



Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

THIS PROGRAMME IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CO-FUNDED
BY THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY IS IMPLEMENTED BY:



THAMM

● Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa

WITH SUPPORT FROM :



REGIONAL CONFERENCE N°2

**MOBILITY SCHEMES BETWEEN NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE:
TIME TO DRAW LESSONS AND BUILD FUTURE SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS**

30 - 31 January & 1 February 2023

Cairo, Egypt



CONCEPT NOTE

1. Introduction to the conference	2
2. Definitions	6
3. Background of the THAMM Programme	7
4. Conference questions, expected outcomes and outputs	8
5. Methodology and format	9
6. Indicative timeframe	10

1. Introduction to the conference

a. The European Union approach to labour migration

Over the years, the European Parliament has underscored the need for a comprehensive labour migration policy in order to meet the European Union's goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.¹ As recognised more recently by the European Commission, "(t)he EU is currently losing the global race for talent. Other OECD countries, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, are attracting more talent from abroad. The *Impact of Demographic Change in Europe* report shows that Europe has an ageing and shrinking population and skills shortages that need to be addressed."² The recent Communication on Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU (COM (2022) 657 – 27.4.2022) recognises that "Legal migration benefits migrants as well as countries of origin and destination. It gives those who want to migrate an opportunity to improve their circumstances and helps address labour market needs of host countries." In particular, the Communication acknowledges that "the EU needs to address occupational shortages in specific sectors" through a more strategic approach, "oriented towards better attracting and keeping talent [...] and channelling legal migration towards regions and occupations experiencing skills shortages."

In terms of actions to be taken, the Communication sets out three key pillars of a new approach:

- A **legislative pillar**, recasting the Long-Term Residents Directive and the Single Permit Directive, simplifying their procedures;
- An **operational pillar**, addressing the challenges of international matching, based on the implementation of the Talent Partnerships with key partner countries and the EU Talent Pool (OECD 2019 study *Building an EU Talent Pool*); and
- A **forward-looking pillar**, based on three priorities for action: care, youth and innovation.³

In addition, in 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on new avenues for legal labour migration.⁴ Building on this resolution, the European Parliament is drawing up a legislative-initiative report on Legal migration policy and law (2020/2255 (INL)).⁵

Within the operational pillar of the communication on talents, the first Talent Partnerships have been announced in the April 2022 Communication with North African countries,

¹ European Parliament, Resolution of 12 April 2016 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration, 2015/2095(INI); European Parliament, Resolution of 5 July 2016 on refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market, 2015/2321 (INI).

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum/skills-and-talent_en

³ Communication on Attracting Skills and Talent, COM (2022) 657, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0657&from=EN>

⁴ European Parliament, Resolution of 20 May 2021 on New avenues for legal labour migration (2020/2010(INI)).

⁵ The proposal is being put forward by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE).

in particular, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia for implementation to start by end of 2022, drawing on the experience of pilot projects such as THAMM.

The **Talent Partnership process with North African partners** will start with a round of consultations, followed by labour market needs analyses, and a technical roundtable to ensure alignment of expectations and policies between the EU Commission, interested Member States and the partner country. Several financial instruments (Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, Member States' own funds, and private sector funds are anticipated to be mobilised for implementation.⁶

It will therefore be critical for North African countries to come to the negotiating table with clear objectives and strategic expectations.

b. North African countries' approach to labour migration

North African countries are all going through phases of demographic transitions, albeit not at the same pace and with the same consequences, due to their substantive differences in terms of population size. With a population of 36 million and a base of 27% under the age of 15, compared to 34% in 2000, **Morocco** is going through an important phase of demographic transition. The overall unemployment rate in Morocco remains significantly high (9.5% in 2015, 10.2% in 2020, and 12.3% in 2021).⁷ Up to 12% of Moroccans live abroad according to the latest MED-HIMS study Morocco 2021. Like Morocco, but with a population of 43 million and a percentage of the population aged 0-14 close to 30.5%,⁸ **Algeria** also faces the challenge of integrating its youth into the labour market. The large share (21%) of 15-24 year old who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), albeit not as high as Morocco where it stands at close to 30%, confirms the difficulty of the task.⁹ According to data from the ONS (Office National des Statistiques) for May 2019, the unemployment rate reached 11.4% of the active population, with significant disparities: the unemployment rate for men was 9.1%, but estimated at 20.4% for women and 27% for youth. **Tunisia** (11.8 million inhabitants in 2021) is on the path of demographic transition with an under-15 demographic segment that has fallen from 29% to 24% in just two decades. According to the INS (National Institute of Statistics) the active population in Tunisia stands at 4.2 million in December 2019 with respectively 71% of men and 29% of women. The unemployment rate recorded for the third quarter of 2021 was at 18.4, standing at 42.8% for the youth. 7.6% of the total population lived abroad in 2020. **Egypt** has the largest population in the region, at 100.4 million, with approximately 34% young people below 15. The demographic factor plays an essential role in the socioeconomic, employment and migration dynamics: from 2010 to 2015, the average annual population growth rate was estimated at 2.2% and the fertility rate at 3.4 children per woman. Youth account for nearly 80% of the unemployed. The number of Egyptians abroad reached around 10 million, according to the Foreign Ministry estimates in 2020, that is about 10% of the overall population. The report noted that the total number of Egyptians in Arab countries reached 6.985 million Egyptians, marking 68.2 percent.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0657&from=EN>

⁷ Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2015, 2020 and 2021.

⁸ World Bank – ILOSTAT – <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?locations=DZ>

⁹ World Bank – ILOSTAT – <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=DZ>

North African countries have also undertaken specific national initiatives. The North African countries have a tradition of labour emigration and other forms of migration and have each large diaspora groups abroad, notably in the EU Member States (EU MS). In 2013, **Morocco** signed a Mobility Partnership agreement with the EU and a number of EU Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom). One of the priority areas of this agreement is notably aimed at managing the movement of persons for short periods and regular and labour migration more effectively, as well as to strengthen the cooperation on migration and development in order to exploit the potential of migration and its positive effects on the development of Morocco and European countries. In 2014, **Tunisia** signed a Mobility Partnership agreement with the EU and a number of Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom). Amongst other objectives, the Partnership aims to improve the information available to qualified Tunisian citizens on employment, education and training opportunities available in the EU, and also to make mutual recognition of professional and university qualifications easier. Furthermore, it works towards a better integration of Tunisian nationals regularly living in the EU and of migrants regularly living in Tunisia as well as the mobilisation of Tunisian communities abroad in the development of Tunisia. **Egypt** has signed several bilateral labour migration agreements with EU member states, most notably Greece in 1981 and Italy in 2005 but the latter has never been implemented. Egypt has several labour mobility and social security agreements with countries outside Europe, such as Jordan, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates.

In the **absence of any effective shared regional migration regime across North Africa**, each country has its own migration policy mechanisms and labour migration strategy (whether it is called external or international placement) which is regulated by various institutions and sets of laws and procedures varying from country to country. All North African countries have bilateral labour and social security agreements with one or several European Union member states, some decades old, others very recent.

At the same time, labour markets have continued to be depressed in the post-Covid period with unemployment, underemployment, low wages, poverty, and deficits in decent work triggering social unrest and political transformation processes. The COVID impact on North Africa has been particularly harsh and has aggravated employment situations, particularly for the most vulnerable. While GDP growth in quarter two of 2021, in comparison to a year earlier, had regained strength, North African economies, except for Egypt, remained depressed compared to pre-pandemic.¹⁰ Pre-pandemic structural weaknesses, such as shares of NEETs among the highest in the world, and labour force and employment rates of women among the lowest, have only been exacerbated under COVID conditions and subsequently.¹¹ For instance, in Tunisia, an ILO study found that “unemployment within the surveyed population increased by 33 per cent (going from 9 per cent to 12 per cent) between February and October 2020” and

¹⁰ <https://erf.org.eg/publications/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-middle-eastern-and-north-african-labor-markets-employment-recovering-but-income-losses-persisting/>

¹¹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/37412/9781464817359.pdf>

“informal waged workers were 3 times more affected by job losses than formal waged workers.”¹²

Employment and unemployment indicators and decent work opportunities also represent **important factors determining migration dynamics** that affect especially the youth. While migrants' remittances have counter-intuitively been particularly resilient and constituted a social safety net for North African households¹³, post-COVID reconstruction calls for an even higher investment in education, skills, employment, decent work, and social protection to address the root causes of irregular migration. Available data shows that irregular flows, particularly of youth, often minors, are on the increase from North Africa.¹⁴ It is therefore essential that any new labour migration and mobility model takes these dimensions into account.

c. Justification for the THAMM second regional conference

After the first regional conference which focused on **Strategic and operational trends, lessons and experiences with regard to labour migration responses to the COVID-19 crisis observed in European and North African countries** in July 2021, the THAMM second regional conference offers to **draw lessons and explore the potential for future skills mobility partnerships reviewing critically ongoing and past mobility schemes between North Africa and Europe**. Through presentations from the latest research findings and the sharing of practitioners' experiences produced within and beyond the programme, this second regional conference intends to:

- **Inform implementation of programme activities** among all partners involved in THAMM in its final phase of implementation ;
- **Provide evidence-based original research** on the impact of such schemes to inform conference discussions;
- Inform ongoing discussions in the context of the **EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, Talent Partnership Initiative, Talent Pool, Skills Package, and at the Neighbourhood level, in terms of Team Europe Initiatives and Joint Programming**;
- Appraise **needs and expectations from the perspective of** Government and private sector stakeholders **in North African and European countries** in terms of skills needs in specific sectors or jobs, and for specific beneficiaries, in particular women and youth ;

¹² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/publication/wcms_791949.pdf

¹³ See results from *THAMM Impact of COVID-19 on Tunisians and Moroccans Abroad, 2021*. In the IMPACT assessments, the reasons were analysed which are in the case of MOR: increase in the use of regular channels and in the case of TUN: those in a better economic situation were behind the stable remittance flows (as COVID did not have a big impact on their salaries).

¹⁴ From Tunisia; https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/08/25/migrants-plus-de-2-000-mineurs-tunisiens-arrive-clandestinement-en-italie-depuis-janvier_6138978_3212.html ; from all North African countries, see: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/migration-flows/>

- Explore **concrete, operational and sustainable cooperation avenues** likely to increase impact on employment, employability both in CoO and CoD, skills demand and sustainable socio-economic (re)integration of migrant workers.

This regional conference aims to contribute to **mid- to high-level labour migration governance dialogue aimed at policy makers and practitioners** on both shores of the Mediterranean.

2. Definitions

In the context of THAMM (described in the next section), **labour migration** is to be understood as **both immigration and emigration of workers for employment purposes**. It will therefore typically encompass the recruitment and placement of national workers for international markets (for North African countries) and the socio-economic integration of foreign workers into national labour markets.

Mobility schemes are to be understood as any Government-to-government agreement facilitating the mobility and / or migration for employment purposes whether for the highly, medium or low-skilled, and for apprenticeship purposes. It will typically include intermediation activities (selection, recruitment, return). A broader understanding may envisage mobility schemes as formalised agreements for the purpose of organizing mobility and migration for employment between private sector entities (large scale contractual arrangements; agreements between public employment services).

North Africa is to be understood as encompassing the following countries: Mauritania¹⁵, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. THAMM has a specific emphasis on Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt but the paper is expected to process data, where available, from all the countries listed above.

Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) are to be understood as “innovative mechanism for sharing the benefits of migration for both countries of origin and destination, as well as migrant workers and employers hiring foreign workforce”¹⁶. These SMPs are based, among other things, on 1. Long- and mid-term planning; 2. Multi-stakeholder approach & policy coherence; 3. Data for evidence-based policy; 4. Local development and job creation; 5. Skills 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.¹⁷

¹⁵ Inclusion of Mauritania into North Africa varies from organization to organization. For the ILO, Mauritania is included in North Africa. Mauritania is also part of the Union du Maghreb Arabe, together with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_821274.pdf

¹⁷ <https://eea.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl666/files/documents/Skills-Mobility-Partnerships-Infosheet.pdf>

3. Background of the THAMM Programme

THAMM, which stands for “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa”, is an international cooperation programme implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency Enabel and the Office Français pour l'Immigration et l'Intégration (OFII). Enabel has joined the THAMM programme in August 2020 and OFII in January 2022. This programme is co-financed under the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

THAMM proposes to approach **labour migration holistically, in terms of both technical dimensions (governance frameworks, skills recognition and qualification, statistical data and information systems) and end beneficiaries (integration of foreign workers into labour markets and assistance to national workers seeking employment abroad).**

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.** The programme addresses **both the South-North and the South-South dimensions of labour migration and mobility through regional dialogue and cooperation.** 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 which will be invited to this regional conference.

The Programme is **aligned to existing policy frameworks** at global (Sustainable Development Goals, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration) and regional (African Union Migration Policy Framework Plan of Action 2018-2030) levels and in line with national priorities as identified through a series of preliminary consultations and national workshops with relevant national stakeholders conducted in the preparation phase.

Furthermore, the Programme contributes to Objective (3) "Improved migration management in countries of origin, transit and destination" of the **EU Trust Fund for Africa** and in particular to the Priority Action II – Advancing mutually beneficial legal migration and mobility of the Operational framework of the North of Africa window. The action is also aligned with the **Valletta Action Plan Priority Domain 2** “Legal migration and mobility”, and with the Communication on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration¹⁸ that sets legal migration channels with third countries via pilot initiatives as a strategy for achieving concrete results.

The **Overall Objective** of the Action is to **increase mutually beneficial legal migration and mobility** and this is addressed through the following specific objectives:

¹⁸ Communication from the Commission to the EP, the Council, the EESC and the CoR on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration, COM (2017) 558 final.

- **SO 1:** Policy, legislative, institutional and regulatory frameworks in the field of legal migration and mobility in particular those aiming at enhancing migrant workers' rights and combatting forced labour, child labour and slavery are progressively established;
- **SO 2:** Mechanisms for assessment, certification, validation and recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications are improved;
- **SO 3:** Migration related knowledge and data management in the field of legal migration and mobility is improved;
- **SO4:** Mobility Schemes are established and/or improved;
- **SO 5:** Cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the field of legal migration and mobility, in particular job placement, is improved.¹⁹

4. Conference questions, expected outcomes and outputs

In view of the strong demographic trends and labour market needs calling for a renewal of organised labour flows to Europe and the need to support skills development and recognition in the North of Africa, combined with post-Covid recovery needs across countries, it seems opportune to seek responses to the following questions:

- What are the key lessons to be drawn on the different approaches to mobility adopted in **pilot projects funded by the European Union, and other bilateral donors from EU Member States²⁰, over the past decade (Mobility Partnership Facility; EU Trust Fund) in North Africa?**
- Are **models** emerging? Are these scalable and sustainable? In terms of which political and financial conditions?
- What are the key lessons to be drawn on the **existing large-scale mobility schemes for lower-skilled workers** such as in seasonal agriculture? Which specific measures should be adopted to ensure better protection of workers, consideration for gendered dimensions, and sustainability of their return and reintegration, where applicable, into income generating activities leading to decent work conditions?
- What are the **key expectations from North African countries in terms of skills mobility partnership agreements?** Are these compatible with both mid- to long-term EU and North African countries' labour market needs and fair and ethical recruitment standards?

¹⁹ For more information on the THAMM Programme, see https://www.ilo.org/africa/technical-cooperation/WCMS_741974/lang--en/index.htm

²⁰ In particular, one should mention BMZ, AFD, ENABEL, and AECID.

- How to better involve **the private sector** in setting up successful and sustainable skills and mobility schemes?
- What are the **main bottlenecks standing in the way of strengthened and sustainable partnerships, at strategic and operational levels**? How to address them? Are there examples of good practice with robust evidence of impact?

The conference's **main outputs** are expected to be:

- An original research **paper** synthesizing existing data and recent research findings envisaging critically the question of mobility schemes between the European Union and North Africa and exploring avenues for new partnerships (see ToRs);
- A **conference report** containing the summary of discussions, key recommendations formulated by experts and group discussions, all presentations, and list of referenced research and practitioners' published works;
- **A series of video podcasts** of the conference and experts and practitioners' interviews;
- **A press release.**

The above conference outputs will be made available in Arabic, English and French.

5. Methodology and format

The ILO and IOM THAMM teams will coordinate the production of the research paper through a competitive call and will coordinate the secretariat of the conference.

The **target participants** will be invited from THAMM national partners' lists as well as among practitioners and policy makers from Europe and North Africa, with a track record of research or policy engagement on the focus of the conference. Additional participants will be from relevant international and regional organizations, and relevant stakeholders from governments and social partners, private sector organizations, international and local research institutions, and as mentioned including practitioners and policy makers in Algeria and Libya. The total number of targeted participants will be in the range of 120 to 150.

The **format** of the conference will be hybrid, that is combining interventions in person and remote connections via a videoconference. A final decision will be taken three months ahead of the event, based on the conditions in countries of

implementation and standard operating procedures in place within implementing institutions with regard to the COVID-pandemic. At the time of writing a resurgence of the pandemic cannot be excluded. The anticipated conference location will be Tunisia.

The conference will take place over **2 days and a half**. Following a **general opening** during which THAMM donors and national partners will provide orientations as to their expectations regarding the Conference, the original research paper produced for the conference will be presented and a panel discussion aiming for the framing of the conference key areas of enquiry will take place. The **following panels** are then envisaged:

- A panel will explore strategic approaches comparatively between countries of origin.
- Subsequent panels will be focusing on specific approaches to organized mobility for employment and coordinated by THAMM's partner implementing agencies exploring in turn the key lessons from: GIZ Triple Win model, ENABEL Global Skills Partnership Model, ILO-IOM-UNESCO-IOE-ITUC Global Mobility Partnership for Migration, OFII's approach, and others, from different operational angles: Skills development in country of origin; Identification of skills in demand and vocational training; Recruitment and pre-departure training; Accompanying workers abroad; Sustainable labour market integration and return and socio-economic reintegration.
- Finally, a panel discussion will provide an opportunity for North African and European stakeholders to present and discuss expectations and chart out innovative partnership possibilities.

6. Indicative timeframe

The conference is planned for **30,31 January and 1st February 2023** in Cairo, Egypt. This timing seems the most opportune to benefit the THAMM implemented mobility schemes, as well as the EU agenda on Talent Partnerships. It will still leave ample time to disseminate broadly key conference recommendations and incorporate them into programme implementation.

