

## Global Refugee Forum 2019 Template for Good Practices

Please send this template and any attachments to the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team at [hqgrf@unhcr.org](mailto:hqgrf@unhcr.org) as **early as possible** to facilitate the consolidation and presentation of good practices in time for the Global Refugee Forum.

Good practices can be shared on the Global Refugee Forum website and then included in the digital portal, which is currently under development.

Please complete a separate template for each good practice.

**Name of entity sharing good practice**

PES Austria (AMS Österreich)/PES Vienna (AMS Wien)

**Name and position of contact person**

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**Partners**

Please note the States or other stakeholders who are partnering in this good practice model/approach: The regional PES branches are free to adopt or develop their own instruments. With respect to refugees registered as unemployed in Vienna the whole measure is contracted out to training institutions on behalf of PES Vienna.

**Name of good practice**

“Competence check” for the vocational integration of refugees (Kompetenzcheck)

**Country/ Region:**

Austria

**Year(s) of implementation and duration:**

Piloted from August 2015 to May 2016 in Vienna. Rolled out in all other regions of Austria in 2016. Ongoing.

**Document related to the good practice model/approach:**

Website European Commission PES Practices:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1206&langId=en>

Attached     Available at:

### **General description of the good practice:**

The Competence Check identifies and documents the competencies of refugees registered as unemployed to inform the Austrian PES (AMS) about an individual's employability and/or needs for further training and support measures.

The Competence Check is a tool used to assess the skills, qualifications and language knowledge of refugees. It is used to help the PES decide on an individual's employability and/or needs for further training and support measures. As about 60% of the recognised refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection is registered unemployed with or is attending a PES Training at the PES Vienna, it will be focused on the Competence Check carried out by the PES Vienna in the following. The Competence Check is offered in the mother tongue of the refugees involved (e.g. Farsi/Dari, Arabic) and in German for those with sufficient German language skills (at least A1) and takes 5 (for men) -7 (for women) weeks to complete. The aim of the Competence Check is to recognise existing skills and qualifications and to define additional need for qualifications. It also provides refugees with information about employment and the Austrian education-, health and social security system.

The PES Vienna piloted the Competence Check in the autumn of 2015 and tested it with a first cohort of 898 refugees. Since 2016, the qualifications of refugees have been collected in all Länder through Competence Checks. The regional PES branches are free to adopt or develop their own instruments. With respect to refugees registered as unemployed in Vienna – as already mentioned before - the whole measure is contracted out to training institutions on behalf of PES Vienna. From September 2017, a compulsory introduction year has been introduced for all refugees and the Competence Check will be an integral part of it

### **Main activities of the good practice:**

The typical referral process in the context of the Competence Check in Vienna follows the sequence listed here:

1. After having received a positive decision on asylum or subsidiary protection, refugees must contact the AMS and will be referred to German language courses which are offered by providers accredited by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF). Basic language competencies (A1, beginner) are a prerequisite for the further steps in the consultation process with the AMS.
2. During the *Competence Check*, skills and qualifications are assessed. The measure takes 5-7 weeks for each participant to complete. Each participant has one hour of one-on-one biographical interviewing/conversations each week and ten hours of workshops each week. While in the one-on-one settings qualifications are surveyed, in the workshops the participants are getting useful information on the Austrian labour market, the application procedure and the Austrian education system, social insurance system, housing and health. If needed, the persons involved are sent to various institutions to check their practical skills, and work experience is checked and verified by field trials (for example: if somebody says he/she has been a painter for 3 years in their home country, then the person is sent to a professional painter who checks their skills in relation to the required competences of a completed vocational training in Austria).
3. A *Results Report* (past experiences, current competencies) and a development plan (for the next 1.5 years) regarding integration into the labour market are elaborated. A *second basic German language course (A2, elementary)* is completed in parallel.

4. The provider of the respective Competence Check often refers participants to other institutions, which are responsible for the formal *recognition of qualifications*, expert opinions and/or tests on competencies.

When returning to the AMS, the AMS case worker has already received the result report of the Competence Check and can integrate the client into the regular consultancy process and decide on immediate placement opportunities or on further placement or training measures (e.g. step2Austria or step2business). However, there can be cases that deviate from this sequence, e.g. when clients have already better language skills, when their competencies enable them to have a clear path towards recognition, or when they can be placed right away.

### **Results of the good practice:**

- The results concerning the qualification of the Competence Check participants (latest available data: 2015-2017) reveal that, according to countries of origin, Competence Check participants from Syria, Iran and Iraq have the highest qualifications. For example, 58 % of participants from Syria (total: 7,133 people), 85 % of participants from Iran (833 persons in total) and 58 % of participants from Iraq (964 persons in total) have either achieved undergraduate education or matriculation.
- Competence Check participants from Afghanistan (2,734 people) are the least qualified: only 20 % of them have an education that goes beyond compulsory education<sup>1</sup>.

The AMS monitors regularly a group of about 9.500 individuals given residence status in 2015 and was registered with the AMS between January 2015 and June 2016. While by June 2016 10.1% of this group were employed, already 41.3% of them were employed by April 2019. Of those who were given residence status in 2016 and were registered with the AMS between January 2016 and June 2017 (group of about 11.600 persons) 36.4% were employed by April 2019. And of those who were given residence status in 2017 and were registered with the AMS between January 2017 and June 2018 (group of about 8.800 persons) 30.9% were employed by April 2019.

### **Challenges in implementing the good practice and how they are being addressed:**

Lessons learnt include:

- The Competence Check is an efficient way of gaining relevant information about refugees.
- Differences between refugees from different countries and between male and females became apparent.
- Based on the findings of the Competence Check, AMS could diversify and adjust its portfolio of measures, e.g. by creating support for recognition of qualifications for higher qualified refugees and intense forms of basic education for clients with lower skill.
- For the individual participant, it also provides information about Austrian society, and the welfare system and labour market in particular, allowing people to locate their competences in an Austrian context.

Success factors included:

- The PES Vienna is experienced in the counselling of jobseekers with migration backgrounds and setting up projects for this target group.
- The use of native speaking training staff was very useful to avoid language and cultural barriers and to get valid information from the participants.

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<sup>1</sup> The observations for these groups were confirmed by the insights the Austrian Academy of Science gained in an independent, parallel study on refugees in Austria at that time (ÖAW 2016).



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- The coaches' knowledge of the education system of the countries of origin as well as their knowledge of the Austrian education and qualification system was very useful.