Integrating EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals into Entrepreneurial Learning

Intellectual Output (IO) 3

1. Introduction - General Background

Refugee flows across Europe, especially after 2015, have increased significantly. Many European Member States, in the context of integration policy for refugees in local societies, organise training programs in the corresponding national language. The immediate next step is to help refugees permanently established in one Member State to join the labor market. Some northern European countries, such as Denmark, are pursuing a policy of helping refugees learn the language through employment, notably in the context of specific funded programs, so that they can join the labour market at an early stage of their establishment to the country.

Other Member States, particularly in the South such as Greece and Italy, where refugee arrivals are dramatically larger, are forced to concentrate their efforts mainly on saving people arriving on dramatic conditions and taking care for their basic, needs such as medical care and accommodation. A common fact with regard to these countries is that most of the refugees consider them as entry points having as target for their establishment some country of Northern Europe.

Whatever the national policy, there is a stage, two or three years after their arrival, when refugees cease to attract adequate support. At this stage many still do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to be able to easily enter the labor market. Due to this fact (as well as due to other issues), the unemployment rate for refugees is remarkably higher compared to other segments of the population.

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The integration of migrants/refugees to local communities is among the central policies of EU. As it stated in the "EUROPEAN AGENDA ON MIGRATION", (EU Brussels, 13.5.2015 COM(2015) 240 final):*"The EU must continue to offer protection to those in need. It must also recognise that the skills needed for a vibrant economy cannot always immediately be found inside the EU labour market or will take time to develop. Migrants who have been legally admitted by Member States should not be faced with reluctance and obstruction–they should be given every assistance to integrate in their new communities. This should be seen as central to the values Europeans should be proud of and should project to partners worldwide."*

2. Migrant Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Training

Integration of migrants and refugees into the labour market plays a central role with regards to the general policy of integration to local communities and is a key issue both internationally (ILO, 2017; UNCTAD, 2018; Rath, 2018) and in EU member states (CEDEFOP, 2014).

Social and labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees is first of all a humanitarian social policy compatible with EU values. It is also recognized that Europe will benefit from this policy and needs to make the best in integrating the human capital of migrants to the economy.

A first step towards the integration is the identification of migrants/refugees qualifications and skills. As it stated in the European Parliament report (June 2016): *"The need for an early, fair, transparent and free-of-charge assessment of refugees' and asylum seekers' formal and non-formal skills, as well as recognition and validation of their qualifications, with a view to facilitating their access to active labour market policies, in particular through training and employment guidance, including measures guaranteeing their access to the labour market and to non-discriminatory working conditions, and tailored measures allowing them to make full use of their potential, and to match labour supply and demand*

in the host countries". Towards the goal of early identification of skills and qualifications, a tool/web platform was implemented: "The EU Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals" (see next paragraph).

Among the measures for social inclusion and integration to the host country's economic and social life, supporting entrepreneurship through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills is considered one of the gateways to the labour market and self-employment for migrants/refugees.

The EU in the Action Plan for third country nationals (ACTION-PLAN, 2016) has included entrepreneurship among its policy priorities and in this respect the Commission promotes and supports specific measures for migrant entrepreneurship (EU-Migrant entrepreneurship, 2019) and funds relevant pilot projects (EU-Migrant entrepreneurs, 2019). Measures to support migrant entrepreneurship and examples of good practice are elaborated in a number of research papers and ongoing projects (EU-Guidebook, 2016; MEGA, 2019).

Recognising the fact that some of the refugees already have business experience in their country of origin, the goal of the 9Conversations project is to help them set up their own business in the host country by providing them with a training program that takes into account both the specific national requirements and procedures for setting up a business (mainly personal or small) and the general principles of operation and funding. This program can, of course, also be addressed to refugees without previous experience.

To achieve the above goal, an on-demand e-learning training package is developed, which can be completed by refugees either personally or preferably in small teams face-to-face. The approach to be followed will be to encourage participants to learn by communicating with local business consulting services and where feasible, with financial and legal experts. This will contribute to the development of professional networks deprived of refugees as well as to the provision of essential knowledge for starting a small business.

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The above e-learning package, the relevant accompanying manual-user guide as well as the pilot application and testing are of the main deliverables of the project. An emphasis is given so that the analysis of the requirements of the training package and its pilot implementation are implemented in collaboration with refugee supporting organisations and structures in the Member States represented in the project. Upon completion of the project, the training material and the accompanying user guide will be available to the relevant refugee support agencies of the partner countries of the project and more widely to EU member states.

3. The EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals

The EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals was developed by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion as part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe (EU-Skills, 2016), which was adopted by the Commission on June 2016. The tool is one out of the ten actions launched by the new Skills Agenda aiming to support the right training and efficient ways of acquiring skills for all people living in the EU.

The tool complements other tools for skills transparency such as Europass and the European Qualifications Framework, which have both been revised under the New Skills Agenda to allow employers, education and training providers and relevant authorities to compare national qualifications across the EU and internationally.

The aim of the EU Skills Profile Tool is to facilitate the identification of skills of third country nationals (coming from non-EU countries: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) and is available, free online, through the link below:

https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills

A first version of the tool was presented in Brussels at a stakeholders' conference in June 2017 and after upgrades is now in a complete multilingual status, available

in all EU languages (except Irish) as well as in Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Sorani, Somali, Tigrinya and Turkish.

The tool can be used either:

- By individuals -third country nationals willing to record and present their formal and informal qualifications, skills and experiences and prepare a kind of professional profile or CV. The specifications of this profile/CV are well understood across the whole European Union which means that it can be very helpful for the contact of non-EU nationals with local authorities, education and training providers and for job seeking.
- By organisations offering assistance to third country nationals. These organasations include, at a first level, national authorities, reception centres for refugees and NGOs, and at a second level services for education and training guidance and employment assistance. The tool can be used in an interview situation in order for an advisor to identify the personal status, the qualifications, skills, working experience and future needs of an individual migrant/refugee. The information collected can be used to for recommendations on next steps, such as advice for further training, recognition of qualifications in the absence of diplomas or certificates and suggestions for job-matching and ways to the labour market.

It has to be noted that the tool, itself, is not intended as a recognition or authentication tool.

The tool is friendly enough allowing an advisor and an individual refugee to see two languages at the same time on the screen, a fact that reduces possible language barriers in between them when completing the profile of the later. On-line help on demand is also integrated in the tool explaining how to answer questions and complete the relevant fields. A separate user's guide is also available in several languages from the tools website.

It is possible to complete one's profile at a certain stage save it and continue latter on by inserting information to the rest of the sections. To do so one can export the profile as an XML file and imported whenever needed.

Completed profiles are also exportable as PDF files.

4. The role of the EU Profile tool in Entrepreneurial Learning and Training

In many occasions refugees and migrants, do not possess the necessary documentary evidence of their previous formal, non-formal and informal learning and qualifications in general. Due to difficult conditions in their country of origin they may have lost their documents, they may had their education interrupted or may even had no opportunity to participate in formal education. Facilitating validation of their skills, recognising their qualifications or alternatively recommending ways for further training and up-skilling is crucial to ensure that refugees' skills are used to their full potential towards their integration to the labour market. For the above reasons the EU Skills profile Tool for Third Country Nationals (EU profile tool for short) provides the appropriate framework both for the identification of their skills and qualifications and for suggesting further steps to follow.

In the context of the 9conversations project, since the training module, as an end product, will be a set of self-study learning materials, using the EU Skills Profile for Third Country Nationals as a tool to gauge current skills as well as skills gained as a result of the course is appropriate to provide a way of documenting progress. Figure 1 depicts the role of the EU profile tool with regards to the training module.
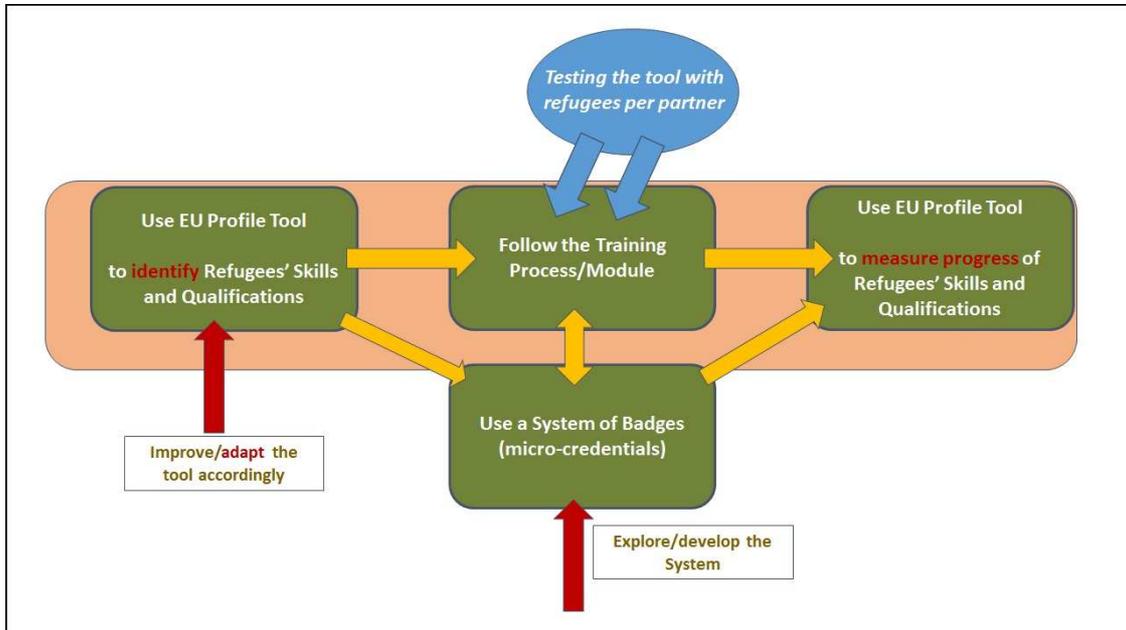
Figure 1: The Role of EU Skills Profile tool with regards to the training process

The EU profile tool is used before the training process for entrepreneurial skills identification of the trainees and for initial guidance. At the end of the course trainees can complete the relevant sections of the tool for measuring their progress. Additionally mentors/tutors can evaluate the effectiveness of the training module and suggest possible personailsed adaptations in its future use. Special guidelines and amendments are suggested in making the tool more suitable for entrepreneurial skills identification and guidance. During the pilot testing of the training module, partners together with refuge support organisations involved will test the guidelines and amendments for using the tool in order to improve its use.

The special guidelines and amendments suggested are mainly based on the outputs of Intellectual Output (IO) 1 (Business Start-up Frequently Asked Questions) and IO2 (Adaptation of the EnterComp Framework). They are also related to the final decisions that will be made in the context of IO4, regarding course material development and instructional design. Finally they should comply with the fact that the course/training module should be available through a mobile app (under

development through IO7. Figure 2 shows the relations between IO3 and the rest of 9-conversation IOs.
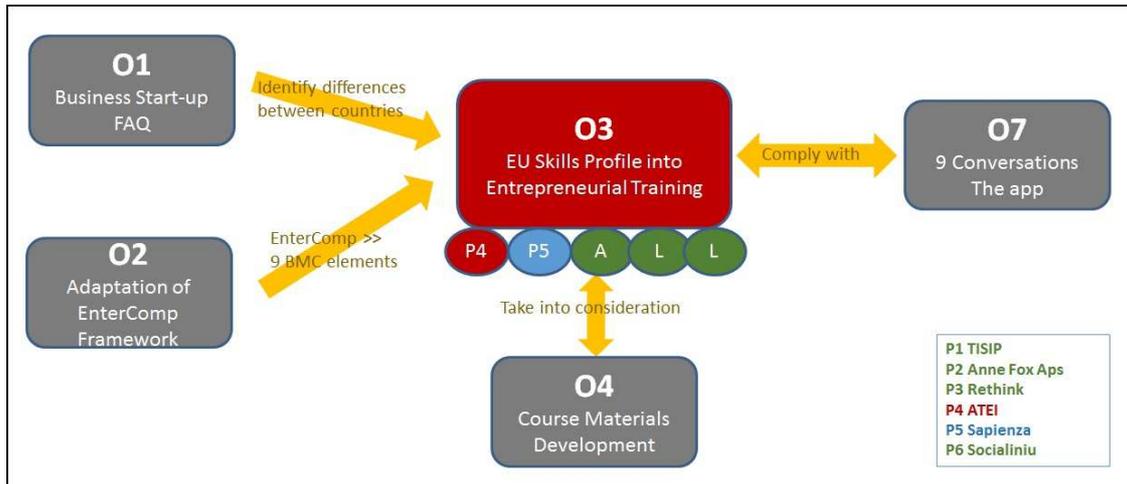
Figure 2: The relation of IO3 EU Skills Profile to other project Intellectual Outputs

## 4.1. Existing Sections of the EU Skills Profile tool to identify Entrepreneurial Skills

Apart from recording personal data and general skills (e.g. educational qualifications and language skills) the EU Skills Profile Tool is flexible enough in order to help identify basic entrepreneurial skills and address mismatches between skills and jobs of non-EU nationals. A strong characteristic of the tool is its adaptability to different levels of qualifications, providing different paths for questions and answers through its relevant sections. For example it is possible to address both individuals with a higher level of education, who will need guidance to get their qualifications recognized, as well those with a low level of education and who need further training to obtain the skills needed in the labour market.

The existing sections of the EU Skills Profile Tool which are pertinent both for identifying entrepreneurial skills and for recommending next steps for training and for business development are:

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- Expectations:
- Skills Identification
- Overall Appraisal and Recommended Next Steps

Under the expectations section of the tool the person who completes its profile (under guidance or not) is able to add a number of expectations. In figure 3 one can see the possibility of adding a new expectation, namely "my aim is to start a personal business".
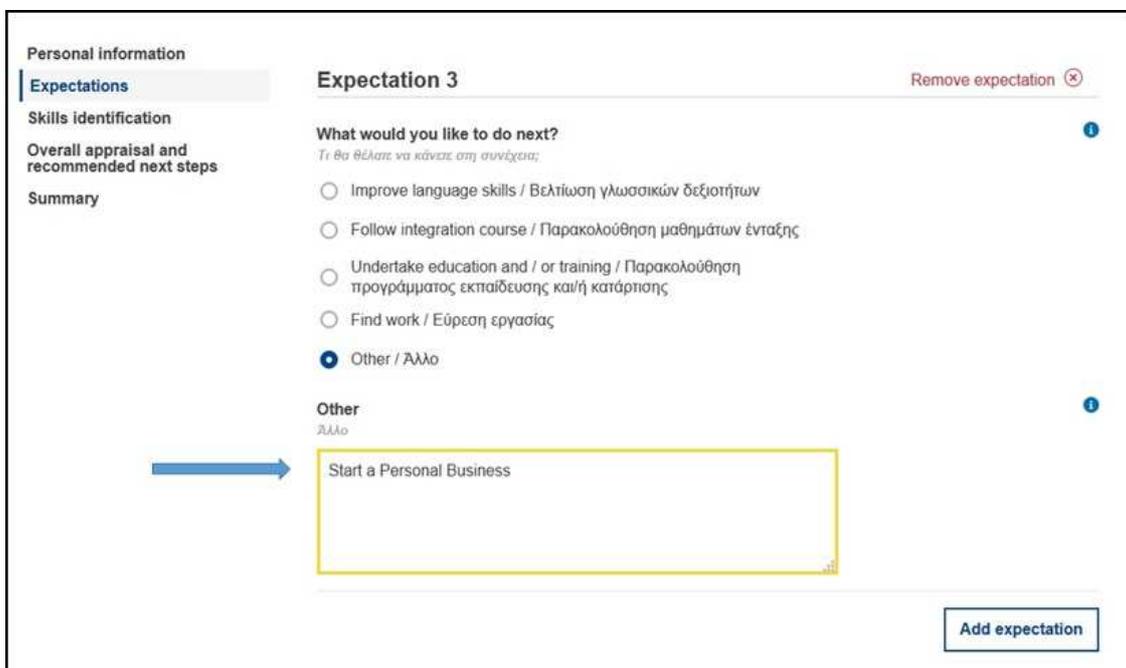
Figure 3: Adding "Start a Personal Business" as an expectation

Regarding skills identification, through the relevant tool section and its sub-sections one can record both general skills (e.g. knowledge of languages) as well as skills having to do specifically with businesses and entrepreneurship by completing the sub-sections "Professional skills" or "Other basic and transversal skills".

Following the sub-sections of "Other basic and transversal skills" one can record his/her level of expertise by selecting one or more of the following statements:

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- Work as a leader/manager/supervisor
- Manage project
- Work in stressful conditions/under time pressure
- Develop new ideas and turn them into action
- Inspire and enthuse others
- Taking responsibility of my own learning/development

For example. Figure 4 depicts such an example where a refugee has selected the provided statement "Develop new ideas and turn them into action" and has characterised himself as belonging at the intermediate level.

Figure 4: Skills identification relevant to Entrepreneurship

It has to be noted that in the latest versions of the EU profile tool an interesting characteristic was included in the section "Other basic and transversal skills": the use of competence cards developed by Bertelsmann Stiftung and others (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). Competence cards were developed for immigration counselling in order to speed up the recognition and utilisation of such

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qualifications and experience. Their inclusion seems to make the tool more practical and user friendly.

Based on the answers completed through the identification sections the tool is able to provide recommendations through the "Overall appraisal and recommended next steps" section. These recommendations may be exported automatically by the tool or it is under the responsibility of the authority or person providing guidance to the third country national to add them as free text advices.

Figure 5 shows four recommendations regarding training programmes for improving work based learning socio-cultural, language and entrepreneurial skills. The recommendations are based on the answers of a person who has competed his profile mentioning that he intends to start a personal business and has recorded inadequate levels regarding knowledge of the host country language, general and entrepreneurial skills.
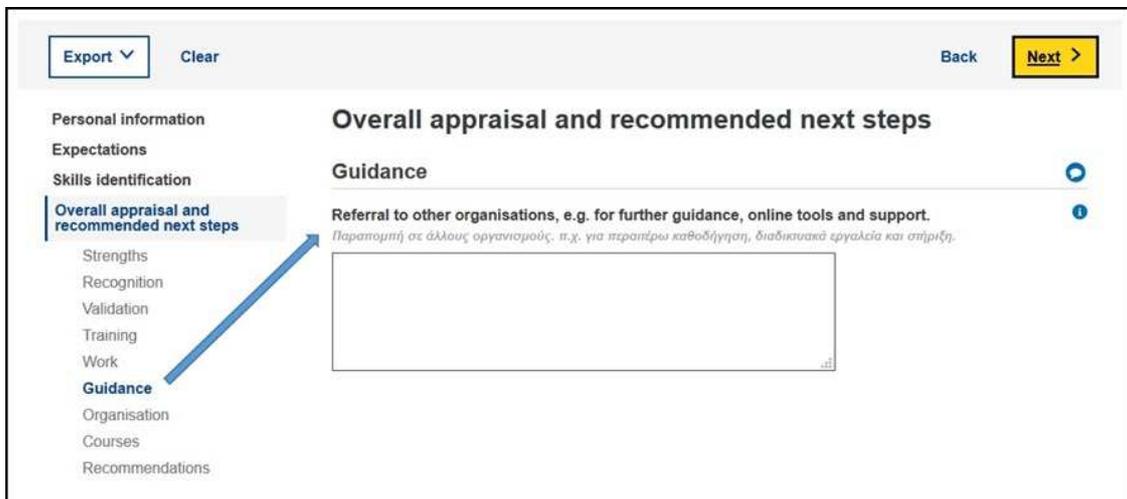

Figure 5: Recommending next steps regarding training

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Figures 6 and 7 represent the possibility for the person advising a third country national to complete in the free text boxes his/her advices under the "Work" and "Guidance" sub-sections respectively.

**Figure 6:** Recommending next steps regarding job seeking

Figure 7: Recommending next steps regarding further guidance

The latest upgrade (March 2018) of the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals is providing a new module to users, offering the opportunity to select online courses, in order to improve their skills. Most of the courses are offered as

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), are free of charge and are available in several different European and non-EU languages. Based on their answers in the tool's sections, users will receive recommendations of relevant online courses. For example, if a third country national states an interest on improving language skills or learning a new language (e.g. English), online courses for English will appear under "Recommendations". The user can also browse on his own through the "Courses" section of the tool, identify relevant courses and follow them.
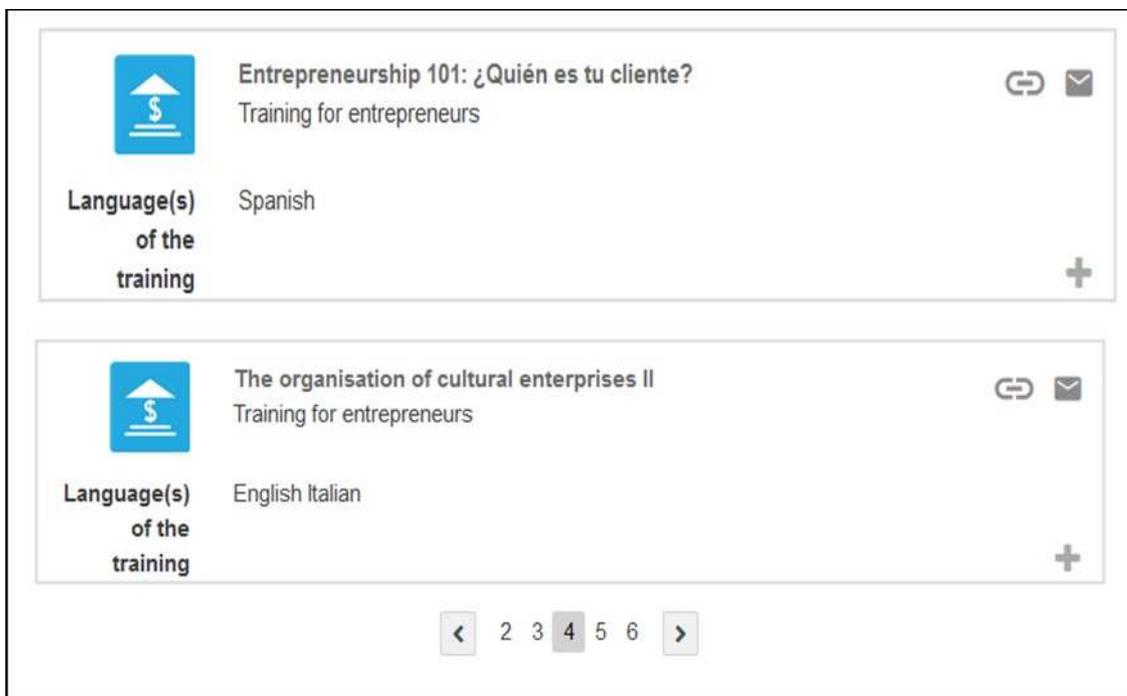
Figure 8: Courses on Entrepreneurial Training

Figures 8, 9 and 10 show examples of recommended courses on entrepreneurship, labour market integration and digital skills. They are offered either in English/Spanish or in Arabic.

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Figure 9: Courses related to Labour Integration

Figure 10: Courses on Digital Skills

4.2. Amendments to the EU Skills Profile tool to identify Entrepreneurial Skills

Two categories of amendments are suggested:

The first category should be used when completing one's profile before following the entrepreneurial course and are related to selected questions from the ones identified as frequently asked questions (FAQs) in the context of IO1. These are the following:

- What will be the costs to set up the business and run it for the first few months? (Q2)
- Where do you plan to get your financial resources to start the business? (Q12)
- What are general business taxes to pay? (Q4)
- How do you set up or register a business? (Q5)
- How do I increase the reputation of my refugee-owned business? (Q11)

The above are turned into identification questions/statements much in the same way as those present in the sub-section "Other basic and transversal skills" They ask for relevant previous knowledge of the refugee mainly in the country of origin. They have the form of the simple type as is suggested in the competence cards.

Based on the identification section, recommending next steps should also be provided in a systematic way as a follow up. Guidelines for recommendations should take into consideration the above answers and the following dimensions:

- *Mentoring - Legal and regulatory advice: Part of setting up and running a business requires dealing with legal questions such as registering the enterprise, obtaining permits, filling out tax reports and others. For a migrant who has no previous experience in the area and is also not used to the administrative system and institutions in the host country, this might be a significant obstacle and a migrant entrepreneur*

may face greater difficulties than a native counterpart in navigating regulations and administrative red tape.

- ***Financial issues****: Access to credit is crucial for entrepreneurs as a lack of adequate financing is one of the main obstacles to develop a business.*
- ***Networking****: Many migrants lack a business network in the new host country and this dimension includes support in accessing relevant business networks and in establishing contacts with business associations, as well as with suppliers and potential customers.*
- ***Facilities provision****: Migrant entrepreneurs might have additional difficulties in finding facilities for their businesses in comparison to native entrepreneurs.*
- ***Language and cultural issues:*** *Specially those important for the function of a business in a specific local community environment.*

The second category of amendments should be used when completing one's profile after having completed the entrepreneurial course and are related to the combination of the initial 4 levels of the EntreComp framework and the 9 sections of the Osterwalder Canvas as presented in the "Self-evaluation of entrepreneurship competence" of IO2. There are two paths: (a) A "light version", which is based on a selection of the issues of 4 levels of the EntreComp framework and (b) a link to the complete framework developed for self-evaluation.

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Video: Promoting and supporting migrant entrepreneurship - a study of the best practices. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSgI-98p6q0 (Migrants being active as entrepreneurs could add value to the European society and to the host country that they are in. This video is a presentation of a study on good practices in Europe and beyond.)

Appendix (under development)

Methodology and guidelines (user guide) in completing the EU Profile tool, based on paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of this report