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THAMM



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# Regional conference #1

Labour Migration Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis in  
Europe and North Africa : Strategic and Operational  
Trends, Lessons and Sharing of Experience

*5-7 July 2021 - Online*

REPORT ●

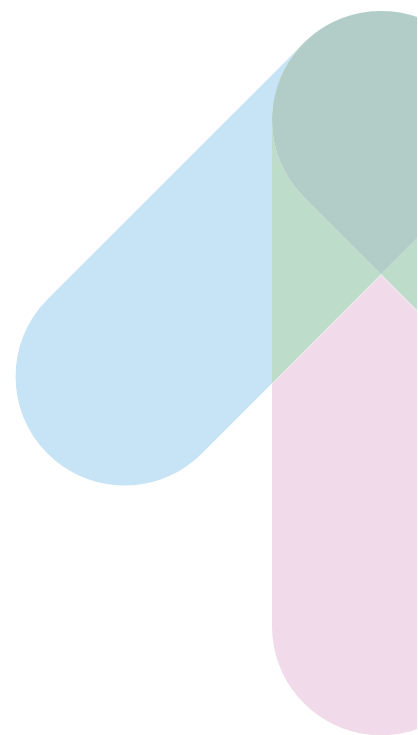
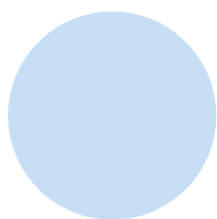
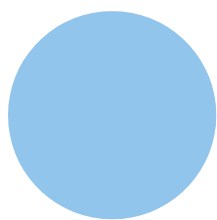


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# THAMM

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In close collaboration with the European Commission (EC), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) co-organised a regional conference - from 5 to 7 July - on labour Migration Responses to COVID-19 in European and North African Countries, the first in the “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Mobility in North Africa” (THAMM) Programme. The conference was held in three languages (Arabic, English and French) entirely online. The conference was also coordinated with THAMM’s other implementing partners, the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency Enabel and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Entitled “Labour Migration Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis in European and North African Countries: Strategic and Operational Trends, Lessons and Sharing of Experience”, the event aimed to document and explore policy changes 18 months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the event representatives from governments, social partners and academia from THAMM’s partner countries (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) as well as ILO, IOM, ETF, OECD and international experts presented latest policy observations and findings from recent research produced in the framework of THAMM and beyond. With 189 registered participants from North Africa, Europe and the rest of the world and average connection numbers of between 137 and 75 people per session, the conference was an opportunity to:

- take stock of current labour migration and mobility trends observed within and between the EU and North Africa;
- reflect over mid-term results achieved within the THAMM programme and strengthen collaboration and information sharing among all partners
- facilitate exchange among a range of labour migration and mobility stakeholders to help build consensus of practice around establishing regular pathways including in a crisis situation;
- identify common approaches towards preparing for the post-crisis phase of “building forward better” based on lessons learned in 2020 and 2021.

Organised around five different panel discussions, the conference set out on the presentation of an original research paper produced for the conference presenting the state of the existing literature and available data on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on labour migration dynamics between European and North African countries. Subsequent panel sessions explored the following issues:

- Adoption of the New European Pact on Migration and Asylum and its implications for labour migration and mobility for EU and North African countries ;
- Recent findings from statistical analysis and quantitative surveys;
- The Impact of the Crisis on Remittances;
- Fair and Ethical Recruitment: Policies and practice
- Sectoral Demand and Migrant Workers’ Protection
- Global Skills Partnerships

The conference shed light on important research findings and key trade-offs and recommendations, which will inform the remainder of the programme implementation as well as, more broadly, all stakeholders in the area of labour migration and mobility governance between North Africa and Europe. Among others, one may cite the following key lessons and recommendation:

## Lessons

1. **Labour demand in Europe** will continue to increase and **labour surplus in North Africa** is unlikely to be absorbed in the near future. The European situation is one of labour scarcity which will not be solved through increased wages only. It is therefore important to understand that a new cycle of interdependency has opened and will continue. Its human and economic outcomes will depend on the commitment of all stakeholders.
2. Beyond governments, **key stakeholders including in particular social partners** could be better involved in policy dialogues at national, bilateral and multilateral levels.
3. Current **mechanisms to avoid brain drain** seem weak in view of the renewed needs and pressure, especially on the EU side. How can EU countries avoid triggering a de facto brain drain and help highly qualified North Africans to better contribute or return to their countries of origin? And how effective and prospective are current

policies in North African countries in terms of retaining or attracting back the talents that they have trained? How to monitor the effectiveness of announced skills partnerships in avoiding the pitfalls of brain drain?

4. Numerous lessons were learnt on “**essential workers**” during the crisis and the role played by migrant workers within these. These findings provide clear indications to reform legal pathways and mobility schemes to facilitate the inclusion of medium and low-skilled but essential workers.
5. Certain **sectors in specific EU countries, such as agriculture, construction and tourism, in Southern European countries**, have become increasingly dependent on migrant labour. Yet, their working and living conditions are often unacceptable. The key challenge is to ensure better protection of these workers throughout the migration cycle.

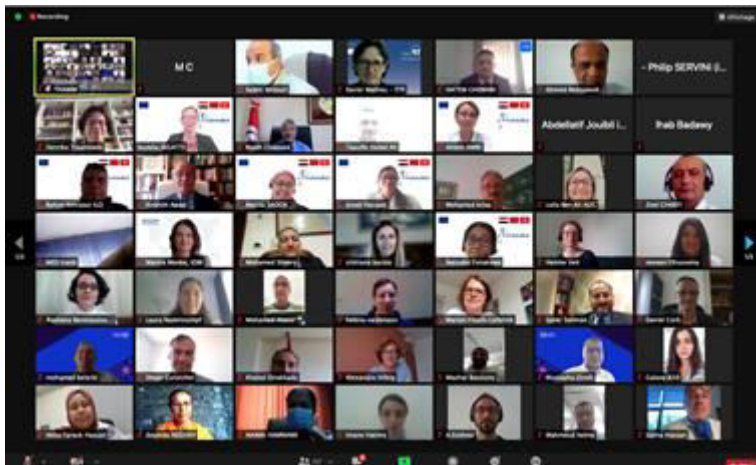
## Recommendations

1. Current **labour migration data gaps** and the absence of a regional knowledge platform point to the weakness of an evidence-based policy culture on the issue of labour migration governance. **Regional and transnational bodies** should increase their efforts to work towards greater harmonisation and dissemination of labour migration statistics and knowledge.
2. **Countries of origin in North Africa should periodically study the demand for highly- mid- and low-skilled migrant workers.** In their studies, they can benefit from the regularly updated reviews of demand for skills in the EU published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and by ETF. They can also draw on the Member States’ national projections of skill demand.
3. **European countries of destination should periodically update their identification of needed skills and bring them to the attention of North African countries.** Importantly, for attracting skills and putting them to good use, they should also formulate clear policies on both the recognition of qualifications and prior learning.
4. In contexts where formal qualifications are scarce but where migrant workers accumulate experience, there should be **facilitated systems of recognition of prior learning.**
5. There is a need to create **more efficient and effective pathways from studies to vocational training to integration into labour markets** between and within North African and European countries.
6. The establishment of connections between the North African **public employment services and the European network of public employment services (EURES)** should be considered. This would facilitate the matching of migrant labour demand and supply. It would usefully contribute to labour mobility in safe, orderly and regular conditions between the two shores of the Mediterranean.
7. The **legal frameworks for private recruitment agencies need to be upgraded** so as to develop the industry and to curb informal intermediation, which is at the origin of illicit practices, such as fake and substitution of contracts. Incentives should be provided to highly performing agencies that ensure decent work for migrant workers. ILO Convention no. 181 (1997) on private employment agencies should be drawn upon in upgrading the legal frameworks.
8. There is a **need to develop digital infrastructures in North African countries** so as to facilitate matching demand for and supply of migrant workers through digital platforms. These platforms should allow the performance by public employment services and private recruitment agencies of their functions and would help find abusive recruitment practices.
9. **Bilateral agreements** are a useful tool to organize labour migration between countries of origin and destination. European and North African can enter into such agreements, where they do not exist. Existing bilateral agreements should be effectively operationalized and updated to take account of the changing demand for labour at destinations. In particular, they should take into account the **social protection of workers.**
10. North African countries should increase the number of **labour attachés and labour attaché offices** so as to be commensurate with the volumes and destinations of their labour migrations. The functions of labour attachés, including the protection of migrant workers,

should be spelled out and adapted to the labour markets and to the legal and policy frameworks of countries of destination. Labour attachés should be trained to the performance of these functions.

The conference website offers all the conference documents in three languages.

(<http://www.thammregionalconference.com>)



## CONTEXT

One year and a half into the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which broke out a few months after the start of the THAMM Programme, it felt right to try and draw lessons from the wealth of knowledge produced within and beyond the programme. This is what the First THAMM Regional Conference has endeavoured to do in bringing together programme stakeholders and other key roleplayers of labour migration and mobility over three days to speak about labour migration responses to the COVID-19 crisis in Europe and North Africa in terms of strategic and operational trends, lessons and sharing of experience.

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 Belgian Development Cooperation Agency Enabel and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Enabel has joined the THAMM programme in August 2020. This programme is funded by the European Union under the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The ILO and the IOM implement four of its five Specific Objectives (see below) on funding from the European Union.

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). As recent research from the European Commission’s Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography suggests, “the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the government responses to it could reshape migratory movements, shift migration routes and alter the composition of migrant populations worldwide”.<sup>1</sup> A better understanding of key trends shaping labour migration governance, in particular in a crisis of the nature, duration and depth which the COVID-19 crisis, was needed to shape and refine intervention within THAMM in North Africa.

This proposed first regional conference offers to share 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. Through presentations from the latest research findings and the sharing of practitioners’ experiences produced within and beyond the programme, this regional conference intends to:

- take stock of current labour migration and mobility trends observed within and between the two regions;
- inform implementation of programme activities among all partners involved in THAMM half way into the programme:

<sup>1</sup> European Commission’s Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography, 2020 *Atlas of Migration*.

2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/how-coronavirus-reshaping-migration-worldwide>











- engage a range of labour migration and mobility stakeholders to help build consensus of practice around establishing regular pathways including in a crisis situation;
- prepare the post-crisis phase building on lessons learned in 2020 and 2021.

A second regional conference, due to take place towards the end of the programme in July 2022, will be specifically focused on drawing lessons on mobility schemes and their implementation once more substantial knowledge is available.



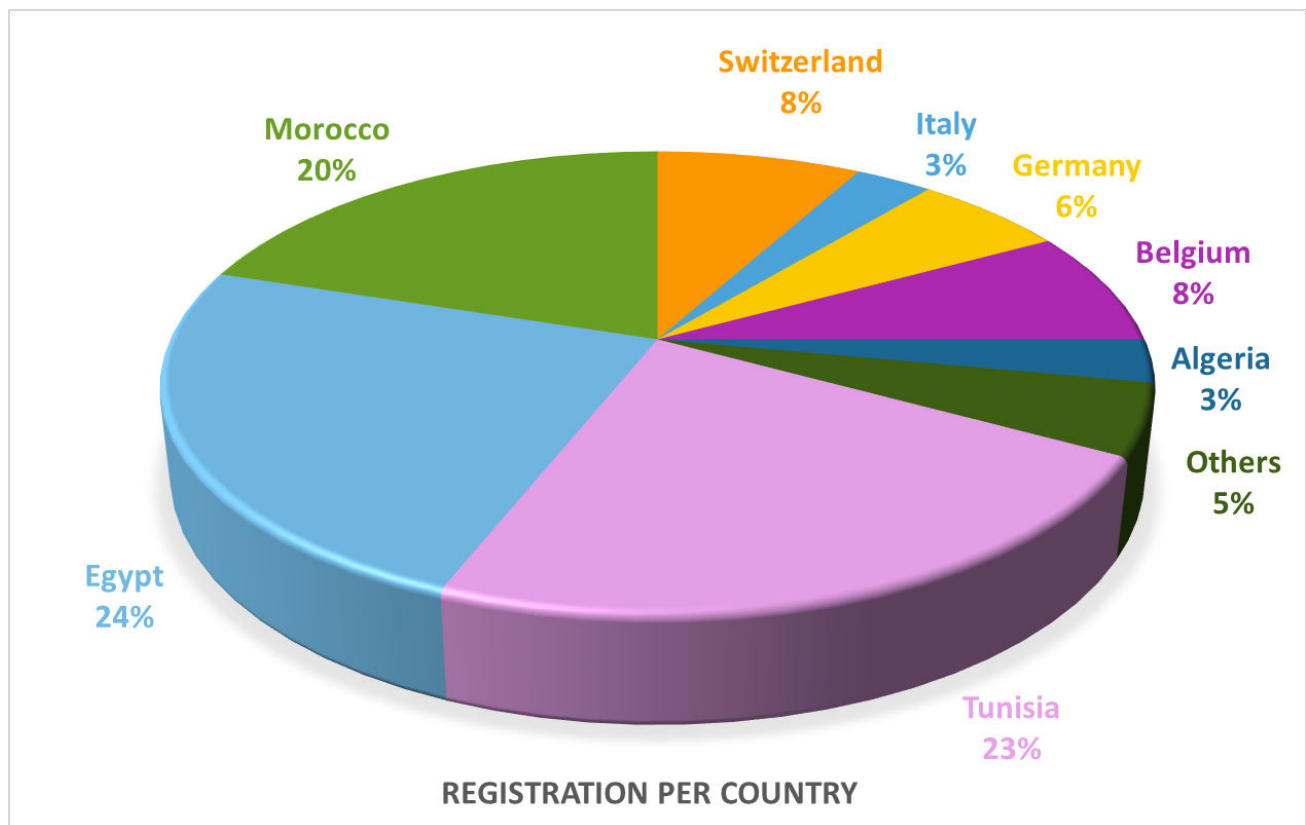
## CONFERENCE STATISTICS

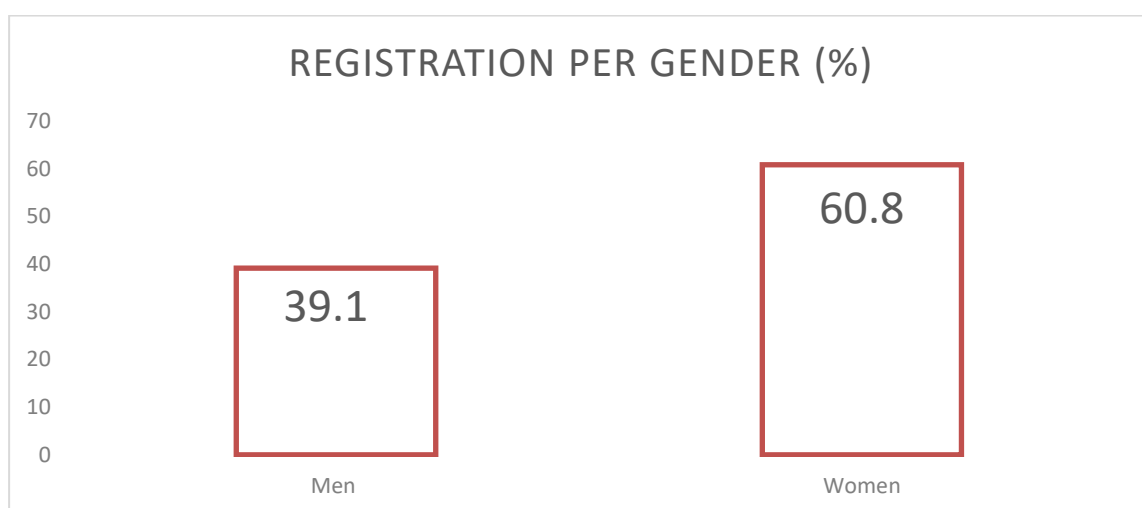
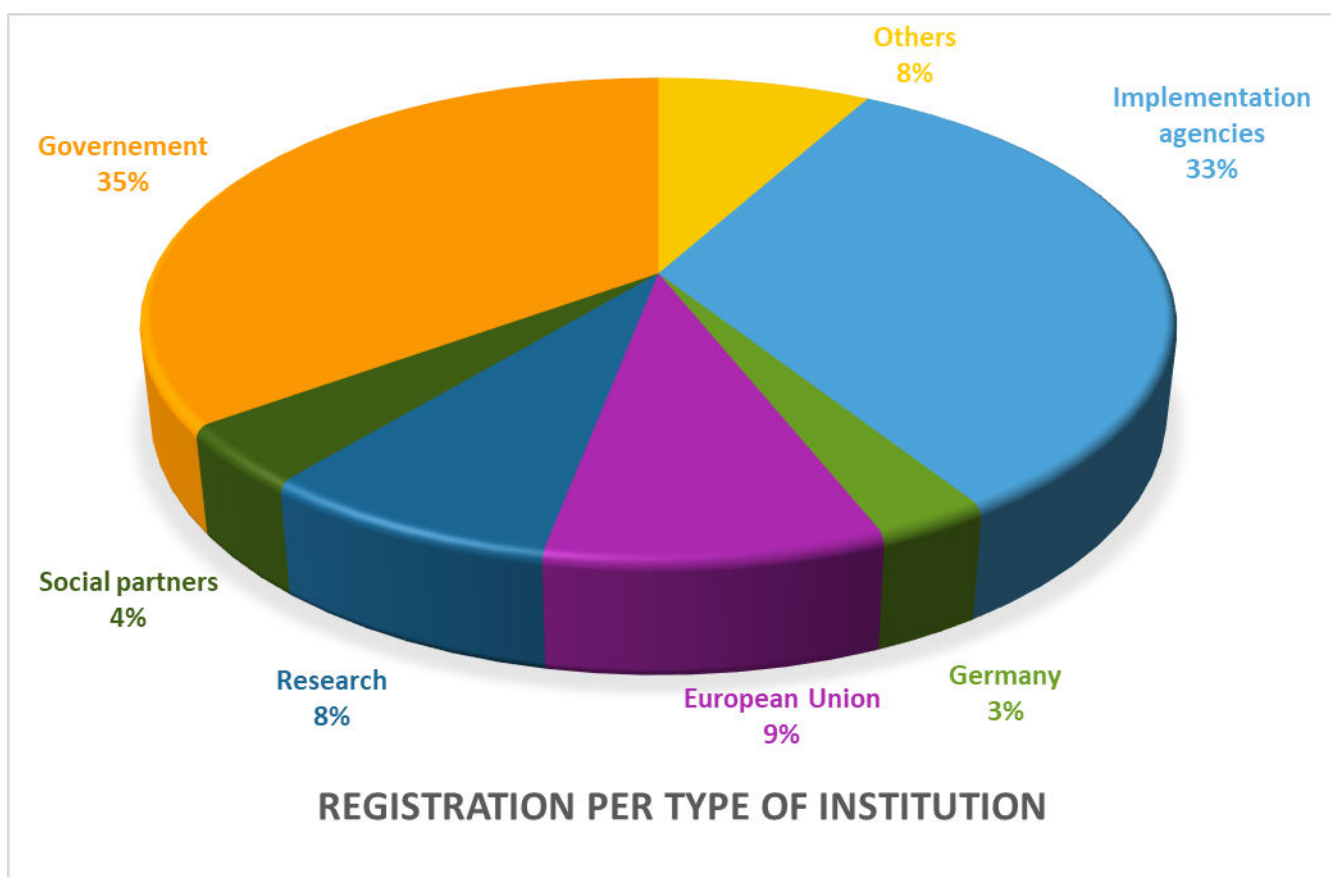
### Top 10 locations by Conference participants

1	 Morocco	709
2	 Egypt	632
3	 Tunisia	554
4	 Switzerland	138
5	 Belgium	134
6	 Germany	114
7	 Italy	54
8	 Spain	46
9	 France	27
10	 United States of America	25

### Registrations

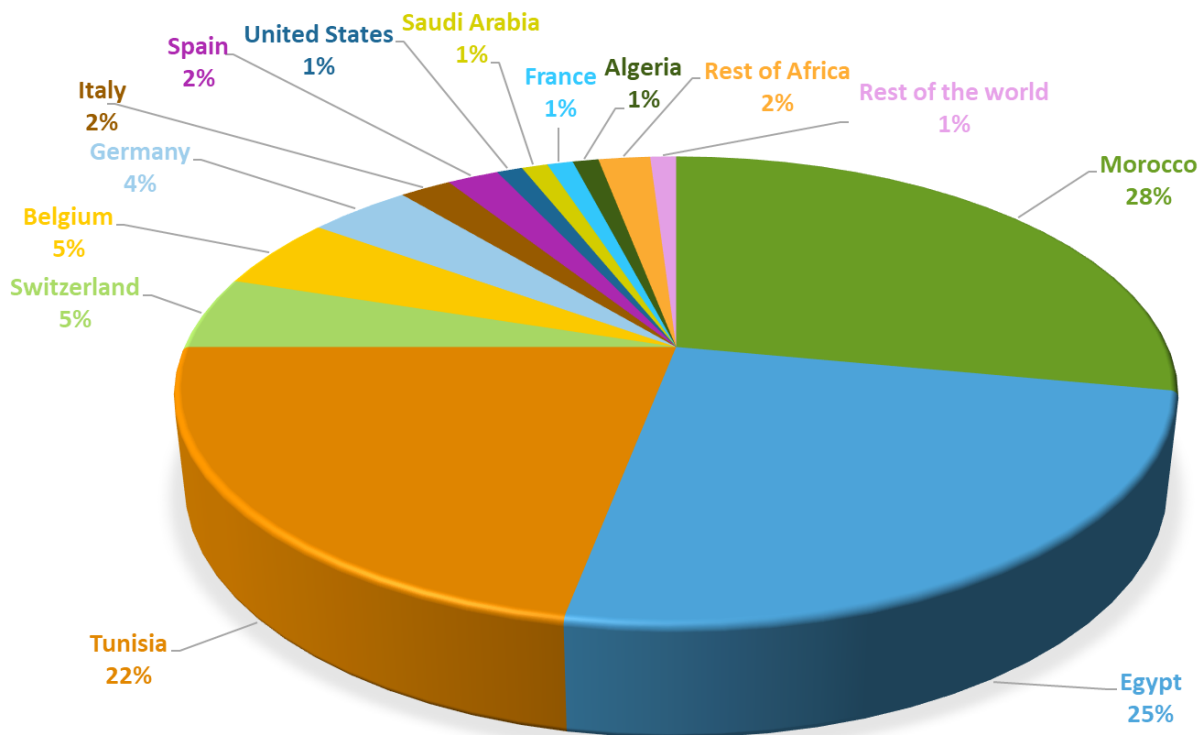
Total number of single registration: **189**





## Connections

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CONNECTIONS PER COUNTRY/REGION

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# SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

## Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was facilitated by **Ms Aurelia Segatti, ILO THAMM Regional Project Manager**. Speakers in the Opening were: **H.E. Ambassador I. Badawy, Assistant Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs and International Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt**; **Mr Chaoued, Chief of Office of H.E. Ms S. Ayadi, Minister of Youth, Sports and Professional Integration, Tunisia** and **Ms H. Trautmann, Acting Director, DG NEAR, European Commission**.



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*H.E. Ambassador I. Badawy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt –  
“In the last few years migration governance gradually became a vital component of bilateral, regional, and international dialogues especially in discussion related to national security, economic development, and social cohesion.”*

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Support and commitment to the programme was consistently expressed by all three speakers. **Ambassador Badawy** flagged that in the last few years migration governance gradually became a vital component of bilateral, regional, and international dialogues especially in discussion related to national security, economic development, and social cohesion. He specified that the outbreak of covid-19 highlighted the important contribution of migrants to the societies in which they live

and demonstrated the vulnerabilities that many of them face and the importance of collectively addressing the issue of migration and labour mobility. He emphasized that the project (THAMM) demonstrates the importance of creating multi-stakeholders' partnerships between countries of origin and destination by the principles of shared responsibility and solidarity to address challenges in multifaceted approach.



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*Mr Chaoued, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Professional Integration, Tunisia –  
“Tunisia is working to increase solutions to address the causes of illegal migration which should not be limited to security considerations. They should encompass granting and providing opportunities for youth and talents to work in European countries in a regular way.”*

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**Mr Chaoued**, Tunisia, stated that the Tunisian government has taken a number of immediate exceptional measures, including economic and social ones, to limit the impact of the pandemic, including:

- Forming a briefing and support cell for the institutions most affected in order to preserve the rights and jobs of workers.
- Providing financial support to institutions that find it difficult to finance.
- Establishing tax facilities.
- Preparing the national strategy for employment and the national strategy for employment abroad and the

protection of the rights of immigrants with the aim of setting short- and long-term scenarios.

- Finding solutions to reduce social disparities and establish the principle of equal opportunities.
- In the field of regular labour migration, the Ministry seeks to prepare and implement many projects and cooperation programs with various countries to achieve a fair assignment of work.

He highlighted that the Ministry in charge of vocational training and employment is currently implementing several reforms aimed at improving the protection of migrant workers and facilitating placement abroad, in particular:

- 1- Regulating private employment agencies thanks to legislative reform;
- 2- Adoption of strict procedures and penalties to curb the abuses that were carried out by private institutions for employment abroad.
- 3- Establishing and training a new corps of controllers to monitor compliance of these private intermediaries.

Mr Chaoued wished all successes to the THAMM Programme.



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*Ms Trautmann, DG NEAR,  
European Commission –  
“It is essential that North African  
partner countries work together  
with the EU member states to  
create concrete initiatives that  
respond to the challenges. The  
interests of both sides have to be  
matched to result in a win-win  
situation for the sending and the*

*destination countries, and the  
migrants themselves.”*

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**Ms Trautmann**, from DG NEAR, insisted that labour migration is a policy interest for both sides of the Mediterranean, Europe and the partner countries in North Africa. She underscored that the Commission is committed to supporting the implementation of the New pact on migration and asylum in which the EU has put forward a comprehensive package on migration and asylum including reinforcing cooperation mechanisms for mutually beneficial international mobility and working toward skills partnerships.

On THAMM, Ms. Trautmann indicated that it drew much political attention as a pilot project to see what alternatives it may offer, particularly in the post-COVID crisis context where so many workers have been affected by job losses in sectors such as tourism in particular.

## Session 1. Conference framing and expectations

Session 1 was facilitated by **Ms Tanja Dedovic**, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, RO Cairo, IOM. The session gave the floor to the nominated leads from partner countries, **Dr S. Soliman**, Assistant Minister for Institutional Development, Ministry of State for Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs, Egypt, and **Mr A. Messaoudi**, Director General, International Placement and Foreign Labour, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisia.



**Dr Soliman** explored three dimensions in his intervention:

1. The most important efforts and measures taken by the Egyptian state to support Egyptians abroad in confronting the Corona virus pandemic; 2. The role of the THAMM programme and related activities; 3. Expectations and desired outcomes of the conference. In terms of flagship measures taken by the Government of Egypt, Dr Soliman highlighted the organised return of 77,000 stranded Egyptian citizens stranded and humanitarian cases thanks to 514 flights facilitated from various countries, and the opening of a hotline which dealt with 96,638 inquiries, requests and complaints received by the Ministry. Other initiatives were: "Nawart Baladak": to support the return of Egyptian workers and provide suitable job opportunities for these workers, the "Bidaya Digital" initiative in December 2020 to qualify young people to work in electronic jobs, both of which supported several thousands beneficiaries.

Dr. Soliman acknowledged the efforts of the German Agency for International Cooperation for instance in adapting to the effects on the German labour market during the pandemic through continuous coordination with the German Federal Agency for Employment Informing the required travel requirements in light of the pandemic and providing the necessary information to the candidates before and when traveling. He also welcomed the efforts of the ILO and IOM in response to the pandemic with the production of two Guidance Notes of the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) for employers and recruitment agencies; and support to the extension of social protection mechanisms for Egyptian migrant workers.

Lastly, Dr. Soliman indicated that Egypt's expectations of the conference was to receive structured information on:

- Means of protecting immigrant workers abroad during the Corona virus pandemic
- Best practices to ensure that migrant workers have access to needed services
- Addressing the many challenges regarding the pandemic
- Shedding light on the limited time frame in which the program is implemented in light of the pandemic.



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*Mr Messaoudi, DGPEMOE, Tunisia  
– “The governance of migration  
and labour mobility in the  
countries of North Africa requires a  
comprehensive approach in order  
to amplify the positive effects of  
this migration on the countries of  
origin, the countries of destination,  
and the workers.”*

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**Mr Messaoudi** emphasized the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of work stoppages and closures, reduced levels of economic activity and reduced demand for and supply of products and services. He also pointed to a very significant drop recorded in the turnover of small businesses (-64%), against only 12% of small businesses who were able to take advantage of the crisis and increase their turnover. The impact was also felt on the area of the placement of Tunisians abroad: Numbers of placement operations abroad during the year 2020 registered a decrease of about 62% compared to that of the year 2019. Measures adopted by the Government of Tunisia are: The transformation of the Tunisian economic model, The enhancement of human capital, Reform of labour market governance; Adopting an effective approach to its implementation, The creation of a supervision and support unit responsible for the most affected companies, which works to preserve jobs and guarantee workers' rights has been set up at the level of the Presidency of the Government.

Mr. Messaoudi concluded by emphasizing that in view of this difficult period characterized by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of good governance of



labour migration in Tunisia is all the more important. In his view, the first THAMM conference can help identify the best ways to achieve the specific objectives of the THAMM programme in Tunisia, to better ensure good management of migratory flows for work in Tunisia and help identify strategic and operational trends in labour migration, lessons to be learned and experiences observed in European and North African countries. Importantly, the THAMM conference creates a space for dialogue between all stakeholders in labour migration and mobility in order to help build a consensus of practices around the establishment of regular migration routes, including during crisis situations.

Ms Dedovic ended the session by presenting the agenda (see Annex 1 for the full agenda).

## Session 2. COVID-19 and labour migration and mobility policies across the Mediterranean – Key questions

Moderated by **Ms Michelle Leighton**, Chief, MIGRANT, ILO, the first two parts of this session were organised in an inaugural lecture intended to set the scene and frame the discussion; followed by a panel discussion on the European Pact on Migration and Asylum.

In her introduction, **Ms Leighton** highlighted that “the COVID-19 crisis has revealed how critical it is to uphold the International Labour Standards promoted by the ILO, particularly for migrant workers, who occupy essential positions in often precarious contexts”. Michelle Leighton also emphasized that the “ILO sees the THAMM programme both as an innovative pilot, which will produce original knowledge products and operational tools but also a vehicle to ensure the sustainability of ILO’s past and current interventions in North Africa (such as IRAM, AMEM, or FAIR) on labour migration governance, skills and labour migration statistics and information systems.”

### Part One: Setting the scene, framing the discussion

In Part One, Mr Hervé Nicolle, Samuel Hall, presented the key findings and trade-offs from an original research study undertaken as part of the THAMM Knowledge outputs. The discussion paper, titled “Labour migration

responses to the COVID 19 Crisis in European and North African countries” drew on a wealth and oecumenic range of available data from European and North African sources, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as interviews with THAMM programme stakeholders.




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*Mr Nicolle, Samuel Hall for  
THAMM –*

*“The COVID-19 pandemic has refocused attention on the difficult working conditions of migrants in certain sectors, in particular the agricultural sector. Despite their essential role in most EU countries, seasonal and key workers from Morocco, Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Algeria, still suffer from very low wages and poor living and working conditions. This is also the case for many Egyptian migrants in the Gulf countries.”*

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The current COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the salient and often overlooked failures of migration governance within and between Europe and North Africa. On the one hand, North African countries of origin - mainly Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria - are facing new challenges: job losses, social tensions and returning migrants who need to be reintegrated, all of which add to already high unemployment rates, especially among young people. On the other hand, European destination countries are grappling with the question of how to ensure that labour shortages in critical sectors are filled quickly, in order to avoid another economic downturn. In this respect, COVID-19 could be an opportunity to reflect on how cooperation on migration can better take into

account the interests and priorities of African countries and their citizens. In this regard, and in preparation for the first THAMM regional conference, this discussion paper on labour migration responses to the COVID-19 crisis in Europe and North Africa aims to gain a better understanding of the key trends currently shaping the governance of labour migration in times of crisis and affecting the socio-economic integration of foreign workers into labour markets, in order to inform the design and implementation of THAMM programme activities in North Africa.

The final section presents perspectives to inform the THAMM conference debates and future dialogues between actors on both sides of the Mediterranean on the issue of mobility and labour migration. Three themes in particular are explored: 1. Existing labour migration frameworks: challenging strategy and narratives; 2. A new deal for countries of origin, destination and migrant workers; and 3. Protection mechanisms and decent work.

The full discussion paper and a shorter brief are available in three languages on the conference website ([www.thammregionalconference.com](http://www.thammregionalconference.com)) and soon on the implementing agencies' web pages.

**Professor Ibrahim Awad, Director of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the American University in Cairo**, provided a response to Mr Nicolle's presentation of the discussion paper. In his intervention, Prof. Awad first concurred with the findings in the paper that Covid-19 did not change the drivers of labour migration between North Africa and Europe. In fact, Covid-19 has brought them out with increased salience. Covid-19 has also emphasized the shortcomings in labour migration as well as the benefits it can bring to countries of destination and origin. Remittances have increased, which conforms to theory, migrant workers helping their families in times of crises. Another explanation for the increased remittances relates to border closures, which largely curbed informal channels and trips back to origin countries by migrant workers and their families. Prof. Awad also seconded the observation of historical and cultural legacies as shaping labour migration genesis and directions. Whereas Morocco and Tunisia share with Europe labour migration systems since the 1960s, the decade after independence, for Egypt, Europe is a subsidiary migration destination.

Prof. Awad insisted on the **need to consider structural economic dimensions of migration**. Whether EU countries are their first external labour markets or not, countries of origin in North Africa should act on the drivers of migration in unemployment, underemployment, informality and poverty. While decent terms and conditions of employment have their own intrinsic value and should be pursued as objectives per se, in order for the terms and conditions of employment to continue improving, action is required on the economy. The economy needs to be formalized. The formalization is not through the adoption of laws and regulations that cannot be implemented. It is through ensuring a higher financial and human capital for production and exchange processes and increasing the knowledge content of the economy. In Prof. Awad's view, a truly holistic approach to labour migration governance that results in safe, orderly, regular and decent labour migration requires action on the economy and not only on internal and external labour markets.



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*Prof. I. Awad, American University  
in Cairo –*

*“A truly holistic approach to labour  
migration governance that results  
in safe, orderly, regular and decent  
labour migration requires action  
on the economy and not only on  
internal and external labour  
markets.”*

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Prof. Awad continued by noting that the **European approach to migration in the Mediterranean**, as can be gleaned from different European Union documents including the GAMM and the EU Pact on Migration, sits



on **four legs**: to simplify, these are (i) to enlarge legal labour migration channels; (ii) to combat irregular migration; (iii) to combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings; and (iv) to reinforce migration and development linkages. The challenge is to ensure a balance between these four legs. The fact is that the emphasis is more often than not on combating irregular migration and combatting smuggling and trafficking. Obviously, irregular migration, on the one hand, and smuggling and trafficking on the other, are related. But, in turn, irregular migration and the informal economies of Southern European countries are related, especially in agriculture, construction, hotels and restaurants, personal services and domestic work.

Prof. Awad further underscored that demand for low-skilled workers in the informal economies pulls migrant workers in irregular situations. **An effective and efficient reduction of irregular migration hinges on the official recognition of demand for labour in the modern and in the informal economy.** This most importantly also requires action on the informal economies, modernizing and formalizing them. Much as it is called for in developing countries of origin in North Africa, formalizing informal economies is required in Southern European countries. Covid-19 glaringly revealed the **vulnerability and fragility of irregular migrant workers** employed in the informal economies.

In his view, **countries of origin in North Africa should also aim at targeting occupations that are in demand in EU countries.** Their education and training policies should be formulated and implemented so as to meet demand in their domestic labour markets as well as contribute to meeting demand in the EU countries. In studying which occupations are in demand, they can benefit, for instance, from the regularly updated reports of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

For Prof. Awad, meeting demand for Medium-skilled Migration (MSM) and Highly-skilled Migration (HSM) should not be at the expense of the functioning of the North African countries' domestic labour markets. This requires action on the fourth leg of the EU approach: **reinforcing migration and development linkages.** Euro-Mediterranean cooperation should aim at enlarging the volume of educated to highly-educated workers who can

meet demand for labour in both the North African and the European labour markets. Preventing brain drain is essential to preserving the North African countries' chances of development.

Prof. Awad concluded that **labour markets and economies function in political systems and are framed by political narratives.** The discourse on how migration comes about determines attitudes and policies towards migrant workers and labour migration. Thus, discourse may end up hindering and impeding the adoption of policies. Action on the narrative is necessary in both countries of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. This narrative should bring out the risks of irregular migration and smuggling but should also recognize demand for migrant labour and the contributions migrant workers make to countries of destination. It should address the xenophobia and hate speech that may be directed at migrant workers. The narrative should underline what almost all studies have brought out: migrant workers neither affect the employment of native workers nor their wages because of the segmentation of labour markets. A hostile attitude among parts of the public towards migrant workers is a constraint on the formulation of policies by countries of destination and sensitization measures should be factored into migration policies to propose alternative progressive narratives.

#### **Part Two: Panel discussion - The EU New Pact on Migration: What implications for labour migration and mobility for EU and North African countries?**



This panel discussion gave the floor to three panellists, Ms Jagiello, DG HOME, European Commission, **Dr Dempster, Assistant Director and Senior Associate for Policy Outreach Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy at the Centre for Global Development, London,**

and Ms A. El Ouassif, from the Policy Centre for the New South, Rabat.

Ms Jagiello first outlined what the new Pact on migration and asylum is proposing in terms of developing legal migration pathways. She noted that the EU aspires to building mutually beneficial partnerships with partner countries, and that the African continent is a key partner to the EU, not only in immigration but in terms of historical and economic ties.

She insisted that the Pact encompasses a broad range of initiatives such as attracting highly skilled talents, introducing more flexible admission conditions for the highly skilled and enhancing their rights and the possibility to move and work easily between member states. The identification of skills needs in both EU member States and partner countries is a critical process.

Dr. Dempster unpacked why it is indeed critical for European and North African countries to explore new types of partnerships, specifically in terms of labour shortages and labour surpluses, which are long-term structural socio-economic and demographic trends. According to Dr Dempster, a degree of experimenting, in terms of piloting, testing, evaluating work opportunities and mobility schemes is necessary to explore new paths.

Ms. El Ouassif insisted that that African researchers' current analysis of the European pact on migration and asylum lead them to envisage it more as an inward package of policies targeting internal EU dynamic, particularly on the front of asylum burden sharing.

Ms. Ouassif discussed the effective EU return systems, where the EU has been coherent in its approach meaning that it always seeks to reconcile both the need to protect its borders and the protection of those in need. Whereas the EU is one of the biggest donors of development aid, the concerns are that these aids should not be used with conditionality for other purposes, notably on security or readmission matters.

### **Part Three: Recent findings from statistical analysis and quantitative surveys**

**Dr M. Manke, Head, Labour Mobility and Human Development Division, IOM Headquarters**, facilitated this session focused on findings from recent statistical analysis and quantitative surveys.



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*Ms Manke, IOM –  
“This 1st regional conference helped take stock of the existing labour mobility eco-system in the Mediterranean and once again highlighted the need to approach challenges – both systemic but also caused by the pandemic – in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society way.”*

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Panellists were: **Dr N.Touihri, Tunisian Statistics Institute, Labour Migration Statistics Report in Arab Maghreb Union Countries (Phase I), (JLMP and THAMM Research)**, **Dr J. Bouoiyour, Univ. of Pau et al., Statistical estimate of COVID-19 Impact on Moroccans Residing Abroad by levels of vulnerability (THAMM research)**, **Ms F. Garofalo, Impact Initiatives, COVID-19 Impact Survey on Income and Social Protection of Moroccans and Tunisians Residing Abroad: Preliminary findings (THAMM re-search)**, and **Dr F. Fasani, European Commission Joint Research Centre**.

In the words of Dr Manke, “governments and partners on both shores of the Mediterranean have started to form new partnerships on a skills based migration management in the interest of both – the sending countries and the receiving countries. This can help overcome immediate negative impact of the crisis but will also put a basis for a solid foundation for future mobility in the region along safe, regular and development oriented manner.”

**Dr. Touihri** introduced the current initiative of the Union of Maghreb Arabe (UMA) supported by the ILO-IOM-

UNECA Joint Labour Migration Project which consists in enhance the production of labour migration statistics at the regional level, and particularly in the production of reports on the state of labour migration statistics at the level of Regional Economic Communities (RECs). In spite of challenges due to uneven levels of data collection and the lack of harmonization, the UMA report is progressing and should be presented to UMA for validation by the end of the year. Following this first descriptive phase, a second analytical phase will be supported by the THAMM Programme to mine the available data on issues related to the position of migrant workers on the labour markets of UMA member states.

**Dr. Fasani** presented the key findings from a research report he published in 2020, with Jacopo Mazza, titled ["A Vulnerable Workforce: Migrant Workers in the COVID-19 Pandemic."](#) This report analyses the labour conditions of migrant workers in the EU in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic. By looking at the prevalence of temporary contracts, the position in the income distribution and the likelihood that jobs can be conducted from home for both key and other migrant workers, it highlights the potential and distinct vulnerabilities for these two groups. Foreign born workers - especially Extra-EU migrants - are at a disadvantage in all three dimensions: they are more likely to be in temporary employment, earn lower wages and have jobs that are less amenable to teleworking. The report concludes by identifying possible areas of policy intervention to address these vulnerabilities.

**Ms. Garofalo**, from Impact Initiatives, presented the approach and methodology of an original THAMM survey, on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Income and Social Protection of Moroccans and Tunisians Residing Abroad.



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*Dr Fasani, European Commission Joint Research Centre – “EU mobile and Extra-EU key workers are 16% and 48% more likely to be employed under temporary contracts than natives, respectively. The higher probability of temporary employment and lower wages for foreign key workers - especially Extra-EU ones - compared to natives, persists even when accounting for differences in occupation, education, age and gender composition between the groups.”*

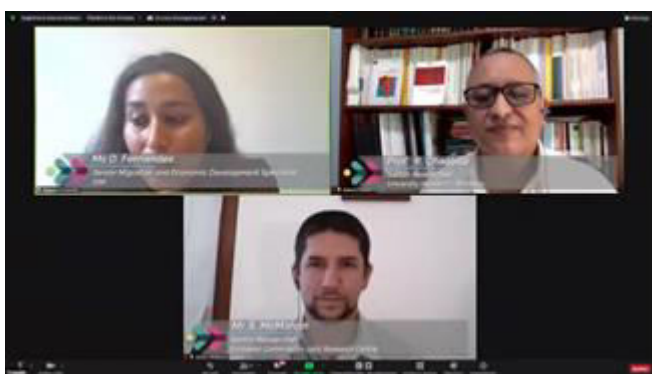
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This survey is designed around two rounds of quantitative, on-line data collection, using social media advertising to reach out for a population that is by definition difficult to survey in the absence of an existing sampling base. The survey, conducted in partnership with Moroccan and Tunisian government partners, will seek to document the effect of the crisis on income levels and access to social protection among MRE and TRE in main destination countries in Europe, North America and Middle East countries.

**Dr. Bouoiyour** presented the preliminary findings of a statistical estimate of COVID-19 Impact on Moroccans Residing Abroad by levels of vulnerability conducted in the context of the THAMM programme. Drawing on existing and publicly available statistical data from main destination countries of MRE in Europe, the study develops a composite index of vulnerability (health, COVID, socio-economic). Preliminary findings of the study which will be presented in full to Moroccan partners later in 2021 point to the presence of Moroccan migrants in specifically underprivileged territories in a trend that is not specific to them but rather emblematic of a general increase in socio-economic inequalities translating into specific health vulnerabilities. The study ends on recommendations to strengthen data collection on the Moroccan population abroad through more regular data collection and surveys at the local / community level. The study is particularly revealing of current knowledge gaps, specifically on the side of the country of origin.

#### Part four: COVID-19 Impact on Remittances

This last part in Session 2 was moderated by **Ms D. Fernandes, Senior Migration and Economic Development Specialist, IOM**. Two panellists presented recently published original research on the impact of COVID-19 on international migrants' remittances: **Mr S. McMahon, from the European Commission Joint Research Centre**, on [Remittances in Africa](#) and **Prof. R. Châabita, Univ. Hassan II, Morocco**, on [The Moroccan diaspora's remittances in the context of COVID-19 : Determinants and stakes](#).



Mr McMahon's intervention emphasized the scale of remittances in the region and their consistent increase over the time, in the last 10 years it went from 17.7 billion to 37 billion dollars in value according to the statistics of the World Bank (the remittances of formal channels), while the remittances of the informal channel are way more than this.

Speakers in this panel noted that, as opposed to initial estimates from the World Bank, officially recorded remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries reached \$540 billion in 2020, just 1.6 percent below the 2019 total of \$548 billion, according to the latest World Bank Migration and Development Brief.

Professor Châabita confirmed the resilience of remittance flows to Morocco, which rose 6.5 percent in 2020. Flows to Egypt, the largest by far in the Africa region, increased 11 percent to a record high of nearly \$30 billion in 2020. Simon McMahon stressed that 2019 data already showed that Egypt was the largest recipient and Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, featured among the ten largest recipients in absolute data across the region.

Regarding who the people receiving the remittances are,

Mr. McMahon added that 2/3 of people who receive remittances are economically inactive or unemployed and this means that they are entirely relying on remittances, have no other source of income.

Remittances offer very significant currency inflows, to mitigate trade deficits. Morocco relies on remittances not only as a source of hard currency but also as way to provide opportunities to fulfill social needs.

Mr. Mazhar Bassiouny, General Director of Ministry of Manpower in Egypt, added that given the importance of remittances for Egyptian workers abroad, there was a need for a national strategy to direct remittances into development projects in Egypt.

### Session 3. Promoting Fair and Ethical Recruitment policies and strategies

#### Part One: Emerging trends

**Mr. J. Theede, Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, RO for Southern Africa, IOM** was the facilitator of this first panel in Session 3. This first panel examined emerging trends in Fair and Ethical Recruitment through the lens of recent studies and policy initiatives in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

**Mr E.A. Deon, Director-General, Arkayn & Company - Conseil en coopération & développement**, presented a study, commissioned under the THAMM Programme, on the mapping of International Recruitment in Morocco which produced recommendations for paradigm shifts in Labour Migration and Mobility Governance. Mr. Deon expressed the need for a new institutional framework to coordinate between Morocco and its international partners the different policies to carry national strategies to organize safe, regular migration, the need to have good understanding of migration as it holds a lot of opportunities and building partnerships, and finally the need to build long term diagnoses to shape innovative solutions.

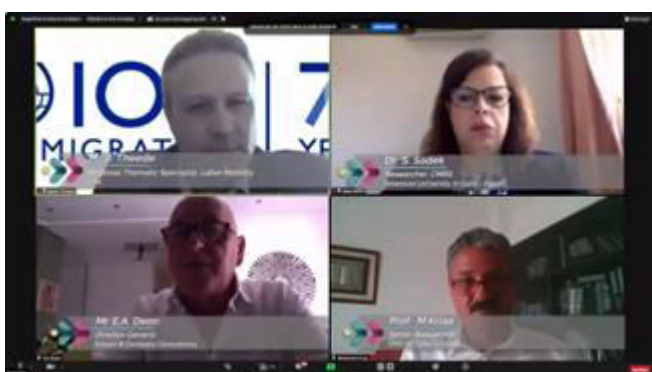
**Prof. M.Kriaa, Univ. of Tunis, Institut Supérieur de Gestion de Tunis**, reported on the mainstreaming of labour migration in the National Strategy for Employment and the development of a Draft National Strategy for Employment Abroad in Tunisia, both of which were undertaken with support from the THAMM Programme



and at the initiative of the Tunisian DGPEMOE (Directorate for International Placement of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment). Prof. Kriaa noted that the dominant economic model in Tunisia has induced quantitative imbalances at the functioning level of the labour market, leading on one hand to an increase in labour emigration because of the growing surplus in the labour supply, and pushed the employers to demand labour immigration in order to satisfy unfulfilled jobs on the national market. Prof. Kriaa clarified that mainstreaming of labour migration into the national employment strategy on one hand, and the development of a national strategy for international employment on the other are closely interrelated, and pursue a specific strategy that is part of an impetus for reform carried out in Tunisia over the past ten years. The draft SNEI provides the ministry and departments in charge of international employment with an operational framework that promotes effective governance of labour migration. It poses the challenges of inter-institutional coordination given the transversal nature of the migration issue.

Prof. Kriaa concluded by identifying the vision and approach of SNEI,

- Serving the country's economic and social development.
- Addressing a double entry migration/ immigration and stock/ flow
- Promoting secure routes for migration and fair recruitment, respecting workers' rights



**Dr S. Sadek from the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), at the American University in Cairo,** presented the methodology and preliminary findings from a diagnostic study on fair recruitment frameworks

and practices for the placement of Egyptian workers abroad, currently conducted under the THAMM Programme. Dr. Sadek noted that the global literature reveals a shortage in analysis about the role of intermediaries, and the regulation of recruitment agencies. The study's approach, which has been developed in other countries under the ILO FAIR Initiative (in Tunisia in particular), is to document actual processes and practices on the ground against existing international standards such as the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. The final goal is to support government to enhance the national framework on international recruitment in Egypt and better protect Egyptian migrants, a priority which has become very high on the national agenda. Dr Sadek noted that while Egyptian legislation does provide indications and a regulatory framework for the operation of private intermediation, there is a need to clarify and strengthen state capacity to effectively regulate in practice.

## Part Two: Practitioners' views

**Mr M. Belarbi, Project Manager AMEM, ILO CO-Algiers,** was the facilitator of the second part of this Session on Fair and Ethical Recruitment, in which the floor was given to representatives of partner institutions in THAMM to share experience and practice in regulating recruitment.

For Egypt, **Ms A. Abdel Mawgoud, Undersecretary of Foreign Relations Department at the Ministry of Manpower,** presented on Challenges in the Placement of Egyptian Migrant Workers. The difficulties that are faced by the Egyptian migrants can be divided in two categories, the first one is about problems related to access to foreign markets, the second one is financial crisis caused by the Arab spring or the pandemic for instance which affected the migrant workers. These come in addition to the linguistic barriers that can also be difficult to overcome, and lack of knowledge of rules and labour rights in the country of destination. Solutions could be found in international standards, for instance in the ILO Fair Recruitment principles, but also in following closely market needs, ensuring better alignment between required and available skills and qualifications providing legal framework for the protection of labour, , and lastly implementing protocols to ensure social protection.

Ms Abdel Mawgoud was followed by **Dr E. Torky, Senior**

**Adviser – Head of Labour Affairs Unit, Federation of Egyptian Industries**, who spoke about Fair and Ethical Recruitment from the employer's perspective and shared original initiatives undertaken by Egyptian employers regarding the integration of migrant workers in specific sectors of the Egyptian labour market. Dr Torky indicated that many migrant workers in Egypt tend to work without contracts. When FEI started implementing initiatives, they realized that in many instances, conditions guaranteed by Egyptian labour laws do not benefit migrant workers. From the perspective of Egyptian employers, it is important to ensure that employees reach a good level of technical training, in addition to the required qualifications. He gave the example of 5 factories which are ready to provide technical paid training for migrants, offering a meal and transportation. Social dialogue and discussion of conditions of work before recruitment are also important, in particular on issues such as working hours, social and health protection, and contract duration.

The Panel session then turned to Morocco, first with an intervention from **Ms S. Bensalem, Head of the International Placement Directorate, ANAPEC**, who shared findings and action points from a recent diagnosis on International Placement Services and new orientations coinducted with support from THAMM and AMEM projects within the National Employment Services (ANAPEC) of Morocco. Ms Bensalem introduced ANAPEC and indicated that it was highly impacted by the pandemic, as their activities were stopped because of borders closure and protection measures, as well as from employment loss. She also noted that labour needs had changed, increasing demand for new technology and increasing adaptation from the Public Employment Services, in particular in terms of the digitalization of the recruitment process. ANAPEC is currently working on adaptation through platforms, intermediation protocols, mobile phone applications, and very special measures were taken to allow agricultural workers to take part in international campaigns.



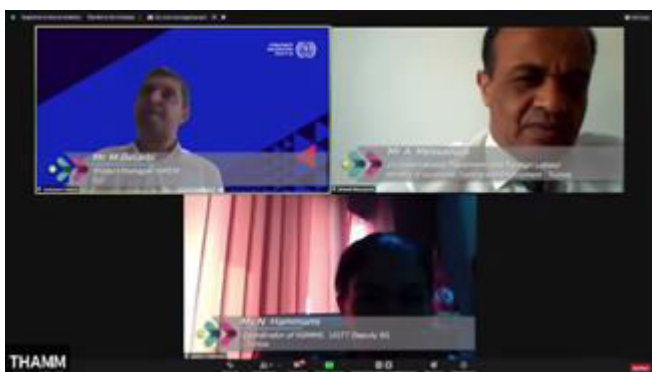
**Mr Hansali from Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc and Mr Firachine from Confédération Démocratique du Travail** completed the discussion on Morocco by adding the perspective of trade unions to the discussion. Mr Alaoui from Union Marocaine du Travail had a last minute emergency which prevented him from joining the discussion. Mr. Hansali started by introducing UGTM, and confirmed the challenges induced by the pandemic in terms of business closures and loss of jobs. .

Mr Hansali called for better harmonization of mitigation and support measures by government towards small businesses.

Mr. Y. Firachine, from CDT, discussed the vulnerability of workers in the labour market even before the Covid-19 crisis in Morocco, adding that the government tries to support the employers and institutionalize vulnerability and made amendments to the labour code, to ensure safety, decent working hours, and fair salaries.

Regarding migrant workers, the procedures are complicated and the worker needs to have a visa to be hired so the employers avoid these complications and the migrant workers tend to work in the informal sector.

Mr. Firachine emphasized the many abuses to which sub-Saharan workers are subjected in terms of minimum labour rights. CDT focuses on the migrant workers, monitors their situation and provides trainings to teach them about their rights.



Concerning **Tunisia**, Mr A. Messaoudi, Director General from DGPEMOE, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, talked on strategic changes to Tunisian labour migration law and management. He stated that the national strategy for international employment (SNEI) is based on the principle of protection of migrant workers' rights, and pursues the following priorities:

- Guarantee efficient governance of the international work market
- Legislative framework and social protection system that protects migrant workers' rights
- International cooperation
- Various partnerships and dialogues
- Control mechanisms to guarantee decent work opportunities and fair recruitment
- Integrated information systems
- Efficient training systems
- Intimidation systems built on the principle of protecting the labour rights.

Lastly, the panel closed on an exchange with **Ms N. Hammami, Coordinator of the Réseau Syndical Migrations Méditerranéennes Sub-sahariennes (RSMMS)**, a network of trade unions from Europe, North and West Africa, focused on the protection of migrant workers' rights and the capacity-building of trade unions on this issue. RSMMS is supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of Tunis. This network has a complete structure and has a leadership committee that meets when needed, including 30 trade union organizations, and 17 countries. Ms Hammami confirmed that Covid 19 has greatly affected work, workers and migrant workers, and the role of the network is to protect workers from the repercussions of Corona who find themselves without

work or without a salary. Therefore, the network has taken a set of measures to reduce the negative effects of this crisis on workers: Intensification of consultation meetings, develop a questionnaire to identify the conditions of the 17 countries and the situation of workers, conducting negotiating sessions with government and parliamentary institutions, establishing dialogue with the concerned parties from the government, business owners, and civil society.

## Session 4. Meeting specific sectoral labour demand and migrant workers' protection needs

**Ms C. Kuptsch, Senior Labour Migration Specialist, MIGRANT, ILO** facilitated this panel session which gave the floor to four speakers: **Mr L. Kleine-Rueschkamp, from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**, who spoke about findings from a recently published paper [‘COVID-19 and key workers: What role do migrants play in your region?’](#); **Ms S. Kalantaryan, from the European Commission Joint Research Centre**, who presented highlights from her paper on [“Meeting labour demand in agriculture in times of COVID 19 pandemic”](#); Ms A. Kaufman, from the German Ministry of Health, who explained the main objectives of the German „Konzertierte Aktion Pflege“ 2021 with regard to the sourcing of skilled care workers from third countries; and lastly Ms R. Smith, Executive Director, Labor Mobility Partnerships, who proposed original insights into [New partnerships for the future](#), from different opinion pieces she has recently developed.

Ms Kuptsch stated that the move towards more seasonal employment in that sector is not limited to the EU but it does exist in many other industrialized countries like Canada, the US, Brazil and Australia.

**Mr L. Kleine-Rueschkamp** started off by providing a short overview of the OECD project which the findings belong to. The project tries to shed light on the link between migration and regional development. The objectives of the project are: more comprehensive regional data on migration and migrants, greater granularity – going beyond large regions (TL2), and novel solid and causal evidence on the role of migration for regional development. It also tackles two new data

sets on migration, the regional data (TL2 or NUTS 1/2) and Municipal/ Census tracts data. During COVID-19 lockdowns it became visible that migrants are often important in sectors that are crucial for the functioning of everyday life. Informed by this experience, this note provides an assessment of the role of foreign-born workers in essential services (referred to as migrant key workers) at regional level for 31 European countries. It examines the share of migrant key workers in regional labour markets, their importance in jobs with different skill requirements, and differences between EU and non-EU migrants. Migrants play a crucial role in health care, where 23% of doctors and 14% of nurses are foreign-born. In cities such as London or Brussels, around half of all doctors and nurses are migrants. Overall, capital regions have the highest share of migrant key workers (20%). Similarly, cities rely more on migrant key workers than other areas, especially in low-skilled occupations where migrants make up 25% of workers.

**Ms Kalantaryan** indicated that Member States affected by the COVID-19 pandemic have often resorted to shelter in workers at work sites to stop the virus from spreading widely. These orders have affected many economic activities, but are designed to prevent a shutdown of those essential activities that are meant to keep the population safe and fed. Agriculture is one of those sectors that needs to be kept functional, but mobility restrictions have kept seasonal temporary workers, which this sector has grown reliant on, from reaching their workplace curbing the productivity of this essential sector. This report analyses the potential for the agriculture sector to replace the seasonal workers who are prevented by shelter in place orders from reaching their usual place of work with EU native born workforce. Looking at labour market flows into agriculture in the past decade, this report finds that the probabilities of flows in agriculture are low. Movers into agriculture are mostly migrant men older than 19 living in a rural area and with low qualification. After analysing recent labour market trends, the report concludes that native workers can only partially fill potential vacancies in the sector.

**Ms Kaufman** started by explaining the term *Konzertierte Aktion Pflege*, as a united approach towards nursing shortage in Germany, and this united approach was decided upon due to the increasing nursing shortage in the German healthcare system where the state

government, federal government as well as relevant stakeholders decided upon goals and measurements targeting the national nursing crisis: e.g. increasing the number of nursing students, better payment for health care professionals, improving the framework to source more healthcare professionals from third countries.

The objective is to improve the Recruitment of nurses from third countries, in terms of:

- Fast-tracking application processes;
- Recognition, integration and monitoring
- Quality label for private recruiters to ensure the high ethical standards for the recruitment process
- Global skills partnerships

The latter is particularly about:

- Expanding the education of (future) nurses who are interested in working in Germany or who want to stay in their country of origin
- Supporting nurses wanting to work in Germany get a German (EU) License – allowing them to work anywhere in the EU
- Program takes place at universities in partnering countries and includes additional content of the German nursing education into the students' curricula as well as German Language courses
- The program is beneficial for the students in the "home track", the "abroad track", the universities and the future employers
- Creation of a sustainable network between partnering universities, nursing students and German employers.

**Ms. Smith** identified that the labour shortages have sharpened because of the Covid19 pandemic however it's more labour scarcity not shortages. Covid-19 has added new operational, political and reputational barriers to partnerships: the mobility itself is still constrained in terms of travel restriction, borders closure between countries. There is therefore a need for partnerships in coming up with solutions that are cost effective in sharing burden across all the stakeholders. Regarding the political and reputational barriers, Ms Smith found that they have decreased in the sense that there is increased recognition of key workers and the role of migrants to the economy.





Ms. Smith identified that overcoming these challenges requires collective action where the coalition would work to overcome the barriers in three ways:

- Identifying other actors taking similar risks or with similar needs.
- Building evidence and a common narrative on their needs for labor mobility and its benefits.
- Using this narrative and a common knowledge base to build support to act.

In the discussion, Ms. Aurelia Segatti, ILO, asked about the available data on underemployment in the sense of recognition of skills and qualifications, the gap between the types of jobs people gets, and the level of qualifications they actually have, and on the migrant workers in agriculture, medical sector.

Mr. Kleine-Rueschkamp responded to the question related to the underemployment, identifying that they have carried out number of analysis on the issue of labour market and migrants, and that migrants have much greater competencies to be employed on jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications so they often downgraded. And regarding the sector of health care, it is not a question of being underemployed it is rather a question of being able to enter the section in the first place.

Ms. Kalantaryan added that regarding the agriculture sector and identifying the negative selection in terms of education towards rural areas and agriculture sector, there are a lot of people with rarely elementary occupation working there. The main cause is therefore low education in addition to the complexity of the

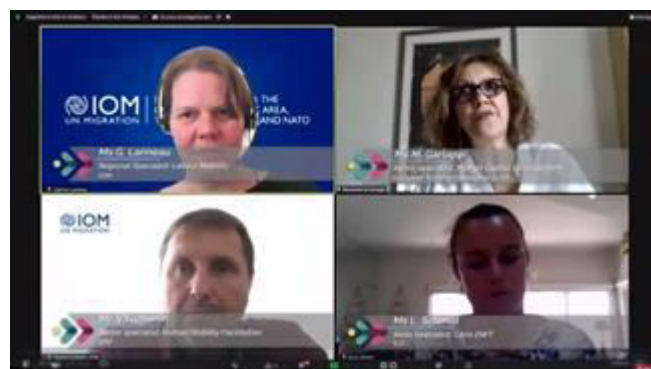
procedures to be employed in sectors like health care.

Ms. Kuptsch asked Ms Smith about the partnerships and coalition building and how she sees the role of international organization like the ILO, and IOM in that type of coalition building

Ms. Smith responded that ILO and IOM have significant convening power and experience in coalition building and ensuring the key roles that these organizations have. And that there have been a lot of efforts within the migration field to build coordination at the governmental level and there was a key missing piece which is the private sectors especially the employers so the need is to focus the coalition to bring those actors in.

## Session 5. Global Partnerships for skills

**Ms G. Lanneau, Regional Thematic Specialist on Labour Mobility and Human Development, IOM RO Brussels** was the facilitator in this session on global partnerships for skills. **Ms M. Garlappi, Human Capital Development Expert, European Training Foundation**, spoke on “Upskilling and reskilling within a life-wide and lifelong learning perspective” ; **Mr V.Yuzhanin, Senior specialist, Human Mobility Facilitation IOM, HQ**, on “Labour mobility and skills in response, recovery and post COVID-19 pandemic” ; **Mr Ali Serhani, Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM)**, provided insights into “Attracting skills back to Morocco in a competitive global environment”; and **Ms L. Schmid, Skills Specialist, ILO Decent Work Team Cairo**, focused on “Skills and Migration from a system building perspective”.



Ms Garlappi identified that ETF promotes the skills agenda of migration relevant to North Africa through a new project called "Skills of migration country fiches"; which include Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon. These country fiches are the first entry analysis of the

skills dimensions of migration from 3 main angles:

- Data
- Nexus
- Project and practices

The last part of country fiches is the recommendations for follow up.

Ms. Lanneau asked Ms. Garlappi, about the recognition of qualification which is fundamental for migrant's access to labour markets and to minimize underutilization of skills so what is ETF doing in this respect?

Ms. Garlappi responded by distinguishing between recognition of qualifications, validation of learning, and identification of skills. The recognition of qualification for migrants is an aspiration but is still far from happening smoothly. However, there is another process that is feasible for migrants to have their skills which is validation of prior learning that means what you learn while working. This is about assessing the knowledge, skills, and competencies of people. This process does not lead automatically to recognition of diplomas; however it is documented, accurate and useful for recruitment so the private sector can know what the persons know and can do, in addition that it opens the way to build up on the assessment for further training. Regarding the identification of skills, there is no assessment so it does not have the same accuracy of the second process but it did some feasibility about the case of migrants and refugees.

Ms L. Schmid, Skills Specialist, ILO Cairo DWT, identifying that it is a key topic for the ILO and it is one way to support migrants and refugees and support host communities. The increased recognition of qualifications and skills is important to gain access to employment skills need to be transferrable and recognized by the labour market. Ms Schmid added that recognition tends to be most successful when established through social dialogue with governments, social partners, and TVET institutions, also Countries have established a range of institutions for the formal recognition of formal qualifications either unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally.

Ms. Schmid added that the recognition of prior learning is successful only if it is linked to wage increases, if the qualifications that are recognized have direct impact on

access and ability to maneuver to labour market.

Ms. Schmid discussed the recognition of formal qualifications, unilateral recognition VS multilateral recognition, and recognition of informally gained skills which is a relatively new area of intervention for national training systems is the recognition of prior learning (RPL). RPL systems require:

- Development of standards and tools to assess skills
- Agencies to review documentation on work experience / qualifications
- Integration of RPL systems within the policy / legal framework of formal education
- Trained assessors and accredited assessment agencies
- Well-developed national systems of quality assurance

Ms. Schmid also tackled piloting the MRS and roadmap through 7 steps

1. Identifying skills area for MRS
2. Benchmarking skills and competency standards
3. Defining and benchmarking qualifications
4. Assessing the assessment and certification arrangements
5. Assessing QA of training and assessment certification arrangements
6. Drafting migrant skilled worker profile
7. Assembling and submission of portfolio

Ms Schmid added that from ILO's side fostering skills partnerships is embedded in a whole set of promising policy options to support employment, migration, skills development and that related to Utilizing skills anticipation systems to formulate migration policies that meet skill demands, increasing migrants' access to education and training, increasing bilateral and multilateral recognition of formally gained qualifications and informally gained skills. The ILO definition for skills partnerships on migration is: "Skills Partnerships on Migration aim to better organize skills and migration across countries, increase investments in skills development and recognition, and meet the needs of countries of origin, transit and destination as well as of migrant workers and employers".

**Mr V.Yuzhanin, IOM**, identified that arrangements in which origin and destination countries come in may vary

(bilateral arrangements or others), and that the focus of skills mobility partnerships is on labour market-based needs and training. Mr. Yuzhanin, identified the need to have training and dedication as well as mechanisms that related to the recognition of the certificates and training outcomes that need to be the integral part of this partnerships.

The prerequisites of effective partnership that the origin and destination countries need to reach are:

- Mid- and long-term policy planning
- Policy coherence
- Multi-stakeholder approach
- Data setting mechanisms
- Data collection mechanisms
- Link skills mobility partnerships to local development and jobs creation schemes at origin and destination
- Establish skills classification systems
- Need to address social aspects of labour mobility and employment

Mr. Yuzhanin, concluded by stressing on the need of partnerships on all possible levels between international organizations.

**Mr. Serhani**, General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM) confirms the importance of the role to be played by the private sector in terms of attracting skills back to Morocco. He stressed that companies have global recruitment strategies and that the current environment is highly competitive, particularly at the higher end of the skills ladder. From CGEM's perspective, the need is to organize competencies and introduce attractive salaries. Moreover, in order to attract skills, the need is to design many incentives to encourage them to stay in the destination country. Morocco for instance.

## Closing remarks

This last session, facilitated by Ms Dedovic from IOM, opened on Prof. I. Awad's synthesis of the discussions over the three days and the formulations of some recommendations.

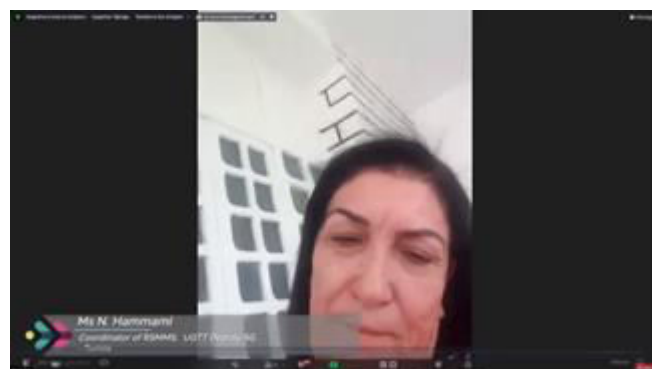
Prof. Awad noted that this first THAMM conference was characterised by:

- its balanced nature in terms of origin of speakers from both Europe and North Africa, quantitative and qualitative research and knowledge discussions, experts and practitioners,

governments and social partners, and last but not least, gender;

- The great support to the THAMM project from the government and social partners side;
- Data discussions which also tackled data for policy use;
- The scope, trends and role of remittances;
- Issues of labour demand, labour shortages and labour scarcity;
- Fair and ethical recruitment approaches as strategic tools for the regulation of international placement and recruitment;

Prof. Awad then proposed some recommendations which are summarised together with messages from the Discussion paper by Mr Nicolle in the following section.



The closing session then turned to THAMM 's Social Partners Focal Points. **Ms. Naïma Hammami, UGTT Deputy Secretary-General for International and Arab Affairs, Tunisia**, insisted on the wealth of benefits immigrants add to the countries of destination, the countries of origin, themselves and their families, and their support for the economy. She further insisted that

migrants alleviate the problem of unemployment in their countries. Regarding UGTT, she added that it works to promote the rights of immigrants, whether they are Tunisians who work abroad or migrant workers working in Tunisia, and it works to protect them legally.

**Ms. Hammami** mentioned the union's partnerships with ILO on several projects (FAIR, AMEM, THAMM). She concluded her speech with reference to numerous activities, such as the establishment of a tripartite working group (Government, Employers, Workers) on labour migration within the national social dialogue committee in Tunisia.

**Mr. Ali Serhani, CGEM, Morocco**, insisted that human beings are entitled to freedom of movement and that CGEM is a proponent of freedom of circulation between countries which should be based on true reciprocity. Bilateral labour agreements and conventions are an important component of labour migration and mobility governance. A programme like THAMM should support work in this area.

**Ms. T. Dedovic, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, RO Cairo, IOM**, emphasized the importance of this conference and the topics tackled. Ms Dedovic indicated that the conference main discussions and findings will be turned into a report. She also reminded the audience that the topic of the second conference next year will be about how to assess mobility schemes from the government's, employers', workers' organizations', migrant workers' and experts' perspectives.

Ms. Dedovic concluded by thanking all the participants and colleagues who took part in the conference.





## CONFERENCE KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section draws on several sources to propose a set of key messages and recommendations aimed at supporting THAMM's stakeholders: Implementing agencies, national partners, and the donor. The main sources for this section are: Mr Hervé Nicolle's Discussion paper commissioned for the THAMM Conference; Prof. I. Awad's response to the Discussion paper and Final Synthesis of the Conference; specific recommendations which emerged from the conference sessions.

1. **Labour demand in Europe** will continue to increase and **labour surplus in North Africa** is unlikely to be absorbed in the near future. The European situation is one of labour scarcity which will not be solved through increased wages only. It is therefore important to understand that a new cycle of interdependency has opened and will continue. Its human and economic outcomes will depend on the commitment of all stakeholders.
2. How can **all stakeholders including social partners** be better involved in policy dialogues at national, bilateral and multilateral levels?
3. Current **mechanisms to avoid brain drain** seem weak in view of the renewed needs and pressure, especially on the EU side. How can EU countries avoid triggering a de facto brain drain and help highly qualified North Africans to better contribute or return to their countries of origin? And how effective and prospective are current policies in North African countries in terms of retaining or attracting back the talents that they have trained? How to monitor the effectiveness of announced skills partnerships in avoiding the pitfalls of brain drain?
4. The current understanding of skills needs in the EU seems to contradict the lessons learnt on "**essential workers**" during the crisis and the role played by migrant workers within these. These findings provide clear indications to reform legal pathways and mobility schemes to facilitate the inclusion of medium and low-skilled but essential workers.
5. Current **labour migration data gaps** and the absence of a regional knowledge platform point to the weakness of an evidence-based policy culture on the issue of labour migration governance. **Regional and transnational bodies** should increase their efforts to work towards greater harmonisation and dissemination of labour migration statistics and knowledge.
6. **Countries of origin in North Africa should periodically study the demand for highly- mid- and low-skilled migrant workers.** In their studies, they can benefit from the regularly updated reviews of demand for skills in the EU published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and by ETF. They can also draw on the Member States' national projections of skill demand.
7. **European countries of destination should periodically update their identification of needed skills and bring them to the attention of North African countries.** Importantly, for attracting skills and putting them to good use, they should also formulate clear policies on both the recognition of qualifications and prior learning.
8. In contexts where formal qualifications are scarce but where migrant workers accumulate experience, there should be **facilitated systems of recognition of prior learning.**
9. There is a need to create **more efficient and effective pathways from studies to vocational training to integration into labour markets** between and within North African and European countries.
10. Certain **sectors in specific EU countries, such as agriculture, construction and tourism, in Southern European countries**, have become increasingly dependent on migrant labour. Yet, their working and living conditions are often unacceptable. How to ensure better protection of these workers throughout the migration cycle?
11. The establishment of connections between the North African **public employment services and the European network of public employment services (EURES)** should be considered. This would facilitate the matching of migrant labour demand and supply. It would usefully contribute to labour mobility in safe, orderly and regular conditions between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

12. The **legal frameworks for private recruitment agencies need to be upgraded** so as to develop the industry and to curb informal intermediation, which is at the origin of illicit practices, such as fake and substitution of contracts. Incentives should be provided to highly performing agencies that ensure decent work for migrant workers. ILO Convention no. 181 (1997) on private employment agencies should be drawn upon in upgrading the legal frameworks.
13. There is a **need to develop digital infrastructures further in North African countries** so as to facilitate matching demand for and supply of migrant workers through digital platforms. These platforms should allow the performance by public employment services and private recruitment agencies of their functions and would help find abusive recruitment practices.
14. **Bilateral agreements** are a useful tool to organize labour migration between countries of origin and destination. European and North African can enter into such agreements, where they do not exist. Existing bilateral agreements should be effectively operationalized and updated to take account of the changing demand for labour at destinations. In particular, they should take into account the **social protection of workers**.
15. North African countries should increase the number of **labour attachés and labour attaché offices** so as to be commensurate with the volumes and destinations of their labour migrations. The functions of labour attachés, including the protection of migrant workers, should be spelled out and adapted to the labour markets and to the legal and policy frameworks of countries of destination. Labour attachés should be trained to the performance of these functions.
16. North African countries should periodically collect, process, analyze and disseminate data on labour migration. The quality of data should be upgraded.
17. European countries should develop a narrative on labour migration, including from North Africa, which emphasizes its necessity and brings out evidence about its contribution to their economies and societies. This narrative should help build a supportive environment for labour migration. The roots of xenophobia should be uncovered through research and addressed by purposive public policies. Without a supportive environment it will be difficult to promote labour migration from North Africa and to fully protect migrant workers and their families already present in Europe.
18. A narrative aimed at the labour forces and societies of North African countries is also needed. It should recognize the need to protect refugees and migrant workers in North Africa and that, because of labour market segmentation, they neither affect the employment of natives nor their wages.

## ANNEXES

- Concept Note
- Agenda
- Conference Website
- Discussion Paper
- Press release and social media posts



Programme funded by the European Union



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

# THAMM

REGIONAL CONFERENCE N°1

**LABOUR MIGRATION RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS  
IN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES:**

**STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL TRENDS, LESSONS AND SHARING OF EXPERIENCE**

5, 6 & 7 July 2021



## CONCEPT NOTE

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### 1. Introduction to the conference

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 Organization for Migration (IOM), the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency Endabel and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Endabel has joined the THAMM programme in August 2020. 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). The ILO and the IOM implement four of its five Specific Objectives (see below) on funding from the European Union.

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). As recent research from the European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography suggests, "the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the government responses to it could reshape migratory movements, shift migration routes and alter the composition of migrant populations worldwide".<sup>1</sup> **A better understanding of key trends shaping labour migration governance, in particular in a crisis of the nature, duration and depth which the COVID-19 crisis, is needed to shape and refine intervention within THAMM in North Africa.**

This proposed first regional conference offers to **share 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.** Through presentations from the latest research findings and the sharing of practitioners' experiences produced within and beyond the programme, this regional conference intends to:

- **take stock of current labour migration and mobility trends** observed within and between the two regions;
- **inform implementation of programme activities** among all partners involved in THAMM half way into the programme;
- **engage a range of labour migration and mobility stakeholders to help build consensus of practice** around establishing regular pathways including in a crisis situation;
- **prepare the post-crisis phase** building on lessons learned in 2020 and 2021.

This activity of the programme is implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)



<sup>1</sup> European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography, 2020 *Atlas of Migration*, 2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/kic/en/news/how-coronavirus-reshaping-migration-worldwide>





A **second regional conference**, due to take place towards the end of the programme in July 2022, will be specifically focused on drawing lessons on mobility schemes and their implementation once more substantial knowledge is available.

## 2. Background of the THAMM Programme

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** of 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 Migration<sup>2</sup> 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:

- **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.<sup>2</sup>

This Regional conference is organized more specifically as part of the implementation of SO1 and SO5.

## 3. Labour migration and the COVID-19 context

In an unprecedented turn of events in a time of globalisation, the **COVID-19 crisis has resulted in an almost complete closure of borders between regions of the world**, and within them. While these decisions were taken over a few weeks in direct relation with the urgent imperative to contain the pandemic, their immediate and longer-lasting effects on migration policies, and more specifically on the mobility of workers, ought to be appraised and understood.

The **shared space between the European Union and North African countries**, the Mediterranean geo-political area, is no exception. The 2015 migration crisis created a political momentum at the Valletta summit to address immediate and root causes of African - European migration dynamics and placed a renewed emphasis on the need to identify regular pathways for labour migration.

The **COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted 2.2 billion workers and economies worldwide**, according to the ILO, with the equivalent of 305 million jobs lost and 436 million enterprises facing high risks of serious disruption. Migrant and refugee workers have been particularly affected as many serve on the front lines carrying out essential jobs in health care, services, food retail, agriculture, and other sectors. Along with high levels of unemployment and the resulting loss of income, migrant and refugee workers are facing rising levels of discrimination and xenophobia, food insecurity, increased risk of virus transmission due to cramped or inadequate living conditions, and restrictions on movement. Many are also having to return to home countries already suffering high levels of unemployment. Migrant workers are also particularly affected as they tend to be overrepresented in the informal sector which tends to be even more harshly impacted by the effects of the pandemic as health and safety measures are typically neglected and social protection nonexistent in informal contexts. Recent research by Fosani and Mazza (2020) for the Joint Research Centre provides evidence to the fact that "(f)oreign born workers - especially ExtracEU migrants - are at a disadvantage [...] in terms of temporary employment, [earning of] lower wages and [occupation of] jobs that are less amenable to teleworking."<sup>3</sup>

Another serious outcome of the crisis is the **decrease in remittances** which already affects migrant households and economies in countries of origin. The World Bank estimates that, due to the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown, global remittances will decline by about 20 percent in 2020 and, for the MENA

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the EP, the Council, the ESC and the CoR on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration, COM (2017) 558 final.

<sup>3</sup> Fosani, F. and Mazza, J., A Vulnerable Workforce: Migrant Workers in the COVID-19 Pandemic, EUR 30225 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Ispra, 2020.  
<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120730/online.pdf>

region, by 19.6 percent to \$47 billion in 2020, following the 2.6 percent growth seen in 2019. Diliip Ratho, Head of the Knomad programme at the World Bank<sup>4</sup>, calls for "Quick actions that make it easier to send and receive remittances can provide much-needed support to the lives of migrants and their families. These include teaching remittance services as essential and making them more accessible to migrants."<sup>5</sup> In a context, as in North Africa, where Remittance inflows have outstripped Foreign Direct Investment from 2013 to 2018, such a downturn could have dire consequences especially for the most vulnerable, most dependent populations. For the Africa region, North African countries (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) featured among the top ten recipients in millions of US dollars in 2019<sup>6</sup>.

These effects show in many ways **how important and useful approaches in terms of migrant workers' protection act as a buffer to the worst effects of such crises**. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed many of the fault lines of existing labour migration practices, the risks attached to leaving out workers in the informal sector and how important it is (and would have been) to better safeguard migrant workers' fundamental rights at work, their safety and security, their protection over the entire migration cycle, and of course their social protection, drawing on existing international fair and ethical recruitment standards.<sup>7</sup>

However, border closure decisions taken within the EU, and across North African countries, have revealed the **endurance of the idea of territorial sovereignty** and could even reactivate conservative protectionist approaches to labour market integration, while possibly having the simultaneous negative effect of exacerbating underground economies of passage and labour exploitation. There is concern among several analysts that while the COVID-19 crisis is not a migration crisis per se, it may create favourable ground for radical pseudo-policy solutions, such as total border closure, walls, etc<sup>8</sup>.

In **Europe**, the Schengen space has de facto been suspended (15 member states have in fact taken unilateral decisions on the closure of their borders in March)<sup>9</sup>. On its external borders, the Commission has issued on 16 March 2020 a temporary restriction on

non-essential travels to the European Union, a few days after the American Europeans Travel Ban. The New Pact on Migration announced in September 2020 advocates for the abolition of the Dublin II framework and profound policy reshaping.<sup>10</sup> The European Commission together with trade unions, chambers of commerce and employers' organisations, is working on enhancing the integration of migrants and refugees into the labour market in the framework of the European Partnership on Integration signed on 20 December 2017 and the European Skills Agenda presented in July 2020.<sup>11</sup>

**North Africa** is not a free movement space and while belonging to the African Union and in spite of its commitment to such, remains dominated by national migration policies. But beyond the lack of an integrated circulation space, let alone a single labour market, several agreements between North African countries, in the form of visa waivers, "conventions d'établissement" and social security agreements, have for decades allowed a degree of fluidity in terms of labour migration flows between these countries. With Covid-19, international commercial flights to and from Europe and between North African countries have been suspended for months; borders were closed unilaterally by all countries in March 2020 and visa issuance suspended until further notice. The situation only eased up for some countries in September 2020 but reversals were also observed when the second wave hit Europe and North Africa with Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco deciding to go back to curfews and partial closing of their international borders. It is only in June 2021 that we have generally seen international borders reopen, but in ways specific to each country, but the type of professional movement this will actually allow in the coming months still remains to be assessed.

There are however **encouraging signs of a degree of measure and of constructive intentions on both shores of the Mediterranean**. Most North African countries have taken steps to authorise bi-nationals and residents to travel / repatriate their family members; mobility schemes have not been cancelled but slowed down or temporarily put on hold and pre-departure orientation and screening and training has continued, often remotely, and, last but not least, development cooperation programmes destined to strengthen regular labour migration schemes have continued implementation. Many analysts are calling for lessons to be drawn from the crisis and translated into profound reforms of migration policies, particularly in terms of regularization and better protection of migrant workers.<sup>12</sup> Recently conducted research confirms the very critical role played by migrant workers in key occupations: A recent study found that on average,

<sup>4</sup> The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) is a global hub of knowledge and policy expertise on migration and development issues. (For more info, visit: <https://www.knomad.org/about-us>)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharp-rebound-in-remittances-in-2020>

<sup>6</sup> Kadiyalyan, S., and McMahon, S., Covid-19 and Remittances in Africa, EUR 30262 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, p.12.

<sup>7</sup> [https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121055/remittances\\_in\\_the\\_context\\_of\\_covid\\_19\\_official\\_12062020\\_final\\_online\\_clean.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121055/remittances_in_the_context_of_covid_19_official_12062020_final_online_clean.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Several publications have pointed to existing frameworks Protecting migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, 'Seasonal Migrant Workers: Rethinking Fundamental Principles and Mechanisms in light of COVID-19'.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ojciecra.com/news/2020/03/south-africa-build-40km-fence-zimbabwe-border-200320062936120.html>

<sup>10</sup> Some analysts note the multiple consequences of the crisis on European common migration and asylum policy: <https://oscd-development-matters.org/2020/04/02/covid-19-consequences-for-international-migration-and-development/>; [https://www.iifm.org/sites/default/files/cioms/files/foris\\_bertos\\_i\\_migrations\\_covid\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.iifm.org/sites/default/files/cioms/files/foris_bertos_i_migrations_covid_2020_1.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1561](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1561)

<sup>12</sup> Some of the papers accessible here contain such analyses: Historic shocks can bring about historic changes. Fixing our broken migration system should be one of them ; Regularizing Migrant Workers in Response to COVID-19; Less gratitude, please. How COVID-19 reveals the need for migration reform; Migrants' contribution to the COVID-19 response: Four Reasons to Keep Developing Legal Migration Pathways During COVID-19; Labor Mobility in the Post-COVID-19 Era: The Case for Partnerships; Foreign, essential and undocumented: A snapshot of irregular immigration in Spain.

13% of key workers are immigrants in the EU and in some occupations (e.g. cleaners and helpers and labourers in mining and construction), up to a third of key workers are foreign born<sup>13</sup>. In some sectors, such as agriculture, native workers can only partially fill in the positions left vacant by migrant workers following mobility restrictions during COVID<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4. Conference questions, expected outcomes and outputs

Therefore, in view of the uncertainty created by these various measures, the bulk of which remained unchanged until early 2021, and the already palpable impact on thousands of stranded and returned workers, **several questions** deserve consideration:

- What do we learn from current confirmed COVID-19 related labour migration policy decisions in both Europe and North African countries?
- What are key variables or factors likely to influence strategic approaches and operational decisions on labour migration issues in the upcoming months?
- What is available in terms of assessments on labour market needs and skills forecasts in sending and destination countries? How are private sectors reacting in different countries and what lessons are they drawing from the crisis regarding labour migration and mobility?
- Has COVID-19 created new opportunities regarding the protection of migrant workers, for instance in terms of regularisation of jobs occupied by migrants (following the realization of their essential nature) or in terms of renegotiated bilateral labour migration agreements and social security agreements?<sup>15</sup>

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 with a view to the following outcomes:

1. Stock-taking of the labour migration governance situation, strategic and operational trends looking into women and men migrant workers' protection gaps and how they may be taken into consideration in THAMM's implementation and more broadly by regional stakeholders;

<sup>13</sup> Fossati, F. and Mazza, J., Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library/doc/immigrant-key-workers-their-contribution-to-europes-covid-19-response>  
<sup>14</sup> Kaldanyan, S., Mazza, J., Scipioni, M., Meeting labour demand in agriculture in times of COVID 19 pandemic, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/ica/en/publication/annual-reports/meeting-labour-demand-agriculture-times-covid-19-pandemic>  
<sup>15</sup> In Germany for instance, new regulations for seasonal workers were put in place to facilitate their recruitment; see also communication from the EU: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/docs/pages/00\\_eu\\_inform3\\_labour\\_migration\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/docs/pages/00_eu_inform3_labour_migration_2020_en.pdf)

2. Identification of lessons to be drawn and spaces for further research and monitoring of identified trends in labour migration governance, looking specifically into account the 2021 EU agenda on talent ;
3. Formulation of concrete and pragmatic policy recommendations to the EU Commission, to EU Member States (in particular those involved in the THAMM programme), and to North African states, aiming to strengthen the protection of North African migrant workers sustainably in times of crisis.

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

- A **baseline discussion paper** synthesizing existing recent research findings on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on labour migration governance trends within and between the two regions (EU and North Africa) and showcasing THAMM's findings;
- 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**.

#### 5. Methodology and format

Following the drafting of this conceptual note, the ILO in close collaboration with IOM commissioned a **baseline study to produce a discussion paper on "The impact of the COVID-19 on European and North African Labour Migration Governance trends"**, which will serve as the basis for the conference discussion. Drawing on the most recent research findings from European, North African and international research, the paper will provide a synthesis of current labour migration governance trends in reaction to the pandemic across the EU and in the concerned North African countries and will also relate them to lessons drawn from existing data on the actual impact of the crisis on women and men migrant workers. This paper will be available ahead of the conference to inform and guide discussions during the conference.

The **target participants** will be invited from THAMM national partners' lists including practitioners and policy makers (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia), enlarged to relevant international and regional organizations, and relevant stakeholders from governments and social partners, researchers, academics, and the specialized press, and as mentioned including practitioners and policy makers in Algeria and Libya.

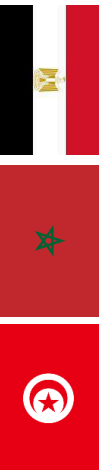
#### 6. Indicative timeframe

The conference is scheduled for **5, 6 and 7 July 2021** and will be strictly online due to uncertainty on travel restrictions in the current COVID-19 crisis.





Programme funded by the European Union



# THAMM

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

REGIONAL CONFERENCE N°1

ONLINE

## LABOUR MIGRATION RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES:

### STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL TRENDS, LESSONS AND SHARING OF EXPERIENCE

5, 6 & 7 July 2021 - Time zone: GMT + 1 (Rabat)

#### Draft Agenda

#### Monday 5 July

#### DAY 1: SETTING THE SCENE AND COLLECTING RESEARCH TAKE-AWAYS

08:45 – 09:00	<b>Online Registration of Participants</b>
09:00 – 10:00	<b>Opening Ceremony</b> <b>Facilitator: Ms A. Segatti, ILO THAMM manager</b> <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- H.E. Ambassador I. Badawy, Assistant Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs and International Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt</li> <li>- Mr R. Chouaied, Head of the cabinet of the Minister of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisia</li> <li>- Ms H. Trautmann, Acting Director, DG NEAR, European Commission</li> </ul>
10:00 – 10:10	<b>Group Photo</b>
10:10 – 11:00	<b>Session 1: Conference framing and expectations</b> <b>Facilitation: Ms T. Dedovic, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, RO Cairo, IOM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr S. Soliman, Assistant Minister for Institutional Development, Ministry of State for Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs, Egypt</li> <li>- Mr A. Messaoudi, Director General, International Placement and Foreign Labour, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisia</li> </ul>

This activity of the programme is implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)



11:00 – 12:00	<b>Session 2: COVID-19 and labour migration and mobility policies across the Mediterranean – Key questions</b> <b>Facilitation: Ms M. Leighton, Chief, MIGRANT, ILO</b> <b>Part One: Setting the scene, framing the discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaugural discussion paper: <b>Labour migration responses to the COVID 19 Crisis in European and North African countries: An overview of key research findings</b>. Dr H. Nicolle, Samuel Hall (THAMM research)</li> <li>• Respondent: Prof. I. Awad, Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), American University in Cairo</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
12:00 – 13:00	<b>Part Two: Panel discussion - The EU New Pact on Migration: What implications for labour migration and mobility for EU and North African countries?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms M. Joglelle, DG HOME, European Commission</li> <li>• Dr H. Dempster, Assistant Director and Senior Associate for Policy Outreach Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy, Centre for Global Development, London</li> <li>• Ms A. El Ouassif, Policy Centre for the New South, Rabat</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Lunch break</b>
14:00 – 16:30	<b>Session 2: COVID-19 and labour migration and mobility policies across the Mediterranean – Key questions (Ctd)</b> <b>Part Three: Recent findings from statistical analysis and quantitative surveys</b> <b>Facilitator: Ms M. Manke, Head, Labour Mobility and Human Development Division, IOM (Confirmed)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr N. Toubri, Tunisian Statistics Institute, <b>Labour Migration Statistics Report in Arab Maghreb Union Countries (Phase 1)</b>, (JLMP and THAMM Research)</li> <li>• Dr J. Bouayjour, Univ. of Pau et al., <b>Statistical estimate of COVID-19 Impact on Moroccans Residing Abroad by levels of vulnerability</b> (THAMM research)</li> <li>• Ms F. Garofalo, Impact Initiatives, <b>COVID-19 Impact Survey on Income and Social Protection of Moroccans and Tunisians Residing Abroad: Preliminary findings</b> (THAMM research)</li> <li>• Dr F. Fasani, European Commission Joint Research Centre, <b>A Vulnerable Workforce: Migrant Workers in the COVID-19 Pandemic</b></li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
16:30	<b>End of Day 1</b>



## Tuesday 6 July

### DAY 2: TECHNICAL COMPONENTS OF LABOUR MIGRATION POLICY

9:30 – 09:45	<b>Highlights of Day 1 (Video clip)</b>  <b>Session 2. COVID-19 and labour migration and mobility policies across the Mediterranean – Key questions (Ctd)</b>  <b>Part four: COVID-19 Impact on Remittances</b> <b>Facilitator: Ms D. Fernandes, Senior Migration and Economic Development Specialist, IOM</b> <b>Facilitator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr S. McMahon, European Commission Joint Research Centre, <b>Remittances in North Africa: sources, scale and the Covid-19 pandemic</b></li> <li>• Prof. R. Chachita, Univ. Hassan II, Morocco <b>Les transferts de fonds de la diaspora marocaine dans le contexte de la COVID-19 : déterminants et enjeux</b></li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
09:45 – 10:30	<b>Session 3. Promoting Fair and Ethical Recruitment policies and strategies</b> <b>Part One: Emerging trends</b> <b>Facilitator: Mr. J. Theede, Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, KO for Southern Africa, IOM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr E.A. Deon, Director-General, Arkayn &amp; Company - Conseil en coopération &amp; développement, <b>Mapping of International Recruitment in Morocco and Recommendations for Paradigm Shifts in Labour Migration and Mobility Governance</b> (THAMM Research)</li> <li>• Prof. M.Krida, Univ. of Tunis, Institut Supérieur de Gestion de Tunis, membre de l'unité de recherche UAQAP-ISG, <b>The mainstreaming of labour migration in the National Strategy for Employment and Development of a Draft National Strategy for Employment Abroad in Tunisia</b> (THAMM)</li> <li>• Dr S. Sodek, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), American University in Cairo, <b>Diagnostic Study on Recruitment Frameworks and Practices for the Placement of Egyptian Workers Abroad: Preliminary Findings</b> (THAMM Research)</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
10:30 – 12:00	
12:00 – 13:30	<b>Lunch break</b>
	<b>Session 3. Promoting Fair and Ethical Recruitment policies and strategies (Ctd)</b> <b>Part Two: Practitioners' views</b> <b>Facilitator: Mr M. Belarbi, Project Manager AMEM, ILO CO-Algiers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Egypt:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms A. Abdel Mawgoud, Undersecretary of Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry of Manpower, Egypt – <b>Challenges in the Placement of Egyptian Migrant Workers</b></li> <li>▪ Dr E. Torky, Senior Adviser – Head of Labour Affairs Unit, Federation of Egyptian Industries, Egypt - <b>Fair and Ethical Recruitment from the employer's perspective</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Morocco:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms S. Bensalem, ANAPEC, <b>Diagnosis on International Placement Services and new orientations</b></li> <li>▪ Moroccan trade unions, Mr L. Hansali, Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc; M. Y. Ftichine, Confédération Démocratique du Travail</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
13:30 – 16:00	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tunisia:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mr A. Messaoudi, DGP/EMOE, <b>Strategic changes to Tunisian labour migration law and management</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Régional:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms N. Hammami, Coordinator RSMMS, <b>Réseau Syndical Migrations Méditerranée Afrique Sub-saharienne</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
16:00	<b>End of Day 2</b>



## Wednesday 7 July

### DAY 3: Sector-based needs and skills mobility

9:00 – 09:15	<p><b>Highlights of Day 2 (video clip)</b></p> <p><b>Session 4. Meeting specific sectoral labour demand and migrant workers' protection needs</b></p> <p><b>Facilitator: Ms C. Kupisch, Senior Labour Migration Specialist, MIGRANT, ILO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr L. Kleine-Rueschkamp, OECD, COVID-19 and key workers: What role do migrants play in your region?</li> <li>Ms S. Kalantaryan, European Commission Joint Research Centre, Meeting labour demand in agriculture in times of COVID 19 pandemic</li> <li>Ms A. Kaufman, Results of the German „Konzertierte Aktion Pflege“ 2021 with regard to the sourcing of skilled care workers from third countries, German Federal Ministry of Health, Division for Skilled workers abroad, migration, integration</li> <li>Ms R. Smith, Executive Director, Labor Mobility Partnerships, New partnerships for the future</li> <li>Discussion</li> </ul>
11:00 – 11:15	<p><b>Health break</b></p> <p><b>Session 5. Global Partnerships for skills</b></p> <p><b>Facilitator: Ms G. Lanneau, Regional Thematic Specialist on Labour Mobility and Human Development, IOM RO Brussels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms M. Gattioppi, Human Capital Development Expert, European Training Foundation, Upskilling and reskilling within a life-wide and lifelong learning perspective</li> <li>Mr A. Serhani, Labour mobility and skills in response, recovery and post COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>Mr L. El Wardi, Vice-President Mem, Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM) (13ème région), Attracting skills back to Morocco in a competitive global environment</li> <li>Ms L. Schmid, Skills Specialist, IL O Cairo DWT, Skills and Migration from a system building perspective</li> <li>Discussion</li> </ul>
13:00 – 13:10	<p><b>Transition Break</b></p>
13:10 – 14:00	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p><b>Facilitator: Ms A. Segati, ILO THAMM Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Overall synthesis of conference key findings:</b> Prof. I. Awad, Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), American University in Cairo</li> <li><b>THAMM's Social Partners Focal Points:</b> Mr A. Serhani, CGEM; Ms N. Hammami, UGIT</li> <li><b>Way Forward and THAMM Regional Conference No.2:</b> Ms T. Dedović, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labor Mobility and Human Development, RO Cairo, IOM</li> </ul> <p><b>End of Conference</b></p>



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## Documents



## Conference



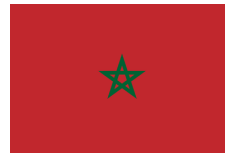
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# THAMM

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

## Press Release

### THAMM PROGRAMME HELD ITS FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LABOUR MIGRATION RESPONSES TO COVID-19 CRISIS IN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

**Rabat, 7 July 2021** Supported by the European Commission (EC), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) co-organised a virtual regional conference - from 5 to 7 July - on Labour Migration Responses to COVID-19 in European and North African Countries.

This was the first in the “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Mobility in North Africa” (THAMM) Programme.

The event aimed to document and explore labour migration-related policy changes 18 months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the event representatives from governments, social partners and academia from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia as well as ILO, IOM, ETF, OECD and international experts presented latest policy observations and findings from recent research produced in the framework of THAMM and beyond. With 130 participants from North Africa and Europe, the conference was an opportunity to:

- take stock of current labour migration and mobility trends observed within and between the EU and North Africa;
- reflect over mid-term results achieved within the THAMM programme and strengthen collaboration and information sharing among all partners
- facilitate exchange among a range of labour migration and mobility stakeholders to help build consensus of practice around establishing regular pathways including in a crisis situation;
- identify common approaches towards preparing for the post-crisis phase of “building forward better” based on lessons learned in 2020 and 2021.

As Michelle Leighton, ILO Labour Migration Branch Chief, highlighted in her introduction, “the COVID-19 crisis has revealed how critical it is to uphold the International Labour Standards upheld by the ILO, particularly for migrant workers, who occupy essential positions in often precarious contexts”. Michelle Leighton also emphasized that the “ILO sees the THAMM programme both as an innovative pilot, which will produce original knowledge products and operational tools but also a vehicle to ensure the sustainability of ILO’s past and current interventions in North Africa (such as IRAM, AMEM, or FAIR) on labour migration governance, skills and labour migration statistics and information systems.”





In the words of Marina Manke, Head of Labour Mobility and Human Development at IOM, "this 1st regional conference helped take stock of the existing labour mobility ecosystem in the Mediterranean and once again highlighted the need to approach challenges – both systemic but also caused by the pandemic – in a whole of government and whole of society way. Governments and partners on both shores of the Mediterranean have started to form new partnerships on a skills based migration management in the interest of both – the sending countries and the receiving countries. This can help overcome immediate negative impact of the crisis but will also put a basis for a solid foundation for future mobility in the region along safe, regular and development oriented manner."

Henrike Trautmann, acting director, DG NEAR European Commission, underlined that the EU via THAMM is working together with EU MS and the North African countries to promote concrete initiatives that respond to the political priority of legal migration. THAMM supports the implementation of the "New Pact on Migration and Asylum", which includes stronger cooperation on mutually beneficial international and right-based labour migration and the new concept of Talent Partnerships.

Magdalena Jagiello, acting head of unit, DG HOME European Commission, outlined the EU work towards ...developing Talent Partnerships, building upon experience with pilot projects on legal migration. Talent Partnerships, developed together with partner countries, will match real labour market skills and needs and meet the interests of countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants themselves.

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). THAMM is an international cooperation programme implemented by ILO, IOM, the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency (Enabel) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 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). Partner countries are Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

*This regional conference is implemented through the ILO/IOM component funded by the European Union.*

Agenda and concept note are attached.

**For information on the THAMM programme and partnership, please contact:**

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# FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

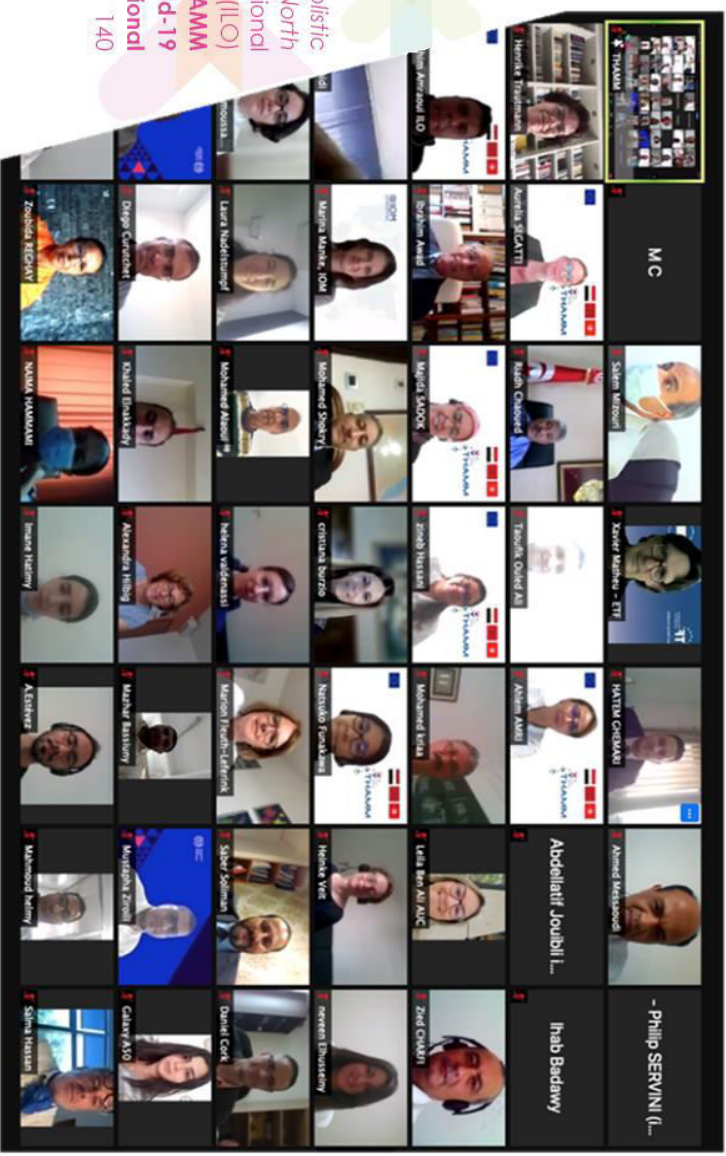
The European Union-funded **THAMM Pilot programme** (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa), implemented in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, held its first Regional Conference co-organised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This first **THAMM Conference** focused on: "**Labour Migration Responses to the Covid-19 Crisis in European and North African Countries: Strategic and Operational Trends, lessons and Sharing of Experience**" entirely **online**. Over 140 participants from North Africa, Europe and beyond in attendance.

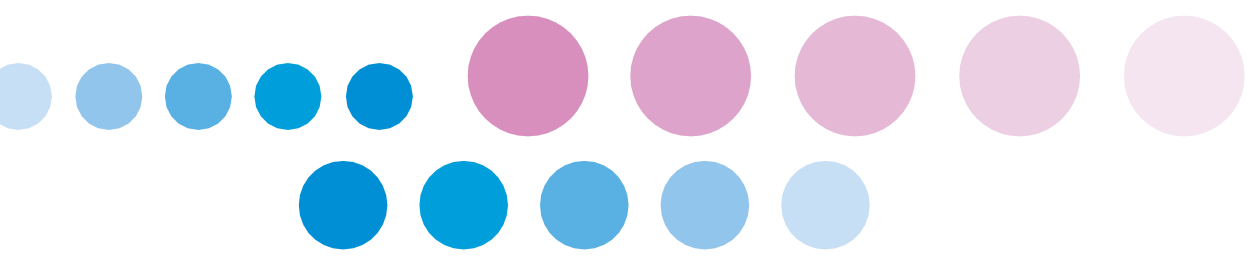
5, 6 & 7 JULY, ONLINE

# THAMM

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

This activity of the programme is implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)





**THAMM**

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

