

**Written contribution of Ambassador Tomáš Boček, Special Representative of the Secretary  
General on migration and refugees, Council of Europe**

**Sixth Informal Thematic Session, UN Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration**  
Panel 3: *Recognition of skills and qualifications and relevant measures* (Geneva, 12-13 October 2017)

On behalf of the Council of Europe, I would like to contribute to the discussion in this panel by referring to two activities run under the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children and the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies.

1. The first is a pilot project on the **European Qualifications Passport for Refugees** (EQPR). This passport is a document providing an assessment of the holder's higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview. It also presents information on the applicant's work experience and language proficiency. It is not a substitute for identification or educational documentation. It does not guarantee admission to studies or employment. And it is not a formal recognition act.

The methodology for the project is based on the proposal for a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, developed by NOKUT (the Norwegian ENIC/NARIC) and UK NARIC (the United Kingdom ENIC/NARIC).

This document is intended to eliminate unnecessary and repeated further assessments of the same qualifications in other European countries if and when the EQPR holder moves. The EQPR does not constitute a formal recognition act, and it will not give access to study programmes or professions with specific requirements, such as most regulated professions (typically medical doctor, dentist, lawyer, engineer), but it does set out the attainment of the individual. The EQPR includes three sections – the assessment part, the explanatory part and advice on the way ahead. The assessment part of the document contains information describing the highest achieved qualification(s), subject field, other relevant qualifications, as well as work experience and language proficiency. The explanatory and advisory sections contain information about the status of the document and a short description of the project.

The document provides reliable information for integration and progression towards employment and admission to further studies. It is a specially developed assessment scheme for refugees, even for those who cannot fully document their qualifications. This concept is reflected in international law, including the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, which foresees “procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education”.

The first phase of the pilot project demonstrated that this is a feasible project and reconfirmed the need for a method for assessing refugees' qualification even where these cannot be fully documented as well

as the need for recording the assessment in a format that ensures its validity throughout Europe. In this first phase, implemented in Greece, 73 European Qualifications Passports for Refugees were issued, out of 92 interviews held. Online interviews have been successfully tested (out of 73 European Qualifications Passport for Refugees issued, 8 were issued following the online interviews).

The original partners for this pilot project are the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and European Network of National Information Centres (ENICs) from Greece, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). By its nature this project is transversal and inclusive. Additional partners for the future are being sought.

The second phase will be implemented in Armenia, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Discussions with three more states are ongoing. Once the details on this second phase are defined, we would be glad to share this information. We believe that this good practice is potentially suitable to be rolled out at a global level.

UPDATE: At its extraordinary meeting on 14 November 2017, the Convention Committee of the joint CoE-UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention adopted a *Recommendation on the Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications under the Lisbon Recognition Convention and draft Explanatory Memorandum*. The recommendation makes reference to EQPR as an example of a background document which can be used for the assessment of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons or persons in a refugee-like situation.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>

2. The second is the project **Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants** (LIAM) which provides assistance to member states in developing coherent and effective policies on linguistic support to adult migrants in keeping with shared Council of Europe values and principles. The programme is supported by a number of partner organisations, including the OHCHR.

The Council of Europe has developed a **linguistic toolkit** presented on the LIAM website (available in seven languages) to support member states in their efforts to respond to the challenges posed by unprecedented migration flows. The toolkit is designed to assist organisations, and especially volunteers, providing language support for adult refugees. It comprises 57 tools and other resources on facilitating migrants' language learning. Tools can be [downloaded](#) and adapted to meet the needs of different contexts.

The toolkit was piloted in Italy between 13 February and 5 April 2017. 18 local co-ordinators, 150 volunteers and 2,076 refugees were involved across 36 centres throughout Italy.

In addition, the Council of Europe has developed standard-setting instruments and recommendations which provide for the principles governing actions in the migration field. These are complemented by language policy guidelines and reference tools developed to support their effective implementation in an inclusive approach based on shared values and principles. Among these are the [Guiding principles](#) for agencies responsible for language policies and the [Language policies](#) for adult migrants. More information is available on a dedicated [LIAM website](#).

In the context of the LIAM project a number of guidelines and instruments have been developed to provide support:

- a. to policy makers and professionals as the integration of newly-arrived migrants is a multifaceted process, and therefore complex to evaluate.

In particular, [Guide to policy development and implementation](#) on linguistic integration as part of a coherent set of policy proposals for improving the situation of migrants while building harmonious community relations in increasingly diverse European societies. It offers an overview of the resources developed by the Council of Europe in the LIAM field. Using practical examples, it discusses the different forms of linguistic integration while taking account of the diversity of migrant populations, proposes guidelines for the design of learning programmes while suggesting adaptations to existing instruments, and also considers aspects relating to skills assessment.

- b. to language course providers for efficient language education and quality

The [Self-Assessment Handbook](#) is designed to help providers of language and other courses for adult migrants to review the quality of all aspects of their work. National authorities responsible for overseeing the provision of courses for adult migrants may find it a useful reference document when setting up courses, reviewing quality guidelines, carrying out quality control or developing guidelines on quality assurance for providers.

- c. to learners and teachers

The Council of Europe conceived and developed the [European Language Portfolio \(ELP\)](#) in parallel with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a personal document devised by the Council of Europe to promote lifelong language learning. It supports the development of learner autonomy, intercultural awareness and plurilingualism (the ability to communicate in two or more languages at any level of proficiency).

Three features of the ELP give it particular relevance for adult migrants. First, the emphasis on learning how to learn helps to develop an awareness of language and language learning that they can continue to exploit, after their course has ended since learning the language of the host community will be a lifelong process. Secondly, the goal-setting and self-assessment cycle provides them with a means of subjecting their communicative situation to continuous analysis and helps to maintain focus on their immediate learning needs and reinforce their motivation. Thirdly, the reporting function of the ELP is likely to be especially important to adult migrants. Their proficiency can easily be underestimated by officials and

prospective employers, and a well-organised ELP can bear effective testimony to language learning effort and achievement.

In many contexts there is no official curriculum to guide the design of language courses for adult migrants and no suitable textbook. In such circumstances the ELP can provide a basis for course design as well as implementation, checklist descriptors being used to define learning objectives and select learning activities and materials.

Further instruments related to the ELP are available [here](#).