



INFORMATION
BOOKLET

Foreign workers
in social services

**GUIDELINES
& RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR HR PERSONNEL
AND MANAGERS**

EN



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Project description

The project supports the inclusion of foreign workers in the social care sector who have difficulties in entering the labour market, for example due to language and cultural barriers, but also due to employers' lack of confidence in their skills and prejudice from other employees.

These problems can be particularly strong for foreign workers coming from non-EU countries where the cultural environment is very different from Central Europe. Anyone who has ever moved to another country will attest to the various problems and issues they have had to face in order to adapt and live and work normally. However, these problems are very difficult to understand for the inhabitants of a country who have never encountered such a situation. Therefore, it is crucial to educate employers in the social welfare field to understand the various difficulties that foreign workers face when working in another country, and also to teach them how to approach such workers so that their transition and adaptation is as easy and smooth as possible, allowing them to work to their full potential.

The project aims to help remove barriers to the integration of foreign workers by developing guidelines and recommendations as well as training programmes for managers of social care providers.

Partner organisations

The project involves 6 partner organisations from 5 European countries:

- Centre for Development Activities of the Union of Employers' Unions of the Czech Republic (CRA UZS) - project coordinator
- AKMI ANONIMI EKPAIDEFTIKI ETAIRIA (AKMI) from Greece
- Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (APSS CR)
- Federation of European Social Employers (Social Employers) from Belgium
- SERVICE MENSCH GmbH / Volkshilfe Niederösterreich (Service Mensch) from Austria
- ELISFA from France.





Context and purpose of the guidelines & recommendations

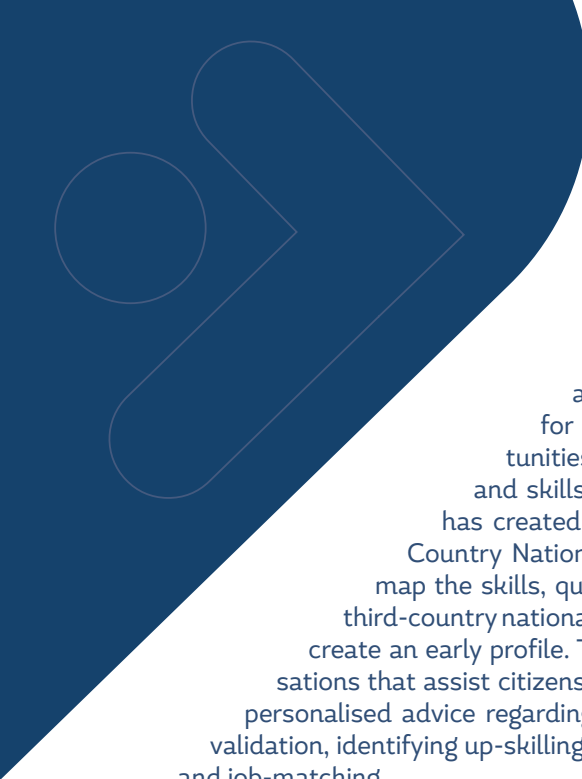
The purpose of this document is to set out guidelines and recommendations on the recruitment process and employment of foreign workers in the social services sector. The recommendations are targeting HR personnel and managers at EU level and in the 5 targeted project countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France and Greece). The guidelines aim to help remove barriers and create equal opportunities for foreign workers, to support their inclusion in the social care labour market.

For this project, a foreign worker is defined as „a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which they are not nationals”, according to Art. 2(1) of the UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

There is an increasing demand for social care service professionals in most EU Member States related to demographic changes and evolving family patterns and needs, among other factors. All these elements are leading to increased pressure on social care services. In addition, a shortage of labour in the health and long-term care sector are predicted in the medium and long term.¹

Employing foreign workers in social services and promoting their inclusion in the workplace, can bring great benefits for different reasons, it brings new skills and competencies, cultural and linguistic diversity and has the potential to alleviate current and future staff shortages, among others. According to ILO (2020), labour migration in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the entire Europe increased significantly over the past decade.

Migration is also a topic of high interest for the European Commission, which is putting in place initiatives and policy proposals to improve



overall migration management in the long term². Some of the initiatives include operational cooperation between Member States as well as with partner countries, a more effective framework for legal pathways to the EU, and making the EU more attractive for non-EU nationals looking for opportunities by matching labour market needs and skills. In this regard, the EU Commission has created the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals. A multilingual tool designed to map the skills, qualifications and work experiences of third-country nationals who are staying in the EU, and thus create an early profile. This will help authorities and organisations that assist citizens of non-EU countries by giving them personalised advice regarding the recognition of diplomas, skills validation, identifying up-skilling needs and supporting job-searching and job-matching.

In order to guarantee cross-border recruitment is beneficial for employers and employees, a framework supporting ethical recruitment and retention is key. As highlighted by EPSU and HOSPEEM in their joint code of conduct on “*Ethical Cross-Border Recruitment and Retention in the Hospital Sector*”³, this must involve different actors, such as social partners, regulatory bodies, national, regional and local authorities.

The guidelines collected are based on the findings from the country reports in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France and Greece, put together by the FWSS project partners. The aim of the country reports was to identify obstacles foreign workers face in taking up employment, in order to better understand their needs and develop recommendations and guidance for organisations employing or seeking to employ foreign workers.

¹ Eurofound (2023), Measures to tackle labour shortages: Lessons for future policy, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

² Communication from the European Commission (2022), Attracting skills and talent to the EU. EPSU and HOSPEEM (2008), code of conduct and follow up on Ethical Cross-Border Recruitment and Retention in the Hospital Sector.

Guidelines and recommendations at EU level for HR personnel and managers

The Guidelines focus on initiatives to address the four main challenges identified in the reports, namely the attractiveness of the sector, the difficult and long administrative procedures, the support for foreign workers at work and diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in the community.

Attractiveness of the sector

In order to meet the current and future staff needs of the sector, attractiveness is crucial in terms of staff recruitment and retention. Promotion of the sector, visibility and accessibility to job offers, are key to attracting skills and talent, in the short and long-term.

- Promote the social services sector, through communication campaigns and by contacting specialised immigration associations and employment organisations to raise awareness of the social service profession and needs.
- Development of relations between service providers and universities, immigration offices and employment agencies at national level, to give better visibility to job positions.




- Develop new communication concepts aimed at the target group, for example by providing employment offers in more languages, making visits and workshops arranged between immigrant jobseekers and regional/local service providers.
- Inclusive approach to recruitment and career progression, by making inclusive job descriptions, ensuring that each stage of the recruitment process and career progression is accessible to people from a diverse range of backgrounds, giving individual personal support to guide workers into a job, or to improve their well-being.
- Make job offers in the sector more attractive, by providing benefits that can be of interest to foreign workers in the long-term. For example, language courses, support to extend the visa, training on cultural aspects, etc.
- Make the offer and process more accessible, by posting the job offers online but also on paper on the employment agencies. Provide different alternatives to send the CV, by email, mail or in person as well as for interviews.

Administrative procedures

The administrative burden (work permits, employment licenses, visas, etc.), the length and the lack of knowledge deter some employers from hiring foreign workers, especially from non-European countries. It is key to provide expertise to HR personnel and managers on the employment process, and thus perceive the employment of foreign workers as an opportunity.

- Seek expertise from external entities, for example from national/regional/local employment offices, to get guidance on administrative procedures, especially when employing people from non-EU Member States.



- Look for support from an intermediary association that can take care of the administrative issues, especially for small associations or first-time employers of foreigners.

- Train HR personnel/managers on the legal aspects, obligations and processes to employ foreign workers, with special attention on workers coming from non-EU countries. Employ an HR or manager who also has specific knowledge on employing foreign workers. This will help to make the process more accessible. The training could be shared with other organisations in the sector.

- Create internally a manual explaining the procedures to employ foreign workers, including the relevant contact persons and contact points that can be updated, if necessary. This will be accessible to managers and HR and could be shared with other organisations in the social services sector.

- Cooperate closely with different actors/stakeholders and/or other employers involved in the implementation of the policy measures regarding legal migration.



Support foreign workers at work

As highlighted in the country reports, insufficient language skills, recognition of the qualifications of foreign workers and the transferability of qualifications and skills pose a major barrier to the employment of foreign workers.

Providing accessible information, training and language courses, is key to better inclusion in the workplace, and thus in the community.

Recognition of qualifications & training

- Provide advice, information and training to validate foreign workers' skills and/or training on local culture/institutions. Provide certificated and non-certificated training in the different professions in the social services sector and actively enhance access to training. Training plays an important role in contributing to career development, job satisfaction and retention.
- Coordinate between the government and social partners to identify the specific sector labour shortage needs and to develop clear and common criteria for validating skills.
- Provide support for the recognition of diplomas, for example, by providing courses to get the certificate, and offering flexible working hours in order to attend courses/university for its validation. This is particularly important for workers coming from non-EU countries, due to the reported difficulties in getting their certificates recognised.

Language skills

- Support at the workplace to improve language knowledge, by providing courses, encouraging and assisting the support between colleagues to learn better the language, the rules and system in the workplace and in the country, etc. Emphasise language as a mean of inclusion at work and in the community. In this regard, a plan could be elaborated to make sure that all employees participate in the initiative.
- Internal or external support at the workplace to improve the knowledge of the working language.
- Provide information on different courses or initiatives available in the country to learn the language.

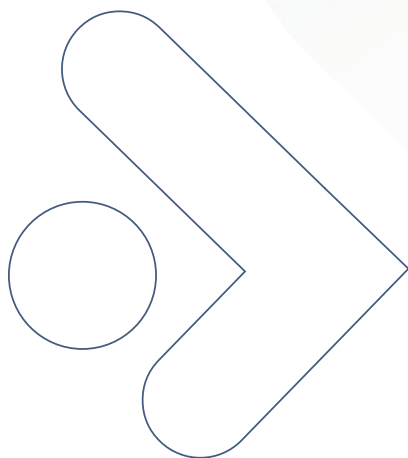
Other support

- Provide clear information on the labour rights and obligations in the country as well as in the organisation. Make relevant information regarding the rules in the workplace, and the obligations and rights accessible to foreign workers, for example by using simple language or translating it into other languages.
- Provide information on the process to renew and prolong their visa (for workers from non-EU countries), work permit, residence and/or any other support to facilitate inclusion in the society (language, certification diplomas, housing, etc.). Also, provide a list with the relevant point of contact or actors at national/regional/local level.
- Promote support between colleagues, by designating an experienced employee to support a newcomer during the first weeks, with the tasks to be implemented, the rules, obligations and other relevant information. Important to raise awareness of the need to learn from each other and exchange experiences.

Diversity and inclusion at the workplace

Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace helps to create an environment in which everyone feels equally valued and involved. It means giving equal access to opportunities and resources regardless of the person's background.

- Analyse effective ways to better include foreign employees into the organisation's structures, with colleagues and service users. For example, establish a diversity management plan, including policies, coaching and training on diversity management and communications.
- Put in place inclusive initiatives at work, such as team building or activities for cultural exchanges between employees, for a better understanding of the different cultures and traditions. For example, cultural events where to present the food, traditions and other relevant aspects from the different countries present in the organisation. Raise awareness on the importance of these events, to ensure that employees participate.



- Create a safe work environment by providing individualised support and/or with the help of an external mediator tailored to the needs of all workers. This will also facilitate communication between employers and employees.
- Seek external expertise to moderate/mediate difficult situations.
- Designing tailor-made collective training at local, regional or national level, where several foreign employees would be involved.
- Establish a strong collaboration between organisations in the social services sector and structures that support the inclusion of foreign workers.



Guidelines for targeted countries

The following guidelines aim to address the main challenges of each project target country (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France and Greece), as presented in the country report.

Examples of good practices from each target country are also included, for the exchange of initiatives at EU and national level.

The guidelines were discussed and confirmed at national level during workshops held by the FWSS project partners and at the partner's coordination meeting.



Austria

- Contacting universities or schools in the targeted country to promote exchanges to learn more about the social services sector labour market, traineeships, etc.
- Offer support and flexibility at work during the process for recognition of qualifications. Especially for workers with qualifications obtained outside the EU, additional examinations and internships are usually required. In many cases, foreigners are allowed to work in a less qualified occupational group, for a maximum of two years until recognition is granted.
- Provide foreign workers with relevant contact points and websites in Austria, that help with the recognition of professional qualifications as well as with obtaining residence and work permits.
- Establish contact with counselling centers to have support with the administrative procedures, such as the ABA WORK in AUSTRIA. They can provide information about the status of the pro-

cedure, missing documents, and the expected duration of the procedure. They also provide other services to employers, such as publishing job offers, events, etc.

Examples:

- A company in Austria has its own Diversity Office. Collaborators in this office speak different languages, take care of culturally sensitive concerns/topics and respond to specific requests.
- Another Austrian company provides legal advice for people with a migration background. There is no formal process, but a lawyer is called if necessary.
- Most companies in Austria underline that integration is a core task for the team leaders. They provide space and time for teambuilding, but no explicit integration activities for foreign workers. Therefore, integration takes place in the course of general team building under the responsibility of the team leader.



Belgium

- Look for support, such as a coach/mediator, who can provide clear information on the legislative procedures in Belgium and thus reduce the administrative charge on employers.
- Give more importance to the skills and competencies of the person for the position, rather than to certificates, when no formal certification is requested. Make use of external support and/or tools available in Belgium such as the FOREM, to recruit, publish offers or train workers.

- Establish a diversity management plan, including policies, coaching, trainings on diversity management and communications and designate a person in the team “trust person” to be in charge of diversity management in the workplace. This person will be the reference to employees to discuss any issue in a safe space.
- More visibility and accessibility to the organisation/associations supporting foreign workers with the administrative process.
- Training on digital and social skills at the workplace. This means everyday skills to interact and communicate with others, such as the country’s cultural aspects, specific terms relevant to the job position, and non-verbal communication for better interaction with the users and colleagues.

Examples:

- The Compostela residential care centre in Borsbeek, participated in a project on diversity (2013-2018). The project was based on a diversity plan created with the feedbacks from a survey focusing on the origin, age, work environment and validation of skills, with a concrete impact. Now the residence has employees from around 26 different countries.
- A residential care center in Belgium put in contact employees with volunteers that were providing language courses for free.



Czech Republic

- Establish contact with employment agencies in the home country, an employment agency in the Czech Republic or another intermediary organisation, to communicate on the vacancies in the sector and thus, attract workers.
- Provide training to better understand the culture, customs and law in the Czech Republic, which will facilitate the inclusion in the country.
- Inform foreign workers on the external initiatives available to support inclusion in the community, such as activities in the integration center, the municipality, cultural events, etc.
- Involvement of an external person/mentor to provide support with the necessary instructions related to the work tasks, obligations and rules. This person would be the contact point for the worker.

Examples:

- Due to the situation in Ukraine, special support for the people coming from this country was put in place:
- Employees are provided with HSE training in Ukrainian, and the methodology for caregivers is also prepared in Ukrainian.
- Videos to preview the person's care procedures (including for people with dementia) have subtitles in Ukrainian.
- Caregivers receive a basic Czech-Ukrainian glossary for caregivers upon employment.
- Work schedules are also available in Ukrainian for simplicity.
- Some organisations encourage local employees to refresh their Russian language skills so that they can communicate with new Ukrainian workers.
- Employer deliberately does not put two people of the same nationality on the same shift - this encourages earlier integration of foreign workers into the work team, earlier acquisition of the Czech language, etc.



France

- Get information and training on the legal framework for the employment of foreign employees, which provides security for both the employer and the employee: design practical legal sheets and a FAQ.
- Implement actions to support the employees during the first months in the organisation by putting in place French language courses, integrating the specific professional language and/or assigning a tutor or a referent.
- Encourage employers to provide employees with a document on the working environment, social protection, collective agreement and explain the rights and duties of the employee and the employer.
- Use legal and contractual tools to develop training and career paths for foreign employees such as skills assessment and recognition (valorisation des acquis de experience VAE) and training while working (FEST) are very important in this respect.



Examples:

- To overcome the difficulty of mastering the French language to obtain residence permit and work permits, “public writers” (volunteers from the association) help foreign nationals to understand and complete administrative documents.
- Managers explain to foreign employees about training opportunities and possible career paths.
- French language courses are offered and paid during working hours.



Greece

- Training for employers/HR on diversity management, including good examples of inclusive strategies and activities that could be implemented in the workplace.
- Make trainings available to facilitate access to other job positions in the organisations. This will promote stability, education and employment opportunities.
- Provide information about the activities available and contact points outside of the workplace, where Greeks and newcomers can make an exchange and build relations.
- Migrants are properly trained to staff the structures providing counselling and support services.

Examples

- The initiative “Sunday Migrant School” offers lessons of the Greek language to migrants and refugees for free. Apart from the language lessons, the initiative offers legal help through lawyers who are working as volunteers.





- Best CSR (Company Social Responsibility) practices that can be found in Greece are:
- Surveying employee satisfaction. Employees in the company complete a questionnaire every six months on their level of job satisfaction. Employees can remain anonymous, but 99% of them fill in their names, which demonstrates the good relationship between employees and management.
- Participation in decision-making. Employees are encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes concerning human resources policies.
- Strengthening social relations between leadership and staff. Social relations are based on direct communication between leadership and staff. Managers are addressed by their first name.
- Respect of cultural specificity. The company not only promotes the diversity and cultural diversity of its employees, but actively supports it in various ways.





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