

# Roadmap for Strengthening Mutual Recognition of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Qualifications between Ukraine, Germany, Poland, and Czechia

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### Disclaimer

The analysis, results and recommendations in this roadmap represent the opinion of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of the position of the Skills Alliance Secretariat, hosted by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

## 1. Purpose and context of the roadmap

The Skills Alliance is a joint initiative more than 80 donors, their implementing organisations, international and civil society organisations, and businesses. Its goal is to support the Ukrainian government's efforts in vocational education and training, establish a dialogue between members and the government, and mobilise additional funding. In doing so, it creates synergies between existing and new initiatives to promote vocational education both in Ukraine and in EU member states<sup>1</sup>.

Supporting and promoting the mutual recognition of qualifications is one of the avenues to enhance education and training opportunities for refugees and (future) returnees and to support them in securing employment and contributing to Ukraine's economic recovery. With this roadmap, the Subgroup III of the Skills Alliance for Ukraine on "Vocational training in host countries & mutual recognition of qualifications"<sup>2</sup> proposes different action lines and recommendations **to facilitate the recognition of Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications for Ukrainians living abroad and returnees**. The Subgroup's work is embedded in a larger work programme, including contributions from other Subgroups on "Upskilling and Vocational Training" and on "Addressing Special Needs and ensuring Inclusion".

This document is the product of consultations with the members of the Skills Alliance for Ukraine Subgroup III and other stakeholders. Interviews were conducted between February and June 2025 with representatives from Ukraine and the three countries hosting the biggest number of Ukrainian refugees (Czechia, Germany, Poland), as well as with representatives of European multilateral organisations.

## 2. Key challenges in the recognition of VET qualifications

The recognition of VET qualifications for Ukrainian refugees in the European Union (EU) and returnees in Ukraine is a complex issue with implications for labour market integration, individual career trajectories, and long-term regional policy goals. **A lack of recognition is a strong barrier for labour market integration of refugees and returnees in regulated professions (e.g. in health, education, transport etc.).** Accordingly, several EU countries have adopted targeted measures to support recognition in highly demanded regulated professions such as nurses, doctors or teachers.<sup>2</sup> Regarding VET qualifications in non-regulated professions, the overall demand for recognition from Ukrainian refugees in Germany, Poland and Czechia, as well as from returnees in Ukraine, is relatively low until now.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the **recognition issues of VET qualifications in non-regulated professions, for the same outlined reasons as above, might also become more pressing for refugees as**

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<sup>1</sup> See also the Skills Alliance website: [Skills Alliance for Ukraine](https://www.skillsalliance.org.uk/).

<sup>2</sup> OECD (Ed.): 2025: Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine. [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-issues/migration/OECD-EMN%20Inform\\_%20Labour-market-integration-of-beneficiaries-of-temporary-protection-from-Ukraine.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-issues/migration/OECD-EMN%20Inform_%20Labour-market-integration-of-beneficiaries-of-temporary-protection-from-Ukraine.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> There are no official statistics publicly available on the total number of applications for recognition of VET qualifications in Germany, Czechia and Poland. Interviews with experts and numbers on specific sectors (e.g. agriculture, industry) suggest that the demand is very limited.



**time goes by** and other barriers to employment, such as missing language skills and arrangements for everyday life in the host countries, have to be tackled.<sup>4</sup>

A recent study shows that in Germany, more than half of all Ukrainian refugees who are in employment are working in jobs that have lower skills requirements than the job they had in Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> If this situation persists, it can be considered as a wasted potential for the local economy, but also and more pressingly, as a problem for the individuals, who experience reduced income and skills attrition.

For young people, recognition of (VET) qualifications is of relevance to ensure smooth transitions between different education systems.<sup>6</sup> Finally, regarding the Ukrainian labour market, ensuring recognition and transparency of the skills gained abroad by returnees is important to ensure the best possible allocation of labour forces in a context of high demand and pressing skills gaps. In the long run, **mutual recognition of VET qualifications will also gain significance in the context of the EU accession** of Ukraine.

Both, the **labour market and the VET system in Ukraine, have undergone rapid and far-reaching transformations** in response to wartime challenges. Decentralisation and digitalisation have given the system more flexibility, reducing the gap between VET and the labour market and opening the training institutions towards adults for re- and upskilling through short-cycle training formats. At the same time, social and economic imperatives as well the EU accession negotiations have reshaped priorities and goals of institutional reforms launched before the full scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> In this highly dynamic context, it is important that international initiatives for improving mutual recognition of VET qualifications distinguish between a **short-term perspective aiming at the rapid support of refugees and returnees** on the one hand, and **longer-term support to undergoing reform processes in Ukraine** on the other hand. Furthermore, recognition of VET qualifications needs to be **embedded in a more holistic approach** to ensure that skills are not only documented and recognised but

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<sup>4</sup> The most common barriers to employment experienced by Ukrainian refugees in Europe are the lack of local language skills, a lack of jobs in the area of residence, difficulties in reconciling family and work arrangements, as well as health issues and discrimination. IOM (2023): Access to Labour Markets and Employment in Europe for Refugees from Ukraine. [https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/DTM2023\\_Regional\\_Access\\_to\\_Labour\\_Markets\\_in\\_Europe\\_Ukrainians\\_Jan-March\\_0.pdf](https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/DTM2023_Regional_Access_to_Labour_Markets_in_Europe_Ukrainians_Jan-March_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Lebenssituation und Teilhabe ukrainischer Geflüchteter in Deutschland: Ergebnisse der IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung (Forschungsbericht 51). Overall in the EU, employment levels among refugees- rose from 67% end of 2022 to 72% end of 2024 and the share of those working in their field of specialisation (or a related field) rose from 40 to 52% over the same period, according to CEPS (2025): For when the war ends: Prospects and policy options for the Ukrainian refugees in the EU. <https://cdn.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-02-PB-FP-Ukrainian-refugees-1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> In Ukraine, there is a difference between “educational qualifications” (i.e. certificates and diplomas issued by within the education and training system) and “occupational qualifications” issued by accredited qualifications centres. Educational qualifications from abroad are recognised in Ukraine based on a comparison of curricula, while Ukrainian “occupational qualifications” are granted following a process of recognition of prior learning (RPL). We use the term “VET qualification” for both types in the field of vocational education and training, unless specified otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Melnyk, S., & Lytvynchuk, A. (2025). Development of the Vocational Education and Training system in extreme conditions: The case of Ukraine. In E. Quintana-Murci, F. Salvà-Mut, B. E. Stalder, & C. Nägele (Eds.), Towards inclusive and egalitarian vocational education and training: Key challenges and strategies from a holistic and multi-contextual approach. Proceedings of the 6th Crossing Boundaries Conference in Vocational Education and Training, Palma, Mallorca, Spain, 21 to 23 May 2025 (pp. 380–387). VETNET. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15379138>

also aligned to the needs of the labour markets as well as to the aspirations and life plans of the individuals.

Several barriers have been identified, that **limit the mutual recognition of VET qualifications** between Ukraine and Czechia, Germany and Poland:

- **Limited comparability of Ukrainian and VET qualifications in EU countries due to different classification systems.** Among others, learning outcomes descriptions are not always available for Ukrainian qualifications or they are based on different taxonomies, and qualification pathways and assigned level in national qualification frameworks (NQF) are difficult to compare to the Ukrainian system. While a comparison was done between the NQF and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the referencing process is still in progress and expected to be completed in 2026.<sup>8</sup>
- **Lack of structured legal regulation of key professions in Ukraine, which are typically “regulated professions” in EU member states** (e.g. in the health and education sectors).<sup>9</sup> Because of this, national authorities in the EU may apply particularly restrictive policies in recognition processes due to lack of trust in Ukrainian qualifications.
- **Still limited availability of information on Ukrainian qualifications** for recognition bodies in host countries, especially for qualifications obtained longer ago. Many efforts have been made at EU level and within the Member States to facilitate recognition processes by informing competent bodies on the Ukrainian VET system.<sup>10</sup> Practitioners report, however, that it is sometimes challenging to find detailed information on particular qualifications. While in Germany for instance, recognition bodies have good networks to share information on recognition of VET qualifications, in other countries there are no such networks or these are limited to Higher Education qualifications, such as the ENIC-NARIC network.
- **Lack of a consolidated system of recognition in Ukraine.** The approach to recognition of foreign qualifications in Ukraine is traditionally equivalence-based, relying on a comparison of curricula. Competency-based (including also partial) recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes gained abroad is a recent development and is based on “occupational standards” that are not related to educational qualifications. Because of these two approaches and the fact that the recognition of “occupational qualifications” is still developing and lacks involvement of employers’ and employees’ organisations, the system for recognition of foreign qualifications can be difficult to navigate for returnees.

In addition to these institutional barriers, **a lack of interest in and commitment to recognition of VET qualifications** has been noticed both among the beneficiaries and the

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<sup>8</sup> According to expert interviews, the referencing should be completed in 2026. See also information on the comparison on <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/ngfs-online-tool/countries/ukraine-2022>.

<sup>9</sup> Kovtunets, Volodymyr & Melnyk, Sergii. (2024). DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM IN UKRAINE: REGULATED PROFESSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN APPROACHES. Educational Analytics of Ukraine. 76-86. DOI:10.32987/2617-8532-2024-4-76-86.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance at EU level the [Education and work information for Ukrainians and EU countries | ETF](#); in Germany, information for recognition bodies, refugees, companies and training providers are bundled on the central platform [Ukrainische Berufsabschlüsse | BQ-Portal](#).

stakeholders in all countries examined here. A notable exception exists for regulated professions in the health and education sectors. Based on the data collected for this roadmap, different reasons can be given for this situation, which will have to be validated and expanded by future empirical studies in the field:

- **Limited demand by refugees for the recognition of their qualifications in EU countries:** lack of knowledge about recognition procedures and benefits; interest in upskilling or re-skilling in the host country, rather than in recognition; successful transition to employment without formal recognition; no availability for employment because of language courses, family care, health issues etc.
- **Employers and employers' organisations in host countries do not ask for or actively promote the recognition of VET qualifications outside regulated professions:** lack of awareness on the long-term benefits of recognition (e.g. opportunities for further training); high demand for skilled workers, so that formal certificates are not a pre-condition for employment in non-regulated professions; possibly little interest in acknowledging formal qualifications that would be linked to higher wages and increase labour market mobility of workers.
- **Returnees seem not to demand recognition in Ukraine of their foreign qualifications:** the number of returnees having completed a VET programme in their host country is not known and probably still low, which might explain that there is little experience with recognition applications in Ukraine for qualifications from Germany, Poland or Czechia.

### 3. Strategic objectives for improving qualification recognition

With a view to current challenges regarding mutual recognition of VET qualifications of Ukrainian refugees and returnees, the **Subgroup III invites the members of the Skills Alliance for Ukraine to agree on two overarching strategic goals** for the years to come:

- **Short-Term (2024-2026): Improving current practices through transparency and information sharing**
  - Make recognition processes in EU countries faster and more efficient, in VET but also in higher education.
  - Better support applicants in the recognition processes in EU countries and Ukraine.
  - Raise awareness about the benefits of and opportunities for recognition among Ukrainian refugees and returnees as well as among stakeholders (e.g. employers and employer/business associations, training institutions, others such as dedicated agencies, chamber organizations, labour unions etc.).
- **Mid-Term (2026-2030): Institutional strengthening and policy reform towards Ukraine's full participation in EU recognition and transparency mechanisms**
  - Strengthen Ukraine's capacities to implement European tools and approaches, such as the EQF, the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) or the Europass framework.

- Support national VET reforms and initiatives to facilitate the recognition of qualifications acquired by returnees in EU member states.

## 4. Recommended actions and implementation measures

To reach the afore-mentioned goals, following recommendations have been developed on the basis of expert interviews and literature reviews. They are clustered thematically and not in order of importance or priority, since they address different stakeholders as represented in the Skills Alliance for Ukraine and can be pursued in parallel at different (national and international) level:

### 1. Enhancing data collection and expanding knowledge on recognition processes

- Conduct **sector-specific studies** on the status of qualifications (regulated/non-regulated occupations), recognition processes and labour market needs in Ukraine to inform (future) returnees. Sectors with particularly high demands in skilled labour in Ukraine are currently 1) Manufacturing (Clothing production); 2) Construction; 3) Transport, warehousing, postal, and courier activities; 4) Supply of electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning; and 5) Education.<sup>11</sup>
- **Analyse and evaluate current recognition practices for vocational qualifications in Ukraine** to establish a baseline for further reforms and capacity building. While some studies already point to the shortcomings and challenges of the current system,<sup>12</sup> there is still a need for systematic evaluation across the country to support evidence-based policymaking.
- Build up cooperative structures between Ukraine and host countries to **secure a good evidence base on skills needs and skills resources within Ukraine and among Ukrainian refugees abroad**, so as to develop targeted measures for attracting and supporting returnees.

### 2. Develop and share national good practices on supporting applicants for recognition

- **Within the host countries, standards and regulations, networks and information to applicants for recognition processes need to be improved.** While the system in Germany is already well-developed, although it still can be improved,<sup>13</sup> in Poland and Czechia there is an urgent need to build up better structures to support the recognition of refugees' qualifications.<sup>14</sup>
- Publish and share **good practices related to awareness raising, support programmes and dual intent** approaches among the members of the Subgroup III and beyond.<sup>15</sup> This includes to raise awareness on and support measures taken by

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<sup>11</sup> See more details in [Working-Paper-Synthesis-Report-from-WP3-January-2025-UKIM-final-2.pdf](#)

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Semigina (2025): [\(PDF\) Кваліфікаційні центри України: нова реальність освіти чи старі проблеми \(не\)узгодженості політики?](#)

<sup>13</sup> See an analysis of strengths and weaknesses from 2024: [BIBB / Stellschrauben für eine optimierte Berufsanerkennung](#)

<sup>14</sup> See the CASE-Analysis

<sup>15</sup> See for instance the recommendations for awareness raising among employers in Germany in Leininger et al. (2025): Recognition of foreign professional qualifications from a corporate perspective. [https://www.iwkoeln.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Studien/Report/PDF/2025/German\\_Economic\\_Institute-Recognition\\_of\\_foreign\\_qualifications-2025.pdf](https://www.iwkoeln.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Studien/Report/PDF/2025/German_Economic_Institute-Recognition_of_foreign_qualifications-2025.pdf)

Ukraine, such as language courses and complementary online-courses for school-aged children and youth abroad, based on Ukrainian school curricula.

- Systematically identify good practices in Czechia, Poland and Germany for the **recognition of prior learning in relation with skills development** in VET. Opportunities and support for recognition need to be taken into account especially in training programmes targeting refugees. In some cases, bridging modules should be offered to link up Ukrainian qualifications with national qualifications (e.g. the “junior specialist” diploma from Ukraine and the bachelor’s degree in Poland).

### 3. Strengthening institutional cooperation between recognition agencies and related stakeholders in Ukraine and in the host countries

- **Foster direct cooperation and networking between national qualification/recognition agencies** or other organisations in charge of recognition in Ukraine and in Czechia, Poland and Germany, to speed up recognition processes through better information sharing. Building on the experiences and good practices of the ENIC-NARIC network in Higher Education, there is a potential for closer cooperation also in VET.<sup>16</sup>
- **Support the responsible Ukrainian authorities** to develop targeted measures for (future) returnees and promote a dual intent approach in the host countries (e.g. reaching out to Ukrainian refugees with distance education modules on Ukrainian language and culture).

### 4. Establishing pilot projects and bilateral cooperation initiatives

- **Supporting the work of preparation for EU accession within different Acquis chapters with direct or indirect relevance for recognition of qualifications:**
  - Acquis Chapter 2 “Freedom of movement of workers”: fostering the joining of European Network of Employment Services (EURES), exploring compatibility between Ukrainian system and structures with EURES, including the compliance of national occupational classification with European norms qualification framework;
  - Acquis Chapter 3 “Right of establishment and freedom to provide services”: directives for harmonisation of rules concerning regulated professions to ensure mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas between EU Member States;
  - Acquis Chapter 26 “Education & Culture”: directives for vocational education and training (VET), further development of partly already implemented instruments (such as EURO Pass, Skill Pass, EQF, LLL, ENIC-NARIC).
- **Utilise Erasmus+ funding more systematically to support qualification alignment projects and capacity building in Ukraine** among employers’ associations, professional or branch organisations and other stakeholders, whose role in developing educational (VET) and occupational qualification standards and supporting materials for recognition need to be strengthened.
- Organise **peer-learning activities and study visits** for Ukrainian and recognition professionals to strengthen institutional capacities at all levels (i.e. Ministries, Agencies,

<sup>16</sup> More detailed recommendations are available in ETF (2025): Qualification data needs to support recognition of non-EU country vocational qualifications. [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-06/ETF.97685\\_Final%20report%20for%20publication.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-06/ETF.97685_Final%20report%20for%20publication.pdf)

Recognition centres). This can be done, for instance, by using the EU-funded Twinning programme.

## 5. Key Challenges, Risks, and Success Factors

While following the recommendations of this roadmap, stakeholders should be aware of a series of challenges and risks that are already partly addressed, but need continuous attention and efforts:

- **Challenges and risks:**

- Legal and bureaucratic differences in national recognition systems, including for instance different understandings of VET in relation to Higher Education.
- Limited institutional capacity in Ukraine for large-scale recognition reforms in the current context.
- Lack of monitoring data on recognition needs, applications and results both in Ukraine and in the host countries.
- Lack of awareness and understanding for the importance of mutual recognition of VET qualifications on the part of policymakers and stakeholders in host countries.

To make a significant contribution to the mutual recognition of VET qualifications, the members of the Skills Alliance for Ukraine can leverage the following resources and success factors:

- **Key resources and critical success factors:**

- Engagement of employers and trade unions in reform processes in Ukraine and in the improvement of mutual recognition of VET qualifications in host countries
- Strong political commitment and EU-Ukraine collaboration based on Ukraine's status as an accession candidate.<sup>17</sup>
- Ongoing reforms of the Ukrainian VET system, that contribute to a closer relationship between VET institutions and the labour market and that aim at rapidly increasing the quality of VET provision and assessment.
- Holistic approach embedding recognition issues in skills development, labour market integration programmes and socio-economic support for refugees and (future) returnees.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/three-years-war-ukraines-resilience-europes-support-and-future-skills-and>