showing an evolution in the policy approach: the attention has shifted more towards refugees' obligation to integrate and less on host society's commitment to provide a support (Biffi 2019). Nevertheless, Austria remains one of the countries in Europe with a deeper experience in skills assessment and validation (Konle-Seidl 2017). Along having incorporated elements of skills assessment into their integration programmes for refugees, since 2010 a policy debate has been developed concerning ways to reduce the degree of over-qualification of migrant employment or inadequate matching of migrant skills and jobs (Biffi 2019). In 2012 a website to promote the accreditation and validation of skills acquired abroad was implemented (www.berufsanerkennung.at). In 2015 a law granting the right to accreditation /validation of one's skills and qualifications was adopted. In addition elements of skills assessment have been incorporated into its integration programme for refugees.

³⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2016) <https://europa.eu/>

4.4

▶ THE TESTING OF THE EU SKILLS PROFILE TOOL IN TYROL (AUSTRIA)

THE EU TOOL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL PILOT ACTION

In **Austria** the assessment of the EU Tool was planned in the framework of the elaboration of the Tiroler IntegrationsKompass – Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK) 2.0 and was functional to the improvement of the TIK. The improvement of the TIK has been planned in the framework of the LABOUR INT 2 project.

Designed and developed by TSD, the TIK is a tool to prove formally acquired competences and informal skills, and to verify and certify knowledge and experience of refugees and asylum seekers. Its main goals are the following:

- ▶ provide beneficiaries with a guide and orientation aid in relation to the various job opportunities in Tyrol;
- ▶ provide beneficiaries as well as all TSD partners in Tyrol (e.g. language institutes, authorities, Austrian Labour Market Service AMS, counselling centres, associations and municipalities) with the opportunity to identify at a glance the education/training activities of the candidates and the education/training opportunities available for them;
- ▶ provide beneficiaries with a small booklet containing a short CV as well as their recognised skills and all the courses they attended.

The TIK also offers individual consultations starting with the recording of training and work experience in the country of origin and in Austria, followed by a competence analysis. The individual consultation is structured in different meetings (at least two) and the first interview with the counsellor typically lasts 45 minutes. This interview aims to collect personal information and to explain the process to the beneficiaries. Then the beneficiaries are invited to reflect by themselves on their skills and abilities and about their experiences and to return for a second meeting. It is requested that during this second encounter the beneficiaries bring all the documentation they can provide on skills and past experience (education and labour market). In a coaching perspective, the interaction with the counsellor is quite important and multiple encounters are functional to stimulate the beneficiaries and to lift up their awareness.

In order to be more effective the TIK Compass was structured with the collaboration of the TDS's partners, notably the Public Employment Services. The close cooperation with the Public Employment Service was an essential point of the process, as the project manager explained: "it took a long time to make the TIK understandable and usable for job services in Tyrol".³⁹

To sum up, TIK has been designed not only to collect and present information but also to support beneficiaries in their future: "to prove their competence, experience and willingness to integrate in Tyrol."⁴⁰ In fact, "the TIK covers several areas such as personal info, languages, competences, education, integration activities (voluntary work, sports, etc.), and it can be easily updated without be fully reprinted. The designed packaging makes it useful for talks with other service or job applications with potential employers".⁴¹ Last but not least, collecting in one place all the competences and experiences of the person, TDS's counsellors observe that TIK has also an emotional value: "it is something to hold on to for people who have nothing else. It has an empowering effect".⁴²

³⁹ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (3/02/2020)

⁴⁰ Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK), An Austrian –wide pioneering project for educational and professional integration, TDS's flyer.

⁴¹ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (4/02/2020)

⁴² Interview Tyrolean counsellor (4/02/2020)

From TDS's perspective, the testing of the EU Skills Profile Tool was an opportunity to improve TIK. In particular, the EU Tool was perceived as useful in dealing with people that are more skilled. However, as a multilingual online editor, it was expected to help overcoming the language barrier: in similar conditions, this specific target population would be able to fill in at least the first part of the tool by himself without support of a counsellor or interpreter. Tyrolean case workers' expectation was that the Tool would be functional to test the beneficiary's degree of autonomy as well as IT competences. While they perceived it as more suitable for immigrants from third countries, they had some reservations about its use with asylum seekers and refugees.

THE TESTING OF THE EU SKILLS PROFILE TOOL

Unlike what was done in Greece, it was not possible to interview each case worker involved in the test but only the responsible for the project and two other counsellors.

Both counselors work in the area of integration and they work almost exclusively with asylum seekers. Devoting more than 50% of their working hours to skills assessment, they have a high level of expertise in this area. Indeed, they have been involved in the creation of a different tool for the validation of informal and formal skills, i.e. the Hamet (see below). Moreover, the case workers interviewed are used to deal with vulnerable users.

As it has occurred in Greece, only one of the two involved caseworkers affirms having taken part in a specific training on the EU skills profile tool.

Before moving to the analysis of the testing of the EU Tool in Tyrol, we briefly present the Hamet test. Describing this tool is important to underline the expertise of the staff as well as the context within which the EU Skills Profile Tool was tested in Tyrol. Indeed, one of the objectives of the testing was to compare the EU Tool with local skills assessment tools. The Hamet test is part of the comprehensive skills assessment approach adopted locally.

The Hamet is a practical and professional assessment and it has been designed not only for *testing by doing* but also for empowering beneficiaries. Started during the spring 2019, Hamet combines the testing of hard skills (i.e., ability to complete simple tasks with tools and machines) with soft skills (e.g., ability to work in group or to approach a new challenge, dedication). It consists of some exercises that beneficiaries perform in TSD's dedicated laboratory in order to assess and even try for the first time their manual, practical and social skills at work. The Hamet testing lasts a full day and people who are interested in taking the test come to TDS on a voluntary basis. According to Hamet's designers, it is a flexible test, assessing basic competences (60%) and technical competence (40%); it can be used to assess everyone (young and old, male and female) no matter their skill level. In fact, they paid attention to make sure that it can be employed regardless of the beneficiary's personal competence in German or English. Being aware that beneficiaries may lack basic linguistic competences, Hamet employs symbols and objects to explain the exercises.

Moreover, the skills assessment within the TIK and Hamet is also connected with a specific job goal and a specific skill shortage: "It is built to answer to the (local) labour market demand".⁴³ Being conscious that techniques might differ from one country to another (e.g. tailoring in Afghanistan), Hamet has the objective to test the ability to complete specific tasks effectively. Beneficiaries can do and redo the exercise several times until they feel confident. Then they are tested. In a coaching approach, the relationship with the counsellor is crucial and it has been structured in order to improve beneficiary's self-confidence and awareness. "It is empowering! Self-evaluation plus evaluation with the counselor: it is not a deficit model".⁴⁴

⁴³ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (3/02/2020)

⁴⁴ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (3/02/2020)

After having identified the existing knowledge and competences, and having defined individual goals, counsellors issue a perspective plan and explain how existing knowledge might be enhanced and useful certifications achieved. During the interview, along with education and work experience, the counsellor investigates also other aspects such as the beneficiary's living and economic conditions, his/her social networks and aspirations.

At the time the evaluation mission was carried out, TSD counsellors had already tested the EU Tool with six former beneficiaries and the testing was interrupted shortly after the evaluation mission ended. The six former beneficiaries involved in the testing were people with a migratory background who had already been tested using "TIK". They were all highly skilled and therefore supposed to be completely autonomous in using the Tool. Planning to use it for autonomous users, TSD counselors opted to test the EU tool with some former beneficiaries before officially adopting it.

The EU Tool was tested in a one-to-one interview context, in multiple locations and in different modalities: using either the paper version, or the laptop or PC depending on their needs and possibilities. This flexibility of the tool particularly pleased counselors of TSD. While using the tool the testers were encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

- ▶ Can clients work with the Tool independently?
- ▶ What support is required from the supervisor / advisor?
- ▶ Would an additional translation service be necessary?
- ▶ How long does it take to process the tool?
- ▶ Are there any technical problems?
- ▶ And anything else that stands out.

Moreover, they noted down several specific observations while completing the Tool.

Despite the Tool was planned to be used with highly skilled people, none of the refugees finally filled in the online form by themselves. The EU tool was used:

- ▶ either as a guideline to help refugees understand what their competences are
- ▶ either they asked to refugees to fill the online form with the counsellor support. Both counselors interviewed affirm that they needed the support of cultural mediators while they were testing the Tool especially in the cases in which "the client is not able to communicate in German/English".

Asked to rank the user-friendliness of the Tool from 1 to 4, the two interviewed caseworkers respectively answer 1 and 2. As for the flexibility of the Tool and its ability to adapt to the necessities of counsellors' work, their opinions diverges: one person judges the tool not flexible enough (she/he votes 0 on a scale of 0 to 4); the other one expresses a less critical judgment (a 2).

Instead they agree with regards to the flexibility of the tool as regards the different profiles of refugees and asylum seekers. Both counsellors perceive the tool as not flexible enough.

With regards the use of the EU Tool, they show to be quite sceptical concerning the *matching*: both rate a 1 out of 4. Instead both show a little more positive attitude towards two functions:

- *take note of suggestions in terms of education and training,*
- *data management.*

They rate respectively a 1 and a 2 on a scale from 0 to 4. The Greek case workers have expressed a positive judgment about the same two functions (see 4.3).

Finally, concerning the last function, i.e. *information sharing among case workers and other service*, they differ in their opinion. One person vote 2, the other 0.

The Austrian counsellors declared to have encounter several problems in the use of the EU Tool. Concerning the multilingual interface, some weaknesses were detected: i.e. the absence of some translations such as Russian, Chinese and Korean (moreover they miss having more African languages); a word by word translation instead of a content translation that makes question difficult to read; some terms adopted in the translation are misleading or not easily understandable in each culture, e.g. as secondary education. In particular they tested Somali, Arab, and Farsi version. In addition, they underline that not all parts (e.g. link to further options or some title of the sections) are translated (they appear in English).

The testing went on for around 60 to 120 minutes. According to the counselors, it took not so much time since both case workers and beneficiaries have good IT competence. Some of them encountered "error" messages at the end.

Finally, the interviewees stated that in order to be able to use the Tool on an institutional basis, some indispensable requirements needed to be fulfilled. The two prerequisites were the following: the disposition of a data processing agreement⁴⁵ and the shifting of the letter of acceptance of privacy from the end to the beginning of the Tool. At the moment of the writing of the report, the letter of acceptance still appears at the very end of the Tool, when "the client has already invested hours"⁴⁶ to fill it in. TSD case workers underline this aspect as particularly relevant since the Tool gives the possibility to upload personal data (such as the copy of the passport) and therefore it has to be clear from the beginning how these data will be processed. Moreover, according to TSD pilot testing manager, the text on data processing is quite vague and the users are forced to accept: otherwise they will not be able to save or print their work.⁴⁷ The pilot project manager reported these comments also during the ESGM of February.

⁴⁵ REGULATION (EU) 2016/679 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (in Austria DSGVO und DSG)

⁴⁶ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (3/2/2020)

⁴⁷ Unpublished document realized by manager of TSD "TSD testing of the EC skills profile tool for TCNs – Comments"

5.



MAIN FEATURES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU TOOL

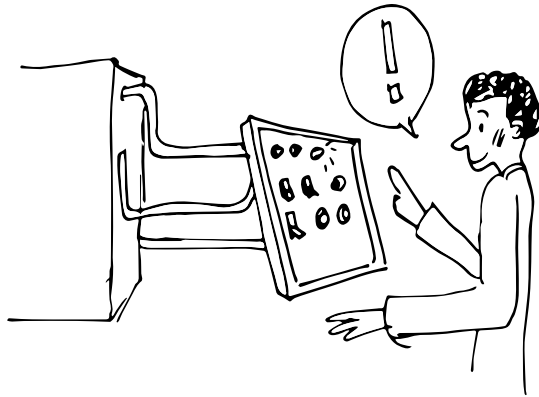
Following the logical framework, the EU Tool was expected to support organisations by providing guidelines to assess and recognise asylum seekers and refugees' skills and bridging communication difficulties. In addition, it was expected to be more useful for organisations with less experience.

Indeed, as the two tests show, notwithstanding the frustration of the caseworkers due to the impossibility to ensure a placement in the Greek labour market for the asylum seekers involved in the testing, the judgement on the Tool of the case workers with less experience in skills assessment is more positive. However, some aspects need to be improved in order to make it more user-friendly and responsive to counsellors' needs. These aspects are presented in the paragraph 5.1.

In paragraph 5.2, we will focus on how the EU Tool interacts with the context, a key dimension for any policy/measure evaluation. In particular, the two tests highlight that the level of caseworkers' expertise (i.e., a contextual element) has an impact on the implementation of the Tool. Moreover, the two pilot actions show that the EU Tool better fits the needs and the characteristics of certain categories of asylum seekers and refugees rather than others, i.e. high skilled migrants, and it functions better in reception systems where organisations have a strong collaboration with the local labour market service and have a good level of expertise in skills assessment. Without taking into account these latter aspects, an unforeseen negative effect might occur: the frustration of the refugee's expectations.

5.1

► IMPROVING USER-FRIENDLINESS AND MAKING THE TOOL EVEN MORE RESPONSIVE TO COUNSELLORS' NEEDS



Aiming to provide support in overcoming language barriers, the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals offers a **multilingual interface** available for all EU languages (except Irish) plus eight non-EU languages (Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Sorani, Somali, Tigrinya and Turkish). Still, it is worth underlining that some languages widely spoken by asylum seekers and refugees living in the EU are not provided, such as Russian (in Austria there are numerous asylum seekers from Chechnia and Ukraine- as for Ukrainian, Russian represents a vehicular language), Chinese, and Korean.

Concerning the multilingual interface, another weakness has been detected during the testing: some translations, notably in non-EU languages, are misleading or very tiny and difficult to read. Both project partners underlined this: the Austrian partner evidenced the adoption of unusual vocabulary (e.g. the word employed to translate “single” or “not married” in German is unusual for an Austrian speaker). Both in Austria and Athens, the wording of some questions turned out to be ambiguous. Sentences such as “when did you arrive?” or “who are you travelling with?” raise doubts in asylum seekers and international protection holders. Similarly, expressions such as “part-time training”, “full time education” “secondary education” are not easily understandable for persons with a non-European cultural background. Lastly, some sentences are not translated, such as title of each section. In order to facilitate the comprehension and the identification of basic and transversal skills, images are incorporated in the Tool. These images are borrowed from the *Competence cards for professional and immigration counselling* that Bertelsmann Foundation created in order to support the assessment of the social abilities and skills of migrants. The cards of the Bertelsmann Foundation combine pictures with a simple descriptive text.

Nevertheless, both project partners judge the images included in the Tool not so easily understandable; this is probably because the images in the original format were meant to be accompanied by a written description, which is absent in the EU Tool. That makes it difficult for counselors to explain to refugees what the image represents.



Aiming to support organisations offering services to asylum seekers and refugees, the EU Tool offers a certain **flexibility**. Available free of charge, the Tool is web-based and can thus be used in multiple locations, ensuring that users can reach refugees wherever they are. Moreover, the tool can be adapted to each organisation's specific needs (e.g. modifying the open source code, hiding questions or sections). These features are generally appreciated. Still, some technical aspects may be improved, to make the tool even more user-friendly and responsive to specific needs related to the target the testers evidenced that:

- ▶ the user always end on the very top of the page while moving between different sections, which obliges the user to take time to scroll down to resume the compilation;
- ▶ information buttons are not always useful: some filters are built in while others are missing;
- ▶ drop down list are too long, e.g. the professional experience list; a drop down list comprehensive of all profession might be useful but it might also turn out to be very time consuming and quite frustrating, notably for low skilled migrants: while they do not want to rate every competence (even the ones that they do not have) they feel frustrated because they might realise that they do not possess a lot of the competences listed;

Aiming to support counsellors in issuing personalised career advices to asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. validation of skills, language or other training), the Tool includes a section with online (mainly free of charge) courses recommendations. While all counsellors showed to be particularly interested in this service, sharing high expectations on it. Unfortunately, though, this function presents some limits. Namely, the standard online courses suggested are, for the most part, not suited for refugees who are not used to organize autonomously their learning activities or who have not taken part in training (or have not been in school) for a long time. On the one hand, the interaction with an instructor is important in itself notably for those with a low skilled profile; on the other hand, online courses represent a very “exclusive” way of learning because refugees may need a laptop (and not a mobile phone, which most asylum seekers and refugees possess) to follow the course.

Moreover, despite the big potential of this section, counsellors take a lot of time to go through all the courses: “No built-in filter are foreseen: beneficiaries and counsellors are confronted with a *sea of links*”⁴⁸, as one of the interviewees reported. In particular, they suggest adding more filters in the algorithm, e.g. a filter taking into account counselors and TCNs’ languages.

Moreover, during both national pilot actions, some **technical problems** occurred (e.g. TSD firewall impeded the download of the filled form in any format; “internal error” appeared very often when trying to print or download). Even though an email support service has been created, the remote technical support may be still improved in order to enhance the services and encourage users to ask for support.

⁴⁸ Interview Tyrolean counsellor (4/02/2020)

Finally, as already explained, some observations from an administrative point of view are necessary. Caseworkers observed the absence of two prerequisites: the disposition of a data processing agreement⁴⁹ and the shifting of the letter of acceptance at the beginning of the procedure⁵⁰. In the framework of the validation process, these two aspects are particular relevant since individual should be able to take control of the process. Candidates need to know what to expect and which requirements to meet in order to make informed decisions on whether to proceed or not (CEDEFOP, 2015: 19-20).

5.2

THE CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE EU TOOL

The EU Tool was designed in order to support different organisations (e.g. national authorities responsible for reception and integration, reception centres, employment assistance services, education and training advisers, social services, NGOs and charities) operating in different contexts, especially those with less experience with the integration of migrants or fewer resources to develop their own tools. Therefore, in the Labour INT 2 project the Tool has been tested in two completely different contexts: Tyrol and Athens. In this section, we draw some comparative conclusions on how the context influences the implementation of the EU Tool.

It is worth reminding that within the Labour INT 2 project, the EU Tool has been tested with a specific target, i.e. refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore the analysis concerns organizations operating (exclusively or not) with the local reception system. First of all, in the two national pilot actions, we observed several ways in which the institutional and administrative context can affect perceptions and uses of the Tool.

From this point of view, two aspects are more relevant than others, i.e. a) **the degree of cooperation and collaboration between the organisations involved in the testing and local labour market services** (public or private) and b) the pre-existing **level of expertise in skills assessment of the organisations**. These two aspects turn out to have a relevant impact in the implementation of the Tool.

As regards the first aspect, the two tests show that the collaboration between the organizations and the labour market services is relevant. In order to employ the EU Tool in the most profitable way, from the beginning counsellors have to know to whom they have to forward their comments and suggestions (notably those included in the “Overall appraisal and recommended next steps” section of the Tool) regarding the TCNs’ skills and path to work inclusion. Therefore, as the TIK experience reveals, a strong interconnection and collaboration with labour market services in this field needs to be built on a common understanding of the Tool itself. As the literature already observed (see 1.1.), the lack of close cooperation and dialogue between actors involved in reception and in employment services results in the misuse of or in the failure to use the output of the Tool, i.e. the skills assessment. For a fruitful adoption of the EU Tool the involvement of labour market services (public or private) appears to be important.

⁴⁹ REGULATION (EU) 2016/679 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (in Austria DSGVO und DSG)

⁵⁰ For further information see 4.4.

As regards the second aspect, focusing on validation of informal and non-formal skills, there are two steps: identification, i.e. the processes by which knowledge, skills and competences already achieved by individuals are made visible, and recognition, i.e. the outcome resulting from the assessment of experiential learning measured against external standards, requirements, or criteria. The identification is just as important as the recognition. Often, making skills visible to the labour market implies first of all making these competence visible to the same individual. Working with asylum seekers and international protection holders and notably with low-skilled individuals, this step becomes even more important to empower refugees and reduce vulnerabilities in a structural way. Making a diagnostic or organising information without helping the beneficiary to empower him/herself might engender frustration and increase inquietude. In this view, along with collecting and organizing all information concerning personal skills (acquired through formal and informal learning), the Tiroler Integrations Kompass (TIK) offers also a support in improving people self-consciousness and reflecting on individual solutions. For less skilled people, the Hamet tool has been created in order to identify skills and competences. Both high- and low-skilled people receive the TIK document folder designed to be appealing and useful even outside the service that provide it.

All these considerations lead us to state the importance to provide organisations adopting the EU Skills Profile Tool with all needed competences and support to employ it in the most profitable way. The EU Tool has been conceived to support organisations with less experience and it might be useful to help them to better support refugees. However, in order to attain this goal, these organisations have to be assisted in the development of their competences and the improvement of their networks.

It is important to take into account these caveats when implementing the EU Tool in order to ensure the effectiveness of the Tool itself and avoid both caseworkers and refugees' frustration. If adequately supported, the adoption of the EU Tool might represent an opportunity to strengthen organisations in their skills assessment competences and in their relationship with institutions and other stakeholders.

6. FINAL REMARKS

Within the Labour INT 2 project, the EU Skills Profile Tool has been tested with a specific target, i.e. refugees and asylum seekers. As the literature on the labour market integration of refugees has shown, this is one of the most vulnerable categories since they encounter greater disadvantages in the access to and permanence in European labour markets. The peculiarities of this category have to be taken into account because results cannot be generalised. The problems that have been encountered in the framework of the Labour INT 2 testing experiences concern the implementation of the tool in this specific field, i.e. the refugee integration system. Testing the tool with other categories, e.g. family reunification migrants, might engender different results.

That being said, the goal of this report, as stated in Chapter 2, was to answer the question “does the intervention work?” and, more specifically, “did things work as expected to produce the desired change? And if not, why?” We can affirm that the testing experiences did not work as expected. However, the answers have to be sought not (or not only) in the tool itself but also in the way the tool has been implemented and thus transferred in these very different local contexts.

As the logical framework illustrates, the EU Skills Profile Tool was adopted to help partners to deal with a specific issue, i.e. the limited employability of protection-seeking and refugee population. The general objective was to support caseworkers in making refugees’ skills and competences more visible in the local labour markets. As a multilingual online editor, the EU Skills Profile Tool was expected to facilitate the communication between asylum seekers and international protection holders and the counsellors. This tool was expected to be more useful for EKA, i.e. the project partner with less experience in skills assessment. In the two pilot testing exercises, the expected outcome partially differs. EKA aims to facilitate case workers in carrying out the skills assessment of asylum seekers and international protection holders; TSD aims to improve the TIK Tool.

As for the partner with less experience in skills assessment, i.e. EKA, the collected data underline that, despite they show a need of support, however a certain degree of disappointment and frustration expressed by both asylum seekers and case workers. However, it is worth to underline that output of the EU Skills Profile Tool has been conceived and adopted as a personal CV. As for the partner with more experience in skills assessment, i.e. TSD, the testing exercise was functional to improve the TIK tool. In this perspective, the Austrian partner collected information to formulate a reflection and according to it, the user-friendliness of the tool needs to be improved.

As a matter of fact, along with the necessity to improve the user-friendliness of the EU Tool, the most relevant aspect from the point of view of the evaluation is the impact of contextual elements on the implementation of the tool itself. The findings reveal to what extent some contextual elements, i.e. the degree of collaboration with the local labour market services (public or private) and the level of expertise in skills assessment, may hamper the effectiveness and the proper use of the tool. If these two elements are not strong enough, the risk of misusing of the tool (i.e. the EU Tool *de facto* used as a very time-consuming way to generate a CV) as well as the risk of frustration of both counsellors and beneficiaries become significant.

As argued in Chapter 5, in order to prevent similar situations, a reflection has to be developed on how the tool is transferred to specific contexts. Indeed, following the policy transfer literature, the process by which a policy is transferred has a decisive impact on the policy itself and on its outcome.

The testing experiences clearly demonstrates that the transfer of the Tool needs to be guided. Mechanisms have to be created in order to accompany the adoption of the Tool with a strengthening of the collaboration with the labour market services and an improvement of organisations' competences on skills assessment. In absence of a specific support, the transfer of a single measure (in this case, the EU Tool) risks to be dysfunctional. It risks to solve the problems but to be victim of the weakness of the local system. If integrated in a more systemic approach of this sort, the adoption of the EU Skills Profile Tool could instead contribute to an overall improvement of refugee integration at the local level as well as offer an added value in the ongoing pandemic crisis. Being an online tool, it allows to make skill assessment not only in an office but in different locations

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Finally, special thanks goes to the coordinators of the Expert Group on Skills and Migration and of the LABOUR INT project and to all LABOUR INT partners for these years of intense exchanges, meetings and interesting work together.

The project

The LABOUR INT 2 aims to promote employment as a key part of the integration process of third country nationals and central to the participation of migrants in the society.

One of the specific objectives of the project is to test the European Commission Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals. The European Commission developed the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals as a part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe to support early profiling of the skills of refugees migrants and third country nationals.

The tool aims to help individuals produce profile of their skills, qualification and experience. Two national pilot actions test the EC tool: Austria (Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH - TSD) and Greece (EKA ERGATIKO KENTRO ATHINAS).

The Evaluation strategy

Since the EC Skills Profile Tool is intended for use by services offering assistance to third country nationals, the evaluation will focus on the implementation of the instrument in the two pilot actions. The research will analyse how pilot actions' partners are enforcing it, analysing existing local tool for skills assessment and comparing the existing one with the European Commission one in order to find synergies and margins for amelioration.

The analysis will focus mainly on operators' opinions and experience, without forgetting third country nationals' perceptions.



First step: an analysis of the skills assessment procedure of third country nationals currently in use will be realised. The information will be collected through interviews with the national pilot actions' partners, TSD and EKA. The interviews will focus on:

- strengths and weaknesses of current skills assessment procedures.
- expectations on use of EC Skills Profile Tool
- organization of the pilot
- validation of evaluation strategy



Second step: two brief questionnaires will be submitted in order to monitor the implementation of the tool. The first questionnaire will be addressed to operators to collect information concerning usability and user-friendliness of EC tool as well as its flexibility to deal with different profiles of third country nationals.

The second questionnaire will be addressed to third country nationals and it will be composed by few readily-comprehensible questions.

Third step: two evaluation missions will be carried out in Tyrol and Athens, during the testing, in order to discuss with pilot actions' partners about strengths and weakness of the tool and to take stock of the lessons learned during the implementation.



Evaluation mission will include participant observation, focus groups and interviews.

Fourth step: a final report will be drafted to draw conclusions on the implementation of the EC Skills Profile Tool.



Tool.

Summarizing, in order to achieve the expected results, FIERI will put into effect the following activities:

- ✓ Prepare two brief questionnaires
- ✓ Conduct in-depth interviews with the pilot actions' partners
- ✓ Carry out two evaluation missions.
- ✓ Analyse the collected data
- ✓ Draft a final report



ANNEX

ANNEX I: THE EVALUATION STRATEGY FLYER

Labour int 2 Greece

* Required

LABOUR- INT 2

The EU skills profile tool testing - Operators' questionnaire



Are you testing the EU Skills Profile Tool? Please fill in the following questionnaire, your opinion is essential to evaluate the tool

You and your work

1. Your institution: *

Mark only one oval.

☐ EKA ERGATIKO KENTRO ATHINAS

☐ Other: _____

2. What is your role? *

3. What is your primary area of work? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ vocational education and training VET

☐ skills assessment

☐ job guidance

☐ reception

☐ integration

4. How much time do you usually devote to skills assessment (not including the EC

Skills profile tool testing)? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ none

☐ up to 30 % of your working hours

☐ 50% of your working hours

☐ up to 70% of your working hours

☐ whole time

You and your work - other skills assessment tools

5. Have you ever used skills assessment tools before? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ yes

☐ no

You and your work_ other skills assessment tools

6. How much time does it take to complete the skills assessment with the tool you are used to? (hour) *

ANNEX II: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE COUNSELLORS- THE GREECE EXAMPLE

You and your work- User's profile 1/2

7. With whom do you usually work? User's Nationality *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Third country national
☐ EU national
☐ Austrian/Greek citizen

8. With whom do you usually work? User's status: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ International protection holders
☐ Asylum seeker
☐ Economic migrant
☐ Student
☐ Other visa

You and your work- User's profile 2/2

9. Do you usually take on vulnerable users? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ yes
☐ no

The EC Skills Profile Tool testing

10. Did you take part in specific training activities in view of the Labour-Int pilot action? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, supplementary training on skills assessment
☐ Yes, specific training on the EC skills profile tool
☐ No

11. How long have you been using the EC Skill Profile Tool for? (month)

12. How do you use the EC Skills Profile Tool? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ You ask user to fill in the online form by him/herself
☐ You read the question to the user and you fill in the online form based on his/her answers
☐ You use the questions of the EC Tool as guidelines to help the client understand what his/her competences and skills are
☐ Other: _____

The EC Skills Profile Tool testing - cultural mediator

13. Do you need the support of a cultural mediator when you use the EC Skills Profile Tool? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Always
☐ Never
☐ In some cases

14. Please, tell us more about it: in which cases do you need the support of a cultural mediator? *

Your opinion 1/4

15. Please evaluate the user-friendliness of the EC Skills Profile Tool? *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

no user-friendly

completely user-friendly

16. Is the EC Skills Profile Tool flexible enough to adapt to the necessities of your work?

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

no flexible

completely flexible

17. Is the EC Skills Profile Tool flexible as regards the different profiles of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g. low skilled and high skilled, women and men, etc.)? *

Mark only one oval.

yes

no

Your opinion 2/4

18. Compared to the skills assessment tool that you used before the EC Skills Profile Tool: can you enter more information with the EC Tool?

Mark only one oval.

yes

no

I have never used any other skill assessment tools

19. Does the EC Skills Profile Tool suggest you items that you did not consider before? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

20. Please tell us about it. Which items does the EC Skill Profile Tool suggest you? *

Your opinion 3/4

21. In your opinion, the use of the EC Skills Profile Tool facilitates: *

Mark only one oval per row.

	0	1	2	3	4
data management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
information sharing among operators and other services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
matching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
take note of suggestions in terms of education and training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. In your opinion, the EC Skills Profile Tool can be useful to user in order to:

Check all that apply

☐ create a written and effective CV

☐ create a short summary of his/her work path

☐ understand what their next moves could be

Other:

Your opinion 4/4

23. How much time does it take to complete the EU Skills Profile Tool? (minutes) *

24. In your experience, is the online version of the EC Skills Profile Tool particularly useful? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ yes

☐ no

☐ I have never used

25. Has anyone refused using the EC Tool? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ yes

☐ no

26. If yes, how many people?

27. If yes, why?

28. Do you encounter problems in the use of the EC Skills Profile Tool? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

29. Please tell us something more about the problem you encounter using the EC Tool

Check all that apply.

☐ Some sections need to be improved

☐ Incomplete drop-down menu

☐ Redundant sections

☐ Missing aspects (es. availability for work and family load)

Other:

30. Would you suggest someone to use it?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

LABOUR INT 2

EU skills profile tool testing - Operators' questionnaire



Thank you for your time!

Please press the button "submit/invia" if you want to submit the form

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