



Republic of Korea

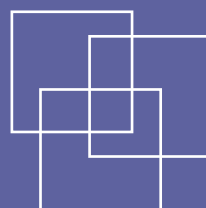


International
Labour
Organization

Regional guidelines on the return and reintegration of migrant workers participating in the Employment Permit System of the Republic of Korea

Developed under the framework
of the ILO-Korea Partnership
Programme

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific





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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a framework for Employment Permit System (EPS) sending countries on the policy responses, institutional mechanisms and programmes or services required for the successful return and reintegration of migrant workers.

2. Coverage

- 2.1 The EPS sending countries to include Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, and other participants to this programme.

3. Premise and assumptions

- 3.1 This programme shall cover a scheduled voluntary return programme. The preparation commences before the departure of the workers to the EPS country of destination (COD), while at work in the Republic of Korea, at the end of employment tenure, their return to the country of origin (COO), and the follow-up services post-EPS term.
- 3.2 The reintegration programme shall proceed on a “dual track” of both assisted and unassisted return.

4. Essential conditions for the COO

- 4.1 Legislation, implementing orders or regulations that recognizes return migration of workers and establishes a delivery management system through an office, bureau, or secretariat, with accompanying programmes and services.
- 4.2 Database of Korean companies operating in the COO that may be able to employ returning workers and make use of their newly acquired experience and skills from the EPS programme.
- 4.3 Active database of workers employed under this programme from the time of departure to COD, while employed, and upon return to the COO.

5. Good practices for the return and reintegration of EPS workers to the COO

5.1 Pre-departure

The preparation for return of workers shall commence from a module within the pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) that presents the future options including opportunities to start a business enterprise, livelihood information materials, savings and investment, additional skills acquisition, family and community connectivity through emerging technologies, and other manners of information conveyance to the worker who is about to enter the EPS programme. This module shall impress on the participating workers the need to return to their COO upon completion of their term of employment, and present the available options upon their return.

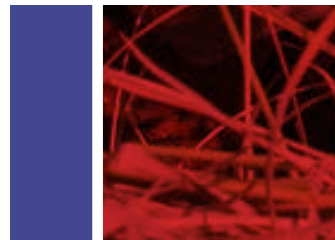


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5.2 On-site support

In addition to the Happy Return Programme of the Republic of Korea, (consisting of pre-departure seminars and skills and business training to prepare the participating workers for their return), the labour attache/labour offices of the respective embassies of the EPS participating states shall provide regular scheduled seminars and workshops on the preparation of livelihood and business strategies, and protocols to start a business at the COO. A “Needs Survey” may be conducted by the participating states during these seminars and workshops, to gauge what programmes can be prepared for their workers’ return to the COO and determine the adjustments that need to be made in the conduct of the EPS from a worker’s perspective.

- The labour attache offices shall update the database of the workers, listing their acquired skills while in the Republic of Korea (language, technology, work processes, work discipline), in preparation for local, or further overseas employment referral upon return to COO.
- Negotiation with employers in the Republic of Korea for one-off grants for equipment, supplies or capital, to start-up a business in the COO, or for the introduction of emerging Korean products and technologies.
- Supplementary training programmes at the COO-community level in the Republic of Korea, sponsored by the COO governments or supported by the Korean companies, to improve the competence of the workers, or introduce new skills within or outside their current lines of work. These may be conducted online, or as classroom and practical training during days-off.





Financial literacy extension seminars to increase the savings rate of worker and their families, and options to bridge the income-expense gap (opening saving and deposit accounts, budgeting, other investments). The participation of banks and money transfer operators (MTOs) who are the channel for the remittance programmes may be tapped as part of their corporate social responsibility to their clients.

Providing the vehicle for continuous subscription to the social security, medicare and safety nets programmes of the COO even while at work under EPS, to cushion the burden on loss of overseas work at the end of the term.

Whenever possible, organize the workers at the local worksite communities into an association, to establish a channel for better delivery of programmes and services.

5.3 Before return to COO

Free online competency assessment and certification by the technical vocational government agency of the COO, to reflect the skills improvement of workers in the EPS, and prepare them for acquisition of better jobs on their return.

Job matching with Korean companies and overseas employment agencies at the COO (skills-to-job match). For this purpose, an online job fair maybe organized by the respective embassies to show the opportunities for workers who are about to return, before they leave the Republic of Korea. An updated database will be an essential pre-requisite.

5.4 Return of workers to the COO

Registration system for returned EPS workers (to include assisted and unassisted return) through online channels or the government employment offices.

- Business development and livelihood programme assistance to the worker and family members, to include business start-up counselling, linking with private and government low cost credit facilities, including government guarantee funds to commercial banks to lower the borrowing cost for business capital.

Using legislation or policy, provide

- “take-back” incentives to returning workers including duty-free import of tools, equipment, appliances and goods, subject to limitations of value, quantity and time.

Engage the network of government

- offices, the local community and its leaders, financial intermediaries and NGOs, to create a network of support to the returning workers.

6. Overarching element

A national coordinating office in the COO for the return and reintegration of workers, with a portal for access to information, programmes and services is essential for effective programme management, as well as regular coordination with the country of destination through labour attaches/consular officials.







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The Republic of Korea introduced the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004, which recognized the need for low-skilled workers by Korean enterprises (particularly of small and medium sizes) in construction, manufacturing, agriculture and services, and introduced a government-to-government labour recruitment programme based on mandatory Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs). A major achievement is the reduction in the average cost paid by a worker from US\$3,509 under the trainee system in 2002 to US\$927 under the EPS system in 2011 (Kyung 2013). While not a model in all respects, the EPS of the Republic of Korea is a better conceived, funded and implemented foreign-worker programme than most in the region. The EPS MOUs, with 15 countries of origin in Asia, require that all recruitment and placement of workers for the EPS are covered under Government to Government arrangements. The Government has also introduced standardized employment contracts for employers and workers.

Since 2012, the ILO-Korea Partnership Programme labour migration component has focused on migration and development. Research and national and regional workshops have focused on return and reintegration, leading to the development and adoption of these Regional Guidelines on Return and Reintegration Programmes.