



Questions and Answers on the Skills and Talent Mobility Package

Brussels, 15 November 2023

What is the Skills and Talent Mobility Package?

The Talent Mobility package is a set of proposals from the European Commission, including:

- A Communication on Skills and Talent mobility;
- A proposal for a Regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool;
- A Commission Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications of Third Country Nationals;
- A proposal for a Council Recommendation on Learning mobility opportunities for everyone.

Together these proposals form a strong set of deliverables under the 2023 European Year of Skills, which puts the focusing on helping people get the right skills for quality jobs and supporting companies in addressing skill shortages in Europe.

The 2020 Pact on Migration and Asylum focused on addressing irregular migration, border management and asylum, but announced further measures to come to promote legal migration pathways. The 2021 Skills and Talent proposal took a first step in revising two key legal migration laws and announced a future initiative to create an EU Talent Pool.

In her 2022 State of the Union address, President von der Leyen stressed the need to make Europe more attractive for skilled workers and announced an initiative to speed up and facilitate the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals.

In its conclusions of June 2023, the European Council called for a toolbox to address demographic challenges and notably their impact on Europe's competitive edge. The Commission delivered in October 2023 with a Communication on demographic change in Europe, which stressed the positive contribution enhanced legal migration pathways to the EU can make to filling vacancies, and announced the Skills and Talent Mobility package.

1. The EU Talent Pool

What is the EU Talent Pool?

The EU Talent Pool will be the first EU-wide online platform bringing together profiles of jobseekers residing outside the EU and job vacancies of EU employers.

Jobseekers from third countries will be able to register their profiles on the platform and provide information on their skills, qualifications, work experience and language knowledge.

Job vacancies of EU employers will be registered in the EU Talent Pool by the National Contact Points established in the participating Member States.

The EU Talent Pool platform will integrate specific tools to make it easier for jobseekers from third countries and employers to identify each other and facilitate their matching. Registered jobseekers from third countries and employers with a published job vacancy in the EU Talent Pool, would be able to search for each other via filters and use a semi-automated matching tool to create a list of suggested matches.

Participation in the EU Talent Pool will be voluntary for Member States, who will support the management of the platform.

To facilitate the recruitment process, clear and transparent information on relevant rules in the participating Member States will be available via the EU Talent Pool platform, in particular with regard to recruitment and immigration rules, qualifications recognition and skills validation procedures, and working and living conditions.

Additional support and guidance will be provided by the National Contact Points established in the

participating Member States.

The EU Talent Pool will also include in-built safeguards to avoid exploitative practices by employers, recalling that third country nationals recruited through the EU Talent Pool will enjoy the same rights and obligations as domestic workers once they are in employment.

How will the Talent Pool contribute to addressing EU labour market challenges?

EU employers and jobseekers from third countries are facing several challenges linked to international recruitment. This undermines the potential of legal migration pathways to help address acute and structural labour and skills shortages faced by EU employers in many professions.

The EU Talent Pool will contribute to addressing these challenges by facilitating international recruitment of jobseekers from third countries residing outside the EU.

The EU Talent Pool will target specific occupations for which there is an insufficient number of skilled persons to take up employment. It will focus only on EU-wide shortage occupations, including in the context of the green and digital transitions, while also taking into account the individual needs of national labour markets.

Why can labour shortages not be addressed with the domestic workforce alone?

EU employers, in particular SMEs, are facing acute and structural labour and skills shortages in many occupations. Labour shortages in the EU affect a variety of occupations and sectors across all skills levels including healthcare, long term care and social work activities, construction, manufacturing, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services, engineering, technical and scientific activities and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The unemployment rate remains low (6.0% in September 2023), and the job vacancy rate rose to 2.9% last year – more than double the level of 2012. This means that nearly 3% of jobs across the EU are sitting vacant, even after efforts to upskill, reskill and activate the domestic workforce.

At the same time, the working age population is expected to decline from 265 million in 2022 to 258 million in 2030. The prospect of an ageing population and a shrinking working-age population pose significant pressure and long-term challenges for the EU and its Member States' ability to effectively address shortages.

The EU is addressing these challenges through a comprehensive approach that starts at home: The core of the EU's response is activating groups with lower labour market participation (such as women, youth, older workers, people with disabilities, Roma and people with a migrant background), reskilling and upskilling the domestic workforce, improving working conditions, and the facilitation of intra-EU mobility.

However, in view of growing labour market needs, labour migration can be a useful complement to these actions.

Who can use the EU Talent Pool?

The EU Talent Pool is a voluntary tool allowing Member States to decide whether they want to join. EU Talent Pool National Contact Points will be established in the participating Member States to implement the tool at national level.

Only employers established in participating Member States will be able to publish their job vacancies on the platform.

As the EU Talent Pool will focus on EU-wide shortage occupations, only job vacancies falling within this list will be listed on the EU Talent Pool. When joining the Pool, Member States can open up listings for all of the shortage occupations on the EU-wide list, or reduce or add to this list, depending on the national labour market.

The EU Talent Pool will be open to jobseekers from all third countries residing outside the EU, of all skills levels.

The EU Talent Pool does not regulate the visa procedures for accessing the EU, the procedures for which remain unchanged and are determined by EU governments. Member States are however encouraged to accelerate the issuance of work visas for people who have received a job offer through the Talent Pool.

The Talent Pool can also contribute to the objective of providing and enhancing legal and safe channels to the EU for those in need of international protection as set out in the 2020 Commission Recommendation on legal pathways to protection to the EU.

How will the EU Talent Pool support Talent Partnerships?

The Commission is currently steering the development of Talent Partnerships with five partner countries (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Bangladesh and Pakistan), which are moving towards implementation, with concrete programmes and roadmaps being defined.

The EU Talent Pool will support the implementation of the Talent Partnerships by offering a channel to facilitate job placements in this context. Non-EU nationals who participated in a Talent Partnership will be able to register on the platform linking their profile to a 'Talent Partnership pass' (a skills certification) that will provide relevant information including on the skills developed in the context of a Talent Partnership.

Once registered in the EU Talent Pool, the profiles holding a 'Talent Partnership pass' would be flagged as certified and will be visible to employers established in a Member State participating in the Talent Partnership.

How do you ensure that the third country nationals will be fairly treated by employers?

Fair recruitment practices are at the core of the proposal for the EU Talent Pool. Employers' compliance with the Union and national law and practice is a pre-condition for their participation in the EU Talent Pool. In cases of breach they will be suspended from the EU Talent Pool. Member States have the possibility to add additional layers based on their individual best practices.

What about third country nationals that are already in the EU? Can they apply to the EU Talent Pool?

The EU Talent Pool will open be only to jobseekers from third countries residing outside the EU. The EU Talent Pool specifically focuses on labour shortages – meaning only those jobs where it is already the case that there are not enough people already in the EU (either EU citizens or third country nationals) taking up these posts: the nearly 3% of jobs in the EU that were left vacant last year.

Maximising the potential of the EU's domestic workforce is our first priority. The Commission is already carrying out numerous initiatives to support third country nationals in their integration to EU society. Third country nationals legally residing in the EU already have access to several tools to support their labour market integration, including EURES and assistance from the Public Employment Services.

For successful labour market integration of the foreign talent that is already in the country, streamlined validation of skills and recognition of qualifications is crucial. To enhance this, Commission adopted a recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals.

Can asylum-seekers apply for a job through the EU Talent Pool?

The Talent Pool is open to everyone. People in need of international protection residing outside the EU can therefore also apply for jobs they have the skills to carry out. The procedures for applying for asylum remain the same however – with a job offer through the Talent Pool not generating any right to asylum in the EU.

The Talent Pool, whilst not the primary channel for humanitarian admission or resettlement of people in need of protection, can provide a useful complementary pathway.

Asylum seekers already legally residing in the EU should make use of the existing tools for labour market integration, including EURES and assistance from the Public Employment Services.

2. Recognition of Qualifications

What is meant by the term 'recognition of skills and qualifications'?

In the Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals, the term 'recognition of skills and qualifications' means a formal acknowledgement by a relevant authority of the validity of a foreign qualification, and identification of skills, with a view to granting rights to a third country national.

Such acknowledgment or decision provides a way to verify that a person has the necessary skills and qualifications before granting them three particular kinds of rights, namely: 1) access to a regulated profession, 2) visa or work and residence permit for employment purposes, and 3) access to a learning programme.

Why is the recognition of skills and qualifications an important issue for third country nationals?

The recognition of skills and qualifications plays a key role in the context of attracting talent and recruitment. A lack of recognition is also one of the main causes of 'brain drain' - when people,

especially women, are working in positions well below their qualification level.

For third country nationals, slow or complex processes for recognition of skills and qualifications can deter them from submitting applications for recognition, or from even considering working in a particular country. Third country nationals may face hurdles to explain their skills and qualifications, and lack information on how to get their skills and qualifications recognised, particularly in regulated professions, and also in jobs that reflect their full skills and potential.

This is why the Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals seeks to simplify and expedite the recognition of their skills and qualifications.

How will the Commission Recommendation enhance the attractiveness of the Union as a place to work for third country nationals?

The Commission recommends a systematic set of measures to Member States relating to the organisation of national recognition services, in terms of capacity building, cooperation with third countries, and user-friendly and efficient procedures. This will help Member States' services recognising qualifications for access to regulated professions and to learning programmes, or for visa or work and residence permit.

The measures seek to shorten processing times, reduce costs for third country nationals, simplify translation and authentication processes, and build on existing expertise. The Recommendation will thus support the organisation of recognition processes for third country nationals and employers to make recognition faster and more effective, without compromising with professional standards.

3. Recommendation on Learners' Mobility

What is the 'Europe on the Move' Recommendation?

Building on the 2011 Recommendation on "Youth on the Move", the proposed new Recommendation expands the scope of learning mobility to learners of all ages, as well as to educators and staff. In addition, it proposes new EU-level targets by 2030 to boost learning mobility and to make it more inclusive.

It also addresses new learning patterns, such as the spreading of digital tools for learning and blended learning. This can refer to the blend of school sites and other physical learning and training environments like companies, training centres, distance learning, outdoors, or cultural sites, or to blending different digital and non-digital learning tools. The new Recommendation also aims for more sustainable mobility.

The Recommendation also responds to the high interest of Europeans. In 2022, citizens' proposals at the Conference on the Future of Europe highlighted the need for the EU and its Member States to promote opportunities for mobility. In 2023, the European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility provided 21 recommendations on enabling more widespread and diverse participation in the Erasmus+ programme and other learning mobility schemes.

What new 2030 EU-level targets is the Commission proposing?

The Commission has identified three areas suitable for adjusting or setting EU-level targets to enhance learning mobility in Europe for 2030:

In higher education, the share of graduates with a learning mobility experience should be at least 25%. The current target is at least 20%, and current numbers range around 15%.

In vocational education and training, the share of learners benefiting from a learning mobility abroad should be at least 15%. The 2025 target is at least 8%, and current numbers range between 5 and 7%.

In all education and training, and youth and sport systems, the new target is to see at least 20% of people with fewer opportunities benefiting from learning mobility abroad.

These EU-level targets invite Member States, regional authorities, and organisations to be much more ambitious with their strategies on learning mobility, and ensure inclusiveness.

What is the Commission proposing on the recognition of learning outcomes?

The Commission proposes recommendations to strengthen automatic recognition by providing guidance and training, using the available tools, including digital tools, and improving record keeping. The proposal also contains recommendations to strengthen recognition of the competences gained from mobility in non-formal and informal settings, as well as of learning mobility by students from third countries.

The Commission will also support continued improvement in automatic recognition through the Erasmus+ programme, and through the upcoming initiative on quality assurance and recognition announced in the 2024 Commission Work Programme.

What is the Commission proposing to enhance language learning?

The Commission's proposal encourages Member States to strengthen language learning at all stages of education and training, and in youth and sport systems. This includes delivering part of the curricula in EU languages other than the national language(s), notably to boost opportunities and learning mobility options abroad.

How does the proposal support learning mobility of apprentices?

The recommendation dedicates a whole annex to apprentice mobility and aims to provide a coherent policy framework including proposals for short-term incremental changes and elements of a comprehensive long-term strategy. The increased mobility of apprentices will help to address skills gaps, to support the green and digital transitions, and to increase the employability of young people.

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Press contacts:

[Anitta HIPPER](#) (+32 2 298 56 91)

[Johanna BERNSEL](#) (+32 2 298 66 99)

[Veerle NUYTS](#) (+32 2 299 63 02)

[Fiorella BELCIU](#) (+32 2 299 37 34)

[Flore BOUTIER](#) (+32 2 296 60 43)

[Flora MATTHAES](#) (+32 2 298 39 51)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)