

Meeting Labour Skill Needs While Expanding Refugee Protection

26 February 2026 | Webinar



Today's webinar

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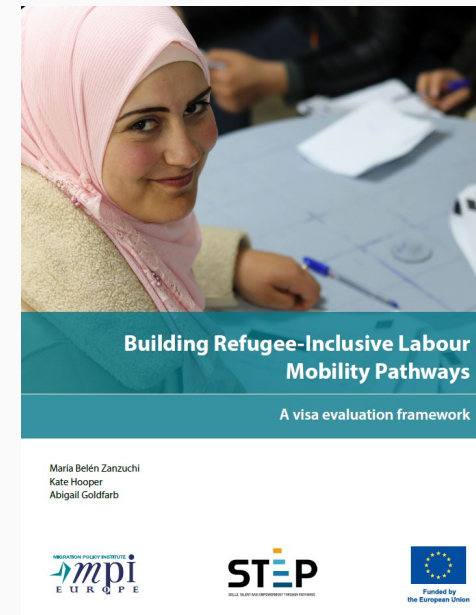
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Building Refugee-Inclusive Labour Mobility Pathways: A Visa Evaluation Framework

By María Belén Zanzuchi, Kate Hooper and Abigail Goldfarb

& Visa Evaluation Scorecard

Available at: bit.ly/reflabour



The Visa Evaluation Framework

Purpose



Operationalise existing knowledge – transform lessons learned into a structured, comparable, and systematic assessment framework.



Assess real-world accessibility – help users determine whether current visa systems are genuinely accessible to people in need of protection.



Identify gaps and barriers – highlight legal, procedural, financial, and administrative obstacles that limit access.



Generate a to-do list for reforms – pinpoint concrete areas where policy, process, or implementation changes are needed.



Refugee Accessibility Framework:

Pillar 1 – Eligibility, Status & Family Provisions

- Qualification requirements
- Age limits and nationality restrictions
- Sector/shortage occupation limits
- Type of status (temporary vs. permanent pathway)
- Protections against refoulement
- Family unity & reunification rights
- Access to labour market & public services



What profiles are targeted with this visa and what provisions are linked to it?

Pillar 2 – Requirements & Documentation

- Travel document requirements
- Proof of legal residence
- Savings & bank accounts
- Credential recognition & equivalency
- Language requirements
- Work experience documentation
- Job offer requirements & salary thresholds



Which requirements might pose challenges for refugees?

Pillar 3 – Processing, Costs & Institutional Capacity

- Where and how applications are filed
- Appeals and waivers
- Document verification (apostille, notarisisation, translation)
- Medical & background checks
- Costs & fee waivers
- Processing timelines
- Consular capacity & refugee-specific support



How feasible is it for refugees to successfully navigate the process?



How the Scorecard Works

Pillar #

Sub-category

Multiple-Choice Answers

PILLAR 1: Preliminary applicant eligibility and residence conditions

General applicant profile

Questions	Advanced qualifications (e.g., PhD, senior professional experience)	Bachelor's degree or equivalent, and/or vocational or technical training	No formal qualifications required	
1. Does the visa (or work permit) require formal academic or professional qualifications? If so, what level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Is the visa open to all nationalities?		No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3. Are there age limits for applicants and/or is preference given to applicants below a certain age?	Young applicants only (up to age 35) <input type="checkbox"/>	Broader age range (up to age 50) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No limit/preference <input type="checkbox"/>	Although some points-based visas, for example, do not have an age limit, they may award fewer points for older applicants, which can narrow the eligible pool of refugee (and other) applicants.
4. Is the visa restricted to a specific sector or industry (e.g., health care, information technology, or construction)?		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does the visa (or work permit) require applicants' occupation to be listed as a shortage or in-demand profession/skill at destination?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6. Is the visa linked to a regulated profession?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	Because entering a regulated profession in a new country entails a licensing process, and that process can introduce new, difficult-to-meet requirements (e.g., additional credential review and recognition, fees, language requirements), many refugees may not be able to access these visas.
7. Are there annual caps for this visa? If so, are these caps often met?		Yes, a fixed annual cap <input type="checkbox"/>	No cap; OR yes, but refugees are excluded from the cap/have a refugee-specific quota <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Having a refugee-specific quota (or uncapped programme) can incentivise employers to recruit refugees and avoid a situation in which refugees have to compete directly with applicants who face fewer barriers to mobility.
Category subscore				Visa is relatively accessible

Diagnostic Notes

Category sub-score (colour coded)

Overall Accessibility Score =
Combined performance across 67 indicators (colour coded)

⚠ A single "hard barrier" can significantly reduce real-world access

OVERALL VISA ACCESSIBILITY SCORE

HARD BARRIER: One or more of the selected features makes this visa inaccessible to most or all refugees.

Visa Scorecard Walkthrough



HOW ACCESSIBLE IS A WORK VISA TO REFUGEE APPLICANTS?

A visa evaluation scorecard

PILLAR 1: Preliminary applicant eligibility and residence conditions

General applicant profile

1. Does the visa (or work permit) require formal academic or professional qualifications? If so, what level?	Advanced qualifications (e.g., PhD, senior professional experience) <input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor's degree or equivalent, and/or vocational or technical training <input type="checkbox"/>	No formal qualifications required <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Is the visa open to all nationalities?		No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Are there age limits for applicants and/or is preference given to applicants below a certain age?	Young applicants only (up to age 35) <input type="checkbox"/>	Broader age range (up to age 50) <input type="checkbox"/>	No limit/preference <input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Is the visa restricted to a specific sector or industry (e.g., health care, information technology, or construction)?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does the visa (or work permit) require applicants' occupation to be listed as a shortage or in-demand profession/skill at destination?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Is the visa linked to a regulated profession?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Are there annual caps for this visa? If so, are these caps often met?		Yes, a fixed annual cap <input type="checkbox"/>	No cap; OR yes, but refugees are excluded from the cap/have a refugee-specific quota <input type="checkbox"/>	

Category subscore

Significant room for improvement

Visa and work authorisation conditions for the main applicant

8. What temporary or permanent status is granted? For visas granting temporary status, is it possible to transition to permanent status?	Temporary status without pathway to permanent residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Temporary status with pathway to permanent residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Permanent residence granted upon arrival <input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Is the visa open to people who hope to settle in the country permanently, or do applicants have to prove that...	Proof of intention to return to country of origin / habitual residence is		Visa does not ask applicants about their intention to return, or it	



Visa Comparison Summary

	SPAIN – <i>Trabajo por cuenta ajena</i>	GERMANY – <i>Chancenkarte</i>	UNITED KINGDOM – <i>Skilled Worker</i>
Pillar 1 <i>Preliminary applicant eligibility and residence conditions</i>	● Flexible eligibility criteria	● Relatively flexible eligibility but more beneficial to younger applicants due to points system	● Relatively flexible eligibility but targeting high skilled workers
	● Insufficient protection against refoulement	● Insufficient protection against refoulement	● Insufficient protection against refoulement
	● Work permit restricted to specific employer, occupation, and province	● Work up to 20h/week while looking for a qualified position + trial employment	● Work permit restricted to occupation/sector
	● No family provisions for family unity. Family reunification only if contract is renewed after 1 year + upon proof of income/insurance/housing	● No provisions for family unity	● Family unity possible through separate application; some flexibilities for family reunification



Visa Comparison Summary

	SPAIN – <i>Trabajo por cuenta ajena</i>	GERMANY – <i>Chancenkarte</i>	UNITED KINGDOM – <i>Skilled Worker</i>
Pillar 2 <i>Application requirements and documentation</i>	● Only valid passport accepted	● Only valid passport accepted + proof of legal residence in departure country	● Range of travel documents accepted
	● No bank account / minimum savings required	● Minimum funds + 'Blocked Account' required	● No Bank account / minimum savings required
	● No language requirements	● No language requirements	● Language proficiency required (international test)
	● Labour market test required (if not on shortage occupation list)	● Work experience must be relevant + recent	● Some contract-related conditions (incl. high salary threshold)



Visa Comparison Summary

	SPAIN – <i>Trabajo por cuenta ajena</i>	GERMANY – <i>Chancenkarte</i>	UNITED KINGDOM – <i>Skilled Worker</i>
Pillar 3 <i>Checks and visa processing</i>	● In-person Embassy/Consulate appointments	● In-person Embassy/Consulate appointments	● Largely online application (digital ID check app)
	● Police clearance from country of origin required	● Police clearance (with some flexibility)	● Police clearance dependent on work sector/occupation
	● All costs borne by applicant (incl. health insurance)	● All costs borne by applicant (incl. health insurance)	● All costs borne by applicant
	● Typically 3+ months process	● Estimated 3+ months process	● Visa processing under 1 month (priority option)



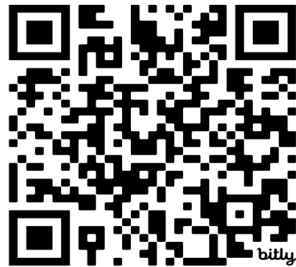
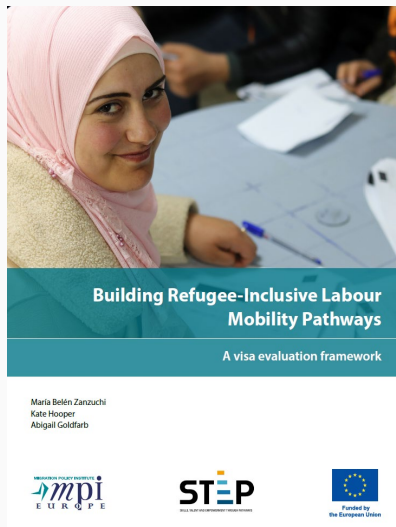
Thank you for joining us

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Reporters can contact Michelle Mittelstadt at mmittelstadt@migrationpolicy.org

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