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European Union

New EMN-OECD joint study examines skills matching policies and instruments for third country nationals

NEWS article: July 2026

Introduction

A new European Migration Network (EMN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) joint study, 'Fostering sustainable labour market integration of third-country nationals: skills matching policies and instruments' has been published.

Overview

A new EMN-OECD study examines how third-country nationals in EMN Member Countries face skills mismatch in the labour market. It focuses on labour migrants as well as those arriving via family reunification, beneficiaries of international protection (BIP) and Beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTP). Drawing on contributions from 25 EMN National Contact Points and using OECD comparative analysis in measuring skills mismatch, this study highlights key barriers such as limited language proficiency, difficulties in recognising qualifications and discrimination. It also shows how countries are responding through national, local and employer-led measures to improve skills recognition, language support and access to more suitable employment.

Key factors influencing labour market outcomes

Skills mismatch is shaping labour market outcomes by leaving third-country nationals in jobs below their qualifications. Frequently, migrants address this issue by taking roles that are below their skill level (e.g. dental assistant instead of dentist; carer instead of medical practitioner) which contributes to higher overqualification, lower earnings and underused talent. The study highlights that limited language proficiency, challenges with the recognition of qualifications (including availability of documentation), and care-related constraints such as affordable childcare, are among the main factors driving skill mismatch and slowing sustainable labour market integration. Third-country nationals are more likely than native-born workers in EMN Member Countries to be overqualified for their jobs, and this gap often remains even after years of residence.

Supporting skills recognition and use

Countries have introduced a wide range of policies and instruments to address the challenges related to recognition of skills. These include qualification recognition measures, career guidance, language training, upskilling and reskilling, and sector-specific initiatives to help meet labour shortages. The study also notes that ministries and educational institutions lead in promoting policies to address skill mismatch. Municipalities, other sub-national authorities,

NGOs and social partners (like trade unions) offer a wide range of services, especially supporting with civic courses and job referrals.

Ongoing challenges and good practices

The study identifies several persistent challenges linked with insufficient provision of advanced language support, complex qualification recognition procedures, and employer-side barriers such as discrimination and limited awareness of hiring regulations. To address these, good practice examples include combining recognition, language support and vocational training, together with more integrated, multi-actor approaches that link migrants, employers and support services more closely.