



# OVERCOMING OBSTACLES IN BORDER REGIONS

TRAIN AND QUALIFY  
IN YOUR COUNTRY,  
WORK IN ANOTHER



## Spain and Portugal: recognising qualifications across borders

Did you know that almost 7 000 Portuguese work in the Spanish region of Galicia and almost 2 000 Spaniards are employed in the North of Portugal region?

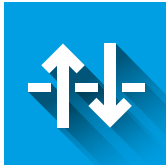
Close ties between Galicia and the North of Portugal regions have existed throughout history, helped by **similarities in the languages** spoken.

Yet, locals still experience difficulties when considering accepting a job offer across the border. Their professional diplomas need to be officially accepted and **lengthy recognition processes** may mean missing out on an opportunity.

The **barriers to cross-border employment** include a lack of information, the need for costly translations and strong liability rules in case of mistakes.

With many people pursuing positions across the border, steps are being taken by the two regions to make it easier for workers to have their qualifications accepted.

**Galicia and North of Portugal are pioneering efforts to ease qualification recognition for job seekers throughout the EU.**



## Two countries, one workforce

A **national qualification** is “recognised” if it is accepted as being equivalent to a diploma earned in the host country. The holder is then granted the same rights as someone who holds a national diploma. The recognition of qualifications and diplomas is based on international agreements.

The 2005 EU Directive has been transposed by member countries and establishes **procedures to recognise regulated professions**.



## Regional trailblazers in qualification recognition

Authorities on both sides of the border are working together to ease qualification recognition throughout the region.

## Best practices

Cross-border organisations:

- ▶ **provide joint study programmes** for university students, including Master’s courses
- ▶ **align vocational qualifications** in mechanics, catering and tourism
- ▶ **teach language courses** to those interested in working on the other side of the border
- ▶ **coach potential entrepreneurs** with the aim of promoting cross-border cooperation.





## Border barriers

Some of the cross-border obstacles (and their status)

- ▶ **administration** — complex, lengthy procedures discourage workers and their potential employers (in progress)
- ▶ **costs** — required translations add extra expense for the worker (unresolved)
- ▶ **vocational and training recognition** — very often education and training provided by public employment services or the private sector are not recognised (in progress)
- ▶ **lack of information** available (in progress).



## Invisible obstacles, real issues

EU rules on **qualification recognition and educational initiatives aim to remove legal obstacles** to the cross-border recognition of certain national qualifications. However, EU countries do not often recognise **vocational training** or lesser-known professional qualifications from another country.

In North of Portugal, recognition is processed by different organisations depending on the profession, making the overall procedure more complex. The main problems for applicants in the two regions are:

- ▶ complex, lengthy procedures with **extra costs**
- ▶ **lack of information** — employers are not likely to offer contracts to non-nationals if they are uncertain about the recognition process
- ▶ no academic **recognition of non-formal training** — for example those provided by employment services
- ▶ **liability for public administrations** — public bodies in both regions are liable for mistakes made in the recognition process. Fear of being charged with fraud causes administrations to reject qualifications if there are any uncertainties.



## Galicia and North of Portugal — linked by culture



### Galicia



**Area:**  
29 574 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
2 720 544

### North of Portugal

**Area:**  
21 276 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:**  
3 603 778



#### Top sectors:

Automotive, health, metal, fishing, textiles, stone quarrying, agriculture, food, naval and construction

More Portuguese work in Galicia than vice versa, though overall unemployment is higher in Galicia than North of Portugal. **Skills demands** on either side of the border differ – North of Portugal hires Galicians to work in the automotive, health and metal sectors, whereas most Portuguese in Galicia work in construction.



## EU steps towards qualification recognition

- ▶ **517 888** — number of qualifications recognised from 1997-2015 by EU and European Free Trade Association member countries
- ▶ **EU Directive 2005/36/EC** – as amended, established recognition procedures for several regulated professions such as architects, pharmacists and doctors.
- ▶ **Bologna Process and European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning** — provide guidelines for comparing academic degrees
- ▶ **European Professional Card** — enables speedy recognition of diplomas in five professions
- ▶ **Lisbon Recognition Convention** — guarantees graduates access to assessments of their qualifications in another country.

### More information

Communication 'Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions': <http://bit.ly/2v5u4PK>

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The Cross-Border Review: <http://bit.ly/28h802K>

The full case study: <http://bit.ly/2wsShjt>



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