

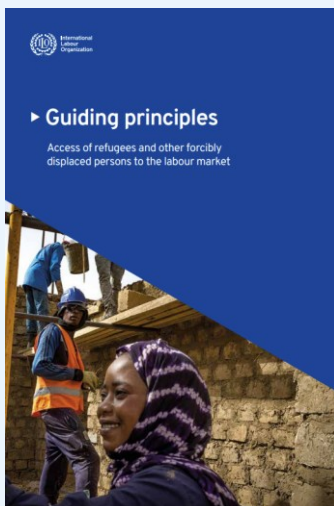
► Labour market inclusion for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional coordination and policy coherence for labour market inclusion

July 2026

The ILO Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market, adopted in 2016 by a tripartite technical meeting, provide a basis for the formulation of policy responses and national tripartite dialogue applicable to responses to forced displacement.

The Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market



The Guiding Principles (GPs) support efforts to improve labour market functioning and ensure the protection of nationals, as well as refugees and other forcibly displaced persons (FDPs), in accessing decent work. The GPs are a set of voluntary, non-binding principles rooted in relevant international labour standards and universal human rights instruments, and inspired by good practices implemented in the field.

The Guiding Principles are structured around six core pillars:

- A. Governance frameworks on access to labour markets;
- B. Economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets;
- C. Labour rights and equality of opportunity and treatment;
- **D. Partnership, coordination and coherence;**
- E. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration of returnees; and
- F. Additional pathways for labour mobility.

This knowledge product focuses on section D of the GPs, with a specific emphasis on Principles 25 and 26. Using the Regional Socio-economic Integration Strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean (ERISE/+ERISE) as a case study, it illustrates how regional coordination mechanisms and strategies support the harmonization of national laws and policies promoting access to decent work for displaced and host populations across countries.

Unpacking the Guiding Principles

What does section D on Partnership, coordination and coherence mean in practice?

Guiding Principle 25 – Member States are encouraged to promote national, bilateral, regional and global dialogue on the labour market implications of large influxes of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, and the importance of access to livelihoods and decent work.

Guiding Principle 26 – Cooperation among Member States should include measures to:

- strengthen the role of local government, regional bodies, and particularly regional economic commissions and regional initiatives to foster consistent regional responses, including with the support of the ILO and other international agencies, notably the UNHCR;
- encourage development assistance and private sector investment for the creation of decent and productive jobs, business development and self-employment to benefit all workers, including refugees and other forcibly displaced persons;
- enhance the roles and capacities of employers' and workers' organizations and civil society to promote and protect the fundamental principles and rights at work of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons; and
- promote, where possible, the inclusion of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in national development planning processes, including through UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) mechanisms.

Case study: The Regional Socio-economic Integration Strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean (ERISE/+ERISE)

Key points



Ditraiza Ramírez is a Venezuelan migrant entrepreneur living in Cali, Colombia. In her spare time, she helps migrants learn about their rights to social protection. Cali, Colombia, 16 June 2023. Photo: Mauricio Pulido Bonilla/ILO

Key issue:

- Strengthening regional cooperation and coordinated action among governments, social partners, UN agencies, and regional mechanisms, with particular

attention to women, youth, groups in vulnerable situations, to ensure that migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and returnees, alongside host communities, can access decent work.

Key takeaways:

- The Regional Socio-economic Integration Strategy (ERISE and its updated version +ERISE) illustrates the value of a regional, step-by-step approach that links regularization, protection, social inclusion, and decent work.
- ERISE/+ERISE demonstrates that regional strategies are strongest when they complement and guide national policies and are backed by coordinated action among governments, social partners, and regional platforms and institutions.
- ERISE/+ERISE highlights the importance of adapting to different mobility contexts while maintaining a shared focus on rights, equality of opportunity and treatment, and social cohesion.

1. Profile of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

In February 2026, Latin America and the Caribbean hosted approximately 6.95 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Colombia remained the main host country (hosting 2.8 million), followed by Peru (1.64 million), Brazil (761,300), Chile (669,400), and Ecuador (440,500), with significant populations also in Argentina, Mexico, and several Caribbean states, which host smaller number but high proportions relative to their population. The Venezuelan situation remains protracted, with continuing needs for protection, documentation, and socio-economic integration, and with a substantial share of the population still in an irregular status or in the process of regularization.¹

2. Major developments: Towards regional harmonization of laws and policies

Since 2015, Latin America and the Caribbean have faced a large and prolonged displacement crisis, driven primarily by the movement of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Over time, this prompted many host countries to recognize the limits of addressing only the immediate needs of refugees and migrants; and the need for a durable framework for long-term socio-economic integration. Such a framework enables refugees and migrants to become self-reliant, contribute to host country economies, and strengthen social cohesion within host communities.

Against this backdrop, the first [Regional socio-economic integration strategy](#) (ERISE) – developed with the technical assistance of the ILO and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – was adopted by the Quito Process through the Joint Declaration of the Seventh International Technical Meeting on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region.² ERISE provides guidance around seven priority axes to promote decent work by focusing on regularization, professional training and recognition of qualifications and competencies, employment promotion, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, social protection, and social cohesion as a coordinated regional pathway for the integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.³

Box 1: The Quito Process and the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V)

Founded in 2018, following the signing of the [Declaration of Quito on human mobility of Venezuelan citizens in the region](#), the Quito Process is a regional political and coordination platform designed to exchange information and harmonize policies in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis in the region.⁴ Over time, it evolved from an emergency coordination space focused mainly on entry, documentation, and immediate protection issues into a broader framework that emphasizes resilience and long-term integration. This shift was reinforced by the adoption of the first Regional socio-economic integration strategy (ERISE) in 2021, which contributes to the objectives set out in the 2018 Quito Declaration.

The [Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela \(R4V\)](#), established in 2018, complements this process as the inter-agency mechanism that brings together UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other partners to coordinate the regional response. Through its Integration Sector, it helps shape ERISE and support its implementation by linking policy guidance to concrete action on the ground.

ERISE's relevance and contribution to decent work objectives have been affirmed through a mid-term evaluation,⁵ which found that the strategy was most effective when translated into concrete initiatives by governments, UN agencies, and

¹ R4V América Latina y el Caribe, [Personas refugiados y migrantes venezolanas en la región - febrero 2026](#).

² [Declaración Conjunta de la VII Reunión Técnica Internacional sobre Movilidad Humana de Ciudadanos Venezolanos en la Región - Proceso de Quito: Capítulo de Lima. 27 y 28 de mayo de 2021](#).

³ The seven priority axes are: 1. Regularization and profiling of the population from Venezuela, facilitating access to services and to the formal labour market; 2. Professional training and recognition of qualifications and competencies, to meet labour market needs and support formal employment; 3. Employment promotion, supporting employment services and skills matching; 4. Entrepreneurship and business development, promoting self-employment; 5. Financial inclusion, promoting financial education and adapting banking services to the needs of refugees and migrants; 6. Access to social protection, promoting a social protection floor and disseminating information on how to access social security; and 7. Social cohesion, building capacities to promote peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution and peace-building.

⁴ The Quito Declaration was signed by the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay on 4 September 2018.

⁵ ILO, ["Independent mid-term evaluation of ERISE"](#) (2024), conducted from September 2023 to May 2024.

social partners. In particular, this included the alignment of national qualification frameworks with a regional framework,⁶ the inclusion of migrants and refugees in public employment services, and capacity-building for entrepreneurship. It also identified key challenges that limited implementation, including the absence of a dedicated governance structure and central coordination, weak monitoring and evaluation, limited links with regional coordination platforms – especially regional economic communities – and gaps in mainstreaming gender and non-discrimination.

An inter-agency working group composed of ILO, UNDP, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Women, and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) updated the strategy, leading to the adoption of the [Regional socio-economic integration strategy for migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (+ERISE) in November 2025 through the Joint Declaration of the Eleventh General Assembly of the Quito Process, Quito Chapter IV.⁷ The updated strategy builds on the first version while adapting to a more complex regional context and addressing earlier implementation gaps. Critically, the strategy:

- Recognizes that countries of origin, transit, and destination require tailored responses within a common regional framework.
- Incorporates current regional realities, including mixed movements (of any origin, not just Venezuelan), return migration, family-based displacement, climate-related mobility, and greater attention to women and children
- Reorganizes the strategy around a clearer logic: mobility and regularization underpin the process, decent work and social protection act as enabling conditions, and social cohesion is the final objective.
- Responds to earlier shortcomings by proposing a clearer governance structure and a stronger monitoring and evaluation approach, with more defined coordination, follow-up, and performance-monitoring arrangements.
- Explicitly links implementation to existing regional mechanisms.
- Places decent work at the center of integration, with emphasis on recognition of qualifications, skills development and reskilling, digital and inclusive public employment services, fair recruitment, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and financial inclusion.

Box 2: Alignment of +ERISE with intergovernmental and consultative platforms in Latin America and the Caribbean

+ERISE is well embedded in the region's broader policy architecture, aligning with existing intergovernmental and consultative platforms that translate political commitments into practical pathways for regularization, inclusion, and decent work. This alignment strengthens coherence across migration, asylum, labour mobility, social protection, and integration agendas, while reinforcing the strategy's socio-economic focus, notably through its alignment with regional integration mechanisms and consultative processes, including:⁸

- The Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)⁹
- The South American Conference on Migration (CSM)¹⁰
- The Regional Comprehensive Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS)¹¹
- The Chile Action Plan under Cartagena+40¹²
- Regional economic communities (RECs), including the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Andean Community of Nations (CA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Central American Integration System (SICA).¹³

⁶ Which was supported by the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (Cinterfor).

⁷ IOM, "[Latin American and Caribbean Countries Agree on New Actions to Protect, Regularize, and Integrate Refugees and Migrants](#)," 15 November 2025.

⁸ See for an overview Table 1 on Alignment of +ERISE with the objectives of consultative processes and regional integration mechanisms, [+ERISE - Estrategia regional de integración socioeconómica para personas migrantes, solicitantes de asilo, refugiados y retornados en América Latina y el Caribe](#).

⁹ With its emphasis on safe, orderly and regular migration, including work on labour migration, and migration-development linkages.

¹⁰ With its South American Migration Plan toward Integration 2035, which highlights regular migration, portability of social protection rights, access to basic services, and decent work as a mechanism for integration.

¹¹ With its ambition to strengthen asylum systems, improving data on internal displacement, reinforcing public employment services, promoting private-sector labour inclusion, supporting recognition of migrants' skills, and empowering local governments to lead integration.

¹² Through its chapters on the protection of persons during the whole migration cycle and its chapter on comprehensive and sustainable solutions emphasizing socio-economic integration.

¹³ The RECs address migration, labour mobility, social protection, and integration consistent with the strategy's socio-economic focus. MERCOSUR facilitates residence for nationals of its member states and includes a multilateral social security agreement and a socio-labour declaration that supports equal

3. Outcomes and key lessons

ERISE and +ERISE have underlined the importance of regional coordination mechanisms for moving toward harmonized laws and policies at the national level.

Box 3: Putting +ERISE into practice at the regional level

Several regional initiatives have put +ERISE's emphasis on better access to public employment services, mutual recognition of documents, qualifications and competencies, shared vacancy information, and labour-market intelligence into practice, for example:

- **The promotion of National Qualifications Frameworks** aligning with a Regional Qualification Framework, and mutual recognition arrangements that build trust across countries and make skills portable in the region.
- **The Skills Passport**, launched by a tripartite working group in June 2025 and supported by 11 countries from the region, that advances the harmonization of technical, institutional, and governance criteria so that mechanisms to certify and recognize skills can function effectively, inclusively, and sustainably.¹⁴
- **The Ibero-American Network of public employment services** – RISPE (*Red Iberoamericana de Servicios Públicos de Empleo*), created to foster cooperation among Member States' public employment services, to promote job-placement and employment programmes, to strengthen career guidance and vocational training to improve workers' skills, and to manage unemployment benefits.¹⁵

Regional priorities have been translated into concrete actions at national level:

- **Argentina** supports labour market integration through strengthened governance and protection mechanisms, including the *Red Intersindical de Migración Laboral y Movilidad* that brings together trade unions to strengthen migrant and refugee labour rights through advocacy, training and coordination, and through the *Mesas Locales para la Integración Socioeconómica* that coordinate local responses.
- **Colombia** has advanced a rights-based integration model by moving from temporary protection to a 10-year status and statutory labour equality. This approach has helped expand access to formal jobs, public services, and skills development, while supporting productivity gains, economic contribution, and social cohesion in the face of large-scale inflows (see knowledge product on Colombia: Equal rights as a foundation for inclusion and equal opportunity and treatment).
- In the **Dominican Republic**, INFOTEP, the national vocational training institute, changed its internal rules to allow Venezuelans to access its courses, certificates, and diplomas.
- **Mexico** supports labour market integration by supporting recognition of prior learning and certifying primary and secondary education through the *Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos* (INEA), facilitating recognition of competencies acquired abroad through *CONOCER*, complementing these efforts with a microinsurance market for low-income groups.
- **Peru** is in the process of developing – through an inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral process – a national strategy based on the regional socio-economic integration strategy.

Key lessons from ERISE/+ERISE include:

treatment, labour rights, and portability of rights for migrant workers. CA allows simplified residence and work across member countries and its social security instrument seeks to guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment with respect to labour rights. CARICOM's regional integration agenda emphasizes free movement within the Community, human and social development, improved living standards, and inclusion of vulnerable groups, while SICA provides the institutional framework for Central American integration and supports policy coordination, civil society participation, and development-oriented regional cooperation.

¹⁴ ILO, "[Integración socioeconómica de personas en movilidad - Pasaporte de Habilidades: hacia el reconocimiento de las competencias laborales de personas en movilidad](#)", 26 November 2025.

¹⁵ The following countries are members: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Spain, and Uruguay, with ILO holding observatory status. See for further information the [RISPE website](#).

- **First**, moving from a humanitarian response to a long-term socio-economic integration strategy works best when it is embedded in coherent multi-level policies and regularization pathways, supported by coordinated governance across ministries, social partners, UN agencies, and regional mechanisms to align implementation.
- **Second**, progress on refugee socio-economic inclusion requires strong leadership and sustained political commitment. Moving from short-term humanitarian responses to long-term solutions depends not only on technical reforms, but also on a forward-looking vision, institutional courage, and solidarity among governments, social partners, and international actors to support access to decent work and self-reliance.
- **Third**, it demonstrates the value of regional cooperation platforms and technical tools, such as moving toward harmonized recognition of documents, degrees and skills or strengthened cooperation between public employment services, and the digitization of procedures that can reduce barriers to access. Peru offers a useful example in this regard, with virtual work authorizations for asylum seekers and digital identity documents for migrants helping to facilitate labour market integration.¹⁶

4. Actionable steps: Roadmap based on experience from ERISE/+ERISE

- **Establish a regional integration framework:** +ERISE provides a common regional reference to shift from emergency response toward long-term socio-economic integration, aligning national policies, regularization pathways, and labour-market access measures for migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and returnees.
- **Operationalize through phased labour market inclusion:** +ERISE prioritises a step-by-step pathway that starts with mobility, protection, and regularization, then advances through social protection and family inclusion, decent work, and finally social cohesion, with practical actions on recognition of qualifications, vocational training, employment promotion, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.
- **Strengthen rights and protection systems:** +ERISE links labour market integration to fair recruitment, social protection, and social cohesion measures, and strengthens protection against discrimination and xenophobia while promoting inclusive services for host communities and people on the move.
- **Coordinate through regional governance mechanisms:** +ERISE relies on shared leadership and coordination among governments, social partners, UN agencies, and existing regional platforms such as the Quito Process and R4V to harmonise standards, exchange good practices, mobilise resources, and support implementation across countries.

5. Way forward

With a regional framework in place, the main challenge for +ERISE now is to turn its strong design into sustained implementation. +ERISE already sets out a coherent, step-by-step approach to socio-economic integration through regularization, skills recognition, labour intermediation, social protection, entrepreneurship, and social cohesion, however progress has been uneven as funding remains limited, political commitment varies, and implementation is often fragmented across parallel structures and actors working on similar issues. In practice, this means that some initiatives advance through the Quito Process and R4V, while others are led through separate channels, which can weaken coordination, dilute ownership, and make it harder to scale up results across countries.

To address these barriers, the way forward should focus on strong regional coordination, clear division of roles, predictable financing, and strong monitoring to ensure that shared standards translate into concrete action. At the same time, +ERISE should continue to strengthen political buy-in, so that socio-economic integration remains a sustained policy priority.

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¹⁶ Peru provides virtual work authorizations for asylum seekers through the *Autorización de Trabajo Virtual para personas solicitantes de refugio*, and gives access to digital identity documents for foreigners through the *Carné de Permiso Temporal de Permanencia (CPP)* y *Carné de Extranjería*.