SkillsPath

SKILLs and Innovation for Youth Employment PATHways

Pilot Evaluation Report

Assessment of how personalized counselling and AI skills assessment impact refugee and migrant youth's pathways into skills development and employment in Germany, Greece, and Spain

November 2026



Social Innovation Initiative

Co-funded by the European Union

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About this report

Prepared by IRC Hellas with IRC Germany and INSERTA Andalucía, in cooperation with the SkillsPath consortium.

AI Usage Disclaimer

This short-form impact evaluation report was prepared with the assistance of artificial intelligence (Claude) from a longer-form impact evaluation. AI was applied for condensing the report, finalising design elements, and compiling and analysing qualitative feedback. All data was anonymized prior to analysis. Each of these elements has been reviewed and verified with due diligence by the writers and designers, who take full responsibility for accuracy. The use of Claude aligns with IRC's AI policy, as an approved tool.

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Summary

SkillsPath tested how an AI-powered skills assessment tool, combined with job readiness training, individual coaching, referrals and employer engagement, helps refugee and migrant young people aged 16 to 29 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) to enter work and skills development, particularly in the context of the green transition. The pilot ran in the Bonn area and North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Thessaloniki (Greece) and Andalucía (Spain).

During pilot delivery, from July 2025 to September 2026, the project enrolled 165 young people, 92% of its target of 180. The evidence suggests the social innovation model (combining AI-powered skills assessment with job counselling, job-readiness training, referral to (up)skilling opportunities, job placement support and employer engagement) contributes to a clearer self-understanding of skills, stronger job-search capability and, for a share of participants, entry into work or training: 74 participants (45%) reached an employment or training milestone.

165
young people enrolled, 92% of 180 target

113
completed the guided AI skills assessment

141
developed an action plan

74
reached an employment or training milestone (45%)

Results at a glance: Outcomes were partially impacted by site contexts, such as existing programming and employer networks, as well as delivery constraints with staffing turnover or reduction.

Outcome	Target	Result	Status
1.1 Improved confidence in (a) describing skills to others and (b) matching skills with available occupations	80%	**56%** (18 of 32 matched pairs improved both); 88% improved on at least one item	Not met
1.2 Knowledge improvement after job readiness and soft skills training (pre/post tests)	75%	**81%** (30 of 37 tested; Germany and Greece only)	Met
1.3a In employment or training at completion	50%	**45%** (74 of 165)	Close
1.3b Reaching green-sector milestones (employment or training)	30%	**4%** (7 participants)	Not met
1.4 Employers reporting practice change or intention to implement one (measured by a feedback survey after training)	50%	**67%** (10 of 15 employers)	Met

Key findings

1 **The core service was delivered, though job readiness and employer training targets lagged.**
Enrolment reached 92% of the 180 target. Action plans and one-to-one support reached 101% and 103% of targets. Group job readiness training participation reached 36% of participants and employer training reached 46% (32 of 70 employers).

2 **Participants reported improved self-understanding.**
In the end-of-pilot survey (54 participants), 85% said they can describe their skills and 96% reported that they understand which jobs match them. Matched baseline and endline data are more modest: 56% improved in both items against a target of 80%.

3 **The AI tool helped most with self-understanding, less with job matching, and worked best inside a counselling conversation.**
Of 41 participants who completed the AI skills assessment, 23 said it showed skills they had not considered and 13 said it partly did. Counsellors found it easy to use themselves (4.25 out of 5) but not easy for participants (2.75 out of 5).

4 **Outcomes differed between sites and by gender.**
Only 21% of clients were women, with only 20% reaching a milestone, compared to 51% of men. Milestone rates ranged from 18% to 64% across the three sites. They were shaped by staffing continuity, local conditions and, in one site, by a single vocational course that accounted for most of its milestones.

5 **Participants gained beyond the plan.**
Participants' reported practical integration gains such as legal documentation for starting work, bank accounts, digital skills, hope, and calmer family relationships.

Recommendations in brief

1. Pair the tool with a counsellor and budget time for a guided assessment and debrief.
2. Tailor the service to the target group by country, a share of women, entry-level green routes.
3. Dedicate time to building employer capacity, helping with work documents and skills recognition.
4. Build local partnerships, held by the organisation and not by one person.
5. Measure what lasts, with baseline and endline for all and a six-month follow-up. See section 8 for more details.

1 About the pilot

1.1 What was tested

Young people's skills are often hidden or not evidenced by proof of formal learning. Barriers around language, digital skills, credentialling and administrative processes impede both recognition of their skills and access to training and job opportunities. SkillsPath tested an AI skills assessment tool, built by SkillLab, that helps young people articulate their skills and links them to occupations. It was integrated into a service model that combined job readiness and soft skills training, referral to upskilling opportunities, individual coaching and employer engagement.

The theory of change was simple. If young people can describe their skills in relation to the work they want, have the job readiness and knowledge to apply, and meet employers and training providers who support their inclusive hiring and workforce participation, then they will be better able to enter and advance in local labour markets, including in the green economy. The project ran from December 2024 to November 2026, with pilot implementation from July 2025 to September 2026.

1.2 Who took part

Participants were young adults from refugee and migrant backgrounds, ages 16-29, mostly with limited formal education and basic digital skills, though profiles differed by site. In all contexts, getting employed was the participant's immediate priority, while their longer-term aims were more specific and pointed towards qualifications and skilled work. Vocational training (Ausbildung) featured in 74% of plans in Germany, while in Spain participants aimed for stable work with better conditions (29%) or further education and specialisation (18%), and in Greece 71% named a job or career, with 24% hoping to start their own business. Many named specific sectors, from construction, healthcare and solar panel installation to automotive repair, IT, sport and the arts.

	Germany	Greece	Spain
Participants enrolled	**44**	**65**	**56**
Women	**34%**	**8%**	**27%**
Average age	**23.5**	**20.9**	**23.5**
Basic digital skills	**33%**	**90%**	**73%**
Education	60% completed secondary 16% completed university	70% completed secondary	63% had primary education
Most common countries of origin	Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan	Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, South Sudan	Mali, Morocco, Somalia

In each country, a Youth Advisory Board of three to four young people with refugee or migrant backgrounds advised the project. They named documentation issues, language barriers, limited access to fair contracts and difficulties with recruitment processes as barriers to employment. In Germany they also pointed to the non-recognition of qualifications and discrimination in the labour market. They stressed that young people need to know whether a job is safe and formal, including contracts, hours, pay and basic rights.

1.3 One project, three delivery contexts

In all three sites participants followed the same pathway: outreach and enrolment, a counsellor-guided AI skills assessment leading to an employment and education action plan (EEAP), then skills development and activation, supported by employer engagement. The context shaped how far that pathway could be delivered, and each site developed a different emphasis. The project's baseline assessment, carried out in November 2025, explains these differences more in depth.

Site	Pathway emphasis	Context, organisational capacity and starting point
Germany: Bonn area and North Rhine-Westphalia	A stronger internship and VET orientation.	Built on existing economic wellbeing programming in one location with one job counsellor and no dedicated employer-engagement role. Open spaces for training but access depended on recognition of qualifications and residence status, with recognition and language acquisition taking around six months. First enrolments came in July 2025, followed by a gap after a staff transition.
Greece: Thessaloniki	A stronger employment and employer-engagement pathway.	Delivered as an add-on to an existing economic wellbeing programme that was later reduced, with one job counsellor in one location. Nearly 40% of participants were unaccompanied or formerly unaccompanied youth living in shelters. Entry jobs were mostly informal and seasonal, and documents such as tax number were needed to work legally. The reduction of the host programme removed support functions such as social worker referrals and networking. First enrolments came in October 2025.
Spain: Andalucía	A stronger vocational-training pathway.	Enrolled participants across six locations through the organisation's territorial network, mostly young people already seeking labour market support. By the end of the pilot, six job counsellors delivered the project, one per location. Limited Spanish and digital skills meant counsellors often gave additional support. First enrolments came in January 2026. The spread across six locations and a change in project coordination made continuity difficult.

2 Methodology and limits

This section outlines the essential elements of the methodology. The sources, consent arrangements and analysis are set out in Annex A in full.

2.1 Evaluation framework

The evaluation followed a contribution-based logic (claim, evidence, interpretation, limitations) to assess the overall impact of the pilot on refugee and migrant youth NEETs and the contribution of the AI tool to the intended outcomes. The evaluation asked four things:

- Whether the intended outcomes were achieved and how certain we can be of the project's contribution;
- What the AI tool added to skills assessment, guidance and job placement and how it helped providers deliver better job matching and counselling;
- What wider changes occurred for the target groups (participants, employers and VET providers) and what obstacles arose; and
- What to keep, change or avoid when integrating AI into employability services for migrant and NEET youth.

A mixed-methods evaluation design was used. The evidence base included the client assessment trackers for all 165 participants and 7 other sources (in the graphic below). Quantitative methods measured outcome and output indicators; qualitative methods explain how and why change happened, and results from different sources were compared to strengthen or triangulate findings. Results were compared with logframe targets, cross-checked across sources, rated strong, moderate or limited, and split by country, gender and age.

Evidence base

165 participants in the trackers	**54** responses to the participant feedback survey	**37** pre/post knowledge tests	**35** matched baseline and endline questionnaires
11 participant Most Significant Change stories	**8** job counsellors surveyed	**15** employers surveyed after training	**2** after action reviews, plus Community of Practice sessions

2.2 Limitations

The findings should be read with the limits of a small, three-country pilot in mind. Most limitations stem from the nature of a small pilot: samples were small and uneven across sites with no comparison group and results were measured only up to project completion. The table below sets out each limitation, how it affects the findings and how the evaluation handled it.

Limitation	Effect on the findings	How it was handled
No comparison group	The project's effect cannot be separated from maturation, labour market conditions or other services	Contribution, not attribution, is explored; external factors are named
Participant survey smaller than planned (54 against about 80), not anonymous, 61% completed by phone with staff	Satisfaction may be overstated; site subgroups are small	Results analysed by site and compared with stories and staff reflection
Self-reported skills and confidence; matched data cover 32 of 113 assessed participants	Gains may be overstated; outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 are only partly measured; no tests in Spain	Matched pairs reported separately from endline ratings; coverage stated with each result
Small qualitative samples: 11 stories, 8 counsellors	Stories illustrate change but do not show how common it is	Counts, not percentages; patterns treated as leads
Employer outcome measures intention, among 15 employers	The indicator cannot show sustained change	Reported as intention
The counsellor pathway is described as designed (orientation, assessment, validation, action plan, ongoing support)	Whether each step was delivered to each participant was not separately measured	Findings rest on outcomes and on participants' and counsellors' own accounts
No follow-up at six months	Durability and quality of jobs are unknown	Flagged as a gap and recommended in section 8

Implications for scaling. A scaled-up model should be designed to close these gaps from the start. A comparison group, such as a waiting list, staggered roll-out or matched public employment service data, would allow effects to be estimated rather than only explored. Baseline and endline measures and pre/post tests in every site, an anonymous survey completed independently of staff, and a tracker that records which pathway steps each participant received would strengthen the evidence on outcomes and delivery. Follow-up at six months with participants, and with employers after training, would show whether jobs and changes in hiring practice last.

2.3 Notes on Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology and GDPR disclaimer

The Most Significant Change technique was applied in a simplified form to the 11 participant stories collected by the project teams. The main domains of change followed the theory of change, though participants were free to describe other changes, which are reported separately. There was no panel selection and no structured verification, and the stories came from different sources (two interviews and nine focus-group accounts). As a small sample, they do not fully illustrate how common a change was, and criticism may be

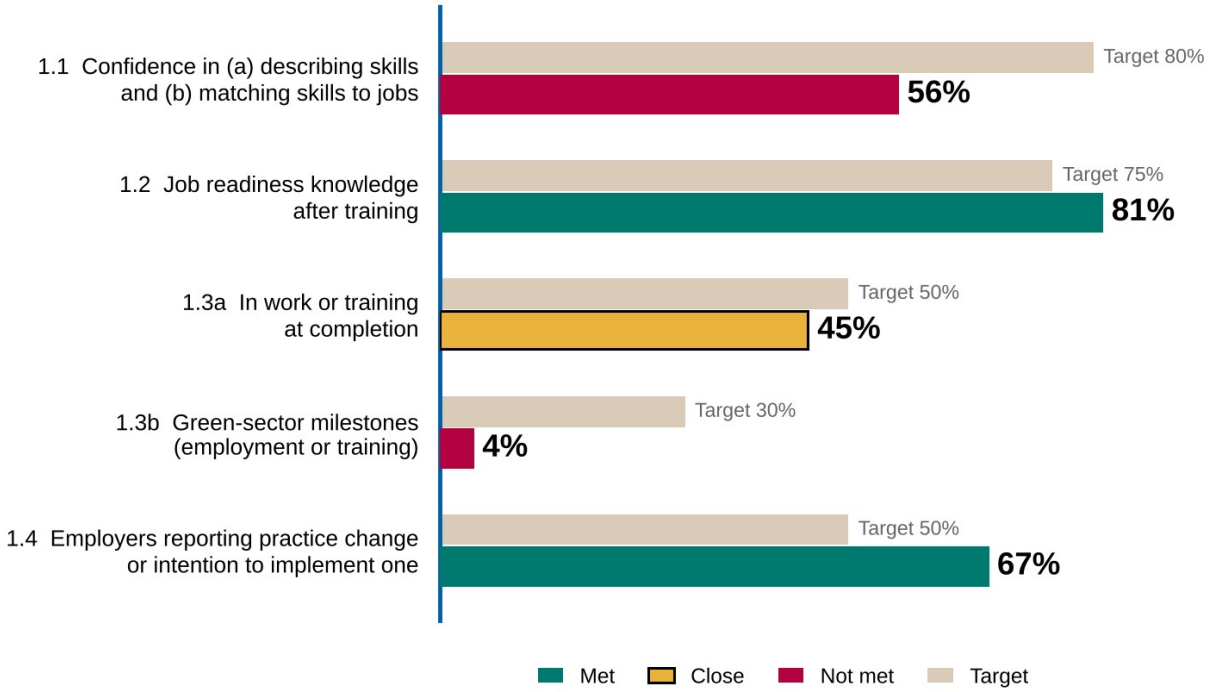
under-reported. They are used here to show in participants' own words what change looked like, and only claims supported by other evidence are strengthened by them.

For the collection of Most Significant Change stories, the participants, depending on the format, signed a consent form for participation in the focus group discussion (FGD) or the consent form for use of their client stories. During intake, participants signed a GDPR-compliant personal data collection and processing consent form, to allow job counsellors to record their demographic information and contact details, while the client feedback survey included a question to participants for consent to provide their name and surname together with their answers. Whenever the survey was administered via project staff (phone administration), staff asked for verbal consent after reading out loud the purpose of the survey and that the survey was not anonymous but confidential. If participants replied negatively, the survey was discontinued.

3 Results against the logframe

Results against logframe targets

Results for each outcome are compared with the targets. Figures are explained in sections 3.1 to 3.5.



3.1 Reach and delivery

The table below breaks down the delivery figures in the summary by country, showing where the pathway was delivered in full and where outputs fell short.

Delivery against targets, by country (result / target, % of target)

Green: target met or exceeded. Rose: below half of target.

Output	Germany	Greece	Spain	All three
Young people enrolled	**55%** 44 / 80	**130%** 65 / 50	**112%** 56 / 50	**92%** 165 / 180
Guided AI skills assessments completed	**60%** 24 / 40	**88%** 44 / 50	**90%** 45 / 50	**81%** 113 / 140
Employment and education action plans	**110%** 44 / 40	**118%** 59 / 50	**76%** 38 / 50	**101%** 141 / 140
Participants receiving one-to-one support	**98%** 39 / 40	**118%** 59 / 50	**92%** 46 / 50	**103%** 144 / 140
Job readiness and soft skills training completed	**19%** 15 / 80	**66%** 33 / 50	**33%** 13 / 40	**36%** 61 / 170

Output	Germany	Greece	Spain	All three
Participants in industry sessions, company visits or job fairs	**0%** 0 / 34	**56%** 19 / 34	Not monitored	**19%** 19 / 100
Employers and VET providers engaged	**52%** 26 / 50	**84%** 42 / 50	**28%** 14 / 50	**55%** 82 / 150
Employers providing a skills catalogue	**0%** 0 / 10	**100%** 10 / 10	**140%** 14 / 10	**80%** 24 / 30
VET providers with offerings in the AI tool	**100%** 5 / 5	**100%** 5 / 5	**0%** 0 / 5	**67%** 10 / 15
Employers trained on inclusive recruitment and retention	Not applicable	**40%** 14 / 35	**51%** 18 / 35	**46%** 32 / 70

Source: client assessment trackers and results framework, October 2026. Enrolment is shown against the internal consortium target of 180; against the 170 committed in Annex I of the Grant Agreement, enrolment reached 97%. Germany's enrolment target is 80 in the logframe and 70 in the project description. Employer training applied to Greece and Spain only. In Spain, activities linking participants with employers took place but were irregular and not systematically recorded.

Core pathway. The one-to-one pathway was delivered close to or above target in all three countries. Counsellors completed action plans and individual support for nearly every enrolled participant, and Greece exceeded its targets on both. Spain's lower action plan figure (76%) partly reflects data entry, as some plans were completed during onboarding sessions that were not recorded as one-to-one support. Germany enrolled just over half its target after a gap in enrolment that followed a staff transition shortly after the first participants joined in July 2025, and completed the fewest skills assessments relative to enrolment.

Group training. Completion of job readiness and soft skills training fell short of target in all three countries. Field teams reported that many participants saw group training as an obligatory step and wanted practical help linked to hiring, and online sessions drew very few participants. Each team adapted its approach: Greece delivered most training individually (57 individual sessions and two group sessions) and achieved the highest completion rate; Germany shifted towards practical content such as job search; and Spain used group training as a complement to personalised support, given participants' diverse needs.

Employer engagement and training. Employer outputs varied more between countries than any other area of delivery. Greece's vacancy-led approach engaged the most employers and met its targets for skills catalogues and VET providers, although a single counsellor acting as the main contact for employers could not reach those further away. Spain produced the most employer job profiles but engaged the fewest employers relative to target, had no VET providers in the tool, and did not systematically record activities linking participants with employers. Germany had no dedicated employer engagement role and held no employer workshop; its engagement focused on internship and vocational training places, mostly in care and nursing, and it met its VET provider target. Employer training was delivered in Greece and Spain only. Greek staff reported that employers had little time for training not linked to a vacancy, while in Spain employers' interest in diversity and inclusion training led to 18 companies being trained. Section 3.5 describes these activities and their results in more detail.

3.2 Understanding and describing skills

Among 32 participants with matched baseline and endline data who completed the AI assessment, 56% (18) reported improved confidence on both items, describing their skills and understanding which jobs match them, against an 80% target. Counting improvement on at least one item, 28 of 32 (88%) improved. Across all 35 matched pairs, average ratings of confidence in describing skills rose from 3.5 to 4.5 on a five-point scale, and in understanding matching jobs from 3.3 to 4.7. The biggest gain was in “I can search and apply for jobs”, from 2.5 to 4.3.

Matched baseline and endline data (32 pairs) and end-of-pilot survey (54 participants)

56% improved on both items (18 of 32 matched pairs); target 80%	**88%** improved on at least one item (28 of 32)	**85%** rate themselves 4 or 5 on describing their skills	**96%** rate themselves 4 or 5 on knowing which jobs match them

At the end of the pilot, of 54 surveyed participants, 85% rated themselves 4 or 5 out of 5 on describing their skills and 96% on understanding which jobs match them. Ratings were lowest on knowing labour rights (57%) and doing a job interview (72%).

> “I now know a little better what I can do and what I can improve in order to find work.”
>
> Participant, Spain

3.3 Job readiness, soft skills and knowledge

Of 37 participants tested before and after training, 81% (30) improved their knowledge, above the 75% target. Training reached 61 participants against a plan of 170, so participation, not learning, was the weak point.

The participant survey indicates the same. 54 participants ranked the usefulness of services as follows:

Service named most useful

59% CV and application support	**56%** one-to-one counselling	**37%** group training	**24%** the AI tool

3.4 Entry into work or training

Seventy-four participants reached an employment or training milestone: 45% of the 165 enrolled or 51% of the 146 who received at least one service beyond onboarding, against a 50% target. Thirty-eight participants secured a job, and six of them secured more than one.

74
reached an employment or training milestone (45% of 165)

51%
of the 146 who received at least one service beyond onboarding

38
secured a job; 6 secured more than one job

7
reached a green-sector milestone (4%; target 30%)

Site	Enrolled	Reached a milestone	Rate	Milestone types
Germany	44	8	**18%**	7 internships, 1 vocational training enrolment
Greece	65	30	**46%**	29 participants in job placements (34 placements), 5 vocational training enrolments, 2 completions, 1 voluntary work
Spain	56	36	**64%**	26 vocational training enrolments (one construction course), 9 participants in jobs (12 placements), 2 government integration courses, 1 apprenticeship, 1 internship, 1 study place
All	**165**	**74**	**45%**	**38 participants in a job**

Observations regarding milestones.

- **A single vocational course increased one site's result.** In Spain, 26 of 36 milestones were enrolments in the same vocational course, in construction. Without it, the site's rate would be far lower.
- **Jobs were mostly entry-level,** in kitchens, factories, warehouses, cleaning, housekeeping and agriculture.
- **The project's role in each placement was mixed.** In Greece, 20 of 34 placements came through project-supported or IRC-network routes and 9 were found by participants themselves.
- **Germany's lower rate reflects a longer pathway.** Where access to training depends on recognition, language and residence status, internships were the most accessible step (7 of 8 milestones), and recognition and language steps can take around six months.

Green-sector milestones. Seven participants reached a milestone relevant to the green industry, 4% against a 30% target. Staff classified each milestone themselves, so the count depends on how broadly "green" was interpreted. Intake goals show little green orientation. Project teams said the target assumed technical skills the group generally did not have, and entry-level jobs rarely carry a green label. The baseline assessment found that green roles in Germany were mostly skilled and highly qualified, that in Greece they sit mainly in rural areas where housing and transport are barriers, and that in Spain access for NEET youth was limited by documentation gaps and few training places. Further exploration of roles that require green skills may have further reaching impacts. The extent to which the tool or counsellors addressed green skills with participants was not systematically tracked.

3.5 Employers and training providers

The indicator asked whether trained employers apply a policy or practice change within three months. What was measured was a feedback survey after training: 10 of 15 employers (67%) said they intend to apply what they learned, against a target of 50%. The outcome is therefore met on intention. Because this captures intention directly after training, not a practice change three months later, it is not treated as evidence of change.

Employer engagement achieved more than the indicator shows, and it looked different in each site:

- **Greece:** a vacancy-led approach. Staff reached 42 companies, held a hotel-group workshop, organised three workplace visits and accompanied 13 participants to six job fairs. Hires followed close cooperation with two large employers, and one company visit led to job offers for every participant who attended.
- **Spain:** 14 employer job profiles were drawn up. Eighteen companies were trained, but activities were irregular and not systematically monitored.
- **Germany:** employer engagement consisted of talks on internship and training places, mostly in care and nursing, and produced two concrete opportunities for participants. Twenty-six of 28 employers contacted engaged.

3.6 Participants' experience of services

Of 54 surveyed participants, 76% were satisfied (4 or 5 out of 5), 69% said the support helped them move forward, 63% said it improved their life situation and 94% said staff treated them with respect. Satisfaction was high overall but varied between sites. Participants most often praised the attention of staff, CV and application help and practical training. Their suggestions focused on more staff and time, more personalised goals and delivering what was promised.

Participant survey (54 respondents)

76%	69%	63%	94%
satisfied (4 or 5 out of 5)	said the support helped them move forward	said it improved their life situation	said staff treated them with respect

> "They focused on each person and their specific case, making sure to answer all the questions we had."
>
> Participant survey, Spain

4 Impact story: claims and evidence

4.1 The contribution claim

The evidence suggests a plausible contribution to clearer self-understanding of skills and, for a share of participants, to entry into work or training. It is not attributable to the project alone. The results are consistent with the pathway in the theory of change, from assessment and counselling to clearer self-understanding and job-search skills. The link from the AI tool to jobs is weaker. Of the six storytellers who found a job, two did not use the tool, and participants credited counsellor discussions, CV help, job fairs and employer contact alongside it.

Other factors also shaped results. Participants found jobs through their own search and through other organisations, and a seasonal hospitality labour market absorbed some. Differences between sites point to structural factors: staffing continuity, the stability of the programme hosting the pilot, and the time that recognition and language steps take. Staff also reported that some employers are reluctant to hire from certain national backgrounds, a barrier independent of participants' readiness.

4.2 How strong is the evidence?

Each claim is rated strong, moderate or limited, based on the number of independent sources, sample size and risk of bias.

Claim	Strength	Main sources and caveat
Young people understand and present their skills better	**Moderate to strong**	Matched data, endline survey, stories, counsellors. Small matched base
Young people improved their job readiness knowledge	**Moderate**	Pre/post tests (37 participants, none in Spain), participant survey
Young people entered work or training	**Moderate**	Trackers, stories. Attribution to the project is partial; no follow-up on retention or quality
The AI tool helped young people understand their skills	**Moderate**	Participant survey, stories, counsellors
The AI tool improved job matching	**Limited**	Counsellors, staff reflection, stories
Employers changed practice	**Limited**	15 respondents, intention only

5 Contribution of the AI tool

The tool's contribution to the project's social innovation is central. Five sources give a consistent but mixed picture: the participant survey, the stories, the counsellor survey, staff reflection and the tool's own usage data.

5.1 What participants said

Of 54 surveyed participants, 41 completed the assessment. Twenty-three said it showed them skills they had not considered and 13 said it partly did; five said it told them nothing new. The tool ranked below CV and application help and one-to-one counselling when participants named the most useful service.

Participants who completed the assessment (41 of 54)

3.8 / 5
usefulness rating (63% gave 4 or 5)

3.6 / 5
ease of use rating (58% gave 4 or 5)

In the stories, five of eleven participants said the assessment showed strengths they had not valued, such as responsibility, persistence and learning quickly. For people with little formal education or work history, the shift was about recognising that everyday and informal experience counts.

> "I liked it because it made me think about things that I don't normally consider important."
>
> Participant, Spain

> "Before, when someone asked me what my strengths were, I did not know exactly what to say."
>
> Participant, Greece

Where it did not work. Participants met unclear or ill-fitting questions, found it slow and, for some, experienced it as a procedure rather than a help. Their most frequent requests were better translation (15), simpler language (9), easier navigation (7) and a shorter questionnaire (7). Few recommended occupations were "liked" by participants, which supports counsellors' view that the tool helps people describe their skills more than it matches them to jobs.

Link to jobs. Four of the six storytellers who found a job used the tool and two did not. When participants described what changed for them, they linked it to finishing the assessment and then talking through the results with a counsellor. None said the tool on its own made the difference.

5.2 What counsellors said

Counsellors found the tool easy to use themselves (4.25 out of 5) but not easy for participants (2.75). Half said it helped participants identify hidden skills, and the same number said it did little to increase their capacity to match participants with local occupations. The generated CV was the lowest-rated output, yet the

most-mentioned useful feature in open comments. Views on fit with the target group were split, and the two counsellors who had used the tool with more than 15 participants rated the fit low, which suggests concerns may grow with heavier use.

Job counsellor survey (8 counsellors)

4.25 / 5 easy to use for counsellors themselves	**2.75 / 5** easy to use for participants	**8 of 8** said it could be valuable to other providers (1 definitely, 7 possibly)

All eight counsellors said the tool could be valuable to other employment service providers (one “definitely”, seven “possibly”). They added that the assessment needed far more active management than a form-fill, with motivation, prompting and help with accounts and passwords, and that participants who already had a CV had to re-enter everything.

The tool was localised to each region: teams mapped local demand and opportunities, adapted the occupation taxonomy, tested it with users and refined delivery. Even so, field teams found that the taxonomy fitted local labour markets poorly, because occupations are not tied to live local vacancies.

> “The tool in its current form presents an additional challenge for many beneficiaries. They are exhausted and disappointed by the major things they have already gone through.”
>
> A job counsellor

5.3 What the Community of Practice added

Partners in all three countries named participant motivation as the largest barrier, because many young people want a job now. Low literacy and digital skills mean intensive counsellor support, and some participants’ languages are not supported in the tool. Partners agreed that the skills-based CV is better described as a skills profile, since employers still recruit on qualifications and experience.

They reframed the question from whether the tool works to what it does well, and for whom. It appears most useful for young people with little work experience, low confidence or a need to identify transferable strengths, and adds less for participants with clear goals and extensive experience.

5.4 Assessment of the tool’s contribution

Question	Assessment
Did it help participants understand and describe their skills?	**Yes, moderate evidence.** It prompted recognition of informal skills and more confident self-description, mostly inside a counselling conversation.

Question	Assessment
Did it improve job matching for participants and employers?	**Not yet; limited evidence.** Occupations are not tied to live local vacancies, and counsellors and field teams do not see it strengthening matching. Employers recruit on qualifications and are not used to skills-based profiles, so awareness raising is needed.
Did it support counsellors' work?	**Partly.** It gave counsellors a structured way into the conversation and a skills profile, at the cost of considerable time and technical support.
Was it suitable for the target group?	**Only with support.** Language, length, literacy and digital skills limit independent use. It fits best participants with a career-change or limited-experience profile.
Can it be used with other groups?	**Possibly.** All eight counsellors saw at least possible value for other employment service providers.

Conditions for the tool to work are consistent across sources: deliver it as part of counselling, with a debrief of the results; tell participants at the start that it is not an exam; give help with the technical steps; and fix the tool's language, length and links to vacancies.

6 Differences by gender and other characteristics

6.1 Gender

Women were 35 of 165 participants (21%), against 130 men. Participation differed by site: 34% women in Germany, 27% in Spain and 8% in Greece. In Greece, nearly 40% of participants were unaccompanied or formerly unaccompanied youth reached through shelters and referral partners. Most unaccompanied minors are boys, and this largely explains the gender difference at that site.

Women and men completed the AI assessment at similar rates. Milestones differed markedly: 20% of women (7 of 35) reached one, against 51% of men (67 of 130). The gap is driven mainly by Spain, where all 26 enrolments in the construction course were men and the three women's milestones were all job placements, in packaging, factory work and kitchen assistance.

21%
of participants were women (35 of 165)

20%
of women reached a milestone (7 of 35)

51%
of men reached a milestone (67 of 130)

Site	Women enrolled	Women reaching a milestone	Men enrolled	Men reaching a milestone
Germany	15	2 (13%)	29	6 (21%)
Greece	5	2 (40%)*	60	28 (47%)
Spain	15	3 (20%)	41	33 (80%)
All three	**35**	**7 (20%)**	**130**	**67 (51%)**

* Only five women enrolled in Greece, so the rate is indicative.

Women are under-represented among survey respondents and story-tellers too, so other differences by gender cannot be reliably assessed. They are flagged for follow-up rather than reported as findings.

6.2 Age, education and language

A small number of participants were under 18 at enrolment, as the age criterion was relaxed in practice. Staff working with minors in shelters found the work more effective than with adults, because shelter staff added structure: they made sure appointments happened and helped with questionnaires and workplace visits.

Differences by education level did not point in one direction, and the pooled pattern is driven by the single construction course in one site, so no education effect should be inferred. Language level mattered where it was recorded consistently. In Greece, milestone rates rose with knowledge of Greek. In the other sites the picture was affected by site-specific factors.

7 Wider changes and unintended effects

7.1 What changed for participants

Eleven participants described their most significant change. Five named an employment change first, four a change in skills, confidence or outlook, and two named both. Six had found a job. In Greece, all five participants who had found work said the job lets them support themselves or become independent. The most lasting change may be job-search capability, since it does not depend on one job: six storytellers said they can now search and apply by themselves.

Most Significant Change stories (11)

6 of 11 had found a job	**6 of 11** can now search and apply by themselves	**11 of 11** would recommend the programme	**4** had already told friends

> “Now I can search for vacancies and apply by myself.”
>
> Participant, Greece

> “Before, I always looked for the same types of jobs and now I think about other options.”
>
> Participant, Spain

Participants also described changes beyond the theory of change: access to documents, an address and a bank account, which are preconditions for formal work (four Greek stories); hope and emotional wellbeing (five stories, three from Spain); housing and personal security linked to a stable job (three Greek stories); calmer family relationships; and digital skills. All eleven would recommend the programme and four had already told friends. Their advice was consistent: do not underestimate yourself, and ask for help.

Some changes were still evolving when the stories were recorded. Some jobs were informal or not yet stable, one participant was still waiting for documents that blocked a hire, and one was still working through recognition of certificates.

7.2 Unintended effects

Positive unintended effects include access to legal documents and bank accounts and hope and wellbeing. New access to hard-to-reach camps opened through the hotel workshop in Greece. There was also a negative effect: participants who expected an immediate job and then found that the process takes several appointments often stopped attending. Administrative support, which participants needed to reach milestones, also took a large share of counsellor time, and participants sometimes expected more than the service could sustain.

8 Lessons and recommendations

The lessons combine the participant and counsellor surveys, the stories, the after action reviews and the Community of Practice. They are set out as five learnings, each with what we recommend, followed by the five recommendations in full.

8.1 Five learnings

1

Learning 1

Pair the tool with a counsellor

113 participants completed the guided skills assessment and 141 individual action plans were completed.

What we learned

The tool surfaces informal skills, and the counsellor turns them into next steps. It worked as a guided counselling exercise, not as a standalone task, and needed far more time than planned.

What we recommend

Budget time for a guided assessment with a debrief, and link the tool to live vacancies.

> “I liked it because it made me think about things that I don’t normally consider important.”
>
> Participant, Spain

2

Learning 2

Personal support matters most

Of 54 participants, 59% named CV and application support as the most useful service and 56% one-to-one counselling.

What we learned

Young people valued practical, one-to-one help most. Group and online training had weak take-up, and training was more useful when tied to a concrete goal and the action plan. Administrative support (documents, recognition, registrations) took a large share of counsellor time but was essential for reaching milestones.

What we recommend

Keep group training practical, and budget time for documents and administration.

3

Learning 3

Dedicate capacity to employers

82 employers and training providers were engaged, and one hotel workshop in Greece, attended by 23 young people, was followed by five new enrolments.

What we learned

Working with employers is a different job from counselling: it means building relationships and finding vacancies, and it is closer to sales than to counselling.

What we recommend

Create a dedicated, vacancy-led employer role held by the organisation and not by an individual member of staff.

4

Learning 4

Build local partnerships

24 employers shared a skills catalogue and 10 VET providers put courses in the tool.

What we learned

Shelters, NGOs and employers opened doors: referrals, placements, documents. Referrals from trusted organisations, word of mouth and links to a specific vacancy worked; materials alone did not. Language and age criteria were relaxed in practice, so the real target group should be stated up front.

What we recommend

Build partnerships at organisation level and keep them alive beyond one-off events.

5

Learning 5

Tailor to each country

Milestone rates ranged from 18% to 64% across the three sites.

What we learned

Local context shapes the pace: recognition and language steps, documents and local labour markets. The green-sector target assumed technical skills that participants did not have.

What we recommend

Set targets country by country, allow time for first steps, base green targets on the entry-level green routes open to the group, and agree a common definition of a green milestone.

Further lessons.

A design that rests on one counsellor is fragile: staff turnover and cuts to complementary programming shaped delivery, and counselling capacity must be sized for participants' language and digital needs. Presenting the service at registration as a route to an immediate job led many participants to stop coming once they saw that the process takes several appointments. Teams would avoid delivering the assessment as a standalone digital task and online group sessions for this group.

8.2 Recommendations

#	Recommendation	What it means in practice
1	**Pair the tool with a counsellor.** Budget time for a guided assessment and debrief.	Keep the assessment inside guided counselling, with a results debrief and a clear message that it is not an exam. Rework the tool for this group: shorter, plain language, voice, more languages (for example Somali and Farsi), CV upload, localised occupations linked to live vacancies, and rename the CV output a skills profile.
2	**Dedicate employer capacity.** A vacancy-led role, plus help with documents and recognition.	Make employer engagement a dedicated, vacancy-led role and institutionalise relationships beyond individual staff. Treat help with documents and recognition as part of the service, with referral partners for language, legal and housing needs.
3	**Build local partnerships.** Shelters, NGOs, employers and VET providers, held by the organisation and not by one person.	Tie every service to a concrete vacancy or event, recruit through trusted referrers and state the real eligibility criteria.
4	**Tailor to your target group.** Targets by country, a share of women, entry-level green routes.	Close the gender gap: set a target share of women, recruit through channels that reach women, offer training routes in fields open to women and ask women directly what barriers they face. Define entry-level green occupations (recycling and waste, energy-efficiency trades, sustainable agriculture) and add short certified training.
5	**Measure what lasts.** Baseline and endline for all, plus a six-month follow-up.	Pre/post tests in every site, a six-month follow-up on job retention and quality, gender, age and recruitment channel recorded, and an anonymous feedback option.

Field teams also discussed a future “virtual coach” delivering short job readiness modules. Partners pointed to the importance of channel choice, since many participants send voice messages rather than type, and to the need for users to be able to reach a human coach. Any next product should be tested with participants, including women, before it is scaled.

8.3 Conclusion

SkillsPath delivered its core service pathway and demonstrates the social innovation model’s plausible contribution to better self-understanding and job-search skills among young refugees and migrants. It did not reach its targets for confidence gains, group training, green-sector milestones and employer training, and results varied widely between sites, shaped by staffing continuity and local conditions. Women reached milestones at well under half the rate of men but notably comprised only 21% of project participants. The AI tool is a useful discussion aid for self-understanding but is not yet a job-matching tool, and it fits participants with limited language and digital skills poorly unless it is used inside guided counselling. What remains to be shown is the tool’s effect on job matching, how results last, and use by other providers at scale.

Annex A Methodology in full

This annex sets out the evaluation questions, sources, consent arrangements and analysis in full. The limitations are in section 2.2.

A.1 Evaluation questions and target groups

The evaluation assessed the overall impact of the pilot on refugee and migrant youth NEETs, the contribution of the AI tool to the intended outcomes, and the ability of employment service providers to deliver better job matching and counselling with the tool. It also examined the effect on employers and VET providers engaged during the pilot. It followed a contribution-based logic (claim, evidence, interpretation, limitations) and sought to answer four questions:

(a) Have the intended outcomes been achieved for the relevant target groups, as presented in the theory of change and logframe? Can we claim the project contributed, and how certain are we?

(b) What was the contribution of the social innovation (the AI skills assessment) to skills assessment, career guidance and job placement, and what was the effect of activation measures on access to employment and education?

(c) What was the wider impact on the target groups, on top of or besides the outcomes in the theory of change? What changed, and what was the most significant change? Were changes anticipated, and did they differ by demographic characteristics such as gender, age or education? Were there unintended consequences, and what were the main obstacles?

(d) What are the lessons on integrating AI in employability services for migrant and NEET youth: what to keep and replicate, and what to avoid?

Three groups were addressed: refugee and migrant youth NEETs in Germany, Greece and Spain who took part in the pilot; the consortium job counsellors who used the tool; and employers and VET providers engaged by partners.

A.2 Methods and data sources

A mixed-methods evaluation design was used. Quantitative methods measure outcome and output indicators; qualitative methods explain how and why change happened, and results from different sources are compared to strengthen or triangulate findings.

Evidence base

165	54	37	35
participants in the trackers	responses to the participant feedback survey	pre/post knowledge tests	matched baseline and endline questionnaires

11	8	15	2
participant Most Significant Change stories	job counsellors surveyed	employers surveyed after training	after action reviews, plus Community of Practice sessions

Source	What it measures	Coverage
Participant trackers	Demographics, services received, milestones and outputs; gender and age disaggregation, nationality and other characteristics; the share of youth supported who are in employment or training at completion	165 enrolled participants in three countries; 146 received at least one service beyond onboarding
Baseline and endline self-assessment questions	Outcome 1.1: the ability to articulate skills in relation to desired occupations, including those aligned with the green economy	35 matched pairs; 32 of them completed the AI assessment
Pre/post knowledge tests before and after the job readiness trainings	Outcome 1.2: job readiness, soft skills and knowledge to apply for and access job and skills development opportunities	37 participants (Germany 14, Greece 23); none in Spain
Participant feedback survey	Endline self-assessment, services, the AI tool, satisfaction, obstacles and needs. By phone with staff or online; not anonymous	54 participants (Greece 23, Spain 21, Germany 10), against about 80 planned; 46 men, 6 women, 2 not recorded
Job counsellor survey	Counsellor views of the tool and its effect on their work and on participants	8 counsellors across the three sites; 16 July to 24 August 2026
Employer feedback survey after training	Intended practice change after training on inclusive hiring	15 employers (Greece and Spain)
Client stories (Most Significant Change)	Change in participants' own words, including feedback on the use of the AI tool	11 stories: Germany 2, Spain 3 (one focus group discussion), Greece 6 (two focus group discussions)
After action review meetings	Project staff insights on what worked and what did not in four phases: outreach; skills assessment, validation and individual support; skills development and activation; employer engagement. Partner experience of the AI tool	Two meetings (IRC Germany and IRC Hellas; INSERTA)
Community of Practice meeting notes	The Community of Practice brought partners and other stakeholders together for training and knowledge exchange at pilot start, to discuss implementation challenges and to exchange experience across locations, including on the AI skills assessment	Session summary reports
Baseline assessment, November 2025	Local labour market context, barriers, growth and green sectors, views on AI support; used to interpret differences between sites	Bonn and Rhein-Sieg, Thessaloniki, Andalucía
Tool usage data	Number of participants creating profiles and interacting with the tool, by demographic information and data points added (skills, experience, career interest), skills groupings and recommended occupations	Participants using the tool in the three sites

A.3 Data collection and ethical considerations

Participation by young people and staff in project and evaluation activities followed data protection protocols and core ethical principles, including informed consent for the purpose of collection, sharing, storage and publication of data; voluntary participation in all project and evaluation activities; and confidentiality. During intake, participants signed a GDPR-compliant personal data collection and processing consent form, to allow

job counsellors to record demographic information and contact details. The participant feedback survey included a question asking for consent to provide name and surname together with answers.

Whenever the survey was administered by project staff over the phone, staff asked for verbal consent after reading out the purpose of the survey and that it was not anonymous but confidential. If participants replied negatively, the survey was discontinued. For the Most Significant Change stories, participants, depending on the format, signed a consent form for participation in the focus group discussion or a consent form for use of their stories.

A.4 Most Significant Change methodology disclaimer

For the purpose of this report the Most Significant Change technique was applied in a simplified form. Project teams collected stories and recorded them in a tailor-made template. The main domains of change were pre-defined and followed the project's theory of change (employment or education status; confidence in relation to skills identification and job search), and all 11 stories were analysed together by theme and counted. Participants were free to describe any other change, and those changes are reported separately.

There was no panel selection and no structured verification, and the stories came from different sources (two interviews and nine focus-group accounts). The stories therefore cannot show how common a change is or attribute it to the project, and criticism may be under-reported. They remain valid for showing in participants' own words what change looked like, how the support was experienced and which changes were not anticipated. They are used here as one source alongside the project trackers and surveys, and only claims supported by other evidence are strengthened by them.

A.5 Analysis, triangulation and disaggregation

Each outcome is reported against its logframe target, and sources that address the same question are compared: agreement strengthens a finding and differences are stated. Counts rather than percentages are used for small groups. Each claim is rated strong, moderate or limited, based on the number of independent sources, sample size and risk of bias. Differences by gender, age and country are analysed from the trackers, milestone records and the participant survey. Quotes are anonymised and identified by country, or by role.