



# Pathways to Progress

## ANALYSIS & DESIGN: Research and needs analysis report

WP2



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# 1. METHODOLOGY

## 1.1. Overall Research Approach

The research conducted within the Pathways 2 Progress project was designed to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the challenges and needs related to migrant participation in vocational education and training (VET) and workplace learning. In order to achieve this, the consortium applied a mixed-methods research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

As outlined in the project methodology guidelines, the research integrated three complementary components: desk research, surveys, and qualitative activities (interviews and focus groups). This combination allowed the project to capture not only broad patterns and trends, but also the underlying experiences and perspectives of the target groups. While surveys provided structured and comparable data across countries, qualitative methods offered deeper insights into real-life learning situations, challenges, and practices. Desk research, in turn, ensured that all findings were grounded in the national context of each partner country.

The research was implemented across four partner countries (Croatia, Austria, Belgium, and Slovenia) using a shared and standardised methodological framework. All partners applied the same research tools, including common survey questionnaires, interview and focus group guides, and desk research templates. Although these tools were adapted linguistically where necessary, their structure and content remained consistent, ensuring that the data collected could be meaningfully compared and integrated into a joint analytical report.

A key feature of the approach was its user-centred and bottom-up orientation. Rather than relying solely on existing reports or institutional perspectives, the research focused on gathering direct input from those most closely involved in vocational training and labour market integration. This included migrant learners, trainers and educators working in VET and adult education, as well as employers engaging migrant workers. By placing these groups at the centre of the research, the project ensured that the findings reflect real experiences, practical challenges, and everyday realities.

Overall, this approach provided a strong and reliable evidence base for the subsequent phases of the project. By combining different data sources and perspectives, and by ensuring consistency across countries, the research created the conditions for a meaningful cross-country comparison and the development of training modules that are both relevant and applicable in diverse national contexts.



## 1.2. Data Collection Methods

The data collection process within the Pathways 2 Progress project was structured around three complementary methods: desk research, surveys, and qualitative activities in the form of interviews and focus groups. Each of these methods contributed to building a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of migrant participation in vocational education and training (VET) and workplace learning.

Desk research was conducted as the initial phase in all partner countries, providing a contextual foundation for the study. It focused on analysing national systems, policies, and existing practices related to migrant integration, vocational training, and labour market participation. This phase ensured that subsequent data collection was grounded in the realities of each national context.

The second phase consisted of surveys targeting three key groups: migrant learners, trainers/educators, and employers. The questionnaires followed a shared structure and addressed core themes such as barriers to learning, recognition of prior learning, digital and AI-supported tools, and language and cultural challenges. Data collection took place between February and April 2026 and was carried out both online and face-to-face, depending on participant accessibility.

A total of 82 survey responses were collected across the four partner countries:

- Croatia (AEI Studium) – 21 respondents
  - 7 educators
  - 6 employers
  - 8 migrants
- Austria (ENTER) – 15 respondents
  - 5 educators
  - 5 employers
  - 5 migrants
- Belgium (PlastIQ) – 22 respondents
  - 5 educators
  - 11 employers
  - 6 migrants
- Slovenia (STEP Institute) – 19 respondents
  - 7 educators
  - 4 employers
  - 8 migrants

This exceeded the minimum requirements defined in the methodology and ensured a sufficiently balanced dataset across all target groups.

To complement the quantitative data, qualitative research was conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. These activities allowed participants to share their experiences in greater depth, providing insight into real-life learning environments, teaching practices, and workplace expectations.

A total of 37 participants were involved in qualitative activities:

- Croatia – 7 participants
  - 3 migrants
  - 4 educators
- Austria – 5 participants
  - 2 migrants
  - 3 educators
- Belgium – 18 participants
  - 13 migrants
  - 5 employers
- Slovenia – 7 participants
  - 1 migrant
  - 6 educators (mixed group)

These activities were conducted between March and April 2026, using formats adapted to local contexts, including individual interviews and small group discussions.

Together, these methods provided a robust dataset combining statistical trends, contextual understanding, and lived experiences.

### 1.3. Data Collection Process

The data collection process was designed to be both structured and flexible, allowing partners to adapt their approach to local conditions while maintaining overall methodological consistency.

Data was collected using a combination of:

- **online methods** (e.g. digital surveys, virtual interviews), and
- **face-to-face approaches** (paper-based surveys, in-person discussions).

This flexibility proved particularly important when working with migrant participants, some of whom had limited access to digital tools or varying levels of digital literacy. In

such cases, in-person engagement ensured more inclusive participation and more reliable data collection.

Participants were recruited through VET institutions, training centres, workplaces, and partner networks. This ensured that all respondents were directly involved in vocational learning or labour market integration processes.

All participants were informed about:

- the purpose of the research,
- the voluntary nature of participation,
- anonymity and data protection.

Participants had the option to provide personal or identifying information; however, this was **not mandatory**, and many responses remained fully anonymous. No sensitive personal data was collected, and participants were free to skip questions or withdraw at any stage.

Overall, the process balanced methodological rigour with practical adaptability, ensuring both quality and inclusiveness of the data.

## 1.4. Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

Survey data was processed using descriptive statistical analysis, allowing the identification of key patterns, trends, and differences across countries and target groups. This made it possible to highlight both common challenges and variations in experiences between migrants, trainers, and employers.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups was analysed using thematic analysis. This approach focused on identifying recurring themes, practical challenges, and illustrative examples drawn from participants' experiences. These insights added depth and context to the quantitative findings.

A key element of the analysis was **triangulation**, meaning that findings from different sources were compared and cross-validated. In practice, this involved linking:

- desk research findings (system-level context),
- survey results (patterns and trends),



- qualitative insights (lived experiences).

This approach strengthened the reliability of the results and ensured that conclusions were supported by multiple perspectives.

## 1.5. Limitations

While the research provides valuable insights into migrant learning and integration, several limitations should be considered.

The overall sample size, although exceeding the minimum requirements, remains relatively limited and may not fully capture the diversity of experiences within each country. In addition, access to participants—particularly migrants—varied between countries, which influenced the distribution of responses.

Language barriers and different levels of digital literacy may also have affected how some participants understood and responded to survey questions. Although efforts were made to adapt the data collection process to participants' needs, these factors may have influenced the depth of certain responses.

Despite these limitations, the use of a mixed-methods approach and multiple data sources ensured a reliable and well-rounded evidence base. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data, supported by cross-country comparison, provides a strong foundation for further analysis and project development.



## 2. Country Analysis

### 2.1. Croatia (AEI Studium)

#### 2.1.1. Desk Research

In recent years, Croatia has experienced a significant increase in the number of migrant workers, marking a relatively new development in its labour market. According to available data, more than 149,000 residence and work permits were issued in 2025 alone, with the majority concentrated in sectors such as construction, tourism and hospitality, industry, transport, and trade. This trend reflects both labour shortages and a growing dependence on foreign workers in key economic sectors.

Despite this increase, Croatia does not yet have a fully developed and systematic framework for migrant integration. Historically, migration flows were primarily regional, which limited the need for structured integration policies. As a result, current systems are still adapting to the realities of a more diverse migrant population.

One of the most prominent challenges identified is the **lack of Croatian language proficiency among migrants**, which significantly affects both workplace performance and broader social integration. While language courses are available—often supported through voucher systems or employer co-financing—participation rates remain lower than expected, indicating the need for more accessible and engaging learning formats.

In terms of education and training, vocational education and training (VET) programmes are regulated and require formal approval from national authorities. However, access to these programmes may depend on prior qualifications, which presents an additional barrier for migrants whose skills are not formally recognised.

Although procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications exist, they are often complex, time-consuming, and fragmented across institutions. This makes it difficult for migrants to validate their previous education and work experience, particularly in regulated professions.

From a labour market perspective, migrants are predominantly employed in lower-skilled occupations, despite often having prior experience or qualifications. This mismatch highlights the need for better integration into adult education and upskilling opportunities.



Overall, the desk research indicates that while Croatia has taken initial steps towards supporting migrant integration, there are still significant gaps related to language support, recognition of prior learning, and the alignment between education and labour market needs.

### 2.1.2. Survey Results

The survey conducted in Croatia included a total of **21 respondents**, representing all three key stakeholder groups:

- 7 trainers/educators
- 6 employers
- 8 migrant learners

This distribution provided a balanced perspective, allowing for a comparison of experiences and expectations across education, employment, and learning contexts.

Across all groups, the findings point to a consistent set of challenges and needs, particularly in relation to language, learning approaches, and the recognition of prior skills.

The recognition of prior learning is currently handled in a predominantly informal manner. Trainers and employers rely largely on observation, interviews, and practical demonstrations when assessing migrants' skills. While these methods can provide initial insight into learners' abilities, they lack consistency and do not allow for systematic comparison or validation of qualifications obtained abroad. Respondents highlighted several recurring difficulties, including language barriers during assessment, lack of documentation, and discrepancies between self-reported and demonstrated skills. This creates uncertainty both for trainers and employers and often leads to a trial-and-error approach in the early stages of training or employment.

When it comes to learning and teaching practices, both trainers and learners emphasised the importance of adapting methods to better suit migrants' needs. Traditional, theory-heavy approaches were generally perceived as less effective, particularly for learners with limited language proficiency. In contrast, practical, hands-on activities and visual materials were consistently identified as the most effective forms of learning. Clear, simplified instructions and step-by-step guidance were also seen as essential elements that support understanding and task completion.

Digital tools are present in the learning process but are not yet used in a systematic or strategic way. While basic tools such as videos, presentations, and online resources are



occasionally used, their application depends largely on individual initiative rather than institutional guidance. More advanced tools, including those based on artificial intelligence, are still largely unfamiliar to both trainers and learners. Respondents recognised the potential of such tools—particularly for language learning and visual instruction—but also pointed to barriers such as limited digital skills, lack of access to devices, and the absence of structured solutions.

Language challenges emerged as the most consistent and significant issue across all responses. Participants reported difficulties in understanding instructions, especially when technical vocabulary is involved, as well as challenges in everyday workplace communication. Cultural differences were also mentioned, particularly in relation to workplace expectations, communication styles, and teamwork. However, these were generally perceived as secondary to language-related barriers.

From the learners' perspective, the survey results clearly highlight a gap between the current structure of training programmes and the actual needs of migrant participants. Learners reported that they benefit most from practical activities, visual materials, and clear instructions, while fast-paced teaching and theoretical content often create difficulties. This suggests a need for more flexible, adaptive, and learner-centred approaches.

### 2.1.3. Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative component of the research provided additional depth to the survey findings by capturing the lived experiences of both migrant learners and trainers.

In Croatia, qualitative activities involved a total of 7 participants, including:

- 3 migrant learners
- 4 trainers/educators

These discussions offered valuable insight into how the identified challenges manifest in real learning and teaching situations.

Migrant participants described their overall learning experience as positive, but at the same time demanding and at times overwhelming. They expressed a strong motivation to learn and improve their skills, particularly in relation to employment opportunities. However, they also highlighted the constant pressure of learning new content while simultaneously navigating a foreign language environment.

Language was consistently described as the most significant barrier, affecting not only comprehension but also confidence. Participants explained that they often understand the general idea of a task but struggle with specific details, which makes them uncertain about whether they are performing tasks correctly. This uncertainty can lead to hesitation, mistakes, and reduced independence in learning.

Learning was described as significantly more accessible when supported by visual and practical elements. Demonstrations, videos, and step-by-step explanations helped learners overcome language barriers and better understand tasks. In contrast, text-heavy materials and abstract explanations were frequently identified as difficult to follow.

Digital tools play a role in supporting learning, but mainly on an individual level. Migrants reported using translation applications and online videos to help them understand content, particularly practical tasks. However, the use of such tools is not systematically integrated into training programmes, and awareness of available resources remains limited.

From the trainers' perspective, similar challenges were observed. Trainers described migrant learners as highly motivated but emphasised that working with them requires additional time, flexibility, and adaptation. Language barriers were identified as the main factor affecting learning progress, often requiring repeated explanations and alternative teaching methods.

Trainers reported that they frequently adapt their teaching by simplifying language, using visual aids, and demonstrating tasks. However, these adaptations are largely based on individual experience rather than structured training or institutional support. They also highlighted the lack of standardised tools for assessing prior learning and the difficulty of verifying qualifications obtained abroad.

Overall, the qualitative findings reinforce the survey results, highlighting a strong need for more structured support systems, both for learners and for trainers.

#### 2.1.4. Key Conclusions – Croatia

The analysis of the Croatian context reveals a consistent pattern across desk research, survey data, and qualitative findings.

Language barriers clearly stand out as the central challenge, influencing all aspects of learning and integration—from understanding instructions to participating in the workplace. At the same time, the current system for recognising prior learning remains



underdeveloped, relying largely on informal practices that do not fully capture migrants' existing skills and experience.

Although effective teaching strategies—particularly those based on visual and practical learning—are already being used, they are not systematically implemented and depend heavily on individual initiative. Similarly, while digital tools show strong potential, their use remains limited and lacks a clear strategic framework.

Despite these challenges, the findings also point to a strong foundation for improvement. Both learners and trainers demonstrate high levels of motivation and willingness to adapt, suggesting that targeted support, structured methodologies, and appropriate tools could significantly enhance learning outcomes.

In this context, Croatia represents a system in transition, where the need for more inclusive, flexible, and evidence-based approaches is increasingly recognised. This makes it a highly relevant environment for the development and testing of innovative training solutions within the project.

## 2.2. Austria (ENTER)

### 2.2.1. Desk Research

Austria represents a well-established and structurally developed context in terms of migrant integration, vocational education and training (VET), and labour market organisation. At the beginning of 2025, foreign nationals accounted for approximately 20.2% of the total population, reflecting a long-standing and diverse migration dynamic. Unlike countries where migration is a more recent phenomenon, Austria has developed a range of institutional frameworks and support mechanisms aimed at facilitating integration through both education and employment.

Education plays a central role in this process, particularly through the Austrian VET system, which is widely recognised for its strong connection to labour market needs. The dual system, combining company-based training with part-time vocational schooling, ensures that learners acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This structure contributes to relatively low youth unemployment rates and high employer involvement in training processes.

However, despite these structural strengths, migrants continue to face a number of persistent challenges. Language proficiency remains one of the most significant barriers,



limiting access to education, training opportunities, and skilled employment. In addition, the recognition of foreign qualifications, while legally regulated, is often complex and fragmented. Responsibility for validation is distributed across multiple institutions, and procedures can involve administrative burdens, translation costs, and long processing times. As a result, many migrants are either discouraged from initiating the process or experience delays in entering employment that matches their qualifications.

Although recent developments, such as the Recognition and Assessment Act (AuBG), have introduced more flexible pathways—including alternative assessment methods for individuals without formal documentation—accessibility and awareness remain uneven. In practice, the system continues to rely on a combination of formal procedures and informal assessments, particularly when dealing with non-formal and informal learning.

Language and cultural integration support is relatively well developed, with multiple institutions—such as the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), the Public Employment Service (AMS), and various NGOs—offering courses and programmes. These initiatives often combine language learning with orientation to workplace norms and social structures. However, gaps remain, particularly in the provision of job-specific language training and in ensuring access for individuals in rural areas or with specific personal circumstances.

From a labour market perspective, migrants are predominantly employed in sectors with high demand for labour, such as hospitality, construction, transport, and retail. While this reflects economic needs, it also highlights a mismatch between migrants' qualifications and their employment, as many are overqualified for the positions they hold. Structural barriers, including language requirements, recognition procedures, and, in some cases, discrimination, further limit opportunities for upward mobility.

Overall, Austria presents a system with strong institutional foundations and a high level of organisation, but one that still faces challenges in ensuring equal access, efficient recognition of skills, and full integration of migrant learners into both education and the labour market.

### 2.2.2. Survey Results

The survey conducted in Austria included a total of **15 respondents**, distributed equally across the three target groups:

- 5 trainers/educators
- 5 employers
- 5 migrant learners



Although smaller in scale, the sample provides a balanced perspective across education, employment, and learner experiences.

Across all groups, the findings confirm several structural patterns identified in the desk research, particularly in relation to language barriers, recognition of prior learning, and the balance between theoretical and practical training.

The recognition of prior learning is approached through a combination of methods, including interviews, practical tasks, and the review of documentation. However, similar to other contexts, this process is often affected by a lack of standardisation and comparability. Respondents highlighted language barriers and insufficient or unclear documentation as the most significant obstacles. Differences between foreign and national education systems further complicate the evaluation of qualifications, leading to uncertainty and, in some cases, underutilisation of skills.

In terms of learning and teaching approaches, the survey results emphasise the importance of adapting methods to the needs of migrant learners. Simplified language, step-by-step instructions, and allowing additional time for task completion were identified as particularly effective strategies. These approaches place the learner at the centre of the process and help bridge gaps in language and prior knowledge.

Digital tools are widely recognised as important and are generally accessible, with most respondents reporting access to devices such as smartphones or computers. Migrant learners also reported a relatively high level of confidence in using digital tools. Translation tools, online platforms, and visual learning resources were identified as particularly useful. At the same time, challenges remain, including varying levels of digital skills, limited confidence among some learners, and language-related barriers when using more complex platforms.

Language continues to be the most significant factor affecting learning. Respondents identified difficulties in understanding instructions, particularly when technical terminology is involved, as well as challenges in workplace communication. Interestingly, the findings suggest that while multilingual materials may be useful, there is a stronger emphasis on learning and applying the host country language in practical contexts.

Cultural integration challenges were also highlighted, particularly in relation to workplace norms, communication styles, and expectations around punctuality and teamwork. These aspects, while less prominent than language barriers, still play an important role in shaping the learning and working experience.

From the learners' perspective, there is a clear preference for practical learning and hands-on experience, while theoretical content is often perceived as difficult, especially



when combined with language challenges. This again points to the need for more balanced and adaptive learning approaches.

### 2.2.3. Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative component in Austria involved a total of **5 participants**, including:

- 2 migrant learners
- 3 trainers/educators

Although limited in size, these discussions provided valuable insight into individual experiences and helped illustrate the patterns identified in the survey.

Migrant participants described their learning experience as generally positive, particularly appreciating the combination of practical training and classroom-based instruction. However, they also emphasised that the learning process can be challenging, especially in the early stages. Language plays a central role in this, with technical vocabulary and the speed of instruction often making it difficult to fully understand tasks and expectations.

Participants noted that their experience improves over time as their language skills develop and as they become more familiar with the education system. Those with a longer period of residence reported fewer difficulties, suggesting that integration is a gradual process supported by exposure and practice.

Learning was described as most effective when supported by repetition, visual examples, and opportunities to apply knowledge in real work situations. Motivation was closely linked to visible progress and the ability to use newly acquired skills in practice.

At the same time, participants highlighted challenges related to communication, particularly when trainers do not adapt their pace or provide additional explanation. In some cases, a lack of willingness to repeat instructions was perceived as discouraging, affecting learners' confidence and engagement.

From the trainers' perspective, working with migrant learners requires a high degree of flexibility and awareness. Trainers reported that adapting teaching methods, providing additional explanations, and using practical demonstrations are essential to ensure understanding and maintain motivation. However, these adaptations often rely on individual effort rather than structured guidance or institutional support.

Trainers also emphasised the difficulty of assessing prior learning, particularly when documentation is missing or when learners are unfamiliar with Austrian standards. Practical observation was identified as the most reliable method for evaluating skills,

while theoretical assessments were seen as less effective in capturing actual competence.

Cultural differences were recognised as an important factor influencing classroom dynamics and workplace behaviour. Trainers noted differences in communication styles, attitudes towards hierarchy, and expectations around participation, which can affect both learning and interaction. Creating an inclusive and respectful environment was seen as essential for supporting adaptation.

#### 2.2.4. Key Conclusions – Austria

The Austrian context is characterised by a strong and well-developed VET system, providing a solid foundation for migrant integration through education and employment. The dual system, in particular, offers valuable opportunities for combining theoretical learning with practical experience.

At the same time, several challenges persist. Language barriers remain a central issue, affecting both learning and workplace integration. Although support systems are in place, there is a clear need for more targeted, job-specific language training that directly responds to the demands of different professions.

The recognition of prior learning, while supported by legal frameworks, is still perceived as complex and difficult to access. This limits the effective use of migrants' existing skills and contributes to underemployment.

Teaching practices show a strong awareness of the need for adaptation, with trainers already applying a range of effective strategies. However, these practices are often informal and not supported by structured tools or guidelines.

Digital tools offer significant potential, particularly in supporting language learning and providing flexible learning opportunities. However, their use is not yet fully integrated into training systems and depends on individual capacity and resources.

Overall, Austria represents a context with strong institutional capacity and a high level of readiness for innovation. The existing system provides a solid basis for developing and implementing new approaches, particularly those focused on adaptive learning, digital support, and more efficient recognition of prior learning.



## 2.3. Belgium (PlastIQ)

### 2.3.1. Desk Research

Belgium, and particularly the Flemish region, represents a context characterised by long-standing migration trends combined with increasing labour market pressures. In 2024 alone, nearly 94,400 international immigrations were recorded, with almost half of migrants originating from non-EU countries. This reflects both the growing diversity of the population and the increasing importance of migrant integration for the functioning of the labour market.

At the same time, Belgium is facing significant structural challenges related to labour shortages and demographic change. A large number of workers are expected to leave the labour market in the coming years due to ageing, while the available workforce is not sufficient to meet demand. As a result, integrating migrants into employment is no longer only a social objective but also an economic necessity.

Despite this need, there remains a notable gap in labour market participation between native-born individuals and those with a migration background. Employment rates among non-EU migrants are significantly lower, and unemployment rates are considerably higher. This indicates that structural barriers continue to limit full participation, even in a system with relatively developed integration policies.

In terms of education and training, Belgium offers a range of opportunities, including adult education and vocational training. However, the system is not always specifically adapted to the needs of migrant learners. Language acquisition plays a central role in integration policy, with a strong emphasis on learning Dutch as a prerequisite for participation in society, education, and employment. Integration programmes typically combine language learning with social orientation and guidance towards employment.

The recognition of prior learning is formally organised through institutions such as NARIC-Flanders, which evaluates foreign diplomas. However, the process is often complex, time-consuming, and dependent on documentation that migrants may not always be able to provide, particularly in the case of refugees. In practice, the recognition of practical skills remains a significant challenge, as there are no widely standardised methods for assessing professional competences in workplace contexts.



Digital tools are increasingly present in both education and workplace training, although their use varies significantly between institutions. While basic tools and platforms are widely available, more advanced or structured use of digital and AI-supported tools remains limited and is often driven by individual initiative rather than systematic implementation.

Overall, the Belgian context reflects a combination of strong labour market demand, relatively structured integration policies, and persistent gaps in practice—particularly in relation to language, skills recognition, and the adaptation of training approaches to diverse learner profiles.

### 2.3.2. Survey Results

The survey conducted in Belgium included a total of **22 respondents**, with a strong representation from the employer sector:

- 5 trainers/educators
- 11 employers
- 6 migrant learners

This distribution reflects the strong involvement of companies in training and integration processes, particularly in industrial sectors.

Across all respondent groups, language was consistently identified as the central factor influencing both learning and employment outcomes. In many cases, language proficiency is assessed informally during job interviews and is often the primary criterion in hiring decisions. This places migrant learners at a disadvantage, as the ability to communicate effectively is sometimes prioritised over practical skills.

The assessment of prior learning is largely based on a combination of interviews, initial work periods, and informal observation. Employers often rely on the first weeks of employment as a testing phase to evaluate a worker's actual performance. Formal documentation and certificates play a relatively limited role in this process, which reflects both the difficulty of verifying foreign qualifications and the practical orientation of many sectors.

In terms of learning approaches, both trainers and employers emphasised the importance of visual and practical methods. In industrial settings, this is often already embedded in practice through the use of pictograms, visual safety instructions, and



hands-on training. However, these adaptations are typically designed for all workers rather than specifically tailored to migrant learners.

Digital tools are present but not specifically targeted at supporting migrants. Most commonly used tools include translation applications such as Google Translate or DeepL, as well as basic digital platforms used for instructions and monitoring processes. There is interest in more advanced solutions, such as real-time translation tools, but their use remains limited due to concerns about usability and reliability.

Language challenges are particularly evident in understanding instructions, especially when technical terminology is involved. Even migrants with a relatively good command of the general language face difficulties when encountering sector-specific vocabulary. This creates a gap between everyday communication and professional communication, which directly affects performance and integration in the workplace.

Cultural aspects were also highlighted, particularly in relation to punctuality, work pace, and communication styles. Employers and trainers noted that differences in expectations can lead to misunderstandings or frustration, especially in fast-paced industrial environments where efficiency is essential.

From the learners' perspective, the survey results reinforce the importance of practical learning. Migrants reported that they learn most effectively by doing tasks and demonstrating their skills, while theoretical instruction and complex explanations are more difficult to follow. This again highlights the need for more adaptive and practice-oriented learning approaches.

### 2.3.3. Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative research in Belgium involved a relatively large and diverse group of participants, particularly among migrant learners.

In total, the qualitative activities included:

- 13 migrant learners (interviews)
- trainers from a VET training centre (PlastIQ)

The diversity of participants provided insight into significantly different learning experiences depending on educational background, country of origin, and level of prior skills.

One of the most striking findings is the **strong variation between different groups of migrants**. Participants from Ukraine, for example, were often highly educated and had previous professional experience, while others—particularly from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, or Eritrea—had limited formal education or were even illiterate. This difference has a major impact on learning capacity, access to employment, and the effectiveness of training approaches.

Despite these differences, a common pattern emerged across all groups: language remains the central barrier to learning and integration. Migrants consistently reported difficulties in understanding instructions, particularly when dialects are used or when communication deviates from standard language. In the Flemish context, the use of local dialects was identified as an additional challenge, creating a gap between the language learned in courses and the language used in everyday work environments.

Learning experiences were described as more accessible once a basic level of language proficiency is achieved. However, before reaching that stage, many learners rely heavily on observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction. This is particularly evident among participants with lower educational backgrounds, who often prefer and depend on visual and practical learning methods.

Digital tools are used inconsistently and mainly on an individual basis. While some participants—particularly those with higher educational backgrounds – reported using tools such as translation apps or AI-based platforms, others had very limited engagement with digital learning. Overall, the use of digital tools within formal training remains minimal.

From the trainers' perspective, the main challenge is how to effectively adapt training to such a diverse group of learners. Trainers reported that they have gradually simplified their teaching materials and increased the use of visual instructions and demonstrations. However, they also noted that assessing prior learning remains difficult, as foreign qualifications do not always correspond to actual skills, and formal documentation is often insufficient.

Another important observation relates to communication. Trainers highlighted that migrant learners often indicate understanding—even when they have not fully grasped the content—which can lead to errors and misunderstandings. As a result, trainers emphasised the importance of checking understanding through feedback and repetition.

Cultural differences were also present, although their impact varied. Some trainers noted challenges related to punctuality, work pace, or interaction styles, while others highlighted gender-related dynamics in classroom interaction. These factors can influence both learning and integration, particularly in group settings.



### 2.3.4. Key Conclusions – Belgium

The Belgian context is characterised by a strong demand for labour combined with a highly diverse migrant population. This creates both opportunities and challenges for vocational education and training systems.

Language emerges as the central issue across all levels, affecting not only learning but also hiring decisions, workplace performance, and social integration. At the same time, there is a clear gap between general language training and the specific vocabulary required in professional contexts.

The recognition of prior learning remains a complex and partially unresolved issue. In practice, employers rely more on observation and real-life performance than on formal recognition procedures, which limits the effective use of migrants' existing skills.

Training approaches show a strong orientation towards practical learning, particularly in industrial contexts. However, these approaches are not systematically adapted to migrant learners, despite their clear need for more individualised and flexible methods.

A key finding in the Belgian context is the **high level of diversity among migrant learners**, which requires differentiated approaches depending on educational background and learning capacity. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective in such a setting.

Digital and AI-supported tools present a promising area for development, particularly in addressing language barriers. However, their current use is limited, and further efforts are needed to integrate them effectively into both training and workplace environments.

Overall, Belgium represents a context with strong labour market demand and openness to innovation, but also with significant structural and practical challenges that need to be addressed in order to improve the integration of migrant learners.

## 2.4. Slovenia (STEP Institute)

### 2.4.1. Desk Research

Slovenia can be described as a labour-immigration country in which migrant integration is closely linked to employment needs and adult participation in working life. In 2024, the country recorded positive net migration, with most of this balance resulting from foreign



citizens, especially from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. This is important because it shows that migrant inclusion in Slovenia is not only a matter of humanitarian protection, but also a structural labour market issue.

A particular feature of the Slovenian context is that many migrant workers have traditionally come from linguistically and culturally relatively close South Slavic environments. This can make initial everyday communication easier and may partly explain why the need for more systematic language support has not always been strongly recognised. However, as labour shortages increase and migrant inflows become more diverse, this model appears less sustainable. The existing literature suggests that reliance on informal adaptation and linguistic proximity will not be sufficient in the future.

The Slovenian VET system offers an important framework for migrant learning. Vocational education and training is institutionally well established, and work-based learning is an integral part of formal VET programmes. Adult migrants can also access requalification and further training through public and private adult education providers. This creates opportunities for integration, but in practice migrant learners still operate at the intersection of several separate systems: migration and integration policy, adult education and VET, and the labour market. The challenge is therefore not only whether support exists, but whether these systems are connected in a way that makes them usable and effective for migrants.

Slovenia also has a formal system for recognising prior learning, including both validation of non-formal and informal learning and separate procedures for recognising foreign education. In institutional terms, this is a strength. However, from the migrant perspective, the system remains somewhat fragmented and procedurally complex. Different pathways apply depending on whether the goal is employment, further study, or access to a regulated profession. This means that recognition is not experienced as one clear system, but rather as several parallel procedures requiring documentary evidence, administrative knowledge, and persistence.

In the field of language and cultural integration, Slovenia has a public support framework that includes language courses, orientation programmes, and certain support measures for third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection. However, policy documents themselves acknowledge implementation problems, including insufficient hours for some groups, difficulties with attendance due to work or childcare, shortages of qualified teachers, and uneven local availability of programmes. Research also indicates that language support is still not sufficiently connected to workplace realities. Migrants often learn Slovene informally while working, and employers only exceptionally provide systematic language support.



Digital infrastructure in education is relatively strong, which provides a good basis for online and blended learning. There are also some promising examples of digital language tools, including beginner-level resources for adult migrants and more specialised tools for sectors such as healthcare. At the same time, AI-supported approaches appear to still be in an early stage of development and are not yet broadly integrated into migrant training or workplace learning.

Overall, the Slovenian context is characterised by the existence of many relevant systems and public measures, but also by limited coordination between them in practice. Language, recognition, employment, and training are all present as policy areas, yet migrants still often have to navigate them separately.

### 2.4.2. Survey Results

The survey conducted in Slovenia included a total of **19 respondents**, covering all three target groups:

- 7 trainers/educators
- 4 employers
- 8 migrant learners

The responses provide an interesting picture of a context in which both trainers and employers are already working regularly with migrants, but where integration still appears to depend heavily on individual effort and local practice rather than on a consistent, standardised approach.

In the area of prior learning recognition and skills assessment, trainers reported that they most often rely on initial interviews and the review of documentation such as CVs or portfolios. Employers similarly emphasised informal interviews, observation during trial periods, and an assessment of motivation, independence, and the ability to learn new tasks. Migrant learners, however, reported that in most cases no one had really helped them identify or assess their prior skills in a structured way. From their perspective, practical tests and discussions with a mentor or counsellor would be more effective ways of demonstrating what they know and can do.

The survey results suggest that language barriers continue to shape almost every aspect of the integration process. Trainers identified language as the main challenge during interviews, tests, and communication more broadly, while employers pointed not only to language difficulties but also to the administrative and legal complexity of employment-



related procedures. In practice, employers also experience uncertainty when trying to determine whether reported skills correspond to actual competences.

In relation to learning approaches and digital support, trainers reported that they most often use simplified language, step-by-step instructions, visual support, and additional individual guidance. Migrant learners generally described themselves as confident in using digital tools and reported access to smartphones or computers. Many already use translation tools, while some also use online platforms or video tutorials. Employers similarly indicated that they provide or recommend some form of digital learning support. This is notable because, unlike in some other countries, migrants in Slovenia do not perceive themselves as having major digital barriers to the same extent that trainers or employers sometimes assume.

Language support was again identified as central when respondents were asked more directly about learning needs. Trainers stressed the importance of both everyday communication and work-related language learning. Migrants themselves reported that written tasks, writing reports, and in some cases speaking remain difficult, even when they can communicate at a basic or intermediate level. Employers confirmed that limited vocabulary and difficulty understanding workplace expectations continue to affect performance and integration.

Cultural integration was described in a more varied way than language. Trainers most often referred to differences in communication styles, understanding of workplace norms, and teamwork expectations. Migrant learners, however, did not describe one common pattern. Some reported clear challenges, especially in communication and interaction with trainers or co-workers, while others said they experienced few or no cultural barriers. This suggests that cultural adaptation in Slovenia may be highly individual and shaped by personal background, profession, and the local setting rather than by one uniform experience.

Overall, the survey findings point to a context in which support exists, but remains uneven and highly dependent on the institution, employer, or individual trainer. Language remains the strongest common theme across all groups.

### 2.4.3. Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative component in Slovenia consisted of a mixed focus group with **7 participants**, including:

- 1 migrant learner
- 6 trainers/counsellors and adult education professionals



Although the discussion was largely shaped by trainer perspectives, it provided valuable insight into the practical realities of supporting migrant learners in Slovenia.

A central message emerging from the discussion was that language barriers rarely appear in isolation. Trainers repeatedly described language as the main obstacle, but also stressed that it is closely intertwined with literacy, digital access, administrative complexity, employment conditions, and broader psychological strain. Limited Slovene affects not only participation in lessons, but also counselling, understanding of legal and institutional procedures, and access to available support.

Trainers explained that they often have to compensate by speaking more slowly, simplifying explanations, repeating instructions, using gestures, switching to English where possible, or relying on translation apps and other improvised tools. However, these strategies were described as practical responses rather than ideal solutions. They can help communication move forward, but they do not guarantee real understanding. This is especially relevant in cases where migrants may have difficulty reading or writing even in their first language, making written instructions, forms, and administrative tasks particularly difficult.

The migrant participant partly confirmed these observations, but also added an important nuance. She explained that language itself had not been her main obstacle because she had actively invested in learning Slovene soon after arrival. For her, the bigger challenge was cultural and professional adaptation—understanding how the new environment works, how expectations differ, and how previous qualifications and status do not necessarily transfer into the new context. She emphasised that this can be especially difficult for migrants who had established careers in their country of origin and then have to restart in lower-status jobs, which can seriously affect self-confidence.

Cultural adaptation emerged as a particularly important theme in the Slovenian discussion. Trainers described cases where gender norms, family expectations, or differing views on women's participation in public life shaped attendance and engagement in courses. They also pointed to differences in expectations around motherhood, employment, and family life. Mental health burdens, including stress and trauma, were also mentioned in relation to some migrant groups, especially people affected by displacement.

At the same time, trainers stressed that not every challenge should automatically be interpreted as a cultural misunderstanding. In some cases, what appears to be a cultural issue may actually be linked to workplace rules or institutional requirements, such as safety measures in industrial environments. This distinction is important because it



shows that successful integration requires not only sensitivity to cultural differences, but also clear explanation of why certain expectations or rules exist.

Digital and AI tools were discussed with interest, but also caution. Translation apps are already used informally, and some trainers saw potential in AI tools for document support, translation, and interview preparation. At the same time, public institutions face limits related to approval, data security, and official policy. This means that even when trainers see the value of such tools, their practical use may still be constrained.

Overall, the qualitative findings reinforce the idea that migrant integration in Slovenia depends heavily on individualised support and on the ability of trainers and counsellors to improvise across multiple domains at once.

#### 2.4.4. Key Conclusions – Slovenia

The Slovenian context is characterised by the existence of a relatively well-developed formal framework for migrant inclusion. Public language programmes, VET pathways, and systems for validation and recognition of prior learning are all in place. In that sense, the issue is not the complete absence of support structures.

At the same time, the findings clearly show that the main challenge lies in how these systems function in practice and how well they connect with one another. Migrants need language support, recognition support, workplace learning, and counselling at the same time, yet these are still often delivered through separate institutional channels.

Language is the strongest cross-cutting issue in the Slovenian context. It affects participation in education, access to work, understanding of workplace rules, and long-term professional development. Existing public courses are important, but they are still not sufficiently connected to occupational language needs and real workplace situations.

Another important conclusion is that integration in Slovenia still relies heavily on individualised effort and ad hoc adaptation by trainers, counsellors, and employers. This flexibility is valuable, but it also means that outcomes can vary considerably depending on local conditions and available support.

The findings also suggest that migrants in Slovenia may be more confident in using digital tools than some trainers or employers assume. This creates an opportunity for more flexible digital and AI-supported learning solutions, especially if these are directly linked to everyday communication, job-specific language, and practical guidance.



Overall, Slovenia represents a context with many existing institutional elements, but also with a clear need for better coordination, more workplace-oriented language support, and more integrated approaches to learning and recognition. This makes it highly relevant for the development of practical and adaptable solutions within the project.

## 3. Cross-country Comparison

The cross-country analysis of findings from Croatia, Austria, Belgium, and Slovenia reveals a number of strong common patterns, but also several important differences related to national systems, labour market structures, migrant profiles, and institutional readiness. Although the four partner countries operate in different contexts, the research shows that migrant learners, trainers, and employers across all countries face a broadly similar set of challenges when it comes to vocational learning and labour market integration.

At the same time, the way these challenges appear in practice is shaped by national realities. In some countries, the main issue lies in the lack of established systems; in others, systems do exist, but they remain difficult to access, fragmented, or insufficiently adapted to migrants' actual needs.

### 3.1. Common Challenges Across All Countries

The clearest and most consistent finding across all four countries is the central role of **language**. In Croatia, Austria, Belgium, and Slovenia alike, language barriers were identified as the main obstacle to successful learning, communication, and workplace integration. This applies not only to general communication, but even more strongly to understanding instructions, sector-specific terminology, written materials, and workplace expectations. In all countries, respondents stressed that migrants may manage basic everyday communication while still struggling significantly with professional vocabulary and more complex explanations.

A second shared challenge concerns the **recognition of prior learning and skills**. In all countries, formal procedures for recognising foreign qualifications or validating prior



competences exist to some extent, but in practice they are often experienced as fragmented, time-consuming, overly administrative, or insufficiently responsive to migrants' actual situation. As a result, trainers and employers often rely on informal methods such as observation, interviews, practical tasks, and trial periods. While these methods may be useful in practice, they are not standardised and do not always ensure fair or accurate assessment.

Another recurring theme is the mismatch between **standardised learning approaches** and the actual needs of migrant learners. Across all partner countries, migrants consistently reported that they learn most effectively through practical demonstrations, visual support, repetition, and step-by-step guidance, while text-heavy, theory-oriented, or fast-paced learning environments create difficulties. This suggests that existing VET and workplace training structures are often not sufficiently flexible or adapted for linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

Finally, all four countries show a similar pattern in relation to **digital and AI-supported tools**. There is clear interest in digital support, particularly for translation, language learning, and visual instruction, but actual use remains limited and largely unsystematic. In most cases, digital tools are used on an individual or ad hoc basis rather than being formally integrated into training programmes or workplace learning processes.

## 3.2. Differences Between Countries

While these common challenges are clear, the four countries differ significantly in the maturity and organisation of their systems.

Austria and Slovenia present contexts in which institutional structures for VET, language support, and recognition of prior learning are relatively well developed. Austria has a strong dual VET system and a range of integration programmes, while Slovenia has public language programmes, validation systems, and an established adult education structure. However, in both countries the research shows that the issue is not only whether systems exist, but how accessible, coordinated, and responsive they are in practice.

Belgium, particularly in the Flemish context examined here, appears to combine relatively structured integration policy with strong labour market pressure and heavy employer involvement. Compared with the other countries, Belgium stands out for the strong role of companies in assessing and integrating migrant workers, especially in industrial sectors. At the same time, the Belgian findings show a particularly sharp



contrast between different migrant groups, especially between highly educated migrants and those with limited formal education or low literacy levels. This makes the Belgian context especially important for understanding the need for differentiated, non-uniform approaches.

Croatia differs somewhat in that migrant labour is a newer and rapidly growing phenomenon. While formal systems exist, the research suggests that Croatia is still in an earlier phase of adapting its educational and labour market structures to a more diverse migrant population. Integration support, recognition systems, and language provision are present, but often not yet sufficiently coordinated or systematised. In this sense, Croatia represents a context where the need for structured support is increasingly recognised, but where many practices still rely on individual adaptation.

The countries also differ in the role of **local language context**. In Slovenia, the historical prevalence of migrants from linguistically related countries may have delayed the development of more structured support. In Belgium, the problem is complicated by dialect use, particularly in West Flanders, which creates an additional gap between formal language learning and real-life communication at work. In Austria and Croatia, the challenge appears more directly linked to learning the national language and then navigating profession-specific terminology.

### 3.3. Migrant Learners' Perspective Across Countries

Across all four countries, migrant learners showed a high level of motivation and a strong desire to improve their situation through learning and work. This is one of the most positive and consistent findings of the entire research. Migrants generally value opportunities to learn, to gain practical experience, and to improve their employment prospects.

At the same time, their experiences point to a recurring gap between motivation and the support actually available. Learners across countries repeatedly reported that they understand best when they can see tasks being demonstrated, when they are given time to repeat and practise, and when instructions are concrete and broken down into manageable steps. Where these conditions are missing, confidence decreases and misunderstandings multiply.

Another important cross-country observation is that migrants are not a homogeneous group. The Belgian data made this particularly visible, but the same principle applies across the partnership: migrants differ greatly in education level, work history, literacy,



digital confidence, family responsibilities, migration pathway, and cultural background. This means that effective support cannot be built on assumptions about a single “typical migrant learner.”

In several countries, migrants also highlighted the psychological and social dimensions of adaptation. These include reduced confidence, hesitation in asking questions, difficulties in adjusting to new norms, and frustration linked to working below one’s qualification level. This dimension was especially visible in Slovenia and Belgium, but is relevant across the partnership.

### 3.4. Trainers’ Perspective Across Countries

Trainers across the four countries consistently described migrant learners as motivated and willing to learn, but also as requiring more time, more explanation, and more flexible teaching approaches than standard training contexts typically allow. The most effective strategies reported by trainers were highly similar across countries: simplifying language, using visuals, repeating instructions, demonstrating tasks, and checking understanding through practice rather than relying only on written or verbal explanation.

A major common finding is that trainers often already adapt in practice, but they do so **informally**. In other words, many good practices exist, but they depend on individual initiative, experience, and goodwill rather than on structured tools, official guidance, or institutional support. This pattern is particularly clear in Croatia and Austria, but is visible in all countries to some extent.

Trainers also expressed a clear need for more support in three areas:

- working with linguistically and culturally diverse groups,
- assessing prior learning and real competences more fairly,
- using digital and AI-supported tools in a practical and pedagogically meaningful way.

This suggests that the project has strong potential to fill a real gap by developing training that is directly usable for practitioners.



### 3.5. Employers' Perspective Across Countries

Employers in all four countries confirmed that migrants are important to the labour market, particularly in sectors facing shortages. At the same time, they also described a number of practical difficulties related to recruitment, onboarding, communication, and skills assessment.

A particularly strong common message is that employers often lack reliable and efficient ways to assess migrants' actual competences before or at the point of hiring. Formal documentation is not always available or easy to interpret, and language barriers make interviews less reliable as tools for understanding real skill levels. For this reason, employers frequently depend on observation during trial periods or early work performance.

Another repeated theme is that employers generally do not have strongly differentiated systems for migrant workers. In Belgium this was especially explicit: if companies use visuals or digital instructions, they are usually designed for the whole workforce, not specifically for migrants. Similar patterns are visible elsewhere. Support is therefore often practical and local, but not yet strategically designed as part of inclusive workforce development.

Employers also emphasised the importance of workplace language, punctuality, teamwork, and understanding expectations. This shows that labour market integration is not only about access to a job, but about the ability to function sustainably within a given workplace culture.

### 3.6. Digitalisation and AI as a Shared Opportunity

Across all countries, digitalisation emerged less as a fully developed practice and more as a **shared opportunity**. Translation tools are already widely recognised as useful, and in some contexts, basic platforms, videos, or apps are already in use. However, the broader potential of AI-supported tools remains largely untapped.

What is particularly important is that the research does not point to a need for highly complex digital systems for their own sake. Rather, participants across countries seem to value tools that are:

- easy to use,
- directly linked to language and understanding,

- supportive of practical tasks,
- accessible in real work and training situations.

This suggests that the most useful project outputs will likely be those that combine simplicity, practical relevance, and adaptability.

### 3.7. Overall Comparative Conclusion

Taken together, the findings from the four countries show that migrant integration into VET and workplace learning is not limited by a lack of motivation or potential on the part of migrants. Rather, the main obstacles lie in how systems, institutions, and training practices respond to linguistic diversity, prior learning, and different educational pathways.

The comparison also shows that all four countries already have elements of good practice. These include practical learning, work-based training, language support, mentoring, visual instruction, and emerging digital tools. However, these elements are often scattered, informal, or unevenly accessible.

For this reason, the added value of the project lies not in inventing entirely new challenges, but in helping partners and stakeholders respond to already clearly identified needs in a more structured, practical, and transferable way. The cross-country analysis confirms that future solutions should focus especially on:

- more effective and practical language support,
- better recognition and assessment of prior skills,
- adaptive and visual learning approaches,
- stronger support for trainers,
- and realistic, user-friendly digital and AI-supported tools.

These priorities are relevant across all four national contexts, even if the exact implementation will need to reflect local differences.



## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1. Overall Conclusions

The research conducted within the Pathways 2 Progress project provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities related to migrant participation in vocational education and training (VET) and workplace learning across Croatia, Austria, Belgium, and Slovenia.

Across all four countries, the findings consistently show that migrant learners are highly motivated and willing to engage in learning and employment. Their readiness to adapt, learn new skills, and integrate into the labour market represents a strong foundation for successful inclusion. However, this potential is not always fully realised, primarily due to structural and practical barriers that affect learning outcomes and labour market participation.

The most significant and cross-cutting issue identified throughout the research is the role of **language**. Language barriers affect not only communication, but also access to education, understanding of instructions, workplace performance, safety, and long-term professional development. Even when migrants achieve a basic level of communication, challenges remain in relation to technical vocabulary and job-specific language.

A second key conclusion relates to the **recognition of prior learning and skills**. Although all countries have some form of recognition system in place, these systems are often complex, fragmented, and difficult to access. As a result, migrants frequently find themselves working below their qualification level, while employers struggle to assess their actual competences.

The research also highlights a clear mismatch between **existing learning approaches and the needs of migrant learners**. Traditional, theory-based, and language-heavy teaching methods are often not effective in this context. Instead, learners benefit most from practical, visual, and step-by-step approaches that allow them to understand and apply knowledge in real situations.

At the same time, trainers and educators demonstrate a strong willingness to adapt their teaching practices. However, these adaptations are often informal and based on individual initiative rather than supported by structured tools or institutional frameworks. This limits the scalability and consistency of good practices.

Finally, digital and AI-supported tools emerge as a promising but still underutilised area. While there is clear interest and some initial use of basic tools—particularly for

translation—their integration into learning and workplace processes remains limited and unsystematic.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the main challenge is not the absence of solutions, but the lack of **coordination, accessibility, and practical application** of existing approaches. This creates a gap between policy and practice, as well as between available tools and real needs on the ground.

## 4.2. Key Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support more effective integration of migrant learners into VET and workplace learning.

For VET Providers and Educators

VET providers should move towards more **adaptive and learner-centred approaches** that reflect the diversity of migrant learners. This includes a stronger focus on practical learning, visual materials, and step-by-step instruction, as well as flexibility in pacing and delivery.

There is also a clear need to support trainers through:

- structured methodologies for working with migrant learners,
- training in intercultural communication and inclusive pedagogy,
- practical tools for simplifying content and checking understanding.

Rather than relying on individual adaptation, these practices should be integrated into institutional strategies and teaching frameworks.

For Employers and Workplace Trainers

Employers play a key role in integration and should be supported in developing more structured approaches to onboarding and training migrant workers.

This includes:

- clearer and more practical methods for assessing skills and competences,
- greater use of workplace-based learning and mentoring,
- integration of job-specific language support into daily work processes.



Employers would also benefit from collaboration with training providers and specialised organisations that can support skills assessment and learning design.

### **For Policy Makers and Institutions**

At the policy level, there is a need to improve the **accessibility, coordination, and transparency** of systems related to migrant integration.

Particular attention should be given to:

- simplifying and streamlining recognition of prior learning procedures,
- strengthening links between language learning and vocational training,
- ensuring that support measures are accessible to different target groups, including those with lower literacy levels or irregular working conditions.

Policies should move beyond formal provision and focus more on how systems function in practice.

### **For Digital and AI-Supported Solutions**

The research clearly indicates strong potential for digital and AI-supported tools, particularly in addressing language barriers and supporting flexible learning.

Future solutions should focus on:

- simple, user-friendly tools that can be used in real learning and work environments,
- support for translation, explanation of concepts, and visualisation of tasks,
- integration into existing learning and training processes rather than stand-alone tools.

Special attention should be given to ensuring accessibility for users with different levels of digital skills.

### **For Future Project Development**

The findings provide a clear direction for the development of project outputs. Future activities should prioritise:

- practical and transferable solutions,
- tools and methods that can be easily adapted to different contexts,
- approaches that combine language learning, skills development, and workplace application.

Given the diversity of migrant learners, solutions should be flexible and modular, allowing adaptation to different levels of education, experience, and learning capacity.

### 4.3. Final Reflection

The research confirms that migrant integration into VET and the labour market is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It requires not only access to education and employment, but also appropriate support systems, adapted learning approaches, and effective communication between all stakeholders.

At the same time, the findings demonstrate that there is already a strong basis for improvement. Across all countries, there are examples of good practice, motivated learners, and committed professionals. The challenge moving forward is to build on these strengths in a more structured, coordinated, and sustainable way.

In this context, the Pathways 2 Progress project is well positioned to contribute by developing practical tools and approaches that respond directly to identified needs and that can be applied across different national contexts.

