Competency management tool for construction companies to assess migrant workers' skill levels before they arrive in the country of work

Estonia

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Name of the organisation	Werk
Type of organisation	Private sector (companies)
Address	Rataskaevu street 22-13, 10123 Tallinn, Harju county, Estonia
Web page	https://werk.eu/
Contact person	Name and surname: Marion Kallakas Job position: COO (Chief Operating Officer) E-mail: marion.kallakas@werk.eu
Member State	Estonia

GOOD PRACTICE - GENERAL INFORMATION	
Title of the good practice	Competency management tool for construction companies to assess migrant workers' skill levels before the workers arrive in the country of work
Topic of the good practice	Construction
Geographical focus	Nation-wide The tool has a **European focus** - the biggest client currently is from Finland, further clients originate from EE and SE so there is a Nordic focus; UK as well as an **international component** - cooperating with London City Government and part of the taskforce solving green skills shortages in the London built environment. The workers being tested on the competency platform originate predominately from RO, Ukraine, Georgia, Central-Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan).
Duration	ongoing
Summary of the good practice	Competency assessment and management tool focusing on skilled blue collar workers to assess their skills levels before their arrival in another country. The tool is AI-based and currently most in use by large-scale employers in the construction sector allowing them to assess the quality of manpower provided by sub-contractors as well as temporary agencies. From an employer perspective, this tool helps to identify qualified employees and therefore reduces friction and costs in the hiring process.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Background/context	A group with a background in IT and the construction sector are behind this start-up which currently consists of a team of 9 staff (one of them from Finland). The core idea behind their business was that all over Europe employers are facing the issue of labour shortages. Due to a lack of local labour supply, employers are increasingly forced to recruit from further away, hiring migrant workers from within the EU but increasingly from outside the EU. Despite this bigger pool of candidates, employers struggle to hire manpower with the skills they are looking for. The company estimates that roughly half of hired workers are asked to return to their country due to insufficient skills.
	What their tool offers is not just to test skills prior to arrival, it also focuses on different components that make up a single trade (e.g. tiler, drywaller, painter) and breaks these down into different modules which are to be completed using an open text field questionnaire that mimics actual building process on site. The tool is language agnostic, meaning that workers conclude the assessments in their native language and the hiring companies see the results in their preferred language. Some questions are recorded by video to prevent cheating and there are several more anti-cheat measures in place. The assessment is then captured in the form of a detailed report showcasing a person's strengths and weaknesses which is made available to the hiring company. Moreover, the report gives inside not only into competencies but can also shed light on whether safety training has been provided or site induction has taken place. The information on the strengths and weaknesses of each individual allows to compose suitable crews at construction sites, outbalancing any individual shortcomings identified during the skills assessment phase.
Objectives	General objectives
	To combat labour shortages for skilled blue collar workers in Europe based on inefficient hiring

	practices through creating transparency for employers on workers skill levels.
	Specific objectives
	● To screen skills via AI-supported tool.
	● To form suitable crews of workers at the construction site.
	Future plans
	● To venture into new sectors of activity.
	● To add and track workers documentation: Such as A1 forms, in their tool and also track workers deployment. For workers this has the advantage that their skills are transparent to the employers. For employers this has the advantage of engaging skilled workers in the longer run and ensuring compliance with laws.
Main activities	● The company promotes their service in the construction sector as well as adjacent sectors.
	● Once signed up, a company uses their service and pays on a monthly basis. Tool is free for the workers.
	● The company actively seeks to further expand their business to new areas and sectors.
Did you previously provide information about this particular good practice under the European Platform tackling undeclared work? (if yes, is it possible to provide the year and the title of good practice or a link of the good practice in ELA Virtual library)	No. However, this tool was presented at the ELA tech conference in 2022. Werk is also a EURES partner.
Funding/organisational resources	This tool originates from the private sector. Companies interested in their services, sign up and pay monthly to use the assessment tool and receive access to an online interface providing detailed information about workers skills per area but also aggregated data showing which sub-contractor or agency provides what kind of quality manpower.

	The company has recently received €25,000 in funding from the Estonian government.
PARTICIPATION	
Stakeholders involved	• Companies, companies' recruitment partners (i.e. sub-contractors and temporary agencies), workers, some public sector entities.
Target groups	Skilled blue collar workers from within and mostly outside the EU (Romania, Ukraine and Central-Asia for example) and employers in the construction sector. The company estimates that in bigger metropolitan areas currently 40% of workers in the construction sector are recruited internationally. From a workers perspective, one of the main advantages is that in the case of skilled workers, they can more easily get recruited for better positions. The results of the skills' assessment could potentially be used in the form of a "skills passport" and high scores are likely to result in higher wages.
Final beneficiaries	Larger scale employers and skilled workers are the main beneficiaries. While temporary agencies and sub-contractors may be disadvantaged compared to previously given the transparency regarding skills which is introduced by this tool.
GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA	
Achievements/ Results and outcomes (Alignment of good practice with the priorities of the Call (if not applicable, alignment with the field of EU labour mobility)	The tool has already been tested on more than 5,000 international workers and the accuracy has been validated on construction sites in 3 countries.
Recognition (has this good practice been recognised on regional, national or EU level)	Yes, by ELA through participation in the ELA tech conference in 2022.
Cost effectiveness (the degree to which the practice was successful in reaching objectives and producing clear and measurable outcomes at the lowest possible cost)	The tool is indeed cost-effective since it helps employers to save on extra expenses linked to skills shortages and labour market mismatches.
Transferability (how the experience from this practice could be transferred to other contexts i.e. what would another Member State/group/sector need to have or put in place for this measure to be successful in their country/group/sector)	The founders of the tool are in the process of extending the tools use to other sectors so the tool can indeed be applied in other sectors like manufacturing or healthcare which are in need of highly skilled manual labour and where multilingual workforce is often used. Moreover, geographically speaking, the tool can be

	applied internationally, there are no geographical limitations.
Sustainability (how the practice is sustainable from a social, financial or environmental perspective)	From a financial point of view sustainability is an important aspect of this tool and one of the reasons it was conceived in the first place. The company claims that skills shortages and labour market mismatches and the problems which result from these – such as increased costs in the hiring process, lengthy hiring or the return of hired workers due to lack of skills – have a considerable financial downside in the construction sector as employers find it difficult to secure skilled labour. From the workers point of view, once skills are assessed and deemed appropriate, this assessment does not have to be repeated and a foreign worker can more easily find (better) work engagements.
Innovativeness (innovative features of the good practice)	It only takes 20 minutes for the tool to check workers' skills with the assistance of AI. Workers can fill out the assessment in any language like writing a text message as simple as using a whatsapp. Part of the innovativeness is that this tool can accurately predict quality of manual work in a very detailed way and provides transparency vis-à-vis the employer who previously was only able to assess workers skills once the manpower had arrived at the construction site. The tool furthermore allows companies to screen for the quality of manpower provided for by temporary agencies and sub-contractors. Moreover, the information gathered allows to compose suitable teams at construction sites, outbalancing any individual shortcomings identified during the skill assessment phase.
Digitalisation (Design, development and/or utilisation of digital tools, policies or plans for digitalisation, business processes and data digitalisation, data sharing digital initiatives, the use of digitalisation to facilitate the access to data in real time and detection of fraud and error, etc.)	This is a digital, AI-based tool where AI assesses a number of key skills to check whether a worker is qualified enough to work on a construction site abroad. Through the use of AI, the tool can be used irrespective of any language barrier.