



Preparatory Assessments for the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme

**Volume 3: Talent Partnership Models Assessment -
EU Member States & Bangladesh**

Skills 21 Project, ILO
Financed by the European Union

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This report is a product of the collaborative effort within the International Labour Organization (ILO), combining the expertise of ILO-Bangladesh, through the ILO Skills 21 Project - *Empowering Citizens for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth*, and the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) in Turin.

The report represents the last of three preparatory assessments (Volume III) as part of the research investigations to explore potential EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme. It focuses on the analysis and lessons learnt from international, regional, and national practices in the field of skills development and migration partnerships. Based on this, it suggests three Talent Partnership (TP) model prototypes that could facilitate skills mobility between Bangladesh and selected EU countries - Italy, Germany, Greece and Romania, with the potential to be replicated also in different EU contexts.

The report was initially drafted by Ms Maria Todorova in 2024 with contributions from Ms Marta Bloemers-Makhoul, international experts and consultants to the ILO. It was supervised and finalized under the overall coordination of the ILO Skills 21 team at ILO Country Office to Bangladesh.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHK	German Chambers of Commerce Abroad
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
AMIF	Asylum Migration and Integration Fund
ANAPEC	Moroccan National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills
ANPAL	Agenzia Nazionale Politiche Attive del Lavoro
APTC	Australia Pacific Training College
AQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Referencing Framework
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit
BACI	Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry
BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BLMA	Bilateral labour migration agreement
BMG	Federal Ministry of Health, Germany
BMAS	Federal Ministry for Work and Social Affairs, Germany
BMFSFJ	Federal Ministry for Family, Social Affairs, Women and Youth
BMET	Bangladesh's Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BNQF	Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BYETS	Building Youth Employability through Skills
B2B	Business to Business
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CMR	Central Mediterranean Route
CoD	Country of destination
CoO	Country of origin
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPIA	Provincial Centre for Adult Education, Italy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DEF	Economic and Financial Document of the Italian Government
DeFa	German Skilled Agency for Health and Care Professions
DEHOGA	German Hotel and Restaurant Association
DEMO	District Manpower and Employment Offices, Bangladesh
DG HOME	Director General for Migration and Home Affairs
DIHK	German Chambers of Industry and Commerce
DKF	German Competence Centre for international skilled workers in Health and Care Professions
DYPA	Public Employment Service, Greece
EBA	Everything but Arms
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
ELA	European Labour Authority
EMR	Eastern Mediterranean Route

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ENABEL	Belgian Development Agency
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPS	Employment Permit System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EU MS	European Union Member States
EURES	European Employment Services
Eurofound	The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Europass	A EU-level set of online tools and information
EUTF	Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
FEG	Skilled Workers Immigration Act, Germany
FTE	Full time equivalent
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GDP	Gross domestic product
GII	General Inspectorate for Immigration, Romania
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GOVET	German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training
G2G	Government to Government
HRD Korea	Human Resources Development Korea
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IQ	Integration through Qualification
ISC	Industry Skills Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMIS	Integrated Migration Information System
IMT	Institutes of Marine Technology, Bangladesh
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
INAIL	Italian National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work
INAPP	National Institute for Public Policy Analysis
INPS	Italian National Social Security Institute
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISMU	Institute for the Study of Multi-ethnicity
ISTAT	Italian National Institute of Statistics
IT	Information Technology
KAP	Concerted Action for Care
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LBB	Bavarian State Association of Bavarian Construction Guilds
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MAI	Ministry of Administration and Interior, Romania
MIP	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme
MIUR	Ministry of Education, University and Research
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Italy
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania

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M-MPTF	UN Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoF	Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Italy
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Bangladesh
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPF	Migration Partnership Facility
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
MS	Member States
MSDE	India's Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship
NAE	National Agency for Employment, Romania
NAP	National Action Plan, Bangladesh
NCA/NQA	National Qualification Authority, Romania
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
OAED	Greek Manpower Employment Organization
OEMA	Overseas Employment and Migrants Act
OJA	Online Jobs Advertisements
OVATE	Skills OVATE – online tool of Cedefop
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
PES	Public Employment Services
PrEAs	Private employment agencies
P2P	Private to Private
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area
RAISE	Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment
RMG	Ready Made Garments
RNCR	Foundation Romanian National Council for Refugees
ROMIG	Romanian Network for Migration Studies
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMP	Skills and Mobility Partnerships
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TCNs	Third country nationals
TEI	Team Europe Initiatives
THAMM	Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration
TITP	Technical Intern Training Program
TOR	Terms of Reference
TP	Talent Partnership
TTC	Technical Training Centres
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIL	UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Unioncamere	Italian Association of the Chambers of Commerce
US	United States
USD	US Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
ZAV	Central Foreign and Specialist Placement Service (Zentrale Auslands-und Fachvermittlung)
ZSBA	Service Center for Professional Recognition, Germany

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Executive summary

Introduction

Context and background

International labour migration and international skills and migration partnerships models are seen as important contribution to the development of the contemporary labour markets, balanced labour demand and supply, transfer of skills at all levels, maximising ‘brain gain’, increased competitiveness and growth.

More in details, the broader implications of the skills and migration partnerships for the global education and training systems, labour markets and economies can:

- aid transparency and mutual understanding among qualification systems, support portability of qualifications across countries, facilitate mobility of professionals and recognize their professional qualifications.
- contribute to improving opportunities for jobseekers to find work in migration contexts.
- decrease shortage of professionals and brain waste; support effective use of human resources in society and enable integration of migrants in the host countries; and establish fair and ethic hiring procedures in the countries of destination and for reintegrating returning migrants in the home country.
- strengthen connection between migration and use of skills development as a proactive strategy, incl. with the aim of lowering the cost for training.
- improve the relation between education and labour market at a global scale.
- promote regional and global cooperation and become a solution to regulatory problems that hinder international trade in services and growth¹.

The newly developed concept of Talent Partnerships², announced in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, refers to tailor-made partnerships with non-EU countries, providing mobility for work or training.

The recently launched Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh³ at EU level involved interested Member States and the partner countries in a Roundtable-format discussions and policy dialogues to allow for identifying sectors and professions of mutual interest to be targeted. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the EU Commission and several EU Member States, Italy, Germany, Greece and Romania, have expressed interest in initiating a TP to increase international labour mobility through legal and documented pathways, and achieve talent development in a mutually beneficial way.

¹ Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO, UIL (2017). Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks, p. 8; ILO, Skills harmonization and partnerships, 6 February 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/skills-harmonization-and-partnerships>

² https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en

³ Roundtables were held on 1 March 2023 with Bangladesh, on 15 March with Pakistan, on 26 April with Morocco, on 7 June with Egypt, and on 22 June with Tunisia

EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme – purpose and objectives

Contributing to the work on reinforcing cooperation between the EU and the EU MS and Bangladesh, the EU and ILO project *Skills 21 - Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth*⁴, is being implemented in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, employers and workers organizations. The project aims to increase productivity and employment opportunities through an environment friendly, inclusive and market relevant skills development system responding to the needs of the domestic as well as overseas labour market. As part of the project, three EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme Preparatory Assessments are being conducted: **Volume 1**, with a focus on examining skills needs and employment demands in four countries – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania in the broader EU context in 4+ economic sectors in order to inform the potential match with the supply capacity of Bangladesh; **Volume 2**, aiming at identifying technical and vocational skills gaps, training needs and skills comparability in Bangladesh to enhance potential migrants employability in the destination countries; and **Volume 3**, with the objective to analyse international, regional and national practices and based on lessons learnt, to design three Talent Partnership (TP) models that facilitate skills mobility between Bangladesh and the selected EU countries.

This report represents Volume 3 of the assessment studies, called “Talent Partnership Models Assessment - EU Member States & Bangladesh”.

The report has five objectives:

- 1) Understanding international and EU legal migration policy and Skills Partnership Cooperation.
- 2) Examine the existing migration laws, work permit regulations, labour market policies, and skilled migration frameworks in the target destination countries and in the EU in general.
- 3) Study experiences and recent developments in Bangladesh’s collaboration and agreements on migration with other countries and with the focus on the EU.
- 4) Draw on lessons learnt and assess advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries.
- 5) Design three pilot Talent Partnerships models, to be replicable also in another context.

Content and structure

The report has the following content and structure:

Chapter 1, The Introduction, describes the context, the purpose, the objectives and the structure of the report.

Chapter 2 explains the methodological approach and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the report organised in a few sections:

- Background and recent developments, as well as – concepts, policies, cooperation mechanisms with regard to the international and EU legal migration policy and Skills Partnership.

⁴ https://www ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_543629/lang--en/index3htm

- Labour migration strategies, policy and legislation, as well as experience in skills and mobility partnerships across the EU and selected EU Member States.
- Bangladesh experience in skills partnerships, particularly with the EU and the EU Member States, where such exists.
- Analyses of common challenges and lessons learnt across the future partnering countries.
- Prototypes of three prospective models of Talent Partnerships

Chapter 4 is devoted to recommendations and the way forward.

The Annexes shed light on the used research tools and provide more detailed information on recent developments in terms of labour market legislation and approaches.

Methodological Approach

The study adopted the following approach, based on a qualitative methodology:

Data collection, management and triangulation: Data from different sources were used, combined and analysed - such as surveys, document analysis, interviews, observations, online consultations.

Desk review: The consultant team conducted their research on the topics specified in the ToR in the format of a comprehensive review of available sources, literature and documents, comprising national and international legislation, policies, strategies, action plans, and secondary data on recent projects and initiatives, related to migration and skills development and partnerships.

Interviews with key informants (KII) and individual or group online technical consultations were held across EU Member States. Participants and respondents were key stakeholders from the government/public administration, private sector, social partners, research institutes, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations.

A **Study Visit** of Bangladeshi stakeholders to Germany and Italy was organised to enable participants to benchmark and adapt European best practices in VET, enhancing labour mobility, and developing partnerships.

Geographical coverage: The study covers national, EU and international models, practices and cooperation formats. The main focus is on four EU Member States, which participated in recent discussions on EU Talent Partnerships (TP) – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania - where some of them expressed interest to a different degree in exploring the opportunities of this format of skills and migration cooperation.

Limitations of the study

The proposed Talent Partnerships Models have their roots in existing practices, but also include elements of recently introduced legislative and administrative arrangements, particularly in the case of Germany and Italy, and within the framework of EU level initiatives and Recommendations. As the latter are in their initial phase of implementation, there is still no evidence of the effectiveness of the envisaged measures. This shapes the models to a certain

extent as theoretical ones. Although many aspects of the models have been piloted in different context, the combination of those aspects in a fully-fledged model, as well as the details of their planning, management, implementation, and monitoring are the ones that will determine their success or failure. More than this, the capacity of the countries' administration, the general "migrants welcoming culture" of the respective societies and - last but not least – the political will to implement the models and the exact way to implement them should be considered as important factors.

Findings

1) International and EU legal migration policies and skills partnership cooperation mechanisms

International and EU legal and policy documents regulate and guide main aspects of skills and migration partnerships that call for international cooperation in human resource development, education, training and lifelong learning for developing "mechanisms that mitigate the adverse impact on developing countries of the loss of skilled people through migration, including strategies to strengthen the human resources development systems in the countries of origin, recognizing that creating enabling conditions for economic growth, investment, creation of decent jobs and human development..." (ILO R195, Art. 21)⁵. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact) of 2018, adopted by 164 member states promotes the approach for "mutual recognition" and encouraged States to "build global skills partnerships amongst countries..." (Objective 18)⁶. With the adoption of the Skills and Talent Mobility Package at the end of 2023, the European Commission (EC) integrated work on a series of measures, designed to make the EU more attractive to talent from outside the EU.

International labour migration and international skills/migration/talent partnerships models have historically taken formats of:

- Referencing to common or similar standards to enable transparency and comparison between skills and qualifications; developing taxonomies and classifications as they help countries align skills standards and qualifications to standards other than their own (ISCO, ESCO).
- Developing joint or sectoral standards (the latter exist in transport, ICT, construction, trade and welding).
- Comparing and mutual recognition of qualifications; Bilateral, multilateral, regional (recognition) agreements.

⁵ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R195; see as well: International Labour Organisation, Global Skills Partnerships for Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---iip_skills/documents/publication/wcms_653993.pdf; ILO, IOM, UNESCO and International Organisation of Employers (IOE), Global Skills Partnership on Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---iip_skills/documents/publication/wcms_821274.pdf

⁶ ILO, Skills harmonisation and partnerships, Think piece prepared for the Meeting of the Employment working group under the Indian Presidency, G20, 2023, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---ddg_p/documents/publication/wcms_867539.pdf

- Creating regional qualification frameworks - European Qualifications Framework (EQF), ASEAN Qualification Frameworks (AQRF).
- Qualification supplements and skills and qualification passports (Europass); digital badges representing learning beyond qualifications.

2) Examining Migration Laws, Policies and Practices

Across the studied EU Member States, a variety of institutions and organisations share responsibilities on labour market policies and migration. In addition to this, ministries and agencies in charge of the development cooperation and cultural institutes cooperate with international partners from third countries.

Particularly variable are the recognition and visa procedures, many of each encompassing coordination between a series of actors at local, regional, national and sectoral level, which usually lead to administrative burden, lengthy procedures and high costs for all involved in the migration cycle.

In the last few years, there have been new developments, particularly in the migration laws and approaches in Germany (The Skilled Workers Immigration Act) and Italy (Flussi and Cutro Decrees), see below in Chapter 3, aiming at reducing long-lasting application processes and qualifications and foreign language requirements. They are based on good practice examples of pilot projects, such as the *Triple-Win-Project* between Germany and partners countries, where the German Development Agency (GIZ) works with local partners institutions like employment agencies and language institutes to recruit nurse professionals for Germany. Such projects pilot a number of innovative approaches that are setting standards for future projects: providing support in terms of language and professional skills preparation and integration training before and after arrival in Germany, as well as the recognition process of the foreign qualification; gearing programs to account for the full cycle of migration; involving key stakeholders such as unions and employers' associations and individual employers; establishing effective operational cooperation between CoO and CoD.

3) Bangladesh's skills partnerships experience and agreements

The Government of Bangladesh has formulated the Overseas Migration Policy of 2016 and Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (OEMA) of 2013. In addition to this, the country has gathered extensive experience in terms of skills development and cooperation in the framework of cooperation agreements and bilateral partnerships and projects.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has signed *bilateral agreements* or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with at least 17 countries for sending labour migrants (e.g. Greece, Japan, Hong Kong Maldives, Qatar). These agreements aim to facilitate regular and regulated migration, ensure the protection of workers' rights, and promote cooperation between the sending and receiving countries. Those are either Government-to-Government approaches or Private Agencies-led (P2P) such. There is as well Government-to-Government Plus (G2G+) mechanism, jointly administered by the Government and private agencies.

Good practice examples from partnership agreements on labour mobility with the Republic of Korea and Japan showcase examples of agreements that were signed between the partner

countries, and the whole process of selection, training, recruitment, departure, employment, and return is managed under the stringent terms and conditions of the agreements. G2G Plus arrangements for managing the skilling and migration process under both of these systems are in place.

The cooperation between the EU and Bangladesh is largely determined by the framework of the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement⁷ signed in 2001. It is being followed up by Multi-Annual Indicative programmes and EU-funded projects.

The recently launched Talent Partnerships aim to provide frameworks for increased cooperation between the EU, the EU Member States and selected partner countries on talent mobility and skills development. Political-level Roundtables took place between the Bangladesh Government, senior representatives of the EU and relevant EU MS in 2023 and 2024. The Roundtables identified occupational sectors suffering from skills deficits of mutual relevance to be targeted in such a skills' matching collaboration.

Bangladesh has struggled to develop bilateral agreements with some EU MSs. To date, no general bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and any EU MSs have been finalised, but negotiations are ongoing with Romania and Poland, and developments with further states are at various stages of progress; for example, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on migration and mobility has been signed with Greece.

4) Lessons learnt that have been considered when designing prototypes of Talent Partnerships Models

Common challenges and lessons learnt from policies and projects, studied in the research and stakeholders' exchange, could be taken forward as foundations to build upon in future cooperation efforts between the EU, the EU MSs and Bangladesh, as well as in the broader context of the Talent Partnerships between the EU and other partners countries. Main ones are presented more in detail in the text below.

EU Member States and EU-level cooperation:

Complex, multilayer and sometimes restrictive legislative and administrative procedures across the EU MS and significant costs and delays hamper effective migration. Major barriers relate to bureaucracy, time-consuming procedures and requirements for ensuring skills equivalency and mastery of language, making it difficult particularly for SMEs to attract foreign workers.

Factors, deemed to support further development and progress:

- Recent changes in migration legislation and/or labour migration arrangements have been introduced with the aim to better respond to labour market needs and simplify procedures, with their implementation just starting now.
- Concerted engagement and inter-agency cohesion, and integrated and strengthened systems, functions and products are essential to define shared long-term agendas and achieve operational results.

⁷ The full text of the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/agreement-with-bangladesh-on-partnership-and-development.html>.

- In a short-term perspective government agencies and ministries are expected to progress with streamlining and digitalising of their services in order to provide agile, timely, transparent requirements, processes and procedures.

Bangladesh

Enhancing labour migration mechanisms, the capacity of the responsible bodies and the public-private partnerships is a prerequisite for effective participation of the country in the TP programme. Upgrading quality, industry relevance and recognition of Bangladesh TVET training and qualifications in demand in EU MS belong to the main potential success factors of the fair and decent recruitment procedures. Establishing independent monitoring and risk mitigation mechanisms is a lesson learnt from good practice examples.

Cooperation between the EU and Bangladesh

- Learning from the variety of projects and tools across the EU offers valuable experience. In addition to this, using or developing common approaches, tools and mechanisms for the main components of a future Talent Partnership (TP) procedure, and if possible – for the whole procedure in the TP between EU MS and Bangladesh would be a good to be embedded in the future TP models.
- The type and the modalities of skills and mobility partnerships models can mitigate the issue of “brain drain” and avoid situations, in which migration agreements and partnerships address primarily the labour market needs of the country of destination. Based on the good practice examples, there is a broad consensus between the governmental bodies of the EU MS and the partner countries, specifically – Bangladesh - that the future TP should complement migration cooperation with skills development programmes that can benefit both labour markets, turning a risk of brain drain into brain gain.
- When developing a TP model, timely and relevant labour market information and targeted training of skilled workers should be considered in order to avoid skills mismatch and support decent employment. The cooperation model with Japan and other pilot projects show that demand-driven skills development will be mutually beneficial for the sending and receiving countries, and in the first place – for the aspiring labour migrants. Such training activities would target the employers’ needs at the country of destination but will also help modernizing and developing the skills provision in the country of origin.
This is why, while establishing a Talent Partnerships Programme, options should be discussed on the provision of information on the mentioned aspects of skills migration for all interested parties: workers, students, employers, training institutions, governments.
- Recognising qualifications still remains an issue. The recognition of qualifications is essential for the employers to ensure that incoming workers have sufficient training or experience. It is also important for the migrants themselves, as formal recognition decisions may be necessary as an entry requirement or for ensuring access to a profession, or for occupying a job position, corresponding to the qualification level of the worker. Where transparency of qualification is needed for further certification and recognition of skills and qualifications, further activities may require establishing operational cooperations between the responsible bodies in the CoO and CoD for comparing qualifications and qualifications frameworks and establishing modalities for the certification of skills and qualifications, as

well as - providing concrete support as regards certifications (e.g. carrying out qualification or skills testing according to Member States' or private employers' standards).

- Migration to another country and return support require a coordinated social welfare and integration approach between employment services, recruitment agencies, employers, local administration, training centres, and in some cases – trade unions. Creating a welcoming environment for legally residing third country nationals and offering effective integration support, including to workers' families, is central to the EU's attractiveness and to the overall success of legal migration policies. Third country nationals experience discrimination at work that disproportionately affects the highly educated. At the other end of the migration cycle, a functional reintegration scheme, reintegration services, adequate employment opportunities, and employment options for supporting attractive, decent and quality of life in Bangladesh ought to be considered in the future TP.

Employers' role

Active participation of employers and their organisation has proved vital in pilot projects and migration agreements at all stages of the migration process: data collection and sharing, recruitment, training, recognition of skills and qualifications, financial arrangements, integration in the CoD.

- Acceptance of principles of "employer pays", "fair recruitment", inclusivity and decent work belong to the philosophy of the Talent Partnerships concept and should be integrated in future TP models.
- On a short-term basis, the approach of involving the employers and their associations in the whole migration cycle in cooperation with the governmental organisations or in the framework of transparent, reliable and swift procedures would increase their motivation.

Skilled workers

- Transparent and timely information on skills needs and matching, as well as – available jobs and working conditions is a good precondition for informed recruitment process.
- Skills development according to the requirements of the workplace and formal recognition, where necessary, contributes to ensuring decent salary and working conditions.
- Transparent, timely, effective recruitment process period, longer employment period, employer support for workplace, social integration, applying human rights standards and ensuring smooth return to CoO belong to the good practice examples of successful TP projects.

4) Talent Partnerships Models

▪ Why different TP models?

The TP Model depends on the following variables:

- **Who is it for?** Type of potential migrants included in the model;
- **What is it for?** Type of work and level of skills and qualifications needed for it;
- **Who is involved?** Who is doing what? Governance and implementation;
- **How to implement it?** Type, scope, composition, location of activities

▪ **Three TP models/prototypes**

(1) TP on highly skilled workers.

The model provides a flexible high-skilled pathway to EU Member States' employment of the type "Blue Card"⁸, which may be applied for example for ICT practitioners and skilled (construction) workers, incl. those without formally recognised qualifications, but with relevant high-level professional experience (to be concretely assessed in the country of origin (CoO), if required). In such a way, the model is close to the "first skills" approach. Recognition of skills and qualifications is not compulsory (except for regulated professions⁹).

Other characteristics of the model are:

- Training activities: Pre-departure, in the CoO: short-term, adaptation training: language training; intercultural awareness; short-term, targeted technical training (from the type of micro-credentials).
- Strong role and responsibilities of the employers; employer-led model: the employers should have expressed their needs and should accept the foreign worker as one that corresponds to the skills requirements. That is why, representatives of the employers usually participate in the identification of the need of short-term targeted professional training, its design and possibly – its delivery in cooperation with training centres.
- Mobility between jobs, employers, EU countries (for Blue Card holders).
- Relevant to highly skilled specialists from the ICT sector, well skilled workers from the construction sector and for regulated professions of nurses and caregivers.
- Stronger focus on the skills shortages in the CoD, compared to Model 3 (see below).
- Suitable both for long-term and for circular migration.

Advantages of the model in terms of the Talent Partnerships programme are:

- For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Transfer of knowledge; Transfer of funds (remittances); Builds capacity in future-related skills and competences; Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration.
- For the employees: Occupy attractive and decent work positions, without further delays and lengthy procedures.
- For CoD: Addresses shortage occupations; Attracts talents: Raises productivity and competences.

⁸ The European Blue Card Directive 2009/50, replaced in 2021 by the Directive 2021/1883 EU Blue Card is an approved EU-wide work permit (Directive (EU) aims to create a clear and transparent EU-wide admission system to attract highly qualified workers from third countries to live and work in the Member States of the European Union. It is applicable in all EU Member States, with the exception of Denmark and Ireland; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32021L1883>

⁹ A profession is regulated if the national legislation of the host country stipulates that specific requirements need to be met in order to be allowed to practise this profession. In regulated professions, one needs a license or a certificate from a regulatory body in order to work and use the specific job title associated with that career. This often applies to occupations in the health, safety and social services sectors. Every country has its own list of regulated professions; <https://www.enic-naric.net/page-regulated-professions>

For the model to work, in the CoO, the following is particularly important: the pre-identification of suitable specialists in general terms, and targeted identification, after receiving the specific employers' requirements, in order to pre-select the potential candidates. In all the cases, the principle of recruiting specialists that are in surplus in Bangladesh should be applied.

In the CoD main concerns are related to the need for the work to be coordinated between the variety of ministries and bodies involved. Employers may find the costs too high or the procedures too long, as from identifying potential interested labour migrants to occupying a job position the process can still take a couple of months.

Measures that are usually being taken to address the challenges, relate to a creation of a unified Migration office/ministry at an EU MS level and - interface offices/intermediary bodies/migration cells or teams could in the CoD. Using flexible training modes as "microcredentials" and digitalisation of different phases of the migration cycle are seen as timesaving.

(2) TP on Training and Recognition in the CoD

The model provides the opportunity to study/ be trained in EU Member States, (incl. work-based learning through dual vocational training,) and subsequently to be placed in employment, and obtain a recognized professional qualification in the country of destination (CoD). The model is suitable for young people and low-middle or semi-skilled workers for all non-regulated professions and offers particularly good perspectives in the sectors of hospitality and construction.

Other characteristics of the model are:

- The model is based on the traditional approach for providing training to top up labour migrants' skills in the CoD (including apprenticeships). In such a way, the training activities consist of pre-departure preparatory training in the CoO and a follow-up, full or compensatory training to reach requested skills level at the CoD. This approach has been applicable in almost all EU Member States with well-established vocational education and training systems.
- The model aims at achieving comparability of degrees in the CoO and CoD and/or opportunities to upgrade workers' skills against the standards required in the CoD.
- Possibilities for working while studying.
- A longer way towards occupying a full position yet offers all preconditions for a decent job with all benefits, like the citizens of the CoD.
- Stronger focus on the skills shortages in the CoD, compared to Model 3 (see below).
- Suitable for a permanent or long-term migration, although there are examples across the countries of circular migration too, especially in the case of youths' training and exchange.

Advantages of the model in terms of the Talent Partnerships programme are:

- For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Builds skills and competences of the workforce, which can be used in the CoO in case of circular migration; Pre-departure training may also raise capacity of domestic institutions to better prepare future labour

migrants; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration.

- For the employees: Possibilities for working while training; Avoiding the risk of remaining unemployed or hired for positions that require lower skills and qualifications.
- For CoD: Addressing shortage occupations on a long-term basis, as the model enhances the skills pool according to the specific requirements of the country.

Main concerns when applying the model are related to the significant operational costs associated with the vocational and language training, as well as social integration measures in the CoD. It is unclear whether industrial associations and employers themselves will be willing to take over the costs of such programmes, initially funded by donors and international organisations. In addition to this, in the cases, where a full cycle of vocational training is offered (3-3.5 years) these are programs of lengthy duration, which often leads to high dropout rate, which negatively affects the total cost calculation of such programs.

(3) TP on VET training in the CoO

The model provides training, qualifications and/or provides RPL (recognition of prior learning) assessments of existing skills through existing public sector and/or private sector skills provision and assessments in the country of origin (CoO). This model prepares skilled workers both for the national and international labour market in the country of origin (CoO) in cooperation between stakeholders from countries of origin and destination (Public employment services, recruitment companies, training institutions etc.). In such a way, the model is the closest one to the Michael Clemens model on Global Skill Partnerships and to the ‘triple-win’ paradigm, which calls on migration policy to meet the needs of destination countries, countries of origin and migrants.

Other characteristics of the model are:

- Targets young and/or skilled or semi-skilled workers by offering relevant training activities in the CoO prior to moving abroad.
- Training activities in the CoO, provided in cooperation:
 - after skills mapping, addressing both skills shortages in CoD and skills development in prospective sectors in CoO
 - covering foreign language, vocational training, cultural/civic awareness
 - potentially training “home track” and “away track” students.
- Suitable for countries with experience and intermediary bodies, like agencies, specialised in development cooperation, business organisations and chambers of commerce and industry among the main ones.
- Well-applicable model in case of in-company training, lower-level qualifications and for temporary labour migration, similar to the procedure of “posting workers” in the EU.¹⁰

Advantages of the model in terms of the Talent Partnerships programme are:

¹⁰ A “posted worker”, including from a “third country” is an employee who is sent by his employer to carry out a service in another EU Member State on a temporary basis, in the context of a contract of services, an intra-group posting or a hiring out through a temporary agency²

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- For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Builds capacity in vocational education and training and skills development in the CoD to better prepare domestic labour force and future labour migrants; Transfer of knowledge; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration.
- For the employees: Prevents travelling to the CoD with no relevant skills and recognised qualification and being trapped in precarious situations; Ensures upgrading skills and competences in the familiar circumstances of CoO; Limited risks for not responding to the requirements of the employers in the CoD; All working conditions previously defined and agreed upon, before leaving the country.
- For CoD: addressing skills shortages according to the requirements of the employers. Reducing the risks to get employees with not corresponding skills.

This model targets young and/or skilled or semi-skilled workers by offering relevant training activities in the country of origin prior to moving abroad (technical, foreign languages, cultural awareness and civic competences, or similar). In this way, the skilled worker fulfils all necessary requirements already in the country of origin before they get recruited by companies in the destination country. Recognition, validation or sort of a recognised by the future employer certification comes in addition to the training, so that no further recognition procedures are needed in the CoD. That is why, the model relies on the cooperation commitment of the CoD and CoO and depends on the willingness and motivation of the employers to participate. Coordination potential of the bridging organizations is crucial for the scheme to succeed. As many of the activities are usually privately run, good communication with the official authorities in the CoD is needed, in order to ensure smooth procedures.

In summary:

	TP model 1	TP model 2	TP model 3
Description	TP on highly skilled workers	TP on Training and Recognition in the CoD	TP on VET training in the CoO
Target group	Highly skilled workers (ICT, construction, regulated professions)	Young people and low-middle or semi-skilled workers	Semi-skilled/not skilled
Training activities	Pre-departure, in the CoO: short-term, adaptation training - Language training - Intercultural - Technical (from the type of Micro credentials)	- Pre-departure preparatory training in the CoO; - Full or compensatory training to reach requested skills level at the CoD	- Pre-departure training in the CoO: - Language - VET - Intercultural training
Recognition	Only if needed; compulsory for regulated professions, if possible – procedures to start in the CoO	Recognition in the CoD	Recognition/Certification – in the CoO Or Validation/recognition – in the CoD
Characteristics	• Based on the philosophy of the Blue Card Framework with or without possessing	• Traditional approach for following training to top up labour migrants' skills in the	• Targets young and/or skilled or semi-skilled workers by offering relevant training

the respective qualifications: - Promoting “first skills” approach - Recognition of skills and qualifications is not compulsory (except for regulated professions) • Strong role and responsibilities of the employers; employer-led model: the employers should have expressed their needs and should accept the foreign worker as one that corresponds to the skills requirements. • Suitable both for long-term and for circular migration	CoD (including apprenticeships) • Targeting comparability of degree obtained at the CoO and/or opportunities to upgrade their skills against the standards required in the CoD • Possibilities for working while studying • A longer way of occupying a full position yet offers all preconditions for a decent job with all benefits, like the citizens of the CoD. • Suitable for a permanent or long-term migration, although there are examples across the countries of circular migration too, especially in the case of youths’ training and exchange.	activities in the CoO prior to moving abroad. • Training activities in the CoO, provided in cooperation: - after skills mapping, addressing both skills shortages in CoD and skills development in prospective sectors in CoO - covering foreign language, vocational training, cultural/civic awareness - potentially training “home track” and “away track” students; • Suitable for countries with experience and intermediary bodies in development cooperation • Well-applicable model in case of in-company training and mobility and for workers with lower skills levels, aiming at upgrading and updating them.
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Recommendations and the way forward

- Successful mobility schemes are the ones that support skills development and targeted training of skilled workers both in interested EU Member States and their partner countries with the aim of avoiding potential “brain drain” and skills mismatch and support decent employment.
- Although some EU Member States (particularly Italy and Germany) have undertaken legislative amendments to support fair regular recruitment and migration, the dynamic economic development and political context are expected to spur further policy discussions, (re)formulating and operationalising policies. Strengthening their links to the labour and economic policies, as well as questions of cultural sensitivity, national identity and security might need to be further addressed. Streamlining and simplifying administrative procedures

(in some cases – on both the EU and Bangladeshi side), and visa regimes and permit systems in the EU MS is still to be progressed upon. Further research might be needed in some of the EU MS, followed by a policy dialogue, policy making, and possibly – pilot projects, further EU-level initiatives and similar. The ILO research capacity and EU-led initiatives might provide good framework conditions for this.

- Policy coherence at national and partnership's level and throughout the whole migration cycle in the selected TP model is needed to allow smooth mobility of talents.
- Policy dialogue, cooperation formats, coordination of partner interventions at local level should be strengthened to ensure strategic engagement with all relevant stakeholders from both sides. Government-to-Government (G2G) cooperation arrangement might at times be preferred by Governments for selection, training, recruitment, and placement of skilled workers in jobs abroad. While governments often do not have the capacity for a swift response or for scaling up service provision and implementation, a combination of public and private service provision may be considered.
- Increased operational cooperation and capacity building between interested EU Member States and Partner Countries would support implementation of policy priorities in the specific TP programme in the areas of:
 - skills intelligence, assessments, forecasting and regular monitoring of continuing availability of skilled labour in envisaged occupations and sectors;
 - mapping of standards and qualifications, adaptation and alignment of curricula/training offers, and assessment and certification procedures;
 - continuous professional development of trainers and provision of vocational training, language and pre-departure training, as well as social and workplace integration training in the CoD.
- Developing institutional capacities requires several measures in a Talent Partnership programme:
 - Supporting stakeholders dealing with vocational training/ skills development and employment to appropriately assess their own capacities and improve their ability to link training and labour market; to assess and report on labour market needs and shortages; to develop platforms with labour market information; to address irregular migration practices; and in general terms - to participate in and fulfil their role in the TP mechanism and to develop dialogue mechanisms and networks of partners and stakeholders;
 - Supporting training centres to deliver relevant high quality training services (including through development/ upgrading/ application of training packages as well as for soft skills, pre-departure training, workplace and social integration, language training etc.) which respond to labour market needs, and to prepare individuals for the national and (in some cases) for the international labour market; to promote innovation practices and technology transfer in training and work-based learning;
 - Development of stakeholder-based and independent monitoring & risk management mechanism, as well as a quality assurance mechanism throughout the migration process.
- Enhancing the skills of current and potential workers from Bangladesh to boost their employability in the national and international labour market might include: conducting

market assessment from labour market information systems and platforms to ensure better matching of skills; mapping of standards and qualifications; where applicable, identification and joint definition of curricula and modalities, including competency standards for training etc.

- Further efforts for the simplification of the recognition procedures should be considered. They could become part of already conducted targeted training according to approved and agreed with CoD programmes; be even avoided when not required by the national legislation; or be replaced by recognition of prior learning or validation procedures
- Key to the success of any potential Talent Partnership between Bangladesh and the EU/EU MS is to maintain efficiency, accountability, and transparency at all stages of migration management and skills development. Harmonizing approaches, tools and mechanisms for key components of future Talent Partnership models and programmes, in particularly skills recognition requirements should be promoted.
- Successful mobility schemes rely on enhanced cooperation between key public agencies and private sector players involved in skilling, selection, recruitment, migration, and reintegration and on the “*buy-in*” of employers in EU MS to ensure ownership by the private sector in the country of destination. Working with the employers’ and workers organizations, associations, chambers and overall, *the social partners* - is crucial for well-managed regular migration.
- Ensuring fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers should be in line with ILO General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and the Fair Recruitment Initiative¹¹. Recruitment should take place in a way that respects, protects and fulfils internationally recognized human rights, including the fundamental principles and rights at work, and relevant international labour standards. More than this, improving services to protect migrant workers should go throughout the whole migration cycle, including pre-departure/post arrival information, orientation and training and access to justice mechanisms
- A functional reintegration scheme, reintegration services, counselling and training, adequate employment opportunities, and employment options for supporting attractive, decent, and quality of life in Bangladesh should be considered part of the mobility schemes.

¹¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_536755.pdf

Chapter I. Introduction

1.1 Context and background

Skills partnerships are flagged by the Global Compact on Migration as an innovative mechanism that can bring benefits to workers, employers and governments both in origin and destination countries. Both EU together with its Member States and ‘third countries’ are interested in advancing on policy dialogue and concrete measure to maximise those benefits.

At the end of 2023 the European Commission (EC) adopted a **Skills and Talent Mobility Package**¹² comprising a series of new measures designed to make the EU more attractive to talent from outside the EU, and to facilitate mobility within it. Among the main ones is the action on **Talents Partnerships**, announced already in 2022 in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum¹³. The others are:

- **The EU Talent Pool:** A platform that should facilitate the recruitment of jobseekers from non-EU countries in EU-wide shortage occupations, making international recruitment easier and faster and enabling employers to access a wider pool of skills and talent. It will also provide information on recruitment and migration procedures in the Member States (MS), with strong safeguards to ensure fair recruitment and working conditions.
- **Measures for easier, faster recognition of qualifications** gained in third countries that will be helpful for employers seeking skilled workers and for third country nationals (TCNs) seeking access to EU labour markets.
- **Measures to make learning mobility more accessible.**

The Talent Partnerships aim to provide frameworks for increased cooperation between the EU, Member States and selected partner countries on talent mobility and skills development. They are supposed to combine direct support for mobility schemes for work and training with capacity development in human capital, skills development, vocational education and training and work-based exchange schemes. They should be of equal win for the partner countries, on the one hand – by helping to address skills shortages in economic sectors of the EU Member States (EU MS) and on the other – by benefitting the education and training systems and the economic development of the countries of origin (CoO)¹⁴.

The Migration Partnership Facility (MPF) funded by the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission (EC) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy and Development (ICMPD) has supported the

¹² https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/european-commission-adopts-skills-and-talent-mobility-package_en

¹³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b42-ff13-11ea-b442-01aa75ed71a1:000202/DOC_3&format=PDF

¹⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Skills and Talent Mobility, 15th 1st 2023, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/COM_2023_715_1_EN.pdf

external dimension of EU migration policy through dialogue and cooperation initiatives on migration and mobility between European Union Member States (EU MSs) and priority partner countries from outside of the European Union (EU) since 2016.

The EU has recently launched Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh¹⁵. Roundtables held with these countries with involvement of interested Member States have allowed identifying sectors and professions of mutual interest to be targeted. Partners showed a strong interest in cooperating on skills development and the recognition of qualifications.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the EU Commission and several EU Member States have expressed interest in initiating a TP to increase international labour mobility through legal and documented pathways, and achieve talent development in a mutually beneficial way, combining direct support for mobility schemes for work and training with capacity building and agreeing to intensify preparations to this end. The EU Talent Partnerships framework offers a tool that can be well adapted and aligned to the specificities of the skills demand and supply capacity of the target labour markets, and TP success will depend on the effectiveness of the cooperation between EU MSs and partner countries.

A Roundtable was organised in Dhaka in March 2023, jointly with the first Migration and Mobility dialogue and the Joint Working Group on Readmission. The Bangladeshi Authorities, the European Commission, Germany and Italy (and Greece and Romania following the process) endorsed the main elements of the Talent Partnership with Bangladesh, including: vocational education and training, recruitment schemes and pre-departure measures (language and integration training), reinsertion of workers, returning to Bangladesh.

The first technical meeting with Bangladeshi authorities took place in July 2023. This allowed for a discussion in particular on the programming of the Commission to follow-up to the objectives endorsed during the Roundtable.

The programme on the Bangladesh Talent Partnership Pilot Project (BTPPP) mid-2024 – 2027 was recently approved with the objective to foster regular and safe labour migration between EU and Bangladesh under the umbrella of the recently launched Talent Partnerships.

In this context, the EU and ILO are implementing the project *Skills 21 - Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth*¹⁶ in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, employers and workers organizations. Given the continuing importance of labour migration in the context of the Bangladesh economy, as part of the project, three preparatory assessments are being conducted with a focus on (i) examining skills needs and employment demands in four countries – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania in the broader EU context in 4+ economic sectors in order to inform the potential match with the supply capacity of Bangladesh; (ii) identifying technical and vocational skills gaps, training needs and skills comparability in Bangladesh to enhance potential migrants employability in the destination

¹⁵ Roundtables were held on 1 March 2023 with Bangladesh, on 15 March with Pakistan, on 26 April with Morocco, on 7 June with Egypt, and on 22 June with Tunisia

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_543629/lang--en/index3.htm

countries; (iii) design three Talent Partnership (TP) models that facilitate skills mobility between Bangladesh and the selected EU countries.

1.2 Objectives of the research

This report represents Volume 3 of the above-mentioned assessment studies, called “Talent Partnership Models Assessment - EU Member States & Bangladesh” and has five objectives:

- 1) Understanding international and EU legal migration policy and Skills Partnership Cooperation.
- 2) Examine the existing migration laws, work permit regulations, labour market policies, and skilled migration frameworks in the target destination countries and the EU in general.
- 3) Study experiences and recent developments in Bangladesh’s collaboration and agreements on migration with other countries and with the focus on the EU.
- 4) Draw on lessons learnt and assess advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries.
- 5) Design three pilot Talent Partnerships models, to be replicable also in another context.

1.3 Significance of the research

The orientation towards the expansion of legal pathways into the EU has been discussed and piloted during the last decades. Since the beginning of the 21st century global mega-trends like dynamic technological developments, including AI, digitalisation and green transition of the economy have added argumentation for the need of skilled talents, next to the already emerged opportunity to counterbalance the demographic processes across the EU. Additionally comes the assumption that developing legal pathways could contribute to leverage of readmission negotiations and may play a role in the fight against irregular migration flows.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the refugee crises during the last 10 years in Europe (the latest one – due to the war in Ukraine) have created important awareness of the high value and addition of migrants’ work for Europe’s economy and society and their recovery, as well as – for considering opportunities to better attract and retain migrant workers. The New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (presented by the European Commission at the end of September 2020) paved the way for rethinking how EU and its MS enter into partnerships with third countries labour migration and what the further-reaching and concrete attempts to create and expand opportunities for regular migration from non-EU citizens would be. Dedicated Talent Partnerships promise an “enhanced commitment to support regular migration and mobility with key partners”, as they seek to:

(...) provide a comprehensive EU policy framework as well as funding support for cooperation with third countries, to better match labour and skills needs in the EU, as well as being part of the EU’s toolbox for engaging partner countries strategically on migration...”¹⁷

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, Brussels, 23 September 2020 COM(2020) 609 final; [https://eur-](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0609)

Bangladesh on the other hand has a young population and a growing workforce. The labour market in Bangladesh is characterised by a labour surplus and the labour migration plays a significant role in managing this surplus by providing opportunities for Bangladeshi workers to seek employment and income abroad. Many Bangladeshi work overseas, in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and other regions including Europe. However, addressing the labour surplus and ensuring productive employment opportunities for the growing workforce remain important challenges for Bangladesh. Complex migration dynamics and management, limited resources, insufficient institutional capacity in terms of data availability, skills development and recognition are still aspects to work on in cooperation with partner countries.

The Talent Partnerships (TP) are expected to bring together a broad range of stakeholders to strengthen initiatives to develop skills and boost employment opportunities in a triple win perspective: (i) addressing skills shortages in the destination countries in the EU and contributing to labour market dynamics and competitiveness; (ii), address labour surplus and benefit skills development, institutional capacities and development goals of Bangladesh; and (iii) bring benefits to migrants by enhancing their access to reliable and real time information on job availability and requirements, developing or upgrading their skills and getting them recognised in order to obtain better employment opportunities abroad, ensuring support to enter into fair contacts and contracts to employers and avoid fraud and exploitations, as well as – for reintegration back in the country of origin.

In such a way, the TP combine support for mobility and migration schemes to EU MS with capacity building and skills development in Bangladesh for mutual benefits of economies, communities and people of the two sides. This includes investment in human capital, including skills development, vocational education and training and operationalisation of work-based exchange schemes. TP are expected to transform the risk of brain drain from partner countries into brain gain for all partners, benefiting those involved as they access renewed training opportunities, professional experiences and additional study or vocational education and training developed either in the EU or in their countries of origin.

The project *Skills 21 - Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth* supports the European Union and its Member States efforts for **a more strategic approach to regular migration**, oriented towards better attracting and retaining talent to foster growth and innovation potential and channelling regular migration towards regions and occupations facing skills shortages¹⁸. The common goal is to **continue to deepen cooperation** between partner countries, ensuring a mutually beneficial approach in opening new pathways for regular migration, offering support in skills development and promoting circular migration in order to counteract brain drain.

Following up on this understanding, the European Commission sets out an approach of an ambitious and sustainable EU legal migration policy, in the framework of which it develops

[lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b42-ff13-11ea-b442-01aa75ed71a1:0002_02/DOC_3&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b42-ff13-11ea-b442-01aa75ed71a1:0002_02/DOC_3&format=PDF)

¹⁸ Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Report, Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing an EU Talent Pool, Brussels, 15 July 2023, SWD(2023) 717 final

and upgrades its current legislative framework; develops pilot labour mobility schemes with non-EU countries; and envisages concrete steps to develop Talent Partnerships with key partner countries, with Bangladesh among them.

In order to do so, the future Talent Partnerships should rely on:

- Matching of real labour market needs and skills on both sides. This requires identification of skills shortage sectors and occupations
- Identification of the supply capacity of the Bangladesh educational and TVET system and training needs to address potential gaps
- Suggest pathways for mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships between participating countries for a managed labour migration circle.

These sub-problems are at the heart of the three volumes of the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme Preparatory Assessments:

Volume I, “Skills Needs Assessment in EU and in selected EU Member States” (presented in study below) aims at conducting skills needs analysis across four selected EU Member States (Italy, Germany, Greece and Romania) to serve as a background document for potential pathways for forging sustainable partnerships between participating states and Bangladesh for a managed migration cycle and sustainable recruitment schemes. The focus of the study is on addressing labour market situation, trends, occupation profiles and skills needs. The four selected countries have been identified as countries with pronounced occupation shortages across sectors of importance for their future economic development and competitiveness: ICT, construction, hospitality and tourism, healthcare, transportation and logistics, agriculture and food industry. Same sectors are of interest as well for the Bangladeshi side. The two sides are engaged in preliminary discussion, exchange of views and high-level dialogues with Bangladesh, with the Italy – Bangladesh dialogue being the most advanced one and Greece - Bangladesh, already having a Memorandum of Understanding signed.

Volume II, Training Needs Analysis, will build on the gathered information and conduct a comparative assessment on occupations, skills sets and skills gaps within the Bangladeshi vocational education and training context.

The identification of the EU skills demand and the Bangladeshi supply capacity will pave the way for developing robust **Talent partnership models**, facilitating potential skills mobility between the EU MS and Bangladesh, objective of **Volume III, represented by this report.**

This report presents a comprehensive study on relevant global, regional and national skills migration partnership practices and national arrangements, analysing their advantages and stumbling blocks in view of the future potential Talent Partnerships between the EU and four EU member States and Bangladesh in prospective sectors for cooperation – ICT, construction, tourism and hospitality, healthcare, transport and agriculture. Based on identified shortages and capacities across the EU Member States and Bangladesh and building on lessons learnt, the authors suggest building skills Talent Partnership models in line with the prominent feature of the concept and applying the triple win approach: EU countries benefit from skilled labour

migrants, Bangladesh profits from increased know-how, economic growth and development of their workforce and individual skilled workers receive the opportunity of fair migration.

The ultimate goal of the report is to help creating pathways for effective skills, migration and talent partnerships, driving economic growth and fostering development and cooperation between the EU MS and Bangladesh.

1.4 Organisation of the report

The report has the following content and structure:

Chapter 1, The Introduction, describes the context, the purpose, the objectives and the structure of the report.

Chapter 2 explains the methodological approach and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the research

Its first part focuses on the background and recent developments with regard to the international and EU legal migration policy and Skills Partnership Cooperation. Policy and legislation, as well as concepts, projects and cooperation mechanisms are studied with the aim to present the general framework for the future TP programme.

A second section provides a broad picture of the EU Member States labour migration strategies, policy and legislation, as well as their experience in skills and mobility partnerships. Responsible institutions and recent developments in labour migration approaches, policies and legislations and lessons learnt from existing partnerships and cooperation formats in Germany, Italy, Greece, Romania are studied considering their implications on the functionalities of the future TP models.

In addition, relevant examples from other EU Member States and EU-financed projects are presented, as there are longstanding experience and multiple initiatives with formalised agreements or cooperation available.

The report refers, as well to the Bangladesh experience in skills partnerships, particularly with the EU and the EU Member States, where such exists. The report draws on current partnership agreements in Bangladesh focusing on Government-to-Government models; Private Agencies-led schemes; or a mix of both resulting in Government-to-Government Plus mechanism, which are jointly administered by the Government and private agencies.

Based on analyses of the common challenges and lessons learnt across the future partnering countries, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries are highlighted and assessed, considering turning them into practical steps when designing TP models.

The main part of the reports is devoted to three prototypes of prospective models of Talent Partnerships. The models are constructed around one and the same outline and common “building blocks”, relating to the target groups, types of mobility, characteristics of the recruitment, training and skills recognition approach, involvement of stakeholders and measures for integration and/or circular migration. Advantages and disadvantages are highlighted as well as country-specific relevance, where applicable.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Recommendations and the Way Forward for the next stage of the TP cooperation focusing on main relevant characteristics of a successful TP programme, applying common principles; enhancing policy dialogue, operational arrangements with all relevant stakeholders and capacity building; and constructing and managing effective regular migration mechanisms, based on the principles of fair recruitment, decent work and respecting human rights. All this can guide future efforts to design effective and efficient, multi-beneficial TP models across different context.

The Annexes shed light on the used research tools and provide more detailed information on recent developments in terms of labour market legislation and approaches.

Chapter 2. Research methodology

To study relevant national, European and global models of skills and migration partnerships and based on this – to develop potential Talent Partnership models, the study adopted the following approach, based on a qualitative methodology:

Data collection, management and triangulation: Data from different sources were used, combined and analysed - such as surveys, document analysis, interviews, observations, online consultations with the aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the combined and analysed research topics and in order to ensure the validity and reliability of findings and recommendations. In addition to this, data was collected from multiple participants with different backgrounds, experiences, or perspectives.

Desk review: The consultant team followed the requirements of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and conducted their research on the topics specified in the ToR in the format of a comprehensive review of available sources, literature and documents. In the desk review the consultants studied recent developments, current situation and good practices, and gathered information on main characteristics and trends within national, European and international approaches and cooperation formats in skills and migration partnerships. To do so, the team gathered documents and literature from national and international sources. The documents comprise national and international legislation, policies, strategies, action plans, and secondary data on recent projects and initiatives, related to migration and skills development and partnerships. The consultants reviewed the documents, evaluated them and analysed their content. Main focus was on characteristics of the existing models and approaches, as well as their advantages and barriers to success.

Interviews with key informants (KII) were held across EU Member States, which participated in discussion rounds on Talent Partnerships, as well as - international organisations and projects. Respondents were key stakeholders from the government/public administration, private sector, social partners, research institutes, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations. The respondents were selected, based on their responsibilities and/or expertise in different aspects of the VET, labour market, skills and migration policies. A List of the Key Informants is provided in Annex 1.

Based on the information collected and analysed, three Talent Partnerships Models were developed around the following building blocks: Types of potential migrants, Level of skills considered; Process of the whole migration cycle (Legislative and bilateral arrangements, Information gathering and sharing; Skills mapping and pre-selection; Training; recognition of skills and competences; Visa and administrative formalities, Integration, Returning back home/circular migration); Stakeholders and their roles, Strengths and limitations of the models; Concluding remarks. The methodology used to identify the models was built around the key questions for an activity and factors making it happen: Who is it for; What is it for; How to implement it; Who participates and in which roles; What are the advantages and disadvantages.

Individual and group online technical consultations with relevant stakeholders were organised, including in cooperation with the *ILO Skills 21 Project* in order to present the research findings and discuss challenges and recommendations. Based on presented examples

from the side of the stakeholders and conducted discussion rounds, additional information has been gathered, more in-dept knowledge of most important aspects of the talent partnerships has been collected and specific challenges identified.

A **Study Visit** of Bangladeshi stakeholders to Germany and Italy was organised to enable participants to benchmark and adapt European best practices in VET, enhancing labour mobility, and developing partnerships, essential for recognizing skills and facilitating skilled migration. Key objectives included exploring talent partnership models, understanding apprenticeship and dual training systems, and developing national qualification frameworks. The study tour also aimed at addressing challenges like employer engagement and curriculum development while promoting international cooperation in VET.

Geographical coverage: The study covers national, EU and international models, practices and cooperation formats. Main focus is on four EU Member States – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania, which participated in recent discussions on EU Talent Partnerships (TP) and some of them expressed interest to a different degree in exploring the opportunities of this format of skills and migration cooperation. Examples from other EU Member States and from around the world were also referred to, when deemed relevant. The experience of Bangladesh was also analysed, as traditions, existing approaches and the preparedness of the country as a CoO for labour migrants should be taken into consideration when designing the future TP models.

Limitations of the study

The proposed Talent Partnerships Models have their roots in existing practices, but also include elements of recently introduced legislative and administrative arrangements, particularly in the case of Germany and Italy, and within the framework of EU level initiatives and Recommendations. As the latter are in their initial phase of implementation, there is still no evidence of the effectiveness of the envisaged measures. This shapes the models to a certain extent as theoretical ones.

In addition to this, the dynamic economic and political developments across Europe are expected to influence the implementation of the migration policies and legislation, which might have its impact on certain aspects of the proposed models – for example those related to reducing the requirements for regular migration. Certain advancements of far-right politicians, both at national and EU level might affect, as well the EU migration policy in general terms. Yet, at the same time, reinforced European ambitions for a new Industrial Plan, will keep the question of ensuring sufficient and adequately skilled labour force open.

Although many aspects of the models have been piloted in different contexts, the combination of those aspects in a fully-fledged model, as well as the details of their planning, management, implementation, and monitoring are the ones that will determine their success or failure. The extensively studied good practice examples and the lessons learnt from previous projects and programmes may serve a good basis for operationalising an effective Talent Partnerships model.

Last but not least – turning research outputs and recommendations into practice depends on the capacity of the countries’ administration, the general “migrants welcoming culture’ of the respective societies and - last but not least – the political will to implement the models and the exact way to implement them. Those aspects of the feasibility of the models are analysed in the study wherever possible, but only to a certain extent, as such socio-political analyses go beyond the time-limitations and the scope of the assessment.

Chapter 3: Research findings

3.1 International and EU legal migration policy and skills partnership cooperation

International and EU normative documents, policies and concepts

Main aspects of skills and migration policy and cooperation are regulated in a variety of international normative documents.

The cornerstones of the international instruments on migrant workers are the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on Migrant Workers (Revised) No. 97, 1949¹⁹ and the Convention on Migration in Abusive Conditions and on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Treatment of Migrant Workers No. 143, 1975²⁰. While Convention No. 97 applies mainly to regular migrants, Convention No. 143 also provides important guarantees to irregular migrants. In particular, Article 1 of this convention commits member states to respect the fundamental human rights of all migrant workers. Convention No. 97 is an ILO convention that promotes the conclusion of bilateral labour agreements between States where there is a considerable flow of migrant workers.

The ILO Protocol No. 29 of 2014, complementary to the Forced Labour Convention of 1930²¹, in addition to the repression of forced labour, provides innovative means for the protection of rights and access to remedies in favour of workers and female workers who have been subjected to forms of exploitation that fall under the notion of forced labour.

The ILO's commitment to the protection of migrant workers also goes through the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which also applies to irregular migrants²². In 2006, the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration was adopted. Although it is a non-binding instrument, the document sets the framework of principles and rights to which states' policies must adhere, including decent work for all, governance of migration, protection of migrant workers, the link between migration and development, the expansion of international cooperation; the crucial role of the social partners, social dialogue and tripartite consultation on labour migration policies; and the development of gender-sensitive migration policies²³.

These documents regulate **main aspects of skills and migration partnerships**, that call for international cooperation in human resource development, education, training and lifelong learning for developing “mechanisms that mitigate the adverse impact on developing countries of the loss of skilled people through migration, including strategies to strengthen the human

¹⁹ ILO Convention No. 97 of 1 July 1949 on Migrant Workers (Revised), ratified by Italy in 1952

²⁰ ILO Convention No. 143 of 24 June 1975 on Migration in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers

²¹ Protocol of 2014 relating to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930

²² <https://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang-en/index.htm>

²³ International Labour Organisation (ILO), ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding Principles and Guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration, Rome, 2007, https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_178672/lang-en/index.htm; ILO, Fair migration: an agenda for the ILO Report of the Director-General to the 103rd International Labour Conference, 2014

resources development systems in the countries of origin, recognizing that creating enabling conditions for economic growth, investment, creation of decent jobs and human development will have a positive effect on retaining skilled labour” (ILO R195, Art. 21)²⁴. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact) of 2018, adopted by 164 member states promotes the approach for “mutual recognition” and encouraged States to “build global skills partnerships amongst countries...” (Objective 18)²⁵.

Ratifying and effectively implementing ILO Conventions Nos 97 and 143 on Migrant Workers and its accompanying Recommendations Nos 86 and 151 is a key pillar in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s labour migration-related goals and targets, the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular migration, as well as the implementation of ILO’s Decent Work and Fair Migration Agendas²⁶.

The concept of a Global Skills Partnerships of the American economist and migration expert Michael Clemens, **referred to in the Global Compact for Migration** envisages activities on skills creation both in the countries of origin (CoO) and countries of destination (CoD). According to it, destination countries invest in an origin country’s VET infrastructure to develop skill creation programs for occupations that are in high demand in both countries. Framework conditions are agreed in advance and costs are shared. A two-track training program is then developed that includes a “home” track targeting the creation of skilled workers who plan to remain in their country of origin, and an “away” track targeting those who plan to work abroad. In addition to the cost-effectiveness, other advantages are that at the same time the VET system in the country of origin is being supported, and transfer of know-how in both directions is facilitated. Vocational training that is aligned with international standards also improves opportunities for employment in the domestic labour market. The partnerships formed are thus expected to contribute to human development, by improving (potential) migrants’ skills sets, individual career prospects and remittances, and they help destination countries to meet skill shortages and labour market needs. At the same time, these partnerships open-up new legal pathways for skilled workers who are willing to leave their home country and whose job skills match those needed in the destination country’s labour market. Furthermore, by actively involving the private sector in the development of these partnerships, the costs and benefits are shared not only between governments, but also with employers. This multi-stakeholder approach may help to overcome the often-encountered lack of sustainability,

²⁴ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R195; see as well: International Labour Organisation, Global Skills Partnerships for Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---iip_skills/documents/publication/wcms_653993.pdf; ILO, IOM, UNESCO and International Organisation of Employers (IOE), Global Skills Partnership on Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---iip_skills/documents/publication/wcms_821274.pdf

²⁵ ILO, Skills harmonisation and partnerships, Think piece prepared for the Meeting of the Employment working group under the Indian Presidency, G20, 2023, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dgg_p/documents/publication/wcms_867539.pdf

²⁶ https://www.ilo.org/africa/areas-of-work/labour-migration/policy-frameworks/WCMS_717848/lang-en/index.htm

due to the temporary nature of project-based approaches, and the high costs of interventions, which frequently requires funding by international donors²⁷.

Related to this, is the **Skills Mobility Partnerships'** concept (SMP), promoting a sustainable approach to skilled migration and mobility with the idea of building skills both for the benefit of countries of origin and destination. Although SMPs may vary in form, modality and type of stakeholder involvement, they all place skills development, mobility and mutual benefit of countries of origin and destination at the heart of their efforts. Providing vocational training in the countries of origin can be a central element of SMPs. SMPs aim to create a “quadruple win” solution for countries of origin, destination, migrant workers as well as employers and the private sector, thus enhancing the positive effects of migration on development²⁸.

The EU migration policy has its legal basis in Article 79 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The Article states that “The Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in the Member States, and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat, irregular immigration and trafficking in human beings”. In 2016, of *The Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals*²⁹ includes actions in the following policy areas, with **education, training and skills development among them**: pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and the local communities for the integration process; education, including actions to promote language training, the participation of migrant children to Early Childhood Education and Care, teacher training and civic education; employment and vocational training, including actions to promote early integration into the labour market and migrants entrepreneurship; access to basic services such as housing, healthcare and social inclusion, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation to cultural life and fighting discrimination.

The **New Pact on Migration and Asylum (December 2020)** calls for **Talent Partnerships** to boost mutually beneficial international mobility to study, work or for training, as well for ensuring capacity building assistance to partner countries, providing a comprehensive policy framework, as well as funding, based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries.³⁰ This approach aims at creating new legal pathways in the context of labour migration, skills matching and addressing labour shortages.

²⁷ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, p. 4

²⁸ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>

²⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0377>

³⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum/legal-pathways-european-union_en; See as well Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022

The new **Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility**³¹ (November 2023) and the accompanying proposals present a set of actions to make the EU more attractive to talent across full range of occupations. It is envisaged, that action at EU level can have higher impact than efforts by individual Member States, creating a more compelling case to attract the staff, employers need, and using economies of scale to reduce obstacles to recruitment. Building on the Pact for Skills, a shared engagement model for skills development in Europe,³² and the Communication, the EC launched the **Talent Partnerships initiative**. At the EU level, the Talent Partnerships launched in the context of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum aim to address skills shortages in the EU, strengthen mutually beneficial migration partnerships with third countries, and combat irregular migration. The talent partnerships will be open to all skill levels, various types of mobility (temporary, long-term, or circular), and economic sectors. The EU has recently launched Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh. New tools proposed would help job-matching between EU employers and third country nationals seeking work in the EU. Making it easier to move within the EU – such as measures to promote learning mobility – also has a positive impact for those from outside the EU looking to participate in the EU labour market. The actions set out aim to ensure a cross-cutting and whole-of-government approach. This builds on existing work including the Skills and Talent package and the Pact on Migration and Asylum³³, as well as on ongoing cooperation with third countries. Implementation will rely on the contribution of Member States' migration and employment authorities, actors at local and regional levels, training providers, social partners, businesses, and their counterparts in partner countries.

Since 2016, sectoral cooperation on skills have been launched under Erasmus+ 'blueprint alliances' in several areas relevant for the green and digital transitions. Some have supported the industry-led development of training programmes. Talent Partnerships could provide a valuable framework to adapt these for a third country context.

The role of the European private sector is fundamental for Talent Partnership activities on both training and recruitment. Public sector investments can complement but not replace the indispensable contributions from the private sector benefitting from skilled workers, to ensure the longer-term sustainability of such activities. The private sector, including professional associations, is already involved in actions financed under the Talent Partnerships, notably in the design of curricula for training in third countries. The Commission is expected to ensure that measures set out in this package on the recognition of qualifications and validation of skills of third country nationals are complementary to and supportive of Talent Partnerships.

³¹<https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/Communication%20on%20skills%20and%20talent%20mobility%20%E2%80%93%20reader-friendly%20version%20EN.pdf>; https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/regulation-establishing-eu-talent-pool_en; https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/commission-recommendation-recognition-qualifications-third-country-nationals_en; <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-europe-on-the-move-learning-mobility-for-everyone>

³² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

³³ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

Skills partnerships – formats and mechanisms

Based on the international normative framework and existing practices around the world, skills and migration partnerships have taken different formats and used a variety of approaches and instruments, such as **mutual recognition, bilateral and multilateral agreements that are stand-alone or part of trade agreements, regional or sectoral qualification frameworks among the main important ones. Thematically, participating parties engage in information sharing, increasing transparency, collaboration on skill needs identification, quality assurance, skills governance, development or updating of skills standards, joint training delivery, recognition of skills and qualifications etc.**

Examples of the different formats and mechanisms are presented below.

▪ Standards and classifications

Historically, skills partnerships are based on creating or referencing to common or similar *standards* to enable transparency and comparison between skills and qualifications³⁴.

Once countries agree to work towards skills partnerships, they would align their requirements to deliver similar labour market outcomes. This includes work in a synchronized way on occupational, education and training (qualification) and assessment *standards*, as well as (usually – to a more limited degree) – on the education and training provision in the partner countries.

As such work usually requires a lot of experts' and administrative capacity, one option is to develop *joint minimal standards*. Those are bottom-up, very often emergency-driven flexible and short-term responses to usually local or regional skills and qualification recognition partnerships. The international cooperation has led throughout the years to developing of *international standards and sectoral frameworks*, leading to widely recognized certificates and diplomas, awarded at international level, outside of the jurisdiction of public authorities, for example in sectors like transport, ICT, construction, trade and welding.

Instruments that are particularly useful when establishing skills partnerships are the *taxonomies* and *classifications* as they help countries align skills standards and qualifications to standards other than their own. Grouping skills concepts and establishing hierarchical structures of categories in order to establish relations both with the world of work and with education and training systems.³⁵ They are used for assessing and measuring skill needs and mismatches and can perform the functions of a *reference point* for comparison of national qualifications and profiles.

Many of the classification systems are based on ISCO, developed by the ILO in 1988 and updated in 2008. ISCO-08 uses two basic criteria to arrange occupations into the 10 major,

³⁴ This part is based on: ILO, Skills harmonisation and partnerships, Think piece prepared for the Meeting of the Employment working group under the Indian Presidency, G20, 2023, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---ddg_p/documents/publication/wcms_867539.pdf

³⁵ See for example the reference to ESCO: ESCO Taxonomy - Classification of European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations in: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/esco-taxonomy-classification-european-skills-competences-qualifications-and-occupations-just>

submajor, 130 minor and 436 unit groups (also called 4-digit) of the ISCO classification structure: skill level and skill specialization.

In Europe, ESCO identifies and categorizes skills/competencies and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, available free of charge in 25 European languages. The system provides occupational profiles showing the relationships between 3008 occupations (mapped to ISCO occupations, 5- or 6-digit level), and 13890 skills/competencies.

Within ESCO, the learning outcomes statements identified at national level can be mapped to the occupation-specific lists of terms, demonstrating correspondence or lack of it. In this way, ESCO can be applied as a sort of ‘fixed’ terminological point allowing for the analysis of national learning outcomes-based data. It is explicitly designed to work at international level and aims to be relevant across national labour markets and education and training systems.

▪ Comparing and recognizing skills and qualifications

The simplest way for skills and qualifications’ recognition is the credential evaluation. This process requires that a competent body in a country evaluates the content of a foreign qualification. After that a decision for recognition is taken by the same or another competent body.

► Box 1: Examples of recognition of qualifications

Credential evaluation is rooted in international documents and practices, such as the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (UNESCO, 22 December 1978), the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (often called the Lisbon Convention (1997) etc.³⁶ The Lisbon convention, for example, has been signed by 50 countries and international organizations, such as the European Union (EU), USA, Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Ukraine, Turkey and Russia. The aim of the convention is to facilitate the recognition of foreign studies among the signatory countries. A national Information Centre (ENIC or ENIC-NARIC) is an entity established by each Party to the Convention, which main function is to give advice and information on recognition matter and evaluate foreign qualifications. A second type of institutions – the Competent Recognition Authorities (CRAs) make binding decisions on recognition. A European Recognition Manual was developed to provide commonly agreed *standards and guidelines* to ensure similar methodologies. Unless a substantial difference is observed, a qualification issued by one of the signatory parties is recognized by the others.

„Benchmarking“ and „Referencing“ are the processes of comparing levels of qualifications after a mapping of the qualifications’ content. Referencing is mainly used for establishing a relationship between the levels of a regional meta-framework (like EQF, AQRF or SADCQF) and the national qualifications framework (NQF). In such a case, the regional framework plays the role of a ‘translation device’ for qualifications.

³⁶ The Convention applies to higher education in Europe, but has an equivalent in Africa, the Arusha Convention for Africa (1981), which was renamed and updated to the Addis Convention in 2014.

► **Box 2: Examples of benchmarking and referencing**

1. The current ILO *Skills 21 Project* has undertaken a comparison between the TVET/Skills qualifications of Bangladesh as a country of origin (CoO) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a country of destination (CoD) on three selected occupations in the construction sector. Comparability Methods considered are credential evaluation, recognition by prior agreement and benchmarking.

The Steps of benchmarking, identified in a Manual, are as follows:

Step 1: Comparing Qualification Framework: (a) collect referencing levels of CoO and CoD; (b) collect level descriptors of CoO and CoD; (c) establish a technical working group for a review and categorizing the level of matching (low, medium, high).

Step 2: Occupational/Qualification Mapping, consisting of: (a) identification of other countries' competency/occupational standards; (b) setting up criteria for comparison (levels, number of training hours, entry level requirements, exit level outcomes etc.); (c) set up a focus group to validate and decide on the level of matching. When gaps are identified, recommendations are provided for additional training³⁷.

2. Examples of countries, referencing their NQFs to other countries with the objective to benchmark levels/ level descriptors can be found in the Arab countries and Southeast Asia. The institutions in India and UAE worked to benchmark qualifications, assessment, and certification - 13 UAE Qualifications were benchmarked with 15 Indian Qualification Packs. During the hiring process of workers, those went through a recognition procedure on benchmarked qualifications and the successful ones received dual certificates³⁸. (PwC, 2022).

3. Within ASEAN, the participating member states reference their NQF level descriptors to the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF) levels. Countries without an NQF, reference key qualifications to the AQRF. There are 11 referencing criteria. By 2021 four ASEAN Member States (AMS) have successfully submitted referencing reports (Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia). The AQRF is supported by Referencing Guidelines (2020), two concept notes (related to nonformal and informal learning and learning outcomes) and a briefing paper on qualifications frameworks and quality assurance. The referencing activity includes responding to criteria, procedures and to a recognized quality assurance framework (ETF, 2020).

In the case of the European Qualification Framework (EQF), a 'referencing' methodology has been developed to define the correspondence between the eight levels of the meta-framework (the EQF) and NQFs.

▪ **Multilateral and regional (recognition) agreements and practices**

The mutual recognition (partnerships) are meant to 'allow' holders of qualifications from a partner country to automatically "access" the territory of the host country, just by notifying the host authorities that they are duly licensed and thus authorized to operate in its territory. For the skills recognition to take place, a *governments' decision* is needed for the "acceptance" of

³⁷ ILO (2020a). Manual on study to conduct compatibility study between selected national technical and vocational skills qualifications of Bangladesh and identified destination country of Bangladeshi migrant workers. Prepared by Md. Wazed Ali (PhD). National consultant, Skills 21 Project, ILO.

³⁸ PwC (2022), Note on strategy and roadmap for Skills Harmonization in G20 Countries, produced for NSDC.

the equivalence of the counterpart's standards/systems. Verification may be needed by providing proof (documents), issued by the home country. This leads to a dialogue between professional organizations in each country in order to investigate the nature of the professional activities, the professional qualifications, and the details of pre- and post-qualification education and training.

Another important aspect is linked to *regulated trades and professions* (e.g., accountants, nurses, architects), where a wide range of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) exists, some of them through trade/regional integration agreements, which thereby encourage the development of mutually accepted standards, and criteria for licensing and certification and provide recommendations on mutual recognition. At regional and bilateral level, qualifications agencies, professional bodies and education providers agree on qualifications to be recognized and standards' procedures applied, including for professional recognition and mutual access to the labour markets.

Main regional partnerships are the ones within the ASEAN, the European Union (EU), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Small States of the Commonwealth. Characteristics of the multilateral agreements that have contributed to the harmonization effort for cross-border labour mobility are linked to the availability of: *institutional structures, related legislature, operating model, and industry incentive structure*. Inter-regional partnerships also take place. In the Asia-Arab migration context, potential linkages between SAARC RQF (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Qualification Framework Regional Qualification Framework) and GQF (Gulf Qualifications Framework) are being explored.

► Box 3: Regional and multilateral recognition agreements (MRA)

ASEAN has formed the foundation for the recognition of skills, starting with the ASEAN Framework Arrangement on Services, 1995. It developed and adopted MRAs for eight professional categories between 2007 and 2013, with tourism being the only one that includes TVET qualifications. While ASEAN MRAs adopt different modalities in the service sector, three important professions (engineers, accountants, and architects) employ the so-called hub-and-spoke model. Under this model, professionals in one ASEAN country cannot be directly recognized in other ASEAN Member States but need to obtain the "ASEAN qualification" first, which then allows ASEAN qualification holders to be registered in other ASEAN Member States as foreign professionals to supply services. In the tourism sector, the MRA also established regional level Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). Implementing offices and bodies at regional and national levels were created and MRA principles were integrated into national laws. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework/AQRF was developed in 2015.

At EU level, in 2011, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)³⁹ placed emphasis on the importance of the skills dimension in migration and mobility initiatives with third countries and proposed to integrate all aspects of migration and mobility of third-country

³⁹ European Commission, 'Communication on Global Approach to Migration and Mobility', COM/2011/0743 final, 2011, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0743>, last accessed 22 February 2022

nationals (following the four pillars of the GAMM - regular migration/mobility; migration and development; irregular migration; and international protection/asylum) into overarching “mobility partnerships”. The European Commission signed Mobility Partnership Declarations with Cape Verde (2008), Moldova (2008), Georgia (2009), Armenia (2011), Azerbaijan (2013), Morocco (2013), Tunisia (2014), Jordan (2014) and Belarus (2016). These partnerships brought together all migration-related issues in a single package. Each declaration makes explicit reference to the skills dimension of migration under the first two pillars such as job creation, labour/skills matching, employment support to migrants and returnees, and recognition and/or validation of migrants’ qualifications and skills.

In sectoral skills partnership programmes, like in nursing, destination countries work with origin-country partner institutions or recruiters to train the workforce to match specific requirements. This has been done in Finland, Germany, Italy and Norway, for example, for vocational occupations in the country of origin, following destination-country standards⁴⁰.

Under the **Economic Partnership Agreements or EPAs** (2008), a programme designed to attract nursing trainees from Indonesia and the Philippines to Japan, costs for the mobility programme were shared by the government and the employers: Japanese government paid for recruitment, travel, and living expenses of participants, while employers paid for six months of Japanese language training.

▪ **Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs)**

RQFs as relatively new methodologies are usually designed as a ‘translation device’, contributing to increasing the transparency between the compared national qualification systems and thus - making portability of qualifications across borders possible.

In some regions, recognition agreements/conventions and qualifications frameworks relate to each other but may as well exist independent of each other.

► **Box 4: The European Qualification Framework**

At **European level**, countries have been working on the comparability of their qualifications, qualifications recognition, and periods of learning undertaken in different countries to make possible the portability of learner and worker qualifications between EU countries. The EU initially pursued recognition via a similarity assessment that can only be achieved by the harmonization of standards (until mid-1970s) and then recognition via a comparability assessment that can be achieved by the harmonization of curricula (from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s).

The Bologna process, involving 47 countries, started in 1999 as an intergovernmental process aiming to restructure higher education in Europe and to establish Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) through the introduction of a three-cycle degree system guided by a set of level descriptors referred to as the Dublin descriptors. In a parallel development, the EQF for primary, secondary, vocational and

⁴⁰ OECD (2018), *What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice?* Migration Policy Debates, No 15, May 2018.

higher education was established in 2008. It provides the central point of reference in using a translation device of eight European generic levels of learning to make qualifications systems more transparent to employers, learners, qualifications authorities, and education and training providers.⁴¹ The EQF involves 27 EU member states as well as other countries.⁴²

In the last few years, new features of the qualification frameworks emerged, such as continued shift to learning outcomes and stronger attention to non-degree credentials and sectoral frameworks.

Qualification supplements and skills and qualification passports

Qualification supplements are the easiest instrument to record benchmarked international standards or references to regional qualification frameworks and make them visible to potential employers.

Skill logbooks and skills passports, existing in some national skills systems for years are typically used to record the skills, competencies, and qualifications achieved by learners as part of individual qualifications or across multiple programs⁴³. The important question with credentials recorded in the passport or logbook is whether they are recognised and/or verified by a national or international entity.

► Box 5: Examples of skills or qualifications passports

UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants describes the highest achieved qualification(s), subject field, other qualifications, relevant job experience and language proficiency, as well as information that helps in the job-seeking and further studies.

In Norway, a Qualification Passport⁴⁴ was developed, using the following methodology: assessment of available documentation; analysis of the qualification; written self-assessment by the individual; structured interview by professional evaluators.

Council of Europe: European Qualifications Passport for Refugees – 2018-2020: A project was designed with nine national participating information and recognition centers, tested in small-scale in different context in Turkey, Lebanon, Armenia and Germany with arranging collective action and developing capacity. It demonstrates a potential to become the global assessment and mobility tool for forced migrants, especially with the digitization of the passport.

Within the European cooperation, **the Europass** model is a good example that could be considered at an international level. Initially the Europass CV, the diploma supplement (for higher education qualifications), a certificate supplement (for TVET qualifications), and a language passport (as a self-assessment tool) were developed. In July 2020 the Europass platform was launched, including an e-profile, the possibility to issue digital credentials and to assess digital skills. Europass offers the most up to date and rich repository of high-quality data on qualifications, national qualification systems and learning opportunities in Europe, helping learners to find a course in another country and employers to grasp the value of a

⁴¹ Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO, UIL (2017). Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks, p. 44

⁴² In 2014 a decision was taken to allow countries outside of Europe to reference their NQFs to the EQF.

⁴³ ILO, 2022, available at: [wcms_840276.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://www.wcms_840276.pdf)

⁴⁴ Stig Arne Skjerven Director of Foreign Education, NOKUT (Norway), Qualification Passport, PPP at UNESCO Information meeting, 2018

qualification from a different EU Member State. Credentials stored are however not automatically recognized by other EU member states.⁴⁵

Digital badges are seen as visual tokens of achievement, effectively providing a technological solution to the problem of **representing learning beyond qualifications**. Badges are associated with competency approaches to education, and as a result, claim to “help speed the shift from credentials that simply measure seat time, to ones that more accurately measure competency”.⁴⁶

Badges can represent micro-credentials, representing discrete skills sets that can be grouped or ‘stacked’ to form a larger macro-credential. They are personalized and machine-readable⁴⁷ and for these reasons, they matter to students, employers and educators.

▪ **Bilateral and multilateral partnerships and agreements**

Examples from countries across the world shed light on how they foster skills partnerships, in order to facilitate the supply of skilled workforce abroad.

► **Box 6: Bilateral partnerships and agreements**

1. In **Korea**, the Employment Permit System (EPS) for temporary non-professional employment is based on bilateral relations with 16 partner countries. EPS was instituted in 2005 and brings 40 000 - 50 000 new workers annually. While primarily a labour migration programme, EPS integrates training before and during the stay – which can last up to 10 years. An interesting aspect is that when the programme was introduced in 2005, the expectation was that workers would capitalise on the skills acquired during their employment in Korea to return to the same activity, but in practice returnees have generally undertaken a different activity upon their return. This has led to a shift in training.

Main lessons learnt from training in the EPS implemented in Korea:

In the Employment Permit System (EPS), learning the Korean language is the responsibility of candidates in countries of origin. To support applicants, Human Resource Development Korea (HRD Korea), the agency managing the programme, offers a self-preparation curriculum for the exam, something which has boosted private language schools in several of the partner countries. Following selection, HRD Korea provides additional specific training necessary for the Korean workplace to foreign workers upon their arrival and before they start their employment. They also offer training during the temporary stay of foreign workers to improve their vocational skills and to prepare for their reintegration in the country of origin. While only about 3% of EPS workers participate in this training, this still has amounted to more than 30 000 individuals over the past decade. The training initially focused on typical sectors of employment in Korea, but HRD Korea discovered that few workers returned to work in the same sectors and functions. Since then, the training has shifted focus towards employment possibilities upon return to the home country in other roles. In addition, it trains workers to become suppliers or qualified sales staff for their former Korean employers once they return home.

⁴⁵ <https://europa.eu/europass/en>

⁴⁶ Ifenthaler, D., Bellin-Mularski, N. and Mah, D. (eds). (2016), *Foundation of Digital Badges and Micro-Credentials: Demonstrating and Recognizing Knowledge and Competencies*. Switzerland, Springer., p. 24

⁴⁷ Oliver, B. (ed.). 2016. *Curate, Credential and Carry Forward Digital Learning Evidence. Final report of OLT Strategic Priority Project*. Sydney, NSW, Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

2. In **Japan**, small-scale bilateral programmes for recruitment of nurses and care workers – initially from the Philippines and Indonesia – involve Japanese government agencies in certifying and training workers in the origin country and in Japan. These initiatives are small compared to the long-standing Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), first created decades ago as a form of international cooperation; firms employing TITP participants had to commit to a skills development plan. In practice, TITP skills development was limited and the programme functioned primarily as a low-skilled labour migration channel. With the introduction in 2019 of the Specified Skilled Worker programme, which is based on language and skills certification, Japanese employers have begun to operate language and skills training centres in countries of origin⁴⁸.

3. In **India**, the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and other implementing organizations in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has signed **11 Government to Government (G2G) MoUs** in the field of skill development and vocational education training and **Business to Business (B2B) MoUs**, which facilitates recruitment, migration and training services for many countries.

4. **Australia and New Zealand** follow the principle of automatic recognition, which means that they have established a system of international or regional licensing.

In the past decade, a number of SMP or SMP-like initiatives have also been developed globally, as the example of the Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) shows:

► **Box 7: The example of Australia – the APTC project**

Created with support from the Australian international cooperation agency in 2006, the APTC comprises training centres in five different Pacific nations. It was designed to train Pacific nationals up to Australian standards for vocational careers throughout the Pacific region. At the same time, it was meant to build the capacity of the Pacific training institutions, and to provide qualifications which would allow some graduates to qualify for labour migration programmes in Australia. The initial project achieved its training goals but not the expected mobility.

More than 10 000 graduated from the programme in the first 8 years. Yet only less than 2% went to Australia to take up the higher-paid jobs for which they were trained. On the one hand, the participants were older (on average, 32 years old) and often already employed, which reduced migration. Another reason for the modest result was that the APTC project was not connected to a legal labour migration channel or international matching mechanism, so graduates had to conduct their own international job search. Further, while the APTC trained to the Australian standard, Australia's skilled migration programme still imposed a costly recognition procedure. Finally, since APTC trainers were sent from Australia, the programme cost as much as it would have cost to train in Australia. Major changes were introduced in the third stage of APTC, starting in 2018. APTC now includes coalitions with relevant stakeholders to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET) reform and the Australian aid programme. The cost-sharing model now includes some of the beneficiaries of training: individuals, individual enterprises, industries, national governments. The new stage connects graduates to legal labour migration pathways.

⁴⁸ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, p.8

Summary

The global and European legal documents, concepts and initiatives could provide important reference information when designing the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership programme. The Concept of Global Skills Partnerships and the new Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility highlight the principles that underpin successful TP models. The formats of skills partnerships provide an important information source when choosing the concrete measures of a particular TP model. Their functionalities presented above will orientate the respective stakeholders when approaching the operational phase of their cooperation. The trends towards developing regional instruments, using microcredentials and digitalising learning content and achievements signal for opportunities how to rationalise and streamline common efforts towards establishing effective skills partnerships cooperation.

3.2 EU Member States migration policy and experience in skills and mobility partnerships

In this chapter the labour market and migration policies and modalities across EU Member States are examined: existing migration laws, work permit regulations, labour market policies, and skilled migration frameworks. The focus is on the four studied EU Member States – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania. In addition, relevant examples from other EU Member States and EU-financed projects have been studied, as there is longstanding experience and multiple initiatives with formalised agreements or cooperation in place. Most of them focus on youth exchanges, mobility of young, qualified professionals or graduates as well as circular migration in the field of higher education. The formats vary between bilateral or multilateral agreements, programmes and pilot projects. Specific sectors addressed by Skills and Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) include healthcare, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and agriculture. Challenges identified in relation to SMPs include their scalability, their relatively high cost and the difficulties encountered to involve multiple stakeholders, including employers. In terms of opportunities, SMPs can contribute to unlocking the potential of skilled mobility based on a more sustainable approach. What distinguishes SMPs (as well as TPs and GSPs) from other approaches to labour migration is that they specifically aim for a “quadruple win”, benefiting the individual and the employer, as well as the destination state and the country of origin more widely. Well-designed and implemented SMPs may in the future act as vehicles for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enhance migration and mobility that harness the potential of migrants’ skills in a way that allows for countries of origin to benefit, whilst at the same time addressing EU employers’ most pressing skills and labour needs⁴⁹, serving in such a way as a foundation for TP models.

⁴⁹ Idem

GERMANY

Labour migration framework – development and recent reforms

Institutional responsibilities

Germany's migration policy aims to manage immigration while considering societal integration, economic interests, and labour market needs.

The **Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** plays a crucial role in this respect. The Ministry provides information on various aspects of labour migration, including entry conditions, residence permits, and employment opportunities for foreign workers. It also manages the Blue Card Framework.

PES, the Public Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) is in charge of evaluating demand and skills shortages, concluding placement agreements with third countries and verifying competences for employment offers, as well as – for supporting people, including foreigners and migrants, in their employment and training.

The Federal Ministry of Interior and Community, Directorate-General M – Migration; Refugees; Return Policy sets the Federal Government's migration policy. It charts the course of law on residence, freedom of movement and asylum at national and European level and deals with issues related to the return of foreigners required to leave the country.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is the German ministry responsible for development cooperation with over 60 partner countries. It strives to shape migration policies that benefit individuals, countries of origin, and host countries while promoting sustainable development and gender equality. The ministry actively shapes migration policy by offering pathways for safe, orderly, and regular migration and supports addressing displaced people and irregular migration; and works to implement the development goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) through joint initiatives and international forums.

BMZ operates centres focused on fair, ethical labour migration to Germany and Europe. These centres support regional mobility, successful reintegration of returnees, and ethical migration.

The German Development Cooperation organisation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is the main German development agency, which provides services in the field of international development cooperation and international education work. GIZ is actively involved in addressing displacement and migration challenges worldwide. Their work combines short-term assistance with medium and long-term projects, focusing on refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host countries' workers. It provides development-oriented support and implementation of labour migration programmes, including by supporting language and technical training, support for qualifications' recognition and integration. Additionally, GIZ strengthens global partnerships by contributing to the UN Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (M-MPTF) and supporting the Global Data Institute established by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The institutional landscape is populated with many other bodies at central and federal states' level with responsibilities in research, recognition of foreign qualification, integration services, whose contribution to managing different aspects of migration process will be highlighted, whenever deemed necessary for the purpose of the study, in the text below.

Recent reforms

In the past few years, Germany, like many other countries has announced changes and reforms to the legal migration policy framework with the aim to increase migration to address labour and skill shortages.

The Skilled Workers Immigration Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz – FEG) came into force on 1 March 2020, and is to boost the immigration of qualified individuals from abroad⁵⁰. On 23rd June 2023 the German Parliament passed the new immigration bill and on August 18, 2023, the new “Skilled Workers Immigration Act”⁵¹ was published in the German Federal Law Gazette (Bundesgesetzblatt). It amends the Residence Act⁵² (Aufenthaltsgesetz), and the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz, BQFG), among others, and implements European Union (EU) Directive 2021/1883⁵³ on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment. The goal of the reform is to make it easier for skilled workers from non-EU countries to come to Germany to work. Previously identified bureaucratic hurdles and missing required German language skills should no longer be obstacles for the decision to immigrate to Germany. The bill’s regulations – which were originally expected to enter into force by March 2024 – are now coming into effect across November 2023, March 2024, and June 2024. The new law is expected to continue and partially expand existing regulations for skilled workers with university degrees, such as the EU Blue Card⁵⁴. It will also be possible to search for a job using a new opportunity card.

Background to the New Act

The German government considers skilled professionals key to innovation and competitiveness, to growth and employment, and to prosperity and a good quality of life. Vacancies across the country in health- and nursing-related sectors, childcare, the IT industry, and building professions, among others can particularly benefit from new talents. Already in January 2022 the new government was cited expressing the need to attract annually 400,000 workers from abroad⁵⁵. In the Skilled Labour Strategy⁵⁶, presented by the federal government later, in October 2022, one field of action is to focus on a modern immigration policy. The government declares its commitment to ethically responsible and holistic immigration that serves the interests of destination countries, countries of origin and migrants alike. A goal-driven policy, based on the principles of the Global Skills Partnerships on pre-departure

⁵¹ <https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/EN/2021/210301-am-fachkraefteeinwanderungsgesetz.html>

⁵² <https://perma.cc/L56W-ZXBS>

⁵³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021L1883>; Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC

⁵⁴ <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/de/service/glossar/glossar-blaue-karte-eu>

⁵⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-wants-attract-400000-skilled-workers-abroad-each-year-2022-01-21/>

⁵⁶ Fachkräftestrategie der Bundesregierung.

<https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Publikationen/Broschueren/fachkraeftestrategie-der-bundesregierung.html>

integration support is deemed crucial. This includes the provision of information and advice, especially on the necessary immigration and visa processes, language courses and orientation services in the individual's country of origin – both for the potential skilled workers themselves and for their family members. Close cooperation with governments in the countries of origin is intended to avoid “brain drain” and to strengthen these countries' capacity to manage skilled labour migration. The aim is for this approach to be supplemented by joint approaches at EU level⁵⁷.

To ensure that immigrants from third countries and their family members can participate fully in society, and to boost immigration as envisaged, modernised legislation on immigration, residence and nationality is also necessary, including rapid, effective and non-bureaucratic administrative processes.

The new law is part of this strategy to support the supply of skilled workers. The bill is expected to create and expand immigration pathways for third-country nationals to enter the country for employment, qualification measures, or job search.

The Skilled Workers Immigration Act introduced the Three-Pillar System

The amendments establish a three-pillar system for skilled workers. The first pillar deals with skilled workers in general, the second pillar with required professional experience, and the third pillar, entitled “potential,” with skilled workers without a concrete job offer. (Skilled Workers Immigration Act arts. 1–3.)

First Pillar: Easier Access to Residence Permits for Skilled Workers

A “skilled worker” is defined as a foreigner who:

1. has successfully completed quality vocational training in Germany or has a foreign quality vocational qualification which is equivalent to one acquired in Germany (skilled worker with vocational training qualification), or
2. has a German university degree, a recognised foreign university degree or a foreign university degree comparable to a German one (skilled worker holding a university degree). (Residence Act § 18, para. 3.)

The former version of the law enabled “skilled workers with a vocational training qualification [to] be granted a temporary residence permit to perform skilled work for which their training qualifies them.” Under the new law, a skilled worker with a vocational training qualification may be granted a temporary residence permit **to perform any type of skilled labour**. (Residence Act § 18a(new); **The skilled workers training no longer needs to match the particular job**. The same restriction was deleted for skilled workers holding a university degree. (Residence Act § 18b(new).)

With the new amendments, in force from 18 November 2023, in an expanded List of professions (IT previously existing) to benefit from the relaxed Blue Card Framework, the

⁵⁷ https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/PDF-Publikationen/skilled-labour-strategy-pdf.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2, p. 26-27

following professions have been included: Professional services managers, such as *childcare or health services managers*; School and out-of-school teachers and educators; Manufacturing, mining, *construction*, or distribution managers; Veterinarians; Dentists; Pharmacists; and *Nursing or midwifery professionals*.

Second Pillar: Required Professional Experience

If a skilled worker has **no formally accepted equivalent to German vocational training**, the person may still come to Germany to work. In such cases, the professional must have appropriate **work experience of at least two years, have a minimum salary, and have completed an apprenticeship that is formally accepted by the home country and took at least two years.** (§ 16d(new).) It is no longer necessary that the **foreign degree be recognized as equivalent.** The minimum required salary is supposed to provide a long-term perspective on the labour market for the skilled worker. (§ 18, para. 1(new).) This is seen by the experts in labour market and migration as opening a new channel for labour migration in Germany⁵⁸. Yet, the responsibility is in a way transferred to the employers who themselves do not share a uniform opinion on this option.

Third Pillar: Potential

The act additionally introduces an “opportunity card⁵⁹.” Workers will receive a temporary residence permit and gain access to the labour market to search for a job. The permit is made for persons who do not have a specific job offer but show “potential” in the labour market due to their specific skills and **are looking for employment or possibilities to get their foreign vocational qualifications recognized as equivalent. Workers need to have a prequalification — for example, a foreign vocational qualification that requires two years of training and is officially recognized by the foreign country, and language skills equivalent to level A2 in German or level B2 in English** according to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages. (Residence Act § 20a, para. 4.) The “opportunity card” establishes a point system, with criteria such as qualifications, German language skills, work experience, and personal connection to Germany, to determine the potential to integrate successfully into the labour market. (Residence Act § 20b(new).) A “search opportunity card” is granted for a period of up to one year with the possibility of an extension of up to two years (“follow-up opportunity card”) if the foreigner receives an employment contract or a binding job offer for domestic skilled employment and the Federal Labour Office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) agrees. (Residence Act § 20a, para. 5(new). In such a way, access to the German labour market is provided for skilled workers, even without a job offer. **This approach would introduce a supply-oriented pillar** to the mainly demand-oriented labour migration system and is considered a step away from employment-based visas globally as a way to improve skills shortages during a tight labour market⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Interview Mr Azahav, Bertelsmann Foundation

⁵⁹ Based on the Canadian model

⁶⁰ <https://www.fragomen.com/insights/germany-new-immigration-bill-seeks-to-attract-non-eu-skilled-workers.html>

With the new amendments of the law, Germany is tailoring it to different situations. Employers will have a larger role in choosing their workers, there will be more flexibility around labour market entry, and the objective is to create a better environment for people to stay permanently.

Employers in industries with serious shortages of skilled staff expected to see a speed-up process. In order to fill a vacancy, they can themselves shorten the recognition procedure at the Foreigners' Registration Office on behalf of the applicant. With a visa, the new employee can then enter Germany within two months and start their job.

The FEG is the first of many steps aimed at attracting more international professionals/skilled workers to Germany: around 16,000 people benefited from it up to the end of 2020 alone. Even so, over 28 percent of vacancies for skilled workers in Germany could still not be filled in 2021. Under the old law, requirements were found still as too high (language, funding etc.) and procedures too heavy for workers and employers⁶¹. There is still a high demand for skilled staff – and the new law means good prospects for international applications.⁶²

The FEG started being gradually implemented as from the end of 2023. (See Annex 2 on the implementation phases.)

▪ Responsible body and procedures:

Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)

Procedure:

- Germany generally required a labour market test, known as Vorrangprüfung, for non-EU workers applying for work permits.
- The employer must advertise the job vacancy in Germany's public job portal and/or other suitable platforms for a specific duration. The advertisement should provide sufficient details about the position and its requirements.
- After the job advertisement, a waiting period of usually four weeks is observed to allow local or EU candidates to apply for the position.
- The Employment Agency evaluates the applications received during the waiting period. They assess whether there are any local or EU candidates who meet the job requirements and could potentially fill the position. If suitable candidates are found, the labour market test may result in the rejection of the non-EU worker's application.
- The Employment Agency informs the employer of the outcome of the labour market test. If no suitable local or EU candidates are found, the employer can proceed with the employment of the non-EU worker.

Exemptions:

- Highly skilled workers with recognised qualifications, such as professionals in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
- Individuals with specific job offers meeting certain salary thresholds.

⁶¹ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network In-Person Conference "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots" 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

⁶² <https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/business/working-in-germany-skilled-immigration-act>

- Individuals applying for the EU Blue Card, which is a work and residence permit for highly qualified professionals.

General information for visa schemes

First, the **applicant applies for a visa to enter Germany** (except for nationals from some countries). Upon arrival, the applicant applies for the relevant residence permit based on the type of work they intend to pursue.

Approval from the German Federal Employment Agency is a process where this agency evaluates if the employment conditions such as salary and working hours and if they are comparable to those of domestic employees.

In an effort to reduce ongoing processing delays and speed up digitalisation of the visa processes, the Consular Services Portal was launched on 14 July 2022 for foreign nationals submitting EU Blue Card applications in certain districts and consulates. The Federal Employment Agency is also piloting an online platform for pre-approval applications. Despite these initiatives, processing times continue to increase, impacting international travel and employment start dates⁶³.

Bilateral agreements and pilot projects

With the model project “Training young people from Vietnam in Germany, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) took the initiative for pilot projects in skilled migration already in 2012 (in the field of elderly care) and 2016 (in nursing). As part of the evaluation, a practical guideline for care facilities was developed⁶⁴.

Since 2013, the Central Foreign and Specialist Placement (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency (BA) and the GIZ are implementing the **Triple Win programme**, which provides qualified nursing staff to care facilities in Germany. The programme philosophy is migration with a wide range of benefits, including:

- targeting the need for skilled workers in Germany;
- reducing the burden on the labour markets of the countries of origin and providing development policy impulses, including know-how to the countries of origin;
- providing good employment perspectives to migrants.

⁶³ <https://www.bregomen.com/insights/germany-updates-on-digitalization-delays-and-policy-developments.html>

⁶⁴ Evaluation des Modellprojekts zur Rekrutierung junger Menschen für eine Pflegeausbildung: https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/E/evaluation-modellprojekt-gewinnungpflegekraefte-vietnam.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10 ➤ Leitfaden für Pflegeeinrichtungen: https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Wirtschaft/leitfaden-auszubildende-ausdrittstaaten-fuer-die-pflege.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10 ➤ Studie zur Analyse von Drittstaaten zur Gewinnung von Auszubildenden für die Pflege in Deutschland: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/kriterien-zur-analyse-von-drittstaaten-zur-gewinnung-von-auszubildenden-fuer-die-pflege-1829430>

► **Box 8: The Triple Win Project in Germany**

Project partner countries of Germany in the Triple Win Project were the Philippines, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Serbia (until February 2020) and Tunisia. GIZ works with local institutions such as employment agencies and language institutes in these countries to recruit nurse professionals for Germany. The project is designed to foster permanent immigration, although returning to one's country of origin remains an option. GIZ provides the following services: coordination, language training, professional training, and integration courses) that are covered by the GIZ charges for potential employers (care facilities) - a placement fee of €5,500 for each skilled worker. Employers are also required to cover nurses' travel costs to their place of employment. Additional costs associated with the recognition of qualifications may be covered as well. The total cost involved with training a skilled worker recruited through the Triple Win Project is estimated to be between €8,000 to €10,000.

This approach has already helped meet the high demand in Germany for skilled labour in nursing and long-term care facilities. Since its launch in 2013 till January 2022, the project has placed 4900 qualified nursing professionals from the four partner countries with German long-term care facilities. The project has also developed a number of innovative management approaches that are setting the standard for future projects. GIZ provided support in terms of language and professional skills preparation and integration upon arrival in Germany, as well as the recognition process of the foreign qualification. This includes gearing programs to account for the full cycle of migration. In addition, the project has succeeded in involving key stakeholders such as unions and employers' associations. Partner countries have already begun to feel the impact of such programs as labour markets with high unemployment rates are relieved of excess labour and migrants' remittances are sent to families in origin countries⁶⁵.

Against the background of the nursing shortage, the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), the Federal Ministry for Family, Social Affairs, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the Federal Ministry for Work and Social Affairs (BMAS) launched the Concerted Action for Care (KAP) in 2018. Since then, various measures have been initiated with the aim to improving and accelerating the processes of recruitment, recognition and visa procedures and integration. For this purpose, the BMG set up two institutions in 2019: the German Skilled Agency for Health and Care Professions (DeFa), to support the processes around the professional recognition and work permits of international nursing professionals; the German Competence Centre for international skilled workers in Health and Care Professions (DKF). A central service point for recognition (ZSBA) was set up by the Federal Employment Agency (BA) for those still abroad to advise the specialists on entry, recognition and living in Germany⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Bertelsmann Foundation. Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany. Policy Brief Migration, May 2020

⁶⁶ Ergebnisse der Konzierten Aktion Pflege und Stand der Umsetzung 2021; https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/3_Downloads/K/Konzertierte_Aktion_Pflege/KAP_Zweiter_Bericht_zum_Stand_der_Umsetzung_der_Vereinbarungen_der_Arbeitsgruppen_1_bis_5.pdf
https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/3_Downloads/K/Konzertierte_Aktion_Pflege/191129_KAP_Gesamttext_Stand_11.2019_3._Auflage.pdf

In July 2021, the BMG launched the new funding program “Fair Recruitment for Care Germany” for employers to receive subsidies for their recruitment costs for nursing care in certain distant locations like the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and India and Indonesia. The funding includes up to 6,000 euros. DeFa advises on the program⁶⁷.

A “Quality Seal” for a “Fair and sustainable placement of skilled workers” has been developed to create binding standards for commercial international placement of nursing specialists. At the end of 2022, over 50 recruitment companies and health facilities were already certified. In addition, the DKF has developed a “welcome culture & integration tool kit”. With “INGA Care – Establishing a welcoming culture in the recognition process” a Job-integrated tool for foreign nursing professionals with integrated language training was developed with the aim to shape the recognition processes in a more time-efficient, appreciative and integration-promoting way.

In addition, with the funding of the Goethe-Institute, the federal government provides pre-integration offers, including with information about migration to Germany (e.g. finding accommodation, intercultural issues). An expansion of the office of Goethe-Institute is foreseen to over 40 locations⁶⁸.

In such a way, *The Triple-Win-Programme* has created a whole paradigm of respecting the needs of the destination countries, the countries of origin and the migrants. Several pilot projects apply this principle.

Further priority countries for Germany have been identified by the federal development agency to cooperate in the framework of the THAMM project: Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt.

► **Box 9: THAMM Project**⁶⁹

Designed as a regional programme, THAMM programme “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa” aims to contribute to improving the governance of labour migration and the protection of migrant workers from selected North African countries, namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia by supporting the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive policy frameworks guided by relevant human rights and labour standards and based on reliable data and evidence, which are essential for fair and effective labour migration governance and decent work. THAMM is implemented by Belgium and Germany in collaboration with IOM and ILO. It supports partner institutions in North Africa to draft and implement policies and mechanisms for safe, orderly and regular migration, as well as fostering cooperation and regional

⁶⁷ Information about the Fair Recruitment Nursing funding program;

<https://www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/faire-anwerbung-pflege-deutschland>;

<https://www.bundesanzeiger.de/pub/publication/qGTRw8UnLp6Z27uFiZ3/content/qGTRw8UnLp6Z27uFiZ3/BAnz%20AT%2030.06.2021%20B5.pdf>

⁶⁸ Angebote zur Vorintegration und „Mein Weg nach Deutschland“ durch das Goethe Institut ►

https://www.goethe.de/de/spr/eng/daz.html?wt_sc=vorintegration

<https://www.goethe.de/prj/mwd/de/startseite.html>

Gütesiegel, Werkzeugkoffer und INGA-Pflege des DKF ► [https://dkf.kda.de/wp-](https://dkf.kda.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Anforderungskatalog_2_2022.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/12/Anforderungskatalog_2_2022.pdf](https://dkf.kda.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Anforderungskatalog_2_2022.pdf)

<https://dkf.kda.de/werkzeugkoffer-wi/> ► <https://dkf.kda.de/inga-pflege/>

⁶⁹ <https://migrationnetwork.eu.org/projects/thamm-towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-north>

exchange between relevant stakeholders in North Africa. The THAMM programme builds on the experience of the implementation institutions in North Africa and beyond to foster mutually beneficial migration and mobility for North African countries. Planned over 36 months, it covers three countries: Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia and is inclusive of and open to other North Africa countries for sub-regional activities. The programme also develops and pilots mobility schemes, in particular for young women and men in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, who are interested in a dual-track vocational training in Germany, or for skilled workers seeking employment in Germany or Belgium. It also includes a pilot regional south-south mobility scheme between Morocco and Tunisia. The project is co-financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and started in 2019.

Objectives are:

- Existing national frameworks in the field of migration and mobility are technically supported according to the needs and priorities of the National Governments (implemented by ILO/IOM);
- Mechanisms for assessment, certification, validation and recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications are improved (implemented by ILO/IOM);
- Migration related knowledge and data management in the field of regular migration and mobility is improved (implemented by ILO/IOM);
- Mobility schemes are established and/or improved; (implemented by GIZ);
- Cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the field of regular migration and mobility, in particular job placement, is improved (implemented by ILO, IOM and GIZ).

In Germany, among other measures, a pilot group of 600 migrants is to be placed either in dual vocational training or employment in the German labour market, following intensive pre-departure preparation. In Germany, THAMM is implemented by the German Development Agency (GIZ), in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency, from 2019 until 2023. Since its start, the programme has linguistically and culturally prepared 127 prospective apprentices from Morocco and Tunisia for living and working in Germany, primarily focusing on the hotel and catering industry.

In Pakistan, GIZ will provide advice on legal migration pathways through the existing Pakistan-German reintegration centre. GIZ have experience with the Philippines and the Balkans, and new programs in Ghana and Senegal. The latter is called "Skills partnerships between Senegal, Ghana and Germany", which will enhance the TVET infrastructure in Senegal and Ghana with the option for some participants to further their education and find employment in Germany in high-demand occupations. Due to the nature of TVET, many stakeholders are involved on the German side (i.e., regulating authority, authorities with oversight of recognition procedures, employer's organisation for construction, Chambers of Commerce, vocational training institutions, etc.), with their counterparts in Ghana and Senegal to also be engaged. The aim is to build trust with authorities to obtain a standardised procedure for recognising qualifications and skills. Other measures to attract foreign talent include Germany's placement agreements with Jordan and Brazil for care workers, and the extension of an earlier placement agreement with Mexico to include hotel and restaurant workers. Workers recruited under these agreements can initiate the procedure for the recognition of their qualifications at the same time as they take up employment in Germany.

Recently, **Germany**, but also Portugal and Austria have concluded **agreements on migration and mobility with India**. These agreements are intended to serve as a model for potential future similar agreements with other countries (see Box 10 below). India previously also concluded bilateral migration and mobility agreements with Finland, France and the United Kingdom⁷⁰.

► **Box 10: German - Indian Migration and Mobility Agreement**

On 5.12.2022, the German - Indian Migration and Mobility Agreement was signed during the Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's visit to India. It is the first extensive agreement in the field of migration concluded between Germany and a country of origin. The agreement will facilitate mobility of students, trainees and professionals; joint action against irregular migration; and clear procedures for forced returns. The migration and mobility partnership between Germany and India addresses aspects of regular migration as well as return cooperation. The agreement includes provisions to facilitate fair mobility for students and trainees, cultural professionals, journalists, academics and skilled workers who want to take up employment in one of the two countries. A joint working group on migration, return and mobility issues was supposed to be set up for implementing the agreement.

The migration and mobility partnership between Germany and India addresses aspects of regular migration as well as return cooperation. At the same time, the two countries are joining forces to resolutely fight irregular migration and human trafficking. They should facilitate the return of Indian nationals required to leave Germany by providing clear procedures for their identification and return.

The migration of skilled workers from India to Germany offers great potential for tackling Germany's shortage of skilled workers. Over 200,000 Indian nationals are currently living in Germany, with the vast majority of them holding a regular residence permit. But there are also more than 5,000 Indian nationals who are staying in Germany illegally. In addition, 34,000 Indians are studying in Germany, making up the second-largest group of foreign students.

▪ **Other instruments recently introduced are:**

- **Western Balkans Regulations:** Introduced in 2016, new regulations opened a migration channel to Germany for people from the Western Balkans (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). This regulation also makes it possible for people in these countries to migrate with a job offer and without the need to prove their qualification or language skills for any type of employment in non-regulated professions. The regulation was originally limited until the end of 2023. The Regulation on the Further Development of Skilled Immigration will remove the time limit on the Western Balkans regulation. From June 2024, the quota will be 50,000 approvals per year.

⁷⁰ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>

- **Bilateral recruitment agreements for seasonal workers:** Germany has this type of agreement with Georgia and Moldova. The agreement with Georgia is in place since 2020. Seasonal migrants in the agricultural sector can stay for 90 days within a 180 - day period. The number of permits granted under this scheme is 5,000 (as of 2023), but far fewer seasonal workers migrated to Germany. The agreement with Moldova was concluded in 2021 for the harvest season of 2022.

The Federal Government is currently trialling partnership-based projects on labour and educational migration with several partner countries in the framework of development cooperation. In this context, **advice centres for jobs, migration, and reintegration, known as migration hubs, also play a key role. They are being implemented by the Federal Government together with the partner countries' public employment services.** Among other things, these centres offer people who are interested in migrating to Germany information about the options and requirements for regular labour and educational migration. The Federal Government will continue to work on expanding the existing options available through intermediary and partner organisations, such as the Goethe Institute, for people to learn German, including job-related language skills, and to take recognised language tests abroad. In the framework of partnerships with German business, the Federal Government is trialling measures in selected countries to prepare people in terms of their language and technical skills, and to place them in jobs in shortage occupations. Development-policy objectives can also be taken into consideration in this context, in partnership with development cooperation. By supporting the teaching of German as a foreign language in schools abroad, the Federal Government is also helping to ensure that, over the long term, individuals develop a connection with Germany over the course of their education, and potential skilled workers can be recruited to work in Germany. The schools participating in the “Schools: Partners for the Future” initiative (Schulen: Partner der Zukunft), which receive particularly intensive support, play an important role in this context. The Federal Government wants to establish a master plan to further strengthen their links with one another and with business and academic partners. Funding is also provided via intermediary organisations for information and the above-mentioned advice services, which enable people interested in migrating to Germany to learn about living and working in Germany while they are still abroad⁷¹.

Lessons learnt

Traditionally, in Germany, The Federal Development Agency (the Organisation for International Cooperation/Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ), works closely with the German Public Employment Service, (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) in all their “triple win” programmes. Recent analyses and reports present a number of GIZ projects including this programme as a success story “maximizing shared benefits”. From the total of 27 projects, around half are in care area. The majority of these are projects and programs, in which young people come to be trained as nursing care or as a nursing specialist in Germany,

⁷¹ Fachkräftestrategie der Bundesregierung
<https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Publikationen/Broschueren/Fachkraeftestrategie-der-bundesregierung.html>

with the prospect of future employment in Germany. Two projects are aimed at trained specialists who are able to gain employment through professional recognition. Part of the projects are partly public and partly privately financed and some others – funded almost exclusively by private employers. The mobility partnership approaches adopted so far are bilateral labour migration agreements or other forms of country-to-country collaboration.

Projects, implemented so far usually apply one of the following mechanisms:

- Attracting skilled labour force from abroad, based primarily on bilateral agreements. Traditionally these partnerships were aimed at low-skilled workers in agriculture, tourism, construction etc. At the same time, as in many other countries, the demand is high for higher skilled workers, particularly in nursing increases. Recognition procedures and compensation/adaptation trainings in case of gaps in standards, adding, as well language training next to the professional one are necessary. The disadvantages of the model are linked to the costly and lengthy procedures, on top of this - differing from one Federal state to the other. There are also the questions of the integration of the new-comers and of the financial involvement of the employers. The latter would invest in workers staying on a long-term basis and not on temporary models – for example – on migrants returning home (i.e., circular migration).
- The second model is characterised by acquiring German language in the country of origin and completing a full course of occupational training in Germany, often dual training. Advantages are associated with tailoring the training to the German needs, avoiding the risks of underemployment and recognition; disadvantages come with the long duration and the consecutive high drop-out rates.
- Training at the country of origin is the third type, which provides occupational training in the country of origin, aligned with the curriculum of the destination country or broader international standards. This reflects the idea underlying the concept of a Global Skill Partnership of the American economist and migration expert Michael Clemens, studied above⁷².

Other activities across the projects can be found in areas like management of labour migration; including ethical recruitment practices, integration of foreign trained/foreign-born professionals, facilitated returns and “circular migration”.

Key challenges faced during implementation of the pilot projects and bilateral agreements refer to:

- Particularly the implementation of the mobility schemes turned out to consist of many small-scale processes and tasks.
- Several external factors may turn out to become crucial for the success of the implementation of the mobility schemes, e.g. passing of language tests, successful and timely issuing of visas.

⁷² Bertelsmann Foundation “Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany” Policy Brief “Migration”, May 2020

- A challenge remains the matching of both countries occupational demand and shortage and the potential qualification and skills.

What can be considered for the future:

- With the new immigration bill, one of the levers to expand skills partnerships in Germany could be supported: the legislative and the political-administrative framework. Still a **whole-of-governmental approach is to be applied**. This could enhance coordination between all operational institutions and structures abroad – such as embassies, AHKs, the Goethe Institutes and German foreign schools – and improve the legal, political and organisational framework for future partnerships. In addition, new cross-departmental initiatives are being implemented in the wake of the FEG, such as the Concerted Action on Nursing (KAP) program and the Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) that offer opportunities of improved interministerial coordination. There is a great need for stronger interministerial coordination in the vocational education and training field. The federal government's existing roundtable for international cooperation in VET, along with the associated GOVET secretariat that reports to the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), could serve as a coordination body for future projects. It should be as well taken into consideration that further capacity should be developed, for example - capacity to handle demands, because the current situation is making visa processes slow and giving an impression of pushback to applicants, which is a serious technical challenge⁷³.
- **A second important lesson learnt refers to the sustainable financial concept of public-private partnerships**, which is being applied in the triple-win programme. Public funds could be used for the design and evaluation stages, the development of methodologies and the language training. The employers could contribute to the occupational training, which could be seen as investment in the company's skilled workforce.
- **Matching supply and demand in international terms and growing the pool of skilled labour in both countries – of origin and destination is the third important precondition for a successful skills partnership.**
- Analyses show that **greater impact could be achieved if, in addition to language training and integration courses, professional training modules were to be carried out in the origin country before departure**. Program participants themselves also often languish as a result of the enormous time and organizational effort needed to complete the recognition process in Germany. The individual federal provinces are responsible for handling recognition procedures, which means that the regulations and bureaucratic processes applied in each state can vary. As a rather time-consuming process, the recognition procedures have often been seen an obstacle in attracting foreign skilled workers. A key goal of the recently introduced Skilled Workers Immigration Act is thus to simplify recognition procedures.

⁷³ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network In-Person Conference "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots" 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points Network

ITALY

Labour migration framework – development and recent reforms

Responsible institutions⁷⁴

At the level of policy design, the competence on migration is shared among different ministries with some coordination, when appropriate (e.g., the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour and Social Policies/MLSP collaborate on the definition of the annual labour migration quotas). At the level of implementation, given the multilevel governance and the involvement of the regions and local authorities, the coordination is ensured by the National Coordination Board of the Ministry of Interior. The board is composed of representatives of the main line ministries (Interior and Labor), regions, local authorities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and other organizations, as appropriate.

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP)** is responsible for the negotiation, signature, and implementation of bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs). It contributes to the identification of domestic labour market needs, for the inclusion in the annual migration quota, indicating the number of foreign workers who can enter the country for seasonal, temporary, and permanent jobs. It has two implementing agencies: (1) the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP, former ISFOL, the Institute for the development of vocational training of workers), which covers vocational training; and (2) the National Agency for Active Labor Policies (ANPAL, former Italia Lavoro), which is responsible for the implementation of labour market policies, including migration-related initiatives.

Job mediation for nationals and migrant workers is carried out mainly by the **Public Employment Services (PES) and private employment agencies (PrEAs)**. PES is managed by the regions, under the coordination of the MLSP. Migrant workers are eligible to apply for the active labour market measures that PES provides to national workers (counselling, training, job mediation). PES is the only institution that can provide migrant and national workers with a certification of unemployment that can entitle them to receive social benefits, such as unemployment allowance and free health care.

Based on the Legislative Decree No. 276 of September 10, 2003, the PrEAs should be licensed by the Ministry of Labour.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** provides support for the negotiation and monitoring of BLMAs through its diplomatic network. It is also responsible for entry visa and family reunification. The ministry is active in development cooperation through its implementing arm, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The AICS has signed a Cooperation Protocol with the MLSP in 2018 for joint activities in partner countries. Based on the provisions of Law No. 125/2014 (MEF 2014), the AICS plans the involvement of diaspora associations in Italy in the policy development process, following a bottom-up approach. As a result, there

⁷⁴ Information in this part is based on: Panzica, Francesco, Natalia Popova, Future skill demand and supply of migrant labor in Italy, ILO, 2021

is a special project, called the “Summit Nazionale delle Diaspore,” which has been organizing a forum every year since 2017 with all relevant partners in the migration process, including diaspora organizations.

The **Ministry of Interior** is responsible for dealing with irregular migration; the integration of foreigners, including migrant workers; and the identification, in collaboration with the MLSP, of domestic labour market needs for inclusion in the annual decree on foreign workers permitted to enter the country for work. It is also responsible for the implementation of procedures for asylum and the treatment of refugees. With regard to the integration process, it benefits from the support and advice of the diaspora associations in Italy.

The **Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR)** ensures that migrants and their families can have access to all education levels and provides language and support services for the effective insertion of foreigners in the education system.

The **Ministry of Agriculture** promotes the integration of migrant workers in the agricultural sector and regular employment, addressing the issue of forced labour and other abusive practices. To combat exploitation, the Ministry of Agriculture, in cooperation with the MLSP and support from the ILO, has adopted a specific National Action Plan (2020–22).

Labour market and migration legislation

The first systemic regulation on labour migration was done through Law No. 39 of 1990. It established for the first time the yearly identification of labour market needs that allowed the competent authorities to issue working permits to migrant workers. Law No. 40 of 1998, which enhanced the mechanisms for the planning of migratory flows, was integrated into national policy through a system of **privileged quotas** in favour of the countries that collaborated in the repatriation of immigrants expelled from Italy. This law, however, proved to be ineffective and irregular migration increased in the following years. Therefore, in 2002, a new Law No. 189, the so-called Bossi-Fini Law, tightened sanctions and made the expulsion procedures more rigid. It also launched the focus more toward the security aspects linked to migration. Thus, the norms on sanctions and expulsions were further tightened. In parallel, the labour market demand for migrant workers declined rapidly and the annual “*Decreto Flussi*” (see below) fixed a need for less than 31,000 migrant workers per year from 2012 to 2016. This number included seasonal workers in the agriculture and tourism sectors, and the regularization of migrant workers already present in the country.

Existing arrangements. The quota system

Since 1990, Law 39/1990 established a mechanism for the yearly identification of labour market needs that could be addressed by migrant workers (quota). The system is demand driven as it is based upon labour shortages identified by the Italian government. Each year the government (in particular the Ministry of Interior and the MLSP), defines the quota for labour migration that is included in a Prime Ministerial Decree (the so-called *Decreto Flussi/ Flow Decree*). The estimation is done using data from the ISTAT labour force and enterprises surveys conducted by Unioncamere (Excelsior). Additional information on labour market needs is

collected from other line ministries, job centres, local authorities, and workers' and employers' organisations.

The quotas are determined through an interinstitutional consultation process: the Presidency of the Council of Ministers hears the Ministers responsible for the subject matter (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and Ministry of Tourism), the members of the register referred to in Article 42, paragraph 2 (i.e. the register established at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department for Social Affairs of the associations of foreigners and with the organisations permanently operating in their favour), as well as the National Economic and Labour Council. The aforesaid decree is adopted, after deliberation by the Council of Ministers, after consulting the Unified Conference⁷⁵ and obtaining the opinion of the competent parliamentary commissions.

The **Procedure** is as follows:

- The employer must demonstrate that no suitable candidates from the EU or EEA are available to fill the position. This is usually done through advertising the job vacancy on national job boards and in newspapers. However, the hiring of seasonal workers, workers in the agricultural and tourist/hospitality sectors, and foreign workers trained abroad are exempt from this verification process.
- Once it is established that no suitable EU/EEA candidates are available, the employer must apply for the release of a "Nulla Osta" (authorization) from the Immigration Office ("Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione") or relevant regional office. An application may be submitted after the publication in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic of the *Flow programming decree*, which determines the quotas of foreign workers that may be admitted to the national territory, distinguishing them by contractual categories (e.g.: subordinate employment, self-employment) and economic sectors.
- The decree indicates the general criteria for defining entry flows, taking into account the analysis of labour market needs carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy after discussions with the most representative workers' and employers' organisations at national level.
- Documentation: Employers are required to submit various documents along with the application, including the employment contract, proof of advertising efforts, and company information.
- The "Commission for Employment" reviews the application and assesses whether the employer has met the required conditions. If the Commission believes the job can be filled by an EU/EEA candidate, the application may be rejected.
- If the Nulla Osta is granted, the non-EU citizen can apply for a work visa at the Italian Embassy or Consulate in their home country.

State-City and Local Self-Government Conference is unified with the State-Regions Conference for matters and tasks of common interest to regions, provinces, municipalities and mountain communities

However, research suggests that the number of third-country national workers or self-employed who can enter Italy under ‘ordinary’ permits, the quota system in the Decreto Flussi, is usually very low. Many of them do not pursue the ordinary procedure for obtaining a work permit. Often third-country nationals arrive in Italy for a short stay or get a permit for reasons other than work, and then look for a job. Once their visa or their residence permit has expired, many foreigners remain in the country and work without a residence permit, becoming irregular migrants. As such, they can claim for wages, social security and other benefits arising out of past employment (Article 2126 Italian civil code; Article 3 Legislative Decree no. 109/2012 implementing the Directive 2009/52/EU). If they report a worker rights’ violation, however, they risk being charged with illegal immigration (Article 10bis Legislative Decree 286/1998 - TUI) and being deported. Moreover, the number of third-country nationals employed in Italy with a residence permit for reasons other than work has constantly been increasing⁷⁶.

Italy’s Migration framework allows for arrivals outside the quota system (called *Decreto Cutro*).

These are entries for work reasons possible throughout the year, regardless of what is established by the Flow Decree and for which there is no numerical limit (with the exception of entries for training and vocational training, for professional/dilettante sports and for voluntary work for which a specific quota is determined). They include highly qualified workers, managers, *specialised workers and workers in training*, on secondment to subsidiaries in Italy, researchers, university professors, *nurses*, entertainment workers, etc.

This can be seen as an opportunity for the Talent partnerships, as there were high number of applications submitted following the latest Flow Decree 2022: there were more than 250,000 applications while only 82,705 entry quotas were available⁷⁷.

There was as well the introduction of a one-year Digital Nomad Visa originally scheduled for the second half of 2022, but this has been put on hold.

Access of migrant workers to the Italian labour market. Migrant workers’ integration

Migrant workers with a regular residence permit have access to the Italian labour market. For this purpose, they can contact the local office of PES, the so-called Job Centre (Centro per l’Impiego), to receive necessary assistance. The recruitment procedure for a regular migrant worker requires that the employer sends a Mandatory Employment Notification form to the Job Centre. The notification should fulfil all the statutory obligations, including those to the National Social Security Institute (INPS), the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL), and to the prefecture of the relevant province. It should be noted that foreign citizens holding an entry permit for study reasons are allowed to work in Italy, provided that the contract envisages no more than 20 working hours per week and a maximum of 1,040 hours

⁷⁶ S. Borelli, Italy, Interaction between Labour Law and Immigration regimes, ETUI, Brussels, 2023, <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Interaction%20between%20labour%20law%20and%20immigration%20regimes-2023.pdf>

⁷⁷ Guidelines implementation modalities for vocational and civic-linguistic training programs and criteria for their evaluation pursuant to article 23 of legislative decree no. 286 of July 25, 1998, 2023 Document approved on June 23, 2023 by the Services Conference convened by Directorial Decree No. 17 of March 30, 2023; Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies

per year. The permit for study reasons could also be converted into a working permit if the migrant has the necessary requirements and there is such possibility in the annual *Decreto Flussi*.

Italy has established a well-developed integration system in order to address the growing demographic challenges, as well as ensure social cohesion. The Ministry of Interior plays a leading role in the integration process, in collaboration with the ministries of labour, education, and health.

Since 2012, newly arrived immigrants have been obligated to sign the so-called Integration Agreement the moment they obtain their first residence permit. By doing so, they commit to achieving specific integration goals in the following two years. Their success is measured through a credits system assessing sufficient knowledge of the Italian language (at the A2 level), as well as their knowledge of the constitution, civic life, and institutions. The programme thus includes all: language courses, civic education, vocational training. Special attention is devoted to reducing language barriers through Italian language training organized by the state. Migrant workers can participate, free of charge, in courses aimed at the achievement of proficiency level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Training is organized by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs), under the responsibility of the MIUR. Regarding the technical skills - apprenticeship programmes are important tools fostering the professional orientation and skills development of migrant workers and students. In 2018, 37,428 migrants were enrolled as apprentices out of a total of 369,133 individuals. Lasting up to six months, apprenticeships are promoted by regions and provinces and implemented by contracted enterprises. Potential migrant workers may apply for these programmes while still in their origin countries if they have knowledge of the Italian language and can obtain a permit of residence for study purposes, within the annual quota for migration, “Decreto Flussi.”

The fulfilment of integration goals is required for the renewal of residence permits. Several categories of migrants are, exempted from this requirement, either by law (such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and disabled migrants) or de facto, since their permits cannot be withdrawn (such as the beneficiaries of international or humanitarian protection, family migrants, long-term residents etc. Unfortunately, no systematic evaluation of integration policies has been carried out.

Bilateral labour migration agreements

The large inflow of migrants in the past years was addressed in two ways: (1) by establishing a national policy on regular migration and creating a normative framework for addressing irregular migration; however, this approach needed frequent adaptation; and (2) by activating the collaboration with main origin countries. As a result, the MLSP signed bilateral labour agreements with Egypt (2005), Morocco (2005), Albania (2008), the Republic of Moldova (2011), Sri Lanka (2011), and Mauritius (2012).²⁴ The objective of the BLMAs was mainly to prevent irregular migration and did not encompass business and skills forecasting. The Italian government signed repatriation agreements with many origin countries, indicating ways and

means for the return of irregular migrant workers. Very few migrant workers came to Italy through BLMAs. Many migrant workers have come through illegal channels and have been subsequently regularized. That is why BLMAs have had a limited impact on labour demand⁷⁸.

► **Box 11: Cooperation between Egypt and Italy**

Egypt and Italy aimed at creating a channel for safe and regular labour migration. To achieve this goal, two documents were signed:

(1) On 28 November 2005, a bilateral labour migration agreement (BLMA), including an implementing protocol was signed, according to which the possibility was arranged to grant to Egypt an annual quota for regular migration to Italy of 7,000 work contracts per year, which was subsequently increased to 10,000 as of 2007. According to the agreement, “migrant workers enjoy the same rights and the same protection accorded to workers who are nationals of the receiving state, including social security, in accordance with the regulations of the receiving states.” The BLMA was complemented by a memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed on May 17, 2011, aimed at providing effective mechanisms for the implementation of the 2005 Agreement. The MoU foresaw the creation of a local coordination office by the Italian Ministry of Labour to support the process of matching labour demand and supply within the BLMA. Detailed procedures were defined for the selection of candidates for labour migration. Article 6 refers to the language and vocational training of selected workers and stipulates that candidates will not bear any costs during the training process. Article 9 indicated the issuance of a three-year working permit by Italian authorities to Egyptian seasonal workers.

(2) A readmission agreement (9 January 2007), including an executive protocol, fixed the modalities for the identification of the nationality of irregular migrants, and procedures and costs for their repatriation

The formal agreements between the two countries were complemented by two initiatives in the field of migration: (1) the creation of an integrated migration information system (IMIS), which lasted up to 2016; and (2) the Information Dissemination for the Prevention of Irregular Migration (IDOM) project aimed at preventing irregular migration through the provision of appropriate information. The scope of IMIS was to create a web-matching mechanism for potential migrant workers and employers for filling job vacancies abroad. The practical impact of the tool proved to be limited due to internal and external factors: there were too many electronic tools for labour market matching (the migration databases of the Egyptian Employment Services or the Flexi platform of the Italian MLSP), now replaced by a new platform, which created parallel systems and additional workload. The database was vast and detailed, but the competences of potential migrants were only self-declared by the jobseekers themselves. Though there was a Validation Unit, it only ensured that the missing data were provided, and it did not carry out quality checks⁷⁹.

There are pilot projects, run by the Agency for International Cooperation under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Tunisia and Morocco (the THAMM+ project), as well as bilateral activities, which could be seen as good foundation for the future Talent Partnerships and vice-versa⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ Panzica, Francesco, Natalia Popova, Future skill demand and supply of migrant labor in Italy, ILO, 2021

⁷⁹ Idem

⁸⁰ Follow-up meeting on the development of Talent Partnerships with partner countries – 24 October 2023
24/10/2023, Brussels, DG Home
Rue Van Maerlant 18, 1040 Brussels

► **Box 12: THAMM Plus Project**

THAMM Plus is a 36-month trans-regional program, funded by the European Union, and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which aims to facilitate the mobility of newly skilled and trained workforce between targeted North African countries and Italy to meet labour market shortages jointly identified by Moroccan and Tunisian authorities, as well as three Italian regions (Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna). At the same time, the Project contributes to strengthening migrant workers' protection mechanisms throughout the migration cycle, no matter if workers are leaving the region, or seeking employment there.

THAMM Plus supports partner countries in building an enabling environment for the development and promotion of regular migration and mobility pathways in line with the EU Talent Partnerships approach. Participants will benefit from the development of new pilot mobility & upskilling schemes for potential migrants, consistent with article 23 of Italian law on migration favouring regular migration and mobility.

The project aims at maximizing the potential win-win of labour and skills mobility for all parties involved. Skills development opportunities are offered, both for migrant workers and the local communities. Increase of workers employability in both the domestic and foreign labour markets and development in both countries of origin and destination are the main objectives of the project⁸¹.

New developments since 2021

Few major developments should be mentioned since 2021. First, the implementation of the regularisation of unregistered migrant workers in Italy prior to 8 March 2020 continued. The process was accelerated by the recruitment of temporary workers to deal with tens of thousands of applications. The second development was a change in the annual quota decree for seasonal and non-seasonal workers. The number of workers in transport, construction and tourism/hospitality was set at 20 000, only from countries which have signed or are negotiating migration management co-operation agreements with Italy. Other parts of the quota are set aside for status changes. There is also a possibility that the government may update the number of entries for seasonal and non-seasonal workers during the same year through the issue of new decrees.

At national level the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies oversees the monitoring and evaluation of migrants' socio-economic integration. In January 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies released a multi-year integrated plan for work, integration and inclusion, following consultations with different actors. The plan, covering 2021-27, follows on the previous 7-year plan. There are seven action areas: supporting co-operation among integration actors; fighting undeclared and exploitative work and promoting dignified work and a culture of legality; inclusion of vulnerable migrants; leveraging the full potential of school-age foreigners and other migrants in accessing the labour market; promoting social and work

⁸¹ <https://italy.iom.int/en/thamm-plus-towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-italy-and-north-africa>; The THAMM Plus programme builds on and complements the regional action "Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa" (THAMM) phase I and II funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa and phase III funded by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (NCIDI)-Global Europe (NDICI-GE).

inclusion of migrant women; social, sport and cultural participation; and promotion of legal migration channels.

In addition, in collaboration with the National Council of Economy and Labour, the Labour ministry developed a set of indicators on migrant integration (including on occupational integration and the "degree of attractiveness" of Italy's different provinces, regions and macro-areas) to monitor and evaluate trends at the national, regional and local levels.

The existing arrangements show active involvement of other stakeholders as well. Employers' organisations in the agricultural sector were directly involved in managing the available entry quotas for seasonal workers.

In 2021, Italy received 241 000 new immigrants on a long-term or permanent basis (including changes of status and free mobility), 91% more than in 2020. This figure comprises 18.7% immigrants benefitting from free mobility, 20.2% labour migrants, 50% family members (including accompanying family) and 9% humanitarian migrants. Around 1 100 permits were issued to tertiary-level international students and 2 900 to temporary and seasonal labour migrants (excluding intra-EU migration). In addition, 108 000 intra-EU postings were recorded in 2021, a 19% increase compared to 2020. These posted workers are generally on short-term contracts.

Romania, Albania and Morocco were the top three nationalities of newcomers in 2021. Among the top 15 countries of origin, Bangladesh registered the strongest increase (+6 800) and Brazil the largest decrease (-500) in flows to Italy compared to the previous year.

In 2022, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 71%, to reach around 77 000. The majority of applicants came from Bangladesh (15 000), Pakistan (11 000) and Egypt (8 800). The largest increase since 2021 concerned nationals of Bangladesh (+8 000) and the largest decrease - nationals of Afghanistan (-3 100). Of the 53 000 decisions taken in 2022, 48% were positive.

Following a substantial increase in 2022, Italy's annual quota for third-country national workers rose again in 2023, indicating a continued worker shortage. The 2023 quota – announced in mid-2022 and published in January 2023 – was for 82 705 workers, up from 69 700 in 2022 (and 31 000 in the previous five years). The quota also assigned the number of seasonal (44 000) and non-seasonal workers and those admitted in different economic sectors (31 205) from countries which have signed or are negotiating migration management co-operation agreements with Italy. A further 7 500 places were set aside for status changes and self-employed individuals.

During 2022, the deadline for third-country nationals holding residence permits to file for a change of status from a residence permit to a work permit was extended twice.

These developments were followed by a recently introduced reform that aims to expand the channels for regular labour migration and reduce the risks associated with irregular migration⁸². The reform includes: (i) a three-year planning of foreign labour force requirements; (ii)

⁸² See Law no 50 of 5 May 2023 containing urgent provisions relating to regular migration flows and to the prevention and contrast of irregular migration.

expedite administrative entry requirements for migrant workers; and (iii) skilling the labour force through pre-departure language and vocational training programmes.

More in detail, the follow-ups resulted in the activities, presented below:

In July 2023 Italy adopted new modifications of the legal migration decree (*Decreto Flussi*), citing the need for 833,000 third country nationals between 2023 and 2025, in a broad range of sectors including **social care, transport, tourism and agriculture**⁸³, identified in close cooperation with the employers' organisations. Following the new law, as of 2023 future quota numbers will be issued by the government every three years, instead of annually. The validity of residence permits issued for family reasons, indefinite contract work, self-employment changed from two to three years, extending the period between renewals.

The newly introduced Decree offers: Immediate access for 40,000 newcomers for agriculture and tourism during 2023 and additional 452,000 workers over the next three years for new sectors, in occupations, such as: **plumbing, electrical work, bus driving, social and healthcare support, nursing, telecommunication services, food industry roles, shipbuilding jobs.**

(a) **136,000** foreigners for the year **2023**

(b) **151,000** foreigners for the year **2024**

(c) **165,000** foreigners for the year **2025**.

In 2024, there are **61,250** quotas reserved for recruiting **non-seasonal workers** and **680** quotas reserved for registering **self-employed workers**. The quotas reserved for **seasonal workers** are instead **82,550**.

The hiring of subordinate workers is possible in the following sectors: **road haulage for third parties and passenger transport by bus, tourism-hotel sector, mechanics, telecommunications, food sector, shipbuilding; fishing; hairdressers, electricians and plumbers; family and socio-medical assistance; seasonal tourist-hotel sector.**

A different entry reserves are provided for three groups, with the most relevant for this study - in favour of non-seasonal subordinate workers in the family and socio-healthcare sector up to a maximum of 9.500 units. As specified in the interministerial circular, recruitment in this case is possible either full-time or part-time, with the salary provided for by the sector's CCNL and not less than the minimum provided for the social allowance (EUR 503.27 per month). No special employer's income is required if the employer suffers from pathologies or disabilities that limit his self-sufficiency and submits the application to hire a care worker.

It should be noted that from 2023, there are no longer any quotas for conversion from study/internship to work, since the so-called "[Cutro Decree](#)" (Decree Law no. 23 of 20 March converted into Law no. 50 of 5 May 2023) has abolished the provision that made the conversion of these permits subject to the availability of a quota provided for by the annual Flow Decree⁸⁴.

⁸³ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/italian-immigration-2023-launch-introducing-updated-decreto/>

⁸⁴ <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/en-gb/Altre-informazioni/2023/05/20/Quotas-in-detail>

Entries outside the Quotas, seen as a second labour migration channel are, as well, regulated for the triennium 2023-2025, as follows:

- Entries of citizens of countries with which Italy has signed agreements or agreements on repatriation. This regulation will be piloted in the future Talent Partnerships schemes with Tunisia, Morocco and potentially – Bangladesh.
- Strengthening of educational and professional training activities and civic-linguistic organised in the countries of origin and subsequent increase in entries of foreign workers, needed by employers, but also - stateless refugees, recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or by the competent authorities in the countries of first asylum or transit, who have completed such activities.

With the adoption of Law Decree 20/2023 and its conversion into law through Law 50/ 2023, also workers trained abroad, i.e. those who have completed special vocational and civic-linguistic education and training programmes in their countries of origin, can enter outside the quotas provided for by the Flows Decree (Art. 23 TUI).

The training activities must be implemented 'within the framework of programmes approved, also on the proposal of the regions and autonomous provinces, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Merit or the Ministry of Universities and Research and carried out also in cooperation with the regions, autonomous provinces and other local authorities, national organisations of entrepreneurs and employers and workers, as well as international bodies aimed at the transfer of foreign workers to Italy and their integration into the country's productive sectors, bodies and associations operating in the field of immigration for at least three years' (Art. 23, para. 1). The aim is targeted labour insertion in Italian productive sectors operating within the State; targeted labour insertion in Italian productive sectors operating within the countries of origin; the development of autonomous productive or entrepreneurial activities in the countries of origin (Art. 23, par. 2, lett. a,b,c).

In accordance with the provisions of the new Article 23, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies adopted and published the [Guidelines on how to prepare vocational and civic-linguistic training programmes and the criteria for their evaluation.](#)⁸⁵

The **Guidelines** for pre-departure training, adopted by the MLSP define implementation modes and set criteria for the evaluation of vocational and civic-linguistic training programs in countries of origin or countries of first asylum or transit for refugees, pursuant to Article 23 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, as amended by Law No. 50 of May 5, 2023⁸⁶. They stipulate the actors, who individually or in partnership, can apply for the "vocational and civic-linguistic training programs", define the number of subjects and indicate the essential contents of the training (See more in detail in Annex 3).

⁸⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Italy, Labour entry regulations and the new regular entry channels introduced by DL 20/2023 (so-called 'Cuto Decree', converted with amendments by Law No. 50 of May 2023)

⁸⁶ <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita-immigrazione/focus/linee-guida-programmi-di-formazione-professionale-civico>

In general terms, there are three possible ways for such programme to function⁸⁷:

- A project could be submitted by a body, eligible under the mechanisms of the Guidelines, to be approved by the Interinstitutional Commission, which monitors, after approval of the project.
- The MLSP itself can conclude a technical agreement with an international organisation, following the THAMM+ model.
- A valid for the period 2023-2024 option for an employers' organisation to implement a project, even without a preliminary approval of the Commission.

In parallel, the Italian government is promoting peer-to-peer bilateral and regional dialogue and collaboration with countries of origin. Sectors with significant labour market shortages include the mechanical components and the automotive industries, the care sector, transport-related occupations and the hotel and tourism industry. With a view to meeting the additional labour force requirements of employers and ensuring decent working conditions of migrant workers, Italy is currently engaged in the development of bilateral cooperation, including through labour migration and mobility agreements, with India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka⁸⁸.

During the Follow-up meeting on the development of Talent Partnerships with partner countries on 24 October 2023 in Brussels, organised by DG HOME, Italy informed on the new developments and particularly – about the preferential admission procedure outside the quota system for workers trained under programmes sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Labour. Italy noted that it was also in the process of negotiating bilateral mobility agreements with Tunisia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It reported that it signed a Memorandum of understanding with Tunisia, involving 4 000 Tunisian workers. Pilot projects are run by the Agency for International Cooperation under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with Morocco and Tunisia. Italy has as well several agreements on regular migration, and cooperation on fighting human trafficking.

Recent information shows that Italy and Bangladesh continue political consultations on a bilateral migration and mobility arrangement in the beginning of 2024, particularly for the Italian construction, shipbuilding and hospitality sectors. According to latest data, at present over 46 percent of workers under Flussi Decree are coming to Italy from Bangladesh for seasonal and non-seasonal work.

Lessons learnt

Efficiency and effectiveness of the current schemes.

(1) The “Flow Decree” has been working for some time for low-skilled labour migration also from Bangladesh. Research suggests that the system of entry quotas for migrant workers, which

⁸⁷ Interview, MLSP

⁸⁸ Concept note ILO project proposal on “Enhancing bilateral cooperation for regular, fair and effective labour migration governance between Italy and countries of origin in Asia (Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka)”

at first appeared to be an adequate approach for managing migration admissions, has proven to be not being very effective⁸⁹. In fact, the quotas did not allow for new migrant workers, as were used during the regularization. It is important to note that the entry quota do not apply to BLMAs, which are negotiated separately on a country-by-country basis. Nevertheless, research shows that very few migrant workers came to Italy also through BLMAs. Many migrant workers have come through irregular channels and have been subsequently regularized. That is why BLMAs have had a limited impact on labour demand. Concerning the repatriation agreements, beside the difficulties in identifying the country of origin (many of these migrants have no identity documents), the modalities and costs of repatriating such a large number of people reduced the effectiveness of the measure⁹⁰.

A particular example from Egypt illustrates what the difficulties are: (i) The most important limitation was the fact that the overall quota for potential migrants was mainly used for the regularization of irregular migrants already present in Italy, thus leaving little or no space for additional migrant workers from Egypt. (ii) Even when a group of potential migrants was selected by the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, very few Egyptian workers could come to Italy due to the time required for training and issuing a visa.

(2) A pilot mobility scheme between Italy and selected North African countries existed (Mentor 2⁹¹), which highlighted weak points in the bilateral cooperation. The project intends to activate 50 training internships of young people from Morocco and Tunisia, at national and multinational companies in Milan and Turin, so that the trainees have the opportunity to acquire additional skills to be used in their CoO. The internships will last 6 months and candidates will be selected on the basis of the match between the training course previously carried out, the entrepreneurial or professional project to be carried out upon return and the training offer of the Italian company. Main challenges observed were on the visa side: in Italy, the system is paper-based and slow and local authorities lacked trust in and knowledge of third countries, which obstructed the visa process. Cooperation with the CoO was also difficult in some cases. The stark difference in timelines between the public and private sector is a real challenge for labour mobility (long visa processes versus immediate labour needs) and a shift is necessary to make it possible for the EU to attract TCNs⁹². The project also focused on traineeships and not employment. The process was highly complex in terms of bureaucracy, without a proper framework for bilateral cooperation.

(3) Main challenges of a potential TP approach are linked to some characteristics of the Italian qualifications and vocational training system. In Italy there is a high degree of fragmentation of the qualification system, with different qualification repositories managed by different awarding bodies, and the difficulty of harmonising qualifications issued at regional level. The “Atlas of Work and Qualifications”⁹³ hosts the National repository of education, training and

⁸⁹ Idem

⁹⁰ Panzica, Francesco, Natalia Popova, Future skill demand and supply of migrant labor in Italy ILO, 2021

⁹¹ <https://mentor2.org/>

⁹² Labour Mobility Practitioners’ Network LMPN In-person event 2023 “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots”, 21-22 November 2023, Brussels

⁹³ https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/atlanle_lavoro_settore.php?codiceAEP=09

vocational qualifications, which includes 116 qualifications from the second cycle of education, 4 709 higher education qualifications and 4 974 regional vocational training and IFTS qualifications (August 2023). Also, training programs are not sufficiently flexible to address changes in skills demand in the medium term. And lastly, at the end of the learning pathways, a nationally recognized qualification is expected to be obtained. There exist as well “non-formal pathways” that is, all other training activities that are provided by the bilateral training system and that are intended to meet the immediate needs of companies. Recognition is done at the sector level with the issuance of the training booklet and, in relation to the Directory of Competencies (sectoral) and the Atlas of Labor established at the National level by INAPP. In some “non-formal” pathways, technological innovation modules are included that are then recognized at the regional level through a specific examination request that is made by the provider to the Regions.

(4) The pilot projects show that leaving everything to the private initiative without any institutional involvement may not lead to the desired outcome. For the Italian, as for other EU MSs governments, it would be good to support the revamp of bilateral and regional cooperation through BLMAs. It could be a working approach for the Italian MoL and the MFA to restart the practice of negotiating BLMAs that should include clear objectives, rules of engagement and agreed outcomes with the given country. For Italy, the proposal that related to bilateral cooperation with Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka was developed through a collaborative undertaking involving MIGRANT, ILO-Delhi and ILO-Rome. The agreement with the origin countries could indicate the skills on demand and detail the recruitment modalities, including assessments of migrant workers’ competencies. Once they identify the skills and qualifications, the BLMAs could envisage that specific training initiatives are organized in CoO, including predeparture language and occupation-specific training. Another option could be to prepare migrant workers for specific occupations, where training could be envisaged in the CoO, with practical training taking place within enterprises in Italy. Timing is very important in order to address employers’ needs. An area that proved to be challenging is the identification of priority sectors in CoO, which will be the basis for joint activities. Then, based on the selection, vocational education and training will be provided, based on real labour market needs at home and abroad. At the same time, it should also be noted that the assessment of experiences in migrants’ countries of origin has enabled the Italian authorities to come up with improved functional mechanisms for the implementation of skills matching arrangements. The creation of a database of potential migrant workers in Egypt (IMIS Plus) demonstrates how difficult it is to successfully manage a large dataset due to the lack of monitoring mechanisms on the information entered; for instance, there was no way of verifying the skill levels of the applicants. One way to overcome these difficulties is to invest in the creation of networks between the countries of origin and destination to facilitate the design of relevant labour migration policies. Another solution would be to involve education and training institutions in countries of origin, and/or develop skills assessment and recognition procedures (Recognition of Prior Learning, RPL) in countries of origin and countries of destination.

(5) For the future, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) recommends going beyond the quota system and through a different route: any third country national who has obtained a certificate for a training program accredited by the Italian MoL, is eligible for a work permit, provided they have a job offer. In such a way, the Talent Partnership should capacitate selected training providers in Bangladesh to deliver these accredited courses, in addition to facilitating Italian language training. In this case, the recommendation is to work directly through Italian business associations (and not the PES or other private recruitment offices). In general, the Italian approach to BLMAs has been to develop together with the partners main aspects of cooperation in labour migration. That is why vocational education and training have been at the centre, as well as the very close collaboration with employers to understand their needs.

It should be noted that in many of the previously implemented pilot schemes, employers do not pay for the service, since EU subsidizes. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus that this is not sustainable.

(6) There is a need to coordinate between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when it comes to the design and implementation of BLMAs. The challenge for the Ministry of Labour is that it does not have offices abroad, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs works abroad through the offices of the Italian Development Cooperation Agency and the diplomatic network.

(7) When piloting skills matching initiatives between Italy and origin countries, there should be a sustainable approach—otherwise the impact could be limited. Attention should focus on building on existing project results and institutions, rather than on starting completely new initiatives to ensure continuity and sustainability. There has already been considerable investment in both human and financial resources in many origin countries. It is necessary to strengthen the implementation of lessons learned and good practices at a systemic level.

(8) It should also be noted that the current Italian migration policy places a special emphasis on involving the diasporas to facilitate integration. The idea is that this type of cooperation could also facilitate skills and job matching through information sharing. It would also be good to consider involving the diaspora in the BLMA preparations.

Approaches should be aligned to international norms: The outstanding CFA case of Bangladesh's violation of C87 and Italy's CAS case on violation of C81 and C129 are known for the specific dimension on the rights of migrant workers.⁹⁴

(9) When it comes to regular migrant workers, integration services and measures have been well developed in Italy. The PES has the competency to implement such actions, which have been used to varying success by migrant workers due to administrative obligations, for example, the need for confirming employment/unemployment status. There is a need to further raise awareness about the employment services offered, and diaspora organizations could play a facilitating role in this regard. There is still a need for specific measures to take effect for the formalization of irregular migrant workers operating in the agriculture sector and in care

services and for addressing informal work, which heavily affects migrant workers. The effective recognition of qualifications is usually linked to a formal contractual relationship. If migrant workers have access to skills recognition, they often have higher chances of obtaining formal employment. For this reason, it is necessary that specific skill development measures be designed and implemented, such as strengthening distance and e-learning, specifically targeting migrant workers. The fact that migrant workers need to work to maintain themselves and their families often forces them to engage in the informal economy, where they work in poor and unsafe conditions and are often exploited.

(10) The need for seasonal workers and the supply of qualifications and skills for hard-to-fill vacancies could be addressed through adapting the existing BLMAs or designing new ones. Such efforts could also tackle the high rates of informality among seasonal migrant workers. Particularly important is the identification of modalities for ensuring that labour migration is effective and corresponding to the clauses of the BLMA that have to include provisions for the protection of migrants' rights, at all skill levels. Further, the agreements should have built-in incentives for migrants' reinsertion into the domestic labour market upon completion of their work abroad. There should be a clear division of tasks and responsibilities among the institutions involved, so that implementation can really take place⁹⁵.

(11) Many third-country nationals, especially in case of posting and short-term migration, do not have sufficient knowledge of Italian and are unaware of their rights. They do not have contacts with trade unions and cannot afford to pay the cost of legal proceedings. Consequently, in many cases, third-country nationals renounce their rights. If working conditions are too harsh, they prefer to look for another job rather than to sue the employer. For this reason, foreigners usually carry out underpaid work which Italian citizens generally tend to avoid. Future TP models should cater for ensuring decent working positions, combined with monitoring mechanisms, in order to avoid precarious situations and even discriminations⁹⁶.

GREECE

Responsible institutions

In Greece, the management of migration and asylum policy falls under the responsibilities of several key bodies and organizations.

In 2019, the previous Ministry for Migration Policy, which was the main governmental body responsible for issues related to migration integration, was replaced by a new **Ministry of Migration and Asylum**⁹⁷. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum is the official government body responsible for overseeing migration and asylum policy issues in Greece. It plays a crucial role in shaping and implementing policies related to migration and contributes to European

⁹⁵ Recommendations based on: Panzica, Francesco, Natalia Popova, Future skill demand and supply of migrant labor in Italy, ILO, 2021

⁹⁶ S. Borelli, Italy, Interaction between Labour Law and Immigration regimes, ETUI, Brussels, 2023, <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Interaction%20between%20labour%20law%20and%20immigration%20regimes-2023.pdf>

⁹⁷ <https://migration.gov.gr/>

policies on migration. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum possesses an Integrated Information System "Migration" to the specifications of the new law, adopted in 2023 (see below).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is responsible, in cooperation with the **Ministry of Interior**, for the evaluation of labour market needs, the registration of requests for foreign labour force, setting requirements for the granting / renewal of residence permits (e.g. social security requirements) and the implementation of labour legislation.

The [Public Employment Service \(DYPA\)](#) also carries out activities meant to integrate migrants into the labour market. It offers targeted training and programmes to encourage the hiring of migrants. Since February 2018, migrants have been allowed to register as unemployed, which in turn provides ground for permanent residence in Greece.

The Labour Inspectorate⁹⁸ is the main monitoring and enforcement body for the application of labour law, responsible for carrying out regular and emergency inspections. The Migration Code prohibits public services from dealing with illegally residing workers (except for health services and the courts, among main ones), forbids landlords to rent to such workers and imposes a duty on managers of hotels and resorts to notify the police authorities about the arrival and departure of any third-country nationals they host. Illegally residing employees have the right to submit complaints against their employer, either themselves or through Local Workers Centres operating on their behalf and with their consent. These workers have the right to recourse to the relevant courts and authorities for back-payment and all other legal rights in accordance with labour law and pertaining to the execution of judicial decisions against their employers, even if they have returned or have been forced to return to their countries of origin⁹⁹.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry is responsible for issuing, renewing and / or revoking Schengen and national visas and the relations with third countries.

At local level, Article 75 of the 2006 Code of Communes and Municipalities established certain **competencies for municipalities regarding the integration of migrants**. The active involvement of large cities and towns with a high concentration of migrant populations has since notably increased. Municipalities provide temporary accommodation, social assistance, Greek language courses, vocational training and health services. Most of these activities are financed through EU funding.

Local governmental structures were further re-organised in 2010 through the [Kallikratis Programme](#). As a result, an important part of the everyday implementation of the integration policy has been transferred to the new decentralised authorities. The reform reinforced the role of municipalities and established that these decentralised structures would issue residence permits through one-stop shops on integration spread across the territory.

European Commission and Greek Authorities:

The Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils, or Symvoulia Entaksis Metanaston kai Prosfygon, are advisory bodies at the municipal level, which record and identify problems that interfere with the social integration of migrants and beneficiaries of international protection residing permanently in a municipality. These councils issue recommendations and proposals

⁹⁸ <https://www.mli.gr/en/organisation/profile/>

⁹⁹ Katsaroumpas, Greece, Interaction between Labour Law and Immigration regimes, ETUI, Brussels, 2023, <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Interaction%20between%20labour%20law%20and%20immigration%20regimes-2023.pdf>

for the municipal council, meant to promote the development of local actions facilitating migrant integration. In cooperation with municipal services, the councils also organise actions to sensitise and strengthen the social cohesion within the local population. These councils include members who are elected municipal officers, as well as representatives of migrant communities and organisations.

The Migrant Integration Centers (MICs), are further entities, whose work is embedded in the integration strategy (see further down in this section). They cater to the individual needs of migrants, both beneficiaries of protection and other legally residing third-country nationals, by offering one-stop-shop services in collaboration with the Directorate of Social Services of each local administration.

Under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), in collaboration with the UNHCR and the IOM, the European Commission and the Greek authorities ensure access to primary medical care, mental health support, psychosocial assistance, emergency aid, and protection activities in Reception Centres across Greece.

These bodies work together to address the complexities of migration, asylum, and integration in Greece, considering both historical emigration patterns and the country's role as a gateway to Europe for people arriving from the Middle East and Africa¹⁰⁰.

There is no consultative body on integration at the national level. However, in 2016, the General Secretariat of Migration Policy of the interior ministry created a National Registry of organisations active in the field of migration, international protection and integration.

National Strategy for Social Integration:

To promote the inclusion of migrants, Greece established its third National Strategy for the Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection in 2021. This strategy focuses exclusively on asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, harmonizing with the current legislative framework in Greece. It includes four main pillars: (i) pre-integration of asylum seekers; (ii) social integration of beneficiaries of international protection; (iii) prevention of and effective protection from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse; (iv) monitoring the integration process.

¹⁰⁰ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/migration-management-greece_en; https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-greece_en

Migration regime and general procedure in the field of labour migration¹⁰¹:

With the aim to develop a more coherent and systematic legal framework for migration, the Migrant and Social Integration Code (enacted by Law 4251/2014 with subsequent amendments) regulates various migration, labour law and social security norms with distinct and often conflicting origins, functions.

In general, to start the visa procedure, the applicant must find an employer who contacts the competent agency to invite the employee to the country (metaklisis). Procedures based on invitation are dependent on the quotas set every two years by region and specialty jobs. These quotas may increase up to 10% to meet any contingencies. This system is seen by many as not sufficiently effective, adding an additional layer, bureaucracy and delays in the process¹⁰².

Legal documents allowing work migration: a) Visa with the right to work b) Residence permits with right to work. c) Certificate of submission of supporting documents for the issue of a residence permit with the right to work.

Employed workers Requisites: a national visa for employment and a residence permits for employment. Procedure: employers apply to the Decentralised Administration of their place of residence. Remuneration in the contract must amount to at least that of an unskilled worker and a tax certificate as proof of ability to pay this salary. This permit may only be granted if the specialization is included in the quotas list and the number of allowed permits has not yet been covered. Application of the permit is then continued by the employee.

Duration: minimum one year, first granted permit is valid for two years and can be renewed for three years.

Conditions: It is possible to change employment during the validity of the initial residence permit as long as work remains in the same specialization for which the permit was issued. An employment contract is not necessary for the renewal of a residence permit. For permit renewal, the applicant must have completed all the tax obligations, to have a minimum number of wages at the relevant insurance organization and to have a valid health insurance certificate.

¹⁰¹ Based on: COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing an EU Talent Pool {COM(2023) 716 final} - {SEC(2023) 716 final} - {SWD(2023) 716 final} - {SWD(2023) 718 final}, 15.11.2023, SWD(2023) 717 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2023:0717:FIN:EN:PDF>; See also: EMN National Report 2019 Greece - Employed worker. (n.d.). EU Immigration Portal. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://immigration-portal.ec.europa.eu/greeceemployed-worker_en Greece - Highly-qualified worker. (n.d.). EU Immigration Portal. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://immigration-portal.ec.europa.eu/greece-highly-qualified-worker_en Greece - Self-employed worker. (n.d.). EU Immigration Portal. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://immigrationportal.ec.europa.eu/greece-self-employed-worker_en Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Legislative framework for the access of third-country nationals to the labour market for seasonal work. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/en/brexit-2/legislative-framework-for-theaccess-of-third-country-nationals-to-the-labour-market-for-seasonal-work/> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Work for third country nationals in Greece Retrieved June 21, 2023, from <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/en/labour-relations/individual-employmentrelations/work-for-third-country-nationals-in-greece/>

¹⁰² Interview, I. Katsaroumpas, 15/04/2024

Highly qualified workers

Requisites: EU Blue Card Procedure: same procedure of volumes of admission as for employed workers. Duration: valid for 2 years. For shorter contracts, the EU Blue Card corresponds to the duration of the contract plus three months. A new application for an EU Blue Card is necessary for renewal.

Conditions: duration of the contract must be for at least a year; remuneration should be 50% higher than the average cross annual remuneration in Greece. For regulated professions all relevant prerequisites must be fulfilled. For unregulated professions, applicant must prove high-specialised professional qualifications. Quotas for this permit also apply. Unemployment is not a reason for withdrawing the EU Blue Card except if the period of unemployment exceeds three months.

Seasonal workers. General procedure: the employer must start the application with the Residence Permit Offices of the Decentralised Administration with the territorial jurisdiction of the place of work. If the employer does not fulfil all their legal obligations (e.g. social security, taxation, labour rights, employment conditions, etc..) seasonal work visa may not be granted or revoked. There is a maximum number of permits for third-country nationals issued every year.

Seasonal work in the agricultural and livestock sector. Duration: can be issued for working up to 9 months in a period of 12 months. Can be extended for up to 5 years. Conditions: The employer must provide the employee with a suitable accommodation that satisfies the health and safety standards. If rent must be paid by the employee, the employer should provide a rental agreement. The amount of rent is proportional to the worker's salary and quality of accommodation. If seasonal worker has their own accommodation, employer must provide the agency of Decentralised Administration proof of this.

Seasonal work for fishermen. This permit may be issued for a maximum of 11 months, limited exclusively to the specific employment through which the permit is granted.

Other cases. Visas to work for a short period of time may also be issued to third-country nationals providing a service, leaders of organised tourism groups (tour leaders), athletes, coaches, and others. The law provides a residence permit for 'special purpose employees', as defined by special legislation, bilateral agreements or for reasons of public interest, sports and national economy.

Self-employment worker. Work permits for applicants wanting to invest in Greece or for the purpose of independent activities. Requirements: a visa Conditions: among other documents, applicants must include in their application a business plan and proof of financial resources of at least 250,000 euros in capital. Duration: for independent economic activities it is granted for 2 years. For investment activities it is granted for three years.

Exemptions: High-demand professions or occupations where there is a shortage of qualified local or EU candidates (healthcare, information technology, engineering, construction, hospitality and tourism, agriculture, and other sectors of strategic importance to the Greek economy).

For posted third-country nationals, the visa is granted for the duration for the posting, which shall not exceed one year for those posted from establishments within the EU/EEA, and six months for other establishments. Postings from non-EU/EEA establishments are restricted to specialised technical personnel engaged in installation, trial operation and maintenance services. No rules exist for re-posting of those workers to other Member States. Posted workers are entitled to non-wage terms of employment as defined by Greek law and universally applicable collective agreements with regard to, among other things, maximum working time and rest periods and duration of minimum annual leave. They are also entitled to equal treatment in relation to minimum gross wages as defined by Greek labour law and collective agreements, which are universally applicable, including wage premia. The law prohibits the more favourable treatment of companies posting third-country nationals from outside the EU/EEA compared with those posting workers from within the EU/EEA¹⁰³.

Responsible body: Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), currently renamed DYPA

In 2021, 23 000 new immigrants obtained a residence permit longer than 12 months in Greece (excluding EU citizens), 15.6% more than in 2020. This figure comprises 9.6% labour migrants, 51.4% family members (including accompanying family), 3% who came for education reasons and 36.1% other migrants. Around 340 short-term permits were issued to third-country students. In addition, 6 100 intra-EU postings were recorded in 2021, a -46% decrease compared to 2020. These posted workers are generally on short-term contracts.

Integration: Migrants have access to services aiming to promote social integration. Local and national authorities (including the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, local municipalities and others), as well as NGOs, provide language courses, soft-skills workshops, and job preparation courses to newcomers. Nevertheless, Greece does not have a standard integration programme for all third-country nationals, and services exist specifically for beneficiaries of international protection¹⁰⁴.

Education and training of adults/ labour market and skills

One of the four main pillars of the National Strategy for Integration is ‘Social inclusion of beneficiaries of international protection through the development of intensive education and training programmes to facilitate beneficiaries’ access to the labour market. Promoting the European way of life’. It contains general objectives and goals, subdivided into specific actions. Law 4939/2022 (G G A’ 111) amended Law 4636/2019 (G G A’ 169) and specifies the rights of beneficiaries of international protection to access to education, vocational training, employment, procedures for the recognition of academic titles and professional qualifications,

¹⁰³ Katsaroumpas, Greece, Interaction between Labour Law and Immigration regimes, ETUI, Brussels, 2023, <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Interaction%20between%20labour%20law%20and%20immigration%20regimes-2023.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-greece_en#integration-strategy

as well as a number of other sectors and services (social assistance, medical care, housing, free movement, social integration services, repatriation)¹⁰⁵.

Recent developments

In 2022, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 29%, to reach around 29 000. The majority of applicants came from Syria (4 300), Afghanistan (4 100) and the West Bank and Gaza Strip (2 900). The largest increase since 2021 concerned applicants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip (+2 100) and the largest decrease of nationals of Bangladesh (-1 200). Of the 39 000 decisions taken in 2022, 50% were positive.

In February 2022, Greece and Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Mobility, which has been ratified by both countries since then (see also below). A bilateral agreement was also signed with Egypt in November 2022 and was ratified by parliament in January 2023. It regulates seasonal employment of Egyptian workers mainly in the agricultural sector.

In February 2022, the list of safe countries of origin was updated to include Egypt, Nepal and Benin, while in December 2022 Ukraine was removed from the list. As a result, 16 countries are designated as safe countries of origin: Ghana, Senegal, Togo, Gambia, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Albania, Georgia, India, Armenia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal and Benin.

In June 2022, the Law 4 939/2022 (Gov. Gazette: A' 111) "Ratification of the Code on reception, international protection of third-country nationals and stateless persons, and temporary protection in cases of mass influx of displaced persons" (Asylum Code) was adopted, mainly codifying amendments introduced after 2019 in one single piece of legislation. In March 2023, the Parliament approved the new Migration Code (Law 5 038/2022, G.G. A'81) to become effective on 1 January 2024. The Law codifies existing regulations on migration in a single text and modifies certain regulations on migrants' residence permits, aiming to correct malfunctions identified over the years. The new migration code also includes measures for those who wish to enter the country for work purposes, as well as for second generation children born and raised in Greece. A new measure with immediate effect eases regulations for unaccompanied minors who will only need to complete three years of secondary schooling by the age of 23 to receive a ten-year residence permit, against six in the previous legislative framework¹⁰⁶. Highly skilled third-country nationals are now eligible to apply for Blue Cards. Third-country nationals who are already lawfully present in Greece (using a C Visa, residence permit, or valid passport) can apply for a Blue Card from within Greece, provided they meet the eligibility criteria¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/EMN_Factsheets2022_EL_0.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, Further information: www.migration.gov.gr; www.astynomia.gr; www.statistics.gr

¹⁰⁷ <https://globaltaxnews.com/news/2023-0873-greeces-new-immigration-law-to-go-into-effect-on-1-january-2024>

In February 2024, it was announced that the Migration and Asylum Ministry is working on a draft law to modernize the administrative mechanism granting resident permits to irregular migrants.

At present, the process can take up to two years, and the bureaucracy involved is far from supportive." Within the first half of 2024, four new biometric data collection centres will be opened, three in Athens and one in Thessaloniki. As announced by the minister, the digitization of 850,000 migration files will be completed by the first half of 2026, reducing the time needed to process applications. This news comes on the back of another law passed last December which allows migrants to obtain a three-year residency and work permit as a means to tackle labour shortages in Greece, in what was a positive development for asylum seekers in the country. That amendment relates to around 30,000 undocumented migrants from non-EU countries, who have crossed into Greece by illegal means and are still living in Greece and have been employed, albeit irregularly, for a minimum of three years.

International partnerships and agreements

On February 9, 2022, a Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Mobility was signed in Dhaka by the then Minister of Migration and Asylum, and his counterpart from Bangladesh. The Memorandum, ratified by the provisions of Law 4959/2022, seeks to primarily meet the needs of the Greek labour market for temporary labour, based on relative Greek legislation, and secondly to improve the cooperation between the two countries on return issues.

Specifically, the most significant points of the Memorandum of Understanding include: a) the possibility of regulating the status of temporary residence and work for 15,000 nationals of Bangladesh already residing in Greece before the signing date of the Memorandum, b) the possibility of admitting and providing temporary residence and employment (annually) to 4,000 nationals of Bangladesh in accordance with the needs and limitations of the Greek labour market, and c) the explicit obligation of Bangladesh to strictly adhere to the Standard Operating Procedures for the return of individuals who do not have the right to stay in the country, as agreed between the EU and Bangladesh.

On November 22, 2022, an agreement was signed in Cairo by the then Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, and the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Ehab Nasr, regarding the employment of seasonal workers in the agricultural sector. This involves the employment of 5,000 agricultural workers. The agreement was ratified on 13 January 2023, by the plenary session of the Hellenic Parliament. It is noted that a bilateral contractual framework for the employment of fishermen from Egypt has been in place since 1984.

During a recent visit of the President Mitsotakis to Egypt, the dialogue deepened the two countries' cooperation on the issue of irregular immigration, emphasizing Egypt's "substantial efforts to limit this phenomenon and its related effects." Both countries have expressed "a

shared commitment to strengthening regular migration paths, including the implementation of the Egyptian agreement on seasonal workers”¹⁰⁸.

A Declaration of Intent on Migration and Mobility was signed during the visit to India on 23 March 2022, by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Dendias. A similar Declaration of Intent has been signed with Pakistan¹⁰⁹.

The next step, according to a statement released by the Migration Ministry, concerns the signing of "six bilateral transnational labour mobility agreements with Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova, as well as Vietnam, India, and the Philippines. It is expected that through this, administrative mechanism of regular immigration is strengthened, modernized and upgraded to be able to process with speed and reliability the increased requests for transfers, new residence permits and renewals of old permits. Particularly, through the agreements with India and Vietnam up to 60 000 regular workers for the tourism and agricultural sector are expected¹¹⁰.

Lessons learnt

Social partners, and particularly the Trade Unions share the opinion that labour and migration policies in Greece are still not well aligned and that the not particularly structured tripartite dialogues on labour policy during the last few years affects as well, the labour migration policy¹¹¹. Much more transparency, institutional dialogue and a structured process is expected from their side not only at the level of the policy making but also in terms of a broader discussion on the nature and advantages of the legal migration policy.

As Greece is an entry point to Europe for hundred thousand of migrants, both regular and irregular, important questions to be further addressed are the human rights vector, the regularisation of the status of some of them, for whom it would be bilaterally agreed to stay in the country, as well as – considering the development of a special targeted path for vocational training and recognition/validation of skills and qualifications. The latter would be particularly important for lower-skilled migrants and shortage occupations that require lower levels of qualifications that are much needed in the economy of Greece. All this requires at operational level prepared administrative structures, which is still not the case.

ROMANIA

Labour migration framework – development and recent reforms

Responsibilities

Ministry of Administration and Interior (MAI) is one of the 18 ministries of the Government of Romania and is the one responsible for migration and asylum. The law on organization and

¹⁰⁸ https://flight.com.gr/a-new-era-in-the-relationship-between-greece-and-egypt-was-opened-by-mitsotakis-visit-to-cairo/#goog_rewarded

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-policy/greece-in-the-strategic-eu/eu-policy-on-migration-and-asylum.html>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.inmigrants.net/en/post/55187/greece-2024-will-be-the-year-of-legal-migration>

¹¹¹ Ellie Varchalama, The General Confederation of Workers in Greece, 24/04/2024

functionalities of MAI provides for that the ministry exercises its attributions in the field of juridical regime of aliens, asylum seekers and persons who were granted a form of protection in Romania.

The Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration (GII)¹¹² is operating under MAI. The GII is the primary authority in charge of asylum and migration and is responsible for matters related to immigration, visas, and residence permits. It oversees the integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) and European Union (EU) citizens, providing essential integration services through its regional structures, as follows:

- It offers an online application service where applicants can upload supporting documents online before visiting the counter in person. This aims to reduce waiting times and streamline the application process.
- Public Foreigner Registration Portal. The Public Foreigner Registration Portal is dedicated to legally entering foreigners in Romania. There's a help module available in both Romanian and English.
- Residence Permits: A residence permit certifies the right to stay in Romania. It could be obtained from the territorial units of the IGI.
- The IGI also issues work authorization, at the request of the employer, under the conditions provided by law; verifies the fulfilment by foreigners of the necessary conditions for granting and extending the right of residence in Romania, according to the law; extends the right of temporary residence in Romania to foreigners who meet the conditions provided by law.

The General Inspectorate for Immigration shall transmit quarterly to the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice the statistical situation of work/detachment authorization, single permits and residence permits that also confer the right to work, as well as the situation of European Union citizens who carry out dependent activities on the territory of Romania.

During the 2017 - 2020 [AMIF](#) funding cycle, the [General Inspectorate for Immigration](#) in Romania focused on setting up a network of integration centres. These were first linked with existing governmental reception centres (of which there are currently six in Romania) and are now independent bodies in the main towns of each network 'region', with an open access system. Six network regions have been identified overall (which have nothing to do with the historic or administrative division of Romanian territory), each with two integration centres that function independently of the governmental reception centres.

Integration services provided vary slightly between centres. Core services - available at all centres - include the following:

- information and counselling for beneficiaries of international protection and third country nationals;
- cultural orientation;
- educational activities (including Romanian language training);
- support with accessing health services, education systems and the labour market;

¹¹² www.igi.mai.gov.ro

- limited financial assistance to meet basic needs¹¹³.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity is in charge of drafting policies in the field of labour force management and mobility. At the proposal of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, in accordance with the labour migration policy and taking into account the labour market situation in Romania, the quota of foreign workers newly admitted to the labour market shall be determined annually by Government decision.

The National Agency for Employment (NAE) as public body with legal statute under the authority of Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (MLSS) enforces the policies and strategies on labour employment and vocational training of the jobseekers, worked-out by MLSS. On the other hand, through measures of institutional reorganization, NAE has taken over the activities of the Labour Force Migration Office in the field of labour recruitment and placement abroad and implementation of bilateral agreements signed between Romania and other states (Member States of EU and EEA especially) regarding labour force exchange and activity of Directorate for Records and Monitoring from the Department of Working Abroad as regards the area of labour migration and bilateral agreements on labour exchange monitoring.

The responsibilities of the NAE (mostly oriented towards the EU) are: labour recruitment and placement abroad, both in states where Romania has concluded with bilateral agreements in the labour field, and the states where Romania has not concluded with such agreements; monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the legal bilateral agreements concluded by Romania with other states, as well as the records on labour force circulation; submission to MLFSP, for endorsement, of legal documents drafts on regulations in the labour migration field, the protection of Romanian citizens working outside the country, the amendment and complementing the legislation, as the case may be; information and counselling services for people who want to work in the EU member states and in the signatory states of the Economic European Area Agreement, as well as in the countries with whom Romanian has concluded treaties, agreements, conventions and understandings.

The National Qualification Authority (NQA/NCA) of Romania has among its main tasks to certify the professional training acquired at authorized / accredited training providers from the Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation, according to a special Methodology, issued by the Ministry of Education in December 2022¹¹⁴. The methodology applies to professional training documents attesting the acquisition of professional skills / learning outcomes, outside the national education system, at professional training providers authorized / accredited in accordance with the legal framework of the mentioned countries. For the purposes of this methodology, professional training is acquired formally through initiation, improvement, specialization, qualification, requalification programs or by assessing professional competencies / learning outcomes obtained at authorized / accredited issuers, level 1-5, according to the National Qualifications Framework. It is important to note that the attestation applies to applicants not only from the above-mentioned countries, but also to:

¹¹³ https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/romania-national-network-integration-centres_en

¹¹⁴ Approved by ORDER nr 6,374 of 7 December 2022, published in the Official Gazette, Part I, no 1241 of 22 December 2022; <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/263028>

- citizens from third countries beneficiaries of permanent resident status in Romania and beneficiaries of long-term resident status granted by one of the Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation;
- citizens of third countries benefiting from a form of international protection on the territory of Romania;
- citizens of third countries, other than those referred above, only for access to the Romanian labour market.

The methodology specifies the procedure, the documents, and the duration of the attestation process.

In the last years, two strategies paved the way to recognition and validation of prior learning: The 2015-20 Strategy for lifelong learning adopted in 2015 provided a foundation for developing validation mechanisms, providing financial incentives and counselling. In 2016, the National strategy for education and vocational training in Romania foresaw the development of mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and quality assurance mechanisms for certification of learning outcomes. A dedicated validation facility within the National Qualifications Authority (ANC), the National Centre for Accreditation, has been established. In 2018, the regulatory framework for validation and recognition was revised with a view to introducing quality assurance (QA) measures for validation and recognition. Specific criteria for certification of evaluator and external evaluator competences and additional requirements for assessment and certification, organised by the assessment centres, were introduced in legislation. By 2019, there were 37 fully functioning local assessment centres that could validate prior learning of candidates, mainly in services, construction and agriculture fields of learning (between 8.000 and 10.000 per year). Those centres would be tasked with mapping the skills and competences of third country nationals, acquired in non-formal, informal settings, against the Romanian occupational standards. A full recognition could be awarded here, but only up to level 3 of the NQF/EQF¹¹⁵.

The area of migration and asylum in Romania enjoys the attention of the civil society represented by NGOs which have as main competencies implementation of activities in this area. An active NGO in migration and asylum is the **Foundation Romanian National Council for Refugees (RNCR)**. RNCR is a non-governmental organization of public utility aimed mainly to protect and promote through all legal means the refugee's rights. With the support of networks of lawyers, students and volunteers, it develops legal and social counselling/assistance, as well as training and research activities mainly in the benefit of refugee-related cases. RNCR has gained solid respect and reliance in cooperating with local authorities, international organizations, academic institutions and other non-governmental organizations. RNCR was set up in 1998 on the basis of Refugee Counselling and Assistance Centre structure, on a platform supported among others by the Save the Children Romania. The main focus was on asylum-seekers and refugees, RNCR being the main implementing partner for UNHCR programmes in Romania since then. In 2003, the foundation was recognized as being of public utility. In the field of assistance RNCR benefits from its lawyer's network and

¹¹⁵ <https://www.ecdedeurope.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28514>; Interview Virgil Ion, NCA, 09/04/2024

its growing network of young volunteers. The network of lawyers evolved into a legal community who donate their time and expertise to assist asylum seekers, refugees and migrants on fees much below lawyers' regular fees.

ROMIG (Romanian Network for Migration Studies): This network brings together experts and researchers from various institutions, including the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, the Romanian Institute of Research on National Minorities, and the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. ROMIG focuses on studying migration trends, policies, and their impact on social and economic development in Romania.

These institutions collectively work to create a supportive environment in the field of asylum and migration.

General procedures in the field of labour migration

The number of third-country nationals (TCN) residing and working in Romania is low (about 0.4 per cent of the population). They are paid at least the minimum wage and are entitled to the same rights and working conditions as Romanian citizens, as established by law or collective agreements. Access to the Romanian Labour market is quite restrictive and there are many conditions for obtaining a work permit. Work permits are requested by and issued to the employer. Citizens of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia (neighbouring countries that are not in the EU) may work in Romania as employees, however, without a work permit for a maximum nine months in a calendar year.

*The Standard work permit*¹¹⁶ must be approved by the Romanian Inspectorate General for Immigration. Eligibility is contingent upon either: • Educational work at a Romanian institution • Highly skilled work • Work through a bilateral agreement • As instructed by the Minister of National Education or Minister of Culture • Work in a ministry • Head of the Romanian branch of a company headquartered abroad.

Employment categories • Permanent employee: foreigner employed in Romania with individual contract of indefinite duration or fixed term concluded with an employer based on the work permit. • Trainee worker: foreigner participating on an internship program of a duration with a view to improving vocational training or obtaining a vocational qualification as well as improving language and cultural knowledge. • Seasonal worker: foreigner who maintains his main residence in a third country, but legally and temporarily lives in Romania, being employed in seasonal activity. • Cross-border worker: the foreigner, citizen of a state which has a common border with Romania and lives in the border area of the respective State, employed in a border town on the Romanian territory. • Highly qualified worker: foreigner employed in Romania on a highly skilled job, with individual contract of at least one year. •

¹¹⁶ See also: <https://visaguide.world/europe/romania-visa/long-stay/> Inspectorate General for Immigration. (n.d.). Frequent questions. Retrieved June 28, 2023, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/category/frequent-questions/> Inspectorate General for Immigration. (n.d.-b). Migration. Retrieved June 28, 2023, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/category/diverse/migration/> Inspectorate General for Immigration. (n.d.-b). Long stay visa for employment purposes. Retrieved June 28, 2023, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/long-stayvisa-for-employment-purposes/> Inspectorate General for Immigration. (n.d.-a). Employment and posting. Retrieved June 28, 2023, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/employment-andposting/>

Deployed worker: the qualified foreigner temporarily deployed from a company established in a third country • ICT worker: person transferred within the same company. • Au pair worker: foreigner temporarily employed by a host family on the territory of Romania to improve their language skills and competences in exchange for easy domestic and childcare.

Long stay visa for employment

For applicants with a job offer that can demonstrate professional training or experience
Requirements: work permit issued by the General Inspectorate for Immigration (or documents that demonstrate you fall into the categories of foreigners who are exempt from requiring a work permit) and a single permit. (Certain categories of foreigners may work in Romania without a work permit).

Procedure: employers apply first for a notice of employment from the General inspector for immigration. Employees follow up the procedure in the diplomatic mission of Romania. Once arriving to Romania, the employee obtains the residence permit from the General inspector for immigration.

Duration: The temporary residence permit for employment purposes can be extended for a period equal to the validity of the employment contract, up to a maximum of 1 year. Conditions: Worker may only be employed by a single employer.

EU Blue Card – Highly skilled workers

For highly qualified applicants with a job offer.

Requirements: work permit issued by the General Inspectorate for Immigration (or documents that demonstrate you fall into the categories of foreigners who are exempt from requiring a work permit) and an EU Blue Card.

Procedure: employers apply first for a notice of employment from the General inspector for immigration. Employees follow up the procedure in the diplomatic mission of Romania. Once arriving to Romania, the employee obtains the EU Blue Card from the General inspector for immigration. Duration: may be issued for a period equal to the validity of the work contract plus an additional 3 months, with a maximum total duration of 2 years.

Conditions: Worker may only be employed by a single employer.

Seasonal work. For applicants conducting seasonal work with a registered employer (at the trade register office).

Requirements: Work authorisation for seasonal workers, a visa for work purposes and a temporary residence permit. It is required to show a basic knowledge of Romanian.

Conditions: Permit issued based on quotas established by the Romanian government. Specific conditions apply for nationals of Canada, Japan and the United States of America based on bilateral agreements.

Procedure: Employer applies through the General inspectorate for Immigration for work authorisation. Authorizations granted based on quotas and a labour market test. Once the

authorization is granted, applicant may apply for a visa for work purposes and the residence permit.

Duration: valid for maximum 6 months within a 12-month period, under an individual labour contract and in a specific seasonal sector.

In general terms, third-country nationals' access to the labour market in Romania involves an employment contract concluded with the employer who applies for the work permit. It is issued only if the employer genuinely carries out activities compatible with the job offered to the foreigner. As temporary agencies in Romania are authorised only for recruiting and placing workers, not for specific activities, they cannot recruit third-country nationals directly from a third country. The Labour Code provides for equal treatment between temporary agency workers and employees recruited directly by the employer; if third-country nationals are recruited by temporary agencies, they enjoy the same treatment as the local workforce. Third-country nationals already having residence status in an EU country can be posted to Romania by temporary agencies under the terms of the Posting of Workers Directive (1996/71/EC) and the Enforcement Directive (2014/67/EU).

New developments in the migration policy

In 2021, 23 000 new immigrants obtained a residence permit longer than 12 months in Romania (excluding EU citizens), 47.4% more than in 2020. This figure comprises 66.3% labour migrants, 15% family members (including accompanying family), 11.7% who came for education reasons and 7% other migrants. Around 1 400 short-term permits were issued to international students and 2 700 to temporary and seasonal labour migrants (excluding intra-EU migration). In addition, 18 000 intra-EU postings were recorded in 2021, a 3% increase compared to 2020. These posted workers are generally on short-term contracts.

In 2022, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 33%, to reach around 12 000. The majority of applicants came from Ukraine (4 400, excluding temporary protection recipients), India (1 500) and Bangladesh (1 400). The largest increase since 2021 concerned nationals of Ukraine (+4 400) and the largest decrease nationals of Afghanistan (-3 500). Of the 4 070 decisions taken in 2022, 25% were positive.

Recent developments in migration policy in Romania have mainly concerned the transposition of several EU Directives or Regulations to simplify and improve migration and asylum management.

To attract and retain highly skilled workers, in 2022 Romania introduced a **six-month digital nomad visa**, allowing foreign nationals to live in Romania while working for companies outside the country. This allows eligible third country nationals to work more flexibly and with fewer constraints in Romania for a fixed period. Applicants need to prove significant financial means to be eligible for the visa.

One key priority for the government is to address labour market shortages. In that regard, Romanian authorities significantly raised the **work permit quota** in 2021. For 2023, as in 2022, Romanian authorities have set the quota at 100 000 for non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals,

while a few years earlier it stood by around 5.000. Each year statistical data on job vacancies and analyses are conducted in order to specify the shortage occupations. Romanian employers and their organisations as well raised this point in exchanges and policy dialogue with the government and the trade unions. And even if the quota system did not cover the estimates of the employers for between 300.000 – 500.000 needed workers, the arranged number was perceived the optimal one and the one that could be possible for the administration to handle¹¹⁷.

Migrant workers holding EU Blue Card and a Romanian single permit can no longer change employers within the first year of employment without the written consent of their current employer. This measure does not apply if the termination of the individual employment contract took place at the initiative of the previous employer or as a result of the agreement of the parties, or by the resignation of the foreigner if the employer does not fulfil the obligations assumed by the individual employment contract, under the conditions provided by Law no. 53/2003, republished, with subsequent amendments and additions. This measure does not apply to seasonal workers.

Legislative amendments in 2022 extended the period in which foreign workers can apply for a long-stay visa for employment from 60 to 180 days after the employer obtains their work permit. In addition, visas are issued by the National Visa Centre within 20 days of application submission, compared with 10 days previously. These provisions aim at easing the administrative burden and facilitating the employment of foreigners in Romania. In addition, to ensure a better distribution of the workload from immigration offices, employers and foreign nationals may now have their legal representative submit work or posting permit applications at any offices of the General Inspectorate for Immigration.

Other changes in migration and asylum policy in Romania in 2022 mainly came in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.¹¹⁸

Lessons learnt and prospective steps

Bilateral agreements exist predominantly with countries from the EU and stem from the pre-EU-accession period. They mostly cover the rights of Romanian citizens abroad. In recent days the biggest influx of refugees and migrants came from Ukraine. Although the regime of their access to labour market is not applicable to other refugees and migrants, some aspects of it could be taken on board: The Ukrainian citizens were granted counselling and language training, once registered at the employment offices. Only in few cases vocational training was provided. They could work at any job position, they declared they are qualified.

For the other refugees and migrants, obstacles of their active participation in the labour market are the missing knowledge of Romanian language, recognition of qualifications and lack of awareness of the cultural and national context in Romania.

Other challenges identified are the low capacity of the responsible institutions to process visa, permits etc, due to understaffing and administrative capacity. If the whole process from identifying the needs and potential migrants to be employed corresponding to those, has the

¹¹⁷ Interview, Radu Ianos, Concordia, the biggest employers' organisation in Romania, 15/04/2024

¹¹⁸ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>; For further information: www.alba.insse.ro | www.mai.gov.ro | www.igi.mai.gov.ro

duration of 6-9 months, this would not be suitable for the short-term contracts and seasonal needs particularly.

A particular situation of the last few years has been created, when a big number of Bangladeshi citizens came to Romania through the mediation of private recruiting companies from Bangladesh, called “phantom agencies”. Most of them transited Romania on the way to Western European countries or even if they stayed, their skills and qualifications were not up to the expectations of the Romanian employers. This resulted in a lack of trust nowadays in Romanian employers when it comes to Bangladeshi workers.

In case of a prospective TP with Bangladesh, those would be the challenges to be addressed. The model how this could be done, should be discussed and decided upon within an interinstitutional approach¹¹⁹. One important aspect to be addressed is the value of the foreign qualifications to be reconfirmed by the Romanian educational institutions or the skills of the foreign workers to be validated in the recently established system for validation and recognition of skills and qualifications, which still should be completed (see also the information in this section above)¹²⁰.

Other EU, EU MS and international approaches and projects

Labour mobility approaches, programmes and pilot projects across the EU gathered relevant experience, which can serve as good practice examples to learn from and foundation to build on for the future.

Through its various funding programmes, the EU has been facilitating and financing a number of Skills and Mobility Partnerships (SMP) and SMP-like programmes and projects. Although the EU Talent Partnerships framework has yet to become fully operational, EU Pilot Projects on legal migration can already provide valuable insights and lessons learned. Since 2018, for example, the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF) an EU-funded initiative, implemented by ICMPD, seeks to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and partner countries across a broad range of migration-related themes aligned to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It has accompanied the implementation of approx. 15 projects funded by DG HOME and led by EU MS in cooperation with partner countries, most notably Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal, some of them already presented in the chapters above. These include labour mobility pilots, dialogue with countries of origin on migration, projects to enhance migration management processes and those that maximise the development impact of migration in the country of origin. These projects, which feature many different dimensions aimed at helping to create or strengthen an enabling environment and infrastructure for labour migration in the target countries, beyond simply mobility, can offer an interesting perspective to develop the potential for cooperation with Bangladesh.

¹¹⁹ Interviews, Ms Irina Persa and her team, National Agency of Employment, 5 April, 2024; Ms Grigore, Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, 02 April, 2024

¹²⁰ Interview, Radu Ianos, Concordia, the biggest employers organisation in Romania, 15 April 2024

The boxes below showcase examples of programmes and projects, facilitated by the EU and EU MS¹²¹.

► **Box 13: EU-level programmes and projects**

The above studied project THAMM has been designed as a regional programme with the aim to contribute to improving the governance of labour migration and the protection of migrant workers from selected North African countries, namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Beyond Germany, it is implemented as well in Belgium, by ENABEL, the Belgian Development Agency. The period of implementation is 2021 – 2023, where THAMM aims to provide training of 350 young people in Morocco and Tunisia of which one fourth would get the opportunity to work in Belgium. In such a way, the project offers an innovative mobility scheme (following the GSP approach), based on partnership, skills development and support for talent to access employment opportunities both in the countries of origin and host countries. THAMM includes a focus on knowledge transfers for the active management of migration in the partner countries as well as piloting placements of qualified personnel and trainees to Belgium and in Germany.

2. IOM-MATCH-project (Migration of African Talents through Capacity building and Hiring) Under the demand-driven circular migration IOM-MATCH-project (between Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Nigeria and Senegal), vocational training in the destination country is accompanied by a temporary job placement in one of the four participating EU Member States, with the aim of upskilling, increasing employability upon return to the home countries whilst (temporarily) filling labour shortages in the countries of destination. The project concerns in particular, but not exclusively, sectors with labour shortages in the destination countries such as ICT, technology and engineering. The project's duration is 36 months – i.e. from January 2020 to December 2022¹²².

Across EU MSs there are plenty of further examples for policies and projects: Germany and Finland are implementing policies to attract skilled workers in the global competition for talents and to ensure that these workers stay in their country in the long run.

Several EU MSs also actively support programmes and projects in the areas of *skills development, technical and professional education*. German social partners have committed to promoting apprenticeships and hiring apprentices at the end of their training. The Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark are particularly supportive of such programmes in capacity building. The UK and Switzerland are among the non-EU member states in Europe that support similar programmes and projects, particularly in Bangladesh (see the example in the box below).

► **Box 14: The Building Youth Employability through Skills (BYETS) project¹²³**

The Building Youth Employability through Skills (BYETS) project will empower Bangladeshi youth with improved technical, employability and entrepreneurial skills, and connect them to income generating opportunities: jobs and self-employment. BYETS will partner with Training Service Providers (TSPs), government, industry, and employers to create a conducive environment for the targeted youth that would facilitate employment

¹²¹ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>

¹²² Idem

¹²³ <https://bangladeshpost.net/posts/swisscontact-launches-project-to-empower-youths-107489>

opportunities for them. The project aims to support youths by providing training in three sectors: Readymade Garments (RMG), Agro-processing (AP), and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The project offers opportunities to collaborate with on-going initiatives of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), other donor-funded programmes and Dutch-based companies and academia. Supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), the four-year project (2022-2026) is being implemented by Swisscontact.

The labour market test, justifying labour shortages made the **Spanish** system inefficient in the recruitment of foreign talent. To remedy this problem, Spain introduced two new legal ‘skilled’ pathways that are more convenient for the private sector and easier to update if necessary (ordinary law that can be amended). Under these schemes, the labour market test is no longer necessary. Spain has also fully digitalised the visa system, which facilitates visa applications for TCNs and cooperation between the different authorities involved in delivering visas (Ministry of Interior, consulates abroad, secretary of state for migration, etc.)¹²⁴.

In other cases, like for example – **in France**, social partners were involved in the **creation of personal training accounts (compte professionnel de formation)** allowing workers to participate in funded vocational training activities. For highly qualified third country workers, expatriate tax breaks are available in some Member States. To cover seasonal peaks Member States have set up simplified procedures and cooperation agreements to attract short-term (seasonal) workers from third countries.

Further projects of EU MSs, presented below offer interesting approaches to different aspects of the mobility partnerships in a **variety of sectors** or in general terms:

The Netherlands has implemented the MOBILISE labour mobility pilot project, which aims to set up a **talent development programme on horticulture**, a priority for the Netherlands (NL). The project targets middle-management professionals from Tunisia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, intending to place them in Dutch companies with business interests in the countries of origin (CoO). MOBILISE was designed based on documented skills gaps in the NL. Significant research is necessary for this kind of programme that involves the identification of the skills and training necessary for the job at hand and research on skills and training in the CoO, which entails interviews with a variety of stakeholders in the CoO and the destination country (e.g., employers, trade unions, governments, education institutions etc.)¹²⁵.

Sector organisations and companies also implement pilot projects.

► **Box 15: Labour mobility pilot project for Polyvia**¹²⁶

Polyvia, the professional union representing the plastics industry is implementing a labour mobility pilot project. The initial pilot concerned 26 Tunisian nationals who acquired qualifications recognised in Tunisia and France to work in the plastics industry. The

¹²⁴ Idem

¹²⁵ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners’ Network In-Person Conference “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

¹²⁶ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners’ Network In-Person Conference “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

recognition of the qualifications was built into the project design, but instead, the first phase faced challenges with the visa process: three to six months were necessary to obtain a visa. This timeframe proved impossible for companies in the plastics sector (mostly SMEs). Currently, for a second larger pilot project “Promob Skills”, the challenge is scaling up: the objective is to train 800 people over three years to match the demand in the plastics sector, and the hope is that with the demonstration effect of matchmaking from the first phase, that this will motivate a streamlining of visa and work permit processes during the second phase.

In the ICT sector¹²⁷, the Digital Explorers labour mobility pilot project is a programme for Nigerian tech professionals to find employment or internships in Lithuania. In total, 26 Nigerian professionals were matched with companies and a value-for-money analysis was conducted to assess the project's economic benefits in Lithuania. It found that more than half of Nigerian ICT specialists earn above-average salaries within their companies and that by 2024, the project's added value outweighs the initial costs, which is attributable to the steady influx of revenue to the Lithuanian ICT sector. In addition, one company launched an office in Nigeria, which will generate significant Foreign Direct Investment and create employment in the CoO. Including a research component in this project was useful to measure success, allowing for scaling up. Measuring the impact on partner countries is important to avoid brain drain, which was not undertaken during the first phase of Digital Explorers.

Summary: In the four studied EU Member States – Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania – the governments report high number of vacancies in health- and nursing-related sectors, the IT industry, and building professions, and in tourism, transportation and agriculture, for which they consider attracting workers from abroad. Significant amendments in the labour migration legislation have been undertaken particularly in Germany and Italy with the aim to create conditions for establishing regular migration channels, to reduce barriers and costs and to simplify administrative procedures.

The employers’ organisations, especially from industries with significant shortages of skilled workers are usually among the supporters of these new developments in the migration policy, as 52%/ 86% of all companies report increasing difficulties hiring third country workers for whom migration is often very expensive (duration, paperwork requirements, translation costs, administrative fees). In most of the countries as well their role is of proactive stakeholders. In general terms they participate in the process of identification of skills needs and contribute to skills development, recognition and the migration procedures.

The labour and migration policies, procedures and involved stakeholders across the EU MS (incl. policies/arrangements/structures, skills priorities, duration of migration period) are very heterogenous. EU Directives (e.g. Blue Card) support confirming common principles for skills and qualifications requirements, salaries thresholds and mobility of workers. Common EU instruments and platforms (Europass, ESCO etc), as well as the envisaged Talent Pool are expected to facilitate the recruitment of jobseekers from non-EU countries in EU-wide shortage occupations, making it easier and faster.

¹²⁷ Idem

Different aspects of the legal migration cycle (establishing partnerships agreements, matching of skills and qualifications, selection of workers who would like to work abroad, providing a training, arranging visa, transportation and introduction to the new working place) have been piloted both in the EU MS and in Bangladesh. Bilateral agreements are still a preferred format when establishing skills and migration cooperations, in many cases as well with one of the objectives to tackle irregular migration. In addition to this, bilateral or multilateral projects and programmes with different modes of training (in the CoD, in the CoO, apprenticeships etc) and innovative management practices, including in the field of ethical recruitment practices and circular migration have been piloted. Important lessons learnt show that a concerted approach of the institutions in the CoD and a sustainable financial concept of public-private partnerships belong to the success factors of a talent partnership. The concept of matching supply and demand and providing a pool of specialists in both partnering countries has confirmed validity. The trends towards reducing qualification requirements and favouring available skills and competences and focusing on demand-driven top-up training programmes or short modules and language and intercultural courses in the CoO appear to show greater impact, compared to other modalities.

3.3 The experience of Bangladesh in skills and migration partnerships

Responsible institutions

In the country, various ministries and departments are involved in managing labour migration. **The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE)** steers the policy formulation for Bangladesh, while its **Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)** is the directorate that regulates the recruitment process and procedures. There are 46 **District Manpower and Employment Office (DEMOS)** across the nation providing registrations and other forms of support. As a governmental agency, **Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL)** directly recruits workers for a few selected countries. The technical training centres (**TTCs**) are engaged in skills-building and provide mandatory pre-departure orientation (PDO) training for outgoing migrants, along with six institutes of marine technology (IMTs).

The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for the overall education system in Bangladesh, including technical and vocational education. It oversees the development of vocational training institutions and curriculum, ensuring that the educational programs align with the needs of the labour market and provide relevant skills to workers. **The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB)**, under the Ministry of Education, focuses on technical and vocational education and training. It develops and implements vocational training programs, conducts examinations, and issues certifications for skilled workers. **The Ministry of Labour and Employment** is responsible for formulating and implementing policies related to labour and employment. They collaborate with various organizations to promote skill development programs for both local workers and those seeking overseas employment.

The Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has established the Bangladesh National Qualification Framework (BNQF) to ensure the relevance and consistency of qualification

outcomes. The framework supports flexible linkages and pathways for qualifications, both nationally and internationally. Its aim is to enable the portability and comparability of qualifications, aligning them with international standards. The BNQF serves as a crucial tool in driving quality improvements within the education and training system. It provides a structure for the development, description, and systematisation of relationships between qualifications, fostering harmonization. However, a significant challenge in the labour migration sector is the recognition of skills. Certifications issued in the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) sector in Bangladesh are not comparable or recognized in destination countries. Consequently, migration does not lead to skill enhancement or career progression for individuals seeking employment abroad¹²⁸.

Labour migration - current situation and bilateral agreements

According to the Government of Bangladesh's **Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training** (BMET) between 1976 and the end of 2023, total employment of Bangladeshis abroad reached a bit more than 36 million and the country has received 297 billion USD in remittances¹²⁹. The growing importance of overseas employment for the Bangladesh economy is clearly evident – the remittances made 4.6% of the GDP in 2022.

The Government of Bangladesh has formulated the Overseas Migration Policy of 2016 and Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (OEMA) of 2013. The government is continuously working to strengthen the regulation of recruitment agencies, enhance pre-departure training programs, and improve consular services. Yet, challenges for ensuring safe and fair labour migration remain.

To expand its extraterritorial jurisdiction and accord more protection to its citizens abroad, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has signed *bilateral agreements* or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with at least 17 countries for sending labour migrants (e.g. Greece, Japan, Hong Kong Maldives, Qatar). These agreements aim to facilitate regular and regulated migration, ensure the protection of workers' rights, and promote cooperation between the sending and receiving countries.

The agreements fall under one of the following procedures:

- Government-to-Government (G2G) model. The G2G model is characterized by lower recruitment fees. The hires go often through TVET centres, but with the current set-up and capacity, this results in low numbers of migrant workers and limited number of occupations; It should be considered if the model is likely to be able to scale up and handle high number or skills demand with short turn-around time.
- Private Agencies-led (P2P) model. This is a private agency-led recruitment of potential labour migrants, which is as well the most common one. This procedure has involved third-

¹²⁸ Action Document for “Supporting a Talent Partnership with Bangladesh”

¹²⁹ BMET, Overseas Employment & Remittances from 1976 to 2023 Available at: <http://www.bmet.gov.bd/site/page/616e9401-0617-45a6-a7aa-7237820ed9ed/->

party service providers (who act as intermediaries, called Dalal) hired by overseas employers, with whom Bangladeshi recruitment agencies must do business. Private recruitment agencies (collectively Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies – BAIRA) are the key players in the private agency-led recruitment system. The model handles a large number of migrant workers, uses intermediaries. Across the years there were malpractices reported of often hiring unskilled workers in the villages with low accountability for the validity of workers’ skills, as well as examples of exploitation and debt bondages, because of high recruitment fees.

- Government-to-Government Plus (G2G+) mechanism, jointly administered by the Government and private agencies.

Some of the working examples in Bangladesh are presented below.

► **Box 16: Existing examples of G2G between Bangladesh and other countries**

There are success stories from partnership agreements on labour mobility, such as the Employment Permit System (EPS) of the Republic of Korea, and the aforementioned IM Japan entity. In both schemes, G2G agreements were signed between the partner countries, and the whole process of selection, training, recruitment, departure, employment, and return is managed under the stringent terms and conditions of the agreements. The arrangements with Korea and Japan target specific destination countries for a limited number of occupations and are run by government authorities.

In the case of the Korean EPS, the Bangladesh’s publicly managed recruitment agency, BOESL remains responsible for skilling workers and sending them to Korea. The EPS system stipulates completion of the skilling selection and recruitment process, under the close supervision of the respective authorities in the destination countries, and in partnership with the local TTCs and government authorities.

In the IM Japan case, designated public and private sector TTCs remain responsible for language training and initial assessment of candidates, and their recruitment and departure are supervised directly by the competent authorities of both governments. G2G Plus arrangements for managing the skilling and migration process under both of these systems are in place.

More in detail:

Bangladesh has a recent history of sending caregivers and technical interns to Japan in some 14 occupational sectors, representing successful fulfilment of an agreement between the MoEWOE and IM Japan. Under the procedures put in place, particular technical training centres (TTCs) holding agreements with the BMET conduct pre-screening of applicants wishing to travel to Japan under this scheme. Pre-screening consists of assessing the candidate’s physical fitness and verifying the minimum level of educational qualification (12 years of formal education ending in Higher Secondary Certificate) during a primary interview. Selected candidates are provided with orientation, followed by six months of Japanese language training. Since the introduction of this scheme, the GoB has expanded¹³⁰ the scope of the Japanese language learning provided to 42 technical training centres, leading to a corresponding increase in the number of workers who ultimately travel to and take up roles in Japan.

¹³⁰ Ara, A., ‘Sending workers to Japan rises’, *The Financial Express*, Economy, Bangladesh, 10 January 2023. Available at: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/sending-workers-to-japan-rises-1673319274>

Following on the success of such schemes and given the great need for caregivers in the EU, Bangladesh is ideally positioned to provide substantial numbers of proficiently trained caregivers to EU MSs, leading to gains for all parties involved. Building on the previously applied approaches, agreements and delivery can be adapted to the specificities of each EU MS.

At the same time, examples from other countries like the Philippines warn on potential large outflow of specialists, particularly - of health care professionals. The Philippines currently has an arrangement with various EU MS to provide medical personnel, including nurses, doctors, and caregivers. Under this scheme, students who have completed higher secondary school can join the caregiving profession, receive training, and work in EU MS. The large outflow of health care professionals from the country resulted in the recent placing of a cap on outflows by the Government of the Philippines.¹³¹

Bangladesh and the EU

Bangladesh migration to Europe/EU

A recent study on Bangladesh migration in the context of the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership has collected valuable information, presented below¹³².

Being the former colonial authority, traditionally the UK has been the most favoured destination for Bangladeshi migrants. Germany and France have been the main destinations for Bangladeshi students and professionals since the 1950s. In addition to these traditionally preferred destinations, Italy, Spain, and Greece have in recent decades, as mentioned, turned into major destinations for Bangladeshis seeking work; for example, as of 2022, there were an estimated 28,000 Bangladeshis in Greece¹³³. In more recent years, Portugal, Romania, and Poland have also emerged as popular destinations. The total number of Bangladeshis residing in Europe stood at 456,516 according to the 2020 International Migrant Stock¹³⁴ compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), see Figure 1 below. The gender breakdown for this group was 60% male and 40% female.

Figure 1. *Number of Bangladeshi citizens in Europe, 2020*

¹³¹ Reuters, 'Philippines raises cap on health professionals going abroad', Asia Pacific, 18 June 2021. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-raises-cap-health-professionals-going-abroad-2021-06-18/>.

¹³² ICMPD, Study on Bangladesh and Selected Bangladeshi Economic Sectors in the context of an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, Draft, September 2023

¹³³ Mahmud, J, 'A year since deal inked, Greece yet to hire Bangladeshis', *The Daily Star*, Migration, News, 16 March 2023. Available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/nrb/migration/news/year-deal-inked-greece-yet-hire-bangladeshis-3272306>

¹³⁴ IOM Bangladesh, *Bangladeshi Migrants in Europe 2021 – A Multiple Source Snapshot*. Available at: <https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11006/files/documents/bangladeshi-migrants-in-europe-2021.pdf>

EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme Preparatory Assessments

ANNEX 1: NUMBER OF BANGLADESHI MALES AND FEMALES IN EUROPE, UNDESA- 2020

 European Region	 European Countries ⁴	 Total Migrants	 Male	 Female
Northern Europe	United Kingdom	241,799	123,787	118,012
	Sweden	10,263	5,989	4,274
	Ireland	3,706	2,618	1,088
	Finland	2,983	1,956	1,027
	Denmark	1,919	1,074	845
	Norway	1,331	715	616
	Estonia	263	212	51
	Lithuania	44	41	3
	Latvia	15	11	4
	Iceland	12	7	5
Southern Europe	Italy	135,468	102,065	33,403
	Spain	14,594	10,144	4,450
	Greece	2,851	1,441	1,410
	Portugal	1,684	1,244	440
	Malta	22	13	9
	Slovenia	20	19	1
Western Europe	Germany	13,612	9,723	3,889
	France	12,878	6,296	6,582
	Austria	3,326	2,158	1,168
	Switzerland	2,761	1,682	1,079
	Belgium	2,694	1,597	1,097
	The Netherlands	1,843	860	983
	Luxembourg	142	92	50
	Liechtenstein	6	4	2
Eastern Europe	The Czech Republic	718	666	52
	Bulgaria	539	288	251
	Russia	469	407	62
	Hungary	244	196	48
	Romania	161	153	8
	Poland	128	112	16
	Slovakia	21	18	3

Source: UNDESA, 2020 International Migrant Stock. Annex 1: Number of Bangladeshi Males and Females in Europe, 2020.

Favourable factors, making the mentioned countries attractive destinations for Bangladeshi citizens as migrant workers, and/or as tourists, business travellers, or students are the easier terms of entry, and subsequent economic opportunities and relaxed enforcement of laws for undocumented aliens, cited as major reasons for the increase in popularity of these countries as destinations. The existence of sizeable Bangladeshi diaspora populations in country, ready to provide immediate support in finding employment and other forms of assistance, is another reason.

The majority of Bangladeshi migrants in the EU are either students, who travel to the bloc on a valid student visa or by irregular means. Since there is currently very high demand for workers in the EU, some MSs also offer assistance to undocumented migrants seeking shelter and regularisation into the workforce. Some MS governments also extend visas for immigrants to stay in the country if they pay monthly taxes.

While undocumented workers make up the bulk of Bangladeshi travellers to the EU, some of these travellers, including students, tourists, and others, go through the formal, documented channels and then cross into another country, becoming undocumented and taking up informal work. The Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR), via Libya and other Middle Eastern and North African states respectively, are the preferred routes for entry of undocumented Bangladeshis to the EU.

Statistics for 2021 from the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex) show that at least 8,667 Bangladeshi citizens entered the bloc irregularly during that year.¹³⁵

In terms of regular migration, the country has a significant number of workers who seek employment abroad; most common destinations for Bangladeshi labour migrants are the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and Bahrain. Other popular destinations include Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and some European countries. According to BMET, total 1,135,873 (female 105,466) Bangladeshi workers migrated to 21 countries (2022). The information for the same year is, that 7,594 Bangladeshis were regularly employed in Italy, according to BMET¹³⁶ data. Labour migration provides an avenue for Bangladeshis to find better economic opportunities and improve their livelihoods.

Comparing the data for the irregular migration, in the same period of time, according to REMAP¹³⁷ 15,228 Bangladeshi nationals arrived (irregularly) in Italy, 907 in Cyprus, 229 in Malta, 117 in Spain and 6 in Greece. 60% of them transited through the Western Balkan and Eastern Europe Region.

The EU-Bangladesh cooperation – historical and future perspectives

The Cooperation between the EU and Bangladesh is largely determined by the framework of the [EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement](#)¹³⁸ signed in 2001. This agreement provides the scope for cooperation, covering the broad areas of trade and economic development, human rights, good governance, and the environment.

¹³⁵ Islam, A., ‘Why do Bangladeshi migrants take irregular routes to Italy?’, Migration, Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/why-do-bangladeshi-migrants-take-irregular-routes-to-italy/a-60683932>

¹³⁶ <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=39>

¹³⁷ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/bangladesh-bangladeshi-nationals-europe-multiple-source-snapshot-2022>

¹³⁸ The full text of the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/agreement-with-bangladesh-on-partnership-and-development.html>.

The EU has committed to providing Bangladesh with developmental aid of up to €690 million (without considering Thematic and Regional funds)¹³⁹ under its [Multi-Annual Indicative Programme \(MIP\) for Bangladesh 2014-2020](#).¹⁴⁰ Under the EU enhanced engagement, with Bangladesh as a beneficiary of the Generalised System of Preference and the Everything but Arms (EBA) schemes, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) put into implementation the [National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) on the labour sector for the five-year period 2021-2026. The purpose of the NAP is to bring the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 and its subsequent amendments, and Export Processing Zone Labour Law, up to international standards.

EU development and investment programmes in Bangladesh

The Office of the European Union Delegation (EUD) to Bangladesh actively supports various programmes and projects implemented by the Government of Bangladesh and major development partners, such as the ILO, to improve the migration management cycle, skills development, and technical education.

Four major EU-funded projects supporting safe migration and skills development in Bangladesh are highlighted below.

i) Prottasha (Bangladesh Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance) was in its first phase a multi-million-euro, multi-stakeholder, and multi-year (2017-2022) project entailing the key activities of providing immediate assistance to returnees at the airport, economic reintegration assistance, medical treatment support and needs-based psychosocial counselling, including trauma counselling to returnees and their family members. Among other activities, the project further focused on capacity development of CSOs, NGOs, and government agencies on various issues related to reintegration and migration. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a large national NGO, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were the implementation partners for the Prottasha project.¹⁴¹

A series of interventions with the objective of improving access to safe migration opportunities for Bangladeshi men and women were implemented through institutional strengthening and policy support targeting the relevant ministries, including the MoEWOE, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, as well as private sector organisations such as the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting

¹³⁹ European Commission, The European Union and Bangladesh: Relations between the EU and Bangladesh, European External Action Service (EEAS), Press and information team of the Delegation to Bangladesh, 21 July 2021. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/bangladesh/european-union-and-bangladesh_en?s=164.

¹⁴⁰ Read the full text of the MIP at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/bangladesh/2014-2020-multiannual-indicative-programme-bangladesh_en?s=164.

¹⁴¹ Migration Network Hub, Bangladesh Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance (Prottasha), Repository of Practices. Available at: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/practice/bangladesh-sustainable-reintegration-and-improved-migration-governance-prottasha>

Agents (BAIRA).¹⁴² **Prottasha Phase II**, with a budget of EUR 20 million¹⁴³ kicked off in 2023, with the main target area aligning with SDG 10.7 (to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed policies).

ii) The **Skills 21**¹⁴⁴ project is a joint initiative of the GoB and the ILO, with the objective of improving productivity and employment opportunities for young people through an inclusive technical and vocational training system, responsive to the needs of the labour market. This multi-year project runs from 2017 to 2023, with 5,950 youths trained (80% certified, 39% employed, 34% women, including 2% persons with disabilities); 3,321 trainers and assessors graduated (16% of whom are women), and 100 master trainers developed; 170 online training materials developed; and 3,905 workers (15% women) assessed under the RPL system, resulting in 80% of them obtaining Level 1 skills certificates in various occupations. All these trainings and assessments were carried out under the BNQF.

iii) The **TVET Reform** project¹⁴⁵ implemented by the ILO and the GoB, between 2007 and 2015, brought about major improvements at the policy and functional levels of the TVET landscape in Bangladesh. The project resulted in multiple reforms to the formal TVET system, set the foundation for the nascent National Skills Development System in Bangladesh, and the adaptation of several major policies and frameworks, including the National Skills Development Policy (2010-2016).

iv) **Human Capital Development Programme for Bangladesh 2021**¹⁴⁶ has a budget of EUR 205 million and sees the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the TMED of the Ministry of Education cooperate to unlock the economic potential of Bangladesh and its youth population through quality education reform, from basic education to TVET and skills development.

The future TP models between EU MS will benefit from the EU **Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Bangladesh for 2021-2027** (with an indicative of 306 million EUR for the first period of cooperation, 2021-2024 and for 2025-2027 – subject to a decision by the EU), which focuses on three priority areas: Human Capital Development, Green Inclusive Development, and Inclusive Governance.

¹⁴² IOM Bangladesh, *Bangladesh: Sustainable Reintegration And Improved Migration Governance (Prottasha)*. Available at: <https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11006/files/documents/Prottasha%20Brochure.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Daily Observer, 'EU commits 20m euro for migration management', Business, 31 July 2023. Available at: <https://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=430444>

¹⁴⁴ ILO, Skills 21 - Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth, ILO in Bangladesh, What we do, Projects. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_543629/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁴⁵ ILO, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform in Bangladesh, ILO in Bangladesh, What we do, Projects. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_106485/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁴⁶ European Commission, Human Capital Development Programme for Bangladesh 2021 (HCDP-21), EEAS, 20 September 2020. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/bangladesh/human-capital-development-programme-bangladesh-2021-hcdp-21_en?s=164.

The MIP aims to strengthen cooperation in key areas and enhance education, employment opportunities, energy efficiency, environmental protection, gender equality, access to justice, public services, and migration management. In addition, the MIP covers cross-cutting issues of migration and forced displacement, security, and human rights.

More in detail:

Within the MIP, Human Capital Development is considered as a holistic area covering education, skills development, access to decent employment and social protection. Traditionally, most of the EU activities focused on the primary education sub-sector, both formal and non-formal channels, with limited to no attention to secondary and higher education, except for TVET at secondary level. With the view of supporting sufficient decent employment for new entrants into the labour force, the EU did support improving quality and relevance of vocational training and skills development and proposes to continue supporting it, with a focus on the implementation of the National Skills Development Policy 2020 and the Bangladesh Qualification Framework. The EU will also pursue full implementation of the commitments outlined in the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact and the National Action Plan (NAP) on the Labour Sector of Bangladesh (2021-2026) under the EBA Enhanced Engagement with Bangladesh, and for social protection of workers as part the Decent Work Agenda. This priority sector closely links to the other priority sectors by including skills, jobs and support measures relevant for the renewable energy sector, as well as digital skills, within its scope. The promotion of the Human Capital will be also pursued through a better access to internal and external labour markets. Moreover, increased job opportunities through improved skills development and appropriate employment services will help to address the root causes of migration on the long term. Synergies could be sought to contribute to strengthening migration governance and management, to enable orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration (including labour migration) and mobility of people. The EU will also continue to advocate in its policy dialogue for a comprehensive and holistic migration policy, adequate legislation, as well as administrative capacities and human, financial and technical resources, including digital support to migration management including return, readmission and reintegration. Outreach on economic diversification and improved domestic resource mobilisation will continue with the aim to reduce dependence on remittances. In case of returning migrants, further support actions to sustainable reintegration might be considered¹⁴⁷. As Bangladesh features among the largest countries of origin for migrants to the EU, and in the context of the cooperation on return of Bangladeshi irregular migrants through the EU-Bangladesh Standard Operating Procedures, the EU Delegation will continue to support sustainable returns, understood not only as absence of re-migration, but also as a returnee's positive impact on the development of their communities of origin. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aim at establishing effective and transparent procedures for the identification and safe and orderly return of persons who have no legal basis stay in the territory of the requesting country and do not hold a valid travel document. Those could be both persons having documents proving their nationality and persons whose nationality cannot be established. Support to reintegration, targeting particularly

¹⁴⁷ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9079-bangladesh-annex_en.pdf

those in need of assistance, will be further up-scaled and strengthened, including through the provision of training and counselling to returning/prospective migrants and relevant skills development programmes that can help to reintegrate returning migrants and even be a motivation for voluntary return.

Supporting **good and inclusive governance**, several activities are taking place. In line with the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025), Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership could also be envisaged aiming at strengthening legal, policy, operational and strategic frameworks in partner countries. This may include actions supporting the Government to strengthen its capacity to manage efficiently and effectively migration in general, in accordance with best international standards and human rights protection, to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

The Bangladesh-EU cooperation in the period 2021-2027 will ensure that, in addition to the main priority areas, **key cross-cutting issues** are taken into account at all levels. *Measures addressing migration and forced displacement, and security and human rights issues, among the main ones*, will be integrated whenever relevant and necessary.

EU support and proposals are envisaged as well under the **Team Europe Initiatives ('TEIs')**¹⁴⁸ focusing on identifying critical priorities that constrain development in a given country or region, where a coordinated and coherent effort by 'Team Europe' would ensure results with a transformative impact.

The priority area *on Decent Work* seeks to realise the demographic dividend and quality jobs through increased investment in human development and policy implementation with three indicative sectors addressed: education, employment and labour rights & social protection¹⁴⁹. Under the Pillar I: Skills & Employment, the Team Europe Initiative seeks to achieve that workers in Bangladesh have increased access to demand-driven skills training and job opportunities with the goals to support diversification of the economy, strengthen socio-economic mobility and increase domestic purchasing power. Possible interventions are: Supporting diversification of the economy by offering demand-driven skills training; Fostering job creation by promoting entrepreneurship opportunities; Embedding skills training activities into sustainable, Bangladesh-led institutional framework. These are expected to contribute to the results under the Human Capital Development priority area of the MIP.

The recently launched Talent Partnerships aim to provide frameworks for increased cooperation between the EU, Member States and selected partner countries on talent mobility and skills development. Working in a Team Europe approach, these partnerships can provide benefits for both sides in line with mutually beneficial, tailor-made priorities. It is important to significantly step-up Talent Partnerships, which need to go hand in hand with comprehensive

¹⁴⁸ Team Europe consists of the European Union, EU Member States — including their implementing agencies and public development banks — as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

¹⁴⁹ A working group was established with participation of EU member states Sweden, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, and like-minded state Switzerland. Denmark and the Netherlands are co-chairing the group together with the EU Delegation.

migration management cooperation including in particular on effective cooperation on readmission. Talent Partnerships are to be conceptualised and operationalised based on an **exchange of views between EU MSs and high-level dialogues with partner countries**.

Depending on needs defined together with partner countries and participating Member States, the Commission will consider Talent Partnership countries for targeted analysis of their qualification frameworks. Capacity building of the education and training systems in Talent Partnership countries drawing on planned actions under NDICI-Global Europe as well as the international dimension of Erasmus+ could be considered.

► **Box 17: Recently launched EU-led Talent Partnerships**

The EU has recently launched Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Bangladesh and the EU held their first Political Dialogue on 24 November 2022, in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka. During this dialogue, the two parties agreed to expand the EU-Bangladesh bilateral engagement beyond the current priority areas of trade, migration, governance, humanitarian action, and development cooperation. Roundtables held with each of these countries with involvement of interested Member States have allowed identifying sectors and professions of mutual interest to be targeted. Partners showed a strong interest in cooperating on skills development and the recognition of qualifications.

At the Talent Partnership Roundtable of 1 March 2023, the Bangladeshi authorities, the European Commission, Germany and Italy endorsed the main elements of the Talent Partnership with Bangladesh, including:

Sectors and professions for mobility of Bangladeshi workers will be identified. The list could be extended in a second phase of the partnership.

As documented in policy dialogue and reports, Bangladesh stands ready to successfully cater to existing and future labour demand in the EU for workers in the broad sectors of **construction and related jobs**, e.g. masons, plumbers, wiring technicians, welders, etc.; **hospitality services**, focused mainly on selected occupations related to food preparation; **ICT**, spanning occupations such as software programmer, web application developer, and network engineer; and **transportation**, readily supplying vehicle operators (e.g. drivers of cars, buses, and trucks). In the short run, i.e. within two to three years, Bangladesh can also supply large numbers of able **caregivers**, if language training to a proficient level can be facilitated in Bangladesh.

Vocational and professional training for the workers who will participate in a potential mobility should be envisaged. Curricula and modalities, including competency standards, for training will be identified and commonly defined.

The needs in terms of further facilitation of *recognition of qualifications and diplomas* should be discussed.

Recruitment schemes and pre-departure measures: Modalities and processes for efficient recruitment will be discussed, with the involvement of the relevant actors, including the private sector. Language and integration training for the workers who will participate in the mobility, possibly involving Bangladeshi universities and training institutes, as well as EU Member States' cultural institutes, will be explored. Modalities for the monitoring of working conditions of workers participating in the mobility, according to international standards, will be discussed.

Sustainable reintegration of workers returning to Bangladesh: When applicable, dedicated measures aimed at supporting reintegration will be discussed, creating synergies with existing programmes and cooperation in this regard.

Candidates who have participated in activities linked to Talent Partnerships are likely to be of particular interest for EU employers. Therefore, these third country nationals will be flagged in the EU Talent Pool (see also above, in Chapter 1) as holding a ‘Talent Partnership pass’, which will be visible to prospective employers and provide information on the skills developed or validated in the context of the Talent Partnership. The pass would include information on the jobseeker’s education and training, as well as skills and qualifications that have been validated in the context of the Talent Partnership.

A future Talent Partnership between Bangladesh and the EU/EU Member States would be highly effective in regularising migration pathways, at the functional level. They should combine support for mobility schemes with capacity building and skills development. They should also address shortages in certain sectors of EU member States and help business communities on both sides build the skills in demand¹⁵⁰. Such a partnership initiative would also be conducive to developing a common approach on skills recognition in those occupational sectors in high demand in the EU and with adequate supply capacity in Bangladesh. Sending workers to individual EU MSs according to their respective skills and language requirements, and also to comply with the respective regulatory requirements for overseas recruitment (work visas, etc.), for each state, would also be easier, notwithstanding the reality that the concluding of separate bilateral agreements might be more effective and expedite the recruitment process.

Most EU MS are waiting to see whether these provisions will align with existing regulations and their priorities. While there are discussions on partnerships with CoO and occasional projects, there might be a need to focus on the willingness to invest in education systems in CoO or strategic long-term thinking.

It should be considered as well that some EU MS (like Germany) are interested in longer-term migration arrangements, whereas other countries, (like Italy and Greece) prefer the emphasis on circular/short-term labour migration mechanisms. However, a circular migration programme is envisaged, with an effective reintegration component, too. To some extent these differences in outlook would appear to derive from the sectors and skills levels of interest and the extent of skills training required. Germany for example is looking for higher-skilled labour, whereas Italy & Greece are looking for lower-skilled labour. Germany is not sure that they can find the higher-skilled labour required in Bangladesh, hence they currently have observer status.

On the other side - Bangladesh has the potential to become a major talent source country for the EU and individual EU Member States. This viewpoint has been unanimously put forward by all involved in the process of migration management in the Bangladeshi context, and echoed by the logical expectation that, if a legal pathway for labour migration from Bangladesh to EU MSs, then irregular migration of Bangladeshis to the EU will reduce substantially. However, some cases of irregularisation by crossing from one EU MS into another, overstay of visa period, etc., are likely to still occur. Proper orientation and awareness campaigns, along with skills and language training can be expected to further reduce the frequency of irregular migration.

¹⁵⁰ Communication from the Commission on Attracting Skills and Talents to the EU, 27 April 2022.

It is also important to note, that if the GoB (the Government of Bangladesh) is interested in broad-based skills export, broad-based skills comparison and broad-based skills recognition, and long stays for skilled migrant workers in destination countries, this will take years for the skills development and recognition phases. A feasible and practical approach is to undertake targeted skills comparison and possibly recognition for the skills sectors and levels for which there is concrete interest in EU MS.

Bangladesh has struggled to develop **bilateral agreements** with some EU MSs.

The main European countries of destination for **regular migration are Italy, Greece, whereas only Greece has a bilateral agreement (MoU) with Bangladesh**. Readmission of undocumented Bangladeshi citizens residing in EU MSs is often proposed as a precondition for forging bilateral agreements on sending migrant workers via legal pathways. This precondition tends to create a stumbling block in talks on bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and EU MS. An example in this regard is that of Italy, which required Bangladesh to support the return from Italian territory of all Bangladeshi undocumented workers before Italy would agree to accept 3,000-4,000 documented workers annually – a very small quantity in comparison to the number of undocumented workers from Bangladesh thought to currently reside in Italy.

To date, no general bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and any EU MSs have been finalised, but negotiations are ongoing with Romania and Poland, and developments with further states are at various stages of progress; for example, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on migration and mobility has been signed with Greece for the purpose of temporary employment, respecting the implementation of the 2017 EU-Bangladesh Agreement¹⁵¹ (see also above). The MoU sets out “*the conditions of entry and temporary residence of Bangladeshi nationals for the Bangladesh Agreement*” and, as a result, Greece took the initiative to regularise the situation of the undocumented Bangladeshi citizens residing on its national territory.

► **Box 18: MoU between Bangladesh and Greece**

A Memorandum of understanding (MoU)¹⁵² was signed between Bangladesh and Greece in February 2022 for the latter to recruit Bangladeshi migrant workers. As per the MoU, Greece is supposed to hire 4,000 workers from Bangladesh each year.

The MoU is seen as an important step towards curbing irregular migration and trafficking of Bangladeshis to the European country. It will be complemented by arrangements facilitating procedure for visa issuance. Greece is currently home to more than 28,000 Bangladeshis. European countries, especially EU member states such as Greece, are sought-after destinations for many Bangladeshi youths mainly because of their strong economic conditions.

¹⁵¹ On 20 September 2017 a readmission business routine was established between the EU and Bangladesh in the form of Standard Operating Procedures for the Identification and Return of Persons without an Authorisation to Stay (SOPs); <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021PC0412>

¹⁵² <https://www.thedailystar.net/nrb/migration/remittance/news/star-brac-launch-remittance-award-3503336>

The MoU targets at a first place the agricultural sector in Greece. Bangladeshi workers are supposed to be hired in the "seasonal" category for the agriculture sector, with other sectors remaining open, based on the demand and following discussions between the two countries. The MoU also aims at promoting efficient return and reducing irregular flows and migrants' smuggling. The workers will have to return home upon the expiry of their work permits. They will be able to re-migrate for employment. While applying for a job, Bangladeshi job seekers will have to submit valid travel documents and work contracts and pay necessary fees.

The MoU includes a regularisation component, which could benefit 15 000 Bangladeshis residing in Greece on the date of signature. A regularisation of undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers in Greece started after the Greek authorities launched an online portal to receive applications in January 2023.

As of 2 March 2023, the Bangladesh mission attested passport copies of over 4,000 Bangladeshis who could submit their applications through the online portal.

Once an application is approved, Greece will initially provide a "white paper" or temporary residence permit via email which will enable the Bangladeshi to work there legally.

Later, upon scrutiny and approval of the applications by the Greek authorities, the migrants will be provided with a "residence card" for five years, which will be renewable.

According to the Bangladesh embassy in Athens, the recruitment in Bangladesh could not be started by the beginning of 2023, because of difficulties in visa issuance, since Greece does not have an embassy in Bangladesh. To resolve the problem, Bangladesh has suggested that Greece open a visa forwarding service (VFS) in Dhaka. Currently, Bangladeshis need to submit visa applications to the Greece embassy in India to enter the country.

Summary:

Bangladesh applies a strategic approach towards labour migration. In the country, various ministries and departments are involved in managing the policy and procedures, yet there is insufficient collaboration among them, as well as – insufficient coordination with the private sector and other multiple stakeholders.

In the bilateral cooperation models the Government-to-Government (G2G) model is preferred, while the most common model is the private agency-led recruitment of potential migrants. A Government-to-Government Plus (G2G+) mechanism, jointly administered by the Government and private agencies also exists with good practice examples being the ones with partners organisations from the Republic of Korea and Japan.

Although the EU Member States are seen as an attractive destination for the Bangladeshi workers, there is only one Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Bangladesh and Greece, while in several other cases issues, related to irregular migration and/or readmission contribute to blocking MoU or further agreements. At EU level, the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2001, followed by Multi-Annual Indicative programmes and EU-funded projects in the last ten years, supporting human capital development, VET and skills development systems, employment, decent work and migration, among the main ones. The recently launched Talent Partnerships by the EU and a few partners countries, with Bangladesh among them, builds on the previous cooperation results.

Bangladesh and the EU held their first Political Dialogue in 2022, followed by Roundtables, where discussions and agreements on sectors and occupations of common interest for skills development and labour migration, as well as recruitment schemes, pre-departure and reintegration measures laid the foundation for a successful Talent Partnership programme. Such a partnership initiative would also be conducive to developing a common approach and building capacity in the field of skills development and recognition, as well – for establishing legal migration channels for fair and decent employment¹⁵³

3.4 Skills and migration partnerships - common challenges and lessons learnt

Across the national, EU and international pilot projects, bilateral cooperation and further partnerships' formats, common challenges and lessons learnt could be taken forward to build upon in future cooperation efforts between the EU, the EU MSs and Bangladesh (as well as in the broader context of the Talent Partnerships between the EU and other partners countries). Main ones are presented more in detail in the text below.

1) Legal migration is a shared competence in the EU. EU MSs face common challenges and needs with regard to their migration policies and thus develop common approaches and instruments at EU level. Yet, at the same time, the MSs retain the full right to determine volumes of admissions.

Successful talent mobility requires measures to recruit non-EU nationals in sectors where there is the greatest need for their labour. The EU considers that talent mobility measures at EU level should be strategic and especially – should target occupations affected by the green and digital transitions, as well as healthcare and long-term care, as per the acute EU-wide needs and likely labour market developments in these areas. The EU should be able to ensure its labour migration initiatives reflect the latest needs of the economy and its employers.

Yet, the 2019 'fitness check' of legal migration showed that the EU acquis in this area was fragmented and did not do enough to increase the EU's overall attractiveness. Since then, a revised EU Blue Card Directive was adopted, introducing more efficient rules to attract highly skilled workers (the deadline for its implementation was November 2023). As set out in the Skills and Talent Package, negotiations are underway on the Commission proposals to review the Single Permit Directive and Long-Term Residents Directive in order to streamline legal migration procedures. As a follow-up, the Commission committed to exploring potential further legal migration avenues to the EU in three important areas: long-term care, youth mobility, and innovative entrepreneurs¹⁵³.

➤ *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

The fragmented initiatives and variety of projects and tools across the EU offer valuable experience. Yet, using or developing common approaches, tools and mechanisms for the main components of a future Talent Partnership (TP) procedure, and if possible – for the whole procedure in the TP between EU MS and Bangladesh would be a significant contribution to

¹⁵³ COM(2023) 716 final

reaching a next level of rationalisation and streamlining of common cooperation efforts. Such could be for example a flexible high-skilled labour migration channel from the type “Blue Card” that could be applied for more specialists, beyond the ICT, also without a formal qualification, but with relevant high-level professional experience. Any further rationalisation or simplification in the recruitment, training or recognition process could add to the common EU efforts to design effective mutually beneficial TP models.

2) Fragmented, complex, multilayer and sometimes restrictive legislative and administrative procedures across the EU MS and significant costs and delays hamper effective migration.

In the EU, migration and employment management systems are run in very different ways across EU Member States. Issuance of residence permits is the competence of Member States, which also have the prerogative to define the number of labour migrants to admit to their respective labour markets. Furthermore, EU MS national labour markets have different needs, structures, and regulations, which translate into heterogeneous labour migration policies. Existing legislative measures are often fragmented and not sufficient. International job matching remains overly complex and costly for both non-EU nationals and employers, particularly SMEs with limited resources. Over half (52%) of the companies recruiting outside the EU find the process very or moderately difficult. Third country nationals often face significant costs such as administrative fees or translation costs.

► **Box 19: Examples of administrative and financial barriers for regular migration**

1) The IOE (The International Organisation of Employers)¹⁵⁴ represents 150 employer organisations and works on advocacy to shape policy affecting employers and facilitates dialogue between employers and government. In 2016, the IOE found that 80-86 percent of European employers faced difficulties attracting talent compared to 35 percent 30 years ago. In terms of labour migration, the IOE advocates for predictable migration frameworks that respond to labour market needs in a timely manner, agile and adaptable legal pathways, ethical international recruitment (no workers should pay to get a job), and the improvement of systems to validate and recognise skills to facilitate labour mobility.¹⁵⁵

One approach could be to examine the reasons for low participation in the entry visa and residency schemes for ICT firms and start-ups in France and other countries that introduced the so called “start-up” visa and the Blue Card procedure, in order to identify how eligibility criteria, high tax rates, initial investment costs, low returns, or other economic and regulatory issues may be adversely affecting such schemes.

2) According to the company Fragomen, the challenges that employers face in recruiting foreign talent within the EU relate to: too few visas given; legal pathways vary considerably across the EU; and processing times are too lengthy. Unfortunately, the focus remains on highly skilled individuals, and even then, the harmonization process is insufficient (i.e., Blue Card Directive). The EU should, therefore, work on removing current hurdles and simplifying existing processes rather than introducing new pathways.

¹⁵⁴ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners’ Network In-Person Conference “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

¹⁵⁵ Idem

3) In Bangladesh, an individual migrant may spend more than BDT 1 million to migrate to the EU. The ceiling threshold for migration costs, as determined by the MoEWOE thus needs to be followed, similar to the threshold followed by BOESL for recruitments handled by this organisation; for example, BOESL charges BDT 52,240 (approx. EUR 450) as fee for sending qualified nurses to Kuwait, while their employers pay for their accommodation, food, air fares, insurance, transportation, and medical expenses, with these nurses earning a basic monthly salary of between approx. EUR 680 and EUR 770.

Data from the *BOESL Annual Report*¹⁵⁶ mentions that the cost of migration to Croatia was BDT 39,000 (approx. EUR 335) for construction workers sent during the period 2020-2021, while their basic monthly salary was approx. EUR 750, and the employer paid for their air fares, accommodation, food, insurance, and medical expenses. While this latter example is an exception to the costs typically seen, it could be followed under the prospective Talent Partnership scheme with the EU.

➤ *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

The complex and multi-stakeholders' governance of the labour market and migration policies across the EU MS require that Bangladeshi stakeholders and potential labour migrants are acquainted with specific national context, legislation, qualifications framework and requirements, recognition procedures and visa formalities. This requires a well synchronised and orchestrated cooperation of all relevant stakeholders from the side of the EU MS and on Bangladeshi side.

Main lessons learnt cover the following aspects:

- Ensuring effective international cooperation on labour migration requires **concerted engagement**, aiming to develop skills, avoid brain drain, and promote partnerships between numerous stakeholders including relevant authorities in destination and origin countries, the private sector and training institutions. **Dialogue is essential** to define shared long-term agendas to help achieve this, while capacity building support can contribute greatly to translating shared priorities into action.

Currently, there are efforts across the EU MS for a **whole-of governance approach in the labour market and migration policies**.

► **Box 20: Whole-of governance approach in the country of destination – the experience of Germany**

The New Immigration Law (FEG) and the federal government's current skilled-worker strategy seek to improve cross-ministerial cooperation in the recruitment of skilled workers from abroad. The plan to enhance coordination between all operational institutions and structures abroad – such as embassies, AHKs, the Goethe Institute and German foreign schools – could improve the legal, political and organizational framework for future partnerships. In addition, new cross-departmental initiatives being implemented in the wake

¹⁵⁶ BOESL, *Annual Report 21-22*, p. 19. <https://boesl.gov.bd/publications>

of the FEG, such as the Concerted Action on Nursing (KAP) program and the Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA), offer hope of improved interministerial coordination. There is a great need for stronger interministerial coordination in the vocational education and training field. The federal government's existing roundtable for international cooperation in VET, along with the associated GOVET secretariat that reports to the BMBF, could serve as a coordination body for future projects. The roundtable regularly brings together federal ministries, implementing organizations, Germany's federal states, chamber organizations, unions and employers' associations, a variety of trade associations, and other organizations active in international VET cooperation. As such, it should be expanded into a clearing house that also coordinates TSMP-related activities. The affiliated Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training could offer valuable advice in the design and implementation of future skilled-worker projects¹⁵⁷.

- **Employment services can coordinate various policy actions** to tackle labour shortages. Public employment services (PES) can provide information and advice to firms and employees, to broaden their search options, and to propose a broad range of adjustment options, such as for example lowering the skills requirements of vacancies by recruiting for entry-level positions and filling positions requiring more experience within the firm. They can collect timely information on up- and re-skilling needs, and support both jobseekers and companies in meeting these, with organizing trainings and also with supporting training participation. Artificial intelligence could be relied upon to augment guidance and counselling. France is already implementing such an approach. PES also conclude bilateral agreements with their counterparts.

Next to public employment services, private employment services also have a role to play, and the actions of these organizations would need to be coordinated. In some Member States, the Public Employment Services have better information on the low- and medium-skilled segment of the labour force. In these cases, the PES could improve their outreach to other segments of the labour market, to improve the underlying information basis to guide skills intelligence.

- **Inter-agency cohesion and partnership in the countries of origin**

If further legitimate migration routes for skilled worker mobility from Bangladesh to the EU are to be opened, inter-agency cooperation will be crucial. Continued cooperation between public agencies, private sector actors, CSOs, NGOs, and development partners will also be essential in this regard. Governmental organisations such as the BMET, BOESL, and TTCs have extensive infrastructure to facilitate migration from Bangladesh, and private recruitment agencies in Bangladesh possess rich and varied experience in successfully sending workers to a range of destinations, which should be leveraged in pursuing the activities of any future TP initiative with the EU.

¹⁵⁷ Bertelsmann Foundation. Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany. Policy Brief. Migration, May 2020

- **Current simplified approaches and reduced requirements** in the EU MS migration legislation should be further studied and good practices used for TP between Bangladesh and EU MS: i.e. Germany introducing pioneering legislation and relaxing language requirements.

The existing very high cost of migration from Bangladesh needs to be rationalized, at the first place, for example, by following the applied approach throughout Italian and German pilot projects in which potential migrants do not bear costs when trained in the CoO.

3) The advantages of the government-to-government (G2G) cooperation partnerships should be further explored, the existing instruments upgraded and used, and potential partnerships concluded

The successful Korean EPS and IM Japan initiatives stand as two examples of how to deploy workers abroad in an ethical manner. Under the EPS system, worker selection and recruitment are monitored by the host country, while under the IM Japan scheme, migrants are recruited as interns and the quality of the whole migration process is monitored by IM Japan and a certain level of reintegration support is provided to returnee migrant workers.

➤ *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

The modalities of the agreement with Japan may be further examined in regard to sending caregivers and workers from other occupations to the EU.

Although the interest and motivation of EU employers is a main driving factor, the future TP between EU MS and Bangladesh could consider the type of G2G (possible – the G2GPlus) modality and include initiating bilateral agreements between the EU MS and their institutions with the Bangladeshi institutions. A G2G arrangement is preferred by the majority of stakeholders, to manage selection, training, recruitment, and send workers to the EU. Concerning Bangladesh, there exist several opportunities for EU MSs and their governmental and non-governmental institutions to conclude partnerships with the relevant Bangladeshi labour export institutions such as the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MOEWOE), BMET etc. BOESL could potentially play a role in this regard, with support and supervision from the talent partnership cell (TPC) within the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

It should be considered as well if a monopoly by a single agency on sending workers abroad would prove effective in the long run. Private sector recruitment agencies may be engaged under supervision from the TPC. Developing such a G2G Plus system can help to ensure Talent Partnership success.

The potential replicability of the Korean EPS and IM Japan models for an EU Talent Partnership could be further studied, also with regard to another aspect: the possibility of offering training courses in European languages at Bangladeshi TTCs and language schools, as a prerequisite for migration to a given EU MS.

- **Increased cooperation** should occur in the areas of recruitment, language training, harmonisation of curricula and standards, joint assessment and certification schemes,

accreditation of training programmes, etc., to deliver trade courses which are well-aligned with and highly targeted toward specific destination countries. Such institutional collaboration may include setting up an assessment centre, sending and receiving European technical experts to conduct ToT courses, arranging exposure visits for TTC representatives to TVET institutions in Europe, etc. In this regard, private sector bodies, such as employers' organisations, recruitment agencies, TVET institutions, trade guilds and certification bodies, along with public entities, such as the NSDA and the BMET in Bangladesh, should forge institutional partnerships in their respective areas of interest.

Table 1: Prospective TP cooperation areas between Bangladeshi and EU partners¹⁵⁸

Area	Bangladesh	EU
Regulation	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	European Union/DG-Home
	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment	National authorities, in charge of developing and implementing the relevant legislation/ Migration Partnership Facility/ICMPD
Labour Market Information System	Labour Wings of Bangladeshi missions abroad	CEDEFOP/labour authorities of Member States
Skills Development, Assessment, Certification, Recognition, RPL, Accreditation	National Skills Development Authority	National standards bodies/certification bodies of Member States
	TTCs, ISCs, NGOs, CSOs	TTCs, ISCs, INGOs
Reintegration	Wage Earners' Welfare Board, ministries, trade bodies, NGOs, CSOs	ICMPD, MPF

- **Capacity building** of key public agencies in the countries of origin is needed.

In Bangladesh, to encourage regular, safe, and orderly migration to EU MSs, the MoEWOE could take the lead in capacity building. In the recent past, donor organisations have worked closely with UN organisations to strengthen the capacity of the MoEWOE, including that of the BMET, the WEWB, BOESL and other related organisations such as DEMOs and TTCs.

4) Successful mobility schemes heavily rely on the “buy-in” of employers in EU MS prior to the pre-departure phase to ensure ownership by the private sector in the country of destination.

¹⁵⁸ ICMPD, Study on Bangladesh and Selected Bangladeshi Economic Sectors in the Context of an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, 2024 (Draft)

➤ *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

- The evaluation of a Belgian-Tunisian Skills Mobility Partnership implemented by IOM has shown that employer needs' assessments, multiple stakeholder participation, and a focus on the participants' aspirations and plans are crucial success criteria¹⁵⁹.

A key indicator of employer commitment is the significant investment on their part in the mobility scheme. Employers ought to bear a considerable part of the costs in preparing and accompanying labour migration, as they invest in this way in the human capital they seek. This could happen either directly financially for the recruitment or through contributions such as housing of the personnel, of flight and visa costs, of mentoring of labour migrants during the integration process etc.). Employers should also invest in re-skilling and upskilling within the EU, not only abroad.

Close work with employers is needed to ensure that trainings provided correspond to the actual needs of employers. For many employers in EU MS and especially in sectors requiring higher skilled workers, the labour mobility schemes can only be attractive if they allow for a long-term perspective to employment.

- Working with the employers' and workers representatives, chambers and in general terms – the **social partners** - is crucial for well-managed regular migration. Social dialogue can help achieve a common vision of how regular migration should fit into broader labour market strategies. Social partners' views should be taken into account by Member States to ensure that, where they consider that labour market tests are necessary, these tests can be completed rapidly and involve a limited administrative burden for employers, in particular SMEs, and for third country nationals. Clear and accessible information on their functioning should be made available. Both employers and trade unions have a role in integration of third country nationals and the European Partnership for Integration structures EU-level cooperation in this area. In the EU Member States, social partners co-shape national dialogue and policies in the field of employment, vocation education and training and migration. They provide their expertise in national labour observatories, which conduct work for the anticipation and identification of skills needs and provide information to workers and employers in view of improving skills matching. Social partners promote training activities and up- and reskilling of workers by managing dedicated funds.

5) The type and the modalities of skills and mobility partnerships can mitigate the issue of “brain drain” and avoid situations, in which migration agreements and partnerships address primarily the labour market needs of the country of destination

Legitimate concerns exist in the third countries about **brain drain** and that the labour markets may be depleted of trained labour and may constrain growth and development.

While the migration and talent partnerships address the needs of the labour market of the destination country, notably by supporting its capacity to attract an adequate number of

¹⁵⁹ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, p. 9

qualified workers, it should be also aimed at addressing the problems of the labour market of the sending country.

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Building on the existing national systems in countries of origin, the EU is already engaged in cooperation on skills with selected partners under the Global Gateway agenda and across the EU's Neighbourhood to strengthen partner countries' capacity to work with the EU on strategic priorities in areas such as the green and digital transitions.

There is a broad consensus between the EU MS and the partner countries, specifically – Bangladesh, that the future TP should **complement migration cooperation with skills development programmes that can benefit both labour markets, turning a risk of brain drain into brain gain**. The cooperation should focus on sectors where **there is a shared need for skilled labour force** and/or on sectors where labour market characteristics are complementary in terms of over and under supply of workers.

Building on this understanding and on the good practice examples of the SMPs, studied in the previous part, the prospective Talent partnerships (TPs) are expected to bring advantages not only to help address labour shortages in specific sectors of EU MS economies, but also help the business communities on both sides to build capacity on the skills in demand. They should transform the risk of 'brain drain' from partner countries into 'brain gain' for all partners, with those involved accessing renewed training opportunities, professional experiences, and additional study or vocational education and training, developed either in the EU or in the countries of origin. They should provide a framework for cooperation to facilitate labour mobility, bringing together a broad range of stakeholders, and to strengthen initiatives to develop skills to boost employment prospects on both the domestic and international labour market. Talent mobility can promote the circulation of skills and transfer of knowledge between the EU and partner countries. In addition to this, there is a "financial gain" of such an approach: as the remittance flow from the EU to low and middle-income countries is estimated at around EUR 65 billion, these funds can provide vital support to the most vulnerable in developing countries.

6) Another long-standing obstacle is linked to accessing clear information on regular migration and open vacancies. Accessible and up-to-date skills intelligence is crucial to address labour shortages, help labour matching, and guide skills development.

- *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

There is an urgent need to collect labour market intelligence on the present and future skills needs and job vacancies of major destination countries, and for regular updating and dissemination of this data. This labour market intelligence should be used in the employment search by jobseekers and recruitment agents, and by relevant government authorities and training institutes in the alignment of Bangladesh's TVET system. Specifying EU MS labour skills needs would help Bangladesh to provide targeted training. In this regard, it is necessary

to spur and strengthen migration cooperation by boosting mutually beneficial international mobility, based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU MS and Bangladesh. The need for data to compare competency standards for priority occupations is seen as an essential first step in designing measures in areas such as skills development, qualification recognition and predeparture training. Beyond that, to successfully fill a vacancy, people with the right skills and qualifications must be in the right place at the right time and must be willing to work under the conditions offered. Accordingly, individuals seeking employment must have adequate information about the requirements, working conditions, and availability of vacant positions.

In more general terms and based on the idea about the creation of a “clearinghouse” or hub for skills mobility partnerships, to serve all stakeholders, allowing employers and their representatives to go straight to a single place for access to states, training institutes, and certification and recognition bodies developing and implementing SMPs has existed for some time. The clearinghouse could contribute to increasing participation in existing SMPs and help spur development of new ones. Such an idea is similar to the concept behind the EU Talent Pool, as presented in the table below.

► **Box 21: The EU perspective - The EU Talent Pool**

The main element of the Commission’s Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility is the proposal to establish **an EU Talent Pool**, which delivers on commitments made by the Commission in the Skills and Talent package and the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Commission proposes a Regulation on the establishment of an EU Talent Pool¹⁶⁰, to facilitate the strategic international recruitment of non-EU jobseekers in shortage occupations of EU relevance.

The EU Talent Pool aims to boost the EU’s overall attractiveness by setting up the first EU-wide platform open to third country nationals worldwide wishing to work legally in Europe and employers who are unable to find the talent they need on the EU labour market. It will provide access to a wider pool of talent for EU employers and make recruitment faster and easier. It will provide information for both jobseekers and employers on recruitment and immigration procedures as well as on recognition of qualifications in the participating EU Member States. To facilitate integration, it will also include information on living and working conditions in the participating Member States and third country nationals’ rights and obligations. The EU Talent Pool will be a new IT platform focused on third country nationals who are not yet in the EU, with its design building on the Commission’s longstanding successful experience with the EURES platform.

The network of EU Delegations around the world will support the provision of information and serve as a relay for third country jobseekers looking for information on legal migration pathways and the EU Talent Pool platform. The EU Talent Pool will target specific occupations at all skills levels, based on the most common shortage occupations in the Union,

¹⁶⁰ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing an EU Talent Pool, Brussels, 15 July 2023 COM(2023) 716 final, 2023/0404 (COD), https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d74d42e8-96b7-416b-b5b7-b3b7334317d8_en?filename=Regulation%20establishing%20an%20EU%20Talent%20Pool_en.pdf

and on occupations with a direct contribution to the green and digital transitions, updated as necessary to respond to changing labour market circumstances. Participation in the EU Talent Pool will be voluntary for Member States, who will support the management of the Talent Pool system via their relevant authorities. The EU Talent Pool will include in-built safeguards to avoid exploitative practices by employers, recalling that third country nationals recruited through the EU Talent Pool will enjoy the same rights and obligations as domestic workers once they are in employment. It will also support interoperability with national recruitment platforms.

The Talent Pool will help in implementing the external dimension of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, by contributing both to Talent Partnerships and developing effective complementary pathways to the EU. Registration in the EU Talent Pool will be open to displaced persons in third countries that need international protection and thus support efforts to put in place complementary pathways for those who qualify. By facilitating access to existing legal pathways, the EU Talent Pool will also serve as a disincentive for irregular migration. This will be reinforced by the fact that no one subject to an entry ban, in particular following a return decision under the Return Directive, will be eligible to register with the EU Talent Pool.

Currently, third-country nationals do not have the same rights as EU nationals to move and reside in other Member States and experience issues with validation or recognition of skills acquired through formal or informal learning. The Skills and Talent package will streamline and reinforce legal pathways for migration and establish channels for skilled labour migration to the EU. Furthermore, the EU Talent Partnerships will promote cooperation with third countries in this domain. The Skills OVATE tool can support the potential of third country workers to fill sectoral and regional labour and skills shortages.

What comes in addition is the **Labour Migration Platform**, launched in January 2023 and providing a valuable forum for discussion on how to develop a targeted labour migration policy, that reflects strategic shortages based on skills intelligence.

While the proposal for an EU Talent Pool is an interesting matching system between qualified individuals and verified employers (they are screened for eligibility to enter the Pool), it can only work with agile legal pathways, which is not currently the case¹⁶¹.

For the Bangladeshi potential migrant it is key to enhance the possibility to have access to reliable, real time and detailed information on the job opportunities available abroad and the specific conditions and requirements attached to them, so as to be able to make a well reflected and sound choice, and to enter into the most possible direct contact with the employers and job providers, so as to avoid falling victims of too many mediators, fraud or smugglers/traffickers.

A Talent Partnership (TP) should be able to address all these challenges or at least contribute to offer a dialogue to identify solutions. For example, while establishing the TP, options should be discussed on the provision of information on the mentioned aspects of skills migration for all interested parties: workers, students, employers, training institutions, governments.

For the time being, at EU level, there are data, analyses and online tools on different aspects of employment and skills developments provided by the European Centre for the Development of

¹⁶¹ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network In-Person Conference "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots" 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

Vocational Training (Cedefop). Eurostat, ELA and Eurofound are engaged in a variety of initiatives to refine skills intelligence, including by drawing on big data. In June 2023, a skills intelligence tool was launched on Europass, providing information on shortage occupations per country. At Member State level, Public Employment Services are increasingly active in identifying future skills needs, with many also developing comprehensive strategies and portals to address future skills needs. On the other hand - the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) of Bangladesh and further stakeholders in Bangladesh may collect and disseminate data through relevant platforms, through their websites, and also - the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) web portal of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). So far, it does not provide any information on employment opportunities, demand for labour by skill type, wage structure in various industries, or training opportunities for workers, etc. The existing system in Bangladesh does not offer any interactive platforms to match jobseekers with employers. Information on overseas labour market opportunities is also not included in the data.

What could be done, is to consider linking the existing relevant platforms in Bangladesh to EU Europass and ESCO for example and prepare in such a way for the interoperability with the EU Talent Pool once created. Recent research recommends as well linking the LMIS with the CEDEFOP database (or relevant national portals), the EU agency for TVET-related information, so that the information on skills gaps is readily available/shared to interested recruitment agencies and TVET institutions in Bangladesh. BAIRA – the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agents, is considered by the same analysis well positioned to carry out market research on job vacancies and present and future skills needs in EU MSs at occupational level¹⁶².

The existing two MRCs established by ICMPD in Bangladesh¹⁶³ serve as one-stop information and referral hubs for the promotion of safe, regular, orderly and responsible migration. Among other activities, they conduct pre-migration, pre-departure and post-arrival orientation sessions, coordinate with recruitment agencies, verify visa and employment contracts, and screen the qualification of potential female migrants. The MRCs are integrated with DEMOs in Dhaka and Cumilla. Further analyses have also supported the BMET in its efforts to understand the labour market needs of selected European states through labour migration fiches and strategies that the GoB are advised to adopt in response to prevailing demand and negotiate with countries of destination¹⁶⁴.

7) Targeted training of skilled workers will help avoiding potential “brain drain”, skills mismatch and support decent employment

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¹⁶² ICMPD, Study on Bangladesh and Selected Bangladeshi Economic Sectors in the Context of an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, 2024 (Draft), p. 23, p. 36.

¹⁶³ MRC Bangladesh, About Us. Available at: <https://www.mrc-bangladesh.org/en/about-us>.

¹⁶⁴ ICMPD, Study on Bangladesh and Selected Bangladeshi Economic Sectors in the Context of an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, 2024 (Draft), p. 24

If the successful IM Japan model is followed, the potential migrant should be provided with language training in Bangladesh. In terms of vocational training, respective curricula should be developed accordingly, and training should be provided to the migrants in Bangladesh. The latter can then receive further training in the respective country of destination. The models should endeavour to promote joint certification or harmonization of skills requirements, where feasible, to simplify the recognition process for skilled third country migrant workers.

The cooperation model with Japan and other pilot projects shows the following main characteristics that might be considered in the future Talent Partnerships:

- A demand-driven skills development, or skills update, or upgrade will be mutually beneficial for the sending and receiving countries, and in the first place – for the aspiring labour migrants. Such training activities would target the employers' needs at the country of destination but will also help modernizing and developing the skills provision in the country of origin.
- Information related to skills demand and job vacancies in specific EU MSs should be used in developing targeted skills training programmes. Exchange, adjustment and harmonisation of curricula and standards, and capacity building of trainers via ToT courses could occur, to ensure that the trainings provided are relevant for the two sides – the EU MS, but also for the Bangladeshi labour market, with the aim of growing skills for the benefit of both EU Member States and Bangladesh – which is in line with the rationale of Talent Partnerships. Most relevant activities in this respect across the studied examples are: curricula commonly shaped and aligned; trainers prepared; and sector-specific and trade-specific courses, as well as language and integration training - provided.
- It is also key for Bangladeshi migrants to enhance their skills preferably before or immediately after departure in the areas key to obtain better and better remunerated jobs abroad and avoid vertical skills mismatch. It is worth mentioning that a training component of the migration circle, conducted in the countries of origin funded by the country of destination can contribute to quality improvements of vocational training and the easier process of recognition of educational qualifications.
- EU Member States have particular obligations concerning those professions that are regulated in all Member States, examples of which is presented in the box below:

► Box 22: Examples for recognising of professional qualifications in the EU

Minimum training standards have been defined at EU level for seven professions (such as nurses and doctors) under EU legislation on the recognition of professional qualifications (Directive 2005/36/EC). According to this directive, the training of nurses responsible for general care should meet the following criteria:

A total of at least **three years of study**

Consisting of **at least 4,600 hours** of theoretical and clinical training.

The duration of theoretical training should represent **at least one-third**, and the duration of clinical training should be **at least one-half** of the minimum training duration¹.

These standards aim to ensure that nurses across the EU have a solid foundation of knowledge and practical skills to provide high-quality care to patients.

A training programme for nurses is also presented in the Directive.

8) Recognising qualifications¹⁶⁵ still remains an issue.

Where transparency of qualification is needed for further certification and recognition of skills and qualifications, further activities are comparing qualifications and qualifications frameworks and establishing modalities for the certification of skills and qualifications and providing concrete support as regards certifications (e.g. carrying out qualification or skills testing according to Member States' or private employers' standards).

Formal recognition decisions may be necessary for access to a profession, but also for the purposes of regular migration or access to further study. The recognition of qualifications is essential to ensure that incoming workers in certain professions have sufficient education, training or experience. Pilot projects and national examples show that in practice, there are still challenges, related to recognition procedures. Processes for the recognition of third country qualifications are often overly expensive, complex and time-consuming. They also represent a significant administrative burden for the EU MS, due to lack of information on third country qualifications systems, limited pooling of expertise and resources at EU level, and difficulties verifying the authenticity of documents. Hundreds of professions are regulated in only some Member States, such as civil engineers or heating technicians. Many occupations facing shortages are not regulated. In these cases, employers have the discretion to decide whether third country nationals have the right profile based on their qualifications, experience and skills and a formal recognition process is not needed. However, employers' lack of understanding and trust in skills and qualifications gained in third countries necessary for recruitment to non-regulated professions is another significant barrier to talent and skills mobility¹⁶⁶. In the EU, labour shortages often concern technical skills, yet recognition of TVET is less formalised than recognition of higher education qualifications. Other challenges identified are high costs and long processing times, complicated administrative requirements, different procedures in individual federal state or regions with thousands of certifications awarding bodies, heterogeneous quality of the decisions from the responsible authorities, an insufficient offer of compensatory measures (preparation courses for the knowledge test, adaptation courses, job-related courses) among the main ones.

The challenges, related to recognition process affect not only the EU's attractiveness but lead to 'brain waste' – third country nationals (TCN) working below their qualification level. According to Eurostat, in 2022 over a quarter of third country nationals are highly qualified but 39.4% are overqualified for the job they do, with women more likely to be overqualified than men. The equivalent figure for EU citizens working in another Member State is 31.8% and for those residing in their own country just 21.1%. Facilitating the recognition of qualifications and validation of skills can therefore also help harness the untapped potential of third country nationals already in the EU.

All this prevents qualified third-country nationals from relocating to the EU or, if they are already within the EU, from working in jobs, they are qualified for.

¹⁶⁵ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network In-Person Conference "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots" 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

¹⁶⁶EU, Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/communication-skills-and-talent-mobility_en, 15 November 2023

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Previous examples show that regarding certification and recognition, two main options could be applied: A more comprehensive approach is the development of mutual recognition arrangements (MRA), whereby the qualifications gained in the home country are recognised as such in the host country, with no need for recertification – see as well in Chapter 1 above. In addition to facilitating skills mobility to reduce skills mismatch across countries, MRAs allow skills acquired abroad to be recognised by the home country, which may increase the likelihood of migrants returning home, facilitating the home country to capitalise on the wealth of skills they bring with them. Mobility across geographic areas is an effective way to tackle skills mismatch in one geographic location, by tapping excess resources of supply in another. The second option is the developing of joint certification programmes or certification programmes according to the requirements of the respective EU country. Joint certification programmes offer the prospect of improved quality and governance through convergence between the participating education systems. However, it should be taken into consideration that such pathways present a long and challenging task, requiring multiple layers of harmonisation of skills standards, qualification frameworks, curricula, training delivery methods, and assessment procedures. Research suggests, that if taking this way, as a first steps, the GoB could strengthen the monitoring and inspection capacity of the regulatory authorities and allow periodic third-party evaluation of the services provided. Moreover, provisions for joint certification programmes and supervised testing and assessment for issuing skills certificates should be negotiated with interested EU MS, and respective employers and TVET institutions. Such collaboration should commence for selected occupations once an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership is in place.

There are as well recent developments, that could be considered in the future EU MS-Bangladesh Talent Partnerships:

Common EU level efforts aim at systematically reducing those and other barriers related to recognition of skills and qualifications that impede the possibility for third-country nationals to legally migrate to that Member State.

- The newly adopted Commission Recommendation on recognition of qualifications for TCN aims to address skills shortages by simplifying the recognition of skills and qualifications of TCNs within EU MS, see Box 23 below.

► **Box 23: The Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of TCNs¹⁶⁷**

The Recommendation covers four areas: capacity building and development, information and support, cooperation with third countries and procedures. It emphasises the importance of skills and experiences, not only qualifications, and stresses that rules and procedures for recognition must be clear for both employers and workers. Furthermore, the

¹⁶⁷ The Recommendation applies to third-country nationals who are in the process of obtaining a visa or work and residence permit in a Member State or are already legally resident in the Union; See, as well Network, Nov 2023

Recommendation emphasises that although attracting talent is crucial for the EU, brain drain must be avoided, requiring cooperation frameworks with CoOs.

The Recommendation advocates for increased flexibility and reducing administrative burdens on third country nationals, so they can access employment or higher education opportunities in the EU more quickly and effectively. It relates to cases of recognition for access to regulated professions, as part of legal migration procedures, and for further learning. It highlights that formal recognition procedures should only be required where rights would be granted to a qualification holder in these three contexts. **Recognition of qualifications should not be required for the purposes of recruitment in non-regulated professions. In these cases, transparency tools and information can support the understanding and comparison of qualifications and skills.** Regarding access to regulated professions, the recommendation takes inspiration from Directive 2005/36/EC, which sets out the system of recognition of professional qualifications in the EU. The recommendation also draws on experience with implementation of the April 2022 Commission Recommendation on facilitating the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

This Recommendation would lead to simpler and faster procedures, while ensuring information submitted can be verified and processes can be trusted. Upholding professional standards should not result in requirements that deter applicants or slow down recruitment procedures.

The Commission will work with the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network to ensure a coordinated approach in terms of the third countries and qualifications to be covered, giving priority to Talent Partnership countries. Multilingual databases further facilitate access to information. **The databases might also indicate what additional training (such as micro-credentials) may be required to fill gaps between a third country qualification and comparable qualifications in the Member States.** In a second phase, the Commission will also explore the feasibility of developing an EU level tool linking national databases on recognition capable of developing statements of comparability for specific third country qualifications covering all Member States, based on a harmonised template and available in digital format. This could cover both EU and third country qualifications, to facilitate intra-EU mobility as well as regular migration. The tool would draw on existing national databases and be interoperable with a network of national qualifications databases of partner countries with which the European Training Foundation (ETF) cooperates. This tool could also allow employers to identify third country qualifications comparable to a national qualification that they are looking for, which can help with targeting recruitment procedures. And it would give candidates an indication of how their qualifications would be considered in a recognition procedure.

The ENIC-NARIC networks' current focus is on higher education. Given the need for technical skills on the EU labour market and the fact that there currently are no EU-level cooperation structures on the recognition of VET qualifications, extending the networks' focus to Vocational Education and Training (VET) could have significant benefits.

Another relevant tool to build on is the Commission's Regulated Professions Database. For each Member State, this contains information on whether specific professions are regulated in each Member State, together with the authority responsible for recognition.

The EU has started moving towards system-wide use of digital qualifications and credentials. In future, every learner should receive their qualifications, credentials and entitlements in a secure digital format, that carries multilingual information and can be verified instantaneously. This will facilitate the matching of skilled workers with jobs, as well as recruitment and recognition processes.

Recent exchange of the participants in the Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network, identifies a number of activities, that could become part of Talent Partnerships models in a short-term perspective within the organisation of a well-managed approach for skills and qualifications' recognition of third countries nationals:

- Co-operation and clear communication between national authorities (migration, employment), industry, social partners, SMEs;
- Knowledge development; interoperable databases; co-ordinated approaches to information provision; processes to authenticate documents;
- Information and support, capacity building and staff development: language skills; data management; information exchange, study visits, joint projects;
- Pre-arrival access to recognition procedures; facilitate early recognition as part of pre-departure processes;
- Principles of the recognition process: user-friendly, complete and up-to-date; minimised translation requirements; avoid undue burden; fast processing of applications; "skills-first approach"¹⁶⁸.

Among the emerging trends, applying the 'skills-first' approach is particularly important for the future Bangladeshi regular migrants to the EU MS. Procedures should avoid basing assessments of third-country nationals solely on their qualifications and emphasise a person's full talent and potential. Recognition of qualifications should be used in combination with an assessment of skills and experiences wherever possible. Similarly, it is important for those Bangladeshis who already have relevant skills and competences, to receive support in order to ensure the recognition of their qualifications by the employers in the destination countries, and to receive the recognition at the earliest possible stage of the selection procedures.

Potential TP between EU MS and Bangladesh can **make use of some of the existing practices, instruments and the existing functionalities of tools and approaches to be developed in the future:**

- receiving access to online information meant to assist third country nationals to understand requirements for recognition of skills and qualifications in the EU;
- using Commission's Regulated Professions Database;
- follow-up on a potential EU-level tool that is able to generate statements of comparability based on a harmonised template for specific third country qualifications covering multiple Member States;
- follow-up on the EU work on digital qualifications and credentials;
- using validation and demonstration of skills as an alternative, see below:

¹⁶⁸Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network LMPN In-person event 2023 "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots", 21-22 November 2023, Brussels

► **Box 24: Validation and demonstration of skills as alternatives to lengthy recognition procedures**

Participants in the Conference “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023¹⁶⁹ discussed the aspect of skills validation or testing as part of the possible approaches to simplifying recognition procedure. *Since recognizing (technical) qualifications remains difficult, the discussants looked at skills validation and testing as an alternative to recognising credentials.* While this also requires setting up a validation and/or testing process, this process could be shorter and avoid skilled individuals working in jobs unfit for their qualifications. Of course, skills validation brings many questions about who assesses and validates skills – employers or institutions and how?

Representatives of *Randstad* developed gaming tools to test soft skills and recommends moving to a “skills passport” that would be accepted by the private sector, rather than qualifications alone. The Digi Talents, a labour mobility pilot project that brings ICT professionals from Moldova and Ukraine to Slovakia demonstrated that skills validation and testing appeared to be more important than foreign diplomas for employers in the ICT sector. Yet, employers could be too demanding on the skills side, expecting employees to be fully ready on the first day.

Despite not being required for the profession, diplomas remain a key requirement for the visa process, which adds complexity, even with a master’s degree. For labour mobility to work, a shift is needed for governments on easing visa requirements and responding to labour market needs, but also for private sector companies, which must invest time in young graduates and develop their potential.

A non-profit organisation, working on economic mobility in five industries and 18 countries, *Generation*, developed a model, which trains participants in their selected areas of work before placing them in companies. Training is delivered by *Generation* or partners, based on the *Generation* methodology and employers/sectors are engaged from the beginning through a ‘demand diagnostic’. On average, 80% of graduates are placed within three months of completing the programme, and after five years, results on the earnings and career development of the graduates remain positive. *Generation* is also engaged in advocacy on recruitment: while employers report difficulties hiring in junior positions, stringent requirements deter juniors from applying to these positions.

- Relevant practices from previous projects also suggest that **recognition of prior learning (RPL) systems for specific trades in demand in the EU MSs could be established**, where this is needed. The assessment process should be jointly supervised with local test centres and concerned EU national authorities, much in the same way that Bangladesh carries out the Skills Verification Programme with Saudi Arabia’s ‘Takamol’ entity. RPL centres can also be established in EU MSs to facilitate skills recognition for migrants already in country.

The above studied activities should be undertaken through institutional collaboration among the relevant entities in the EU and Bangladesh and also – allowing for further capacity building of relevant Bangladeshi institutions.

9) Migration to another country requires a coordinated social welfare and integration approach

¹⁶⁹ EU Labour Mobility Practitioners’ Network In-Person Conference “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

Creating a welcoming environment for legally residing third country nationals and offering effective integration support, including to workers' families, is also central to the EU's attractiveness and to the overall success of legal migration policies. At the same time, third country nationals experience discrimination at work that disproportionately affects the highly educated, one reason why the employment rate for non-EU citizens is lower than for EU nationals. The EU anti-racism action plan and the action plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2027 both seek to address this problem. Fair and transparent recruitment ensures that all candidates have an equal and unbiased opportunity to compete for jobs regardless of their gender, racial or ethnic origin, age, religion or belief.

► Box 25: Lessons learnt from the agricultural sector

The presence of migrants in rural areas presents opportunities (for instance, to contrast depopulation dynamics and the lack of active labour force in specific sectors, innovative bottom-up solutions) but also challenges (for example, remoteness, isolation, limited access to targeted services, and limited capacity to respond to inflows) for both third-country nationals and hosting communities.

The following main characteristics of employment of migrants in agriculture should drive corresponding policy measures:¹⁷⁰

Poor working conditions, and the dependency from the role of intermediaries for recruitment, are often present in agriculture. Given these characteristics, migrants in rural areas represent a predominantly vulnerable group, which would deserve particular attention when formulating social inclusion policies.

The temporary nature and often irregular nature of the work of migrants in agriculture makes it more difficult to quantify needs and target intervention; The challenges posed by the integration can therefore be summarised in the need to provide special attention to vulnerable groups which are however difficult to recognise and target, given the transitory nature of the work in agriculture¹⁷¹.

The territorial specificity would require local and regional rather than nation-wide intervention; local authorities may be less equipped to respond to a rapid onset of a large number of immigrants with dedicated integration services.

The coordination of the European, national, regional, and local level is fundamental to implement properly the tools available to support both public authorities and the population to receive and integrate migrants.

► Box 26: The example of Canada¹⁷²

Canada's approach to permanent economic migration aims at pursuing the maximum social, cultural, and economic objectives of immigration. Economic migration programmes are human capital-focused (language, education, Canadian work experience), labour-focused

¹⁷⁰ Migration in EU Rural Areas, JRC, 2019

¹⁷¹ Idem

¹⁷² Presented by Jonathan Joshi-Koop (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network In-Person Conference "Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots" 21-22 November 2023 Key Discussion Points

(based on job offers) or a combination of both. Other pilot programmes complement this approach, focusing on the needs of certain sectors or regions.

Key lessons learnt from the Express Entry System (EES), a points-based labour pool system, show that including clear objectives and collecting and disaggregating data are important in measuring success. Testing and piloting new policies and programmes and adjusting the course of action based on data are also key elements of a successful economic migration policy. Canada has been conducting longitudinal studies on the impact of economic migration since the 1980s, thus data plays a key role in understanding the impact of economic migration in the country and to adjust policies as necessary.

Other features of the Canadian Express-Entry System are: the invitation to come to Canada is automated but does not involve AI. Authorities make decisions on how persons are invited. After an invitation to come to Canada is accepted by the applicant, the process is no longer automated. The EES is successful: participants work in occupations they are fit for, and wages are good - catching up to and surpassing the Canadian average. Participants are granted full mobility and labour rights (working across different occupations is possible), as well as permanent residency; family members can join them (dependents), and they can sponsor relatives once they are established as permanent residents.

10) Facilitating the mobility of learners and teaching staff

As part of the package on talent mobility, the Commission is proposing a Council Recommendation on a renewed learning mobility framework. The goal of this proposal to facilitate learning mobility inside the EU will first and foremost benefit EU citizens. But it also gives the opportunity to encourage close cooperation on learning mobility with third countries in a Team Europe approach, harnessing the EU's overall attractiveness as a destination for skills development. This can build on actions of the Erasmus+ programme - notably the Study in Europe initiative and Erasmus Mundus actions - that specifically aim to attract talented third-country students to the EU. The proposal also calls for action to address recurrent challenges faced by third country nationals, notably procedures for issuing visas or residence permits for those choosing Europe as their learning destination. Higher education students who have benefited from learning mobility through Erasmus+ are more likely to work abroad or in a job with an international dimension. When people gather positive experiences during temporary learning mobility within the EU, they will be more inclined to return at some stage to take up a job. The proposal encourages Member States to remove remaining obstacles to learning mobility abroad embedding the opportunity for periods of mobility in all education and training curricula. The Commission proposes a Council Recommendation on a Learning Mobility Framework. As part of this proposal, Member States are invited to cooperate closely in a Team Europe approach to further promote Europe as a learning destination for talent from third countries.

11) Return and reintegration support

► Box 27: Existing examples for return and reintegration

Both the Korean EPS and IM Japan models contain provisions for supporting the return of migrant workers following conclusion of their contracted employment period. However, the reintegration support provided comprises only minimal financial support (e.g. one month's salary) and does not provide high-impact services attuned to the individual returnee. In this regard, there are many services in Bangladesh, provided by government agencies, private

sector actors, and NGOs or CSOs, which can be useful in successful reintegration of returnees. ICMPD has carried out a mapping of such services for returnees in Bangladesh, identifying over 50 services across 13 broad categories (e.g. counselling, training, financial, etc.), and has launched an online information hub¹⁷³ providing details of the respective services provided by some 50+ organisations.

Other initiatives to provide the required services for returnees include the RAISE project.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the World Bank is supporting the development of a returnee database and has enacted provisions for providing financial support for specific assistance programmes designed for returnees.

➤ *Lessons learnt, advantages and barriers related to the skilled migration of Bangladeshi workers in the EU target countries*

A future EU TP with Bangladesh may consider adapting such provisions for reintegration and make use of existing services supporting reintegration of returnees.

A functional reintegration scheme, reintegration services, adequate employment opportunities, and employment options for supporting attractive, decent and quality of life in Bangladesh ought to be considered in the future TP.

Returning home should keep links to the CoD - to capitalise on the experience gained there and on the social networks established.

¹⁷³ Visit the BideshFerot platform at: <http://bideshferot.org/>.

¹⁷⁴ Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation, *Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)*, RAISE, 2020. Available at: https://wewb.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/wewb.portal.gov.bd/project/ecc951af_1207_4abf_a53f_4f576aa548c8/2020-11-04-16-28-1d6a347348def685d5446986af41ad9c.pdf

3.5 Models of Talent Partnerships

The global, EU and national examples, studied in the previous chapters show that a variety of cooperation formats, approaches and projects on skills and migration partnerships exists, giving shape to different migration schemes and piloting effective steps or whole practices of the migration cycle. Their characteristics usually stem from the specific national/international context, sector requirements¹⁷⁵, and most recently – from the commitment to contribute to the development goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).

- Some EU Member States and Bangladesh non-EU partners have *skills and mobility partnerships/SMP-like* initiatives and forms of cooperation (such as bilateral mobility agreements) that may not include all the components, but have strong mobility, circular migration and labour market features as well as solidarity-based development (France). Other EU Member States (such as Austria), on the other hand, are implementing mobility partnerships which focus on higher education instead¹⁷⁶. What distinguishes SMPs (as well as TPs and GSPs) from other approaches to labour migration is that they specifically aim for a “quadruple win”, benefiting the individual and the employer, as well as the destination state and the country of origin more widely. This should be achieved through a sustainable approach, which implies avoiding brain drain, enhancing capabilities and skills in both countries (hence pursuing brain gain) and, to some extent, promoting circular migration. This is very much in line with the New Pact on Asylum and Migration, which emphasises the need for a partnership-based approach to legal pathways. SMPs can thus act as an innovative and mutually beneficial mechanisms for skills development and labour mobility.

- EU MSs tend to identify as well, *priority sectors*, yet attempts to link labour market needs to migration policies are inconsistent. Further, labour migration frameworks are fragmented, with EU efforts intersecting national frameworks and priorities. Specific nationalities may have streamlined their application entry routes or platforms, adding further complexity layers. While the overall trend is facilitating entry to respond to labour shortages (Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Austria), other countries have introduced more stringent requirements for certain sectors (the Netherlands, Sweden).

- As most countries struggle with *lengthy delays* to issue work permits and further delays due to documentation issues, they *set up simplified procedures* and cooperation agreements at a first place to attract short-term (seasonal) workers from third countries. In several EU MSs, discussions are ongoing about offering more possibilities for seasonal work (Austria, Spain) and considering this experience in long-term residence processes.

- Many EU MS implement a *labour market test* as a standard, but exceptions and exemptions have proliferated over time. Bilateral agreements between countries and registered employers can fast-track certain processes or grant exemptions from labour market tests. The same trend is visible, what concerns *recognition of skills and qualifications*: simplified procedures, only

¹⁷⁵ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, p. 10

¹⁷⁶ Idem, p.9

in cases where of benefit of the migrant employees and for regulated professions are recommendable.

- While *EU labour migration policies seem to be geared towards highly skilled professionals, the concentration of migrants in low skilled professions and in specific sectors, especially those with large low skilled occupations, is significant.* This has become particularly obvious with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted the important contributions of both high and lower skilled labour migrants to essential services such as health care, agriculture, and food processing. During the last decade, about 50-60% of Bangladeshi labour migrants were *unskilled or semiskilled*, and only about 5% were highly qualified.

The existing SMPs are *no short-term intervention*, but rather a long-term tool and forward-looking investment built around sustainable and effective partnerships. Well-designed and implemented SMPs may in the future act as a vehicle for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enhance migration and mobility that harnesses the potential of migrants' skills in a way that allows for countries of origin to benefit, whilst at the same time addressing EU employers' most pressing skills and labour needs. Increasing the number of participants in each project or the number of interventions is a way for scaling-up, but with a limited effect on cost-saving. To transform this approach, more structural interventions would be needed.

For the interested EU Member States to partner with Bangladesh, the existing global, EU and national practices and instruments and the challenges and lessons learnt identified, present a valuable source to unlock the potential of skilled mobility for their national labour markets. More than this, as the future Talent Partnerships (TP) are envisaged to be implemented in the next few years, when many new EU and national programmes, tools, platforms and digital solutions are expected to become fully functional and operational, the TP models are expected to apply forward-thinking approaches and innovative solutions. One of them – mutualisation – where multiple destination and origin countries participate in the same programme – could be an option to share the costs, however, they also face several challenges, particularly linked to the different training expectations across destinations, as well as financial ones¹⁷⁷.

Building blocks of the Talent Partnerships Models

Experience has shown that the following elements are indispensable for cooperation programmes: **the use or development of appropriate legal and safe migration channels; the ability to meet employers' needs and - the aligning or mutually recognising qualifications/credentials and skills** between EU and third countries, which would support higher volume channels¹⁷⁸.

Countries and projects, applying the SMPs considered more detailed essential prerequisites for their realisation: 1) Long- and mid-term planning; 2) Multi-stakeholder approach and policy coherence; 3) Data for evidence-based policy; 4) Local development and job creation; 5) Skills

¹⁷⁷ Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022, <https://www.becd.org/els/mig/2022-march-joint-emn-oecd-inform-skills-mobility-partnerships.pdf>, p29

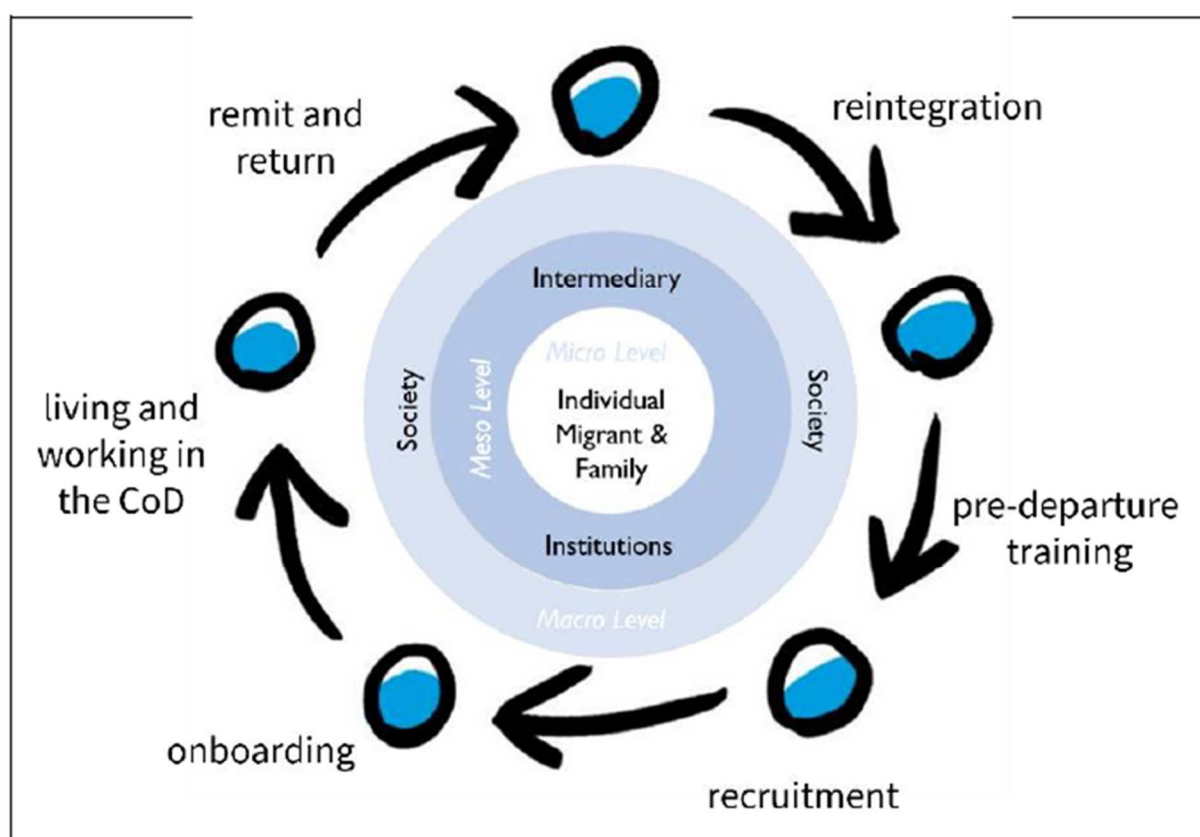
¹⁷⁸ Idem, p210

classification and recognition at national level and beyond; 6) Address the social aspects of employment and mobility; 7) Incorporate migration considerations; 8) Cost reduction and sharing.

Some EU MSs, such as Belgium and Germany, have long-standing experience with *skills and mobility partnerships (SMPs)*, covering almost all significant components: (1) formalised state cooperation, (2) multi-stakeholder involvement (3) vocational training in the origin or destination country, and on-the-job training in the destination country), (4) skills recognition, and (5) migration/ mobility¹⁷⁹.

Most studied models of skills and migration partnerships usually follow phases of the labour migration programme cycle, see *Figure 2* below:

Figure 2: Labour Migration programme cycle



Source: Sauer (2023) From Triple Win to Sustainable Labour Migration 347 *Quarterly on Refugee Problems*, 2023, Vol.62, Issue 4, 346-374 ISSN 2750-7882, Section: Research Articles Open Access Publication, <https://doi.org/10.57947/qrp.62i4.347>

Learning from this experience, the Talent Partnerships Models, presented in this Chapter, are designed around the following building blocks/components:

¹⁷⁹ Idem, p.8

Title and characteristics/modalities of the Talent Partnerships (TP) model, that include the title of the model and a short description of its background and basics, mostly related to main components like scope, type, participation in and destination of activities.

1. Type of potential migrants included in the model

The identification of the models and the differentiation between them is made to a big extent around the **type of the potential participants in it, answering the main question: Who is it for?**

2. Skills/qualification level considered

Pilot projects and bilateral agreements show that applied models are usually oriented according to the requirements of the employers for the **type of work and level of skills and qualifications needed for it, answering the main question: What is it for?**

3. Activities foreseen

Next component of the model focuses on the process of designing, planning and implementing the TP, or answering the question: **How to realise the TP?**

Several important steps have been identified as part of the whole migration process cycle:

Step 1: Official/legal/bilateral arrangements

Some sort of official, legal or bilateral arrangements usually kick-start the skills and migration partnerships. They are usually preceded by an exchange of views and high-level dialogues with partner countries. Partnerships models are to be conceptualised and operationalised based on short-mid-and long-term goals and the respective planning and activities for ensuring multi-stakeholder approach and policy coherence. Cost-reduction and sharing of expertise between the partnering stakeholders and countries is also arranged here.

Step 2: Information gathering and sharing

This step applies the principle of the evidence-based policy making. At this stage, it is important to rely on information and data on sector specific needs, existing occupations or job profiles that are particularly looked for in the EU MSs and what the specific conditions and requirements attached to them are. Specifying EU MS labour skills needs would help Bangladesh to provide targeted training. Information gathering and sharing should cover occupational and linguistic requirements, training opportunities, possible destinations, companies, working and living conditions etc.

Step 3: Pre-selection/Skills mapping

Labour market intelligence ought to be used by relevant government authorities and training institutes for pre-selection of relevant candidates and for the alignment of Bangladesh's TVET system at institutional and system level, but also – at individual level - by jobseekers and recruitment agents. In this regard, it is necessary to spur and strengthen migration cooperation based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU MS and Bangladesh. To compare competency standards for priority occupations is seen as an essential

first step in designing measures in areas such as skills development, qualification recognition and predeparture training. Further modalities and curricula for training will be identified and could be commonly defined.

Step 4: Skills development and professional training. Applying the principle of the GSPs for skills creation and local development

It is key for Bangladeshi aspiring migrants to enhance their skills before or immediately after departure in the areas key to obtain better and better remunerated jobs abroad. The good practice example of the GSP and SMP should be followed and language and pre-departure vocational and professional training, where needed and to extent needed (whole qualifications, partial qualifications, modules, microcredentials etc.) for the labour force in Bangladesh should be organised in the country. Training activities should be part of a well- designed approach for mutual benefits for employment, training sector development and sector modernisation.

Step 5: Candidate selection for recruitment and the recognition of their diplomas

Modalities and processes for efficient recruitment should be specified, with the involvement of the relevant actors, including the private sector. Similarly, it is important for those Bangladeshis who already have relevant skills and competences, to receive support in order to ensure that the equivalence of their training, professional experience or qualification to the foreign ones in the destination countries is confirmed, and this - at the earliest possible stage of the selection procedures.

Step 6: Visa, further administrative procedures

This step includes all contractual and administrative formalities supporting a regular migration process.

Step 7: Integration/Welcome and adaptation package

Integration programmes should be in place, as well as modalities for the monitoring of working conditions of workers participating in the mobility, according to international standards, should be arranged.

Step 8: Sustainable reintegration of workers returning to Bangladesh – circular migration.

When applicable, dedicated measures aimed at supporting reintegration should be designed, creating synergies with existing programmes and cooperation in this regard.

4. Stakeholders involved and their roles. Governance and implementation of the process

This component of the model answers the questions: **Who is involved? Who is doing what?**

5. Strengths and potential risks of the model

Each model has advantages and disadvantages. A critical view on them would support making use of the strengths and mitigating the potential risks of the model.

6. Concluding remarks sum up and draw attention to main aspects and recommendations.

Prototypes of three Talent Partnerships Models

Model 1: “Highly Skilled Workers” Talent Partnerships Model

The Model is based on recent developments, introduced in some EU MS, particularly following the amendments in the Blue Card Framework, the orientation to the “skills first approach” and the general trend towards relaxation of the recognition procedures and reducing the salary thresholds. In Germany the new amendments in the Immigration law have paved the way towards such developments.

1) Type of potential target group

This Talent Partnerships Model targets Bangladeshi skilled workers, who are:

(i) potential beneficiaries of the Blue Card Framework, for the professions which belong to the professions included in the Framework in the respective country of destination.

This is valid at the first place for the ICT specialists, but could be made applicable also for regulated professions, such as the shortage professions in the health sector – nurses, caregivers etc. In Germany, this refers mostly to the ICT specialists, but the newly introduced migration law, makes the provision of the relaxed Blue Card applicable also for professions from the health sector: nursing and midwifery.

What is common for the two sectors is that access to the EU labour market is extremely simplified, once the requirements of the employers are clear. In the case of the ICT specialists, there is no need for a formal qualification, which makes the selection process rely on simple steps, like either a demonstration of skills and competence, or previous experience of the specialist with the same employer in Bangladesh, or a portfolio, showcasing experience with other recognized employers all over the world.

In the case of health professionals, there are some legislative developments and initiatives at EU level that make the process structured, although there are differences across the countries. In more general terms, for the regulated professions, the Directive 2005/36/EC is in place. This directive regulates the recognition of professional qualifications in the EU. It sets out a system of automatic recognition for several professions, including nurses, midwives, doctors (general practitioners and specialists), dental practitioners, pharmacists, architects, and veterinary surgeons. The European Professional Card (EPC) for example allows certain professions to have their qualifications recognized in an online procedure. The professions covered by the

scheme include nurses responsible for general care, pharmacists, physiotherapists, mountain guides, and real estate agents.

(ii) skilled workers with vocational training qualification

They should have completed vocational training in the EU country of destination or have obtained a vocational qualification in Bangladesh, which is equivalent to one acquired in the EU MS.

The following new developments in Germany could serve as an inspiration for aspects that could be considered in the future TP:

- Under the new law, a skilled worker with a vocational training qualification may be granted a temporary residence permit to perform any type of skilled labour. The skilled workers training no longer needs to match the particular job. The same restriction was deleted for skilled workers holding a university degree. **In such a way, no formal education link with role is sought. This is indicative of the skills-based (as opposed to education-based) immigration programs** under development globally to tackle skills shortages.
- Within the “**Required professional experience**”, if a skilled worker has **no formally accepted equivalent to German vocational training**, the person may still come to Germany to work. In such cases, the professional must have appropriate work experience of at **least two years, have a minimum salary, and have completed an apprenticeship that is formally accepted by the home country and took at least two years.** It is no longer necessary that the **foreign degree be recognized as equivalent.**
-

2) Skills/Qualification’s level

This model refers to highly skilled specialists.

- (i) For the Blue Card beneficiaries from the ICT sector, a higher education diploma is not necessarily required, which is the case for many ICT specialists. This is the reason why this target group and the model are considered in the framework of this study. The highly skilled ICT specialists may have completed only high/secondary school and have studied a few years at the university or obtained a VET qualification plus added valuable professional experience.
- (ii) For the workers with a vocational qualification, these are usually specialists at the EQF level 4 or even 5 (post-secondary, non-tertiary).
- (iii) For the regulated professionals the respective qualification is required, according to the requirements of Bangladesh. A recognition procedure will be necessary for the country of destination.

3) Activities foreseen

The TP should be based on the smooth and simplified model of the Blue Card Framework. As this model applies for highly skilled specialists, it is mainly applicable to ICT specialists and regulated professions. From the list of shortage occupations, interesting for the EU MS countries, these are the ICT specialists and the regulated professions of nurses and caregivers.

In addition to this, any further skilled specialists in shortage occupations, where skilled labour force is available in Bangladesh, could benefit from the model: specialists in the construction sectors or in the transportation sector.

The specificity of the model, applying the paradigm of the TP, shows the following features:

Step 1: Official/legal/bilateral arrangements

Bilateral agreement at an intergovernmental level, or an interinstitutional Memorandum of Understanding or similar could be signed. Bilateral arrangements are especially recommendable for this model, as it allows for recognition procedures to be skipped, where they are not required according to the national legislation (with the exception of the regulated professions)¹⁸⁰. In such an official document, the framework arrangements of the TP should be defined.

Step 2: Information sharing

Shortage occupations and prospective sectors should be identified on a short-term basis from the two sides: EU MS and Bangladesh. In the legal/bilateral framework arrangements, the respective occupations, which should be included in the model should be specified for a short to mid-term period - 2-3 years.

► Box 28: Information sharing - good practice example from Germany

There are good practice examples across the EU MS, which help match existing qualifications and lead the potential interested worker step by step to what the next steps are for getting a job.

In Germany, there is a special brochure with relevant information and further links to digitalized steps, that cover all possible options: https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/assets/content/Medien_Dokumente-AI/info-flyer-anerkennung-en.pdf

In the document, a special recognition finder is integrated that starts with finding the equivalence between the relevant occupations.

<https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/en/interest/finder/profession>

Under the web page, the candidates will find out about German professions and can select their reference occupation. They will discover whether recognition is essential for working in the specific profession or whether they can work in Germany without recognition. Voluntary recognition can also be of advantage for their professional future. The Recognition Finder also provides them with contact details of counselling centres and the competent authority responsible for the application. Communication with the competent authority is generally in German. However, advisory centres often provide guidance in various languages.

Step 3: Pre-selection for identifying if requirements for skilled migration are fulfilled: qualification (if required), relevant professional experience etc.

¹⁸⁰ Interview, Sabine Kotsch

For the model two approaches in identifying the Bangladeshi workers skills profiles are working: pre-identification, in general terms; and targeted identification, after receiving the specific employers' requirements, in order to pre-select the potential candidates.

Usually, the responsible bodies and private recruitment agencies start the process with information events or applying variable marketing strategies. They may work directly with training institutions.

- In the case of the ICT specialists, pre-selection could be done upon inviting the specialists to prepare and submit a short portfolio and if needed – by organizing a short demonstration to complete an assignment or by contributing to a micro-project of interest of the potential employer. In case that specific skills for a given position are needed, short-term targeted micro-credentials'- like courses should be organized in cooperation between the concrete employers and a training centre.
- For the non-regulated professions, a similar approach could be considered, like for the ICT specialists.
- In the case of the regulated professions these steps lead directly to a recognition procedure, applicable for such cases, see below¹⁸¹. The collected experience of past projects could be considered. For example, the approach of GIZ within the Tripple-Win-projects is the following: GIZ acted in cooperation with the employment services of the partner countries. The nursing staff are personally selected both in terms of language and nursing skills obtained and communicated. GIZ supports the process with its international External structure.
- However, the healthcare sector also poses particular challenges. To counteract a critical undersupply of medical staff in developing countries, caused in large part by emigration, the World Health Organization (WHO) has adopted a set of ethical principles applying to the international recruitment of skilled healthcare workers. This Global Code of Practice is also associated with a list of countries suffering from a critical supply shortage of qualified doctors, nurses and midwives, and which therefore should not be targeted by recruitment campaigns. In the past, this WHO list has led to the categorical exclusion of the countries suffering from such shortages from pilot projects targeting the nursing sector.
- In the case of skilled workers from crafts professions (construction) all documents related to professional qualification and experience should be gathered and presented. As recognition procedure might not be compulsory (depending on the CoD regulations), the responsibility to evaluate the type and level of skills is transferred to a big extend to the employers, their organisations, the private recruitment agencies and other intermediary organisations in the field (Chambers etc.). A skills portfolio with all relevant certificates, diplomas and professional experience would be a good first step to enter the pre-screening process. Relevant examples of such an approach could be found in the ProRecognition project (see in the box below), implemented by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Italian private recruitment Agency, implementing a pilot project in Bangladesh.

¹⁸¹ It should be taken into consideration, that some of the professions also in the construction sector are regulated in some of the EU MS – see for example “bricklayer”, which is regulated in Germany

In all the cases, the principle of recruiting specialists that are in surplus in Bangladesh should be applied. Already at this stage, there is a need to ensure appropriate protection of third country nationals, in this case – Bangladeshi nationals - against the risk of unfair recruitment and future exploitative working conditions.

► **Box 29: ProRecognition Project**¹⁸²

Germany, ProRecognition Project

The ProRecognition Project provides counselling on recognition at a local level for skilled workers in several countries. It is coordinated in close cooperation with the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) by DIHK Service GmbH. The ProRecognition counselling centres are based in the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce (AHK) in Algeria, Egypt, Brazil, India and Colombia.

ProRecognition provides counselling for foreign skilled workers at a local level on all questions relating to recognition: Is recognition possible for me with my qualification? What is the appropriate reference occupation? How and where do I make the application for recognition? Which documents are necessary? Where can I learn German? How do I find a job? ProRecognition supports and helps applicants, also during the procedure, and arranges applicant training or German courses.

Those wishing to take advantage of counselling should arrange an appointment in advance and find out which documents they need to bring with them.

The DIHK has pointed out that the AHKs would be able to take over the recognition of non-formal qualifications abroad as soon as a legal basis was created for this.

The ProRecognition project was launched in 2015 and since then has been funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). In the second funding phase from 2020, three new locations had been added with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil and Colombia.

Step 4. Pre-departure training

The pre-departure training may include learning of the language of the country of destination or English, cultural awareness and short technical trainings, mainly to prepare for the technology used in the country of destination or for particular position-related requirements of the employer, some emerging technical or other skills etc.

4.1. Language training

In ICT professions in general terms, English could be sufficient. There is a trend visible, to reduce requirements to speak the language of the CoD in order to reduce barriers for qualified workers to occupy a position in a shortage occupation. In Germany for example, German language is not any longer required as a pre-condition for the professional driver.

4.2 Short specialized training courses

The participating business organisations from the EU MS should be involved in the development of the modules, together with training providers from the EU MSs (in case of such) and Bangladesh. As these microcredentials'-like training modules and the certification

¹⁸² <https://www.zanerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/prorecognition.php>; Interview Sabine Kotsch, 19/03 2024

assessment included in the process should be industry driven, they should comply with industry performance standards.

Examples of information on such short-term learning experiences for ICT specialists could be found on [Digital Skills and Jobs Platform](#). This online resource collects training opportunities on digital skills and emerging technologies. Examples of short online courses that allow construction workers to update their skills are provided by the [BuildUpSkills](#) Initiative designed to provide “anytime, anywhere” access to training on a wide range of topics. The [CONSTRYUE 2020](#) project in Spain and the [ingREeS](#) project in Czechia are both examples of such training programmes.

The Belgium Innovative Labour Migration Model could become an inspiration in this case: Development Agencies and IT companies from the EU MS with investments or interest in Bangladesh can develop a short-term training programme with targeted courses for specialization in the ICT occupations of their interest. The training could be even conducted similarly to in-company training in the format of dual-training with trainers who are employees of the companies. The model should be designed with the Global Skills Partnerships model in mind to a bigger group of trainees. Upon a selection procedure, out of the trained specialists only one part could be offered the opportunity to work in the CoD and the rest will be placed in the Bangladesh market, presumably – in most of the cases – in the network of the companies that trained them.

The developed training modules could be collected in a catalogue or similar and uploaded on a platform (existing or especially developed) to be used for further trainings. A (digital) badge/certification could be issued to the ICT specialist, to be further used in case s(he) changes employers in the respective EU MS or between EU MS. It would be good to develop a common template with similar elements for the certification. Further procedures for validation or recognition are not needed, as the Blue Card Directive also allows IT specialists without a formal qualification to work in an EU MS.

For the regulated professions, the Common European Nursing Curriculum developed by the European Heart Association can serve as an inspiration, see Box 30 below:

► **Box 30: Common European Nursing Curriculum**

There is a Common European Nursing Curriculum developed by the European Heart Association. This curriculum aims to provide a unified framework for training nurses across the EU. The initiative is undertaken to tackle challenges in the training, certification, and mobility of nursing staff across the European Union. The goal is to address the shortage of well-trained nursing staff, which is one of the main priorities for policy makers. If nursing students are trained and certified based on common ground standards for qualification, this would be conducive to increased mobility within the EU and thus an approach to filling the gap in the nursing market that some countries are especially suffering from. The curriculum is expected to increase mobility, motivation, trust, quality of skills, and student exchange. This initiative consists of not only building a Common European Nursing Curriculum, but also creating an online platform to facilitate the delivery of the Curriculum. This platform

provides the educational means to cover the curriculum and can be quickly and easily implemented¹⁸³.

In addition, there is also the ENhANCE Project, which targets a specific existing mismatch between the skills currently offered by nurses working in Primary Health Care (PHC) and those actually demanded by both public health care institutions and private service providers¹⁸⁴.

These initiatives are steps towards standardizing and improving nursing education across the EU. They aim to ensure that nurses are well-equipped to meet the healthcare needs of the population.

In the TP trainings, the good example from the studied projects should be considered: the training is offered to a bigger number of employees than the expected number of labour migrants. In the THAMM project only part of the trained specialists benefits from the employment opportunities offered abroad. The rest would upgrade or update their skills and competences and in such a way – increase their employability and jobs perspectives in the CoO. This approach would also be fully in line with the principles of the Talent Partnerships model.

Step 5. Recognition (if required)

In the TP model, recognition procedures, if required by the host country, could (and it is recommended to) be conducted in Bangladesh.

The case of Germany (new Immigration Law) might serve as an inspiration for defining the recognition requirements within the TP model:

- **Special regulation for practical professional experience:** The employment of persons with extensive practical professional experience has been extended. The new regulation now applies to **all non-regulated professions in all sectors**. The requirement for people with practical professional experience is that they have a professional or university degree that is recognized by the respective country of training. In the case of a professional qualification, at least two years of training is required. **As an alternative to a state-recognized qualification, a qualification from a German chamber of commerce abroad is sufficient under certain conditions. In addition, at least two years of experience in the desired profession is required. Formal recognition of the qualification in Germany is not required.** Access to the labour market will also be made easier for **ICT specialists**: the required relevant professional experience will be reduced to two years (previously three years). A professional or university degree is not required. Language skills no longer need to be proven for the visa.

- **Labour market access for nursing assistants from third countries:** With the planned changes, access to the labour market for nursing staff will be supplemented by a regulation for nursing assistants from third countries. All people from third countries with nursing training below the three-year regulated specialist training can be employed in the health and care sector. The prerequisite is that these persons can either provide proof of corresponding German vocational training in the care sector **or a foreign care qualification that has been recognized in Germany.**

¹⁸³ <https://www.heartassociation.eu/about-us/common-european-nursing-curriculum/>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.enhance-3n.eu/>

In such a way, the recognition requirements are kept at the minimum – for example for foreign qualification in a regulated profession, such as nursing and caregiving.

Information sharing on recognition procedures and responsible bodies, is seen helpful for initial orientation of the potential migrants, as well as – for the relevant Bangladeshi stakeholders, see

► **Box 31: Good practice examples for skills and qualification recognition support in Germany**

In Germany, the Service Center for Professional Recognition under the Ministry of Education and Research Council skilled workers abroad and supports them in the recognition procedure¹⁸⁵.

What are the tasks of the Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA)?

The ZSBA supplements the information provided by “Anerkennung in Deutschland” and explores in greater depth the initial counselling provided by the hotline “Working and Living in Germany”. The ZSBA undertakes, for example, the following tasks in particular:

It advises on the process of the recognition procedure.

It supports applicants in determining the appropriate reference occupation.

It clarifies with the applicants the federal state in which they want to work and apply (Location Counselling).

It helps applicants to put together the necessary documents.

It checks in advance whether the documents are complete and forwards them with the Application for recognition to the competent authority.

It provides information on residence permits in connection with the recognition procedure.

The ZSBA supports applications throughout the entire recognition procedure. For the purpose of exchanging information, the ZSBA works with the competent authorities and where required with the immigration authorities. The ZSBA also provides information regarding counselling provision in Germany, opportunities relating to training and about the prospects on the German labour market. For this, it works together with the counselling centres in the Network “Integration through Qualification” (IQ).

The ZSBA is based at the Federal Employment Agency's (BA) Centre for International Migration and Development (ZAV) in Bonn. It is being funded for an initial phase of four years by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

To apply, candidates must have obtained a professional qualification. This may be completed vocational education and training or a completed degree. They must submit the application for recognition to the competent authority responsible for them. The recognition finder provides information about the necessary documents. The cost of recognition differs depending on the profession and the federal state. Generally speaking, recognition costs between €200 and €600. In addition, there are often costs for translations, certifications, compensation measures and refresher training. There may also be costs of travel if you need to collect your documents in person from your country of origin. The recognition procedure normally takes three to four months. In the received recognition notice, the candidate will be informed about the result of the process: full recognition (this means that the foreign qualification is fully equivalent to the German qualification), partial or no recognition. In many cases there is no need for a recognition, although it may bring benefits. Candidates may also complete additional training in Germany. The competent authority advises them on different options¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/service-center.php>

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/service-center.php#gs-3189-1888;>

- In the case of the *regulated professions*, the recognition procedure should be arranged between the EU MS recognition authorities and the Bangladesh side before the selection and departure. Those candidates that meet the requirements can be selected and then included in language- and pre-departure integration training. The duration could vary according to the requirements of the particular EU MS.

Step 6: Visa, contract and residence formalities

The visa regime depends on the arrangements of each particular EU MS with regard to the Blue Card holders and the regulated professions' specialists – see the country-related information in Chapter 2 above. Below, the example of Germany is given as an illustration.

In Germany:

- **Highly skilled worker requirements:** EU Blue Card Conditions: Applicant must have a job offer in Germany or an employment contract with a minimum salary as per the New Immigration law. Approval for employment by the Federal Employment Agency is required. Duration: issued for the duration of the work contract and an additional 3 months (maximum 4 years). Extending the validity of the EU Card is possible. After 33 months (or 21 months with proof of minimum level of German language skills) applicants may be entitled to a settlement permit (permanent residence title).
- **IT Professionals Scheme to facilitate work visa applications for IT professionals with a job offer.** Possible residence permits: Residence permit for qualified employment, Blue Card EU, Residence permit for other employment (for applicants with at least 3 years of work experience).
- **Jobseekers**

For jobseekers with vocational or academic training recognised in Germany: Holders of this permit may work on trial for up to 10 hours per week. Requirements: visa for the purpose of looking for a job; Conditions:

For applicants with vocational training: proof of German language skills is a requisite (at least level B1). Applicants must show proof of being able to cover costs of living. Duration: may be issued for up to 6 months without the possibility of extension. It is possible to re-apply for this permit once applicant has spent an equal duration abroad as the time spent in Germany while seeking employment.

The FEG introduced, as well an accelerated skilled labour process to reduce the administrative procedure before the skilled worker's arrival in Germany. This procedure can also be used for trainees and those wishing to complete a qualification. So far, however, the accelerated procedure can only be initiated for a fee by businesses that recruit abroad, not by the skilled worker himself or herself¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁷ Angenendt, Steffen, Nadine Knapp and David Kipp: Germany is Looking for Foreign Labour: How to make recruitment development-orientated, sustainable and fair, SWP Research Paper, March 2023, Berlin

In the case of Romania, the regime of posted workers could be interesting with regard to this TP model:

Romanian labour legislation applies to third-country nationals posted directly from third countries, except for the more favourable legal provisions in the country of origin. For intra-corporate transfer workers posted from other EU Member States to Romania, wages and other working or employment conditions have to respect Romanian labour legislation and the applicable collective agreements. To be posted, third-country nationals must have been employed in the posting undertaking or in undertakings belonging to the same group for at least six uninterrupted months, immediately prior to the date of the application for the posting permit for management and specialists, or at least three uninterrupted months for trainees. For posted intra-corporate transfer workers, at least three years of appropriate professional experience are required for specialists, relevant to their fields of activity, techniques or management; for trainees, graduation from a university study programme is necessary¹⁸⁸.

Step 7: Welcome and adaptation package

In the CoD a variety of approaches and programmes are applicable to support newcomers in adapting to the new working and living conditions. They may include measures like receiving similar support, as the one provided to the citizens of the CoD, when registered in the employment offices, offering additional adaptation training, or support in labour-rights related issues. The good integration package of Italy could serve as an inspiration for the future TP model (see the section on Italy in Chapter 2). Such initiatives should become an indispensable part of the whole TP model when designed in partnerships between the CoD and the CoO.

Step 8: Returning to the CoO – circular migration

This model may result both in long-term migration and in circular migration, which means that serious efforts should be made in the area of returning regular migrants back home.

Lessons learnt from the Korean and Japanese cooperation with Bangladesh show that only minimal financial support for returning of migrant workers home is not sufficient. Also, remittances sent during the work in the CoD are not sufficient as a trade-off.

These and existing reintegration schemes should be used as a basis for a functional reintegration scheme. Components of such may include pre-departure and after-arrival assistance, counselling and training, but also support for the start of small business and sustainable integration in society. Particularly, for the ICT sector, working in the network of businesses with operations both in Bangladesh and the EU MS (for example – outsourcing of business segments from the EU to Bangladesh) might offer a good reintegration perspective.

4) Stakeholders and their roles

(i) Official bodies both from the countries of origin and of destination: Ministries of Labour, Public employment services, Ministries or other bodies in charge of regular migration. These

¹⁸⁸ Felicia Rosioru, Romania, Interaction between Labour Law and Immigration regimes, ETUI, Brussels, 2023.

official bodies are supposed to be in charge of designing the modalities of the partnerships, the implementation of most of the phases (directly, or through intermediary bodies) and the monitoring process. It is important not only to have these bodies in place, but also to create working formats for dialogue and multistakeholder multi-stakeholder engagement and operational work.

(ii) Recruitment Agencies

Usually, Recruitment Agencies from both sides participate in the model, particularly, in the selection process.

(iii) In Bangladesh: Field coordination centres, Migration Cells, Advisory centres or similar, with official bodies representatives or their officially nominated partners from the two sides (in the case with Germany - offices of the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, external representation of GIZ etc), and/or authorized by the two sides (EU MS and Bangladesh) or other project specific bodies would be needed, as professional pre-selection of relevant candidates for skilled workers should be conducted. In case foreign language skills required, test held by designated bodies should be organised. In case recognition required, this should be done according to the requirements of the country of destination and documentation should be presented. Representatives of the employers participate in the identification of the need of short-term targeted professional training, its design and possibly – its delivery in cooperation with training centres.

(iv) In countries of destination: Recognition authorities, Visa application authorities, Integration services and networks, regional and local administration, including linked to trade-unions, covering the part of the migration cycle related to their responsibilities: issuing visa, recognition procedures (if and when needed), in charge of integration activities and ensuring fair and decent employment.

5. Strengths of the model

- The model reduces the requirements for recognition and language usage.
- It disassociates skills level from qualifications. In many cases no formal qualification is required. In such a way “skills first approach” is applicable.
- Mobility between jobs and employers is granted (in Germany).
- Apart from being more flexible, the model is also more supply oriented. It does not only cover most in demand sectors and occupations. It also may take into account all skills and experience the worker coming to the country may have. So, for example, in Germany, the employee may take a job, for which (s)he has skills and competences, not only the ones, listed in his/her qualification.
- Further focus on transformation-relevant sectors, occupations and skills could be of a big advantage for the model, for example – providing short-term training in high-tech, AI and emerging technologies for better horizontal and vertical permeability between professions, sectors and level of skills.

- The role of employers is strengthened, such as their responsibilities. In general terms, this could be seen as an employer-led model, as usually the employers should have expressed their needs to recruit skilled workers and usually – assign a Recruitment Agency to look for suitable specialists.
- Bridging/intermediary organisations work in the field upon arrangement/approval of the official institutions.
- If recognition is needed, the costs for it in this model are usually taken over by the employers. In the case with the pilot projects of Italy, recognition is supposed to cost nothing for the workers to be recruited.

7. Potential risks and stumbling blocks and how to be addressed

- There are a lot of ministries and other bodies involved - for establishing the framework conditions, for completing the recognition process (in case of such), issuing visa etc. At the same time, there are only limited field offices or even pilot arrangements for supporting activities already in the CoO. Some of the potentially interested countries like Romania and Greece do not have strong expertise in outsourced services in the CoO.
- The digitalization process for issuing visa is still not a comprehensive one, and only parts of it might be digitized, or is in place only in some of the federal states in Germany, for example – for the case of specialists in health care. The digitalization of the process for submitting documents for recognition is just in its beginning phase in most countries.
- The whole process from identifying potential interested labour migrants to occupying a job position can still take a couple of months. For the recognition at least a few months – one to three - are reserved.
- Employers may find the procedures too long and/or costs too high. Particularly, in the Italian pilot project with Bangladesh, the employers pay the whole cost (ca. 1000 EUR per person for identification, training and certification) with no guarantee that the trained workers will finally arrive in Italy and if their training will be suitable for the work.

Potential resolution:

- Where it does not exist, the creation of a unified Migration office/ministry at an EU MS level could be suggested.
- On the ground, interface offices/intermediary bodies/migration cells or teams could be promoted and established.
- Digitalisation of the whole process could be further supported.
- According to an interviewed respondent: The procedure should be designed in a way that reflects the reality that (i) “There is no such thing as the ideal skilled worker for the respective

EU MS”; (ii) “EU MS are in tough competition with other countries for attracting skilled workers”; (iii) “Someone who wants to work in the CoD should feel welcome and needed”¹⁸⁹.

Concluding remarks

Summary:

This Talent Partnership model presents a smooth and simplified model, based on the philosophy of the Blue Card Framework, which would allow for Bangladeshi highly skilled workers (with skills and competences equal to at least level 4 or 5 of the European Qualification Framework) with or without possessing the respective qualifications to occupy working places, relevant to their skills. Additional training in the format of short courses/micro-credentials is needed predominantly in cases where particular job-specific, high-tech and new technologies – related skills, digital and green skills and other “skills of the future” are required. Recognition of skills and qualifications is not compulsory (with the exception of regulated professions, where recognition is compulsory). The model is relevant mainly for specialists from the ICT sector, well skilled workers from the construction sector (for example – with extensive foreign experience from previous assignments), as well as for the regulated professions of nurses and caregivers. As there are highly skilled specialists also in other sectors and craft industries, and as there are regulated professions also among them, it could be as well applicable for occupations among the construction sector, manufacturing and machine industry etc.

Features and advantages, relevant to the TP concept are:

- For the country of origin (CoO): Eases burden on the labour market; Builds capacity in future-related skills and competences; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration;
- For the employees: Occupy attractive and decent work positions, without further delays and lengthy procedures;
- For the country of destination (CoD): Addresses shortage occupations; Attracts talents; Raises productivity and competences.

The model provides the fastest way for addressing shortage occupations in the CoD but is strictly applicable only in cases of an existing surplus of the respective specialists in Bangladesh. The model is suitable to all interested EU MS.

The TP Model No.1 is perceived as a long-term mobility, but also - for circular migration. This means that integration programmes both in the CoD and in the CoO upon returning home should be envisaged. Beyond this, particularly in the case of the ICT specialists, circulation between the EU MS and between the EU MS and the CoO is made easier for them with the latest amendments in the Directive, corresponding to the higher mobility in the sector.

Beyond this, the model could be suitable for posted workers, particularly in publicly launched construction works within the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

¹⁸⁹ Interview, Sabine Kotsch

Recommendations:

- It would be recommendable to create a database of rotating skilled workers/workers, participating in circular migration with an option for them to indicate if they would be interested in another destination. There are for example experienced construction workers coming back to Bangladesh from the Gulf countries and perhaps interested to work in Europe.
- In the recruitment phase, it is recommended that the operational teams from both sides – the EU MS and the Bangladeshis side work together to identify the concrete occupations and employers' specific requirements. For this phase, it is recommended that the candidates have their professional profiles completed, so that the selection process easily identifies what should be added to their skills sets – upgraded or updated.

***Model 2: “Training and recognition in the country of destination”
Talent Partnership Model***

The model builds on a traditional approach to attract labour force from abroad and to offer them either a full course of occupational training or a compensatory/additional/adaptation training up to the required skills or qualification level or type in the CoD.

1) Type of potential labour migrants

(i) Historically, this model targets either young people and/or people with basic/low skills or initial vocational training, who would need vocational training in the country of destination, in many cases – to complete the full course of vocational training. In previous years, this type of partnership was often aimed at attracting lower-skilled or seasonal workers in the agriculture, tourism, construction and similar. Also regulated professions, like nursing, took advantage of such a model, in which case, training in the CoD was offered to compensate for gaps in qualification standards or training.

(ii) In recent days, the target group may cover a second group of potential migrants: medium and even highly skilled workers, who do not have their qualifications fully recognized. The model would help them achieve comparability according to the skills/qualification requirements in the CoD. Such mobility is suitable for workers who would like to move to the CoD for long-term purposes and not only work, but also integrate. In Germany, for example, the entry into country in such a case would be either for qualification measures or as a part of the so-called ‘recognition partnership’.

In the particular case of Bangladesh, the target group would be skilled/semiskilled workers who are ready to move to an EU MS and get their professional experience or qualification recognized, after a compensatory training offered there. The model is suitable for specialists from non-regulated professions. Particularly, occupations from the craft sector could be relevant here. A second path could be reserved for temporary/shorter-term employment, as there is such need as well in the CoD, for example – in Italy and Greece.

2) Skills/Qualification level

The potential migrants might not be very highly skilled and not even possess a vocational qualification.

3) Activities foreseen (Process)

The TP should be based on the existing pilot projects, which usually identify potential migrants across the partner countries with professional training, expertise and/or qualification.

The specificity of the model, applying the paradigm of the TP, shows the following features:

Step 1: Official/legal/bilateral arrangements

The partnership is usually based on a bilateral agreement between the two sides – the CoO and the CoD.

Step 2: Information sharing

Shortage occupations and prospective sectors should be identified from the two sides: EU MS and Bangladesh. The closer to the recruitment process, the more targeted the identification of the corresponding occupations would be.

Steps 3-4. Pre-selection and pre-departure requirements

In Germany, there is a special pathway to enrol in such a scheme: potential labour migrants can enter the country either to complete a qualification measure (Section 16 d (1) AufenthG) or as part of a recognition partnership (Section 16 d (3) AufenthG).

Third country nationals registered in a qualification programme in Germany to acquire the missing skills may apply for this permit. For applicants in unregulated professions, it is also possible to acquire the missing skills by working as a skilled worker in the intended profession (no time restriction). A job offer and training plan are needed. As stated in the part on Germany above, conditions are: recognition certificate, A2 level of German language skills, proof of enrolment in a qualifying training program, and proof of financial means. It is possible to work while completing the qualification programme (for up to 10 hours).

For such a scheme to work, a jointly developed pre-departure package, containing a training and job offer and migration path from the side of the CoD in cooperation with recruitment agencies from both sides and the relevant authorities from the Bangladeshi side would be suitable.

The “Recognition-Partnership” makes it possible to obtain a residence permit to pursue qualified employment and to carry out the necessary recognition procedure only after entry. In contrast to the previous options for carrying out qualification measures, in this case it is not necessary to initiate a recognition procedure or to have a certificate of partial equivalence before entering the country. The granting of a visa is linked to the obligation of the prospective skilled worker and the employer to apply for recognition after entry and to actively pursue the procedure. The basic requirements for the recognition partnership are, in addition to the employment contract, the existence of a professional qualification that has required at least two

years of training or a university degree - both of which must be recognized by the respective country of training - as well as German language skills at level A2. The residence permit is usually issued for one year and can be extended for up to three years.

For the scheme to work, usually language skills at Level A2 (the language of the CoD) are a requirement (in some cases – even lower). In case of bilateral arrangements, language training should be part of the pre-departure activities, as well as - integration or cultural-orientation courses.

Step 5. Training in the CoD

During this phase, skilled workers receive either a full course of occupational training (in Germany often this is dual training) or an additional language and technical training. There should be as well social integration measures to integrate these workers into the host country's labour market.

The example of the German - Moroccan Partnership below gives an example of a full course of training.

► Box 32: German - Moroccan Partnership for Training and Skilled Worker Recruitment

On behalf of the Moroccan National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC), and in cooperation with the German Hotel and Restaurant Association (DEHOGA) of Bavaria and Thuringia and the Bavarian State Association of Bavarian Construction Guilds (LBB), GIZ is focusing on training young Moroccans for the German labour market. The project is carried out under the auspices of GIZ's private-sector division, International Services, and is financed by the World Bank through the MENA Transition Fund. The project aims to address skills shortages in Germany's restaurant and hospitality industry as well as its construction sector by recruiting workers in Morocco and training them in Germany. Closely involved in the project, ANAPEC is responsible for the selection process in Morocco. ANAPEC also receives advice on institutional matters aimed at strengthening its international outreach capabilities. At the same time, GIZ identifies suitable companies in Germany able to provide training and arranges for binding employment contracts. The participants then attend a German-language course and integration courses in Morocco. Once they've arrived in Germany, they start their dual training, which consists of on-the-job training at a company and classes at a vocational school, which means they have a good chance of being hired long-term by the German company where they've trained at. In its first phase, the project focused exclusively on the hospitality sector and involved a total of 108 trainees. In August 2019, a new cohort of 100 trainees joined the program. These individuals are now engaged in two to three-year vocational training courses in Germany, with half of them working in the hospitality sector, and the other half in the construction sector. As a model that provides comprehensive training for its participants, the partnership is designed to foster permanent migration¹⁹⁰.

In Italy, the newly arrived immigrants but also potential migrant workers can participate in programmes, consisting of language courses, civic education, vocational training. Short apprenticeship-type of programmes, lasting up to six months, are offered by regions and provinces and implemented by contracted enterprises. Potential migrant workers may apply for

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.giz.de/en/mediacenter/687453.html>

these programmes while still in their origin countries if they have knowledge of the Italian language and can obtain a permit of residence for study purposes, within the annual quota for migration, “Decreto Flussi.”

In Romania, work permits for trainees are issued only to legally residing persons, for a fixed-term traineeship (up to six months, non-extendable) enabling third-country nationals to obtain a professional qualification or to improve professional training, linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Step 6. Recognition

Within Germany’s form of federalism, individual states are responsible for handling recognition procedures, which means that the regulations and bureaucratic processes applied in each state can vary. Often a rather time-consuming process, recognition procedures have been an obstacle in attracting foreign skilled workers. A key goal of the recently introduced Skilled Workers Immigration Act is thus to simplify recognition procedures. A partnership between employers (and their organisations) and the respective recognition authority (per sector, federal state etc.) would smoothen the process.

In Romania, labour migrants could get their skills and competence recognised in one of the 37 fully functioning local assessment centres that could validate prior learning of candidates, mainly in services, construction and agriculture fields of learning, up to NQF level 3. In case, a bilateral agreement is signed with Bangladesh, this would be one of the possible options for Bangladeshi workers to get their professional skills and experience recognised.

Step 6: Visa, contract and residence formalities

The visa regime depends on the arrangements of each particular EU MS – see the country-related information in Chapter 2 above).

Step 7: Welcome and adaptation package

As the model has at its heart providing training for the labour migrants, this is the core activity in the CoD. An important step is to identify a training organization and in the case with dual training – a training company. This should be pre-arranged already during the pre-departure phase, in order to offer a regular migration channel corresponding to the idea of the TP Model: training, recognition and decent employment. All additional integration measures, similar to those in TP Model 1, should be applicable also for TP Model 2.

Step 8: Returning to the CoO – circular migration

As the model may cover two groups of potential migrants – there are two variants in it. One is traditionally linked to the short-term migration from the past, that rather focuses on temporary employment or circular migration with (some of) the migrants, returning back to their homes.

The second version is focused on long-term or permanent migration.

In the two versions the benefits of the CoO are different. Under the first option, focusing on temporary or circular migration, the CoO receives back a higher-skilled labour force. GIZ is

applying this model in the restaurant and hospitality sector and has begun to apply it more recently in Morocco's construction sector.

In the second version, stemming from programmes, the benefits for the CoO consist in the relief of the labour market and the remittances sent home¹⁹¹.

4) Stakeholders and their roles

(i) Official bodies both from the countries of origin and of destination: Ministries of Labour, Public employment services, Ministries or other bodies in charge of legal migration, Recognition bodies etc. These official bodies are supposed to be in charge of designing the modalities of the partnerships.

(ii) Recruitment Agencies

Usually private Recruitment Agencies from both sides participate in the selection process.

(iii) In Bangladesh: Employment agencies, Field coordination centres, Migration Cells, Advisory centres or similar, with official bodies representatives, participating in them. Those participate in the selection process and arranging pre-departure formalities. Foreign language training should be as well organised in cooperation with language institutes of the CoD for example.

(iv) In Countries of destination: Recognition authorities, Visa application authorities, Training institutions, Employers and their organisations, Welcome and integration centres etc. These institutions are in charge of the training activities, recognition procedures and the integration programme and further services according to their responsibilities.

5) Strengths of the model

- This approach has the advantage that the countries of origin lose fewer amount of skilled labour (brain drain) or the human capital investment associated with such labour (fiscal drain). Instead, the country of destination (or the employers there) invests in the training of the new workers for them to become higher skilled. In the described model of training Moroccan workers to work in the hospitality sector in Germany, the industry associations are involved in an operational capacity, which is a notable innovation.

- This approach also avoids the risk of workers facing underemployment and the considerable frustration that often accompanies the recognition procedures¹⁹².

6) Potential risks and stumbling blocks and how to be addressed

- There are significant operational costs associated with the vocational and language training, as well as social integration measures. The success of this approach depends on the willingness of employers to invest in such programs. They would do so, in cases of skills shortages and if there is a perspective for return of investment – which means for the skilled workers to stay longer. Temporary models that rely on skilled workers returning to their country of origin (i.e., circular migration), tend not to pay off for employers.

¹⁹¹ Bertelsmann Foundation [Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany](#) [Policy Brief](#) [Migration](#), May 2020

¹⁹² idem

- It is unclear whether industrial associations and employers themselves will be willing to take over the costs of such programmes, initially funded by donors and international organisations (like the EU, the World Bank etc.), particularly – for longer term trainings.
- In addition to this, in the cases, where a full cycle of vocational training is offered (3-3.5 years) these are programs of lengthy duration, which often leads to high dropout rate, which negatively affects the total cost calculation of such programs¹⁹³.
- In Germany, with the new “corridor” opened for potential labour migrants with mid-level qualifications, it is still not clear if this will stimulate such workers to use it.
- Research suggests that there should be coordinated migration and labour migration projects in place, in order to make the model work¹⁹⁴.

Concluding remarks

Summary:

The Model targets those that would need to follow a fully-fledged (often – an apprenticeship – type of training), partial qualification training or top up their skills set with additional training in the destination country before being allowed to acquire/recognise a degree or a qualification and to enter the labour market. It is relevant for those skilled migrant workers who need to show a comparability of their degree obtained at the country of origin or upgrade their skills against the standards required in the destination country. The model is based on the traditional approach for following training in the CoD up to the particular requirements.

Features and advantages, relevant to the TP concept are:

- For the country of origin (CoO): Eases burden on the labour market; Builds skills and competences of the workforce, which can be used in the CoO in case of circular migration; Pre-departure training may also raise capacity of domestic institutions to better prepare future labour migrants; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration;
- For the employees: Possibilities for working while training (in case of apprenticeships schemes and beyond them – according to the new legislative arrangements in Germany); Avoiding the risk of remaining unemployed or hired for positions that require lower skills and qualifications.
- For the country of destination (CoD): Addressing shortage occupations on a long-term basis, as the model enhances the skills pool according to the specific requirements of the country.

The model offers a longer way for occupying a full position yet offers all preconditions for a decent job with all benefits, similar to the citizens of the CoD. The model is suitable for a permanent or long-term migration, although there are examples across the countries of circular migration too, especially in the case of youths’ training and exchange. The model is most suitable for Italy and Germany, which are CoD for most of the labour migrants, for reasons

¹⁹³ idem

¹⁹⁴ idem

linked to attractive salaries, bigger Bangladeshi communities, and previous experience in accommodating such groups of labour migrants, among main important ones.

This Talent Partnerships model is based on traditional skills and migration cooperation models. Particularly, in Germany, the dual system attracts workers, who would like to receive a German qualification that qualify them for a job position with equal opportunities with the domestic workforce. With the new amendments in the German Immigration Law, the attractiveness of obtaining a full German qualification is coupled with the opportunity to work and earn at the same time, for example, in the existing schemes for recognition of qualification.

The model could be as well applicable for Romania, as a good network of recognition and validation centres is operating. In addition to this, in case of concluding a bilateral Romania-Bangladesh agreement, it could be considered that the Methodology (see above in the part on Romania) for certifying of professional training covers as well accredited/authorized training centres from Bangladesh.

In Italy and Greece, the model would be applicable in the case of temporary/short-term employment, with offering just adaptation training for the specific working place.

Usually, pre-departure selection of interested applicants is coupled with identification of met requirements and preconditions and/or offering additional pre-departure training in foreign language and integration. More work should be done at the CoD, where a job and training offer should be in place.

Recommendations:

Substantial work in bringing many stakeholders working together in the CoD should be ensured: training organisations, employers and their organisations, recognition authorities, visa and migration authorities, labour market offices.

Enhancing the opportunities to work and earn at the time when training is a good motivation for the migrants aiming at a long-term mobility and integration in the country of destination.

Model 3: Talent Partnership for vocational education and training in the Country of Origin

The model is the closest one to the Michael Clemens model on Global Skill Partnerships² (See in Chapter 1 above) and to the ‘triple-win’ paradigm, which calls on migration policy to meet the needs of destination countries, countries of origin and migrants.

The model is applicable for sectors where there is a shortage in the occupation in the EU Ms and at the same time – potential for economic growth and development in the countries of origin, in this case – Bangladesh. All studied sectors in Volume I have such a potential: ICT sector, construction, tourism and hospitality, healthcare, transport and agriculture. Although out of the scope of the study, the textile sector is a promising one, as it has strong traditions in

Bangladesh, and manufacturing – as it has prospects for fast development with the integration of digitalisation and AI.

Germany with its development agency, GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) has piloted the main activities of the model in many countries around the world. Other EU Member States and further countries as well applied its main principles, including in their partnerships with Bangladesh (See the example of the Japan - Bangladesh partnership in training nurses above).

1) Type of potential labour migrants

This model targets young and/or semi-skilled or even not skilled people, by providing training activities in the country of origin (CoO). Training activities are designed to begin before skilled workers are recruited.

2) Skills/Qualification level

The potential migrants might not be very highly skilled and even not have a vocational qualification. Particularly, occupations from the craft sector could be considered here. The model would be suitable as well for lower level qualifications according to the EQF, as the envisaged training is supposed not to last very long for acquiring the requested level of skills and competences.

3) Activities foreseen (Process)

The TP should be based on the existing pilot projects that identify economic sectors and sector occupations of mutual interest of the partners countries (countries of origin and countries of destination), which could equally benefit from skills development activities.

The specificity of the model, applying the paradigm of the TP, shows the following features:

Step 1: Official/legal/bilateral arrangements

Like in any Global Skills Partnerships-like model, destination countries invest in an origin country's VET infrastructure and training capacity to develop skill creation programs for occupations that are in high demand in both countries. The model relies on a previously reached Partnership agreement (or similar), in which all public and private actors involved agree in advance on the basic framework conditions and costs to be shared.

Step 2: Information sharing

Shortage occupations and prospective sectors should be identified from the two sides: EU MS and Bangladesh. As occupational and qualification standards are not directly transferable and compatible, mapping and assessment analyses should be undertaken, as well as – extensive adaptations of training standards and curricula might be needed¹⁹⁵.

Step 3-4: Pre-selection and pre-departure training

¹⁹⁵ Bertelsmann Foundation. Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany. Policy Brief. Migration, May 2020

The interested parties from the two sides should identify potential participants in the schemes under the model according to the characteristics of the model, specified under point 1 and point 2.

According to the theory of the model, two-track training program should be developed that includes a “home” track targeting the creation of skilled workers who plan to remain in their country of origin, and an “away” track with those who plan to work abroad. It is expected for the migration-oriented track to be more cost intensive because it includes, in addition to technical training, other modules such as language courses and pre-integration courses. However, training a skilled worker in the country of origin is expected to be considerably less expensive than training the same worker in the destination country. This efficiency makes it possible, at least in theory to finance a part of the future training programs for skilled workers who stay in the country of origin. Global Skill Partnerships thus offer a cost-efficient means of creating skilled workers for both CoD and CoO, while at the same time support VET systems in CoO and foster transfer of know-how in both directions.

For this to happen, in advance, the following needs to be done: Mapping of the requirements for the professions across the EU MSs and Bangladesh; Joint identification and definition of competency standards, curricula and modalities of training; Training should be delivered in cooperation with EU interested employers, training organisations and the corresponding partners on the Bangladesh side. Joint diplomas for a qualification or partial or full qualification of the CoD could be envisaged. The commonly identified curricula and conducted training should result in avoiding further recognition procedures in the CoD.

For the departing part of the specialists additional training – foreign language and cultural awareness training should be delivered.

Close to the model is the newly established legal migration channel in Italy, becoming operational as from summer of 2023, see Box 33 below and also section 2.2 of Chapter 2.

► Box 33: Italian scheme of training potential labour migrants in the country of origin

As an alternative to the quota system, since the summer of 2023 when specific Guidelines¹⁹⁶ of the Italian MLSP have been developed, some pilot projects started testing them. The Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP) has issued the Guidelines to define implementation modes and set criteria for the evaluation (by MLPS) of vocational and civic-linguistic training programs in countries of origin or countries of first asylum or transit for refugees. For civic-linguistic training, the attainment of at least the language level A1 is required, to be ascertained by passing an Italian language proficiency test, organised by the training provider and structured in accordance with the parameters adopted by the certification bodies¹⁹⁷. For vocational training, skills acquired in the training course will be tested in a final examination. Those who successfully complete the final examination will be issued with a certificate of attendance, indicating the knowledge and skills acquired, referring to the Economic and

¹⁹⁶ Guidelines implementation modalities for vocational and civic-linguistic training programs and criteria for their evaluation pursuant to article 23 of legislative decree no. 286 of July 25, 1998, 2023 Document approved on June 23, 2023 by the Services Conference convened by Directorial Decree No. 17 of March 30, 2023; Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies

¹⁹⁷ Referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 1, Letter A of the Interministerial Decree of December 7, 2021

Professional Sectors (SEPs) and to the Activity Areas (ADAs) into which the “Atlas of Work and Qualifications”.

Under this scheme, the Italy WorkAgency, which is a placement company that supports labour mobility of skilled workers in Bangladesh and links them to factories in Italy started a new project. The Agency sees itself as a bridging factor between Italian employers and Bangladeshi workers. Their first experience with Bangladesh was to organize the recruitment of 20 Bangladeshi workers for the Italian textile industry in the framework of supplying foreign workers within the quota system (through the Decreto Flussi). A second pilot project is underway for a bigger group of workers, after being approved by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP). These are projects driven and paid by the employers in Italy, seen as an alternative of the quota system. They are implemented in line with the Guidelines, issued in July 2023 by the Italian MLSP.

The following training is supposed to be provided in Bangladesh:

Language: Italian level A1 with a certification. Experience shows that 100 classes in Italian is not sufficient. For a future project, 200 to 300 classes will be offered in cooperation with the University of Siena to reach level A1. Additional language training could be provided as well in Italy.

Technical training: This training on required technical skills is supposed to be provided as a joint venture exercise between the ITALBANGLA and GREENLAND, which are the partners on the ground. Those are also recruiting companies. GREENLAND has a training school in the sector of construction. Certification goes through a training company that has the right to issue vocational certificates. Technical skills are mostly required for using machines and technology, in place in Italy. Such machines are to be delivered in Bangladesh in order to conduct the training on them¹⁹⁸.

Step 5. Recognition

Lessons learnt show that program participants would benefit from a sort of a certification process, “soft” recognition procedure or similar like in the case with Italy should be provided and no further recognition proceed should be conducted in the CoO. In the Italian Scenario, according to the Guidelines, skills acquired in the vocational training course will be tested in a final examination, which end with a certificate of attendance, indicating the knowledge and skills acquired, referring to the Economic and Professional Sectors (SEPs) and to the Activity Areas (ADAs) into which the “Atlas of Work and Qualifications” (see also above in Chapter 2). The rationale for this is that the training is expected to be delivered according to the CoD requirements. Once this is being accomplished already in the pre-departure phase, in the CoO, this will spare enormous time and organizational effort needed to complete the recognition process in the CoD.

In the German case, Chambers and associations are also responsible for recognising qualifications. Under the Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG), chambers are the appropriate authority for verifying equivalence for (semi) skilled jobs in the dual system (unregulated occupations) as well as for the occupations they have been assigned: the regional Chambers of Crafts are responsible for skilled crafts, while the central IHK Foreign Skills

¹⁹⁸ Interview, representatives of WorkAgency Italy, 25/03/2024

Approval (IHK FOSA) is responsible for the more than 250 IHK-regulated training occupations. Thus, Chambers and associations could supply well-conceived assessments of practical experience and professional skills¹⁹⁹.

Steps 6-8 are similar to Model No. 1:

4) Stakeholders and their roles

The model relies on bringing together a broad spectrum of actors from both countries. The expectations are that after an initial pilot phase, the model could become self-sustainable.

(i) Official bodies both from the countries of origin and of destination: Ministries of Labour, Public employment services, Ministries or other bodies in charge of legal migration, Recognition bodies etc. These official bodies are supposed to be in charge of designing the modalities of the partnerships.

(ii) In Bangladesh: Field coordination centers, Migration Cells, Advisory centers or similar, with official bodies representatives. In line with the legislation and the requirements from the CoD, and in agreement with Bangladeshi authorities, it should be arranged whose responsibility the training and certification is, as well as – the whole monitoring of the process. There are different models in place: Foreign languages could be provided by Bangladeshi schools and universities, in case of prepared lectures, or by cultural institutes of the CoO, or at least – certified by them. Vocational training programmes should be commonly designed by the two sides, after agreeing on the skills sets and curricula, and provision could be delivered either by the Bangladeshi training centres under the supervision of bodies of the CoD, or as a joint venture and also – with the participation of employers from the CoD.

(iii) In the countries of destination: Visa application authorities, Training institutions, Employers and their organisations, Welcome and integration centres etc.

Training and certification institutions in the CoD, as well as employers and their organisation should participate in the design of the curricula and training programme, as well as in the certification/recognition process.

(iv) Recruitment Agencies

Usually, private Recruitment Agencies from both sides participate in the selection process and in arranging administrative procedures. Some of them could have also coordination functions in finding relevant partners on the ground and organising their work according to the respective requirements of the national legislation or the funding programme (see the Italian WorkAgency).

4. Strengths of the model

- The model is well known across the countries like Germany and Bangladesh. This would allow building on the traditions and lessons learnt and avoiding identified deficits and shortcomings.

¹⁹⁹ Angenendt, Steffen, Nadine Knapp and David Kipp: Germany is Looking for Foreign Labour: How to make recruitment development-orientated, sustainable and fair, SWP Research Paper, March 2023, Berlin

- The model has pronounced characteristics of a Talent Partnerships model, as it strongly contributes to the development of the labour market and the skills development systems both in the CoO and the CoD.
- Vocational training that is aligned with higher (international) standards also improves opportunities for employment in the domestic labour market.
- Bridging/intermediary organisations' work in the field upon arrangement/approval of the official institutions is another feature. The Italian pilot project, referred to above was pre-approved by the MLSP, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and is being actively supported by the Italian Embassy in Dhaka. In such a way, at least on the ground, all important Italian stakeholders act together.
- There is as well, cooperation between the stakeholders from the two sides.
- At the same time, these partnerships open up new legal pathways for skilled workers who are willing to leave their home country and whose job skills match those needed in the destination country's labour market.
- The model is suitable as well for low-level qualifications according to the EQF. Such are in demand in all four EU MS, and the new legislation in Germany puts a particular emphasis on this group of workers.
- The model is particularly suitable for a type of "in-company training" of multinational companies. They provide uniform technical training with some variations according to the local market, see Box 34.

► **Box 34: Examples of in-company training projects, to be considered in TP models**

1. The example of the Porsche Training and recruitment Centre in Manila, the Philippines: Facing skilled labour shortages in its foreign markets, Porsche has created its own training centres for mechatronics engineers, who are trained in their home country. These workers are then employed in several Porsche factories across the globe, mainly in the Middle East. The project, which is carried out together with the Catholic NGO Don Bosco Mondo, focuses on helping disadvantaged youth lift themselves out of poverty by providing vocational training and employment at Porsche. Innovative and cost-effective, the program features digital and multilingual education modules.
2. Similar approaches are being applied in the international B2B and B2C services, in fintech industries etc. which helps creating an international pool of skilled labour that could be employed anywhere in the world and this contributes to raising the general skills level in the respective countries – be it the CoO or the CoD.
3. Recently, following the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Migration, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) started using the development-policy potential and international competitive advantage generated in recent year by GIZ, its subordinate implementing organization in two new BMZ projects that address regular labour migration in the sense of the triple win: One is a project co-funded through the EU Trust Fund, which aims to create legal migration pathways by offering vocational training in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt; the other is the Partnership Approaches for Development-Oriented Vocational-Training and Labour Migration project, which is intended to make a cross-regional contribution to development-oriented vocational-training and labour migration in the pilot countries of Ecuador, Mongolia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

4. Shortcomings and potential risks

- The model relies on the cooperation commitment of the CoD and CoO and depends on the willingness and motivation of the employers to participate.
- Coordination potential of the intermediary organizations is crucial for the scheme to succeed. In the Italian pilot project, actors like training schools in Bangladesh in cooperation with Italian language and VET training programmes and the relevant institutions should work together and design and provide the training and certify the results according to the needs of the employers.
- As many of the activities are privately run, good communication with the official authorities in the CoD is needed, in order to ensure smooth procedures. The latter and the “bureaucracy” are seen as serious challenges by the interviewed stakeholder²⁰⁰.

Concluding remarks

This model targets young and/or skilled or semi-skilled workers by offering relevant training activities in the country of origin prior to moving abroad (technical, foreign languages, cultural awareness and civic competences, or similar). In this way, the skilled worker fulfils already all necessary requirements already in the country of origin before they get recruited by companies in the destination country. Recognition, validation or sort of a recognised by the future employer certification comes in addition to the training, so that no further recognition procedures are needed in the CoD.

Features and advantages, relevant to the TP concept are:

- For the country of origin (CoO): Eases burden on the labour market; Builds capacity in vocational education and training and skills development in the CoD to better prepare domestic labour force and future labour migrants; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration;
- For the employees: Prevents travelling to the CoD with no relevant skills and recognised qualification and being trapped in precarious situations; Ensures upgrading skills and competences in the familiar circumstances of CoO; Limited risks for not responding to the requirements of the employers in the CoD. All working conditions previously defined and agreed upon, before leaving the country.
- For the country of destination (CoD): Addressing skills shortages according to the requirements of the employers; Avoiding the risks to get employees with not corresponding skills.

The model relies as well on the successful pilot projects of Bangladesh with South Korea and Japan, which is a good starting point for building on known experience. The Model No 3 is seen as a promising channel for regular labour migration, particularly in Germany and Italy, because it is suitable for countries with experience and intermediary bodies in development cooperation. In case of a common EU-led approach, countries like Romania and Greece could join. The model is as well applicable in case of in-company training and posted workers – in such a case – for all interested countries.

²⁰⁰ Interview, representatives of WorkAgency Italy, 25/03/2024

The Talent Partnerships models at a glance

There is a broad understanding and agreement on the important fundamentals, principal characteristics and main functionalities of the potential Talent Partnerships models. The Talent Partnerships (TP) are expected to meet at the minimum the following pressing needs: on one hand – to address the EU MS skills shortages in a short-term and on the other hand – to avoid brain drain and even more – to contribute to the development of the skills context and talent pool in Bangladesh itself. The TP are in line with the understanding, that labour migration not only has economic benefits, but also improves overall migration management as it helps to strengthen the cooperation with countries of origin and transit, including with the aim to reduce irregular migration. They should be beneficial for all participating parties and contribute to addressing existing challenges linked to skills development and shortages, labour market and decent employment opportunities, sustainable development and growth of economy. Such an approach reflects a triple-win perspective: i) supplying labour force to destination countries, ii) reducing domestic unemployment rates, earning remittances through Overseas Bangladeshis and ensuring skills and economy development, and iii) bringing about benefits to migrants themselves and their families, offering good and fair employment perspectives home and abroad. These main characteristics of the concept of Global Skills Partnerships are present, although not in equal proportions in all three Talent Partnerships models.

The first Model has a stronger focus on the financial aspect (highly skilled workers, who receive high salaries and would be able to send high remittances to their own countries) and the third Model - has the strongest focus on skills development and capacity building.

The second model relies on a stronger tradition, and the third has still to prove its practicality, although in some bilateral cooperation projects, its advantages have already been validated. The first model focuses on some emerging concepts like “skills first approach” and “applying recognition only when necessary” and still has to prove its strengths.

While TPs of the first and second type are primarily concerned with labour-market shortages in the destination country, the third type seeks to match similar patterns of skilled-worker demand in destination and origin countries. Thus, when recruiting qualified skilled workers, programs of type 1 TP try to ensure that the partner country has a surplus of such workers who lack job opportunities on that country’s domestic labour markets. The third model, by contrast, seeks to expand the pool of skilled labour in both partner countries (ultimately aiming at achieving “brain gain”).

All three TP Models would depend very much on the active role of the employers, efficient and if possible – digitalised administrative procedures, sustainable funding sources, good working cooperation mechanisms between all involved stakeholders and sound political framework²⁰¹. The TP can function only in the presence of sufficient demand by companies. In order to ensure that this is the case, such programs should focus initially on occupations that are currently experiencing a labour shortage, or which are expected to do so in the future. That is why they

²⁰¹ Bertelsmann Foundation  Fostering transnational skills partnerships in Germany  Policy Brief 
Migration, May 2020

should be designed and implemented as demand-driven, responsive, agile and cost-effective programmes. They should be relevant and useful to private companies/ private recruitment agencies/ private training centres, while engaging and developing GoB TVET centres & institutions on a long-term basis. TP models should facilitate bilateral multi-stakeholder partnerships with basis both in Bangladesh and the EU MS destination countries and seek to raise awareness with companies and recruitment agencies on transparent, trusted and efficient ways of third country skilled labour recruitment.

The TP models promise to realize synergies in the training and recruitment of skilled workers that benefit all stakeholders. However, experience shows that due to high operational costs, they often suffer from an unfavourable cost-benefit ratio if they prove unable to scale the number of participants rapidly. In fact, there are particularly the initial investments in small pilot projects that are large in relation to the number of graduates generated. In the future, one solution for the cost-intensive startup financing could be public-private partnerships, a mixed-finance approach involving the state, private sector entities and civil society organizations plus multi-country and/or even – regional (EU?) schemes.

Public funds could be used to support the design stage, the evaluation of model projects by research teams, and any accompanying capacity-building measures within the partner countries' VET systems. This has already been the case in several pilot projects in North Africa, which have been funded using EU or World Bank resources. Public-sector support is also particularly important in the development of language-learning programs abroad, which account for a significant portion of the overall costs. In many countries of origin, the languages of the potential CoD are not widely spoken, and language institutes like Goethe Institut are not available everywhere. At the same time, the lack of sufficient local language-teaching capacities can make it more difficult for programmes to scale and can hamper recognition process. On the other hand - to the extent possible, the employer doing the hiring should cover additional costs associated with the vocational training for the skilled workers who will be coming to the EU MS. This can be regarded as an investment in the company's skilled workforce. Here, the funding model for GIZ's triple-win program, which relies on a placement fee paid by the interested employer, appears particularly sustainable. This approach will be implemented also in the private companies driven Italian project with Bangladesh.

Last but not least – all three TP Models depend on various socio-political factors in the EU MS such as political priorities and climate of the receiving country, migration and integration sensitiveness and preparedness of societies, the role and engagement of businesses and the strong voice of workers representatives in commonly discussing and designing labour migration policies and the effectiveness of development cooperation policies in making use of the advantages of the mutual beneficial partnerships with other countries.

Table 2: An overview of the TP Models

	TP model 1	TP model 2	TP model 3
Description of the model	TP on highly skilled workers	TP on Training and Recognition in the CoD	TP on VET training in the CoO
Target group	Highly skilled workers (ICT, construction, regulated professions)	Young people and low-middle or semi-skilled workers	Semi-skilled/not skilled
Training activities	Pre-departure, in the CoO: short-term, adaptation training - Language training - Intercultural - Technical (from the type of Micro credentials)	- Pre-departure preparatory training in the CoO; - Full or compensatory training to reach requested skills level at the CoD	- Pre-departure training in the CoO: - Language - VET - Intercultural training
Recognition	Only if needed; compulsory for regulated professions, if possible – procedures to start in the CoO	Recognition in the CoD	Recognition/Certification – in the CoO Or Validation/recognition – in the CoD
Characteristics	- Based on the philosophy of the Blue Card Framework with or without possessing the respective qualifications: - Promoting “first skills” approach - Recognition of skills and qualifications is not compulsory (except for regulated professions) - Strong role and responsibilities of the employers; employer-led model: the employers should have expressed their needs and should accept the foreign worker as one that corresponds to the skills requirements.	- Traditional approach for following training to top up labour migrants’ skills in the CoD (including apprenticeships) - Targeting comparability of degree obtained at the CoO and/or opportunities to upgrade their skills against the standards required in the CoD - Possibilities for working while studying - A longer way of occupying a full position yet offers all preconditions for a decent job with all benefits, like the citizens of the CoD.	- Targets young and/or skilled or semi-skilled workers by offering relevant training activities in the CoO prior to moving abroad. - Training activities in the CoO, provided in cooperation: - after skills mapping, addressing both skills shortages in CoD and skills development in prospective sectors in CoO - covering foreign language, vocational training, cultural/civic awareness - potentially training “home track” and “away track” students

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	• Mobility between jobs, employers, EU countries (for Blue Card holders) • Relevant to highly skilled specialists from the ICT sector, well skilled workers from the construction sector and for regulated professions of nurses and caregivers. • Stronger focus on the skills shortages in the CoD, compared to Model 3 • Suitable both for long-term and for circular migration	• Stronger focus on the skills shortages in the CoD, compared to Model 3 • Suitable for a permanent or long-term migration, although there are examples across the countries of circular migration too, especially in the case of youths' training and exchange.	• Suitable for countries with experience and intermediary bodies in development cooperation • Well-applicable model in case of in-company training, workers with lower skills levels, aiming at upgrading and updating them.
Potential for the sectors professions/workers	ICT, regulated (caregiving); skilled construction workers Further focus on transformation-relevant sectors, occupations and skills could be of a big advantage	All non-regulated professions, and particularly good perspectives in the sectors of hospitality, construction	All non-regulated professions, all sectors
Potential to be used in the countries	All countries	Germany, Italy as countries where labour migrants would reside on a longer-term, after getting a fully recognized qualification and decent working positions (because of favourable payment conditions); Italy and Greece – also - for shorter-term migration; Romania – in case arrangements on recognition made.	Germany, Italy; Greece and Romania for posted workers, in-company training All countries in case of a common/regional/EU-led approach
Features relevant to the TP paradigm	• For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Transfer of knowledge; Builds capacity in	• For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Builds skills and competences of the workforce, which can be used	• For CoO: Eases burden on the labour market; Transfer of knowledge; Builds capacity in vocational education and

EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership Programme Preparatory Assessments

	future-related skills and competences; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration; • For the employees: Occupy attractive and decent work positions, without further delays and lengthy procedures; • For CoD: Addresses shortage occupations; Attracts talents: Raises productivity and competences.	in the CoO in case of circular migration; Pre-departure training may also raise capacity of domestic institutions to better prepare future labour migrants; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration; • For the employees: Possibilities for working while training; Avoiding the risk of remaining unemployed or hired for positions that require lower skills and qualifications. • For CoD: Addressing shortage occupations on a long-term basis, as the model enhances the skills pool according to the specific requirements of the country.	training and skills development in the CoD to better prepare domestic labour force and future labour migrants; Transfer of funds (remittances); Potentially builds knowledge/skills and networks, in the event of return migration; • For the employees: Prevents travelling to the CoD with no relevant skills and recognised qualification and being trapped in precarious situations; Ensures upgrading skills and competences in the familiar circumstances of CoO; Limited risks for not responding to the requirements of the employers in the CoD; All working conditions previously defined and agreed upon, before leaving the country. • For CoD: addressing skills shortages according to the requirements of the employers. Avoiding the risks to get employees with not corresponding skills.
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Chapter 4: Recommendations and the way forward

The three Talent Partnership models, proposed above, are expected to comply with the main characteristics of the TP initiative to combine support for mobility schemes with capacity building and skills development. They should also address shortages in certain sectors of EU Member States and help business communities on both sides build the skills in demand²⁰². This approach aims at creating new legal pathways in the context of labour migration, skills matching and addressing labour shortages, as well as - maximise the development impact of migration in the country of origin. Among other things, they aim at helping to create or strengthen an enabling environment and infrastructure for labour migration in the target countries, beyond simply mobility that can offer an interesting perspective to develop the potential for cooperation with Bangladesh. The TP between Bangladesh and the EU/EU Member States would be highly effective as well, in regularising migration pathways at the functional level.

The TP models should be built on a comprehensive policy framework, as well as funding, based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries.²⁰³ They are as well supposed to contribute to achieving the SDG 10.7 - to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed policies.

What could be recommended in addition to the lessons learnt from previous projects and partnerships mechanisms for the operationalisation of the proposed TP models comes in the text of this chapter below.

1) Legislative arrangements, and beyond

Some EU MS have undertaken recently legislative amendments and based on this - developed administrative and organizational arrangements to support fair regular recruitment and migration – with Italy and Germany representing the most pronounced examples. It is too early to see results of the new amendments, but their orientation is towards mutual beneficial arrangements, easing the whole recruiting and migration process, valuing not only qualifications but also skills (“skills first approach”), re-orientation towards available “supply” to match the existing “demand”, relying on the active involvement of employers, among the main ones, which design a whole new outlook of the labour migration policy making and implementation. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the recently introduced measures and principles would be needed to support the implementation process and give feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of the new labour migration approach.

In countries like Romania and Greece recent legislative arrangements focus on aspects of particular relevance for the situation in the country like for example documenting/regularising migrants across the country in Greece or validation of prior learning in Romania.

²⁰² Communication from the Commission on Attracting Skills and Talents to the EU, 27 April 2022.

²⁰³ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum/legal-pathways-european-union_en; See as well Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration, EMN-OECD INFORM, European Commission, March 2022

In case of decision for a country to join a TP Model with Bangladesh, further legislative arrangements might be needed, like for example – opening up some recognition procedures in Romania for labour migrants from third countries (in this case – from Bangladesh) and covering higher qualifications of EQF/NQF or addressing some gaps in visa or permit regimes in case of labour rights disputes in Greece, for example.

In case, still not applied, governments should as well adopt, review and, where necessary, strengthen national laws and regulations in the field of labour, migration, human rights and criminal laws and other regulatory measures relating to recruitment, in line with international standards, to address the entire spectrum of recruitment practices, including fraudulent and abusive practices that may lead to trafficking in persons and other forms of exploitation, not to exclude more substantial and structured legislative amendments.

It is worth noting that conclusions and recommendations from reviewed policies and projects, as well as – statements of national stakeholders - called for further policy discussions and for formulating and operationalising policies beyond (or before) the legislative steps - in the whole philosophy and orientation of the migration policies. Strengthening their links to the labour and economic policies, as well as questions of cultural sensitivity, national identity, security, xenophobia might need to be addressed in policy debates and awareness raising. Finally, streamlining and simplifying administrative procedures (in some cases – on both the EU and Bangladeshi side), and visa regimes and permit systems in the EU MS is still to be progressed upon.

Further comprehensive research might be needed in some of the EU MS, followed by a policy dialogue, policy making, possibly – pilot projects, EU-level initiatives and similar. Aspects like the economic case of labour migration, comprehensive and interconnected labour market-labour migration policy etc. are still to be discussed in some EU MS. The ILO research capacity and EU-led initiatives might provide good framework conditions for this.

2) Initiating and implementing an EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnerships Programme/TP Model might be accompanied by more operational arrangements or agreements between the institutions on both sides (plus private bodies), or even – MoU between two partnering countries.

Although the Talent Partnerships Models are supposed to operate in the context and applying the principles of the EU labour migration framework, such operational arrangements may address concrete country specific conditions and requirements for receiving workers in individual EU MSs according to their respective skills and language requirements and complying with the respective regulatory requirements for overseas recruitment (work visas, etc.). In addition to this, concrete and effective implementation mechanisms (for example – Implementation plans, see the example of Italy), initiatives, tools and capacity building programmes could be envisaged. There are as well traditions of concluding bilateral agreements between the Public Employment Services of the EU MS and third countries for recruiting and placing skilled workers with professional training. Such has for example the German Bundesagentur für Arbeit in Germany. In such formalised agreements special clauses

could be arranged for the labour migrants from the partner countries, which are more favourable compared to other countries with no agreements

3) A non-exhaustive list of areas and aspects of a TP programme (and concrete operational arrangements, where and if applicable) between the EU/EU MS and Bangladesh that will make the TP prototype models described in Chapter 3 above work and operational are given below:

▪ **Collaboration on labour market information and analyses.**

This component of a TP programme and a model plays a key role in gathering relevant information on sector growth and skills developments to address employers' requirements. Reliable and up-to-date data and information related to the labour market needs and shortages, as well as information on skills available and training capacities are crucial yet remain a challenge. The reliability of the information that the sources and surveys contain and the periodicity for their updates should be ensured. All this requires labour market analyses on both the demand and supply sides for informing policymakers on employment trends in the global context, improving their understanding of the nature and extent of demand for skills, and helping them make well-informed decisions on the devising of policies and mechanisms to equip individuals with skills needed in the present and the future. This includes (i) analyses of the Bangladeshi labour market to identify available workforce/skills and labour market needs of EU MS participating in the Talent Partnership, aimed to ensure better matching; (ii) analyses of skills and qualification frameworks in Bangladesh in priority sectors for the Talent Partnership, with a view to informing the training/skills development and facilitating recruitment of migrants in EU MS. Training institutes and trainees need to learn about employment prospects in key occupations on the basis of available information that is easily digestible and simple to model after. Mapping the key actors and their capacity for potential cooperation belongs here as well. Competencies often formally lie with public employment services which have insufficient capacities²

Any initiative under a future EU Talent Partnership with Bangladesh will require support in mapping and developing material for the timely dissemination of labour market information (e.g. on employment opportunities, the human resource and skills needs of key industries, etc.) to skilled workers.

The philosophy and the potential functionalities of the future dedicated Talent Partnership platform could be as well considered in using the existing experience in the EU MS and Bangladesh. A mixed approach, based on well-founded research on skills, and making the most of available national and EU level platforms and tools (including digital) tools, could be envisaged here (particularly – the Cedefop and Europass ones). The experience of Italy should be taken into consideration in the sense that not too many platforms are needed, because searching information through them is also time-consuming. In addition, the information there should be regularly updated and monitored. Joint efforts, aligned to the future EU-let platform in this regard should be explored and considered. In partnership with the EU/EU MS the existing experience in Bangladesh should be evaluated, a comprehensive capacity needs assessment of Bangladeshi institutions in this regard could be conducted and then – capacity building supported in the near future.

- **Enhancing the skills of current and potential workers from Bangladesh to boost their employability in the national and international labour market**

Training activities in the CoO and the CoD may include the following:

In the CoO: Conducting market assessment from labour market information systems and platforms to ensure better matching of skills; Mapping of standards and qualifications; Providing pre-departure training to ensure that every worker has the skills to receive a well-paid job and decent employment.

More in detail:

- Creating or referencing to common or similar *standards* to enable transparency and comparison between skills and qualifications:

Building on the international experience (see up in Chapter 1), once skills partnership is arranged, countries align their requirements to deliver similar labour market outcomes. This includes work in a synchronized way on occupational, education and training (qualification) and assessment *standards*, as well as (usually – to a more limited degree) – on the education and training provision in the partner countries.

As such work usually requires a lot of experts' and administrative capacity, the future TP may develop *joint 'core' standards*. Those can use *international standards and sectoral frameworks*, for example in sectors like transport, ICT, construction, trade and welding, where such exist.

In case that EU sector skills strategies or Sector Skills Alliances or occupational profiles, curricula etc. are available, these could be used in the EU MS-Bangladesh talent partnerships and cooperation. This is the case with the construction sector, where an EU Sector Skills Strategy, and Sector Skills Alliance and Blueprint exist: <https://constructionblueprint.eu/>. There is as well a European Software Skills Alliance that has elaborated a Report on How to Design Software Professionals' Curricula²⁰⁴ etc.

Classifications like ESCO, can be applied as a sort of 'fixed' terminological point allowing for the analysis of national learning outcomes-based data. It is explicitly designed to work at international level and aims to be relevant across national labour markets and education and training systems.

- For the departing specialists, the specificity in the training related to the CoD requirements should be taken into consideration. Language and pre-departure integration training for the workers who will participate in the mobility, possibly involving Bangladeshi universities and training institutes, as well as EU Member States' cultural institutes, ought to be provided. It should be considered that acquiring the foreign language of the CoD might become a stumbling block in the whole recognition process, as the respective languages are not widely spoken, the

²⁰⁴ <https://softwareskills.eu/>; https://softwareskills.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ESSA_How-to-Design-Software-Professionals-Curricula_FINAL-DRAFT.pdf

training is costly and may require longer hours to achieve the recommended level. In case there is no guarantee for long-term employment, this could become a disincentive for potential migrants to participate in the mobility scheme.

Where applicable, curricula and modalities, including competency standards for training will be identified and commonly defined. The needs in terms of further facilitation of recognition of qualifications and diplomas will also be discussed. One of the options is to develop joint certification programmes, which will streamline efforts towards improved quality and governance of the training and most importantly – will offer a relatively straightforward means of skills recognition. This requires cooperation at the operational level between qualification, recognition and training institutions from both the EU and Bangladeshi side.

If not whole joint certification programmes, at least – joint micro-credentials would be feasible to develop or jointly adapt/use from the existing pools and projects. [Micro-credentials](#) are certified short-term learning experiences which offer a flexible way to acquire specific skills or knowledge. Many of these are online training courses, thus offering opportunities for “anywhere anytime” training. This is convenient for personal service workers occupied on a seasonal basis, such as in the food and hospitality sectors.

There are plenty of examples in this regard:

- Micro-credentials familiarize participants at the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences with the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation processes and technologies in the hospitality sector²⁰⁵. The online course totals to around 135 hours of independent learning on topics like new technologies, critical assessment of digital tools, the financial and management benefits and challenges of digitalisation, and digital business development.
- Transversal upskilling could also be achieved using the material developed by various EU-funded projects that relate to the jobs occupied by personal service workers. For example, the Erasmus+ [Life Climate Smart Chefs](#) project involves European chefs in the promotion of EU Climate Policy and the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) with the aim of popularising the sustainable gastronomy industry. Also, the Digital Skills Evaluation Tool and Support ([DIGISETS](#)) project aims to address the mismatch between existing digital skill levels and needed skill profiles in the tourism and retail sectors. It involves experienced organisations and training providers from 4 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Spain and Greece) and will result in an evaluation toolkit for organisations. This will involve broad hard and soft digital skills and will be designed for education professionals working with employees in tourism and retail sector. In its most recent [report](#), the programme has already identified digital skill gaps in the tourism and retail sectors of these 4 countries.
- Novelties from other countries could be considered, for example – for designing a skills portfolio or skills passports to make skills and qualifications transparent and comparable across different frameworks.

²⁰⁵ [South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences](#)

In the country of destination: Allowing options to enter destination country and start working while fulfilling part of the qualifying training programme/acquiring qualifications gaps is another option to be implemented in the TP models. Apprenticeships-like trainings, where they are offered, can be a good option in this regard. An interesting approach is the offer to participate in a shorter-term qualification programme (Germany) or training, which exists around the EU MS and which allows for working while studying. In the German case, there is a requirement for a training programme to be agreed before leaving to the CoD. This could become a basis for a labour migration channel within the TP Model 2.

Developing training capacities and matching existing skills and labour shortages is a major challenge in any skills partnership. Different approaches were mentioned by KII interviewees that could be taken into account in the future EU-Bangladesh TP models:

- Supporting / strengthening public actors dealing with vocational training / skills development and employment to appropriately assess their own capacities and improve their ability to link training and labour market;
- Supporting the private sector in the dialogue with public authorities for assessing shortages and needs of the different market sectors;
- Supporting training centres / actors to deliver high quality / appropriate training services that respond to labour market needs and prepare individuals for the national (and in some cases for the international) labour market.
- Further diversify training offer to ensure that important labour market shortages in the low- and medium-skills sectors can be addressed systematically, sustainably and in full respect of migrants' rights²⁰⁶.

▪ **One particular aspect that historically has often led to separate bilateral or multilateral agreements is “the mutual recognition” or qualifications.**

The TP should provide for arrangements on the procedures and steps to ‘allow’ holders of qualifications from a partner country to automatically “access” the territory of the host country and operate there. Those arrangements should be in line with existing legislation in the partners countries, the new evolution of national practices and European policies and the capacity of the respective stakeholders to implement them. In case a verification of documents is needed, an operational level cooperation between the professional organizations should be envisaged in the agreement and in practice, in order to investigate details of the vocational training completed, skills and competences acquired, professional qualifications obtained, and professional experience gathered.

Recent gathering of experts in labour migration²⁰⁷ identified the following principles and activities in the field:

²⁰⁶ ICMPD, Partnerships for mobility at the crossroads: Lessons Learnt From 18 Months of Implementation of EU Pilot Projects on Legal Migration, by Diana Stănescu, Brussels, 2020

²⁰⁷ “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023, Brussel

- Systematic: systematically reduce barriers related to recognition of skills and qualifications that impede the possibility for third-country nationals to legally migrate to that Member State, to secure employment that reflects their skills and experience, and to successfully integrate into that Member State's labour market, thereby addressing skills and labour shortages in the Member State.
- 'Skills-first' approach: emphasise a person's full talent and potential and mitigate the risk of overqualification. Procedures should avoid basing assessments of third-country nationals solely on their qualifications. Recognition of qualifications should be used in combination with an assessment of skills and experiences wherever possible.
- Consider exemptions from labour market tests for recruitment in occupations or sectors experiencing skills shortages and are encouraged to envisage in particular such exemptions for SMEs.
- Procedures should be completed rapidly, should involve a limited administrative burden for employers and third country nationals, and be applied in a clear and transparent manner. Member States should provide particular support to SMEs.

In general terms, recognition procedures should be simplified; they could become part of already conducted targeted training according to approved and agreed with CoD programmes; or be even avoided when not required by the national legislation or replaced by recognition of prior learning or validation procedures. Such procedures will orient employers to on what a qualification gained outside the EU means in practice, ensuring third country nationals are able to perform the jobs they are recruited for and have comparable qualifications to their EU counterparts. The "skills first" approach is already being used by many businesses when recruiting, recognising the value not only of formal qualifications but also other demonstrable skills and experiences necessary to identify the right candidates for vacancies, with successful outcomes so far. For example, as digital professions are in general unregulated, the recommendation advocates a skills first approach for recruitment to such posts. These professions can also draw on the revised Blue Card Directive, which has introduced equivalence as regards skills attested by professional experience and comparable higher education qualifications in some ICT jobs. For these occupations, Member States should not impose a formal recognition procedure as a precondition for admission.

For the upcoming TP projects, the assessment process in the Bangladesh should be jointly organized and supervised and thus – where possible further recognition in the CoO avoided. The Western Balkans regulation in Germany is often given as a successful migration approach. There, labour force from Western Balkan countries could immigrate legally without having their qualifications or language skills tested. To be eligible, workers had to prove that they have an approved by the PES job offer from a German firm. In the case with Bangladesh, when reaching a certain level of dialogue and trust for particular cases, occupations and target groups of workers, such an approach could be considered for a jointly arranged quota of workers.

Where recognition recommendable or compulsory – simpler and faster ways could be recommended, like for example – certification of vocational skills and experience, recognition by Chambers, validation etc.

For the future, the platform for the EU Talent Pool will promote the visibility of the information resources related to recognition and validation procedures in the participating Member States to ensure that candidates apply with the best possible prior knowledge on prospects for having their qualifications recognised and skills validated.

- Partnerships might as well include, **monitoring and reporting mechanisms**, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and a code of conduct (CoC) for maintaining transparency and accountability.
- **Arrangements on practical procedures for implementing all phases of the migration process** (such as recruitment practices, mapping skills demand and supply, internships, vocational training, integration measures, circular migration,) and specifying the roles and responsibilities of all involved actors (particularly not to be missed - business involvement, diaspora engagement) can help operationalising the whole process. leverage more positive effects in both countries of origin and destination. Though, a certain level of flexibility in design and planning, as well as simplicity of processes should be taken into consideration.
- **Capacity building and cooperation elements that could be envisaged, are:**
 - For Bangladesh: to increase their specific knowledge and develop instruments and mechanisms in the areas of labour market, vocational training, recognition of qualifications and regular migration management to implement mobility schemes that are labour market and development oriented. THAMM project, for example provides capacity building in different relevant areas and accompanies the partner institutions in setting up small scale mobility schemes, as well as contacts, networks, and standardized processes, in order to embed them within the relevant institutions.
 - For Bangladesh government, employment institutions, vocational training institutions and private sector to effectively network and discuss learning experiences on safe, regular labour migration and mobility in regional and national exchange formats.
 - For relevant stakeholders from both sides to jointly develop a step-by-step approach for the implementation of labour mobility schemes between Bangladesh and EU MS.

In general terms:

- **Maintaining efficiency, accountability, and transparency at all stages of migration management and skills development**, and enhanced cooperation between key public agencies and private sector players involved in skilling, selection, recruitment, migration, and reintegration will be key to the success of any potential Talent Partnership between Bangladesh and the EU/EU MS.
- **Common EU interventions or participation in some EU-led and financed (pilot) initiatives might be useful for Greece and Romania**, in order to catch up with the experience Italy and Germany have already gathered. In addition to this, their country-specific experience with seasonal workers and big diasporas from neighbourhood countries citizens (from Moldova and from Albania) could be taken as a foundation to build upon when they start considering legal migration channels. Fully-fledged labour migration

schemes with serious training components (national language, technical skills, cultural-integration programme), integration package (housing, family support, schooling for children), as part of a TP from the model type 2, might be a good starting point for attracting and/or keeping/regularising labour migrants in the respective country, particularly for low-to-medium skilled workers, which are missing and difficult to attract in the mentioned countries.

- **Economies of scale** through improved cooperation on legal migration between EU and Member State levels should be envisaged. Streamlining of all existing pilots, technical support and other interventions could lead to pooling of resources and a comprehensive approach. **Common tools and mechanisms** at EU level, to be developed in the framework of the Talent partnerships package, should be intensively used in the future mechanisms and agreements on legal migration between the EU MSs and third countries, like Bangladesh. And the other way around – commonly developed approaches and instruments in the prospective TP projects between the EU MS and Bangladesh could feed into the main characteristics and toolbox of the EU-wide applicable TP model for cooperation with partner countries.
- The risk of human-capital flight for countries of origin (**“brain drain”**) could be mitigated through collaboration to **support knowledge-sharing and skills-development in the country of origin**, ongoing research and monitoring to identify potential negative consequences for countries of origin, and **support for circular migration**, so that both sides can derive benefits from legal migration²⁰⁸.

4) Whole-of-government approach, policy coherence and institutionalised cooperation formats

- A **whole-of-government approach** would lead to coordinated and harmonized talent partnership approaches. The fragmented pilot projects from the past, targeting one or another segment from the whole migration process have collected relevant expertise. Yet, for the future, a structured and synchronized process with clearly identified roles and responsibilities throughout the whole procedure, from the start of the cooperation format to the placement and integration measures of workers in the CoD ought to be developed.
- **Some of the activities in the process might be further institutionalized**, like for example - a **dedicated and separate migration/cooperation unit or cell** can be initiated, following in the footsteps of previous successes in this regard. After signing an agreement with the respective Malaysian authority: The BMET opened up a Malaysian unit with dedicated desks officers and staff members and defined a set of responsibilities to oversee the migration of workers from Bangladesh to Malaysia. Advice centres for jobs, migration and reintegration, known as **migration hubs**, are being implemented by the German Federal Government together with the partner countries’ public employment services. The MoU between Italy and Egypt foresaw the creation of a **local coordination office** by the Italian

²⁰⁸ “Labour Mobility and Skills Shortages: Connecting the Dots” 21-22 November 2023, Brussel

Ministry of Labour to support the process of matching labour demand and supply within the BLMA.

Similarly, a separate Talent Partnership Cell (TPC) could be introduced within the BMET. In gradual progression, and as the situation requires, this TPC may engage, in various roles, a range of relevant stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the EUD to Bangladesh and EU MSs, employers, recruitment agencies, and TTCs.

Initiatives could be bilateral or of group countries (EU-labelled) according to joint interests to best adapt to existing capacities and policy priorities.

- **Policy coherence** at national and partnership's level and throughout the whole migration cycle is needed to allow smooth mobility of talents. **Policy dialogue, cooperation formats, coordination of partner interventions** at local level, in countries of origin, should be strengthened to ensure strategic engagement with all relevant stakeholders from both sides.
- TP models should facilitate bilateral **multi-stakeholder partnerships** with basis both in Bangladesh and the EU MS destination countries. The multi-stakeholders' approach is key for the success of the TP models. Such an approach aims at building a bridge between Bangladesh and EU Member States on several levels (institutional, civil society, private sector). This means engagement of social partners, diaspora organizations, migrant workers themselves and the private sector next to the cooperation with different ministries and employment and recognition authorities, actors at local and regional levels, training providers, among the main ones.
- **Private and public sector working together in cooperation with workers' organisations** ensures balanced and cooperative dialogues at all levels. The private sector, including professional associations, is already involved in previous and current skills and mobility partnerships and TP pilot projects, particularly in providing relevant information on skills shortages, identifying and matching of labour market needs and skills of migrant workers, design of curricula and delivery of training in third countries. Public sector investments together with the indispensable contributions from the private sector ensure the longer-term sustainability of such activities.

Yet, cooperation between public and private stakeholders remains challenging. The coordination of actors at different levels needs dedicated time and resources to be effective. Understanding private sector motivations for mobility schemes and keeping continuous dialogue and partnerships with employers and their organisation would lead to a productive multi-stakeholder engagement²⁰⁹. More structural engagement and exchange with relevant bodies (such as chambers of commerce, employers' associations and others), and investment into trust building, are needed in both national and international contexts. TP should explicitly support work with SME representatives to support small and medium enterprises, which otherwise could not have the potential to recruit foreign workers on their one.

²⁰⁹ ICMPD Partnerships for mobility at the crossroads Lessons Learnt From 18 Months of Implementation of EU Pilot Projects on Legal Migration, by Diana Stănescu Brussels, 2020

Even though some partners may lack capacity, resources or experience, it would be wise to have them on board and even make them a part of the steering committee. The positive effect is to increase their participation and enhance their capacities in labour migration governance. This means that the Talent Partnership programmes with Bangladesh, should envisage exploring the possibility of adapting a G2G Plus modality, with initial piloting done through BOESL, and gradually opening up to include private sector recruitment agencies and other private stakeholders.

5) Ensuring fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers should be in line with ILO General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and the Fair Recruitment Initiative²¹⁰. Recruitment should take place in a way that respects, protects and fulfils internationally recognized human rights, including the fundamental principles and rights at work, and relevant international labour standards. Recruitment should respond to established labour market needs, and not serve as a means to displace or diminish an existing workforce, to lower labour standards, wages, or working conditions, or to otherwise undermine decent work. Recruitment should take into account policies and practices that promote efficiency, transparency and protection for workers in the process, such as mutual recognition of skills and qualifications. No recruitment fees or related costs should be charged to, or otherwise borne by, workers or jobseekers. All these should prevent migrant workers from being trapped into a spiral of exploitative work and abuse, including forced labour or trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

More than this, improving services to protect migrant workers should go throughout the whole migration cycle, including pre-departure/post arrival information, orientation and training and access to justice mechanisms.

Measures to achieve this may include: Conducting capacity building and sharing good international practices in line with the ILO standards; Regular monitoring of the recruitment agencies and practices as a whole, including through the potential introduction of a ranking system; Developing a Manual of key principles of fair recruitment; Awareness raising campaigns with recruitment agencies; Providing training for key governmental partners engaged in recruitment process; Introducing a “Seal of Quality for a fair and sustainable placement of skilled workers” or similar, following the German example in healthcare.

6) Talent Partnership should promote best practice placement and integration, based on international labour standards, decent work and fair recruitment principles etc.

Ensuring the protection of migrant workers’ and refugee rights in line with relevant international labour standards, as well as measures for improving working conditions and pay, ensuring regular and predictable working time and enabling a decent work-life balance belong here.

²¹⁰ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_536755.pdf

In general terms, often unsafe and precarious working conditions and uncertain access to social protection and to other socio-economic rights and discrimination are among the main encountered problems in the CoD to be addressed. Factors like illicit costs, salary deductions for migrant workers, low wage, long internships with low allowance, poor working conditions may motivate migrant workers to leave the recruiting employer in order to seek better jobs/other countries. Such developments shall be captured early by a **monitoring mechanism and vulnerability impact review mechanism**.

Development of **minimum standards of fair integration**, additionally tailored to the national Labour Market of the CoD would be recommendable. Together with labour law aspects they could be included in the pre-departure training of potential regular migrants²¹¹.

Addressing social aspects of employment & migration, incl. family accompanying migrant workers is another component of potential successful integration. It would be as well key to invest and support labour migrants with housing.

The promotion of intercultural skills is important to understand the working culture in the receiving country.

Initiating and supporting mentoring programs could be key of the success of labour migrants when arriving to the receiving country. Special support should be given in the following areas:

- o Mentors to support the language at the workplace or after work for specific target groups and be accessible right from the start of the job. A very good knowledge of the language of the CoD is in fact essential for the successful integration of the migrant worker.
- o Support to companies regarding legal advice and support when recruiting labour migrants
- o Use of existing platforms: A referral counselling and support structure is needed, e.g. online accessible and case-specific offers through a central online platform that supplements existing services.

7) Return and reintegration support

The driving element is the returnee's positive impact on the development of their communities of origin.

The TP models can build on the good practices from the Korean EPS and IM Japan models.

Support for returning to the CoO should start already in the host country. In Korea, for example, after discovering that returnees may take another role after going back to the CoO, training has shifted focus towards employment possibilities upon return to the home country in other roles.

²¹¹ Interview Jens Nieth, Mousa Outman, Faire Integration, 3rd April 2024

In addition, the country trains workers to become suppliers or qualified sales staff for their former Korean employers once they return home.

ICMPD has launched an information hub providing details on supporting services and the respective organisations. Such could be enhanced and upgraded, considering the following: Returnees can play an important role in facilitating the transfer of qualifications and skills to origin countries as they bring back skills, experience and entrepreneurship abilities which can support sustainable economic development. Yet, there might be few structural and circumstantial challenges that often prevent their socio-economic reintegration. When back home, returnees need to have access to up-to-date information about employment services and current labour market situation. Return might also happen to face high unemployment and economic hardship. The absence of sustainable, gender responsive, reintegration policies increase the likelihood of these populations to fall into poverty and / or engage into secondary migration or displacement. Policy measures could be taken to address all these challenges, as well as – to improve work ecosystem, with conditions of work and wages in countries of origin as main ones²¹².

TP models can support countries of origin to develop and implement standard based socioeconomic reintegration policies and strategies, building, among others on the [ILO guidelines on labour market reintegration](#) and [regional guidelines on effective return and reintegration of migrant workers](#). Support to reintegration, targeting particularly those in need of assistance, will be further up-scaled and strengthened, including through the provision of training and counselling to returning/prospective migrants and relevant skills development programmes that can help to reintegrate returning migrants and even be a motivation for voluntary return.

²¹² Concept note ILO project proposal on “Enhancing bilateral cooperation for regular, fair and effective labour migration governance between Italy and countries of origin in Asia (Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka)”

Concluding remarks

Talent Partnerships try to answer the question of how to use the skilled labour potential to address global challenges of dynamic technological development, digitalisation, climate change, demographic picture and since recent year – geopolitical turbulences, affecting traditional production lines, supply chains and trade. Securing skilled labour force is as well at the heart of economic growth and competitiveness.

The EU and the EU Member States together with their partner countries from around the world have piloted many ideas and run projects and initiatives, which are valuable source of expertise. Lessons learnt show that next to improving national skills development and labour market policies, regular labour migration is part of the answer. Using its potential for the transition from pilot projects to long-term measures for opening legal labour migration channels cannot happen without well designed concepts, political will, administrative preparedness, mutually beneficial partnerships and built capacity, employers' engagement and secured financing for their implementation. In order not just to repeat the previous experience, a critical reflection on current models is needed, and based on this – modernised vision, future-proof concepts, pioneering legislation and well-managed, yet flexible and pragmatic modes of their operationalisation might be a good way to move on. As theory argues and practice confirms, there is a good perspective for increased benefits for all.

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-wants-attract-400000-skilled-workers-abroad-each-year-2022-01-21/>

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. List of Key Informant Interviews

Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development	Dennis Röntgen, Unit G20 and migration: dennis.roentgen@bmz.bund.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development	Paula Krieg, Unit G20: Displacement and Migration: paula.krieg@bmz.bund.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Julia Schmieder, Unit II a 3: Monitoring and analysis of the labour market Labour market statistics; Financial issues of labour market policy: julia.schmieder@bmas.bund.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Thomas Kurz, Unit I 6: Measures for the integration of migrants into the labour market: thomas.kurz@bmas.bund.de
Skills Needs Analysis	Germany	Public sector	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Katrin Holländer, Unit I 5: Legal issues relating to the employment of foreign workers: katrin.hollaender@bmas.bund.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Public Employment Service	Gitte Richter, unit for labour migration from third countries: gitte.richter@arbeitsagentur.de and Zentrale.INT23@arbeitsagentur.de

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training	Alexander Studthoff, unit for recognition of foreign professional qualifications: studthoff@bibb.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Public sector	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training	Anke Bahl, unit for international requests and accreditation of foreign professional qualifications: bahl@bibb.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Other	German Economic Institute	Jeanette Michaelle Nintcheu: project on Make it in Germany Initiative: nintcheu@iwkoeln.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Other	German Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Sabine Kotsch, project on ProRecognition: kotsch.sabine@dihk.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Other	Indo-German Chamber of Industry for India	Denise Eichhorn, project on ProRecognition & Hand in Hand for International Talents: denise.eichhorn@indo-german.com
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Germany	Other	Federal Trade Union Confederation DGB	Jens Nieth, project on Fair Integration Centre, Integration through Qualification funding programme: j.nieth@iq-consult.de, K.Oetztuerk@iq-consult.de, Mousa Othman [IQ] and M.Othman@iq-consult.de
				Unit for Migration issues: carla.diquattro@interno.it; carmelita.ammendola@interno.it; chiara.impagliazzo@interno.it;

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
				silvana.lasaponara@interno.it; andrea.benvenga@interno.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Ministry of Interior	carmelita.ammendola@interno.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Ministry of Labour	Department for Immigration and Migration, Elisa Lo Grasso: elograsso@sviluppolavoroitalia.it; Elisa Filippetti: EFilippetti@lavoro.gov.it; DG Immigrazione Div 3: DGImmigrazioneDiv3@lavoro.gov.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Carmelita F. AMMENDOLA, Ministry of Interior/Ministero dell'Interno, JHA Expert/Esperto GAI, Permanent Representation of Italy to the European Union, carmelita.ammendola@interno.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Adriana Apollonio, JHA expert, Consigliere d'Ambasciata, Direzione Generale per gli italiani all'estero e le politiche migratory, Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, Adriana.apollonio@esteri.it

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Gianluca Brusco: gianluca.brusco@esteri.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Public Employment Services	Gianni Pizzino: formazionelavoro@unioncamere.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Public sector	Public Training Centre	centro@informagiovaniroma.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Other	Work Agency (private recruitment agency working on Bangladesh)	Michele Peloggio: mpeloggio@partner.workagency.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Other	Format (private recruitment agency)	Antonio Vecchio: avecchio@eformat.biz
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Italy	Other	ItalBangla community service	Shah M. Taifur Rahman: edsb@italbangla.net
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Daniela Busu, Inspectorate-General for Immigration, European Affairs and International Relations Unit: saeri.igi@mai.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Adrian Dragomanu, Inspectorate-General for Immigration: igi@mai.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity	Tania Grigore, Cabinet of the Minister for Labour in charge of labour migration: tania.grigore@mmuncii.gov.ro

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity	Irina Persa, Agenția Națională pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă ,Direcția Coordonarea Retelei Naționale EURES Acorduri si Relatii Internationale, irina.persa@anofm.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity	Bianca Mihaita, Unit for international labour migration: bianca.mihaita@mmuncii.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Cabinet of the Prime Minister's Office	Cabinet Ssds Gal: cabinet.ssd- gal@mmuncii.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Education	Programma Integra team: ufficioimmigrazione@immigrazione.roma.it
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	National Authority for Qualifications	Tiberiu Gabriel Dobrescu: office@anc.edu.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	National Employment Agency	Florin-Irinel Cotoșman: anofm@anofm.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Ministry of Education	National Authority for Qualifications, Mr. Virgil ION – director, virgil.ion@anc.edu.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	Premanent Representation of Romania towards the EU	Raducu-Catalin BURLACU, JHA Counsellor, Asylum, legal migration and integration, screening, SCIFA, raducu.burlacu@rpro.eu

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Public sector	National Center for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas	Gianina Chirazi: cnred@edu.gov.ro and gianina.chirazi@edu.gov.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	National Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Romania	international@cnslr-fratia.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Concordia Employers' Confederation	office@confederatia-concordia.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Multi Professional Solutions	Corina Constantin: office@mpsro.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Country Coordinator for Romania on TVET	Luciana Lazarescu: luciana.lazarescu@arps.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Foundation Romanian National Council for Refugees	office@cnrr.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Romanian Network for Migration Studies	web.romig@gmail.com
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Romania	Other	Romanian Trade Unionist	Felicia Rosioru: felicia.rosioru@law.ubbcluj.ro
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Public sector	Ministry of Education	General Secretariat for VET and LLL: gsvetll@minedu.gov.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Public sector	Ministry of Labour	Constantinos Agrapidas (Director at the General Directorate of Labour relations, kagrapidas@ypakp.gr and

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
				ypourgios_polites@yeka.gr and ypourgios_erg@yeka.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Public sector	Ministry of Interior	Ourania Stavropoulou, Permanent Secretary Migration & Asylum; Ministry of Interior, And info.rp@migration.gov.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Public sector	Ministry of Education	TVET education: gengram.abe@minedu.gov.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Researcher on Greek labour market	Dr Ioannis Katsaroumpas (D. Phil (University of Oxford)) ,Lecturer in Employment Law (Sussex Law School), i.katsaroumpas@sussex.ac.uk
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Hellenic Federation of Enterprises,	Mr Christos Ioannou,Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, cioannou@sev.org.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants	President Georgios Kavvathas, Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE), thanopoulos@gsevee.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE)	President Georgios Karanikas, Meggoulis Antonis (+30 6977523929 / amegoulis@esee.gr)

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (SETE)	President Ioannis Parashis, Zoitos Nikos (+30 6937227643 / nizoitos@yahoo.gr/ nzoitos@hhf.gr)
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Federation of Industries of Greece	President Ms. Loukia Saranti and Chatzigiannakis Constantinos, https://sbe.org.gr/en/
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE)	President: Ioannis Panagopoulos, Ellie Varchalama, nomiki@gsee.gr
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	Greece	Other	Trade Unions	Ioannis Katsaroumpas, Lecturer in Employment Law (drafted the Greek chapter in ETUI report): I.Katsaroumpas@sussex.ac.uk
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)	Patrick Paquet, Head of Unit for Greece (EMPL.F.5): Patrick.PAQUET@ec.europa.eu
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)	Cristiana Costinescu, Deputy Head of Unit for Greece and Cyprus: Cristiana.COSTINESCU@ec.europa.eu
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training CEDEFOP	Jürgen Siebel, CEO of CEDEFOP: Juergen.SIEBEL@cedefop.europa.eu
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training CEDEFOP	Loukas Zahilas, Head of Department for VET and Qualifications: Loukas.Zahilas@cedefop.europa.eu

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Report	Interviewees			
	Country	Type of entity	Entity	Contact details
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	International Centre for Migration Policy Development ICMPD	Naozad.Hodiwala@icmpd.org; Jennifer.Tangney@icmpd.org; Samim.Ahmadi@icmpd.org; Golda.Roma@icmpd.org; Marija.Raus@icmpd.org; Enrico.Ragaglia@icmpd.org;
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Public sector	ILO THAMM	Farah Elbatrawy, Thamm project in Egypt: elbatrawy@ilo.org and for North Africa: segatti@ilo.org
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Other	GIZ THAMM plus	Andrea Milkowski, THAMM plus project worldwide at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ): andrea.milkowski@giz.de
Skills Needs Analysis + Development of TP Models	EU and others	Other	Bertelsmann Foundation	Najim Azahaf, Shape migration in a fair manner: najim.azahaf@bertelsmann- stiftung.de

Annex 2: Latest regulations and developments in selected EU MS, 2023- 2024

1. Implementation phases of the German Skilled Workers Immigration Act

The Skilled Workers Immigration Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz – FEG) started gradually to come into force from November 2023:

The new EU Blue Card from November 2023

In implementing the requirements of Directive (EU) 2021/1883, the German legislator has redesigned and expanded the immigration options with an EU Blue Card:

- **Lowered salary thresholds:** The salary thresholds for the EU Blue Card in legal and bottleneck occupations will be significantly lowered. In future, a minimum salary of 45.3% of the annual contribution assessment ceiling for pension insurance (in 2024: 41,041.80 euros) will apply for bottleneck occupations and new entrants, and 50% (in 2024: 45,300 euros) for all other occupations.

- **Extended group of people:**

Career starters: The possibility of obtaining an EU Blue Card is being opened up to a larger group of people. For example, foreign academics who have obtained a university degree within the last three years can obtain an EU Blue Card if their job in Germany pays them a minimum salary of 45.3% of the annual contribution assessment ceiling for pension insurance (in 2024: 41,041.80 euros). This applies to both bottleneck and standard occupations.

IT specialists: Another new feature is that IT specialists will be able to obtain an EU Blue Card in future **if they do not have a university degree but can prove that they have at least three years of comparable professional experience**. In this case, the lower salary threshold for bottleneck professions applies (45.3% of the annual income threshold; in 2024: EUR 41,041.80).

Extension of the list of bottleneck occupations: The list of bottleneck occupations for the EU Blue Card will be significantly expanded. In addition to the existing bottleneck occupations (mathematics, IT, natural sciences, engineering and human medicine), skilled workers in the following occupational groups will also be able to obtain an EU Blue Card in future if the other requirements are met:

- Managers in production in the manufacture of goods, in mining and construction and in logistics
- Managers in the provision of information and communication technology services
- Managers in the provision of specialized services, such as childcare or healthcare
- Veterinarians
- Dentists
- Pharmacists

- Academic and comparable nursing and obstetrics specialists
- Teaching and educational staff in schools and extracurricular activities

The lower salary threshold for bottleneck occupations also applies here (45.3% of the annual contribution assessment ceiling; in 2024: EUR 41,041.80).

- **Short-term and long-term mobility:** Short-term and long-term mobility to Germany is possible for holders of an EU Blue Card issued by another EU member state. For a maximum stay of 90 days, EU Blue Card holders from other EU member states may come to Germany and stay there for the purpose of a business activity directly related to their employment. Neither a visa nor a work permit from the Federal Employment Agency is required for this short stay.

After a minimum stay of twelve months with an EU Blue Card in another EU country, long-term relocation to Germany is possible without a visa. A German EU Blue Card must be applied for at the immigration office after entering the country. EU Blue Card holders will as well have more flexibility to change employers and positions in Germany²¹³.

- **Facilitated family reunification for EU Blue Card holders:** For EU Blue Card holders who have already lived with their family in another EU member state, family reunification is regulated on a privileged basis. If these family members require a visa due to their nationality, they are entitled to enter and reside in Germany as family members of an EU Blue Card holder with the residence permit issued in the previous member state without having to go through a visa procedure beforehand. When a residence permit is issued in Germany, the requirements of sufficient living space (Sec 29 (1) No.2 AufenthG) and securing a livelihood (Sec.5 (1) No.1 AufenthG) no longer apply.

Further changes from November 2023

- Entitlement to a residence permit for skilled workers and waiver of the link between qualification and employment

The two central legal bases for residence permits for skilled workers with vocational training (Section 18a AufenthG) and skilled workers with academic training (Section 18b AufenthG) were amended in two respects:

Firstly, one can be now entitled to a residence permit if all requirements are met.

Secondly, the restriction that one can only work on the basis of the qualification obtained with the vocational qualification is lifted. This means that if someone has qualified vocational training or a university degree, they are not restricted to jobs related to this training when looking for a job. There are exceptions for regulated professions.

Up to this moment, foreign nationals were restricted to roles specifically linked with their formal education experience. **With the amendments it is envisaged, that foreign skilled**

²¹³ <https://www.fragomen.com/insights/germany-new-eu-blue-card-rules-in-force-from-november-18.html>

workers (except EU Blue Card applicants) will be able to perform any role for which they are qualified as opposed to being restricted to roles specifically linked to their formal education experience; In such a way, no formal education link with role is sought. This is indicative for *skills-based* (as opposed to education-based) immigration programs under development globally to tackle skills shortages. The employer will have discretion to determine if an applicant is capable of performing the role. This will also provide employers with greater flexibility regarding their allocation of human resources. For instance, instead of having to hire new staff with the relevant formal education experience, an employer could now shift an existing (suitably capable) foreign national to the new role.

Thus, the legislation will provide for easier terms for obtaining the EU Blue Card, a work permit that facilitates the migration of educated third-country nationals to Europe to continue their career, even for professionals without a recognised degree. This will also make it easier for example, for information technology specialists (with 3 years' work experience) or educational professionals with sufficient vocational experience to apply for an EU Blue Card, even if they lack formal education.

Shorter duration to acquire permanent residence.

Skilled workers will be able to acquire permanent residence after three years; while EU Blue Card holders will be able to acquire permanent residence after 27 months.

There is as well a relaxation of pathways for applicants with reduced requirements regarding German language skills and recognition of educational qualifications. In such a way, lowering obstacles to recognition of qualifications are expected. Foreigners with qualifications that are not recognised in Germany but in their home country and who have at least two years' work experience can immigrate and work in skilled occupations under certain conditions. Skilled workers will be allowed to work in any unregulated profession.

The existing schemes for recognition of qualification are valid for applicants with qualifications not fully recognised by the competent authorities due to some qualifications missing. Third country nationals registered in a qualification programme in Germany to acquire the missing skills may apply for this permit. For applicants in unregulated professions, it is also possible to acquire the missing skills by working as a skilled worker in the intended profession (no time restriction); a job offer, and a training plan are needed. The requirements are: Residence permit for the purpose of recognition of foreign professional qualifications. Conditions are: recognition certificate, A2 level of German language skills, proof of enrolment in a qualifying training program, and proof of financial means. It is possible to work while completing the qualification programme (for up to 10 hours).

It will become easier for third-countries jobseekers to work and change occupation, without having to undergo complicated qualifications recognition procedures. Time-limits in existing labour migration are to be removed and visa processes - sped up.

There are similar examples from other EU MSs, such as France offering a visa for tech workers and entrepreneurs that allows four years of temporary residency and sets out a clear path toward permanent residency.²¹⁴

Employment of professional drivers

The approval process of the Federal Employment Agency for the employment of professional drivers from third countries is simplified. It will no longer be necessary to check whether the required EU or EEA driving license and the basic qualification or accelerated basic qualification are available. In addition, the priority check has been removed and language skills are no longer required²¹⁵.

Regulations on employment and recognition from March 2024

Residence for the recognition of a foreign professional qualification

The opportunities to stay in Germany to participate in qualification measures will be extended. The previous 18-month residence permit for adaptation measures (Section 16d (1) AufenthG) will now be issued for 24 months when it is first issued. An extension of a further 12 months up to a maximum residence period of three years is possible. This gives employers more flexibility.

Secondary employment during the qualification program will be increased from 10 to 20 hours per week. This will make it easier for future skilled workers to enter the job market.

The implementation of qualification measures in Germany aims to achieve full equivalence of foreign professional qualifications. The new Skilled Immigration Act introduces two new access routes for this purpose:

- Entry and employment as part of a recognition partnership: The recognition partnership makes it possible to obtain a residence permit to pursue qualified employment and to carry out the necessary recognition procedure only after entry. In contrast to the previous options for carrying out qualification measures, in this case it is not necessary to initiate a recognition procedure or to have a certificate of partial equivalence before entering the country. The granting of a visa is linked to the obligation of the prospective skilled worker and the employer to apply for recognition after entry and to actively pursue the procedure. The basic requirements for the recognition partnership are, in addition to the employment contract, the existence of a professional qualification that has required at least two years of training or a university degree - both of which must be recognized by the respective country of training - as well as German

²¹⁴ OECD, *What are the risks and rewards of start-up visas?*, Migration Policy Debates, No. 28, July 2020. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/MPD-28-What-are-the-risks-and-rewards-of-start-up-visas.pdf>.

²¹⁵ PPT, EU Network

language skills at level A2. The residence permit is usually issued for one year and can be extended for up to three years.

The previous residence requirement for recognition in accordance with Section 16 d (3) (old), if the focus is on a lack of practical skills in the workplace, will no longer apply in future. Persons with a decision on partial equivalence who mainly lack practical skills in the workplace have two options for the purpose of professional recognition in Germany: In future, they can - as before - enter the country either to complete a qualification measure (Section 16 d (1) AufenthG) or as part of a recognition partnership (Section 16 d (3) AufenthG).

- **Entry to carry out a qualification analysis:** Recognition seekers who, in the opinion of the competent authority, should carry out a qualification analysis in Germany to determine the equivalence of their foreign qualification can be granted a residence permit for up to six months for this purpose. One of the prerequisites is that they can provide proof of German language skills. As a rule, German language skills of at least level A2 are required.

Employment of specialists and workers

- **Special regulation for practical professional experience:** The employment of persons with extensive practical professional experience has been extended. The new regulation now applies to **all non-regulated professions in all sectors**. The requirement for people with practical professional experience is that they have a professional or university degree that is recognized by the respective country of training. In the case of a professional qualification, at least two years of training is required. As an alternative to a state-recognized qualification, a qualification from a German chamber of commerce abroad is sufficient under certain conditions. In addition, at least two years of experience in the desired profession is required. Formal recognition of the qualification in Germany is not required. The job offer in Germany must guarantee a gross annual salary of at least 40,770 euros (year 2024); if the employer is bound by a collective agreement, remuneration in accordance with it is sufficient. Access to the labour market will also be made easier for **ICT specialists**: the required relevant professional experience will be reduced to two years (previously three years). A professional or university degree is still not required. Language skills no longer need to be proven for the visa. The minimum salary of 40,770 euros (year 2024) gross per year or remuneration in accordance with the collective agreement also applies here.

- **Labor market access for nursing assistants from third countries:** With the planned changes, access to the labour market for nursing staff will be supplemented by a regulation for nursing assistants from third countries. All people from third countries with nursing training below the three-year regulated specialist training can be employed in the health and care sector. The prerequisite is that these persons can either provide proof of corresponding German vocational training in the care sector or a foreign care qualification that has been recognized in Germany.

- **Job search following training in the healthcare and nursing professions:** In future, nursing assistants and care assistants from third countries who have completed their training in Germany will be able to apply for a residence permit to look for a job. The residence permit will be issued for up to twelve months and can be extended by up to six months if their livelihood is secured.

- **Settlement permit for skilled workers from abroad:** Foreign skilled workers who have a residence permit in accordance with § 18a, § 18b, § 18d or § 18g AufenthG and have not completed any vocational training or studies in Germany will receive a settlement in Germany after just three years (previously four years). In addition, holders of an EU Blue Card will receive a settlement permit even faster: after 27 months in employment with an EU Blue Card, they can be granted a settlement permit; if they have sufficient knowledge of German (level B1 CEFR), this is even 21 months. For graduates of a course of study or vocational training in Germany, the current special provision on settlement permits remains in place: After just two years of holding a residence permit for employment as a "skilled worker" (residence permit in accordance with Sections 18a, 18b or 18d AufenthG), they can be granted a settlement permit.

- **Easier family reunification for skilled workers:** If spouses or underage children move to Germany to join certain skilled workers, proof of sufficient living space will not be required in future. In addition, such skilled workers can also bring their parents and - if the spouse is also permanently resident in Germany - parents-in-law to join them if they receive their residence permit for the first time on or after March 1, 2024.

- **Residence permit for holders of start-up grants:** In future, skilled workers within the meaning of Section 18 (3) AufenthG can obtain a residence permit for up to 18 months to set up a business if they are granted a grant from a German scientific organization or public body for this purpose.

Employment of students and trainees

- **Extended employment opportunities for foreign students:** For third-country nationals studying in Germany on a student visa, the opportunities for part-time employment will be extended. The previous annual working time account of 120 full or 240 half days will be increased to 140 full or 280 half working days. Alternatively, the new regulation allows students to work up to 20 hours a week. The amount of the salary and the subject of the employment are irrelevant. In future, part-time employment will also be possible from the outset when attending preparatory courses.

- **Residence for the purpose of seeking a study place with work prospects:** Entry and residence for the purpose of applying to German universities remains possible for third-country nationals. What is new is that it is now possible to work part-time for up to 20 hours a week while looking for a study place.

- **Extended residence options to look for a training place:** Third-country nationals can also continue to enter Germany to look for a training place. The age limit for potential applicants will be raised from 25 to 35, and the requirements for German language skills will be lowered to level B1. This will open up residence to a larger group of third-country nationals for the purpose of seeking a training place. The previous maximum duration of residence of six months will be increased to nine months. In addition, people with this residence permit will be able to work part-time for up to 20 hours a week as well as for trial periods of up to two weeks.

Extended opportunities for part-time employment for trainees: In future, part-time employment of up to 20 hours per week will be possible for all vocational training courses.

Short-term contingent employment

The amendments to the ordinance introduce a new option for the short-term employment of third-country nationals, regardless of their qualifications. As soon as the Federal Employment Agency (BA) determines a needs-based quota - this can also be differentiated for certain economic sectors or occupational groups - interested employers can apply for a work permit or approval of a residence permit for workers from abroad. This is granted if:

- The employer is bound by collective agreements and the employees are employed in accordance with the applicable collectively agreed working conditions,
- the employer undertakes to pay the necessary travel expenses in full,
- the planned employment does not exceed eight months within a 12-month period and
- the weekly working time is at least 30 hours.

Further innovations from June 2024

Introduction of the job search opportunity card (Chancenkarte)

An opportunity card will be introduced for a stay to look for a job. This can be obtained in two ways: Third-country nationals who can prove that their foreign qualification is fully equivalent and are therefore considered "skilled workers" in accordance with Section 18 (3) AufenthG can obtain the opportunity card without any further special requirements. All others must provide proof of a foreign university degree, a vocational qualification of at least two years' duration (recognized by the state in the country of training) or a vocational qualification issued by a German chamber of commerce abroad. In addition, either basic German (level A1) or English language skills (level B2) are required.

If these requirements are met, one can collect different points for criteria such as recognition of qualifications in Germany, language skills, professional experience, age and connection to Germany as well as the potential of the accompanying spouse or partner. At least six points must be achieved in order to receive the opportunity card.

The Chancenkarte is issued for a maximum of one year if one can secure his/her livelihood for this period. During the stay in Germany, it offers opportunities for trial work or part-time

employment for 20 hours a week. If one is unable to obtain another employment title from Section 4 (§§ 18 to 21 of the Residence Act) after this, but still has an offer of qualified employment, the Chancenkarte can be extended for further two years.

In general terms, anyone wishing to work in Germany should:

- have a professional qualification for one of the professions in very high demand (in this case, German language skills are often of lesser importance); or
- be planning to obtain a professional qualification in one of the professions in very high demand (it is possible to come to Germany to obtain qualifications. Germany has a ‘dual learning’ system where learners perform paid work while they are training, which allows them to cover some of their living costs); or
- have a professional qualification for a less in-demand profession. In this case, excellent German language skills are essential to increase the likelihood of finding a job²¹⁶.

▪ **Specific requirements for occupying certain professions in Germany**

Traditionally, the German labour market values professional qualifications (academic degrees and vocational qualifications.) There are good opportunities for foreign skilled workers in occupations that are in particularly high demand.

Nurses (Professional/Associate professional) are, along with several other health related professions included in the list of skills shortage occupations related to migration and work permits for migrant workers. There are many job openings available for nurses and healthcare professionals. Qualified staff are needed in hospitals, retirement homes and other care facilities. There is also particular demand for childcare workers in municipal and church kindergartens.

Requirements: anyone with a nursing qualification from their country of origin can apply for that qualification to be recognised in Germany. Medical fitness and knowledge of German are required, to either B2 or B1 level, depending on the federal state.

The recruitment of nursing professionals takes place within the framework of intergovernmental agreements, which are in Germany negotiated through the Central Foreign and Specialist Placement (ZAV) and often with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). In addition, employers in the health and care sector and private personnel service providers working on behalf of companies are actively recruiting skilled workers and trainees. The private intermediary market is growing increasingly. There are public efforts to regulate this market through the development of quality standards and certifications. When it comes to choosing the countries from which foreign skilled workers are recruited, Germany has obliged to follow the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO)²¹⁷.

²¹⁶ More information can be found at <https://www.deutschland.de/de/arbeiten-in-deutschland>

²¹⁷ Beiträge transnationaler Skills Partnerships zum Bereich Pflege Themendossier im Rahmen der „Denkfabrik für transnationale Skills Partnerships“, Sabine Schröder, ebb - Entwicklungsgesellschaft für berufliche Bildung, Februar 2023, Bertelsmann Stiftung

Most academic **STEM** occupations are on the government's list of shortage occupations. **Scientists, computer scientists and other STEM specialists (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)** are needed both in the private sector and in public research institutes. It is worth noting that the technical industry and the engineering associations and sector organisations can be regarded active potential partners, as they usually campaign to foster interest in the technical field.

Requirements: at the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB), foreign STEM graduates can have their university degrees declared equivalent to German diplomas. Foreign migrants can apply for a work permit (Blue Card).

2. Italy. Guidelines on how to prepare vocational and civic-linguistic training programmes and the criteria for their evaluation

In accordance with the provisions of the new Article 23, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies adopted and published the [Guidelines on how to prepare vocational and civic-linguistic training programmes and the criteria for their evaluation.](#)²¹⁸

The **Guidelines** for pre-departure training, adopted by the MLSP define implementation modes and set criteria for the evaluation of vocational and civic-linguistic training programs in countries of origin or countries of first asylum or transit for refugees, pursuant to Article 23 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, as amended by Law No. 50 of May 5, 2023²¹⁹. The following actors, individually or in partnership, can apply for the "vocational and civic-linguistic training programs": Regions and Autonomous Provinces and their instrumental bodies; Local authorities, their unions and consortia; National employers' organizations and trade unions comparatively more representative at the national level, as well as their own associations and articulations; Joint bodies and bilateral bodies, set up by the comparatively most representative national employers' organizations and trade unions at the national level; International and intergovernmental organizations; Civil society organizations and other non-profit entities; Public and private operators accredited to carry out employment services; Bodies, accredited by individual Regions/Autonomous Provinces, to carry out vocational training and employment services activities; Universities and Research Institutes; ITS Academy; Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA).

The Guidelines define the number of **subjects** who can promote training programs, alone or in partnership, providing rewards for the involvement of Social Partners and Provincial Adult Education Centres. They also indicate the **essential contents of the training**, which will not only be sectoral, but will necessarily also include the teaching of the Italian language, elements of civic education, notions on work and workers' rights and elements of health and safety in the workplace.

The training paths proposed must be aimed at providing skills consistent with the "Atlas of Work and Qualifications"²²⁰ and with the purposes of job placement and the development of

²¹⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Italy, Labour entry regulations and the new regular entry channels introduced by DL 20/2023 (so-called 'Cuto Decree', converted with amendments by Law No. 50 of May 2023)

²¹⁹ <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita-immigrazione/focus/linee-guida-programmi-di-formazione-professionale-civico>

²²⁰ <https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>

productive and/or entrepreneurial activities. These courses must necessarily include Italian language with an exam certifying the achievement of at least level A1, as defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and elements of civic education, with the acquisition of sufficient knowledge of the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution, the organisation and functioning of public institutions and the Italian socio-cultural context. The certificate issued as a result of the A1 level can be recognised by the CPIA for the purpose of completing the training path in Italy for the achievement of the A2 level and in case the acquisition of a qualification, in the perspective of continuous learning, improving human capital and supporting employability. The vocational training path will also have to include notions of labour and workers' rights and elements of health and safety in the workplace, as well as sector vocabulary, and provide work orientation sessions for the enhancement of transversal skills and support for active job search. The path should include both theoretical and practical training and be constructed on the basis of learning objectives expressed in competences. Training may be delivered with the combined use of different teaching methodologies (frontal lesson, remote learning - FAD, other).

At the end of each course, candidates must be issued with a final certificate of learning:

- As for vocational training, skills acquired in the training course will be tested in a final examination. Those who successfully complete the final examination will be issued with a certificate of attendance, indicating the knowledge and skills acquired, referring to the Economic and Professional Sectors (SEPs) and to the Activity Areas (ADAs) into which the “Atlas of Work and Qualifications” (a classification and information device supporting the National Directory of Education and Training Titles and Professional Qualifications) is divided.
- As for civic-linguistic training, the attainment of at least the language level A1, to be ascertained by passing an Italian language proficiency test organised by the training provider and structured in accordance with the parameters adopted by the certification bodies referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 1, Letter A of the Interministerial Decree of December 7, 2021. Alternatively, attainment of language level A1 may be attested through the issuing or presentation of one of the documents specified below:

- Certification of the level of knowledge, issued by one of the recognised certifying bodies, in accordance with article 4, section 1, letter A) of the Interministerial Decree of December 7, 2021, or by other entities that have an agreement with the afore mentioned certifying bodies, in accordance with the current regulations.
- A certificate indicating the level of knowledge of the Italian language, issued by an Italian Cultural Institute, if present.

Before starting the training activities, the proposing parties must ensure that adequate information is provided on the opportunities offered by the training courses, and during the implementation phase the participants must be informed of any job offers, applicable contractual conditions and the types of entry.

More in detail: the Programme implementations should include the following phases: (i) Identification of labour demand (Definition of professional profiles and relative employment sectors, based on an accurate analysis of needs regarding the national and territorial production context of reference, as well as to internationalisation requirements, carried out with the involvement of the social partners and the requesting employers during the planning stage; (ii) Selection of the recipients of training activities; Procedures for the selection of recipients,

candidates for admission to Italy for work reasons, based on the criteria of maximum transparency and equal opportunities, in compliance with current regulations in Italy and in Non-EU country, concerning the selection and recruitment of workers. For selection purposes, the involvement of one or more local partners, preferably public (including the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad (CCIE) and Italian-foreign Chambers of Commerce, in the country concerned is desirable; (iii) Detailed information on the vocational and civic-linguistic training activities; (iv) Indication of the implementing subject (applicant) and human, financial and instrumental resources; (v) Arrangements for coordination with local institutions and/or other public/private entities and involvement of Italian companies); (vi) Evaluation and monitoring plan²²¹.

²²¹ Guidelines implementation modalities for vocational and civic-linguistic training programs and criteria for their evaluation pursuant to article 23 of legislative decree no. 286 of July 25, 1998, 2023 Document approved on June 2023 by the Services Conference convened by Directorial Decree No. 17 of March 30, 2023; Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies