Passport for Work's Legacy: Journal 4

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Mijn skills, mijn baan

Vind een baan   Voor werkgevers
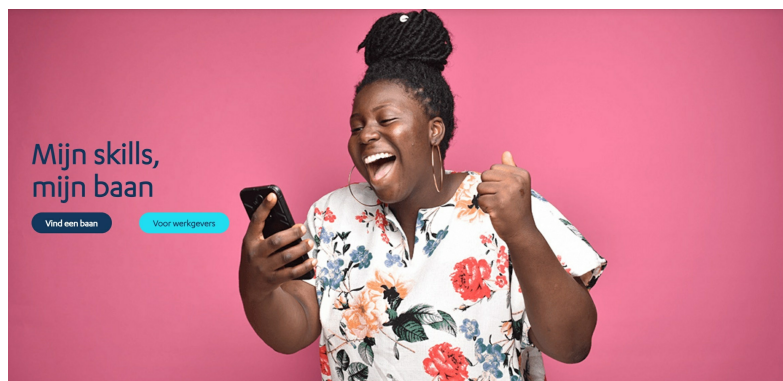
Passport for Work's fourth and final journal, reflecting on its legacy and its activities after the formal project period.

Executive summary

Passport for Work project is an innovative initiative aimed at promoting labor market participation and inclusion for vulnerable groups, particularly those with vocational-level education, in the sectors of Construction, Technology, and Healthcare. The project has achieved significant milestones and generated valuable knowledge throughout its project period, as well as after the formal project period concluded in October 2022.

The primary focus of Passport for Work is to provide a skills-based tool, including a skillprint (in essence a skills passport), to empower individuals, enhance their self-awareness, and support their journey towards employment. By emphasizing skills rather than rigid job profiles, the impact analysis revealed that the project has successfully encouraged inclusivity, sustainable employability, and a shift in recruitment practices.

Lessons learned from the project highlight the importance of engaging partners, such as the Dutch public employment service (UWV) and the regional job intermediation organization "Participatiebedrijf", to facilitate implementation and build communities around employers, education, and support services. Collaborating with existing initiatives and organizations working with the target groups has proven essential for effective outreach and impact.

The project's future plans involve scaling and expanding the use of Passport for Work within its existing target group as well as those with a higher educational attainment level and exploring skill-based intervention opportunities for internal employees of the municipality. Additionally, the project aims to optimize the skillprint, ensure transparency, and further broaden its reach to other sectors beyond Construction, Technology, and Healthcare.

A significant achievement of the project is the development of a national skills taxonomy, based on the established O*NET framework. This innovative approach provides a standardized and comprehensive framework for assessing and recognizing skills, facilitating effective communication between job seekers, employers, and stakeholders.

The legacy of the Passport for Work project lies in its contribution to a skills-based approach to employment, the establishment of a national skills taxonomy, and the promotion of inclusivity and sustainable employability. By empowering individuals and reshaping recruitment practices, the project has the potential to influence future workforce development initiatives and foster a skills-driven labor market.

Overall, the Passport for Work project has demonstrated its value in supporting vulnerable groups, promoting skills-based thinking, and contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic labor market. The insights gained and the solutions implemented have laid a solid foundation for future endeavors in workforce development and skills recognition.

What has happened with the project since its end date

Since its inception, Passport for Work has focused primarily on supporting the labor market participation of vulnerable groups at the vocational (MBO) level, specifically in the sectors of Construction, Technology, and Healthcare. The project aims to fulfill a clear societal objective by reaching the untapped labor potential within these target groups, aligning with the responsibilities and objectives of the municipality in the areas of labor market and culture. Thus far, the following results have been achieved:

- An accessible digital tool for target groups in vocational education (MBO) levels 1-2 and 3-4, starting from language level B1, to assess and depict the one's soft skills

- A comprehensive overview of an individual's skills in a "skillprint" that evokes a positive feeling of recognition, acknowledgement, and encouragement to think positively about employment possibilities among users.

- As of 1 October 2023:

    - 1789 active users in the platform , representing a year-on-year growth of 300 users.

    - A total number of 524 skill passports completed.

    - 433 users available in the "talent pool" of the platform, indicating availability to work.

    - 14 participating employers.

    - 7 matches (in which matches are defined as a jobseeker accepting a connection request by an employer).

- A pilot project successfully completed by over 500 participants from different target groups who have completed and created a skillprint.

- A job expo ("vacaturecafe") in late March where job seekers and prospective employers met and jobseeker skillprints were discussed.

- Initial practical testing carried out by several participation companies and organizations catering to a slightly "higher" target group, such as ERGON/IBN, UWV/Leerwerk loket, Huis naar Werk, and a number of diverse employers.

- The option to compare individual skillprints on the supply side with 24 skill-based occupations on the demand side of the labour market.

- The experiences from this pilot project provide sufficient perspective for expansion with more skills-based professional occupational profiles.

- A white paper has been developed with contributions from two reputable psychometrists, providing substantive support for the skill-based approach and potential matching opportunities.

- Scientific support for the assessment and matching components of PfW and the extent to which the tool aligns with 10 performance indicators.

- A prototype matching module for candidates, organizations, and employment professionals.

- An operational platform for both employers and jobseekers:www.passportforwork.nl

- Initiatives for further development and reskilling opportunities through integration with Summa, Oefenen.nl ("Klik & Tik"), and Brabant leert through a collaboration with the province of North-Brabant.

- A site visit with labour market intermediaries from the Czech Republic to learn more about lifelong development practices in The Netherlands and Passport4Work as a best practice.

The main users of Passport for Work are individuals who receive a skillprint or skillspaspoort. This digital document is designed to enhance their self-awareness and autonomy. By emphasizing skills-based thinking, the tool opens doors to employment opportunities in an unconventional way. While users are encouraged to utilize the tool independently, they can also receive guidance from labor market professionals, such as those from the participation company, to ensure effective utilization of their skills.

Passport for Work recognizes the need for a shift in thinking on the demand side of the labor market. Instead of relying solely on rigid job and competency profiles, there is a growing need to prioritize skills-based thinking. This adaptation process from standard procedures to a personalized skills-based approach requires significant attention during the implementation of Passport for Work. It allows for a practical translation of inclusion and sustainable employability into organizations' recruitment and selection policies.

Commercial market players in the field of labor market mediation, testing, and assessments are unlikely to focus on these target groups, as there may be limited commercial viability. Employers do not naturally seek such instruments. Thus, Passport for Work aims to fill this gap and cater to the needs of these underserved groups.

Looking ahead, the focus for the coming period, particularly in 2023, is on achieving specific goals. This includes further utilizing and scaling the current version of Passport for Work with partner organizations and interested parties. Although the validity and reliability of the job matching algorithm are still being improved, the skillprint can already be effectively used for job matching purposes. Furthermore, Passport for Work has been designated as one of the key pilot projects in The Netherlands among the realization of the Dutch CompetentNL skills language.

Passport for Work intends to continue aligning with the needs and opportunities of partner companies and organizations in the field. This involves conducting additional market research in the short term to ensure continued relevance. The inflow of job seekers may also come from the Schaalsprong (Brainport region) and existing growth fund applications/Katapult projects related to low literacy, in collaboration with the province of North-Brabant.

Furthermore, The Passport for Work project team, responding to a demand from the market, has initiated a collaboration with solar panel companies to develop a training program for solar panel installation technicians, an offering currently absent in the market. Bringing together several companies, the initiative has cultivated a community that cooperates on various fronts such as material procurement and personnel management. These companies aim to stand out in the market by providing quality material, promoting good employer practices, and prioritizing staff training within a safe working environment. There is a shared aspiration to establish a collaborative onboarding process and learning path using a skills-based recruitment and development approach, with Passport for Work serving as the enabling platform. Discussions are ongoing to secure a joint subsidy to support these efforts.

A significant part of the Passport for Work project's strategy includes assisting companies in enhancing their learning culture for sustainable job placements. To address the gap identified in advisory talks with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a Learning Culture Scan tool has been developed and piloted. This practical tool provides feasible improvement suggestions, and the advisory talks offer diverse, tailored solutions catering to

the specific needs of each company.

To meet the promised deliverables, Passport for Work aims to complete its skills profiles for 1500 job seekers with distance from the labor market. The profiles will form the basis for recruitment by 75 employers who will contribute their vacancies to the tool. Additionally, 600 job seekers will begin personalized educational trajectories through Passport for Work, utilizing e-learning modules or accessing appropriate offerings through the Leer Werkloket offices and and the Brabant Leert platform. Moreover, the project aims to match 200 job seekers with suitable occupations based on their skills.

It is anticipated that these objectives will be partially achieved during 2023, with a greater focus on skillprints and building employer relationships through three new dedicated project leaders. Collaborating with partners who already reach the target groups is crucial, and efforts to intensify contact and align with relevant initiatives (such as ROA) will be undertaken.

The project's plan for long-term sustainability

The future plans for Passport for Work include optimizing the usability of the skillprint, tailored to the specific target groups and in collaboration with users and supporting parties. This entails developing criteria and ensuring the tool can address issues related to sustainable employability, inclusion, and facilitating access to promising occupations and lifelong learning, expanding beyond the current three sectors to include areas like ICT, Logistics, and Green sectors.

Furthermore, the project aims to broaden and deepen its contact with the target groups, as data indicates a sufficiently large population to benefit from and sustain the tool. This involves exploring opportunities for expansion to other target occupations and ensuring broader access to Passport for Work for intermediary organizations and parties working with vulnerable groups, requiring a thorough exploration with collaborating partners.

To support the target groups and participants effectively, it is essential to establish "skillsrooms" where individuals can receive personalized guidance in completing the skillprint. These skillsrooms could be physically located at the Huis Naar Werk office in Eindhoven and be opened for several sessions per week, providing access to trained facilitators. Skillsrooms can also act as testing grounds for further application and potential inclusion in the project's societal business plan.

Additionally, efforts will be made to improve the transparency and underpin the continuity and quality of the underlying digital processes. This includes developing a long-term plan for the maintenance and management of Passport for Work, while also ensuring compliance with privacy regulations (AVG) in collaboration with Privacy Company.

Collaboration with other ongoing initiatives, such as CompetentNL, House of Skills, pilot projects in the Amsterdam metropolitan region, and the Dutch Social and Economic Council (SER), will be pursued to leverage synergies and foster collective progress surrounding the realization of a robust Dutch skills-based economy.

To support effective communication and engagement with the target groups and participants, various measures will be taken, such as developing a clear customer journey from initial contact to integration into the workforce and training periods. Unique selling points (USPs) of Passport for Work, including psychometric underpinnings, accessibility, visual materials, limited completion time, and gamification elements, will be highlighted through promotional materials, testimonials, and ongoing validation efforts.

Lastly, the project aims to conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis (MKBA) to inform the development of a robust societal business case. This analysis will incorporate user experiences and lessons learned from other relevant projects to ensure a sustainable and impactful approach.

By implementing these plans and actions, Passport for Work seeks to position itself for continued success in supporting labor market participation, fostering inclusivity, and meeting the needs of vulnerable groups through the effective utilization of skills-based approaches.

Challenges encountered

Challenge	Observation
Leadership for implementation Challenge level 🟠	The project has made progress in developing and implementing the Passport for Work tool. Leadership in managing the complexities of the project and maintaining transparency has been crucial. The project has faced challenges related to GDPR and COVID-19 but has managed to secure commitment from multiple project partners. The tool has shown promising results, and there are plans to expand its usage and explore potential partnerships. The project is now focused on achieving its goals for 2023, including reaching specific targets for skillsprints, matches, and learning trajectories. Further efforts will be made to optimize the tool's usability, establish transparency and quality assurance processes, and explore opportunities for collaboration with other initiatives. As part of its leadership, the project team is working towards a comprehensive societal business case to ensure the sustainable future of PfW.
(Smart) public procurement Challenge level 🟠	Initially there were some challenges with smart public procurement, particularly due to conflicts between EU guidelines and the growing trend of flexible employment contracts, network organizations, and the complexities associated with running innovative projects. However, Passport4Work has taken steps to address these issues. To overcome the challenges, Passport4Work has implemented an outcome-based procurement procedure among its partners, moving away from extensive specifications and emphasizing more freedom and agility in achieving the desired outcomes of procured services. This shift has allowed for greater flexibility and adaptability in the procurement process. Over the past year, the efforts to promote outcome-based procurement have been successful, and the challenges encountered previously have not resurfaced. The adoption of this approach has enabled Passport4Work and its partners to better align their procurement processes with the objectives of the project and ensure the delivery of innovative and efficient services.

Organizational arrangements within the urban authority to deliver integrated innovative projects

Challenge level ●

The project's overall success was heavily dependent on securing political support throughout its duration. The Municipal Urban Authority (MUA) is actively involved in a comprehensive labor market agenda, encompassing a multitude of projects and initiatives. Sustaining the relevance and urgency of these endeavors across all levels of the MUA is of utmost importance. However, these organizational arrangements also present opportunities. Initially, there were challenges in initiating experiments involving target users. To address this, a solution was devised by forging a connection between Passport4Work (P4W) and another regional initiative that shared a similar target audience. This collaborative effort has expanded the reach of P4W, provided mutual benefits to the other initiative and its beneficiaries through the utilization of the P4W platform, and significantly enriched the collection of data. This successful collaboration was made possible by establishing close relationships and cultivating a robust network of actors and stakeholders who share common interests, despite the prevailing organizational silos. By leveraging these connections and shared objectives, the MUA has overcome challenges, enhanced project outcomes, and maximized the impact of integrated innovative projects like Passport4Work.

Participative approach for co-implementation

Challenge level ●

During the initial phase of the project, achieving a participative approach for co-implementation presented a significant hurdle. Maintaining constant communication among all project partners, each with varying responsibilities and allocated resources, proved unfeasible on a day-to-day basis. As a solution, a core project team was established to handle the project's daily operations, streamlining decision-making and involving partners at appropriate times rather than adhering to a rigid schedule. For instance, thematic workshops or events were organized (such as the launch of the first prototype for employers). This revised approach enabled quicker decision-making and allowed for targeted partner involvement when their expertise was most needed.

Monitoring and evaluation

Challenge level ●

The monitoring and evaluation challenge was initially classified as "easy." However, due to unforeseen constraints related to GDPR and the COVID-19 pandemic, its difficulty level has been revised to medium/hard. The progress of the administrative system, designed to store information on job seeker skill assessments and job matching, has faced obstacles arising from ongoing GDPR concerns and barriers. The successful implementation of the tracking system is pivotal for conducting thorough monitoring and evaluation of the project, including a comprehensive impact analysis. Additionally, the handling of personal information beyond the scope of monitoring and evaluation is subject to scrutiny under GDPR regulations and relevant legislative protocols. To address these challenges, the project has sought external expertise to ensure compliance. This has caused several delays in the data collection procedures. Another issue that emerged is the availability of participants, particularly job seekers, which has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 lockdown measures. The project has overcome this hurdle by leveraging the collaborative efforts of multiple project partners who were not originally involved. By pooling resources and expertise, the project has successfully addressed the reduced availability of participants.

| Communication with target beneficiaries and users | Over the past year, communication with target beneficiaries has been strengthened. Jobseekers under the supervision of the Eindhoven municipality faced challenges in attending on-site coaching sessions, but remote sessions and physical meetups were organized, allowing for the utilization of the Passport4Work tool. Valuable feedback was obtained from jobseekers, informing the development of future prototype versions. Additionally, focus group sessions were conducted with university students, highlighting the tool's utility for a broader target group. Evidence from the impact analysis revealed positive impacts, including increased self-worth and motivation among previously discouraged jobseekers, while university students expressed enthusiasm for the tool's assistance in navigating the challenging job market. Towards the future, the establishment of skillsrooms will serve as an innovative approach, further contributing to a supportive environment for jobseekers to enhance their skills and interact with the Passport4Work tool under supervision. These efforts have effectively strengthened engagement, informed tool development, and fostered collaboration among its stakeholders. |
| Challenge level ● | |

| Upscaling | To ensure the long-term success and scalability of the project, P4W is actively engaged in integrating its outputs into existing broader initiatives. One notable example is the collaboration with the national skills language initiative "CompetentNL". Furthermore, discussions are underway to address important considerations such as data hosting and ownership, ensuring data accuracy and currency, and exploring opportunities for expanding the skill validation activities to sectors beyond the project's initial focus. Additionally, the team is actively managing the challenges posed by GDPR legislation, which has emerged as a significant obstacle to be overcome in the upscaling process. By pursuing this comprehensive approach, P4W aims to ensure the sustainability and wider applicability of its innovative solution in the future. |
| Challenge level ● | |

Lessons learned

Throughout its development, Passport for Work has gained valuable insights and lessons that have shaped its approach and enhanced its effectiveness in supporting vulnerable groups. These lessons learned can be summarized as follows:

Lessons learned	
Persistence in development	The development of Passport for Work has been a challenging process, but it has demonstrated that persistence and dedication over a period of more than four years can lead to the creation of a functional tool to support vulnerable groups in their integration into the labor market.
Collaboration and partnership	The involvement of multiple partners, including the municipality of Eindhoven, Organiq, and Building Changes, has been instrumental in the development of Passport for Work. The engagement and collaboration of these partners, as well as other stakeholders, have contributed to the progress and achievements of the initiative.

User-centric approach	Passport for Work has adopted a user-centric approach by focusing on the needs and challenges of the target groups, particularly those with vulnerable positions in the labor market. The tool aims to facilitate their journey towards employment by providing a skills-based perspective and supporting their self-awareness and autonomy.
Positive user experience	The skillsprint provided by Passport for Work has generally received positive feedback from users, evoking feelings of recognition, validation, and encouragement. This highlights the importance of designing user-friendly and engaging features that resonate with the target audience.
Prioritizing a skills-based mentality	For the labour market, shifting the focus from rigid job and competency profiles to a more personalized skills-based approach has proven to be essential for effectively engaging and supporting vulnerable groups. By encouraging individuals to identify and highlight their skills, Passport for Work enhances their self-awareness and autonomy, enabling them to better position themselves for employment opportunities.
Rigorous testing and piloting	The implementation of Passport for Work involved conducting a proeftuin (pilot) with over 500 participants from different target groups. This testing phase has provided valuable insights and perspectives, indicating the potential for further expansion and the addition of more skills-based occupational profiles. The feedback received during the testing phase has informed iterative improvements to the tool, ensuring its effectiveness and usability.
An evidence-based approach	The development of Passport for Work has been supported by a skillsnotitie (skills paper) and a scientific underpinning of the assessment and matching components. The use of evidence-based methodologies and collaboration with experts in psychometrics have contributed to the credibility and validity of the tool.
Continuous improvement and feedback loops	The challenges and attention points identified throughout the development process highlight the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation. The development team recognizes the need to address issues such as technological advancements, ownership, engagement of partners, compliance, cost estimation, system reliability, and expansion to other target groups and sectors.
Engaging stakeholders	The involvement of various stakeholders, including employers, labor market professionals, and governmental organizations, is crucial for the success of Passport for Work. Establishing strong partnerships, fostering collaboration, and aligning with existing initiatives and programs in the labor market ecosystem can enhance the impact and reach of Passport for Work.
Seeking overarching governance & institutionalization	Passport for Work has also made a significant contribution to the development of a national skills taxonomy, building on O*NET. This innovative aspect has allowed the tool to align with industry standards and promote a consistent understanding of skills within the labor market.

These lessons learned provide insights into the development process and highlight the areas where further attention and improvement are required. By incorporating these lessons, Passport for Work can continue to evolve, address challenges, and better support vulnerable groups in their journey towards meaningful employment. The testing and piloting phase, in particular, has allowed for iterative improvements based on user feedback, ensuring that the tool meets the specific needs and preferences of its target audience.

Additionally, Passport for Work has realized the challenges and limitations of relying solely on commercial market players for the target groups. Given the specific needs and circumstances of vulnerable groups, the traditional market dynamics may not naturally prioritize developing solutions tailored to their requirements. Therefore, the project has recognized the need to fill this gap and take the lead in providing a supportive tool that addresses the unique needs of these underserved populations.

Overall, the lessons learned revolve around the importance of skills-based thinking, collaboration with key stakeholders, recognizing the unique needs of vulnerable groups, and maintaining adaptability and continuous improvement. By applying these insights, Passport for Work is poised to make a meaningful impact on the labor market inclusion and sustainable employability of the target groups it serves.

Three key recommendations for urban authorities

Based on the experience and lessons learned from Passport for Work, here are three key recommendations for other urban authorities interested in implementing similar innovative projects:

Foster Collaboration and Partnerships: Developing successful projects that address complex societal challenges requires collaboration and partnerships with various stakeholders. Urban authorities should actively engage with relevant organizations, such as employment agencies, local businesses, educational institutions, and community groups. By building strong partnerships, authorities can leverage existing networks, expertise, and resources, which are crucial for the project's success. Collaborative efforts ensure a more comprehensive approach, enabling a deeper understanding of the target population's needs and the development of tailored solutions. Regular communication, coordination, and shared goals among partners are essential for a sustainable and impactful implementation.

Embrace a Skills-Based Approach: Adopting a skills-based approach is key to unlocking the potential of individuals and facilitating their labor market participation. Urban authorities should prioritize the identification and recognition of skills rather than relying solely on traditional job or competency profiles. By providing tools and resources that empower individuals to assess and articulate their skills effectively, authorities can support them in exploring diverse career paths and adapting to evolving job market demands. Additionally, incorporating skills-based thinking into the practices of employers and recruitment processes can enhance inclusivity, reduce bias, and create more opportunities for vulnerable populations.

Emphasize Continuous Learning and Adaptation: Innovative projects are an iterative process, requiring ongoing learning, evaluation, and adaptation. Urban authorities should establish mechanisms for collecting feedback from participants, partners, and other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness and impact of the project. Regular evaluation and monitoring help identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, leading to informed decision-making and the refinement of project strategies. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging needs are crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of innovative projects.

By following these recommendations, urban authorities can lay the foundation for successful implementation of similar innovative projects. By fostering collaboration, adopting a skills-based approach, and embracing continuous learning and adaptation, authorities can empower vulnerable populations, promote inclusive labor market participation, and contribute to the overall socioeconomic development of their communities.

Final reflection and evaluation

The main legacy of the Passport for Work project lies in the knowledge generated and the solution implemented to address the challenges of labor market participation for vulnerable populations. Here are the key aspects of its legacy:

Knowledge Generation: The project has contributed valuable insights and knowledge about promoting skills-based thinking and inclusive employment practices. By focusing on skills assessment and recognition, Passport for Work has challenged traditional job and competency profiles, paving the way for a more holistic and adaptable approach to matching individuals with suitable employment opportunities by adopting [a taxonomy-based approach](). The project has generated data on the effectiveness of skills-based tools, the needs of the target population, and the impact of personalized support and guidance. This knowledge can inform future initiatives and policymaking in the field of workforce development and inclusion.

Solution Implementation: The implementation of Passport for Work as a supportive tool for labor market participation has created a tangible solution that addresses the barriers faced by vulnerable populations, particularly those with a focus on MBO-level education and the sectors of Construction, Technology, and Healthcare. The development and deployment of the skillsprint and skillspaspoort have provided individuals with a digital document that showcases their skills and opens doors to employment opportunities. By incorporating the tool into the practices of employment agencies, participating companies, and other relevant stakeholders,

the project has facilitated a shift towards skills-based thinking and increased the chances of individuals finding suitable roles based on their skills rather than rigid job descriptions.

The legacy of the project extends beyond the specific implementation. It has influenced the understanding of workforce development, highlighting the importance of skills recognition and individualized support for marginalized groups. The knowledge generated through the project can inform future initiatives and policies aimed at enhancing labor market participation and addressing societal inequalities. The solution implemented by Passport for Work has demonstrated the potential of skills-based tools in unlocking opportunities for vulnerable populations, serving as a model for similar projects and inspiring other urban authorities to adopt innovative approaches to workforce development.

Overall, the legacy of the project encompasses the knowledge generated about skills-based thinking and inclusive employment practices, as well as the tangible solution of Passport for Work, which has empowered individuals and fostered more inclusive labor market participation. The project's impact extends beyond its immediate scope, contributing to the broader conversation on workforce development and inspiring future initiatives to create a more equitable and skills-focused labor market.

In addition to the knowledge generated and the solution implemented, the Passport for Work project has made a significant contribution to the development of a national skills taxonomy, building on the foundation of O*NET. This aspect of the project is particularly noteworthy and innovative.

By leveraging O*NET, a widely recognized and comprehensive skills framework, the project has advanced the understanding and categorization of skills within the context of the Dutch labor market. The development of a national skills taxonomy is a novel approach that offers a standardized and consistent framework for assessing and recognizing skills across various sectors and industries.

The integration of a national skills taxonomy into the Passport for Work tool has several important implications. First, it allows for a common language and understanding of skills, facilitating communication between job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders. This standardized taxonomy ensures that skills assessments are meaningful, reliable, and compatible across different contexts.

Overall, the Passport for Work project is a significant achievement. It represents a novel and innovative approach to skills assessment and recognition, promoting a standardized and comprehensive understanding of skills within the Dutch labor market. This contribution has the potential to influence and guide future initiatives not only within the project's scope but also in the broader landscape of workforce development and skills-based employment practices.

Jobs and skills in the local economy

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