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Tackling skills shortages First Minister announces new funding to help businesses.

A pilot project to reduce Scotland's skills gap by formally recognising and accrediting the skills and qualifications of people from overseas is being expanded.

The initiative, which is being delivered by Glasgow Caledonian University, will support employers by helping migrants transfer training gained in other countries into UK-recognised qualifications across key sectors such as social care, construction, engineering, IT and hospitality.

The scheme has already helped 40 migrants and refugees. Another 40 people are expected to take part in 2019/20 and the scheme will receive around £130,000 funding from the Scottish Government this year. The lessons learned from the project will be studied to see if it can be rolled out across Scotland in due course.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced the funding at the STUC's Annual Congress in Dundee and outlined the steps the Scottish Government is taking to support and protect migrant workers.

She said:

“With all of Scotland's population growth over the next 25 years projected to come from migration, we need to do all we can to ensure people who move to Scotland are able to realise their potential by accessing employment and addressing skills shortages, and allowing them to build their lives and raise their families here.

“This project will help to address skills shortages across some of our key sectors and remove some of the barriers migrants and refugees face when it comes to recognising overseas qualifications, skills and learning, by providing training and matching them with employers.

“In the face of EU exit uncertainty the Scottish Government has been consistently clear that we will support people who have made Scotland their home. Restrictions on movement and access to workers with skills our economy needs would have a disastrous impact on many of Scotland's key sectors and on our communities.

“It is clear that a one size fits all approach to immigration is inappropriate for Scotland. We will continue to call for a tailored approach to migration that meets the needs of business and provides a welcoming environment for all those who wish to live and work in Scotland.”

Dr Ima Jackson, project lead Glasgow Caledonian University said:

“People often think these types of projects are simply for the individual people who have come to Scotland with skills gained from outside of the UK – and of course on one level it is - but more

importantly it is for Scotland as a whole. It will help Scottish businesses large and small bring into their own companies the skills they need to develop and grow.

“Having a formal process which supports the recognition of skills people bring helps employers demonstrate that their company incorporates the diversity of expertise within the people of Scotland - which increasingly reflects the diversity across the world. What a waste it would be not to have processes to recognise the skills, ambition and hope that people bring when they migrate.

“Scotland is politically, culturally and economically stating its place within Brexit and it is taking an important stand. But that stance needs real processes behind it to support that ambition. The skills recognition process which is being developed and led by Glasgow Caledonian University is playing a small but important part within that wider ambition.”

Background

Phase one and two of the project, which received total funding of £158,207, helped 40 migrants receive training and qualifications. Partners in the ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ project include the Bridges Programmes, which supports the social, educational and economic integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in Glasgow, Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and Glasgow Clyde College.

The project aligns with the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 – 2022.

EU citizens living in Scotland are to be supported to remain in Scotland during and beyond the uncertainty associated with EU exit.

Information on how the EU exit might affect people and businesses is available.

Official population projections from National Records of Scotland (NRS) predict more deaths than births in each year over the 25-year period to 2041, and predict that all of Scotland’s population growth in that period is projected to come from migration.

Quotes from participants in the project:

Miura Lima is a qualified social worker from Portugal, with two Masters degrees who currently works in Glasgow as a social care assistant.

She said:

“I have found it very challenging to get my skills and expertise recognised in Scotland. The project is helping me to get my skills recognised so I can work at the level I have been educated to and have experience in. It is as though people don’t quite believe what you bring simply because it comes from another place. Anything that can help this process is welcome.

“It is so important to have this. I have been here for several years and I am really hard working and yet it is a complete struggle. There are lots of people who have migrated who experience this disconnect between their skills and education and the work they actually do. So I know this process will help people like me to use their skills in the best possible way - for me and for Scotland.

“Also, with Brexit, employers are having to look at widening their recruitment to meet skill shortages and the project is necessary to support this happening. Employers in Scotland need this project now and in the future.”

Mohamed Hassan is a qualified mechanical engineer from Sudan with experience of working in the petroleum industry. He said:

“Despite my experience working in the oil and gas industry, over the last two years I’ve lived in Scotland, I haven’t been able to find a job in my industry. All I want is a job that will allow me to work at a level that I am qualified at. I have trained hard to be a professional engineer which involved studying at university. I want to continue my career in Scotland and I am looking for the chance to do that.”