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Construction Sector Help Guide: Spain



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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

Spain's construction sector is one of the country's key economic pillars, employing a large workforce and contributing significantly to national and regional development. It supports a wide range of activities, including the construction of public infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports, hospitals, and schools, as well as housing, commercial buildings, tourism-related facilities, and renovation projects in both urban and rural areas. These activities play an important role not only in economic growth but also in shaping everyday life for communities across Spain.

The sector offers a broad range 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 Spanish labour market. For refugees in particular, it can provide a practical and achievable route into employment. Many entry-level roles do not require formal qualifications at the start, and employers are often experienced in working with international teams, especially in regions facing labour shortages.

Over time, workers can gain experience, develop their skills, and move into more specialised roles. Spain has a structured vocational education and training system that allows individuals to obtain recognised certificates, licences, and trade-specific qualifications. These credentials support progression to better-paid roles, increased job security, and long-term career development.

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



01

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector



Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

Spain's construction sector is a large and varied industry that plays an important role in the country's economic development and employment. It covers a wide range of activities and employs workers with different levels of experience and skills. The sector is closely linked to other areas of the economy, including transport, energy, tourism, manufacturing, and real estate. For refugees and other newcomers, construction is often one of the most accessible sectors, as many employers are open to hiring people who are new to the country and willing to learn on the job.

1.1 Why the construction sector is important in Spain

Construction supports Spain's long-term development and modernisation. In recent years, investment has focused on:

- Public infrastructure, such as roads, railways, ports, airports, and public transport systems
- Housing construction to meet demand in cities and growing regions
- Renovation and refurbishment of older buildings, particularly in historic areas
- Tourism-related construction, including hotels, resorts, and leisure facilities
- Energy-efficiency improvements, such as insulation, renewable energy installation, and building upgrades

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



Understanding Spain's Construction Sector



1.2 Structure of the construction workforce

Spain's construction workforce includes people with different responsibilities and levels of training. Understanding this structure helps newcomers identify suitable entry points and realistic progression routes.

Spain's construction workforce includes:

◆ 1. General labourers

Workers who carry out physical tasks such as cleaning sites, moving materials, preparing work areas, and assisting other workers. This is often the main entry point for refugees.

◆ 2. Semi-skilled workers

Workers with some experience who support technical tasks, use basic tools, and assist skilled trades under supervision.

◆ 3. Skilled workers

Workers who carry out physical tasks such as cleaning sites, moving materials, preparing work areas, and assisting different teams. This level is often the entry point for refugees.

◆ 4. Technical and supervisory roles

Site supervisors, foremen, technicians, health and safety staff, and project coordinators. These roles often require Spanish language skills and recognised qualifications.

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

1.3 The role of foreign workers and refugees

Foreign workers are an essential part of the Spanish construction sector, particularly in regions with high labour demand. Employers rely on international workers due to:

- Ongoing labour shortages
- Seasonal increases in construction activity
- Demand for renovation and maintenance work
- Limited availability of local workers for manual trades

For refugees, construction offers:

- Access to employment without long delays
- Entry-level roles with basic requirements
- Opportunities to gain recognised skills and certificates
- Clear pathways to long-term employment

Workplaces often include multilingual 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 Spain's Construction Sector

1.4 Key types of construction activities in Spain

The construction sector in Spain includes several main areas, each offering different types of work:

1. Residential construction and renovation

Building new homes and renovating existing properties, including painting, plastering, tiling, roofing, insulation, and carpentry.

2. Commercial and tourism construction

Offices, hotels, shopping centres, and leisure facilities. These sites are often larger and may require higher levels of coordination and certification.

3. Civil engineering and infrastructure

Large projects such as roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, ports, and water systems. These roles often involve machinery operation and specialised skills.

4. Installation and finishing trades

Electrical installation, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and interior finishing. These trades are in constant demand.

5. Landscaping and outdoor works

Paving, fencing, public spaces, and landscaping projects, suitable for workers who prefer outdoor and physical work.

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector



1.5 Benefits and challenges of working in construction

Benefits

- High demand for workers at different skill levels
- Opportunities to learn practical skills on the job
- Clear routes to skilled and better-paid roles
- Experience recognised by employers
- Variety of working environments

Challenges

- Physically demanding work
- Exposure to weather, especially high temperatures
- Need to follow strict safety rules
- Certification requirements for some roles
- Long working hours during busy periods

Understanding both the benefits and challenges helps newcomers prepare for realistic working conditions in the sector.

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

1.6 Construction as a stepping stone to long-term stability

Construction in Spain can offer more than short-term work. With experience and training, workers can move into stable employment, gain recognised qualifications, and progress into skilled, supervisory, or self-employed roles. Progression is often based on practical skills, reliability, and experience rather than formal education alone.



1.7 Who this sector is suitable for

Construction may be suitable for people who:

- Prefer hands-on, practical work
- Can work well in teams
- Are comfortable with physical or outdoor tasks
- Want clear opportunities to progress
- Are open to learning new skills and gaining certificates

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

02

Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market





Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market

Entering Spain's construction sector is a realistic and achievable option for many refugees and newcomers. The sector offers work at different skill levels, and employers are often open to hiring people who are new to the country, particularly in regions with labour shortages. This section explains the key legal requirements, preparation steps, entry points, and expectations when starting work in Spanish construction.

2.1 Legal Right to Work

Refugees and individuals with valid residence or protection status in Spain have the legal right to work. A separate work permit is not required if the right to work is already included in the residence status.

Key points

- You must have a valid residence document that allows employment
- Your employer must register you with the Spanish Social Security system (Seguridad Social)
- You must have a Spanish social security number before starting work

What this means for refugees:

- You can start work once an employer offers you a job
- You can apply for both entry-level and skilled roles, depending on your experience
- Registration with social security gives access to healthcare and employment protections



Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market



2.2 Initial Steps Before Starting Work

Before starting work on a construction site in Spain, all workers must complete certain mandatory steps. These apply equally to Spanish nationals and foreign workers.

1. Health and safety training (PRL)

PRL stands for *Prevención de Riesgos Laborales* (Occupational Risk Prevention).

This training is compulsory in construction and usually includes:

- Identification of workplace hazards
- Safe use of tools and machinery
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Accident prevention and emergency procedures
- Basic first aid awareness

Workers must complete PRL training before entering a construction site. In many cases, employers organise and pay for this training.

2. Medical examination (where required)

Some construction roles require a medical check to confirm fitness for work, especially for:

- Physically demanding tasks
- Work at height
- Machinery operation

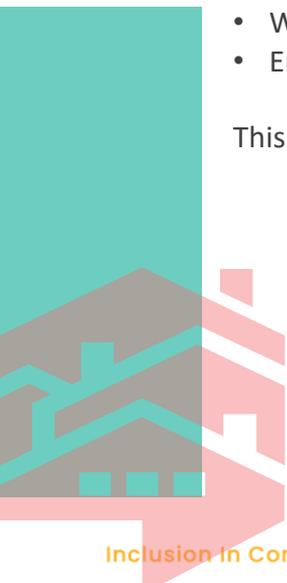
A medical certificate may be requested by the employer.

3. Site induction

Each construction site has specific risks. Before starting work, employers usually explain:

- Site layout and access areas
- Daily work routines
- Safety rules specific to the site
- Who the supervisor or site manager is
- Emergency procedures

This helps new workers work safely and understand expectations.



Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market

2.3 Entry Points for Refugees

Many newcomers start in roles that focus on physical ability rather than formal qualifications. These roles are common across Spain and are suitable when Spanish language skills are still developing.

Typical entry-level roles include:

- General construction labourer
- Renovation or refurbishment assistant
- Site cleaner and preparation worker
- Material handling and loading
- Helper to skilled trades (plumbers, electricians, painters, bricklayers)
- Outdoor and landscaping support

These roles allow workers to:

- Gain practical experience
- Learn Spanish workplace vocabulary
- Understand Spanish work culture
- Demonstrate reliability and motivation
- Progress into semi-skilled or skilled roles

Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market



2.4 Skilled Roles for Workers with Experience

Refugees with previous construction experience may be able to move more quickly into skilled roles, depending on employer needs and certification requirements.

Common skilled trades in Spain include:

- Bricklayer
- Painter and decorator
- Plumber
- Electrician
- Carpenter
- Tiler
- Plasterer
- Machine operator (e.g. excavators, loaders, forklifts)

Employers may ask for:

- Proof of previous experience (if available)
- Practical demonstrations or trial days
- Ability to understand basic safety instructions in Spanish
- Relevant certificates for regulated tasks

Trial days are commonly used in Spain to assess practical skills.



Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market

2.5 Roles Requiring Certification or Licensing

Some construction activities in Spain require official training or certification for safety and legal reasons. Examples include:

- Electrical installation work
- Machinery and lifting equipment operation
- Work at height
- Gas or heating system installation

Workers without these certificates can often start in assistant roles and complete training later to access better-paid positions.



2.6 Language Considerations

Basic Spanish is important on construction sites, particularly for safety. While some entry-level roles require only limited Spanish, improving language skills helps with:

- Understanding instructions
- Avoiding accidents
- Communicating with supervisors
- Progression into skilled or supervisory roles

Learning basic construction vocabulary is strongly recommended. Employers and support organisations may offer language support linked to workplace needs.

Entering the Spanish Construction Labour Market

2.7 What Employers Expect from Newcomers

Construction employers in Spain generally value:

- Punctuality and reliability
- Willingness to follow instructions
- Respect for safety rules
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Motivation to learn
- Consistent attendance

Formal experience is helpful but not always essential at entry level. Workers who show commitment and learn quickly often gain more responsibility.

2.8 What Refugees Can Expect When Starting Out

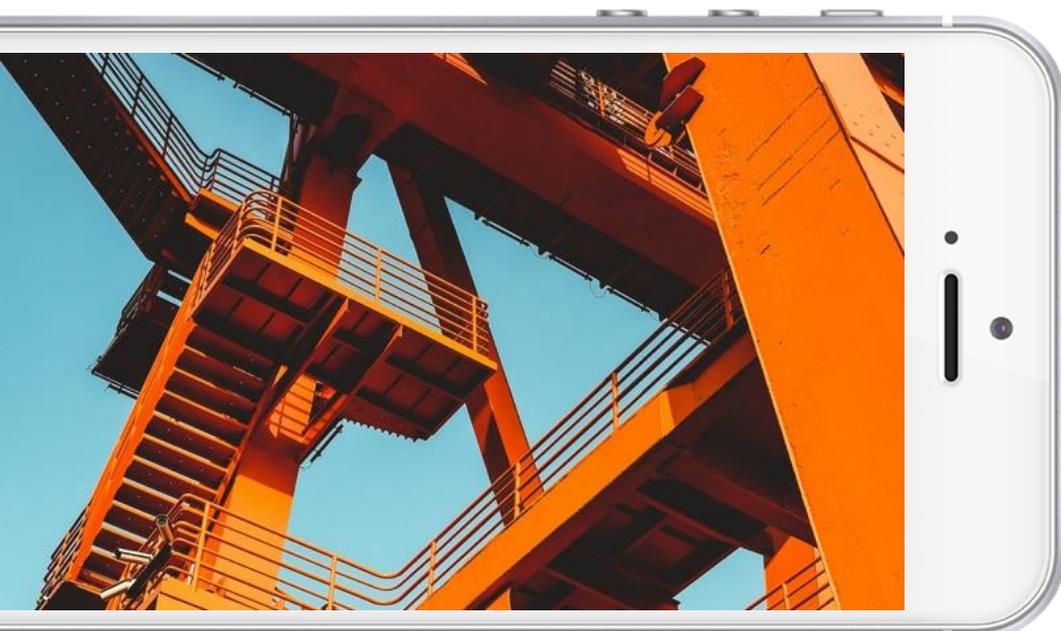
Starting construction work in a new country can be challenging. Refugees in Spain often experience:

Positive aspects:

- Access to work without long delays
- Diverse teams with other foreign workers
- Opportunities to learn practical skills
- Clear progression through experience

Common challenges:

- Physical demands of the work
- Hot weather conditions
- Communication difficulties
- Understanding contracts and payslips



03

Key Construction Trades in Spain





Key Construction Trades in Spain



Spain's construction sector includes many different trades, but some are especially important due to labour demand, building traditions, and national regulations. The trades below are commonly found across Spain and offer realistic entry and progression routes for refugees and newcomers. Each trade combines strong employment prospects with clear ways to gain experience and recognised training.

3.1 Mason / Bricklayer (Albañil)

Bricklaying and masonry are central to construction in Spain, where buildings are commonly made from brick, concrete blocks, and reinforced concrete. *Albañiles* work on housing, renovation projects, and infrastructure across both urban and rural areas.

What the job involves

- Building walls, partitions, and structural elements using bricks, blocks, and concrete
- Mixing mortar and preparing construction materials
- Laying foundations and preparing surfaces
- Carrying out renovation and repair work on older buildings
- Using hand tools, levels, cutters, and basic machinery
- Working on scaffolding and at height

Skills and qualities needed

- Physical strength and endurance
- Good hand–eye coordination
- Ability to follow instructions
- Awareness of safety procedures
- Accuracy and attention to detail

How to enter the trade

- Starting as a labourer or assistant (peón de obra)
- Learning on site under experienced albañiles
- Short practical courses in masonry or construction basics
- Recognition of experience through employer assessment

Prospects

Experienced *albañiles* are in constant demand. With experience, workers may move into supervisory roles, specialise in restoration work, or become self-employed.

Key Construction Trades in Spain



3.2 🎨 Painter and Decorator (Pintor)

Painting and decorating is a common trade in Spain, especially due to renovation work, tourism-related buildings, and regular maintenance of residential properties.

What the job involves

- Preparing surfaces by cleaning, sanding, and filling
- Painting interior and exterior walls
- Applying protective coatings against heat and humidity
- Working with rollers, brushes, and spray equipment
- Carrying out finishing and decorative work
- Using ladders and basic scaffolding safely

Skills and qualities needed

- Attention to detail
- Steady hand and patience
- Good colour awareness
- Clean and organised working habits
- Ability to follow safety instructions

How to enter the trade

- Starting as a helper on renovation projects
- Learning through practical site work
- Short courses in finishing and surface treatment
- Medical clearance for work at height, if required

Prospects

Painters can progress into specialised finishes, façade restoration, or independent renovation services.

Key Construction Trades in Spain

3.3 Plumber / Sanitary Installer (Fontanero)

Plumbers are essential in Spain due to ongoing housing development, renovation of older buildings, and the need for efficient water and heating systems.

What the job involves

- Installing water supply and drainage systems
- Fitting sinks, toilets, showers, and water heaters
- Installing heating systems and radiators
- Detecting and repairing leaks and blockages
- Reading installation plans and diagrams
- Ensuring systems meet Spanish safety and hygiene standards

Skills and qualities needed

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

How to enter the trade

- Starting as an assistant (ayudante de fontanería)
- On-the-job training with experienced plumbers
- Vocational training programmes
- Recognition of experience through employer assessment

Prospects

Plumbers may specialise in heating systems, solar water systems, or maintenance services. Experienced plumbers often move into self-employment.



Key Construction Trades in Spain



3.4 ⚡ Electrician (Electricista)

Electrical work in Spain is a regulated trade. While assistants can work under supervision, independent work requires recognised training and authorisation.

What the job involves

- Installing wiring, sockets, switches, and lighting
- Connecting electrical panels and systems
- Maintaining and repairing electrical installations
- Following technical plans and safety rules
- Testing electrical systems
- Working with specialised tools and equipment

Skills and qualities needed

- Logical thinking and problem-solving
- Good technical understanding
- Strong focus on safety
- Precision and attention to detail
- Ability to work carefully and methodically

How to enter the trade

- Starting as an assistant to a qualified electrician
- Completing vocational training in electrical installations
- Gaining experience under supervision
- Obtaining recognised electrical certification

Prospects

Qualified electricians are in high demand. Specialisation options include renewable energy systems, building automation, and industrial maintenance.



Key Construction Trades in Spain



3.5 Construction Machine Operator (Operador de maquinaria)

Machine operators are essential on larger construction and infrastructure sites.

What the job involves

- Operating excavators, loaders, cranes, or forklifts
- Preparing ground and moving materials
- Following site safety procedures
- Performing basic equipment checks

Skills and qualities needed

- Good coordination and concentration
- Strong awareness of safety
- Ability to follow technical instructions

How to enter the trade in Spain

- Completing certified machinery operation courses
- Gaining licences for specific equipment
- Starting as a site assistant and progressing

Prospects

Certified operators are well paid and in high demand, especially on infrastructure projects.



Key Construction Trades in Spain

3.6 Carpenter / Joiner (Carpintero)

Carpenters work in both structural and finishing roles, especially in renovation, interior work, and custom fittings.

What the job involves

- Installing doors, windows, and wooden structures
- Fitting kitchens, wardrobes, and interior elements
- Measuring, cutting, and assembling materials
- Using hand and power tools
- Reading technical drawings

Skills and qualities needed

- Precision and manual skill
- Spatial awareness
- Attention to detail
- Ability to work independently or in small teams

How to enter the trade in Spain

- Assisting experienced carpenters
- Learning through practical site work
- Vocational courses in carpentry
- Recognition of practical skills by employers

Prospects

Carpenters can specialise in interior fitting, restoration, or bespoke work, and may progress into self-employment.



04

Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills



4. Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

Many refugees arrive in Spain with valuable construction experience but without formal certificates or complete documentation. Spain offers several practical and official ways for workers to demonstrate their skills, gain recognition, and improve access to skilled and better-paid roles. This section explains the main routes available within the Spanish construction system.

4.1 Practical Skills Assessment by Employers

In Spain, construction employers commonly assess skills through practical work rather than formal documents. This approach is widely used, especially on small and medium-sized construction sites.

What this usually includes

- Trial days or short trial periods on site
- Demonstration of basic tasks (e.g. bricklaying, painting, plumbing support)
- Correct and safe use of tools
- Ability to follow instructions and site rules
- Awareness of health and safety practices

Why this helps refugees

- No formal documents are required
- Skills are judged through real work
- Entry into employment can be fast
- Employers often offer further training after a successful trial

Typical outcomes

- Employment as a labourer, assistant, or semi-skilled worker
- Identification of suitable training or certification routes
- Gradual progression to skilled roles

This is often the first and most realistic step for newcomers to the Spanish construction sector.



Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

4.2 Official recognition of professional experience (Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales)

Spain has a formal system for recognising skills gained through work experience or informal training. This process is known as *Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales*.

What this system does

- Assesses skills based on work experience
- Leads to official recognition of professional competencies
- Is linked to national vocational qualifications

How the process works

- The worker applies through regional authorities
- Evidence of experience is provided (employment records, references, declarations, or interviews)
- Practical assessments and interviews may be required
- Competencies are officially validated

Why this route is important

- It provides Spanish-recognised credentials
- It can reduce the need to repeat training
- It improves access to skilled roles and formal contracts

This route is especially suitable for experienced workers who lack formal certificates.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

4.3 Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Documents

Some refugees arrive with diplomas, certificates, or training records from their home countries. In Spain, these may be recognised through official processes.

Types of documents that may be considered

- Vocational diplomas
- Trade or technical certificates
- Apprenticeship records
- Employer references or work contracts

What the recognition process may involve

- Official translation into Spanish
- Submission to education or labour authorities
- Comparison with Spanish qualification standards
- Partial or full recognition, depending on equivalence

Benefits

- Faster access to skilled employment
- Entry into advanced training without repeating basic courses
- Official confirmation of professional level

This route is most suitable for workers who can provide original documents or verified copies.



Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

4.4 Vocational Training and Upskilling Programmes

When prior experience cannot be formally recognised, refugees can build new qualifications through Spain's vocational education and training system.

Types of training available

- Short practical courses (masonry, painting, plumbing basics)
- Medium-length vocational programmes (*Formación Profesional – FP*)
- Trade-specific courses linked to construction needs
- Health and safety (PRL) training
- Machinery operation certification

Key institutions providing training

- Public vocational training centres
- Regional employment services
- Construction training foundations (e.g. sectoral training bodies)
- NGO-supported training programmes

Why this route is useful

- No previous documentation is required
- Suitable for beginners or career changers
- Leads to Spanish-recognised qualifications
- Improves employability and wages



Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

4.5 Construction Labour Foundation (Fundación Laboral de la Construcción)

A key institution in Spain is the *Fundación Laboral de la Construcción*, which plays a major role in training and skills recognition within the sector.

What it offers

- Certified construction training
- Health and safety (PRL) courses
- Trade-specific qualifications
- Recognition of professional experience
- Guidance on career progression

Why this is important for refugees

- Training is aligned with employer needs
- Certificates are widely recognised across Spain
- Courses are often free or subsidised

Who recognition and training routes are suitable for

These pathways are suitable for:

- Refugees with construction experience but no certificates
- Workers with partial or informal training
- Individuals changing trades within construction
- Newcomers aiming to move from entry-level to skilled roles

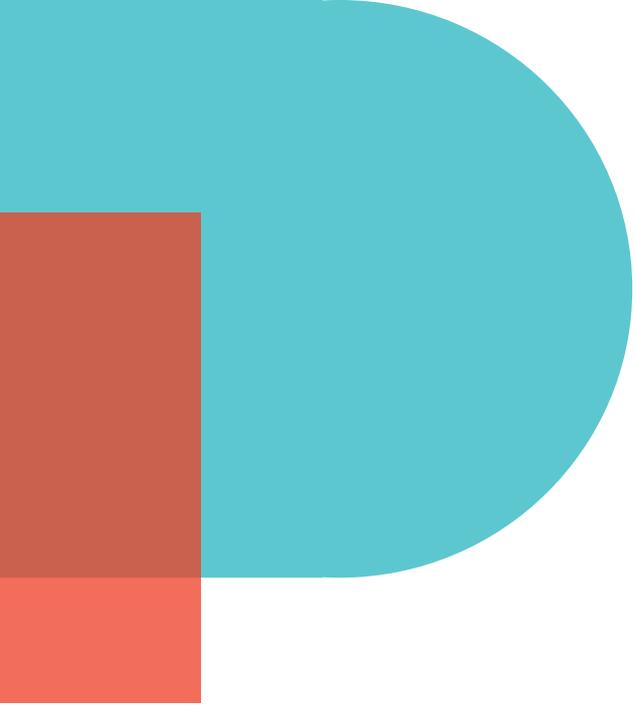
Recognition of prior learning and targeted training help refugees integrate into the Spanish construction sector more quickly, safely, and sustainably.



05

Safety, Rights, and Employment Standards in Spanish Construction





Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

Construction work in Spain is regulated by strict health, safety, and employment rules designed to protect all workers, including refugees and migrants. Understanding these rules is essential for staying safe on site, avoiding exploitation, and building stable employment. This section explains the main safety requirements, worker rights, contract types, and what newcomers can expect on Spanish construction sites.

5.1 Mandatory Safety Requirements

Safety is a legal priority in Spanish construction due to the physical risks involved. All workers must meet specific safety requirements before starting work.

◆ **Health and Safety Training (PRL – *Prevención de Riesgos Laborales*)**
PRL training is compulsory for everyone working in construction in Spain.

What PRL training covers

- Identification of workplace hazards
- Safe use of tools and machinery
- Working at height
- Manual handling and lifting
- Electrical safety awareness
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Emergency procedures and accident reporting

Training must be completed before entering a construction site. In many cases, employers arrange and pay for this training.

◆ **Medical Examination**
A medical examination may be required

depending on the role. These may include:

- General health assessment
- Vision and hearing tests
- Fitness for physically demanding work
- Clearance for work at height or machinery operation

◆ **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
Employers in Spain are legally required to provide PPE at no cost to the worker. **Typical PPE includes:**

- Safety helmet
- Protective gloves
- Safety footwear
- High-visibility clothing
- Safety glasses
- Hearing protection (when required)

◆ **Site-Specific Induction**
Each construction site has different risks. Before starting work, workers must receive a site induction explaining:

- Site layout and access routes
- Hazard zones
- Emergency exits
- Safety rules specific to the site
- Name of the site supervisor or safety officer

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

5.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Workers

Refugees working in Spanish construction have the same rights as Spanish workers.

Worker rights

Workers have the right to:

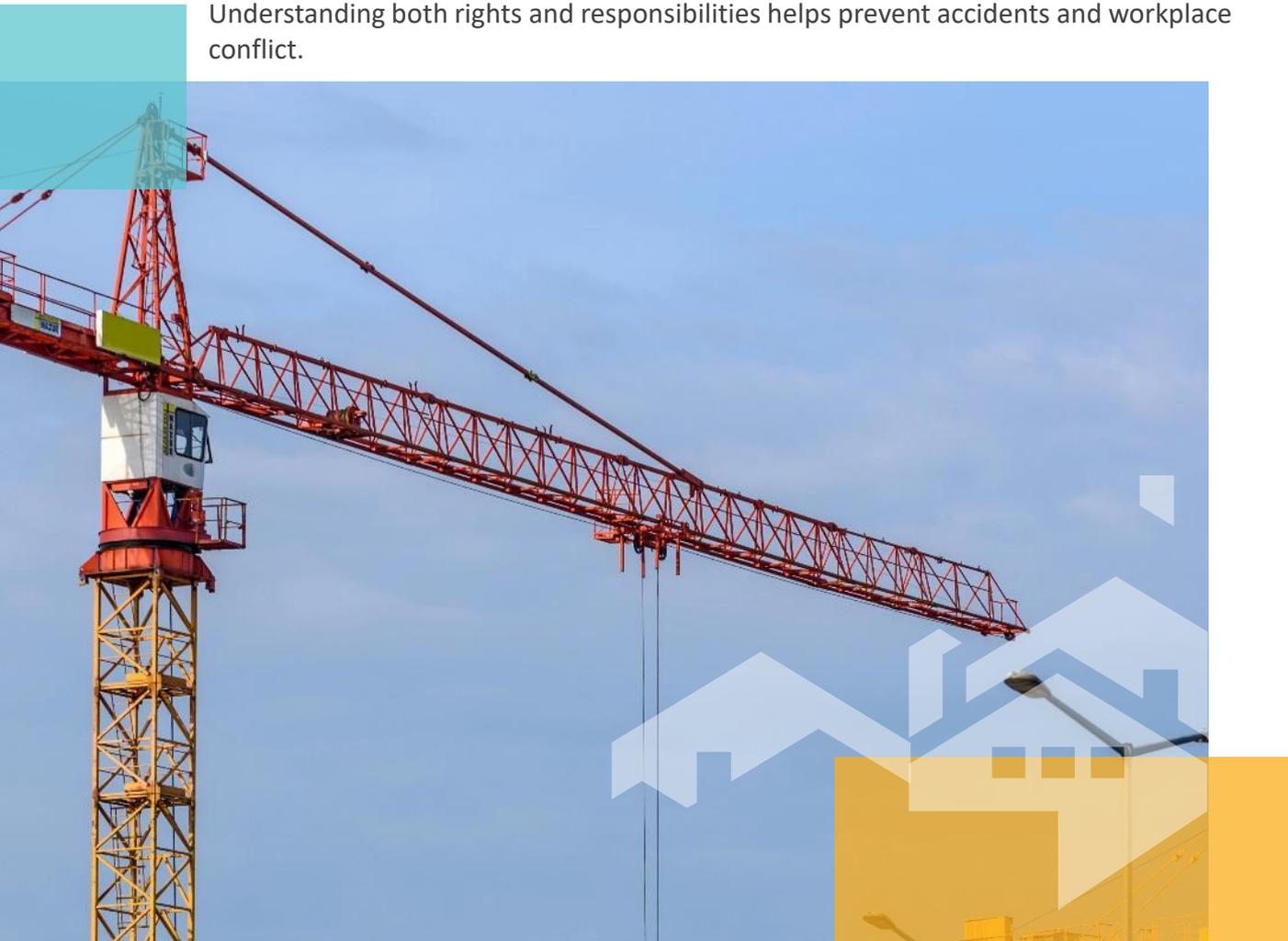
- A safe and healthy working environment
- PRL safety training
- Free PPE
- Stop work if conditions are dangerous
- Receive the agreed wage
- Written information about their job and contract
- Rest breaks and maximum working hours
- Paid holidays and sick leave, depending on contract type

Worker responsibilities

Workers are expected to:

- Follow safety instructions and site rules
- Use PPE correctly
- Report hazards or unsafe conditions
- Follow instructions from supervisors
- Respect colleagues and work cooperatively

Understanding both rights and responsibilities helps prevent accidents and workplace conflict.



Understanding Spain's Construction Sector

5.3 Employment Contracts and Pay Conditions

In Spain, construction employment is governed by labour law and sectoral collective agreements (*convenio colectivo de la construcción*).

Contract Type	Description	Level of Protection	Notes
Contrato indefinido <i>(Permanent contract)</i>	Standard employment contract	★★★★★	Best option for long-term work; includes paid holidays, sick pay, unemployment benefits, and regulated working hours
Contrato temporal <i>(Temporary contract)</i>	Fixed-term contract for a specific project or period	★★★	Common in construction; same basic rights as permanent contracts but limited duration
Contrato fijo-discontinuo	Contract for recurring or seasonal work	★★★★	Common in construction and seasonal projects; worker is re-employed when work resumes
Contrato por obra o servicio <i>(no longer standard but still encountered)</i>	Contract linked to a specific project	★★	Previously common in construction; now restricted under Spanish labour law

Important points

- Workers must receive a written contract
- Employers must register workers with Social Security
- Pay rates are set by regional or sector agreements
- Payslips must show hours worked, wages, and deductions

Understanding Spain's Construction Sector



5.4 What to Expect on a Spanish Construction Site

Construction sites in Spain vary from small renovation teams to large infrastructure projects.

◆ Team Structure

A typical site may include:

- Site manager (*jefe de obra*)
- Foreman (*encargado*)
- Skilled workers
- Assistants and labourers
- Health and safety personnel

Newcomers often start in assistant or labour roles.

◆ Language and Communication

- Spanish is the main working language
- Basic Spanish is important for safety
- Many sites include foreign workers
- Visual instructions and demonstrations are common

◆ Typical Work Conditions

- Early start times, especially in summer
- Outdoor work in high temperatures
- Physically demanding tasks
- Regular breaks, including heat-related pauses
- Use of safety signage and protective equipment

◆ Workplace Culture

Workers are generally expected to:

- Be punctual
- Follow instructions carefully
- Work steadily during shifts
- Respect safety rules
- Support team members

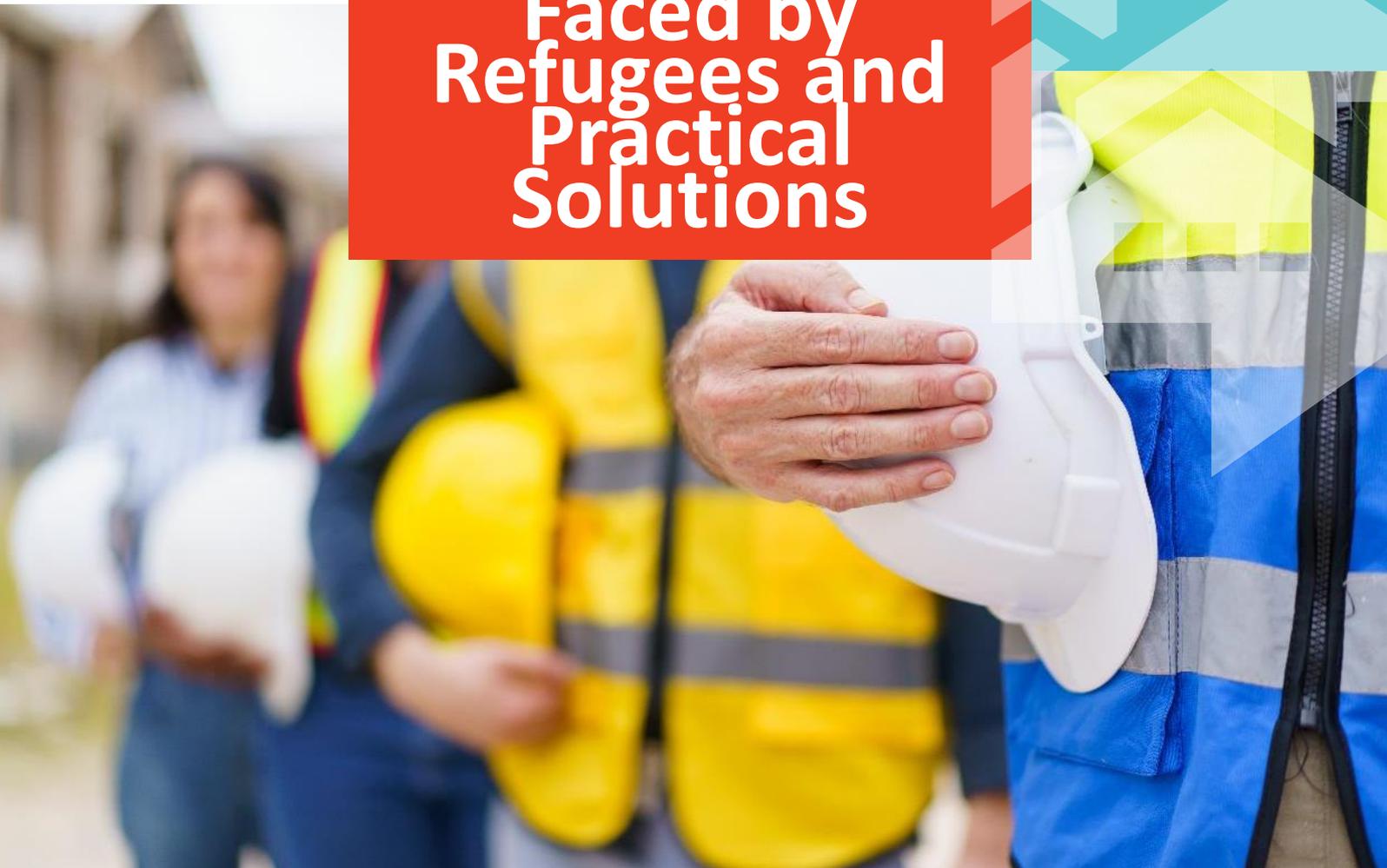
◆ Opportunities for Progression

- Moving from labourer to semi-skilled worker
- Gaining trade-specific certificates
- Specialising in regulated tasks
- Progressing to supervisory roles
- Transitioning into self-employment

Workers who show reliability, respect for safety, and willingness to learn often progress more quickly.

06

Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions





6. Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

Entering the Spanish construction sector can offer real employment opportunities, but refugees often face specific barriers when starting and maintaining work. These challenges are linked to language, documentation, workplace culture, and practical living conditions. This section outlines the most common difficulties in Spain and provides realistic, sector-specific solutions.

6.1 Language Barriers and Communication Challenges

Language is one of the most significant challenges for refugees working in Spanish construction. Safety instructions, technical terms, and daily communication are mainly in Spanish.

Common challenges

- Difficulty understanding safety instructions and warnings
- Limited knowledge of construction-related Spanish vocabulary
- Hesitation to ask questions due to language confidence
- Risk of misunderstandings on busy sites

Practical solutions

- PRL safety training delivered with visual materials and simple language
- Short, workplace-focused Spanish courses covering tools, materials, and safety terms
- Use of demonstrations, hand signals, and colour-coded signage on site
- Pairing new workers with an experienced colleague during the first weeks
- Encouraging supervisors to give clear, short instructions and check understanding

Why this matters

Clear communication reduces accidents, builds trust with employers, and supports progression to skilled roles.



Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.2 Lack of Documentation and Qualification Recognition

Many refugees arrive in Spain without formal certificates or proof of previous construction work.

Common challenges

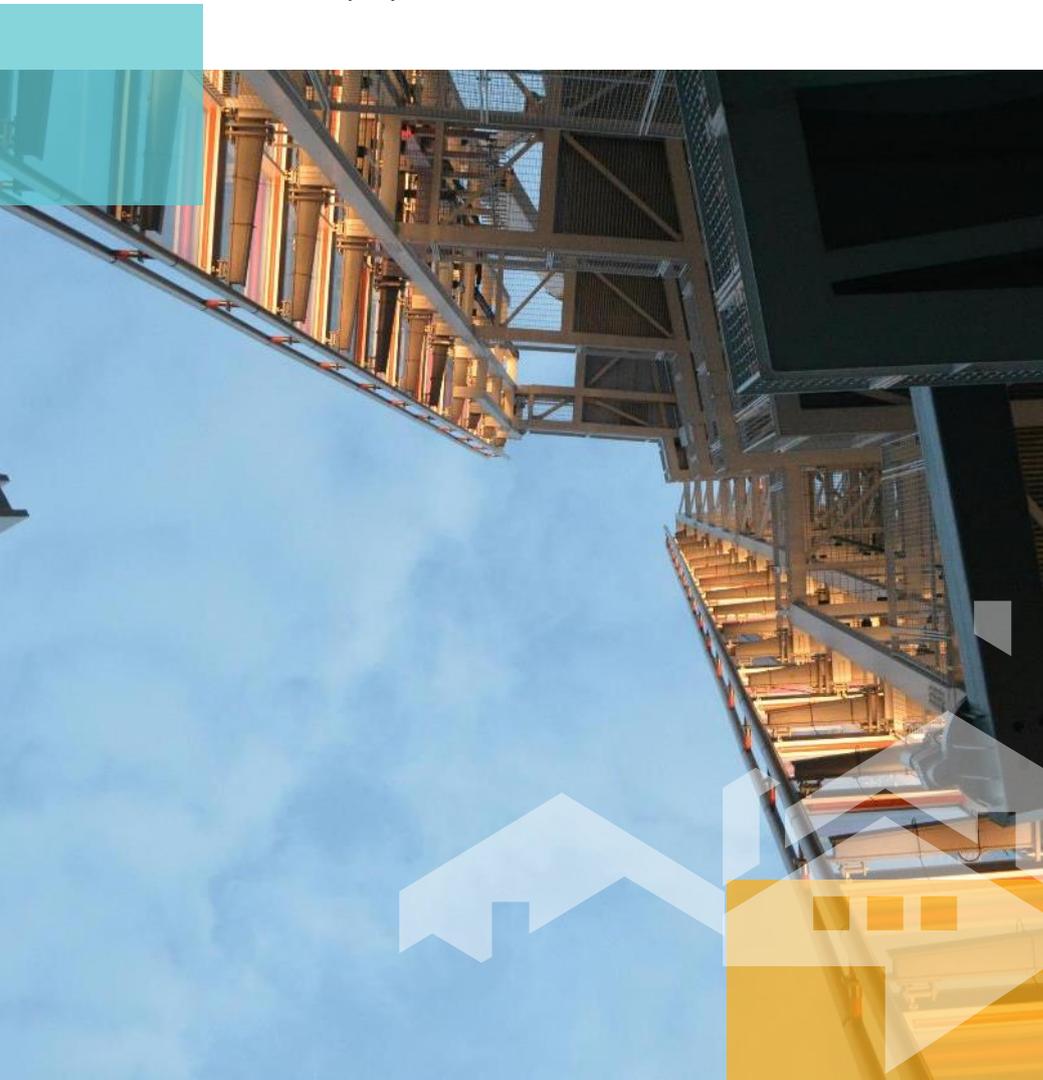
- Missing diplomas or training certificates
- Difficulty proving experience to employers
- Confusion about Spanish qualification systems
- Being limited to entry-level roles despite strong skills

Practical solutions

- Practical skill assessments and trial days with employers
- Use of Spain's *Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales* system
- Support with translating any available documents into Spanish
- Guidance from employment services and NGOs on suitable training routes
- Step-by-step advice on moving from informal experience to recognised certification

Why this matters

Recognition of skills allows refugees to access safer, better-paid work and reduces underemployment.



Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.3 Lack of documentation and recognition of experience

Many refugees arrive in Spain without formal certificates or proof of previous construction work.

Common challenges

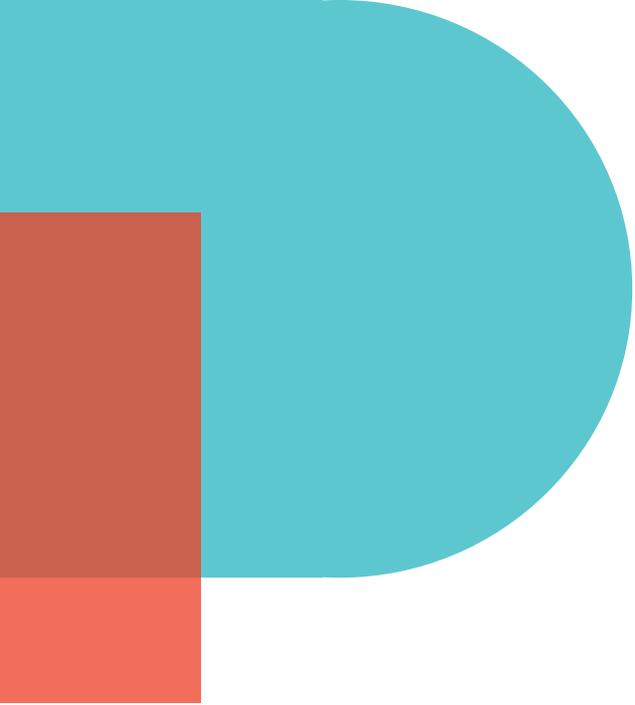
- Missing diplomas or training certificates
- Difficulty proving experience to employers
- Confusion about Spanish qualification systems
- Being limited to entry-level roles despite strong skills

Practical solutions

- Practical skill assessments and trial days with employers
- Use of Spain's *Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales* system
- Support with translating any available documents into Spanish
- Guidance from employment services and NGOs on suitable training routes
- Step-by-step advice on moving from informal experience to recognised certification

Why this matters

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Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.4 Practical and Personal Challenges Affecting Employment Stability

Spanish employment contracts and payslips can be difficult to understand, especially for newcomers.

Common challenges

- Uncertainty about contract types
- Difficulty understanding payslips and deductions
- Fear of asking questions about pay or hours
- Risk of informal or undeclared work

Practical solutions

- Pre-employment sessions explaining Spanish construction contracts
- Clear explanations of payslips, working hours, and overtime rules
- Support from NGOs or trade unions to review contracts
- Encouraging workers to ask for written contracts and payslips
- Information about the sectoral collective agreement (*convenio de la construcción*)

Why this matters

Understanding employment conditions helps refugees avoid exploitation and build stable work relationships.

Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.5 Workplace culture and expectations

Construction sites in Spain have specific work practices that may differ from those in refugees' home countries.

Common challenges

- Different expectations around punctuality and breaks
- Direct communication styles from supervisors
- Strict safety rules and procedures
- Uncertainty about reporting problems or hazards

Practical solutions

- Site inductions explaining Spanish workplace norms
- Mentoring or buddy systems for new workers
- Clear explanations of worker rights and responsibilities
- Encouraging open communication with supervisors
- Regular feedback during the first weeks of employment

Why this matters

Understanding workplace culture improves retention and reduces conflict or misunderstandings.



Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.6 Physical demands and climate-related challenges

Construction work in Spain can be physically demanding, particularly due to high temperatures in summer.

Common challenges

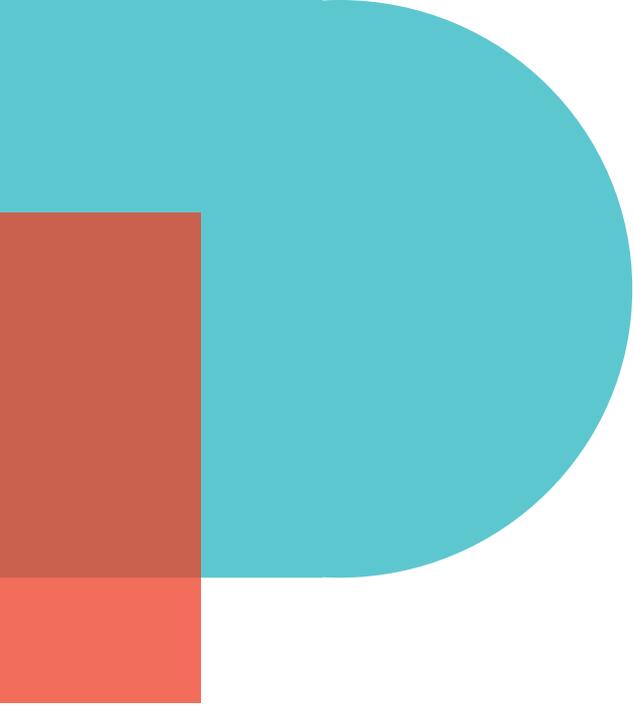
- Working in extreme heat
- Fatigue and dehydration
- Adjusting to physically demanding tasks
- Risk of heat-related illness

Practical solutions

- Adjusted working hours during hot periods
- Regular breaks and access to drinking water
- Use of appropriate protective clothing
- Employer awareness of heat-related risks
- Medical checks for physically demanding roles

Why this matters

Proper management of physical strain reduces health risks and long-term injury.



Challenges Faced by Refugees and Practical Solutions

6.7 Transport, housing, and daily logistics

Many construction sites are located outside city centres or in areas with limited public transport.

Common challenges

- Long travel times to job sites
- High transport costs
- Unstable housing situations
- Difficulty attending early morning shifts

Practical solutions

- Car-sharing arrangements between workers
- Transport subsidies or travel allowances
- Support from NGOs in finding stable accommodation
- Flexible start times where possible
- Coordination between employers and support organisations

Why this matters

Stable logistics support consistent attendance and reduce job loss.

07

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





7. Support Services, Training Opportunities, and Employment Resources

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

7.1 Public employment services (*Servicios Públicos de Empleo*)

Spain's public employment services operate at both national and regional level. Refugees with the right to work can access these services free of charge.

Key institutions

- SEPE (Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal) – national employment service
<https://www.sepe.es>
- Regional employment services, for example:
 - SOC (Catalonia): <https://serveiocupacio.gencat.cat>
 - SAE (Andalusia): <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/servicioandaluzdeempleo>
 - LABORA (Valencian Community): <https://labora.gva.es>

What public employment services offer

- Registration as a jobseeker
- Access to construction job vacancies
- Referral to employers
- Funding for vocational training courses
- Career guidance and counselling
- Information on contracts and workers' rights

How to access services

- Register online or in person at a local employment office
- Bring identification and proof of legal residence

Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

7.2 Construction Labour Foundation (*Fundación Laboral de la Construcción*)

The *Fundación Laboral de la Construcción* is one of the most important organisations in Spain for construction training and skills development.

What it provides

- Certified construction training
- Mandatory PRL health and safety courses
- Trade-specific courses (masonry, plumbing, painting, electrical basics)
- Machinery operation training
- Support for recognition of professional experience
- Career guidance

Official website

<https://www.fundacionlaboral.org>

This foundation has training centres across Spain and works closely with employers.



Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

7.3 Vocational education and training (Formación Profesional – FP)

Spain's vocational training system offers structured routes into construction trades.

Information on vocational training

- General FP information portal: <https://www.todofp.es>
- National qualifications catalogue: <https://incual.educacion.gob.es>

Construction-related FP areas

- Building and civil engineering
- Installation and maintenance
- Electricity and electronics
- Carpentry and furniture
- Energy efficiency and renewable systems

FP qualifications are recognised nationwide and valued by construction employers.

7.4 Recognition of skills (Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales)

Spain offers an official process to recognise skills gained through work experience.

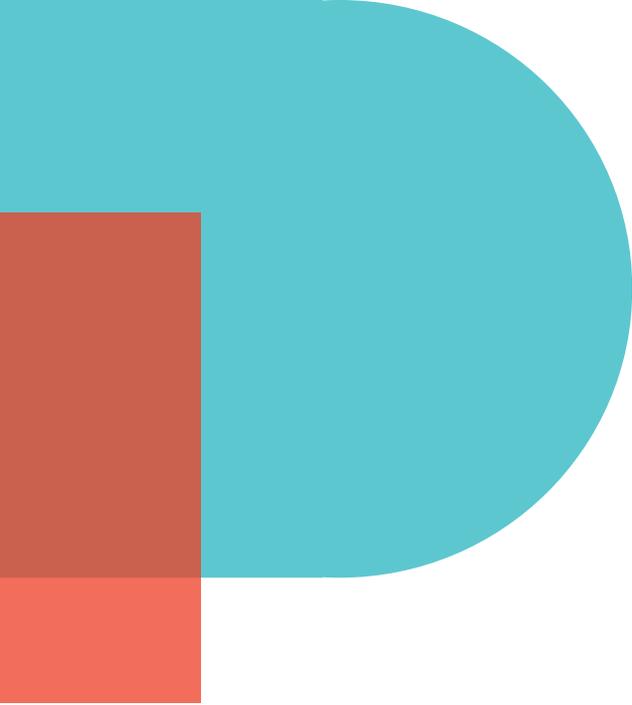
National information portal

<https://www.todofp.es/como/cuando-trabajas/acreditacion-competencias.html>

What support is available

- Information sessions through regional authorities
- Guidance on collecting evidence of experience
- Assessment and validation of competencies
- Advice on additional training needed

Regional employment services and training centres can guide applicants through this process.



Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources

7.5 Recognition of skills (*Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales*)

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What support is available

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- Guidance on collecting evidence of experience
- Assessment and validation of competencies
- Advice on additional training needed

Regional employment services and training centres can guide applicants through this process.

7.6 NGOs and organisations supporting refugees

Several organisations across Spain support refugees with employment, training, and integration into construction and other sectors.

Key organisations

- CEAR (Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid): <https://www.cear.es>
- ACCEM: <https://www.accem.es>
- Cruz Roja Española (Red Cross): <https://www.cruzroja.es>
- Cáritas España: <https://www.caritas.es>

Types of support offered

- Job-search assistance
- Help understanding contracts and payslips
- Legal advice related to work and residence
- Spanish language courses
- Training and certification support
- Social and psychological support

Support Services, Training Opportunities & Employment Resources



7.7 Job search platforms and recruitment channels

Refugees can search for construction jobs using the following platforms:

Online job platforms

- InfoJobs: <https://www.infojobs.net>
- Indeed España: <https://es.indeed.com>
- Jobandtalent: <https://www.jobandtalent.com/es>
- Milanuncios (local and entry-level jobs): <https://www.milanuncios.com>

Other channels

- Construction recruitment agencies
- Direct applications to local construction companies
- Referrals from training centres and NGOs
- Community networks

7.8 Good practices for safe job searching

To avoid unsafe or illegal employment:

- Always ask for a written contract
- Ensure registration with Social Security (*Seguridad Social*)
- Avoid cash-only job offers
- Confirm wages, hours, and duties before starting
- Make sure PRL training and PPE are provided
- Ask NGOs or employment services for advice if unsure



www.welcomeworkproject.eu

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