

# **WP 2.2 Identification and Analysis of Practices Addressing Structural Barriers**

## **Purpose and scope**

Work Package 2.2 identifies and analyses existing practices that respond to the structural barriers outlined in WP 2.1. Building on the evidence base established through the literature review, survey data, interviews, and stakeholder consultations, this work package examines how current interventions operate in practice and to what extent they address the mechanisms limiting access to education, vocational training, and career progression for young migrant workers aged 16-30 in Denmark, Finland, and Lithuania.

The purpose of WP 2.2 is not to catalogue individual programmes, but to identify recurring types of interventions, assess their functional role in weakening or bypassing structural barriers, and examine the conditions under which they are effective.

## **Analytical framing**

The mapping of practices is structured around the barrier framework developed in WP 2.1. Rather than treating practices as isolated solutions, the analysis examines how they interact with specific barrier clusters, including language constraints, time poverty, fragmented information, employer gatekeeping, and non-recognition of prior learning.

The evidence shows that effective practices rarely address a single barrier in isolation. Instead, they tend to combine guidance, training, employer engagement, and support mechanisms in ways that reflect the lived realities of young migrant workers, particularly those already embedded in low-skilled employment. This reflects the findings of the literature review, which highlight that formal access to systems does not automatically translate into practical accessibility.

Across Denmark, Finland, and Lithuania, four broad categories of practices can be identified:

- (1) navigation and guidance support,
- (2) employer-mediated access to employment,
- (3) integrated work-and-learning pathways, and
- (4) recognition and skills utilisation mechanisms.

## **Practices addressing fragmented information and lack of navigational support**

A first group of practices addresses the fragmentation of information and the lack of guided navigation identified as a key enabling barrier in WP 2.1. Across all three countries, the evidence indicates that the presence of programmes alone is insufficient when access depends on individual capacity to identify, understand, and combine available options.

In Denmark, mentoring networks and NGO-led integration services provide structured, ongoing support that helps individuals navigate education and employment systems, access opportunities, and build relevant networks. In Finland, coaching programmes combine individual guidance with labour market orientation and employer linkage, supporting participants in translating available pathways into concrete actions. In Lithuania, one-stop services and integration centres provide coordinated access to employment, education, and administrative processes, although awareness and accessibility remain uneven.

These practices function by shifting the focus from information provision to guided pathway construction. They reduce reliance on informal networks and enable individuals to engage more effectively with institutional systems. However, their impact is constrained by resource intensity, dependence on local implementation capacity, and uneven coverage across regions and target groups.

## **Practices addressing employer gatekeeping and labour market access**

A second group of practices targets employer behaviour, identified in WP 2.1 as a key factor shaping access to both employment and progression pathways. The evidence shows that employers act as both gatekeepers and potential enablers, depending on the presence of support mechanisms and incentives.

In Denmark, employer networks, internships, and mentoring initiatives create mediated entry points into employment, reducing uncertainty in recruitment and supporting trust-building between employers and migrant workers. In Finland, wage subsidy schemes and targeted employment programmes reduce financial risk for employers and increase the likelihood of hiring. In Lithuania, subsidised employment and apprenticeship pathways aim to facilitate initial labour market access and provide work-based experience.

These practices address structural barriers by shifting part of the burden of integration from individuals to institutions and employers. Where such mechanisms are in place, access to employment improves and pathways towards more stable or skilled roles become more visible. However, outcomes remain uneven, particularly where employer engagement is limited or where support mechanisms are temporary or project-based.

## **Practices addressing time poverty and language constraints through integrated pathways**

A third category of practices addresses the structural incompatibility between work, language acquisition, and participation in education identified in WP 2.1. The evidence shows that traditional models, which require individuals to complete language training or education before entering employment, are often not compatible with the realities of migrant workers already engaged in full-time work.

In response, several practices adopt integrated or parallel approaches. In Denmark, combined work-and-training schemes allow individuals to develop language and vocational skills while remaining in employment. In Finland, integration training and employment-linked language programmes connect learning directly to labour market participation. In Lithuania, apprenticeship and work-based learning pathways provide opportunities to combine income, training, and practical experience.

These approaches reduce the time and financial constraints associated with participation in education and create more flexible pathways towards skill development. However, their implementation depends on coordination between employers, education providers, and public services, and their availability varies significantly across local contexts.

## **Practices addressing recognition and underutilisation of skills**

A fourth group of practices focuses on the recognition and utilisation of prior learning and experience. As identified in WP 2.1, non-recognition and under-recognition contribute to prolonged employment below skill level and limit access to appropriate education pathways.

In Denmark, recognition tools provide alternative validation mechanisms for individuals lacking formal documentation. In Finland, services such as SIMHE support individuals in aligning prior education with further study or employment pathways. In Lithuania, recognition processes are supported through national systems and additional guidance, although access and usability remain uneven.

These practices aim to translate existing skills into usable forms within the labour market and education systems. However, recognition alone is rarely sufficient to enable progression and is most effective when combined with training opportunities and employer engagement.

## **Cross-country differentiation within shared practice patterns**

While similar types of practices are present across all three countries, their effectiveness and accessibility vary depending on national context.

In Denmark, practices are often embedded within systems that enable relatively rapid entry into employment, but challenges remain in sustaining progression beyond initial labour market participation. In Finland, practices operate within more formalised and decentralised systems, where coordination and navigation remain key challenges despite the availability of services. In Lithuania, while formal structures for support are in place, practical accessibility is more limited due to language barriers, limited tailored guidance, and weaker links between vocational education and labour market demand. As a result, individuals may rely more heavily on individual navigation and informal support.

## **Implications for policy development**

The analysis confirms that effective practices do not operate as standalone solutions but as combinations of interventions addressing multiple barriers simultaneously. Approaches that integrate guidance, employer engagement, training, and recognition mechanisms are more likely to support access to education and career progression.

At the same time, the mapping highlights structural limitations, including dependence on local implementation capacity, uneven access, and limited scalability. These findings reinforce the conclusion of WP 2.1 that addressing barriers in isolation is insufficient and that integrated policy approaches are required.

## **Conclusion**

WP 2.2 demonstrates that while a range of practices exists across Denmark, Finland, and Lithuania, their effectiveness depends on their ability to address interconnected structural barriers and to operate within the constraints faced by young migrant workers already engaged in the labour market.

By identifying common practice types and their functional role, this work package provides a practical foundation for the development of policy-relevant models and recommendations in the subsequent stages of the Career Compass project.