

## VET VOICES Guidelines: Spain (2)

# Pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Spain

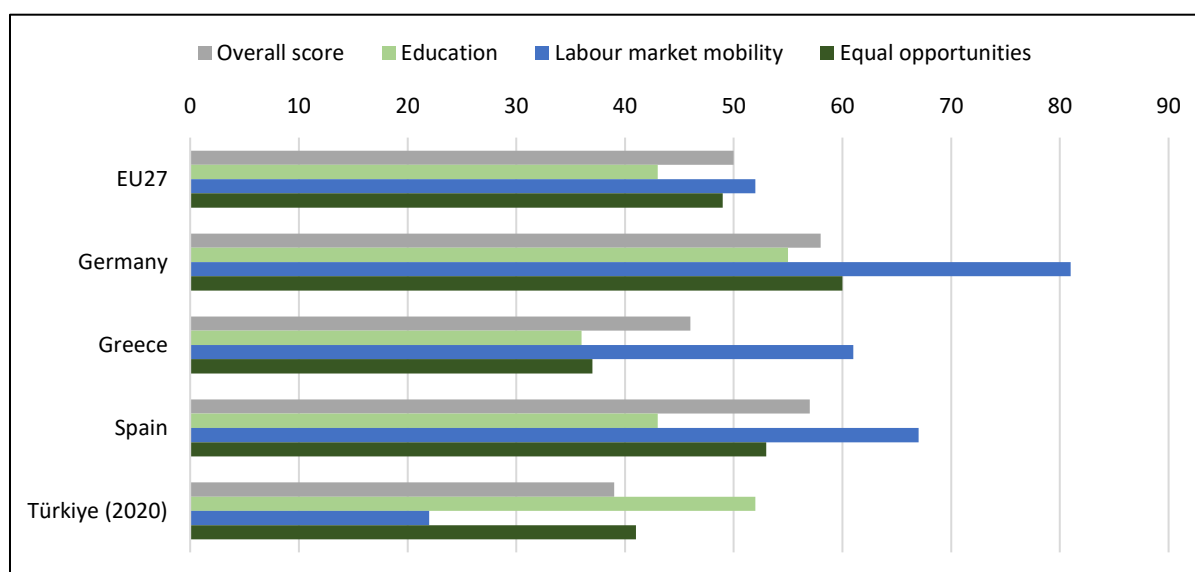
It is estimated that the number of persons living outside of their country of origin reached 281 million in 2020. The largest number of international migrants resided in Europe, with a total of 87 million. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to robust and inclusive economies and societies in countries of destination. However, integration challenges persist for many migrants, especially those who have experienced forced migration. *The VET VOICES project seeks to expedite integration by allowing migrants to quickly and easily assess their interests, explore jobs, create a watchlist, network with professionals, and watch short videos of other migrants who have made it in relevant fields.*

This Guideline outlines **pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Spain**, with examples of good practices implemented by a range of institutions.

## Rights to education and educational integration policies

Children in Spain are entitled, as well as obliged, to participate in school education from ages 6 to 16. This applies to both foreign residents and citizens of Spain, meaning that refugee children are usually – with some exceptions reported due to overcrowding and lack of preparation – provided with standard education. While the central government establishes the overall framework for compulsory education through core curricula and academic standards, education in Spain is still primarily managed at the regional level, with its Autonomous Communities free to organize the specific arrangements of schooling. Thus, the level of support for asylum-seeking and other migrant children differs: e.g., some regions offer ancillary tutors or preparatory courses to ease integration into the educational mainstream, while others lack any specific assistance (AIDA 2023). In the Migrant Integration Policy Index, Spain’s education score corresponds to the EU27 average, indicating generally favourable policies. (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migrant Integration Policy Index 2019 – maximum score = 100 (Solano & Huddleston, 2020)



## Access to the vocational education and training system

Since the beginning of the democratic period in Spain, there have been numerous laws and regulations passed to ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination, many of them making special mention of equal opportunities in the field of education. In principle, regardless of age, refugees whose claims to international protection have access to both compulsory (“regulated”) and public non-compulsory (“non-regulated”) education in Spain, including vocational education and training. Vocational training offerings in the compulsory or “regulated” stream are managed by the federal Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities; they include a set of basic and intermediate training cycles that aim to prepare students for the qualified performance of certain professions, access to employment, and general participation in social and cultural life, and are regulated by Royal Decree 1147/2011 of July 29, which establishes the general organization of professional training in the educational system, and Organic Law 3/2020 of December 29, which modifies the LOE 2006 to clarify the relationships between different subsystems and introduce greater flexibility in access. In brief:

- Students must have completed compulsory secondary education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* or ESO).
- Requirements are exclusively academic in nature, so any foreign person who meets them, regardless of their administrative situation in Spain, has the right to obtain the corresponding academic title.
- Foreign persons furthermore have full access to scholarships under the same conditions as Spanish students, regardless of whether they are in a regular or irregular situation.
- Students who pass a basic degree training cycle will receive the title of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education. Those who obtain this title after passing a basic level training cycle will also receive the title of Basic Technician in the corresponding speciality.

VET offerings in the non-compulsory or “non-regulated” stream are managed by the State Public Employment Service and the Autonomous Communities. In brief:

- Students must have completed *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (ESO), be in possession of the title of Basic Technician in a given speciality or equivalent, and/or have passed the second year of the Unified and Multipurpose Baccaureate (BUP) or equivalent.
- Requirements are exclusively academic in nature, so any foreign person who meets them, regardless of their administrative situation in Spain, has the right to obtain the corresponding academic title.
- In principle, foreign persons should also have full access to scholarships and grants – however, express regulations on this topic are lacking.
- Students who pass the intermediate level vocational training cycles will receive the title of Technician of the corresponding professional profile.

Despite an overall positive legal environment, various practical barriers often hinder refugees and other migrants in accessing VET in Spain. For instance, sometimes foreign students do not have a qualification approved in Spain at the time of enrolment, so they proceed to carry out a temporary enrolment of six months. However, if the homologation of their degree takes longer than that, their enrolment is cancelled, they lose the months they have completed, and they cannot obtain a degree.

On other occasions, foreigners who do not have a residence permit find it difficult to enrol or apply for scholarships or grants, since electronic application platforms or paper forms require a national ID number. Without economic support, accessing training cycles rather than immediately working becomes impracticable. In the case of diplomas, sometimes foreigners over 18 years of age who have degrees but do not have residence or stay authorization are not given the title, but only a certificate of grades. This is because non-residents have difficulty fulfilling other prerequisites for the issuance of certificates, such as proof of a bank account.

## Key institutions and good practices

In addition to academic vocational education, various VET for employment programs are offered by a range of institutions under the regulation of Law 30/2015. of September 9. These aim improve the ability of workers who already have basic qualifications to adapt to new conditions in the labour market. Examples are:

- Training programs offered by companies for their own workers, including sectoral training programs and transversal training programs, as well as professional qualification and recognition programs.
- Training programs offered competent administrations at the Autonomous Community level for unemployed workers, which includes training programs aimed at meeting the needs detected by the public employment services, with and without recruitment commitments.
- Training programs not financed with public funds, which are developed by private entities or CSOs, aimed at granting certificates of professionalism, sometimes in partnership with competent public institutions.

Job-relevant courses are also offered at Adult Education Centres (CEPA), including Spanish for foreigners, occupational workshops, preparation courses for university entrance exams, etc. Finally, language courses are offered by a range of institutions, such as the Cervantes Institute, universities, and the Federation of Schools of Spanish as a Foreign Language (FEDELE). Barriers to accessing VET for employment and adult education include the requirement for certain types of ID, proof of relevant educational qualifications and/or past or current employment, etc.

A range of programmes and initiatives have been developed to improve vocational education and training access and outcomes for refugees and other migrants in Spain. An example is the **Training and Insertion Program (PFI) initiative of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia**. These are voluntary programs aimed at young people who have not obtained the ESO title, and who, at the time of starting the PFI, are not studying or participating in other training activities. They are designed to assist young people in re-joining the formal education system, and consist of three types of modules:

- Professional Initiation Plans (PIP), which are carried out in institutes managed by the Department of Education, as well as in authorised private education and training centres.
- Work Transition Plans (PTT), which are organized in collaboration between the Department of Education and local administrations.
- Professional Training and Learning Programs (FIAP), which are carried out in institutes owned by the Department of Education.

In principle, PFI programmes could greatly assist refugees and other migrants who have failed to enter formal education, or dropped out, due to the above-mentioned barriers. However, several of the same

barriers apply to PFI: would-be applicants must be in possession of a passport or other valid identity document, and must have at least basic command of the Spanish language.

On the federal level, funding is provided by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration to develop programmes for integration in general, e.g., through the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI)**. Entities such as trade unions (such as CC.OO. and UGT) and NGOs (such as ACCEM, Fundación Ángel Tomás-FISAT, Red Acoge) have taken advantage of such funding to offer training programmes that are relevant (though not specific) to vocational education. An example is the **Red Acoge federation of NGOs** dedicated to migrant advocacy, which have developed programmes aimed at language learning and cultural integration

The various **Autonomous Communities** also offer funding and support instruments for the general insertion of immigrants. Examples include the Riojan Employment Service, the Social Services Management programme of the Junta de Castilla y León, and the Department of Social Policy of the Xunta de Galicia. These programmes and instruments can be used to fund initiatives administered by NGOs and municipalities. It should be borne in mind that such initiatives are more common in municipalities that receive the greatest number of migrants: Madrid, Barcelona, Rojales, Castelló d'Empúries, Cartagena, etc.

The forthcoming *VET VOICES Guidelines: Cross-Country Research Report* will focus on young refugees' and other migrants' experiences navigating vocational education and training systems in the target countries, and will offer concrete recommendations for addressing common barriers and concerns.

## References

AIDA (Asylum Information Database) (2023). Spain – Access to education.

<https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/spain/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-education/>

Constitución Española. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 311, de 29 de diciembre de 1978, Artículo 27.

<https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/1978/BOE-A-1978-31229-consolidado.pdf>

La Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la LOE de 2006 (LOMLOE). Boletín Oficial del Estado, 340, de 30 de diciembre de 2020. Disposición 19ª. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2020/BOE-A-2020-17264-consolidado.pdf>

Solano, G. & Huddleston, T (2020). Migrant Integration Policy Index. ISBN: 978-84-92511-83-9.



**SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH**

*The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*