





Vocational education and training of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection

European Migration Network Inform

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

This inform was prepared on the basis of national contributions from [26] EMN NCPs (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, and RS) collected via an AHQ developed by the EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. The information contained in this inform refers to the situation in the abovementioned EMN Member and Observer Countries up to March 2025.

Statistics were sourced from Eurostat, national authorities and other (national) databases.

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1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- Most EMN Member Countries and Serbia provide access for applicants and/or beneficiaries of international protection (BIP) to mainstream vocational and education training (VET) programmes under the same conditions as for nationals and other legally residing third-country/ foreign nationals. About one third of responding countries include only BIP in mainstream VET programmes, while about two thirds include both BIP and applicants for international protection in mainstream VET programmes.¹
- Eleven EMN Member Countries offer specific VET programmes to applicants for and/or beneficiaries of international protection (BIP).
- Among these, five countries offer VET programmes exclusively targeting BIP and three countries offer such programmes for both applicants for international protection and BIP. Lithuania has projects addressed to both categories.
- Six countries offer VET programmes specifically to BIP and/or applicants for international protection in response to labour market shortages.
- France, Italy and the Netherlands provide specific VET programmes for BIP and/or applicants for international protection who are between 16 and 18 years of age.
- The institutions in charge of nationwide VET programmes are mostly those responsible for labour affairs, such as public employment services (PES) and labour and/or employment ministries, as well as special labour-related offices.
- Fourteen countries systematically validate prior knowledge, skills and/or competencies for any VET candidate, with the same evaluation process for BIP and applicants for international protection as for nationals. Greece and Italy reported a special process for the validation of skills, knowledge and/or competencies for BIP and applicants for international protection.

- France, Italy and the Netherlands offer specialised programmes focused on entrepreneurship and business start-up support for BIP. They cover a range of topics including business planning, financial management, taxes and legal requirements.
- The majority of responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia provide mainstream incentives for participants in VET programmes such as financial and transport allowances. Greece and Italy reported incentives targeting BIP and applicants for international protection, with Greece providing rent subsidies to former unaccompanied minors aged 18-21 who attend VET programmes.
- Four countries offer specific incentives to employers in respect of both BIP and applicants for international protection including monetary incentives such as tax relief and subsidies and non-financial incentives such as integration support through translation and mentoring.
- Italy imposes obligations on BIP and applicants for international protection to complete VET programmes, such as attending a majority of scheduled training hours to avoid the suspension of allowances and the loss of eligibility to activate a new training pathway. Ten EMN Member Countries require fulfilment of various obligations by all participants of VET programmes (e.g. regular course attendance).
- Public authorities in seven responding countries have data on the numbers of BIP and applicants for international protection who have participated in VET programmes.
- Good practices include collaboration with the private sector, combination of VET programmes with work, creation of one-stop-shops for VET provision, recognition of prior learning, involvement of support persons, and use of communication materials.
- Constraints and challenges include language barriers, challenges in the recognition of prior learning, and the lack of VET programmes adapted for BIP and applicants for international protection.



2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Aim and scope of the inform

This EMN inform aims to:

- Identify existing procedures in EMN Member and Observer Countries that provide access for BIP and applicants for international protection to VET.
- Examine the incentive mechanisms used by EMN
 Member and Observer Countries to encourage BIP and
 applicants for international protection to enrol in VET
 programmes.
- Provide examples of good practices and challenges from EMN Member and Observer Countries in the

implementation of VET programmes for BIP and applicants for international protection.

This inform focuses on VET programmes provided by public authorities to BIP and applicants for international protection who have access to the labour market, either at no cost or with partial funding provided by public authorities. Here, VET programmes refer to programmes aiming to equip BIP and applicants for international protection with the knowledge, skills and competencies required by the labour market, including initial and continuing VET opportunities.²

¹ Note for the reader: The key points section provides a summary of the main information contained in the inform. For ease of reading, key points do not contain footnotes Please note that EMN Member and Observer Countries referred to in the key points are listed in the relevant sections within the current document.

² Council Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, 2020/C417/1, p. 4, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01), accessed 11 June 2025.

2.2. Context and rationale

Sustainable integration into the labour market is crucial for migrants' successful inclusion in host societies and for maximising their positive impact on the European Union (EU) economy. VET has the potential to positively contribute to both objectives. As stated in the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, high-quality VET with a strong work-based learning dimension could help migrants to enter the labour market and strengthen their integration,³ while the Action Plan's mid-term review published in June 2025 revealed a continued need for better adapted access opportunities to vocational education and training.⁴ Similarly, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) analysis suggests that VET programmes are an effective tool for migrants to enter the labour market, engage with the local working culture, develop social networks, and find jobs matching their skills, qualifications, and aspirations.⁵ The significance of VET is further highlighted in the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training,⁶ which stresses the need to substantially adapt and expand adult VET programmes.

Given their potential to enhance equal opportunities by fostering inclusivity and accessibility, especially for vulnerable groups such as BIP and applicants for international protection, the EU is committed to promoting effective VET policies.7 The rules applicable to applicants for international protection and BIP concerning access to VET are set in Directive 2024/1346/EU (the recast Reception Conditions Directive)8 and Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 (Qualification

Regulation).9 Pursuant to Article 18 of the recast Reception Conditions Directive, EU Member States are required to ensure that applicants for international protection have access to vocational training courses to help them to find employment. Article 17(3)(c) introduces a new provision compared to the previous version of the Directive: once applicants have access to the labour market, they shall enjoy equal treatment with nationals as regards access to vocational training. This aims to further support their long-term employability and integration. A similar understanding of VET as an important tool facilitating access to employment is reflected in the Qualification Regulation, which, in its Article 28, obliges EU Member States to guarantee access to employment-related educational opportunities for BIP. Article 35(1) explicitly recognises vocational training as a measure to support integration.

Nevertheless, obstacles to the participation of BIP and applicants for international protection in VET persist, for example due to a lack of information or language barriers.¹⁰ Research has indicated that strengthening the labour market integration of adult refugees requires tailoring VET selection processes and procedures to the specific needs and abilities of refugees, ensuring that they can fully benefit from VET and smoothly transition into the labour market. This includes lowering admission requirements or focusing on identifying non-formal skills and competencies, as well as motivation.11

Collecting information on VET as a labour market integration measure, while relevant, has not been fully addressed by the EMN to date.



3. ORGANISATION OF VET PROGRAMMES FOR BIP AND/OR APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

3.1. Admission conditions

EMN Member Countries and Serbia include BIP.¹² or both BIP and applicants for international protection¹³ in mainstream VET programmes under the same conditions as nationals and other legally residing third-country/ foreign nationals. In Austria, for example, BIP are eligible

for all VET programmes available to Austrian nationals, whereas applicants for international protection are excluded until their legal status regarding residency is clarified.

However, eleven responding EMN Member Countries¹⁴ offer specific VET programmes to applicants for and/or BIP. Five responding EMN Member Countries offer VET programmes

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, SWD(2020) 290 final, p. 12, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-control nt/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0758, accessed 11 June 2025.
- European Commission, Mid-term review of the Commission Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/? 5SC0162, accessed 31 July 2025
- 5 OECD, Jeon, S., 'Unlocking the Potential of Migrants: Cross-country Analysis', OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, 2019, pp. 11-34, https://doi. rg/10.1787/045be9b0-en, accessed 11 June 2025.
- Council Recommendation, op. cit., p. 6; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 'An ally in the green transition VET, especially apprenticeship, can provide the skills needed for greening jobs- and in turn help shape them', 2022, https://data.eu 10.2801/712651, accessed 11 June 2025; Cedefop, 'The green employment and skills transformation – Insights from a European Green Deal skills forecast scenario', 2021, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/112540, accessed 11 June
- European Commission, 'Vocational education and training: Skills for today and for the future', 2022, p. 17, https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/VET-skills-for-today-and-future/ 9ENN.pdf, accessed 11 June 2025.
- Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection,
- pp. 20-21, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=0.0/63AL_202401346, accessed 11 June 2025.

 Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, pp. 23-24, https://eur-le 401347, accessed 11 June 2025
- 10 OECD, Jeon, S. op cit., pp. 16-17.
- Cedefop, 'Creating lawful opportunities for adult refugee labour market mobility: a conceptual framework for a VET, skills and qualifications-based complementary pathway to protection', 2019, p. 15, http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/2882, accessed 11 June 2025.
- BE, BG, EE, HR, HU, LT (minor applicants for international protection are also eligible for VET programmes), PL, SE, SK, and RS.
- AT (applicants for international protection require a work permit), BE, CY, EL, ES (only those aged under 18), FI (if they have a legal status), FR (access to the labour market may be granted to an applicant for international protection when the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, for reasons not attributable to the applicant, has not taken a decision within six months after the application being lodged), IE (applicants only after six months and if granted a labour market access permission), IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL (applicants after six months), PT, SI (applicants after three months).
- BE, BG, CY, CZ, EL, FR, IT, LT, NL, PT, SE.

exclusively targeting BIP15 and three do so for both BIP and applicants for international protection. 16

Among the countries listed above, dedicated VET programmes, as well as access to mainstream programmes is provided by four countries¹⁷ to BIP only, and by Cyprus and Greece to BIP and applicants of international protection. Separately, five EMN Member Countries¹⁸ offer VET programmes specifically to BIP and/or applicants for international protection in response to labour market shortages (see Section 3.3), and three¹⁹ do so for minor BIP and/or applicants for international protection (see Section 3.2).

Box 1: The IntegraSoins project in Belgium

The IntegraSoins pilot project aims to fill the shortage of qualified nurses and nursing assistants in Belgium by offering training to beneficiaries of international protection who already have experience in the health sector in their country of origin. After a selection process, each candidate signs an employment contract with a healthcare employer. For the duration of the training, candidates are therefore linked to an employer that is a member of the Joint Health Services Commission (CP330) through an employment contract. Once the training is completed, each candidate can immediately enter the job market.

The most frequent conditions of admission to qualify for participation in VET programmes include legal status²⁰ or residence permit, 21 a valid work permit or labour market access permission,²² registration as an unemployed person or jobseeker with the relevant employment service, 23 sufficient understanding of the language of the training,24 minimum duration of residency in the host country.²⁵ and prior completion of compulsory education.

3.2. Responsible institutions

The institutions in charge of ensuring nationwide VET offers are those responsible for labour affairs, such as PES,²⁶ as well as labour and/or employment ministries²⁷ or special labour-related offices, including the General Labour Inspectorate, an executive agency in Bulgaria, the Labour Office in the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, and the

Human Resource Development Authority in Cyprus. VET programmes in several EMN Member Countries fall under the competency of the ministries in charge of education²⁸ or a specialised education agency, such as the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. In Bulgaria, France²⁹ and Greece, the ministry in charge of migration is involved in providing VET programmes to BIP and applicants for international protection. In Ireland, mainstream VET programmes fall under the remit of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and are implemented by local education and training boards (ETBs). DFHERIS also coordinates with other relevant departments, primarily the Department of Social Protection, which is responsible for social welfare provision, and the Department of Justice, in respect of the eligibility of BIP and applicants for international protection.

In four EMN Member Countries,30 VET programmes have a decentralised administration, with significant competencies assigned to either regions³¹ or municipalities.³² In the Netherlands, this is true for some VET programmes.

While the institutions above hold overall responsibility for VET in each country, the implementation of programmes is outsourced to dedicated service providers in eight countries, mostly public adult education centres³³ but also private companies.34 In Luxembourg, professional chambers and civil society also provide support.

3.3. VET programmes for minor applicants

The majority of responding countries³⁵ do not provide specific VET programmes for BIP or applicants for international protection aged between 16 and 18 years old. However, they are eligible to participate in mainstream VET programmes as per the conditions for all potential participants (see section 3.1) and those applicable to national minors. Targeted measures to facilitate their access or support their transition to adulthood within the VET system are not typically provided.

There are three exceptions in Italy, France and the Netherlands. In Italy, the public authorities offer VET programmes accessible to minor BIP and applicants for international protection aged between 16 and 18 years old. For

- BE, BG, CZ (part of the State Integration Programme; special projects), FR, LT (special projects).
- CY (special projects), EL, LT (special projects).
- 17 BE, BG, FR, LT.
- EL, IT, NL, PT. SE 18
- IT, FR and NL
- FI (does not rule out applicants for international protection, as they receive a legal status once their application for international protection has been submitted). SK
- AT (applicants for international protection only), CY (or be legally employed already), EE, FI, FR (see fn 13), IE (applicants are eligible for VET six months after lodging their international protection application and if they successfully obtained a labour market access permission), LT, LU (applicants have to request a temporary work permit, BIP are not subject to this obligation).
- BE, CY, CZ, EE, HR, LV, PL, SI, SK
- BE, EE, IT (a minimum level of Italian language proficiency (A1 or A2) is often required, but language courses are offered alongside technical training), LU, LV, NL, SK.
- BE (different PES for each region), BG, CY (for the registration of unemployed persons), EE, HR, IT, LT, LU (National Employment Agency (ADEM) provides support, information and guidance on adult apprenticeships), LV, MT, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.
- 27 BG, CY, CZ, FR, IT, NL,
- BG, EE, EL, ES, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL.
- FR: main stakeholders are the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministries of Labour and Housing, the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), the Inter-Ministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, the PES, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- BE. ES. IT. SE. BE, EL, ES, IT.
- NL, SE.
- BE, EE, EL, IE, IT. 33
- 34
- AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

example, PERCORSI programme-funded training entities³⁶ carry out employment pathways through professional internships for unaccompanied minors transitioning to adulthood (up to 23 years old). France provides integration workshops to facilitate the participation of BIP transitioning into adulthood in VET programmes. Special transition classes (schakelklassen) are available in the Netherlands to BIP and applicants for international protection. These classes are part of secondary education and focus on improving Dutch language, academic skills, and vocational orientation. Students mostly follow international transition classes for two years, after which they can continue with regular secondary education or go to vocational education. Many secondary schools offer these classes to help minor students to meet entry requirements and succeed in further education.

3.4. Consideration of labour market shortages

Six EMN Member Countries37 offer VET programmes specifically to BIP and/or applicants for international protection in response to existing labour market shortages. For example, Greece trains refugees in eight in-demand sectors, including agriculture and construction, Italy prepares vulnerable migrants (including applicants and BIPs) for work in the construction sector, and Portugal provides VET programmes in tourism to BIP and applicants for international protection. The Netherlands are implementing various projects to facilitate the placement of BIP in the railway and health care sectors. Similarly, Sweden prioritises sectors such as health care, transportation and gastronomy in its VET programmes for BIP, while also promoting the professions of car mechanics and machine operators.

Fifteen responding countries³⁸ offer VET programmes directly in response to existing labour market shortages under their mainstream programme targeting the entire population and without a distinct focus on BIP or applicants for international protection. Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia and Lithuania use employment forecasting and the identification of skills gaps to improve the labour market relevance of their education and training offers.

Prioritised sectors for programmes include health and social care, hospitality and tourism, craftsmanship, construction, transport and logistics, information and communications technology (ICT), industry, agriculture and administration.

Table 1: Prioritised sectors for VET programmes in response to labour shortages

Sector	Countries
Social and health care	AT, BE, CZ, EE, EL, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, SE
Hospitality and tourism	AT, BE, EL, FR, HR, IT, LT, PT, SE
Handicraft/craftsmanship	AT, BE, EE, EL, HR, IT, LT, LV, SE
Construction	BE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL
Transport and logistics	BE, CZ, EE, EL, FR, IT, LT, PL, SE
ICT	CZ, FR, IE, LV, PL, SE
Industry	BE, FR, LV
Agriculture	EE, EL, FR
Administration	BE, HR, PL

Austria and Belgium reported regional differences in labour market shortages that have a direct impact on VET offers, including for BIP. In Austria, needs are higher in the Western provinces, especially across the tourism industry. In response, the government has set up the 'b.mobil placement project', which promotes cross-regional placements for recognised refugees, including support to find (temporary) accommodation.

Five EMN Member Countries³⁹ do not adapt their VET programmes to labour market shortages.

3.5. Validation of prior skills, knowledge and/or competencies

Greece and Italy reported a special process for the validation of skills, knowledge and/or competencies of BIP and applicants for international protection. In Italy, this process takes place through provincial centres for adult education (CPIAs), regional employment services, employment centres and accredited training entities, and assesses language, basic skills, and previous experience acquired through formal, non-formal and informal pathways of BIP and applicants for international protection. They then offer guidance towards the most suitable training options. Similarly, in Greece, prior knowledge, skills and/or competencies of programme beneficiaries are assessed through an

³⁶ The PERCORSI initiative creates integrated pathways for social and work inclusion aimed at unaccompanied minors, including those who are holders or applicants for international protection, who are transitioning to adulthood, as well as young migrants who entered Italy as unaccompanied minors. The social and work inclusion pathways are based on the 'individual endowment' tool, which, along with a monetary allocation, provides a range of support services. These services focus on enhancing and developing skills, facilitating social and work inclusion, and supporting the journey toward autonomy (such as on-the-job training and internships), through the development of personalised intervention plans. The PERCORSI initiative has been funded by the ESF-PON Inclusione. See https:/ -non-accompagnati-e-giovani-migranti, accessed 3 June 2025

BE, EL, IT, NL, PT, SE,

AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, HR, IE, LT, LV, MT, PL, SK.

BG. ES. HU. LU. SI.

exam, often with the help of an employability or integration counsellor. Results lead to the formulation of an individual career or integration plan.

Fourteen countries⁴⁰ systematically validate prior knowledge, skills and/or competencies for any VET candidate, with the same evaluation process for BIP and applicants for international protection as for nationals. In Finland, the validation is mandatory and regulated by law. Lithuania and Spain reported that the validation process was particularly useful where a foreigner lacked documentation of education acquired, especially through non-formal and/or informal pathways, or work experience that could not be proven through formal qualifications.

Box 2: Validation process in Lithuania

The evaluation process for applicants follows the same procedures as for Lithuanian nationals, in line with national admission regulations. Those educated abroad must submit proof of academic achievement and a statement from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education confirming equivalence to Lithuanian qualifications, if applicable. For primary education recognition, the vocational education institution assesses the applicant's learning, with support from the Centre as needed.

In Poland, if a foreigner is unable to submit the original or a duplicate certificate confirming the appropriate level of education, they may be admitted to the VET programme on the basis of an administrative decision confirming the appropriate level of education. In Ireland, validation of prior knowledge is standard practice across most VET providers, but the nature of the validation process may differ across localities. An increasing number of providers make use of the so-called recognition of prior learning (RPL) model that assesses and recognises non-formal pathways to skill development, which is particularly suitable for learner groups that may lack formal documentation of their prior education and skills, such as BIP.

Germany offers a validation procedure for certain occupations that allows individuals without formal vocational qualifications to have their professional expertise recognised and certified. Successful applicants gain access to higher-level vocational education.

Public authorities in 11 EMN Member Countries⁴¹ and Serbia do not validate prior knowledge, skills and/or competencies of BIP or applicants for international protection before admitting them to a VET programme. However, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic and Portugal offer support to BIP who seek to have their foreign qualifications and training recognised, including through tests⁴² and counselling sessions.⁴³

Croatia and Portugal reported that in case of missing documentation in particular, the validation could take a long time and delay participation in VET programmes.

3.6. Training on entrepreneurship skills and business creation

Three countries⁴⁴ offer specialised programmes focused on entrepreneurship and business start-up support for BIP. These programmes cover a range of topics. including business planning, financial management, taxes and legal requirements. In Italy, the various modules equip trainees with knowledge on business planning, access to credit and business management, opening a VAT number, tax declarations and regulatory compliance, and accounting, digital tools and promotion strategies. Similarly, France offers a multi-module training programme. Unusually, it has also created three incubators, with another five planned for the period 2024-2025, through the 'Entrepreneurs réfugiés' programme co-funded by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Inclusion and the private sector. In the Netherlands, entrepreneurship training for BIP is often the result of collaboration between various stakeholders, including municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce, NGOs, and private sector companies.

Eight countries⁴⁵ provide entrepreneurship education with a focus on business creation and management as part of mainstream VET. These programmes allow BIP and/or applicants for international protection with a work permit to access the same services as nationals. Sweden, for example, has a robust system of entrepreneurship education integrated into the national curriculum at various educational levels and the PES offers enterprise start-up support to any individual enrolled in the introduction programme, including BIP. Through its employment service, Serbia offers a training programme on basic entrepreneurial skills, legal and economic aspects of entrepreneurship. and business plan workshops, occasionally focusing on applicants for international protection. Malta is pursuing an innovative approach by working towards establishing a one-stop-shop for start-ups, which will serve as a central hub providing comprehensive information and support for all aspiring entrepreneurs, including BIP.

Lithuania provides entrepreneurship training on an ad hoc or project basis, often tied to specific funding initiatives. In five countries, entrepreneurship programmes are co-financed by the EU through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)⁴⁶ and/or the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+),⁴⁷ highlighting the role of EU funding in promoting the labour market integration of BIP through self-employment.

Eleven responding countries⁴⁸ do not offer specific VET programmes aimed at teaching entrepreneurship to BIP or applicants for international protection.

⁴⁰ CY, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE.

⁴¹ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EL, HU, MT, PT, SI, SK.

⁴² AT (if required), BE.

⁴³ BE, CZ.

⁴⁴ FR, IT, NL.

⁴⁵ AT (BIP only), CY, CZ, EE, IE, MT, SE, and RS.

⁴⁶ CY, IT, LT.

⁴⁷ FR, IT, LT

⁴⁸ BE, BG, EL, ES, HR, HU, LU, LV, PL, PT, SK.



4. INCENTIVE MECHANISMS AND OBLIGATIONS

4.1. Incentives for participants

Greece and Italy have incentives specifically for BIP and applicants for international protection to increase their access and participation in VET programmes. These include rent subsidies for former unaccompanied minors aged 18-21 in Greece, and monthly attendance and transport allowances and childcare vouchers in Italy.

The majority of responding EMN Member Countries⁴⁹ and Serbia provide general incentives that are not specifically targeted at BIP or applicants for international protection. However, those who enrol can benefit from monetary and logistical support. In Lithuania, support depends on the specific vocational training programme and its respective conditions. Participants may be entitled to monthly allowances for participation in VET programmes.⁵⁰ In Belgium, participants are entitled to a financial bonus for the successful completion of VET programmes in shortage occupations, ⁵¹ and in Luxembourg for successful completion of each year of training.

Transport and travel allowances are an incentive in 14 countries,⁵² so that programme attendees can commute to the training for free. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Latvia provide additional distance allowances to stimulate mobility across regions and facilitate the participation of candidates in VET programmes away from their main place of residence.

Box 3: Mobility grant in Germany

Since 1 April 2024, mobility grants can be used as an incentive to consider training in regions other than their own. To promote mobility, the mobility grant can subsidise the cost of two journeys home per month in the first year of training. Anyone who relocates from where they live for training can apply for one of these grants from the employment agency or job centre. However, the mobility grant is aimed at all apprentices, not only BIP.

Finland, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands provide allowances or rent subsidies for those in need of accommodation to participate in a VET programme. Finland, Germany, and Spain provide free meals. Ireland provides rent subsidies only if individual learners meet the eligibility criteria for relevant social welfare supports, although training, travel and meal allowances may be provided for some Irish VET courses without the need to qualify for social welfare support. Five countries provide childcare while the parent is attending a programme, 53 with the Czech Republic also providing support if the VET candidate cares

for someone else's child(ren). Individual coaching is offered in Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany to provide individualised support and prevent dropouts from programmes. The Czech Republic covers fees for any medical examinations required to take part in the VET programme or for the profession more generally.

Other types of support include skills analysis to assist candidates to identify the right pathway,⁵⁴ language classes to enable candidates to follow the VET programme in the host country language(s),⁵⁵ civic orientation or integration courses to help them navigate the (work) environment,⁵⁶ digital education courses,⁵⁷ and information sessions on VET programmes available.⁵⁸ In Austria, for example, the Austrian Integration Fund offers third-country national workers with long-term prospects of staying the opportunity to attend German courses, including within the company. In cases of integration-related challenges at the workplace (e.g. gender equality between men and women), training courses on the Austrian and European legal order and value systems can be offered.

4.2. Incentives for employers

Four EMN Member Countries⁵⁹ offer incentives to employers specifically for employing BIP and/or applicants for international protection.

Incentives for employing BIP and/ or applicants for international protection in apprenticeships

Italy is the only EMN Member Country to offer incentives to employers for employing both BIP and applicants for international protection, mainly to foster on-the-job components in VET programmes. Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden offer non-financial and/or financial incentives to employers for employing BIP. They provide support to foster the successful integration of BIP at the workplace through translation/language and mentoring support. The Netherlands and Italy both offer financial compensation to employers providing on-the-job training in VET programmes. In Italy, this includes tax relief for employers and (limited) allowances for company tutors, funded by national and European funds and activated based on market needs. In the Netherlands, employers can apply for up to € 24 000 to employ up to four BIP; in total, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has made € 10.5 million in subsidies available from 2024 to 2026. Conditions for receiving the subsidy include the development of an activity plan for each apprentice and employer's confirmation that it will provide the candidate with a (learning) employment contract for at least 20 hours per week for a period of at least one year.

⁴⁹ AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR (BIP can benefit from ordinary law incentives such as the personal training account, which allows workers throughout their careers to exercise their individual right to training and certification), HR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK.

⁵⁰ AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, FI, HR, IE (some VET programmes, if the individual learner meets certain eligibility criteria), IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT.
51 In Belgium, the Walloon Region offers the 'Incentive+' bonus worth € 350 to participants who successfully complete a VET programme in a shortage occupation, as well as

⁵¹ In Belgium, the Walloon Region offers the 'Incentive+' bonus worth € 350 to participants who successfully complete a VET programme in a shortage occupation, as well as the possibility to keep 25% of unemployment benefits during the first three months of employment in a shortage occupation.

⁵² BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, ES, HR, IE (some VET programmes), IT, LT, LU (free public transport), LV, NL, SK

BE, CZ, DE, IT, LV.

⁵⁴ BE, DE, EL, IT, LV, PL (individual job counselling), SE (mapping of skills and development of action plan).

⁵⁵ AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, NL, PL, SE.

⁵⁶ AT, BE, CZ, DE, IT, LV, NL, SE.

⁵⁷ BE, CZ, LV. 58 BE. and RS.

⁵⁹ EE (BIP only), IT, NL, SE.

The other responding countries did not report on specific incentives for the target group of BIP and applicants for international protection. However, 11 countries⁶⁰ provide incentives to employers offering apprenticeships in general to support on-the-job components of VET programmes, which may also benefit BIP and applicants for international protection (see section 3.1). This includes financial compensation for training apprentices through reimbursement of the trainee's wage, 61 grants for the remuneration of the work of the supervisor,62 full or partial exemption from social security charges, 63 a grant for the purchase of work equipment,64 tax benefits,65 and training costs for the apprentice⁶⁶ or apprenticeship mentors.⁶⁷ For training mentors, coaching and support services are available in Austria to optimise training structures and workplace processes, while Cyprus provides incentives to employers to design, organise and implement in-company training programmes to support the reintegration of long-term unemployed people.

Incentives for employing BIP and/or applicants for international protection after completion of VET programmes

Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden reported having programmes of incentives for the employment of applicants and/or beneficiaries of international protection who have completed a VET programme. In Italy, tax relief may be provided to employers for hiring applicants or beneficiaries of international protection; however these measures are not structural and only activated based on labour market needs. In the Netherlands, a temporary wage subsidy, which includes a fixed amount linked to the wage value of the BIP, for any additional language support, guidance and/ or or lower labour productivity, is provided. Municipalities can also offer compensation for expenses incurred by an employer, for example for guidance, training or adjustment of the workplace. Similarly, in Sweden, employers can receive a contribution towards the pay of the employed BIP.

Ireland and Malta have generic incentive schemes, which are also applicable to BIP. They consist of financial assistance for employers who engage long-term unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged persons, including BIP (and, in Ireland, additionally those applicants that hold labour market access permission). The exact amount varies significantly, with a subsidy of € 200-300 per week in Malta, and a grant payment of up to € 10 000 paid over an 18-months period in Ireland.

4.3. Obligations for participation

Italy is the only country to report imposing obligations specifically on BIP and/or applicants for international protection to complete VET programmes. For example, in the PUOI PLUS programme (AMIF-ESF+), participants in internships receive a monthly allowance for up to six months, provided they attend at least 70% of the scheduled hours each month. Failure to meet this threshold results in the suspension of the allowance and, in case of early termination, the inability to activate a new training pathway for the same recipient. Another 10 EMN Member Countries⁶⁸ impose obligations on anyone who participates in a VET programme, including BIP and applicants for international protection. The most common obligations relate to regular attendance at the course. The Czech Republic, Italy, Malta and Latvia expect BIP and applicants for international protection to attend at least 70-80% of all classes. while the Czech Republic and Latvia expect trainees to pass a final exam, within 90 days of completion of training in Latvia.

Those who withdraw from programmes without a justifiable reason (e.g. in Croatia or Sweden, these include hospitalisation, serious illness, illness of a child, finding employment) may face consequences. These include the suspension⁶⁹ or requested repayment⁷⁰ of training allowances, as well as any other expenses covered in connection with the training, for example travel costs in Croatia.

While not imposing financial sanctions on those who drop out of VET programmes, Luxembourg terminates the apprenticeship contract for students who do not (sufficiently) attend courses without a valid reason. In France, although there are no explicit obligations for success within a specified timeframe, the AGIR programme requires active participation and commitment from BIP to ensure their successful integration into French society. Participants can be excluded from the programme under certain conditions.

In Ireland, BIP or applicants for international protection who are participants of VET programmes are under no obligation to successfully complete the training and do not face sanctions should they drop out. However, there may be an indirect possibility of sanctions for VET participants in receipt of jobseekers' allowance or benefit.

Twelve responding EMN Member Countries⁷¹ and Serbia do not impose obligations on BIP or applicants for international protection in respect of their participation in VET programmes.

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AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FR, LU, LV, PT, SK.
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AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FR, LU (partial), LV, PT, PL, SK.

⁶² 63 LV. BE, FR, LU.

⁶⁴ LV.

BE, EE, LV (employer is obliged to employ the unemployed person for at least three months after completion of training. If the unemployed person is not hired after completing the training without a justifiable reason, the employer must reimburse the funds used to cover the training costs to the State Employment Agency).

CZ, EL, FR, HR, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE.

⁶⁹

CZ, HR, LV, NL, PL, SE. 70

AT, BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, FI, HU, PL, PT, SI, SK.

5. NUMBERS AND NATIONALITIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN **VET PROGRAMMES**

Public authorities in six responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia⁷² have disaggregated data on the numbers of BIP and/or applicants for international protection who have participated in VET programmes. France⁷³, Italy and the Netherlands collect overall data on their enrolment, but these are not disaggregated by country of origin or type of VET programme attended.

Among the seven countries who reported disaggregated data,74 the highest numbers of BIP and/or applicants for international protection who participated in VET programmes in the last three years came from Syria (all seven countries),75 Afghanistan (five countries),76 and Somalia (five

countries).77 Countries of origin of those who attended VET programmes generally vary widely across EMN Member Countries and Serbia and span all continents, including Africa,78 Eastern Europe,79 Asia80 and Latin America.81

Limited information is available on the sector or occupational focus of VET programmes most attended by BIP or applicants for international protection. Across all three countries with disaggregated data (Malta, Portugal, Sweden), one of the most popular programmes is hospitality and tourism. Health and social care, childcare, and transport are popular in Sweden, while ICT and safety and security are popular in Malta.



6. GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

6.1. Good practices

Collaboration with private sector

France and Italy shared good practice examples on collaboration with the private sector for VET programmes for BIP. France has developed partnerships with companies to promote the socio-professional integration of the target group, while also raising awareness among employers of their potential. In the Loire department, businesses of all sizes and sectors are brought together by state services. the AGIR programme⁸² operator, and the local club 'Companies get involved' (Les entreprises s'engagent) to build an inclusive society, which also benefits BIP vocational education trainees. Platforms dedicated to training and employing BIP have been developed locally to provide personalised support, focus on overcoming the trauma of exile through the construction of a life project, combat victimisation, put prior professional skills at the heart of the integration process, and find ways to enhance these skills in line with the needs of the host society. In Italy, pursuant to an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, and social partners in the construction sector, construction schools across more than 40 Italian provinces have since 2023 been providing training to vulnerable migrants hosted within the reception system. These individuals are subsequently supported in obtaining employment through internship placements within companies.

Combination of VET programmes with work

The Netherlands and Portugal highlighted encouraging experiences of combined learning and work programmes. A pilot with two employers (Liander and Stedin)

in the Netherlands in 2020 produced positive results, with 84% of the participants successfully completing on-thejob training. The Portuguese Refutur project, a vocational training course with two phases (classroom and on-the-job training) promoted by the Portuguese National Tourism Authority, showed a high post-training employability rate for participants in catering and hospitality. Notably, the course combines vocational training such as hotel and restaurant management with integration modules such as language or cultural learning. Italy reported the Protection Combined with Integration Objective (PUOI) project as a good practice example. From 2019 to 2023 around 3 000 BIP and applicants for international protection received employability support such as guidance and internship allowances.

One-stop-shops

In Ireland, several stakeholders, including the DF-HERIS, describe the Irish VET provision model via the local ETBs83 as a good practice. As ETBs function as one-stopshops for adult education rather than focusing exclusively on vocational training, VET programmes can be integrated with other educational services, such as language and literacy training, digital skills, and cultural learning (depending on local availability). ETBs are well-embedded within their local communities, enabling close cooperation with local employers and non-governmental service providers to complement, improve and expand VET provision.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives were reported as good practice by Ireland and Latvia. In Ireland, the RPL model offers an assessment tool that aims to flexibly recognise and validate non-formal pathways to skills

- AT, HR, IE, MT, PT, SE and RS.
- Only BIP benefitting from dedicated VET, such as the AGIR programme.
- AT, HR, IE, MT, PT, SE and RS.
- 75 76 AT, HR, IE, MT, PT, SE and RS. AT, IE, MT, PT, SE.
- AT, IE, MT, PT, SE.
- In addition to Somalia: Nigeria (IE, MT), Sudan (MT, PT), Eritrea (MT, SE), Burundi (RS), Côte d'Ivoire (HR), Libya (MT).
- Ukraine (AT, MT), Russia (AT, HR).
- In addition to Afghanistan: Iraq (PT, SE), Iran (RS), Pakistan (MT), Tűrkiye also in the continent of Europe (HR), Sri Lanka (HR). 80
- Cuba (HR), Venezuela (MT), Brazil (IE),
- Global and individualised support programme for the integration of refugees, launched by the Ministry of the Interior, in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Housing, the OFII, and the Inter-Ministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees in 2022.
- ETBs function as one-stop-shop for adult education, offering VET, language training, and, in the case of a small number of resettled refugees, cultural and civic orientation on arrival.

development. As such, it is particularly relevant to learner groups that may lack documentation of their prior education, such as BIP and applicants for international protection. After publication of the RPL toolkit in 2022, an information sharing network was established to mainstream the model across ETBs and ultimately streamline VET service provision in Ireland. In Latvia, the ESF+ co-funded project 'Support for the assessment of professional competence', implemented by the State Employment Agency, offers an opportunity for unemployed persons, including BIP, to receive a financial reward for assessing their professional competencies acquired outside the formal education system. In Poland, the local labour office may reimburse the fee charged by the certifying institution for the validation and certification of qualifications, up to the amount of the country's average salary, at the request of the registered unemployed person or jobseeker (including BIP).

Support persons

The involvement of trainers with refugee back-grounds whose cultural backgrounds and language skills are similar to those of the participants is a good practice in Austria. Austria also reports positive experiences of engaging members of the host community who are accomplished professionals as mentors to guide migrants to acquire relevant qualifications and enter the labour market. Similar mentoring approaches are implemented in Luxembourg. In Greece, programmes under the supervision of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum provide VET through a personalised approach (e.g. individual career/integration plan), or in specially designed labs that stimulate real working environments, as well as through innovative artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital tools.

Use of communication materials

Belgium uses the visual translation app First Aid Communication Tool (FACT) to facilitate communication in the workplace between non-Dutch or non-French speakers and companies in different sectors. The app contains modules on vocabulary relevant for in-demand sectors. Poland offers multimedia educational materials on career counselling and other topics for all students, including those with a migration background, through an integrated educational platform.

6.2. Challenges

Language barriers

Language barriers are by far the biggest challenge for the delivery of VET programmes to BIP and/or applicants for international protection, reported by more than two-thirds of the responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia. Hanguage (S) of the host country, or do not speak the language (S) of the host country, or do not speak it well enough, complicating access to educational programmes and effective communication in class, and leading to misunderstandings and poorer integration into the labour market. In Ireland and Luxembourg, language learning programmes are integrated into the VET system, but BIP need to achieve a certain proficiency level before they may access vocational training, creating an additional

barrier for relatively new arrivals. Finland has set aside € 8 million project funding for 2023-2027 to increase language awareness of teaching staff to support Finnish-as-a-second-language students in completing their studies. The government recognises that Finnish-as-a-second-language students, such as BIP, have a lower likelihood of completing their studies if the VET provider's teaching staff do not have sufficient language awareness training and if students do not receive the necessary language support. Sweden reported that it is difficult for mother tongue tutors and subject teachers to work closely together, particularly in smaller towns, where vocational teachers are sometimes the sole teacher in their subject at school.

Recognising Prior Learning

Nine EMN Member Countries⁸⁵ reported difficulties in recognising prior learning and qualifications obtained in the country of origin. This results in BIP either being unable to validate their previous skills or facing long bureaucratic processes to have them recognised. While Latvia mentioned difficulties on the part of BIP to present the necessary proof of previous education as a requirement for admission to VET, Austria and Croatia highlighted lengthy recognition processes, despite simplifications, such as Austria's Recognition and Assessment Act.

Lack of adapted VET programmes

The third biggest challenge is the lack of VET programmes adapted to the specific needs of BIP and/ or applicants for international protection, as reported by six countries. BE Malta highlighted that cultural differences can impact the learning process, as education systems and teaching methods may vary significantly from those in their countries of origin. This can affect how individuals adapt to VET programmes and integrate into the labour market. According to Italy, the lack of adequately trained trainers in intercultural contexts can limit the effectiveness of teaching, as teachers and tutors do not always receive specific training on cultural sensitivity, migration trauma, and the most suitable teaching methodologies for this target group.

Ireland and Italy noted the fragmentation of VET programmes as a challenge. In Italy, where training policies are the responsibility of the regions, the availability of VET courses varies significantly across the territory, creating disparities in access opportunities. Similarly in Ireland, the localised nature of the Irish provision model, as well as varying eligibility criteria, can make the VET landscape complex and difficult to navigate for BIP and applicants for international protection learner groups specifically.

France highlighted low awareness and visibility of training programmes and the legal framework for employment, training and internship, as well as low training allowances, all of which serve to limit BIP access to programmes and create a preference for direct entry into the job market when possible. It also identified downgrading effects sometimes inherent in the logic of certain programmes, where training designed with a professional goal can end up limiting participants to specific occupations, whereas non-specialized training can offer broader opportunities.

⁸⁵ AT, CZ, ES, HR, IT, LU, LV, PL, PT.

⁸⁶ BE, IT, LT, LU, MT, PT.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The Czech Republic www.emncz.eu/

Estonia www.emn.ee/ Finland emn.fi/en/

France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/ Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2

Germany www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html

Greece https://migration.gov.gr/emn/ Hungary www.emnhungary.hu/en

Ireland www.emn.ie/ Italy www.emnitalyncp.it/ Latvia www.emn.lv Lithuania www.emn.lt/

Luxembourg emnluxembourg.uni.lu/

Malta emn.gov.mt/

The Netherlands www.emnnetherlands.nl/ Poland www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network

Portugal rem.sef.pt/en/ Romania www.mai.gov.ro/

Spain www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home The Slovak Republic www.emn.sk/en

Slovenia emnslovenia.si Sweden www.emnsweden.se/

Norway www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/ european-migration-network---norway#

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Ukraine dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html Montenegro www.gov.me/mup Armenia migration.am/?lang=en

Serbia kirs.gov.rs/eng

The Republic of North Macedonia

https://mvr.gov.mk/

Albania