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# Construction Sector Help Guide: France



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A photograph of construction workers wearing safety vests and holding hard hats in various colors (white, orange, yellow, blue). The image is partially obscured by a red vertical bar on the left and a teal horizontal bar at the top containing the word 'contents'.

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# Introduction

France's construction sector is one of the country's major economic pillars, employing millions of workers and playing a vital role in national and regional development. It supports a wide range of activities, including public infrastructure such as roads, railways, bridges, hospitals, and schools, as well as housing construction, commercial buildings, renovation projects, and energy-efficiency improvements across both urban and rural areas. These activities contribute not only to economic growth but also to everyday living conditions throughout France.

The sector offers a broad variety of job opportunities, from physical labour and basic on-site support to skilled and technical professions. This diversity makes construction one of the more accessible sectors for newcomers to the French labour market. For refugees in particular, it can provide a realistic entry route into employment. Many roles allow people to start without formal qualifications, and employers are often experienced in working with International teams, especially where labour shortages exist.

With experience, workers can develop their skills and move into more specialised roles. France has a structured vocational training and certification system that allows individuals to obtain recognised diplomas, professional certificates, and trade-specific qualifications. These credentials support access to higher wages, greater job security, and long-term career progression.

This guide is designed to support refugees, job coaches, VET providers, employers, and organisations involved in labour market integration. It explains how the construction sector in France operates, what skills are required, how to enter different professions, and which training and support pathways are available. It also provides practical guidance and links to relevant services, helping newcomers and those supporting them to navigate the sector safely, confidently, and successfully.



01

# Understanding France's Construction Sector



# Understanding France's Construction Sector

France's construction sector is a large and diverse industry that plays an essential role in employment and economic activity. It covers many different types of work and employs people with a wide range of skills and experience. The sector is closely connected to other parts of the economy, including transport, energy, housing, manufacturing, and public services. For refugees and other newcomers, construction is often one of the most accessible sectors due to ongoing demand for labour and the availability of entry-level roles.

## 1.1 Why the construction sector is important in France

Construction supports France's long-term development and public investment. Key areas include:

- Public infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, public transport, bridges, and tunnels
- Residential housing, including social housing and private developments
- Renovation and refurbishment of older buildings
- Energy-efficiency and environmental upgrades
- Commercial and public buildings such as offices, schools, hospitals, and sports facilities

These activities create steady demand for workers across many regions and skill levels.



# Understanding France's Construction Sector



## 1.2 Structure of the construction workforce

France's construction workforce includes several clearly defined levels:

### ◆ 1. General labourers (manœuvres)

Workers carrying out physical tasks such as site preparation, cleaning, material handling, and basic assistance. This is a common entry point for refugees.

### ◆ 2. Semi-skilled workers (ouvriers qualifiés débutants)

Workers with some experience who assist skilled trades and carry out technical tasks under supervision.

### ◆ 3. Skilled workers (ouvriers qualifiés)

Tradespeople such as bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, painters, and machine operators. These roles often require training or certification.

### ◆ 4. Technical and supervisory roles

Site supervisors, foremen (chefs d'équipe), site managers (conducteurs de travaux), and health and safety staff. These roles usually require French language skills and recognised qualifications..

# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 1.3 The role of foreign workers and refugees

Foreign workers play an important role in the French construction sector. Employers rely on international labour due to:

- Labour shortages in manual trades
- An ageing workforce
- High demand for renovation and infrastructure projects

For refugees, construction offers:

- Relatively quick access to employment
- Entry-level roles with limited formal requirements
- Opportunities to gain recognised French qualifications
- Clear progression routes within the sector

Many construction sites include multicultural teams, and employers are increasingly familiar with supporting workers from different backgrounds.



You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful place in the world. But it requires people to make the dream a reality.



Walt Disney

# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 1.4 Key types of construction activities in France

The sector consists of several sub-areas, each offering different types of work.



### 1. Residential construction

Building new flats and houses, as well as renovating older buildings. Common roles include bricklaying, concrete work, painting, plastering, roofing, tiling, insulation, flooring, and carpentry.



### 2. Commercial construction

Work on offices, hotels, shopping centres, warehouses, and public buildings such as schools and hospitals. Sites are usually larger and more structured, with stricter safety rules.



### 3. Civil engineering and infrastructure

Large projects such as roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, public transport, airports, and water systems. These roles often require specialised skills and strong safety awareness.



### 4. Installation and finishing

Electrical installation, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, insulation, and interior finishing. These trades are in high demand, especially in renovation projects.



### 5. Landscaping and outdoor works

Parks, green spaces, outdoor paving, fencing, and landscaping for housing and public areas. These roles suit workers who prefer outdoor, physical work.

# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 1.5 Benefits and challenges of working in construction

### Benefits

- High demand for workers across France
- Entry-level jobs available without formal qualifications
- Opportunities to learn practical skills on site
- Clear routes to skilled and better-paid roles
- Experience valued by employers
- Variety of work environments

### Challenges

- Physically demanding work
- Exposure to weather, especially cold and heat
- Strict safety rules on many sites
- Some roles require recognised training or certificates
- Early start times and long days during busy periods



# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 1.6 Construction as a stepping stone to long-term stability

Construction in France can provide more than short-term employment. With experience and training, workers can gain recognised qualifications, move into skilled trades, and access more stable contracts. Progression is often based on practical skills, reliability, and on-the-job learning, rather than formal education alone. For many refugees, construction can be a pathway to long-term employment and economic stability.



## 1.7 Who this sector is suitable for

Construction may be suitable for people who:

- Prefer practical, hands-on work
- Can work well in teams
- Are comfortable with physical or outdoor tasks
- Want clear opportunities to progress
- Are willing to learn new skills and follow safety rules

It may be less suitable for people with serious physical limitations or those who strongly prefer office-based work.

02

# Entering the French Construction Labour Market





# Entering the French Construction Labour Market

Entering France's construction sector is a realistic and achievable option for many refugees and newcomers. Construction plays an important role in the French economy and offers a wide range of jobs linked to housing, renovation, infrastructure, and public buildings. Employers often need additional workers and may be open to hiring people who are new to the country, especially for entry-level roles. This section explains the key legal requirements, first steps, and what newcomers can expect when starting work in French construction.

## 2.1 Legal Right to Work

Refugees and individuals who hold a residence permit that allows employment have the legal right to work in France.

Key points:

- You must have a valid residence permit that includes permission to work
- Your employer must officially declare your employment to the authorities
- You must be registered with the French social security system (*Sécurité sociale*)

Registration with social security is essential, as it gives access to healthcare, accident cover, and employment rights.



# Entering the French Construction Labour Market



## 2.2 Initial Steps Before Starting Work

Before starting work on a construction site in France, all workers must complete several mandatory steps. These steps are designed to protect workers' health and safety and to ensure that employers meet their legal responsibilities. The same rules apply to French workers and foreign workers, including refugees.

### Health and safety training

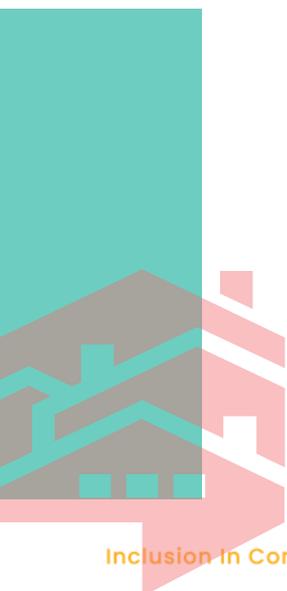
All construction workers must receive basic health and safety instruction before starting work. This training is often adapted to the specific risks of the site and the type of work involved. It covers safe working practices, accident prevention, correct use of tools and equipment, manual handling, and emergency procedures. Employers are responsible for ensuring that workers understand this training, even if they are new to construction or still learning French.

### Medical examination

A medical examination carried out by an occupational health service (*médecine du travail*) is required. This examination confirms that the worker is physically fit to carry out construction work safely. It may include checks of general health, vision, and physical ability, and is particularly important for heavy tasks, repetitive work, or work at height. The employer normally organises this examination.

### Site induction

Each construction site provides a site-specific induction before work begins. This induction explains the site layout, safety rules, daily work organisation, and any specific risks present. Workers are also told who their supervisor is and who to contact in case of accidents, emergencies, or safety concerns. This helps newcomers understand how the site operates and work safely from the first day.



# Entering the French Construction Labour Market

## 2.3 Entry Points for Newcomers

Many refugees start in entry-level roles that do not require formal qualifications or previous work experience in France. These roles are widely available across the construction sector and are often the first step into employment for newcomers.

Common entry-level roles include:

- General construction labourer (*manœuvre*)
- Site assistant
- Renovation or refurbishment helper
- Material handling and site cleaning
- Helper to skilled trades such as bricklayers, plumbers, or electricians

These roles allow workers to gain practical, hands-on experience in real working environments. They help newcomers learn basic construction tools and tasks, build essential French workplace vocabulary, and understand daily routines and safety practices on site. Entry-level roles also give workers the opportunity to show reliability, motivation, and willingness to learn, which can lead to progression into semi-skilled or skilled positions over time.

# Entering the French Construction Labour Market



## 2.4 Skilled Roles for Workers with Experience

Refugees who already have construction experience may be able to move into skilled roles more quickly, depending on employer needs, local labour demand, and certification requirements in France.

Common skilled trades in France include:

- Bricklayer
- Painter and decorator
- Plumber
- Electrician
- Carpenter
- Tiler
- Construction machine operator

Employers often use trial periods or practical assessments on site to check skills and working methods. In many cases, workers can start under supervision while their abilities are assessed. Some skilled roles require recognised French qualifications or professional certificates, especially for regulated tasks such as electrical work or machinery operation.



# Entering the French Construction Labour Market

## 2.5 Roles Requiring Certification or Authorisation

Certain construction activities in France are regulated and require formal training or authorisation for safety reasons. These include:

- Electrical installation work
- Operation of construction machinery or lifting equipment
- Work at height
- Gas or heating system installation

Workers who do not yet have these certificates can often begin as assistants and complete the required training later.

## 2.6 Language Considerations

Basic French is important on construction sites, especially for safety, teamwork, and daily communication. While some entry-level roles may require only limited French at the beginning, workers are still expected to understand basic safety instructions and warnings. Improving French language skills helps workers follow instructions more accurately, report problems or hazards, communicate with supervisors and colleagues, and take part more confidently in the workplace. Over time, better language skills also support access to training opportunities, recognised qualifications, and progression into skilled or supervisory positions.



# Entering the French Construction Labour Market

## 2.7 What Employers Expect from Newcomers

Construction employers in France generally expect workers to:

- Be punctual and reliable
- Follow safety rules at all times
- Listen carefully to instructions
- Work well as part of a team
- Show willingness to learn and improve

Previous experience is useful but not always necessary at entry level.

## 2.8 What Refugees Can Expect When Starting Out

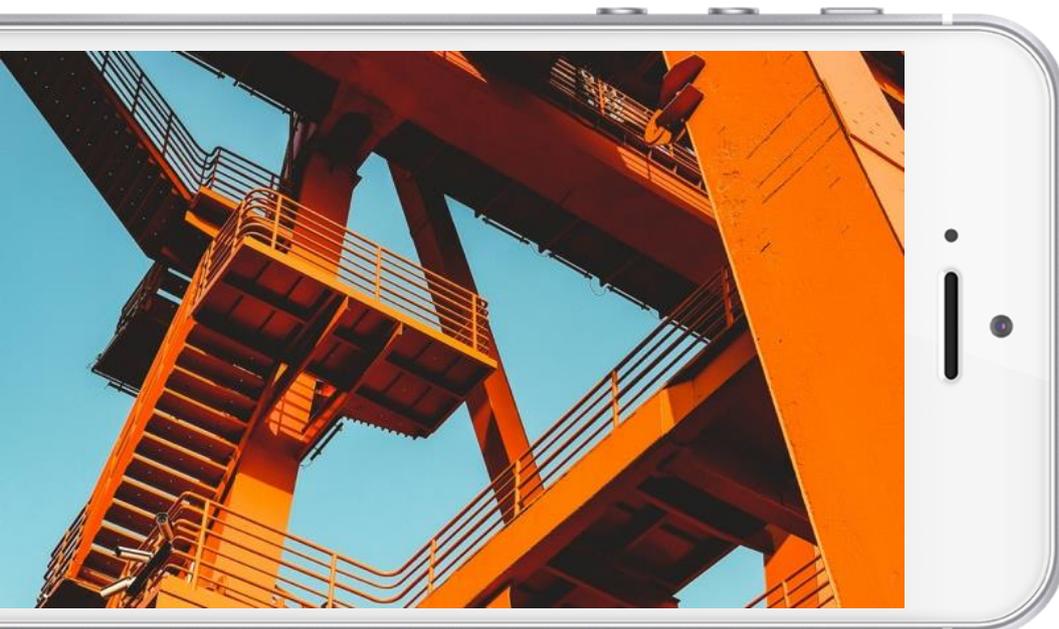
### Positive aspects

- Ongoing demand for construction workers
- Multicultural teams on many sites
- Learning through hands-on, practical work
- Opportunities to progress with experience and training

### Common challenges

- Physically demanding work
- Language barriers during the first months
- Understanding contracts, payslips, and working hours
- Adjusting to French workplace culture and expectations

Support from employers, job coaches, training providers, and support organisations is particularly important during the early stages of employment.



03

# Key Construction Trades in France





# Key Construction Trades in France



Poland's construction sector includes many different trades, but several stand out as especially important for refugees entering the workforce. These trades offer strong employment prospects, clear training routes, and opportunities for long-term career development. Below are four core professions that combine high demand with accessible entry pathways.

## 3.1 Mason / Bricklayer

Masonry is one of the most traditional and essential professions in construction. Bricklayers build the structural elements of houses, commercial buildings, and various infrastructure projects.

### What the job involves

- Constructing walls, partitions, and façades using bricks, concrete blocks, or stone
- Laying foundations and preparing surfaces
- Mixing mortar and operating basic machinery
- Reading simple construction drawings
- Working with scaffolding and tools such as trowels, levels, and cutters

### Skills and qualities needed

- Physical strength and stamina
- Good hand–eye coordination
- Ability to follow instructions precisely
- Awareness of safety rules, especially at height
- Patience and attention to detail

### How to enter the trade

Many refugees start as assistants and learn on the job. Training options include:

- Practical training through employers
- Vocational school (*Branżowa Szkoła I Stopnia*)
- Short masonry courses at training centres
- Craft examinations that confirm competence (Journeyman certificate)

### Prospects

Skilled bricklayers are always in demand. Over time, workers may progress to more specialised roles, site supervision, or self-employment.

# Key Construction Trades in Poland



## 3.2 🎨 Painter & Decorator

Painting and decorating is a versatile trade involving both interior and exterior finishing work. It is a common entry route for refugees because it does not always require advanced qualifications to start.

### What the job involves

- Surface preparation (cleaning, sanding, filling, priming)
- Applying paints, varnishes, and protective coatings
- Wallpapering and decorative finishes
- Using hand tools, rollers, brushes, and sprayers
- Working safely on ladders and basic scaffolding

### Skills and qualities needed

- Strong attention to detail
- Patience and a steady hand
- Good colour awareness
- Ability to follow safety instructions
- Reliability and cleanliness in work areas

### How to enter the trade

Refugees may begin as helpers, gradually taking on more responsibility. Entry routes include:

- On-site learning under experienced painters
- Courses in finishing works
- Recognition of practical skills through trials
- Medical clearance for working at height

### Prospects

Painters can progress to specialised decorative work, equipment operation (e.g., spray systems), or small independent renovation services.

# Key Construction Trades in Poland

## 3.3 Plumber / Sanitary Installer

Plumbers are essential across all sectors of construction, and demand for this trade continues to grow due to ongoing modernisation of heating, water, and sanitation systems.

### What the job involves

Installing water supply and drainage systems  
Fitting radiators, boilers, sinks, toilets, and showers  
Maintaining and repairing leaks or blockages  
Reading installation diagrams and technical plans  
Ensuring systems meet safety and hygiene standards

### Skills and qualities needed

- Practical problem-solving
- Manual dexterity
- Ability to work in confined spaces
- Focus on safety and accuracy
- Technical thinking



### How to enter the trade

Some refugees start as assistants, learning during real projects. Steps towards qualification include:

- Hands-on training with employers
- Vocational training in sanitary installation
- Plumbing-related qualifications and exams
- Journeyman or master craft certificates

### Prospects

Plumbers often progress to heating system installation, advanced maintenance, or certification-based specialisations. Experienced plumbers can earn well and may become self-employed.

# Key Construction Trades in Poland



## 3.4 ⚡ Electrician

Electrical installation is one of the most regulated and respected trades in the sector. While it requires certification, refugees with experience can progress quickly.

### What the job involves

- Installing wiring, sockets, lighting systems, and control panels
- Testing and repairing electrical faults
- Following technical plans and safety procedures
- Maintaining electrical systems in buildings
- Using tools such as testers, drills, cutters, and insulation equipment

### Skills and qualities needed

- Logical thinking and problem-solving
- Good mathematical understanding
- Strong focus on safety and precision
- Ability to identify wiring and equipment types
- Steady, careful workmanship

### How to enter the trade

To work independently, electricians must obtain SEP certification (up to 1 kV for most roles). Paths include:

- Assistant roles supporting certified electricians
- Vocational schooling in electrical installation
- SEP courses followed by examinations
- Gaining experience through supervised practical work

### Prospects

Certified electricians are in high demand in all regions. Progression routes include specialisation in automation, renewable energy systems, or electrical supervision roles.



04

## Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills



## 4. Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

Many refugees arrive in France with construction experience gained through work, apprenticeships, or informal training, but without French certificates. France has several well-established systems that allow workers to have their skills recognised, validated, or converted into official qualifications. These systems help refugees move into skilled roles, improve pay, and access stable employment.

### 4.1 Validation of Experience (Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience – VAE)

The main formal route for recognising prior skills in France is the **VAE** system. VAE allows workers to obtain a French qualification based on professional experience, even if that experience was gained outside France or without formal training.

#### How VAE works

- The worker must usually show at least one year of relevant work experience
- Experience can be paid, unpaid, or informal
- The worker applies for a qualification linked to their trade (for example bricklaying, plumbing, or electrical installation)
- Evidence is collected, such as work descriptions, references, photos, or interviews
- An assessment panel reviews the application
- The qualification may be awarded in full or in part

#### Why VAE is important in construction

- Construction qualifications are highly valued by employers
- VAE avoids repeating training already mastered
- It leads to nationally recognised diplomas (such as CAP or professional certificates)

Support with VAE is often provided through regional services, training centres, or organisations linked to France Compétences.



# Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

## 4.2 Practical assessment by employers

In everyday construction practice in France, many employers first assess a worker's skills directly on site. This approach is common, especially for refugees who may not yet have French certificates but have practical experience.

### What this usually involves

- Trial periods or trial days (*période d'essai*) on a construction site
- Demonstration of practical tasks related to the trade, such as bricklaying, painting, or assisting with installations
- Safe and correct use of tools, equipment, and materials
- Ability to follow instructions from supervisors and respect site rules and safety procedures

### Why this matters

- No formal documents are required at the start
- Skills are judged based on real working conditions, not paperwork
- Workers can enter employment more quickly
- Employers can identify strengths, training needs, and suitable progression paths

This practical assessment is often the first step before formal recognition of skills, entry into vocational training, or progression to a skilled role within the French construction sector.

# Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

## 4.3 Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Documents

Some refugees arrive in France with diplomas, certificates, or proof of training from their home countries. In many cases, these documents can be reviewed and used to support access to skilled work or training in the French construction sector.

### What may be recognised

- Vocational diplomas linked to construction trades
- Trade or technical certificates
- Apprenticeship records or training attestations
- Employment references confirming relevant work experience

### What the process may involve

- Official translation of documents into French
- Review and comparison with French qualification standards
- Partial or full recognition, depending on the level and content of the qualification
- Recommendation for additional training or assessments if required

Recognition of foreign qualifications does not always result in direct equivalence with a French diploma. However, it can significantly reduce the amount of training needed and help workers access skilled roles more quickly within the French construction sector.



# Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

## 4.4 Vocational Training and Upskilling Programmes

When previous experience cannot be fully recognised, refugees in France can gain formal qualifications through vocational training. This is a common and well-established pathway in the French construction sector and allows workers to build recognised skills while improving job stability and safety.

### Common construction qualifications in France

- **CAP** (*Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*), which provides basic professional training in a specific trade such as masonry, plumbing, carpentry, or painting
- **Professional titles** (*titres professionnels*), which focus on practical skills and are directly linked to labour market needs
- **Trade-specific safety or technical certificates**, for example for electrical work, machinery operation, or work at height

### Training provision and support

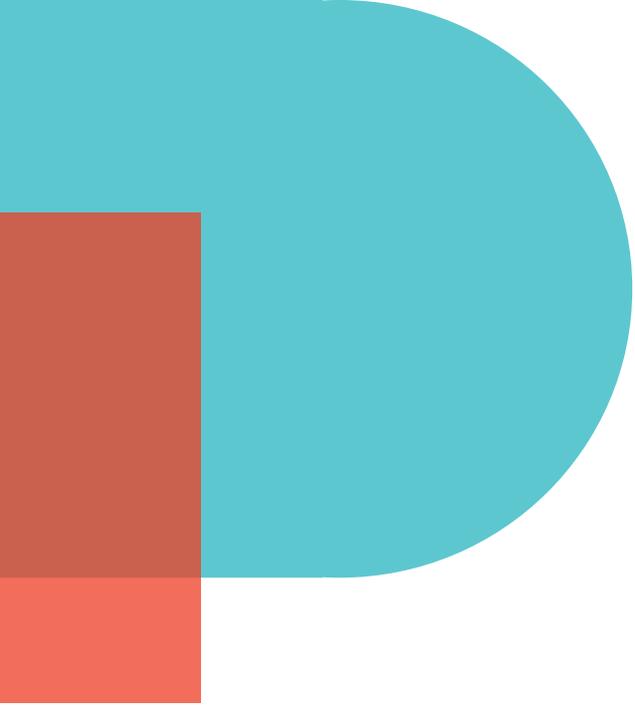
Training is delivered by vocational schools, adult training centres, and construction training bodies across France. Courses may be full-time or part-time and often combine classroom learning with practical work. Many training programmes are funded or partly funded through public employment services, regional authorities, or sectoral training schemes, making them accessible to refugees with the right to work.

Vocational training helps refugees gain French-recognised qualifications, improve employability, and progress from entry-level roles into skilled positions within the construction sector.

05

# Safety, Rights, and Employment Standards in French Construction





# Understanding France's Construction Sector

Construction work in France is regulated by strict health, safety, and employment laws. These rules are designed to protect all workers, including refugees and foreign workers. Understanding safety requirements, worker rights, and employment standards helps people stay safe on site, avoid exploitation, and build stable employment.

## 5.1 Mandatory Safety Requirements

Safety is a legal priority in the French construction sector due to the physical and technical risks involved. All workers must meet certain safety requirements before starting work.

### Health and safety training

Construction workers must receive basic health and safety instruction before entering a site. This training covers workplace risks, safe working practices, correct use of tools and equipment, and emergency procedures. Training is often adapted to the specific risks of the site and the tasks being carried out.

### Medical examination

A medical examination carried out by an occupational health service (*médecine du travail*) is mandatory. This confirms that the worker is physically fit for construction work. It is particularly important for heavy manual tasks, repetitive work, or work at height. The

employer is responsible for organising this examination.

### Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Employers in France must provide PPE free of charge. This typically includes:

- Safety helmet
- Protective gloves
- Safety footwear
- High-visibility clothing
- Safety glasses
- Hearing protection, where required

Workers are required to use PPE correctly at all times.

### Site-specific induction

Before starting work, each site provides an induction explaining site rules, safety measures, hazard areas, emergency procedures, and who to contact in case of accidents or concerns.

# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 5.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Workers

Refugees working in French construction have the same rights and responsibilities as French workers.

### Worker rights

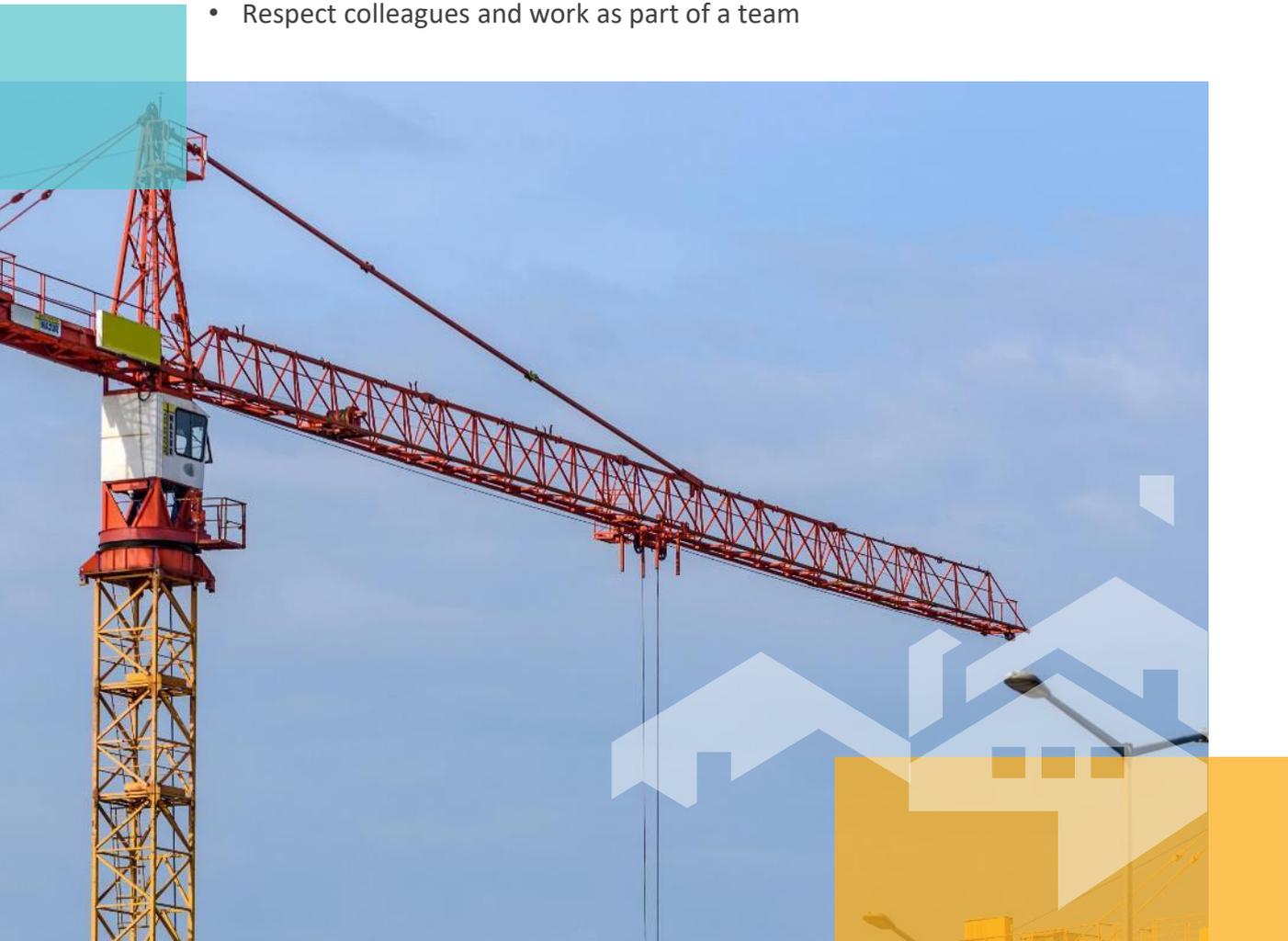
Workers have the right to:

- A safe and healthy working environment
- Health and safety training
- Free PPE
- Medical monitoring through occupational health services
- A written employment contract
- Payment of agreed wages
- Rest breaks and regulated working hours
- Paid holidays and sick leave, depending on contract type
- Stop work if there is serious and immediate danger

### Worker responsibilities

Workers are expected to:

- Follow safety rules and instructions
- Use PPE properly
- Report hazards or unsafe conditions
- Follow instructions from supervisors
- Respect colleagues and work as part of a team



# Understanding France's Construction Sector

## 5.3 Employment Contracts and Pay Conditions

Employment in French construction is governed by national labour law and the construction sector collective agreement (convention collective du bâtiment).

Contract Type	Description	Level of Protection	Notes
<b>CDI (Contrat à durée indéterminée)</b>	Fixed-term contract for a specific period or project (contrat déterminé) or permanent employment contract	★★★★★	Best option for long-term work; includes holidays, sick pay, overtime rules
<b>CDD (Contrat à durée déterminée)</b>	Service contract	★★★★	Provides flexibility but fewer protections; common in construction
<b>Intérim (Temporary agency work)</b>	Employment through a temporary work agency	★★★	Not usually suitable for construction; limited protections
CDI intérimaire	Permanent contract with a temporary work agency	★★★★	Offers more stability than standard intérim; includes periods between assignments

### Important points

- Employment contracts must be provided in writing
- Employers must declare workers to social security authorities
- Wages are set according to job role, experience, and regional agreements
- Payslips must clearly show hours worked, pay, and deductions

# Understanding France's Construction Sector



## 5.4 What to Expect on a French Construction Site

Construction sites in France range from small renovation projects in homes or public buildings to large infrastructure works involving multiple companies and teams. While the size and type of site may differ, organisation, safety rules, and work expectations are generally consistent across the sector.

### Typical site structure

- Site manager (*conducteur de travaux*), responsible for planning, scheduling, and overall coordination
- Site supervisor (*chef de chantier*), overseeing daily work and managing teams on site
- Skilled workers carrying out technical and trade-specific tasks
- Assistants and labourers supporting construction activities
- Health and safety staff ensuring rules are followed and risks are managed

New workers usually report to the site supervisor and receive instructions through clear reporting lines.

### Working conditions

- Early start times are common, particularly on large or urban sites
- Work can be physically demanding and may involve lifting, carrying, or repetitive movements
- Many roles require outdoor work in different weather conditions
- Strict safety controls are in place, including regular checks and use of protective equipment

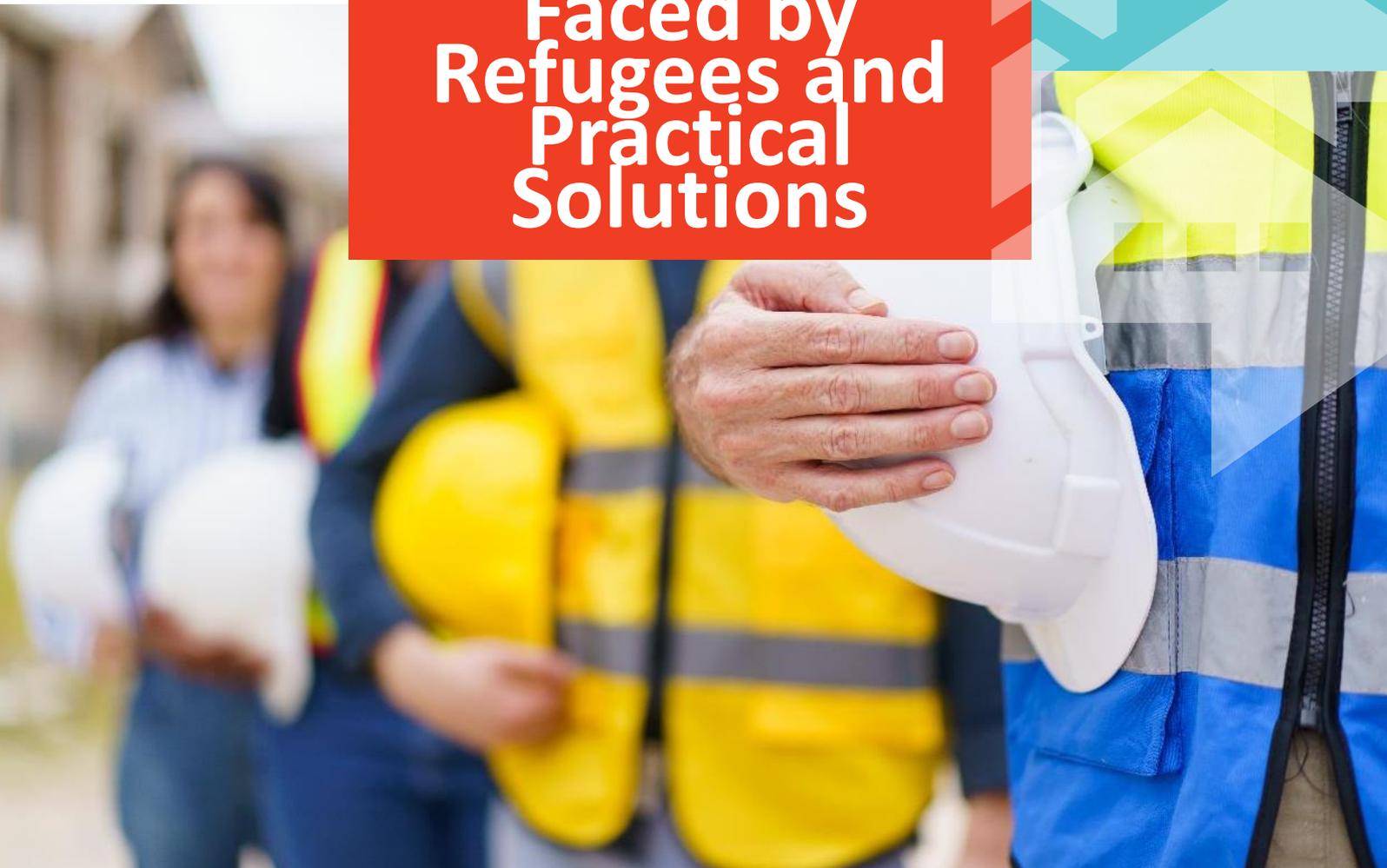
### Workplace culture

- Punctuality and reliability are taken seriously
- Safety rules must be respected at all times
- Workers are expected to follow instructions from supervisors
- Teamwork and cooperation are essential, as tasks are often shared across teams

Understanding these expectations helps newcomers adapt more quickly and work safely on French construction sites.

06

# Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions





# 6. Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

Entering the construction sector in France can provide valuable employment opportunities, but refugees often face specific barriers when starting and maintaining work. These challenges are linked to language, recognition of experience, workplace systems, and personal circumstances. This section outlines the most common challenges in France and practical ways to address them.

## 6.1 Language Barriers and Communication Challenges

French is the main working language on construction sites, particularly for safety instructions and coordination.

### Common challenges

- Difficulty understanding safety instructions and warnings
- Limited knowledge of construction-related French vocabulary
- Hesitation to ask questions or report problems
- Risk of misunderstandings in busy or noisy environments

### Practical solutions

- Site inductions using simple language, visual aids, and demonstrations
- Short, workplace-focused French courses covering tools, tasks, and safety terms
- Buddy systems pairing newcomers with experienced workers
- Supervisors giving clear, short instructions and checking understanding

### Why this matters

Clear communication improves safety, confidence, and integration into the team.



# Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

## 6.2 Lack of Documentation and Qualification Recognition

Many refugees arrive in France with construction skills and work experience but without formal documents or French-recognised qualifications. Missing diplomas, certificates, or employment records can make it difficult to prove skills to employers and may limit access to skilled roles, even when practical experience is strong.

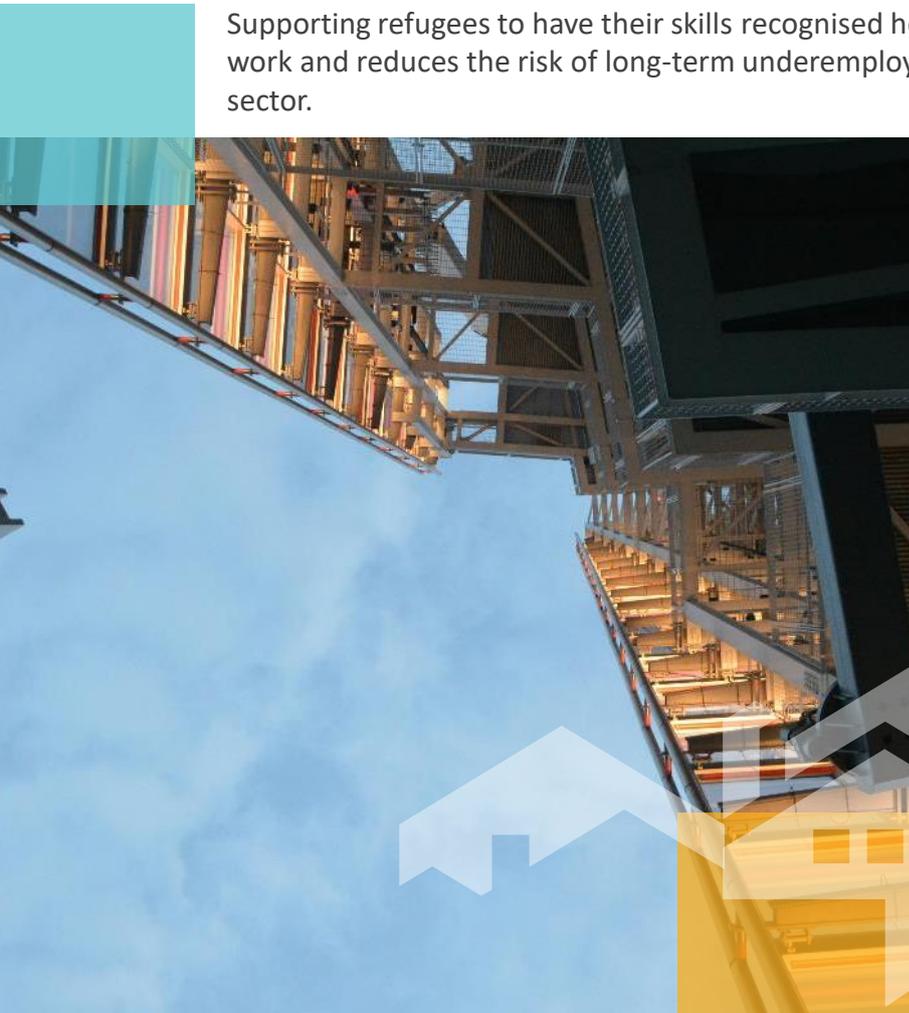
### Common challenges

- Loss of diplomas, certificates, or employment records
- Difficulty proving work experience gained outside France
- Limited understanding of the French qualification system
- Being restricted to entry-level roles despite previous skills

### Practical solutions

- Practical skill assessments or trial periods on construction sites
- Use of the *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)* system to recognise work experience
- Recognition of foreign qualifications where documentation is available
- Support from training centres, employment services, or NGOs to identify suitable pathways
- Step-by-step guidance towards vocational training or professional certificates

Supporting refugees to have their skills recognised helps them access safer, better-paid work and reduces the risk of long-term underemployment in the French construction sector.



# Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

## 6.3 Unfamiliarity with Workplace Culture, Expectations, and Rights

Many refugees entering the French construction sector are unfamiliar with local workplace culture, employer expectations, and their rights as workers. Differences between work practices in France and those in refugees' home countries can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, or difficulties during the first weeks of employment.

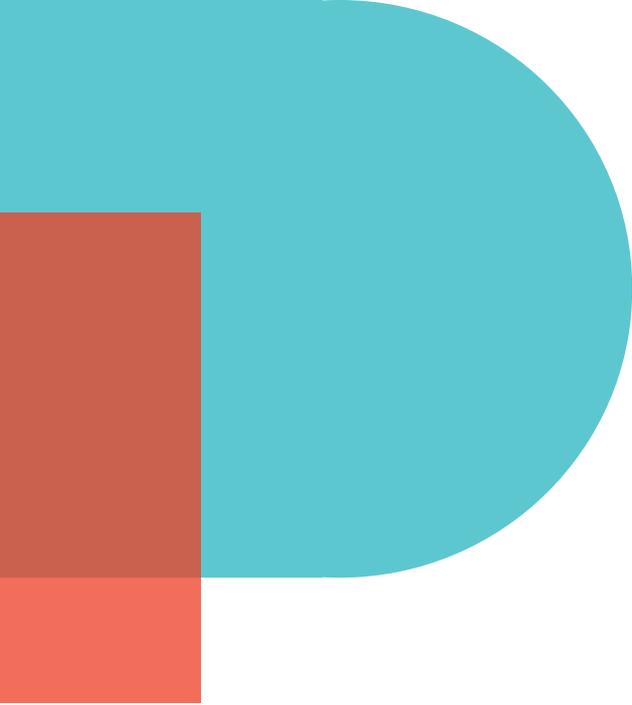
### Common challenges

- Limited understanding of French workplace norms, such as punctuality, break times, and reporting lines
- Uncertainty about who to speak to on site when problems arise
- Difficulty understanding employment contracts, payslips, and working hours
- Lack of awareness of health and safety responsibilities and worker rights
- Hesitation to raise concerns due to fear of losing work

### Practical solutions

- Clear site inductions explaining roles, responsibilities, and daily routines
- Simple explanations of employment contracts, pay, and working hours
- Information sessions on workers' rights and obligations in French construction
- Support from supervisors, job coaches, or mentors during the first weeks
- Encouraging open communication and questions without negative consequences

Helping refugees understand workplace culture and rights improves confidence, reduces conflict, and supports safer and more stable employment in the French construction sector.



# Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

## 6.4 Practical and Personal Challenges Affecting Employment Stability

In addition to workplace-related barriers, many refugees in France face practical and personal challenges that can affect their ability to remain in stable construction employment. These challenges are often linked to housing, transport, health, and personal wellbeing, and may change over time.

### Common challenges

- Unstable or temporary housing, making it difficult to maintain regular work routines
- Long or expensive journeys to construction sites, especially when sites change frequently
- Early start times that are difficult to manage with limited transport options
- Physical fatigue from demanding work combined with personal stress
- Health issues or untreated injuries affecting work capacity
- Emotional stress linked to legal status, family separation, or past experiences

### Practical solutions

- Support from NGOs or local services to access more stable housing
- Car-sharing arrangements or transport advice through employers or colleagues
- Clear communication with employers about availability and constraints
- Access to occupational health services and medical support
- Flexible or adjusted tasks where possible during difficult periods
- Coordination between employment services, social workers, and support organisations

Addressing practical and personal challenges early helps improve attendance, reduces job loss, and supports long-term employment stability in the French construction sector.

07

**Support  
Services,  
Training  
Opportunities,  
and  
Employment  
Resources**





# 7. Support Services, Training Opportunities, and Employment Resources

Refugees entering the French construction sector can access a wide range of public services, training providers, and support organisations. These services help people find work, gain recognised qualifications, understand their rights, and remain in safe and stable employment. This section outlines the most relevant support available in France.

## 7.1 Public employment services (France Travail)

France's national public employment service supports jobseekers, including refugees with the right to work.

### Key service

**France Travail** (formerly Pôle emploi):

<https://www.francetravail.fr>

### What France Travail offers

- Registration as a jobseeker
- Access to construction job vacancies
- Referral to employers and temporary work agencies
- Funding for vocational training
- Career guidance and individual employment advisers
- Information on contracts, pay, and workers' rights

Registration with France Travail is often the first step to accessing training and employment support.

# Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

## 7.2 Construction training organisations

Several organisations specialise in training for the construction sector.

### Key training bodies

**BTP CFA** (Construction apprenticeship and training centres): <https://www.btpcfa.fr>

**GRETA** (adult vocational training network): <https://www.greta.fr>

### What they provide

- Trade-specific vocational training
- Apprenticeships and adult training routes
- Preparation for construction qualifications
- Support for skill development and career progression



# Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

## 7.3 Recognition of skills and qualifications

Support is available to help refugees recognise prior learning or gain French qualifications.

### Key bodies

- **France Compétences** (national authority for skills and qualifications): <https://www.francecompetences.fr>
- **VAE information portal** (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*): <https://vae.gouv.fr>

### Support includes

- Information on skill recognition pathways
- Guidance on VAE applications
- Advice on suitable qualifications and training routes

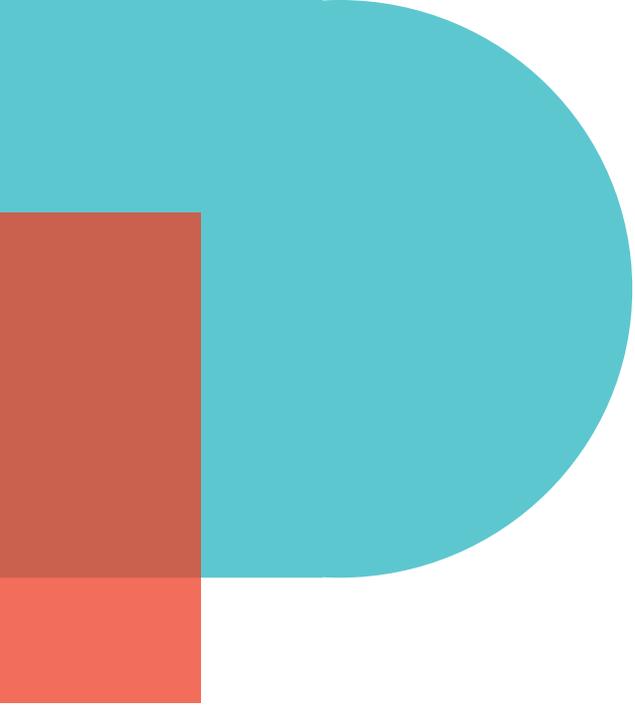
## 7.4 Vocational training and funding support

Refugees may access funded training through public or regional schemes.

### Types of training support

- CAP (*Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*)
- Professional titles (*titres professionnels*)
- Safety and technical certificates
- Trade-specific upskilling courses

Funding may be available through France Travail, regional authorities, or sectoral training programmes.



# Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

## 7.5 NGOs and organisations supporting refugees

Many organisations in France provide employment and integration support for refugees.

### Examples of support organisations

France Terre d'Asile: <https://www.france-terre-asile.org>

Forum Réfugiés: <https://www.forumrefugies.org>

La Cimade: <https://www.lacimade.org>

Croix-Rouge française: <https://www.croix-rouge.fr>

### Support offered

- Employment guidance and job search support
- Help understanding contracts and payslips
- Legal advice related to work and residence
- Language courses
- Social and psychological support

## 7.6 Job search platforms and recruitment channels

Construction jobs in France can be found through several channels.

### Online platforms

France Travail job search: <https://www.francetravail.fr>

Indeed France: <https://fr.indeed.com>

Hellowork: <https://www.hellowork.com>

### Other channels

Temporary work agencies (*intérim*), widely used in construction

Direct applications to local construction companies

Referrals through training centres and NGOs



[www.welcomeworkproject.eu](http://www.welcomeworkproject.eu)

Follow our journey



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