Consultation on the Skills Portability Initiative

Context

The Skills Portability Initiative is a flagship initiative of the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) to make **skills and qualifications more transparent, comparable and portable across borders**. It contributes to the Commission's **2024–2029 priorities** and to building a **Union of Skills**.

The initiative builds on the **2024 Labour and Skills Shortages Action Plan**, and insights from **Enrico Letta's** and **Mario Draghi's** reports, which underline that better transnational understanding of skills is essential for the single market and growth.

Currently, **skills portability remains limited**. Employers often struggle to understand qualifications and skills obtained in another Member States; recognition processes for regulated professions can be slow; systems for recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals are fragmented; and informal or non-formal learning (e.g. youth work, volunteering) often goes unrecognised. Most of diplomas remain paper-based, while digital credential systems are developing unevenly across the EU. Without coordinated action, these barriers will continue to restrict **mobility of workers, job matching** and **Europe's competitiveness**.

What has been achieved

Over the past years, the EU has developed voluntary tools such as the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**, **Europass**, and **ESCO** to support transparency and comparability of qualifications and skills. Most Member States have **National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)** linked to the EQF. Moreover, the Professional Qualifications' Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC) significantly facilitates cross-border recognition of qualifications for EU citizens seeking to access a regulated profession. For third country nationals, the 2023 Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals gave concrete suggestions to Member States on how to simplify their national recognition processes.

However, implementation of these transparency tools remains **inconsistent,** awareness among employers remains low, recognition procedures for EU citizens to access regulated professions can still be **slow and complex**, and systems for assessing **qualifications held by third-country nationals differ widely and tend to be complex and inefficient**. The upcoming **EU Digital Identity Wallet** offers new potential for securely sharing digital credentials, but EU interoperability must be ensured across Member States.

What is being proposed

The **Skills Portability Initiative** will present a **package of three interlinked actions** in 2026 to make skills truly portable across the EU and beyond.

The first action will explore the need for a legislative proposal on increasing **transparency and digitalisation** of skills and qualifications by building on the existing tools like EQF, Europass and ESCO, and enabling citizens to share digital credentials through the **EU Digital Identity Wallet**.

The second action will **modernise the recognition of qualifications to access regulated professions**, simplifying and speeding up procedures, extending automatic recognition to more professions and reducing administrative burden via digital tools.

The third action will **simplify the procedures for recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals** who want to work in the EU, possibly through common EU rules. Together, these measures will enhance mobility, reduce administrative burden and help SMEs recruit across borders.

Why it matters

The initiative will deliver clear benefits for workers, self-employed, employers and particularly for **young people entering the labour market**. By improving the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications, it will make it easier for people to move between jobs and countries, while helping employers find the talent they need. This will lead to **greater mobility, more job opportunities and better matching of skills** to labour market needs.

The initiative will also **advance Europe's digital transformation** by promoting the use of secure, paperless and interoperable digital credentials, reducing paperwork, administrative burden and the risk of fraud.

At the same time, the initiative **promotes inclusion and equality** by empowering young people, mobile workers and third-country nationals through skills portability. By improving **validation of both formal and non-formal learning**—such as volunteering, youth work or internships—it supports decent work.

Consultation and next steps

The Commission is carrying out impact assessments and stakeholder consultations to ensure evidence-based proposals. Activities include a **12-week public consultation** via the *Have Your Say* portal, targeted **workshops and hearings** with youth organisations, social partners and professional bodies. Findings will inform the the package, planned for adoption in Q3 2026.

In brief: The **Skills Portability Initiative** aims to make Europe a place where **skills travel as freely as people do –** and are more easily understood and recognised. For young people, it means that qualifications and experiences—formal or informal— will be **better understandable, trusted and usable anywhere in the EU**.

Guiding question for discussions:

Group	What are three key messages or priorities that young people would like to share with EU policymakers working on the Skills Portability Initiative? *(write down top 3, present only top 1)*
1	1. Accessibility (especially for hard to reach Youth) 2. Promoting employer inclusion
2	1. Recognition of both formal and informal skills, the adoption of this system should not lead to create greater segregation between those with access to higher education and those without. Many skills are acquirable and many jobs are doable without acquiring 'a piece of paper' at a specific institution, even at the policy level. We also see a feeling among young people that getting a degree is felt as mandatory, leading to widespread overqualification. There is also the risk of organisations and governments to require overqualifications of degrees 2. Accessibility, in terms of physical accessibility and physical limitations, as in terms of digital skills, language barriers, accessibility of institutions themselves to these systems, etc. 3. The link between this system and the labour market
3	1. Initiative has been broadly recognized and accepted (by employers, professionals, young people, volunteers...) to not be just another initative. EQF, Youthpass, Europass is still not recognized by employers etc 2. Consult also employers, labour market services, different professional groups 3. Accessibility for all people -> one digital plattfrom (ID wallet connected with national ID apps
7	1. Skills acquired through Youth Guarantee should be taken into consideration (including internships and non-formal/informal training)

	2. Accessibility of digital tools (to everyone, also small organisations,..)
	3. Promoting acceptance by employers, otherwise it risks becoming another initiative that 'stays in a bubble'
8	1. EU System to formally recognise non-formal and informal education. This should include validation of programmes/activities from providers, which are recognised by employers (private, not-for-profit and public sectors). This could be integrated in already existing tools such as Youth Pass or Europass (without limiting it to these tools), allowing applicants to self-assessed themselves. This should also allow for accounting experience acquired in other working environments (. *I.e. Similar to language competence system.*
	2. Raise awareness and recognise the skills and competences of caregivers during a pause from work. *I.e. normalise putting in CV experience from parenthood, caregiving family member, etc.*
	3. Raising awareness of foreign qualifications and promoting inclusion of foreign workers in local communities and citizens.
9	1. Raising awareness among employers to help businesses understand, recognise and use European digital credentials.
	2. Recognition of foreign qualifications remains rather administrative and time-consuming, particularly outside regulated professions. This is an area where European-level simplification could be highly beneficial
	3. The need for harmonised EU rules for digital recognition of skills and qualifications, to prevent fragmentation among Member States
10	1. **Greater transparency and clarity in skills recognition across Europe** Young people want the process of recognizing and transferring skills between EU countries to be **simple, transparent, and easily understood**. Today, they often face unclear criteria, inconsistent systems, and lengthy procedures. A transparent framework — showing **how skills are evaluated, what evidence is needed, and how decisions are made** — would build trust and make mobility fairer and more accessible for all.

	2. Access to information for young job seekers
	3. Recognition of non-formal and language learning
	Young people want the EU to value skills gained beyond formal education — through volunteering, exchanges, community projects, and everyday experiences. This includes **language and intercultural skills**, which are key for mobility and employability across Europe.
11	1. Alignment with current technological development to be up-to-date to support the advantages of the use and of the tools provided; e.g. the tools presented in the actions (such as Europass) should be also be readable by AI-based tools in application processes to provide benefits when using offers such as the Europass CV and therefore, expand use and visibility of offers 2. Strengthen on-the-ground Recognition of NFE, Informal skill development and Exchange. Promote and strengthen the existing tools properly and make them more accessible. Accessibility an promotion should also be possible for non-EU countries. (They need to be understandable, practical, and trusted by employers and young people alike. 3. While promoting common recognition of qualification, It is important for most young people and especially remote regions, that qualified people are able to stay and find a job where they grew up, while having all the tools to continue their qualification abroad and move back afterwards. Therefore, common EU working conditions are necessary.
12	1. Skills acquired from the Youth Guarantee must be taken into consideration under the qualification framework (EQF) 2. There must be a mechanism to validate informal and volunteering work that can be taken into consideration for different QF's and that can be used for non-formal learning activities outside of E+ (Youth Pass). It must be mainstreamed. 3. Create a common tool for recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals based on a brought analyses of good practice