



- **Engaging with Employers**
- **in Skills Mobility**
- **Partnerships**

Business Advisory Group on Migration 2024

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

## Acknowledgement

This paper has been prepared under the auspices of the Business Advisory Group (BAG) to the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) for presentation at the 14th GFMD Summit, held in Geneva in January 2024.

Special thanks to Jean-Christophe Dumont and Jonathan Chaloff of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for their important role in drafting this paper; to the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and to Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy, LLP for co-hosting the webinars on which its findings are based and to Business at OECD (BIAC) for their active participation.

The Business Advisory Group on Migration, which is housed at the IOE, brings the voice of business to the GFMD and to international debates on migration. Established in 2015, it is open to all companies and business associations that share its goal of promoting more transparent, effective and humane labor migration policies.

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD member countries.

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The OECD, together with the Business Advisory Group on Migration, jointly discussed how to advance innovative approaches to managing mobility within the labour migration framework in OECD countries.

As part of this collaboration, two joint webinars with IOE and the global corporate immigration law firm Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy, LLP were organised in November 2023, to present the Skills Mobility Partnership (SMP) Concept to about 130 private sector representatives and discuss opportunities for their involvement. This report presents some of the findings of these discussions. It also draws on prior work by the International Migration Division at the OECD on Skills Mobility Partnerships and on labour migration practices in OECD countries.

This joint paper presents the context in which Skills Mobility Partnerships are being developed and explores the rationale for why private sector representatives, who are by far the largest employers worldwide, need to be proactively involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of these programmes. It discusses the conditions under which employers' involvement and role could be strengthened. The last section proposes concrete actions to be taken with national authorities to create the conditions for a fruitful dialogue leading to the scaling up and mushrooming of operational SMPs.

## Towards innovative approaches to meet future skills needs in OECD countries

### Labour migration has an increasing role to play in meeting labour needs in most countries

According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, there were 9.5 million job openings in the US in September 2023 with only 6.5 million unemployed in October. In the Euro area, the vacancy rate reached 3%, corresponding to about 6.5 million job offers, while the number of unemployed has fallen below 11 million – down from almost 20 million in 2013 and it is at its lowest level in more than 25 years.

These numbers can be explained by the aftermath of the “great resignation”, the positive employment effect of post-pandemic recovery efforts with massive investment plans in the US and Europe, and by delays in international recruitments due to border closures (particularly visible in Australia and Japan, but also in other OECD countries)—as well as by specific national circumstances (e.g. Brexit in the UK).

Structural changes such as population ageing, automation and digitalisation of the economy and the green transition have also affected labour market dynamics. Policies addressing climate change will similarly have a small aggregate impact but important effects on employment distribution. Recent estimates suggest that meeting the net-zero emissions objectives by 2050 can create 30 million jobs globally by 2030, compared to 8 million jobs lost (International Energy Agency, 2021, or OECD 2023).

Foreign workers play a key role in labour market adjustments in countries around the world. Faced with shrinking youth cohorts, a declining working-age population and rapidly evolving skills requirements, employers around the world see international

recruitment as a channel for meeting skills needs, albeit one that is often difficult to use. In a 2022 survey by the Business Advisory Group on Migration, employers highlighted operational challenges with administrative processes.<sup>i</sup>

## Employers are looking for skills and talents, not workers

In this increasingly skill-based economy, with more segmented tasks, more interrelations between workers and the technology, and an increasing share of employment in the service sector, employers are progressively looking not only for workers but for skills, and in particular human and social skills. These skills – as identified in a 2020 IOE report, just to name one – include competencies which are difficult to assess through documentary requirements.<sup>ii</sup>

There is evidence, for example, that employers are resetting degree requirements in a wide range of roles, dropping requirements for a bachelor's degree in many middle-skill and even some higher skill roles. A 2022 analysis by the **Burning Glass Institute** showed that 46 per cent of middle-skill and 31 per cent of high-skill occupations experienced material degree resets between 2017 and 2019.

## Traditional ways of identifying skills internationally aren't working

Finding the right talent is a major challenge for employers. The traditional ways of selecting and recruiting from abroad have been based on selection using educational / human capital selection criteria or through government-to-government cooperation. These criteria and grids are less and less relevant as the skills sought by employers are harder to define. Since employers are looking for more specific skills, they need to be able to assess the quality of the training/education as well as human and social skills. Previous work experience and foreign diplomas, notably for people originating from middle- and lower-income countries, may not be sufficient to be “job ready” and

<sup>i</sup> [gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20220513\\_N078\\_ANNEX\\_Business\\_perspectives\\_on\\_migration\\_-\\_IMRF\\_2022.pdf](https://gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20220513_N078_ANNEX_Business_perspectives_on_migration_-_IMRF_2022.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [www.ioe-emp.org/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=147697&token=0901884a917be4cb448498972ec0a41a3bd3a55a](https://www.ioe-emp.org/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=147697&token=0901884a917be4cb448498972ec0a41a3bd3a55a)

additional investment in training is often required. This is most evident in cases of regulated professions, but also applies to language proficiency. In this context, pre-selection and upskilling are becoming intrinsic parts of the migration journey.

This is not just a challenge for employers. Immigration policies have not caught up with this trend, and it is difficult for employers to attract and obtain work permits for the suitable candidates, if a country's immigration policy is strictly based on criteria around academics and work experience.<sup>iii</sup>

Skills Mobility Partnerships can be part of the solution: a new approach to combine skills development (in origin countries) and migration, while responding to labour market needs

Regulatory barriers and complexity of labour migration systems are often seen as concrete obstacles to international recruitment. Another difficulty is linked to identifying candidates with the right skills and ensuring that their skills meet both the needs of employers and the immigration requirements in the countries of destination.

Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) aim to facilitate cross-border matching between demand and supply of skills by bringing together stakeholders in origin and destination countries to fund the necessary training for skills bridging, using existing legal channels or taking advantage of channels created specifically for these partnerships.

Origin countries benefit by strengthening their skills development infrastructure and by creating a pool of trainees that can potentially be deployed for domestic needs. Employers in destination countries benefit by meeting their labour needs; and migrants benefit by receiving a higher return on their skills investment at lower risk and cost. SMPs also support regular migration management.

Although SMPs may vary in form, modality and type of stakeholder involvement (**OECD 2018**), they all combine skills development and legal migration pathways in a way designed to be mutually beneficial for the workers, the employers as well as the origin country.

- **Skills development and recognition:** The migrant acquires new professional skills or improves existing ones by building upon prior experience and training → so there is training involved - often in the country of origin.
- **Mobility:** The migrant must be able to actually migrate → so a legal pathway must be accessible, which is ultimately in the hands of the country of destination's government to grant access to, improve or even establish.
- **Partnership:** Mobility is organised and linked to employment → so the costs of training and matching are at least partially borne by the country of destination and/or employers.
- **Mutual benefit:** For all involved → so that the country of origin increases its potential pool of skills; the destination country facilitates access to skills in demand; and migrants acquire and make use of new skills.

The GFMD Business Mechanism noted in 2017 that including employers in SMP schemes would enable a “quadruple win”. Furthermore, the Global Compact for Migration specifically calls for Skills Mobility Partnerships (“Objective 18”). In 2020,

<sup>iii</sup> [https://gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20220513\\_N078\\_ANNEX\\_Business\\_perspectives\\_on\\_migration\\_-\\_IMRF\\_2022.pdf](https://gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20220513_N078_ANNEX_Business_perspectives_on_migration_-_IMRF_2022.pdf)

the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum emphasised the importance of creating new legal pathways in the context of labour migration, skills matching and addressing labour shortages. It gave the concept of ‘Talent mobility partnerships’ a new impetus. However, in 2022, the GFMD Business Mechanism noted the difficulty of scaling up implementation.

## Why is it important to involve employers?

There are promising examples of SMPs between countries of origin and destination, which combine international development cooperation with migration management policies (see annex and **OECD/EMN 2022**).

However, most examples of existing SMPs or SMPs still under development share a common issue: they are small scale, fragmented and generally costly. Some failed or have been ineffective in meeting the expectations of key stakeholders. This is usually because they have neglected employers’ concerns. In some cases, SMPs have involved employers late in the process or as an afterthought.

Without employers defining the requirements, however, it will not be possible to build SMPs that can be scaled up to be sustainable and play a meaningful role in meeting skills needs, providing mobility opportunities for skilled workers, and strengthening skills development in origin countries.

To transform this approach into a major stream for labour migration would require increasing the number of projects and/or the number of people being upskilled and migrating under each programme.

As a relatively new policy tool, SMPs bear challenges and opportunities. SMPs require time and resources to build structures and partnerships that meet the needs of all partners to enhance overall human capital formation. As such, SMPs are not short-term interventions, but rather long-term tools and forward-looking investments built around sustainable and effective partnerships. Some governments have been hesitant to adapt legal channels for SMPs in the absence of clear signals of employers’ willingness and capacity to make effective and appropriate use of them. Thus, employers need to be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of SMPs projects to provide (i) a predictable and reliable skills pipeline, (ii) access to timely visa processing and (iii) full control on the selection process.

## What are employers saying?

The SMP model is still largely unknown by employers, even those familiar with training systems. In 2021 and 2022, the OECD held discussions with employer associations and companies to gauge their interest in a possible EU-level matching platform, the EU Talent Pool<sup>iv</sup>, including a Skills Mobility Component. Most of the employers involved in the discussions were unfamiliar with the concept of SMPs and unaccustomed to thinking about how employers could be involved in activities in the origin country,

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/migration/eu-talent-pool.htm>



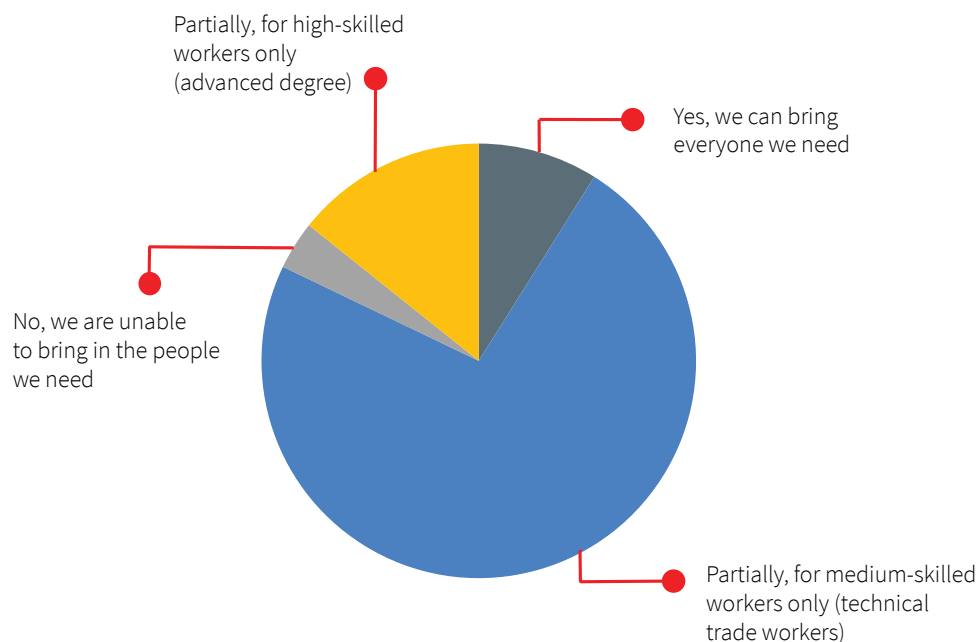
beyond those necessary for selection. These discussions and others, which the OECD and the Business Advisory Group have since held with other partners, identified some of the main requests from employers regarding SMPs.

## Employers want labour migration channels adapted to their demand for skills

The regulatory frameworks for recruitment of highly-educated, highly-remunerated and highly-skilled foreigners allow admission in most countries, although these channels may be difficult to use or subject to numerical limits (work permit quotas). In OECD countries, employers struggle, in particular, to find suitable channels for international recruitment of trades and technical workers, often with skills in high demand.

In a recent OECD/IOE/Fragomen discussion with employers, participants were asked whether they were able to recruit internationally using current labour migration pathways. Fewer than 1 in 10 reported no difficulty, while almost three-fourths noted that the channels in place were only satisfactory for high-skilled workers, and unable to meet needs for recruitment of technical trades workers (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**  
Are current labor migration pathways meeting your international mobility requirements?



Source: survey during OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars for employers on SMPs, 13-14 November 2023

## The potential for Skills Mobility Partnerships in the Road Transport sector

The International Road Transport Union (IRU), which represents 3.5 million mobility and logistics firms, recently published a call for greater access to legal channels for migration of road transport drivers. IRU reported more than 2.6 million unfilled positions globally, but this number is expected to grow to get much worse in the coming years. Without action to attract and retain drivers, over 7 million truck driver positions could be unfilled by 2028. In the EU alone, currently some 600 000 “bus, coach and truck drivers” are needed.

Together with the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF Global), IRU has taken steps to address this skills shortage and raises awareness of the essential contribution that professional drivers and operators make to societies and economies, and, hence, recognising the essential contribution that professional drivers make to the value chain.

Furthermore, IRU calls for work towards increasing the attractiveness of the sector, improving working conditions in the sector, widening the labour pool, improving training pathways, and increasing productivity.

The IRU also calls for more international co-ordination and co-operation through the ILO and other international and regional organisations on “tailored, legal immigration and integration within the road transport industry”. To facilitate this, individual countries can take steps to harmonise qualification training and requirements across the industry. In addition, they can expand the possibility for recognition of professional driving licenses, where procedures are currently national.

Steps have been taken in the EU towards harmonised recognition of third-country driving licences and Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). The European Parliament’s Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN) adopted a favourable position on this in its 7/12/23 vote on the EU Driving Licence Directive. The European Council had already agreed to a harmonised EU practice for the recognition of foreign professional driving licences, while TRAN seeks to take it a step further and create the basis for a procedure to also recognise drivers’ CPC issued in third countries.

Such a procedure would reduce difficulties in international matching of drivers and employers and simplify SMPs in the road transport sector. The IRU calls on national authorities to “develop favourable financing mechanisms and support training centres, including language courses, for the integration and training of legal immigrants in the road transport industry’s workforce”. To the extent that training is integrated into the mobility pathway – through training or qualification in the origin country, for example - this could become the basis for SMPs. While it is the responsibility of states to open legal immigration channels, employers are considered responsible for “operational integration programmes for legal immigrants”, through employer-led training and retention programmes for legal immigrant drivers. Qualification frameworks should potentially comprise both pre- and post-arrival activities. This way, drivers recruited abroad would arrive not only with a recognised licence, but also with the appropriate language level, as well as other key industry specific knowledge and skills required to quickly and safely get behind the wheel and operate professionally and safely.

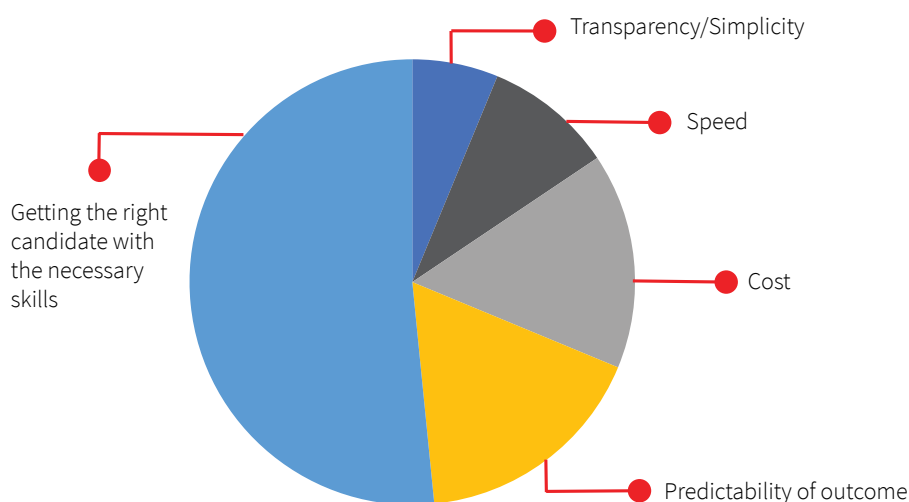
Sources: <https://www.iru.org/resources/iru-library/driver-shortage-also-needs-legal-immigration>; [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs\\_autres\\_institutions/commission\\_europeenne/com/2023/0127/COM\\_COM\(2023\)0127\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/com/2023/0127/COM_COM(2023)0127_EN.pdf)

## Employers want reassurances about training quality and suitability

In 2018, the OECD identified a number of obstacles to international recruitment through structured channels.<sup>v</sup> One is the difficulty in ensuring that origin country training meets employer expectations. This can be related to the curriculum, which may not include components employers require, or do not match the expected duration of training. It may be related to the quality of education since employers may have little information on foreign educational institutions and no experience with their ability to produce consistent results. In particular, expectations of language skills may be difficult to meet.

When asked what the single most important consideration in recruiting was from abroad using labour migration channels, the priority for half of participants in the OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars was getting the right candidate with suitable skills. Predictable outcomes and costs were the main consideration for about one in six respectively.

**Figure 2.**  
Which of the following aspects is most important to recruit people from abroad



Source: survey during webinars for employers on SMPs, 13-14 November 2023

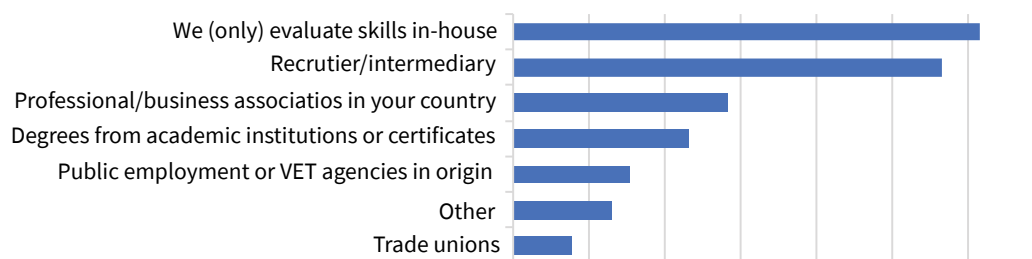
More than half of employers participating were willing to wait longer and pay more by investing in preparation to get the candidate they need. This opens a space for participation in the cost of pre-departure preparation and orientation, or even training, to meet employers' expectations.

Employers at the joint OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars were asked whether they would trust other actors to vet candidates for recruitment. The level of trust in recruiters and

<sup>v</sup> [www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf)

current intermediaries is relatively high. Trust falls when considering origin country public bodies and vocational institutions. This indicates one barrier which would need to be overcome when developing SMPs.

**Figure 3. Whose judgment do you trust to evaluate that the candidate has the skills you are looking for?**



Source: survey during OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars for employers on SMPs, 13-14 November 2023

One idea discussed at length in the EU is the creation of an EU Talent Pool<sup>vi</sup>. The idea of involving a third-party trainer or validator to provide the bridging training or recognition necessary to meet requirements of migration procedures would entail building a pool of candidates in origin countries specifically trained for recruitment<sup>vii</sup>.

In the discussions in 2021-2022, one concern was that providing Vocational Education and Training (VET) in origin countries without a specific destination in mind was not particularly useful in building a pool of candidates: since VET programmes are not harmonised across EU countries, employers did not see the added value in providing VET training for an EU-level Talent Pool. In other words, the need for VET to be matched to national and employer standards was more important.

Furthermore, employers saw additional obstacles to taking advantage of training in origin countries. The approach was seen as most useful in circumstances where employers are able to commit in advance to a training programme, which means well-identified needs and a medium time horizon.

Employers prefer to recruit from origin countries with which they have experience and knowledge of training standards. High-level bilateral state-to-state relationships may not reflect employer priorities in terms of proximity of training and experience with recruitment. Employers may be less interested in recruiting from countries with which they have little or even negative experience. One limit of some of the small-scale pilots

vi [www.oecd.org/migration/eu-talent-pool.htm](http://www.oecd.org/migration/eu-talent-pool.htm)

vii **OECD (2019), Building an EU Talent Pool: A New Approach to Migration Management, for Europe**, doi.org/10.1787/6ea982a0-en

conducted in the 2000s and 2010s was that, since they were driven by development cooperation priorities, they often focused on countries from which employers had never recruited and which they had not chosen.

## **Employers want SMPs to facilitate migration procedures.**

Employers have not yet seen the advantages of SMPs in facilitating the migration procedure. One major selling point for employers would be priority visa processing. However, there are few examples of this, and many employers are sceptical about obtaining fast-track or simplified treatment based on participation.

SMPs typically do not have a family dimension. However, employers may be concerned about whether accompanying partners have direct work authorisation. According to a survey conducted by the Permits Foundation, where the host country allows partners to work, a clear majority of employers report increased ability to attract and retain people with desired qualifications and skills, and a greater willingness of employees to accept an assignment in the host country.<sup>viii</sup>

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Austria recently assembled a focus group with six representatives of Austrian companies to discuss this issue. Among the points which emerged from the discussion (IOM 2023<sup>ix</sup>) were the need to facilitate the permit process. Members of the focus group saw aligning training systems as a lengthy process – so other actions would need to be taken in the short term. The recognition of qualifications to meet the requirements of the Austrian immigration system was seen as even more important than the need to develop these skills – with the notable exception of German language skills.

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viii [www.permitsfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022.06.30\\_HR\\_Survey\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.permitsfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022.06.30_HR_Survey_Final_Report.pdf)

ix [skills\\_mobilitaetspartnerschaften\\_iom\\_at.pdf](#)

## The potential for SMPs in Tech and Industry Sector in Europe

For MET (Tech and Industry) companies, the vast majority of which are SMEs, labour and skills shortages are today's main obstacle to competitiveness, innovation capability, and, consequently, the ability to create quality jobs. Shortages are visible across Europe. For example, in Denmark from 9/21 to 2/22, within the iron, metal and auto industry, more than a fifth of vacancies went unfilled. In France, 67 per cent of industrial firms reported recruitment difficulties in July 2022, compared with barely 40 per cent in the years before the pandemic. The metal industry comprised 12 of 30 shortage-list jobs in 2021 (for example, mechanics, electric and electronic technicians, ironworkers, boilermakers, and mechanic and metal designers). In Spain, Confemetal, which represents the Metal Industry, Services and Trade Sector, reported in 2022 a need for 60,000 workers to cover present and future needs in the metal industry, in particular on the traditional metal professions (e.g., Turning, Milling, Tooling, Machining, Welding, Boilermaking, Foundry, Surface Treatment), and 90,000 skilled workers in Services and Trade, including metal "professionals" responsible for water installations, electricity, HVAC, thermal and acoustic insulation, telecom, recycling, energy and especially renewable energy, etc. Reports are similar across Europe.

Ceemet, the European employers' organisation representing the interests of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries, supports measures aimed at addressing the shortage of workers. One response is to put in place well-designed legal migration policies. Ceemet also places emphasis on avoiding the risk of emptying origin countries of skills.

Given this context, talent mobility partnerships could offer an innovative private sector solution. A crucial factor in ensuring the success of these partnerships is aligning the skilled workforce in the partner country with the demands and needs of EU employers. To be effective, training in the partner country must be tailored to the specific skills required by EU companies.

Skills needs change and so must training. Research bodies and education and training providers need to work constantly and adequately with businesses, industry and MET employers to bring the learning experience closer to the reality of the working environment. To identify the industrial skills needs of the future, continuous, systematic and updated skills intelligence, including on latest trends and changing skills needs in a particular area, as well as intelligence gathering on potential future jobs in the industries, are necessary to guide training. Information on new profiles and jobs in the MET industries is necessary to update and design labour-market driven training programmes in partner countries.

Ceemet notes that active early private-sector involvement in establishing these partnerships depends on companies receiving practical and concrete information on how these collaborations will address labour shortages. Since high costs or burdens would dissuade SMEs, Ceemet advocates for public-private cooperation. National policymakers could provide specific incentives for companies, especially SMEs, to participate.

## It's not just about the cost

More than half of employers in the joint OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars declared they were willing to wait longer and pay more by investing in preparation to get the candidate they need. Of course, the SMP would ideally lead to multiple recruitments to be worth the effort, and costs would have to be contained – less than EUR 5000 per recruitment. However, while cost is not usually the main consideration, employers expect any training they pay for to benefit them directly. This can make it difficult to

ask for contributions to training a pool of people from which not everyone will be hired. And employers would like assurance that workers hired through the SMP will remain for a reasonable period with the firm that recruited them.

## **There is interest in SMPs... if it can overcome scepticism**

About two-thirds of the participants in the OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars indicated, after having heard about how SMPs work and some examples, thought that the approach could help facilitate recruitment from abroad in their organisation. Of the remainder, most did not exclude it.

## **Employers want to see examples of success**

A follow up questionnaire was sent to the participants of the OECD/IOE/Fragomen webinars. Among the answers, employers indicated a need for reassurance about the effectiveness of SMPs, either by seeing successful cases or running a pilot in their own enterprises. In the Annex, there are examples of SMPs that have achieved some results.

## **How to engage employers?**

International recruitment, while an obvious channel for addressing the skills gaps and skills shortage that confront employers around the world, is often an expensive and difficult process. Employers seeking to recruit foreign talent are faced with complex regulatory barriers and requirements, as well as the challenge of identifying suitably skilled candidates. SMPs would seem an attractive solution to such problems. Why, then, have SMPs met with limited success, and how can governments encourage greater take up of these programmes in the business community? Addressing these questions requires both finding ways to identify appropriate business partners and involving them early in the design of the programmes.

The following actions should be considered to involve employers closely in the design and implementation of SMPs.

### **Action 1: Ensure that SMPs are demand driven**

Use all available resources to identify current and forecast future skills needs, including skills gap analyses produced by national-level and industry-specific sectoral organizations. Consult businesses on their unmet needs by sector and/or region and those which are most urgent. Businesses also need to explain to national authorities the standards they apply for skills.

### **Action 2: Engage appropriate business representatives early in and throughout the design and implementation process.**

National-level professional and industry-specific sectoral organisations can be helpful in identifying potential corporate partners, as well as appropriate decision-makers

within companies. Employer experience with SMPs will determine their sustainability. Evaluations should be conducted together with employers to capture returns on involvement and incorporate feedback into changes.

**Action 3:** Identify a suitable funding model and guarantees regarding access to foreign workers

Employers can be willing to bear costs as part of an SMP if they can be assured that the programme will enable them to recruit workers with the required skillset. The funding model needs to take into account risks and guarantees to balance participation with expected outcomes.

**Action 4:** Tap the resources of international business associations

Business at OECD (BIAC) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) represent comprehensive networks of national multi-sectoral business associations, with excellent contacts in both sending and receiving countries. Through their policy bodies, both BIAC and IOE, are well versed in skills, employment, and migration issues.

**Action 5:** Map existing training institutions abroad capable of offering skills training according to employer needs and standards

In order to satisfy employer expectations, training institutions in origin countries must be capable of providing training that meets the standards of employers in both the origin and destination country. Employers should be able to see evidence of training capacity and outcomes before committing to a SMP.

**Action 6:** Ensure a regular dialogue between relevant authorities and employers

In order to foster cooperation and ensure that SMPs are built around feasible procedures, organise a platform for a regular dialogue between national authorities in charge of labour migration and employer representatives. A dialogue would contribute to consensus around priority skills areas, skills standards and actions, that would meet both employers and the migration system's criteria.

**Action 7:** Draw on knowledge and expertise of external intermediaries to facilitate the development of new agreements

Repositories and centres of competence around SMPs have begun to develop (e.g. OECD, IOM, ILO, CGD, LaMP). Learning from both successful and underperforming examples can benefit SMP design.

**Action 8:** Devise promotional and educational campaigns

Enhance information effort towards employers of all sizes, including SMEs, both at national and local levels, about existing legal labour migration pathways and the opportunity to develop SMPs. In doing this, international, national, local and sectoral business associations can be helpful both in designing campaigns and disseminating information on SMPs to their members, as well as in making the case for SMPs to the wider public.



## Annex<sup>x</sup>

# General and multi-country skills partnerships

## Training and recruiting seafarers

Seafarers follow an international standard for job classification aboard ships, with a hierarchy of tasks and associated grades. There are about 1.65 million seafarers working on international merchant ships worldwide; one in three was trained in the Philippines. The other leading countries where seafarers are trained are China, Russia and Ukraine. All major shipping companies are directly involved in the training of seafarers in these origin countries. Employment is generally guaranteed for graduates. For example, the Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA), which employs more than 40 000 foreign seamen, has established a Norwegian Training Center in Manila as well as an NSA Class Project in collaboration with the Latvian Maritime Academy, and a joint project with CSG-owned Shanghai Maritime Academy.

## THAMM programme

The “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa” (THAMM) programme aims to contribute to improving the governance of labour migration and the protection of migrant workers from selected North African countries, namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. THAMM is implemented by Belgium, France and Germany in collaboration with IOM, ILO and the Office Français de l'Immigration et Intégration (OFII) in France. Private-sector engagement was limited in the beginning of these initiatives, which partly explains why numbers have fallen short of the targets so far.

In Belgium, THAMM is implemented by ENABEL, the Belgian Development Agency. The period of implementation is 2021–2023, where THAMM aimed to provide training of **350 young people** in Morocco and Tunisia, of which one-fourth would get the opportunity to work in Belgium.

In Germany THAMM is implemented by the German Development Agency (GIZ), in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency, from 2019 until 2023. The

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x This annex is building on OECD work and research notably **EMN-OECD 2022** and **OECD 2018**. For further resources please see <https://gsp.cgdev.org/> and <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects>

plan was to place a pilot group of **600 migrants** either in dual vocational training or employment in the German labour market, following intensive pre-departure preparation. It primarily focuses on the hotel and catering industry.

In France THAMM is implemented by OFII in cooperation with the Agence tunisienne pour l'emploi (ANETI) in Tunisia. It aims at training **1500 Tunisians** both for the domestic market and for working in France (250 seasonal contracts, 170 work permit un shortage occupations and 214 visas for young professionals).

## IOM-MATCH programme

The Migration of African Talents through Capacity building and Hiring (MATCH) programme was implemented between Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Nigeria and Senegal by IOM from January 2020 to December 2022. Vocational training in the destination country is accompanied by a temporary job placement in one of the four participating EU Member States, with the aim of upskilling, increasing employability upon return to the home countries whilst (temporarily) filling labour shortages in the countries of destination. The project concerns in particular, but not exclusively, sectors with labour shortages in the destination countries such as ICT, technology and engineering. Limited private sector engagement at the outset is one reason why the project did not lead to the desired number of placements.

## Selected examples of country specific Skills Mobility Partnerships-like programmes

### Latvia / Baltics

#### Digital Explorers: Latvia and Nigeria

This is one of the first pilot schemes aimed at addressing labour shortages in the EU and integrating a skills enhancement track. **30 ICT specialists** (50% women) received employment/internships in Latvia, and half of them eventually stayed.

#### Digital Explorers 2: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Nigeria, Kenya and Armenia (and Iraq)

With an extended geography and broader pool of talents participating to the project, this second iteration of Digital Explorers includes various tracks also featuring a specialised training programme, benefiting **150 ICT graduates and specialists** in total. Following specialised ICT training, 30 aspiring ICT specialists will be employed in partner countries, 45 placed for paid 4-6 months internships in Baltic companies and

65 placed for paid 4-6 months locally in partner countries. An additional Iraq edition (with Latvia) does not include mobility paths and aims to provide **15-25 young Iraqis** with advanced training in digital skills.

## Belgium

### **PALIM: Belgium and Morocco**

The project implemented between March 2019 and April 2021, aimed to support the mobility of Moroccan ICT workers in the Flanders region to address labour shortages, and to enhance their communication technology (ICT) skills and employability in Morocco and the international labour market. Due to Covid, the mobility component was not really implemented, although **120 Moroccan young graduates** benefitted from a 7-month training curriculum. Some of the mobilities were ‘transferred’ to the Belgian component of THAMM.

### **PEM WECCO: Belgium and Senegal**

The PEM project with Senegal (2021-2024) is an entrepreneurial mobility scheme. **60 Senegalese entrepreneurs** interested in establishing partnerships with Belgian counterparts will be offered use of an existing business visa pathway for short-term mobility of entrepreneurs. Pre-departure training is provided by FEDASIL, together with funds for coaching and business incubation support. Upon return, the project will provide follow-up to support the continuation of cooperation and the incubation of joint ventures.

### **EMLINK: Belgium and Georgia**

Implemented by ICMPD on behalf of Belgium, this project aims to strengthen Georgian start-ups’ potential to develop and assist skill and talent retention and will produce a course curriculum based on the results of a mapping and sectoral analysis report. A limited number of **10 beneficiaries** of the programme will be selected for a short-term study tour in Belgium.

## Germany

### **Pilot Circular Migration Scheme: Germany and Georgia**

Pilot Circular Migration Scheme (PCMS), was funded by the European Union in the framework of the EU Thematic Program on Migration and Asylum (TPMA). It was implemented between 2013 and 2016. It involved 12-month work placements for 28 Georgian migrants. By the end of the programme, **24 participants** (14 from the hospitality sector and 10 from the healthcare sector) were completing or had completed the circular migration cycle. Upon their return, 9 of the 14 hospitality professionals were rehired by their former employer. The majority of the nurses passed the recognition exam in Germany and extended their employment there.

### **Youth, Employment and Skills in Kosovo (YES): Germany and Kosovo**

Implemented between 2016 and 2020 in cooperation with the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK), the programme aimed at creating job prospects in the construction sector for young people in Kosovo while opening up employment

opportunities for them on the German labour market. Half of the participants were intended to find work in Kosovo after receiving a two-year “expert certificate,” and the other half would complete their training in Germany as part of an apprenticeship. By the end of 2020, more than 8,000 young people in Kosovo had benefited directly from a broad range of human capacity development and active labour market measures. However, it soon became clear that the gap between Kosovar and German qualification standards was too wide to bridge during the project period and the mobility component remained inoperative.

### **Partnership Approaches for Development-oriented Vocational Training and Labour Migration: Ecuador, Nigeria, Kosovo, Vietnam, Jordan and Germany**

The PAM is commissioned by GIZ and piloting new models for skills partnerships, including partnerships between stakeholders from the public and private sector, and civil society. It is implemented between 2019 and 2024. It focuses on Metal Cutting, Industrial Electronics, Industrial Mechanics, Construction, Green Jobs and Information Technology. There are two different modules within the programme, in which young trainees from Ecuador and Vietnam can undergo VET in industrial mechanics, electrical engineering, and machining technology, primarily in the country of origin, with an option to migrate to Germany after successfully completing the program; and a training abroad scheme for early childhood education in Kosovo. A new component has been added for Jordan on Green jobs and bakery craft. The number of potential beneficiaries is not specified.

### **Skills Partnership between Senegal/Ghana and Germany**

This GSP model focuses on vocational training for construction workers in both the country of origin and Germany. **360 participants** will receive training – with half of them eventually travelling to Germany for long-term employment. The project has just started in October 2023.

### **Hand in Hand for International Talents: Vietnam, Brazil and India and Germany**

Hand and in Hand for International Talents brings companies and international qualified professionals together. It is running for interested companies in the pilot regions of Rostock, Reutlingen, Lübeck, Düsseldorf and Erfurt. The Employment Agency supports SMEs with the selection of suitable candidates, the matching process, initiation and support throughout the professional recognition procedure, arrangement of German courses (up to language Level B1 before arrival in Germany, up to Level B2 after arrival) and assistance with visa and entry.

Qualified professionals are recruited from the target countries of Vietnam, Brazil and India. The professionals in question need to have had training and gained experience in (i) Careers in computer science, information and telecommunications technology, software development, (ii) Careers in electrical systems, electrical engineering, electronic engineering or (iii) Cooks, careers in the hotel and food service industry and in system catering. The training component in this programme is minimal.

### **Porsche Training and Recruitment Center**

Porsche is involved in training auto mechanics for its worldwide network. In a project, it supports the identification of underprivileged Filipino youth with basic English-

language skills for a two-step training and selection programme. The first phase is ten months basic vocational training, offered through the existing mechanic training at Don Bosco Technical Institute in Manila, to which Porsche has contributed equipment and curriculum. Of these, about **40 top graduates annually** are selected to participate in a second nine-month training by Porsche itself. At the end, qualifying graduates are able to be hired by Porsche dealerships anywhere in the world, subject to national immigration rules. The programme was developed as a corporate social responsibility initiative yet provides a trained workforce with company-specific skills to importers and dealers, and established a regular pipeline for Porsche Service Mechatronics specialists. Dealers hiring the graduates pay a one-time fee which covers the entire cost of the training and placement. Graduates commit to work for Porsche for at least three years.

## Australia

The Australia Pacific Technical College is a development-cooperation funded vocational training programme operating in Pacific countries. More than 17 000 have graduated from the programme since its inception in 2007, with 83 percent successfully employed. The programme was not designed specifically to promote emigration, but to build skills in islands where local skill basins were insufficient and skilled workers were deployed from developed countries. From this point of view, it has been successful, 5 000 graduates in the first eight years of the programme with employers very satisfied with the skills levels of graduates. Only 2.9 percent of graduates had migrated overseas by 2014 (1.2 percent to Australia). Beginning in 2018 the APTC's third stage has doubled down on connecting graduates to jobs in both Australia and New Zealand including establishing a labour mobility track

Low mobility was due to the fact that many of the students were already employed and remained with their employer and because many were older (average age: 32), making them less prone to migrate. Yet the migration intentions appeared high among this group. Obstacles to mobility included the fact that the programme was not connected to any regular labour migration channel, scheme, or even international matching mechanism, leaving all international job search to the individuals themselves. Further, while the qualifications were at the Australian standard, they still required a very expensive recognition procedure to be able to use them in a skilled migration application. The lower cost of training in the origin country was not achieved, either, since the programme and the trainers were sent from Australia, and the final cost per graduate (AUD 35 000) was similar to what it would have cost to train them in Australia. The cost-sharing model now includes some of the beneficiaries of training: individuals, individual enterprises, industries, national governments. The new stage includes connecting graduates to legal labour migration pathways.

## Ireland

### International Medical Graduate Training Initiative (IMGTI): Pakistan, Sudan, GCC and Ireland

In 2013, the International Medical Graduate Training Initiative (IMGTI) was launched which supports qualified doctors from Pakistan, Sudan, and some Gulf States to carry

out post-graduate medical training in Ireland offered by relevant training colleges. Permission is initially granted for a maximum of 24 months and can be renewed for an additional 12 months, by application, if the relevant training is still being undertaken. The Initiative has been based on Memoranda of Understanding signed by counterparts in third countries.

## France

### High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executives Recruitment (HOMERe): France and Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt

**50 Tunisian and Moroccan** graduates travelled to France for an internship/short-term mobility. Though the matching with French companies was facilitated by higher education institutions, no additional training was foreseen before or during the mobility. Most participants returned to their country of origin and found employment often in a branch of the same enterprise hosting them in the EU.

### Professional Mobility in the Plastics Industry: France and Tunisia

This public-private partnership aims to train approximately **840 Tunisian technicians**. After the training phase in Tunisia (with 42 training tracks implemented in cooperation with local vocational training institutions), about 400 professionals will travel to France with a permanent/long-term contract. This project was initiated in 2023 and is still under development. its expected duration is 40 months.

## Italy

### MENTOR 1: Morocco, Tunisia and Italy

The programme targeted **19 participants** for traineeships (short-term mobility to Milan/Turin) – who received pre-departure training mainly consisting of Italian language and work security short courses. This pilot focused on ‘on-the-job’ training and mentoring by the private companies.

### MENTOR 2: Morocco, Tunisia and Italy

MENTOR II is a multi-sector circular mobility scheme, financed by the MPF that offers professional traineeship opportunities to **40 young Moroccans and Tunisians** in Northern Italy. Traineeship permits can be transformed into work permits outside of the quotas set by the government (for non-EU workers) on an annual basis. The project envisages (re)integration activities with entrepreneurial support for those returning.

## Spain

### MOVE GREEN: Morocco and Spain

MOVE GREEN is a circular mobility scheme between Andalusia and Northern Morocco that provides networking opportunities and professional qualification to selected Moroccan candidates in the renewable energy and green economy sector. Centred around academic training (with **43 Moroccan participants** enrolling in 4-month training programme offered by Spanish universities), the project aims to increase the employability and entrepreneurial capacity of young Moroccans by providing

pre-departure language and socio-cultural training as well as reintegration support to the Moroccan labour market upon return. The acquired competences will help participants find employment in the Moroccan labour market or use project seed-funding to create their start-up.

### **WAFIRA: Morocco and Spain**

Women as Financially Independent Rural Actors, is an initiative that seeks to maximise the development impact of circular migration and mobility between Morocco and Spain – through the sustainable socio-economic reintegration of **250 Moroccan women** seasonal workers participating in a circular migration scheme between Morocco and Spain (entitled GECCO). WAFIRA provides them with a training on financial literacy and self-entrepreneurship developed by ILO to launch their own income generating activities (IGAs) and/or cooperatives upon return to their rural communities of origin in Morocco.

### **Young generation as change agents: Morocco and Spain**

**98 Moroccan graduates** completed a one-year Master in Spain – the project included a reintegration phase composed of labour inclusion mentoring but also seed-funding for entrepreneurial projects (selected through a competitive award scheme). The reintegration phase, selection of entrepreneurial projects and coaching sessions were done in cooperation with ANAPEC.

## **Netherlands**

### **MOBILISE Tunisia, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Netherlands**

This circular mobility scheme aims to develop the skills of **120 students and young workers** in the field of climate-smart agriculture – a 3-month internship in The Netherlands accompanies training courses offered by local educational institutions in the country of origin. University-university cooperation is a pillar of the project, while the idea is that participants may find employment upon return in their home country and (possibly) in Dutch companies operating in the country or origin. The training curriculum includes practical training elements on high-tech plant production systems, product quality, research applied to current and future horticultural practices, as well as sessions dedicated to personal professional development.

## **Slovakia**

### **Digi Talents: Moldova, Ukraine and Slovakia**

Another example of a SMP-like project financed by the MPF is DIGI TALENTS which is a mobility and career advancement programme that will bring young ICT specialists from Moldova or Ukraine to Slovakia. Through a temporary legal labour migration scheme, this 32-month project will pursue a triple win: enabling Moldovan participants to strengthen their social capital and acquire new skills in a stimulating work environment, addressing the shortage of skilled labour in Slovakia, and ultimately transferring highly sought-after knowledge and expertise to the Moldovan ICT sector (with the development of a Talent Incubator Laboratory in Moldova (at the Technical



University of Moldova) and in Ukraine (remote). The programme offers employment or internship contracts for up to **50 ICT talents** from Moldova and Ukraine. The project helps strengthen practical skills of young graduates through a Talent Incubator programme and supports them to either obtain direct employment or establish their own ICT start-up upon return to Moldova.

## Japan

In Japan, the long-standing Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), was first created decades ago as a form of international cooperation; firms employing TITP participants had to commit to a skills development plan. In practice, TITP skills development was limited and the programme functioned primarily as a low-skilled labour migration channel. With the introduction in 2019 of the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) programme, which is based on language and skills certification, Japanese employers have begun to operate language and skills training centres in countries of origin.

### Onodera User Run

Onodera User Run (OUR) is a private enterprise which provides training and placement of foreign workers in SSW jobs in Japan. Training is provided in seven origin countries (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines and India) in centres created and run by the firm. All education and training expenses are borne by OUR; in some cases, room and board are also covered. Initial training lasts approximately six months and includes both language and professional skills. After this training, participants who receive a job offer receive an additional 4-6 months of training – largely self-study – as well as orientation on Japanese culture and practices. OUR has its own language-learning app. Once they arrive in Japan, they continue to receive training to pass higher level and certification tests, such as the test needed to pass to Certified Care Worker status of residence. OUR covers costs while in the country of origin, while employers cover costs in Japan. The pass rate for participants is higher than the overall pass rate: 76% for language, and almost 100% for Nursing Care language and skills tests. By mid-2023, OUR had 30 000 students enrolled or completing the programme and 3 000 placed in Japan. Trainers have experience in the relevant field in Japan. The placement fees from employers allow this approach to be financially sustainable despite the lengthy training period. OUR is selective of students – screening and evaluating them for aptitude for the study and overall commitment to the migration project.

### Komeda Coffee

Komeda coffee is coffee shop/diner franchise chain, present in Japan as well as a number of other Asian economies. Komeda has been suffering from lack of workers (waiters etc). In 2019, the job-opening-to-applicant ratio was 3.86 in 2019 in the restaurant industry, higher than the overall ratio in Japan (1.44). Komeda partnered with Japanese language school in Myanmar and started training workers so that they can pass the “restaurant worker” certificate of SSWP(i) while in Myanmar, and come to Japan to work in Komeda’s shops across Japan as SSWs. Komeda also plans to



expand overseas in Myanmar and have these workers, who have worked in Japan for the duration of SSWP, work in Komeda shops opened in Myanmar after they come back home. In 2020, 43 workers were expected to start working in Japan as first batch.

### **Mos Burger**

Mos Burger is a Japanese burger chain with shops in Australia and a number of Asian economies. Mos Burger has developed “Mos Food Business College (MFC)” in partnership with a local 2-year college (Vietnam Dah Nan Tourism Community College). Graduates of this college can get SSW(i) certification upon passing “restauration” exams while in Vietnam, and can come over to Japan to work at Mos Burger shops , or other restaurants of the group company of Mos Burger Holdings across the country. After 5 years in SSWP in Japan, these workers may potentially be able to work at other Mos Burger shops across Asia. (listed above). In 2019 when this plan was introduced, they were expecting more than 100+ workers/year accepted in Mos Burger shops in Japan, and some 200+ / year on average accepted in other Mos-Burger-Holdings’ restaurants. In 2022, 17 workers entered Japan as part of this program, they are expecting 80 by 2024.

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advisory group** | on  
migration

Avenue Louis-Casaï 71 – CH-1216 Genève  
T +41 22 929 00 00 F +41 22 929 00 01  
[ioe@ioe-emp.com](mailto:ioe@ioe-emp.com) • [ioe-emp.org](http://ioe-emp.org)