

EMN-World Bank discussion series

Footprints: Innovations in Designing and Implementing Labour Migration Pathways

Selected Takeaways

- 1. Existing labour migration pathways are underutilized, and new pathways are needed to level the playing field between EU and non-EU access**, particularly as skill shortages within the EU are on the rise while a greater number of educated non-EU youth are searching for employment abroad. Certain bilateral agreements are already in place to ensure fair conditions for all parties (e.g. special placement agreements that fast-track mobility access for targeted professions). But many policies and regulations are not yet adapted to address private sector needs for qualified workers of different skill levels, i.e. individuals who are suited to the work but are not necessarily highly skilled. Some exceptions to this policy vacuum include seasonal work, for example.
- 2. Since there are labour shortages and demand for non-EU labour at all skill levels and in many sectors, employers need reliable ecosystems of support across the board.** For lower-skilled workers, they need bilateral arrangements to ensure circularity; for medium-skilled workers, they need support in verifying skill certifications and competencies to achieve job-matching; and for high-skilled workers, they need ways of avoiding brain drain in the source countries. At the same time, source countries need to actively engage with labour demand from abroad to implement mobility partnerships.
- 3. Without these support systems, both employers and prospective foreign workers are often left wanting.** Employers can have a tough time navigating the process of recruiting overseas, especially SMEs without in-house departments to deal with the immigration process or without overseas contacts to verify information at the source. Meanwhile, prospective workers often have incomplete and sometimes unreliable information about jobs overseas and how to go about applying or qualifying for them.
- 4. In response to all of the above, trust-building, cross-border mechanisms are needed to develop effective labour mobility schemes that address concerns on all sides.** Both private and public intermediaries can play this role, ideally in concert with each other. Close cooperation between the employment agencies and training institutions in the bilateral corridor is key to improving the chances of mobility being a win-win.

5. It is essential that source countries maintain their capacity through systems of oversight, regulation, and step-by-step support for workers from preparation to placement overseas. Increased emphasis on these systems has yielded results. **Pilot programs have proven to be a great way to get the process started** by bringing stakeholders to the table to start the conversation about innovating, cooperating and aligning systems across borders. Even small pilots have shown how joint work can reduce risk and increase the confidence of employers, policy makers, sending countries, and labour migrants themselves, creating space for potential program expansion as well as practical assessments of the effectiveness of tested methods.

Resources:

MATCH – Hiring African Talents. <https://belgium.iom.int/match>

Institutional support to the movement of people for work between the EU and Morocco. <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/success-stories/institutional-support-movement-people-work-between-eu-and-morocco>

Completed Action: Pilot Project Addressing Labour Shortages through Innovative Labour Migration Models (PALIM). <https://mobilitypartnershipfacility.eu/what-we-do/actions-pilot-projects/pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models-palim>

Arnold, Martin and Solomon, Erika. (2021). 'We Need People': Berlin's grand reopening hit by labour shortages. <https://www.ft.com/content/d35e0ecf-417d-4d57-a075-74c2d4ddcbb8>