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**Accessing and
recognising the prior
learning of migrants
Bridging the gap
and paving the road
to educational
and social
integration**

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Adaptation of the LikeHome Framework best practices



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Strategic Objective of LikeHome Project/ LikeHome Framework

The overall aim of the LikeHome project is to foster the inclusion of newly arrived migrants and refugees to the host country education and training system, to the local economy and to the society in general. More specifically, LikeHome project's strategic objective is to design and deliver a Framework of best practices, based on practices that have been successfully used in other cases, for the assessment and recognition of migrants' prior learning, qualifications and competencies

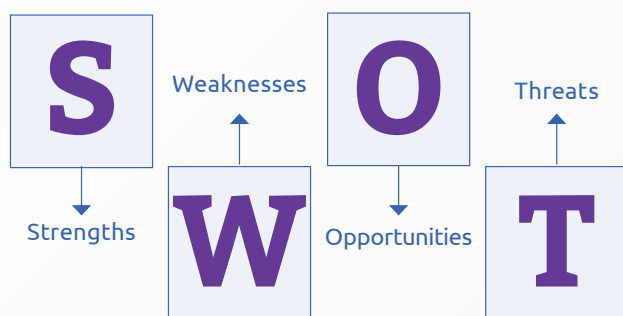
Based on the above strategic objective, a set of seven (7) best practices from frontrunner countries has been identified, adapted and transferred to the target countries. These best practices form the **"Like Home Framework"**:

Best Practices

1. Procedures for recognition of prior knowledge for migrants without proof of formal qualifications
2. Database development
3. Pre-migration screening and examination
4. Information provision to migrants
5. Improved recognition procedures
6. Bridging programmes to support competency-based assessment
7. Host country language training

Method of Best Practices Evaluation

Each of the above selected best practices has been evaluated using the SWOT analysis. SWOT is an acronym for **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** and a SWOT analysis is a structured planning method that evaluates those four elements of an organization, project or business venture.



It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieve that objective. A SWOT analysis may be used in any decision-making situation when a desired end-state (objective) is defined. It is common used to organize information, that may be present while engaging in social change processes, and identify strengths available that can be activated to counteract these barriers.

A SWOT analysis permits to recognize:

- ➔ **Strengths:** specific characteristics of a business or a project (and so on) that give advantages over others
- ➔ **Weaknesses:** characteristics of a business that place the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others
- ➔ **Opportunities:** elements in the environment that the business or project could exploit to its advantage
- ➔ **Threats:** elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project

Best Practices Presentation and Evaluation

BP1: Procedures for the recognition of prior knowledge for migrants without proof of formal qualifications

APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning): The Dutch Knowledge Centre defines APL as *“The common name given to the process of the recognition of the competences an individual has gained through formal, informal or non – formal learning in various settings. This implies that competences acquired by learning on the job, in society or in voluntary work are in principle comparable to the competences acquired in formal education”*.

Accreditation of prior learning (APL) focuses on a certain qualification. The acquired competences, gained through informal and non-formal learning, are compared with the learning outcomes of a formal qualification.

The aim of an APL is to accelerate formal learning programmes or to enhance the employability and mobility of the applicant/employee. Proof of acquired competences could be reached through: reports, diplomas, certificates and reports of assessment interviews.

Methods of assessing the competences may include:

- ✓ the portfolio,
- ✓ assessment,
- ✓ criterion-oriented interviews,
- ✓ workspace observation or other forms of testing.

BP1: Procedures for the recognition of prior knowledge for migrants without proof of formal qualifications

Strengths

- ➔ Support in using previous skills and experience
- ➔ Accurate and fast way to improve personal employability
- ➔ Rapid pathway to integration in labour market
- ➔ Tangible social recognition of refugees' skills' contribution to society
- ➔ Simplified systems to accredit prior knowledge
- ➔ Great range of tested competences and extension possibilities
- ➔ Flexible and adaptable to the target groups' needs and challenges

Weaknesses

- ➔ Cost effective, considering requirements in terms of skills and language abilities
- ➔ Complicated task to conceive a homogenized APL assessment across all professional skills
- ➔ Can take much time
- ➔ Differences between countries of origin and host may underestimate competences
- ➔ Difficult to apply in case of lack of any proof or take for granted refugees' set of skills
- ➔ Requires a lot of human resources

Opportunities

- ➔ Faster inclusion in the labour market
- ➔ Design of specific systems to support refugees' knowledge, skills, and competences
- ➔ Overcomes barriers related to refugees' migration background
- ➔ Social behaviour can be assessed
- ➔ Addresses skill shortage in particular sectors
- ➔ Reduces high unemployment level among refugees, and in general
- ➔ Can be used for migrants with different educational backgrounds
- ➔ Most wanted "best practice": workplace observation

Threats

- ➔ The recognition of APL:
 - needs expertise
 - might underestimate those who didn't have the opportunity to develop prior learning
- ➔ Difficult to generate sustainable agreement among policy makers in the educational sector
- ➔ Regional limitations
- ➔ Possible rejection by Ministry of Economics
- ➔ Bureaucratic burdens, in case of lack of official proof of qualifications
- ➔ Difficult for migrants and refugees to reach and use the existing system

BP2: Database Development

It is based on the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) qualifications recognition research base of Australia. In the past two decades 119 “Country Education Profiles” have been developed – a highly informative series defining the quality and scope of multiple qualification systems, which is both valued and used globally (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, 2008, 1-5).

The database of NOOSR:

- ✓ Includes lists of recognised educational institutions
- ✓ Describes the educational system and qualifications in each country
- ✓ Is regularly updated
- ✓ Covers higher education, technical, vocational and post-secondary qualifications
- ✓ Supports consistent, quality decision-making
- ✓ No licensing fees are required

BP2: Database Development

Strengths

- ➔ Allows for simplification in the recognition of prior degrees (bureaucratic process)
- ➔ Overcomes the need for country to country agreement
- ➔ Online systems provide accessibility and opportunities to check and evaluate opportunities
- ➔ Can provide useful information on educational systems
- ➔ Can be continuously updated remotely

Weaknesses

- ➔ Opportunities are restricted to a narrow range of high level expertise
- ➔ Useful only for people who are planning their migration, especially from developed countries
- ➔ Accessibility issues for asylum seekers and refugees
- ➔ The procedure requires experts, costs for maintenance and regular update
- ➔ Difficulties in expanding the database to also include countries and institutions outside the EU
- ➔ Not the first choice for handicraft businesses

Opportunities

- ➔ Checking in advance the recognition of degrees
- ➔ Possible increased cooperation among countries
- ➔ Raising awareness among potential migrants of specific opportunities in the labour market
- ➔ Ensuring transparency and visibility of the educational system at national level
- ➔ Real need for such an one-stop-shop in EU
- ➔ Can be adapted to a smaller database, maybe by an NGO to keep it updated
- ➔ Migrants with a higher educational background are good "testimonials" for immigration policies

Threats

- ➔ Languages limitations
- ➔ Difficulties in getting agreements regarding norms and laws and in obtaining political consensus on what information should be included
- ➔ Complexity to gather the information to include
- ➔ Inclusion of educational institutions without permission (data protection)
- ➔ Requires strong involvement, high costs of maintenance and continuous update

BP3: Pre-migration Screening and Examination

This best practice is also implemented in Australia. The identified key policy measures include:

- ✓ Mandatory pre-migration screening of credentials
- ✓ Mandatory pre-migration English language assessment (speaking, listening, and writing)
- ✓ Allocation of bonus points for migrants qualified in high-demand fields
- ✓ Immediate eligibility for international students to apply for skilled migration

BP3: Pre-migration Screening and Examination

Strengths

- ➔ Gives migrants all the information needed to access the labour market
- ➔ Promotes access to specific types of jobs and enhances matching potential between labour demand and supply
- ➔ Informs migrants of the requirements to officially validate their knowledge
- ➔ Emphasizes on the importance of acquiring language skills from the host country prior to migration
- ➔ Is a fast procedure, reduces cost on-site screening, and attracts highly qualified people

Weaknesses

- ➔ Is limited to a high level of competences – most migrants don't belong to that target group
- ➔ Difficulties in political arrangements and decisions about the requested competences
- ➔ Need for cooperation among professionals' associations and universities
- ➔ Requires a readjustment of methods and systems takes time
- ➔ Need for experts to perform the assessments

Opportunities

- ➔ Enhances possibility for refugees to find employment, and application of the method is facilitated by the flow of migrants
- ➔ Offers more opportunities, at least for some sectors of the labour market, where lack of professionals is addressed
- ➔ Sets in motion cooperation dynamics between education institutions and migration officials
- ➔ Facilitates the mobility of high-skilled migrants, allowing for controlled and long-term immigration of qualified employees
- ➔ Is attractive to students

Threats

- ➔ Procedures and administrative practices may increase time and effort needed to enter the host country
- ➔ Bureaucratic stress for migrants who are forced to endure another process in addition to migration
- ➔ Resources should be allocated to sending countries too, in order to fulfil demands of pre-screening
- ➔ Cream skimming refugees by selecting only the high skilled ones and rejecting the rest
- ➔ The applicability of this practice depends on collaboration between various organisations, and difficulties on involving the right experts and assessors may come up



BP4: Information Provision to Migrants

This best practice is based on the Danish Agency for International Education (DAUI). The DAUI is responsible for assessing foreign nationals' credentials, with the goal of making the entry into the Danish labour market and/or the undertaking of further education easier. Focus is increased on including informal credentials as well. The DAUI manages the system for assessing qualifications for Danish education and work visas. The DAUI has a central role in assessing the qualifications of highly skilled migrants, which Denmark seeks to attract, and facilitating recruitment of foreign workers to certain fields where there is labour shortage.

BP4: Information Provision to Migrants

Strengths

- ➔ Defines clear parameters for accessing the labour market, decreasing integration problems
- ➔ Facilitates the access of highly skilled employees to the labour market and promotes EU mobility
- ➔ Allows for long-term residence status, as migrants become quickly employable
- ➔ Is a fast procedure that includes e-tools, counselling, group trainings and written advised messages
- ➔ Is easily adaptable to labour market needs, and procedures for skilled individuals and companies are simplified

Weaknesses

- ➔ Focuses on migrants with higher education backgrounds
- ➔ The residence is strictly linked to the contract time, and the job agreement has to be signed before migration
- ➔ Access of refugees to lists of job positions can be limited
- ➔ The host country needs to build a system that can handle the procedure
- ➔ Predictability of labour markets is not that easy

Opportunities

- ➔ Great opportunity for high qualified migrants, who get quickly available to companies
- ➔ A shared EU system can improve access to the labour market and foster mobility
- ➔ Can be expanded to other nationalities and migrants backgrounds (e.g. low skilled)
- ➔ It allows for controlled, long-term immigration of qualified employees
- ➔ Can develop an information centre where the assessment can be conducted

Threats

- ➔ High dependency of employees on the employer
- ➔ Difficulties in defining standards for manual and low-level jobs, as well as recognising informal credentials
- ➔ Does not solve the problems of refugees
- ➔ Potential danger of a stronger split in the society
- ➔ Bureaucracy can be a burden

BP5: Improved Recognition Procedures

This best practice is based on field-specific innovation and entry into practice. Frontrunner countries are working on the introduction of sustained national reform agendas designed to deliver improved foreign credential recognition processes and outcomes across all regulated fields and jurisdictions, supported by determination to achieve greater efficiency, transparency, procedural clarity, legislative reform (where necessary), and buy-in by all relevant stakeholders (including employers), in order to deliver improved outcomes.

An example of such a practice is the European Professional Card – EPC. The European Professional Card (EPC) is an electronic procedure you can use to have your professional qualifications recognised in another EU country. It is easier and quicker to manage than traditional qualification recognition procedures, and more transparent: you can keep track of your application on-line and re-use already uploaded documents to start new applications for different countries.

For the moment, you can use the EPC procedure only if you are:

- ✓ a nurse responsible for general care
- ✓ a pharmacist
- ✓ a physiotherapist
- ✓ a mountain guide
- ✓ a real estate agent

BP5: Improved Recognition Procedures

Other professionals will have to rely on standard procedures to have their professional qualifications recognised. In the future, the EPC procedure may be extended to other professions. You can use the EPC procedure if:

- ✓ you want to practise your profession in another EU country on a temporary and occasional basis (temporary mobility) OR
- ✓ you want to settle in another EU country and practise your profession there permanently (establishment)

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BP6: Bridging Programmes

Best practices in this area include investment in the development of innovative, appropriately resourced, widely located, field-specific bridging programmes for migrant professionals, designed to provide adaptive training as required, and support competency-based skills assessment leading to full professional registration.

The English language training is a prerequisite for entering to professional upgrade programmes, and is typically offered on an accredited basis by the university and college sectors. There is a strong employer support for these processes, primarily through provision of mentoring, guest lectures, and extended internship placements.

For example Australia, has been a world leader in the development of field specific bridging programmes designed to assist migrant workers to receive full recognition and employment. While partial recognition would grant the applicant the possibility to enrol in specific programmes in order to earn missing credits, conditional recognition may allow the applicant to commence the desired activity on the condition that certain goals are successfully met during a specific time period. Canada follows the practice of workplace assessments, where applicants are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a 'real environment' during internships or mentorships.

BP6: Bridging Programmes

Strengths

- ➔ Empowers refugees' skills and possibilities to access language skills in specific domains of knowledge
- ➔ Promotes social integration and reduces exclusion
- ➔ Provides simplified paths towards professional registration
- ➔ Fosters the acquisition of skills needed and access to the labour market
- ➔ Counsels on the right steps to capitalize on previous knowledge

Weaknesses

- ➔ Difficulties in bridging programmes for all job opportunities
- ➔ Possible limitations in accessing bridging programmes by refugees, so not every individual can be reached
- ➔ Aimed only at high qualified persons
- ➔ Lack of synergy between local economy and education providers
- ➔ Properly trained trainers will be required
- ➔ Information should be accurate, updated and verified

Opportunities

- ➔ Increases access opportunities to the labour market
- ➔ Can be linked with other social interventions and employability measures
- ➔ Stimulates active participation, employment, and economic development
- ➔ Creates a network of connections and promotes practices against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market
- ➔ Uses potential of high skilled, newly arrived migrants and refugees
- ➔ Can be adapted to fit different needs

Threats

- ➔ Resources have to be allocated
- ➔ Need for organisation, skills recruitment, and involvement of private or public agencies
- ➔ Unbalanced distribution of the information among the refugee population
- ➔ Favors particular organisations already present in the sector
- ➔ Companies are not interested to be involved
- ➔ Might need to reduce budget for labour market integration



BP7: Host Country Language Training

Advanced host-country language ability is key to success in recognition processes, and also allows migrants to be considered fit for professional practice, development and funding by destination countries. Building general language skills, supported by specialist field-specific training, including preparation for mandatory pre-registration language exams is key for migrants' integration. Knowledge of the host country language is a key factor in determining the speed and success of integration – both economic and social. The language skills are an essential prerequisite in the ability of the foreign-born to form networks and search for a job.

BP7: Host Country Language Training

Strengths

- ➔ Provides access to the job market, skill acquisition and wellbeing within the society
- ➔ Availability of material and many organisations to deliver the training, which can differ in terms of length, level, and intensity
- ➔ Great interest from potential learners, who can benefit on a personal, social, and professional level
- ➔ Applicable to any category of migrants and relatively simple to implement
- ➔ Can help migrants right from the start

Weaknesses

- ➔ Not all language training offer recognized certificates and degrees
- ➔ Efforts needed by both refugees and agencies to organise and attend such courses, and coordination might be an issue
- ➔ Work related language training would be necessary and it might be difficult to find specialised trainers and relevant material
- ➔ Financing is not permanent and funding opportunities should be identified
- ➔ Courses may be too long and not sufficient for more advanced individuals

Opportunities

- ➔ Increases social exchange and job access
- ➔ Can combine online and face-to-face training
- ➔ Can integrate short online e-assessment tools
- ➔ Can increase the involvement of volunteers
- ➔ Easily applicable to refugees

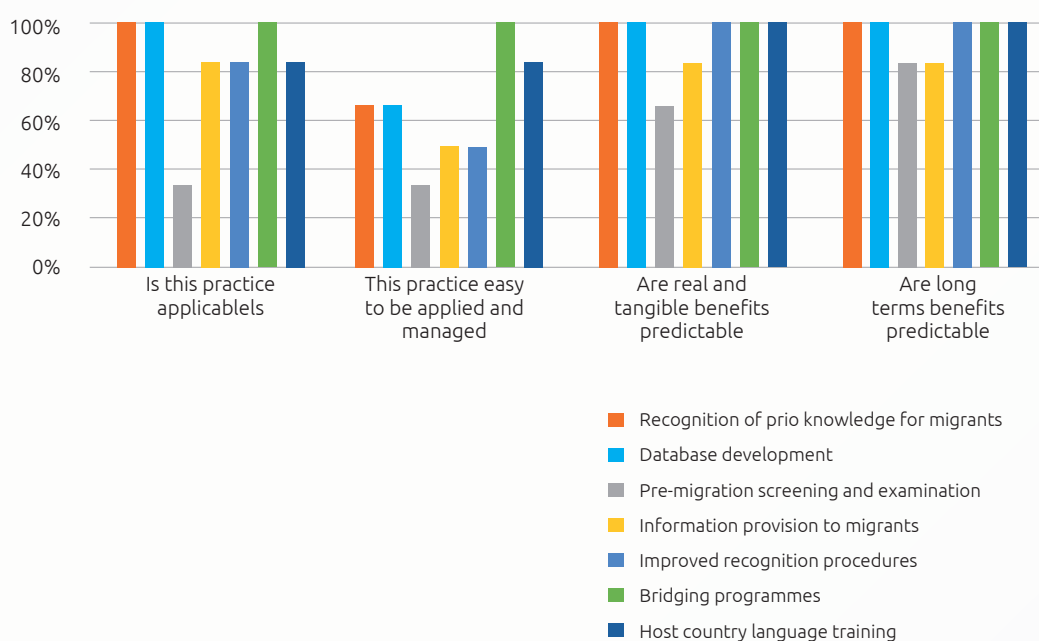
Threats

- ➔ Need for specific and qualified didactic techniques for language training, specifically focused on oral skills
- ➔ Possible lack of commitment for training and/or changing situation of users
- ➔ Possible lack of basic literacy skills
- ➔ Long term budgeting is questionable, causing potential instability

Summary of the results of the analysis on the applicability of the seven identified best practices

The SWOT analysis was used as methodology in order to define the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the adaptation of the seven identified best practices in partner countries. The results are input for the Framework of the LikeHome project. Conclusions of Applicability of seven best practices in terms of percentages are shown in the figure.

Target groups that were involved in this research are mainly non EU refugees with and without status, low skilled newly arrived migrants/refugees, unemployed migrants, refugees applying for asylum, newly arrived migrants from South-Eastern-Europe. Local economy representative, vocational education trainers' representative, government representative.



Conclusions of Applicability of seven best practices in terms of percentages are shown in the figure. After careful study of the answers to the four questions, results of the analysis of applicability of seven best practices can be presented in the next way:

■ **Recognition of prior knowledge**

- 100% applicable, with real and tangible predictable benefits
- 23% possibility to fail in management

■ **Database development**

- 100% applicable, with real and tangible predictable benefits
- 23% possibility to fail in management

■ **Pre – migration screening and examination**

- 33% possibility to be applied
- 70% possibility to be successful, if applied

■ **Information provision to migrants**

- 83% applicable
- 100% possibility to bring long term benefits

■ **Improved recognition procedures**

- 83% applicable
- 100% possibility to bring long term benefits

■ **Bridging programs to support competency – based assessment**

- 100% applicable in all partner countries

■ **Host country language training**

- Possibility to be adopted in all partner countries
- 100% possibility to provide long term benefits

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