

LEGAL LABOUR AND CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN EU

An analysis of different initiatives in EU and the case of the Mentor2 project between Italy, Morocco and Tunisia

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Introduction

Mentor2¹ is an initiative of legal circular mobility through a youth professional training scheme between Morocco, Tunisia and Italy, involving a large international partnership² (under the coordination of the Municipality of Milan) including key stakeholders as specialized employment agencies, public partners in the target countries, NGOs, a think tank, and with the collaboration of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

As continuation of a previous pilot project Mentor1, Mentor2 is financed under the *Migration Partnership Facility III* (MPF III) and managed by ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development). It contributes to the *Global Approach on Migration and Mobility* (GAMM), the overarching framework of the EU external migration and asylum policy and international cooperation, and to one of its four priorities, which is 'to better organize legal migration, and foster well-managed mobility'. The initiative is also in line with the objectives of the 2020 EU *New Pact on Migration and Asylum* which aims to develop legal pathways for third-country nationals to meet the needs of EU Member States labour markets. Mentor2 is also connected to the *Call to Local Action on Migration* launched by UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) launched in 2019 to consolidate the role of local authorities in migration governance in the framework of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM).

Under the coordination of the research institute CeSPI, a **study** was undertaken, aiming at examining initiatives of legal/circular migration in EU in 2022-23, in order to identify and analyze **practices of legal labour mobility** between the EU and third countries. The methodology included: a survey³ distributed within the *Eurocities network*⁴ and addressing EU cities/local authorities involved or interested in labour mobility schemes, a desk review to identify programmes/projects of legal migration between EU and third countries, interviews with key representatives of selected initiatives of legal migration, a closed-door online seminar to discuss and exchange lessons learned in legal migration⁵.

At the beginning, the study mainly addressed EU initiatives similar to Mentor2, involving a direct participation and commitment by local authorities. The mapping exercise was later extended to other relevant labour migration and circular mobility schemes⁶, due to a lack of survey responses and to the difficulties in finding cases⁷. Consequently, the study analyzed **how outcomes of legal migration schemes and circular mobility** have been differently pursued, between the EU and third countries, highlighting their **constitutive elements, enabling factors and internal and external challenges**.

¹ <https://mentor2.org/fr/>

² ANAPEC – Agence Nationale Marocaine de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences, ANETI – Agence Nationale Tunisienne pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant, the Eurocities network, APL, AFOL, ANOLF, Soletterre, Promos – Camera di Commercio di Milano, CeiPiemonte, the Municipality of Turin, the Region of Beni Mellal – Khenifra, the Municipality of Tanger, the Municipality of Tunis and the Municipality of Sfax, and CeSPI.

³ Despite having been relaunched several times, the survey obtained no response (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScG9UnkS4mdst4kHEcXx8DmiklOW-w_35GP8lqmHTBkJyJRzg/viewform).

⁴ <https://eurocities.eu/>

⁵ 12th of December 2023

⁶ These initiatives have been selected according to a national representativeness criterium (German, Spanish, Belgian, Swiss, French case studies), and based on the existing literature review and on the indications of different experts.

⁷ An additional attempt to investigate the interest on circular/labour migration among some selected cities (Utrecht, Munich, Barcelona, Lyon) has been carried out still with little success.

The report includes a **first chapter** on the EU legal migration framework, offering some key definitions and concepts. In this chapter Mentor2 is accurately examined. Additionally, some *national approaches* to legal migration are illustrated in the annex section. The **second chapter** analyzes **eleven initiatives** - including Mentor2 (focusing on the main characteristics, the elements of strength and success, the obstacles and challenges faced) to share good practices and lessons learned. The main highlights of a closed-door seminar involving labour migration initiatives are here incorporated. Detailed information on the selected initiatives of legal labour migration is available in the **annex section**⁸. The different tables illustrate the initiatives mainly based on literature review, web search and interviews⁹.

Main findings of the study

The study offers an analytical overview of how different projects and programmes have been designed and carried out while addressing **two problems**: *labour and skill shortages in EU countries* (to be possibly reduced by considering extra-EU recruitment pools), and *irregular flows* from third-countries. While these two issues might seem to be interconnected, with labour migration pathways representing a possible response to limit irregular flows and labour shortages with third country partners (according to larger MoU and agreements signed), the current analysis shows that **no universal good practice exists, and all schemes and mechanisms are differently challenged by bureaucracy, cultural constraints, private sector's mistrust or public sector's rigidity**.

The study highlights the complexity in turning pilot initiatives into orderly, regular and sustainable bilateral mechanisms. Finally, the analysis illustrates how the projects focused either on ***circular mobility schemes*** (that mainly concerned postgraduate temporary training/return to the origin country to boost local labour force), or on ***medium-long term migration schemes*** (to fill EU national labour shortages within a labour recruitment perspective¹⁰).

Circular (short term/back and forth) mobility schemes and labour (medium-long term) migration mechanisms are **responses to different problems** and produce diverse outcomes. ***Circular labour mobility mechanisms*** undoubtedly reinforce and increase employment opportunities especially for third country youth, both in the country of origin and on the international labour market, reducing unemployment risks, migration pressure and amplifying entrepreneurship prospects (avoiding direct brain drain risks). Additionally, ***circular mobility*** potentially helps to improve positive perceptions, potential appeal and exchanges between companies in EU and in third countries. At the same time (medium-long term) ***labour migration schemes*** seem to provide a more adequate response to skill shortages in EU labour markets requiring a comprehensive integration perspective. Among the main discrepancies are whether return to the origin country is mandatory or not, whether the temporary permit to stay can be easily transformed into a different work permit, and whether companies and foreign workers respond to reciprocal needs and motivations.

⁸ The information sheets in the annex section were realized by A. Galietta.

⁹ Information was sometimes incomplete in the official sources/websites. The study limitation refers to a selection of current/recently closed initiatives; also, direct interviews were not always possible with all selected initiatives. The author thanks all persons involved in the research for their availability.

¹⁰ That do not even necessarily mention the "circularity" component, being mainly interested in a long term/permanent recruitment and labour migration.

The mobility schemes reviewed tend to involve large and diversified set of stakeholders (public, private, and third sector). The potentials of a territorial multistakeholder approach are largely recognized by Mentor2 partners, but implementation challenges and complexities can hinder the success of these initiatives. In the mapped initiatives a direct engagement of **local authorities** in EU appears still limited today¹¹. Occasional interest from Regional or Municipal administrative bodies has been recorded. Additionally, the target areas of projects' interventions¹² rarely refer to the city dimension, more easily addressing the national and regional levels. While local administrations are key actors, especially committed to promoting the integration process in EU, their contribution to designing and implementing labour mobility schemes and to mainstreaming migration into prominent local development sectors should be encouraged by improving exchanges with public authorities at national level along a medium-long term perspective and multilevel governance, by developing national policy frameworks clarifying their migration mandate and responsibility, and by reinforcing horizontal dialogue and discussion with their extra-EU counterparts.

Regardless of the institutional and administrative diversity among EU Member States and between them and third countries, stable and practicable national **policy frameworks** are needed within medium-long term negotiated **partnership** agreements including: clear normative national/regional/local **regulations** (granting quota provisions and timely procedures), an improved **private sector** selection and direct involvement ensuring the practical feasibility of mobility measures, the contribution of **education/training institutions** and national **employment agencies** in the origin country, acting not only as recruitment pools, but hubs for quality human capital formation. Other public/private sector stakeholders (local authorities, no-profit and diaspora organizations, private sector collective representatives) are crucial key intermediators to ensure human and worker rights enforcement, migration-integration successful outcomes, and local win-win effects (forecasting and avoiding negative brain drain and social dumping consequences). A flexible multi-level governance is the outcome of all these ingredients and the required dimension for any project or policy implementation.

¹¹ Despite the Spanish MOVE GREEN project with the involvement of Andalusian Municipalities Fund (FAMSI).

¹² In terms of placement in the labour market/professional training/recruitment/companies' engagement.

I. THE LEGAL LABOUR MOBILITY FRAMEWORK IN EU

1. The importance of reinforcing legal migration pathways

“International labor migration is typically circular, involving non-permanent moves back and forth between home and foreign places of work. Policies that restrict worker mobility often backfire, with workers resorting to illegal means of entering the country, bringing their family with them, and no longer returning home” (Zimmerman, 2014: p. 1¹³). **Supportive policy instruments¹⁴ to favor circular and legal migration are considered for their capacity to generate benefits for all sides**, with movements between the origin and destination country, or to other third countries. A common remark is that immigration restrictions, instead of reducing migrant flows, often deliver opposite outcomes (for instance, increasing the number of migrants strained or extending their stay in the country, instead of leaving, thus giving rise to alternative irregular strategies, Zimmerman, 2014).

Migrants more likely look for jobs in growing economies, where labour market opportunities exist and attract labour force (whether seasonal, permanent, fixed-term, sectoral, geographical, or un/skilled etc.). When people migrate to pursue their economic goals, they mainly choose countries offering job opportunities, naturally preferring safe procedures to illegal ones¹⁵, or else they leave when opportunities are less promising (for instance due to economic recessions or to other seasonal employment pools).

The EU policy on migration and asylum is still in need of further revision to differently manage incoming human mobility induced by humanitarian crisis and to establish adequate, viable and functional measures of legal labour entry¹⁶. The absence of alternative channels for legal entry has largely determined the misuse of the asylum procedures.

¹³ <https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/1/pdfs/circular-migration.pdf>

¹⁴ Including dual citizenship, permanent residence permits, and migration agreements between countries.

¹⁵ For instance, considering the EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007, most of the qualified workers from the new Member States migrated to EU countries with more open immigration policies (as UK and Ireland). Germany and Austria, that restricted entries for seven years (afraid of the risk of mass migration), received mainly low-skilled migrants that entered under legal exceptions (for self-employment, for example), and overall registered an increase in illegal staying (see Constant, A. F., O. Nottmeyer, and K. F. Zimmermann. “The economics of circular migration.” In: Constant, A. F., and K. F. Zimmermann (eds). *International Handbook on the Economics of Migration*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2013; pp. 55–74).

¹⁶ In the last years, national asylum systems of different EU countries have been flooded with an enormous amount of asylum seeker applications. Based on the European Commission’s Atlas of Migration 2020, valid residence permits in the EU at the end of 2019 were mainly referred to “other” reasons, which included international protection (41%), “family” reasons (38%), and “work” reasons (17%) (European Commission 2019). In 2019, the first-time applications for asylum in EU were 631,570; first-instance rejections have increased from 38% in 2016 to 62% in 2019. Estimates (interview with LAMP.org) underline that approximately 60% of asylum applications can refer to migrants unable to find other legal labour opportunity to enter the EU. In 2024 the Pact on Migration and Asylum has brought to a revision of asylum management, while still leaving room for change and improvement.

2. Explaining circular migration

The scope of this paragraph is to investigate on the meaning of circular migration, from theory to practice. According to the length of stay, legal labour migration is technically distinguished into: circular and seasonal migration (3-12 months¹⁷), temporary migration (1-3 years¹⁸), and permanent/long-term migration, that has no explicit or immediate return intention¹⁹.

Labour Mobility Scheme Guide, Key Steps to consider when setting up mobility schemes²⁰ (ICMPD)

	TIME FRAME	TYPE	MOTIVATION
A		skills, employment (internship, traineeship)	More developmental / migration management focused
B	Circular (temporary)	education (postgraduate degree, certification of studies)	↑ ↓
C		exchange (business knowledge exchange, study visit, diaspora)	
D	Meso (mid-long term)	employment (e.g. seasonal)	
E	Permanent	employment (including researcher)	More labour market needs-based
F	Mixed	combine more than one from A, B, C, D, E	

However, circular migration can overall refer to different migration patterns (UNI-CRIS, 2021²¹) and among EU Member States there's no common definition, approach, or statistical measuring methodology²² (UNECE, 2016²³).

According to the European Commission (2007)²⁴, circular migration refers to “a form of migration that is managed in a way allowing **some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries**”; it consists

¹⁷ Definition: “a repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries” (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en)

¹⁸ Definition: “migration for a specific motivation and/or purpose with the intention that afterwards there will be a return to the country of origin or onward movement. Regarding the development of EU policy, this may be seen in the context of inter alia circular migration and / or seasonal workers”.

¹⁹ Definition: “movement of individuals who change their country of usual residence for a period of at least one year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes their new country of usual residence. Long-term migration' and 'permanent migration' are often understood as quasi-synonyms”.

²⁰ <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/calls-for-proposals/documents/13-handbooks/1-labour-mobility-scheme-guide>

²¹ <https://cris.unu.edu/sites/cris.unu.edu/files/WP21.03%20-%20Rahim%20Rapp%20and%20Ruysen.pdf>

²² In Poland for instance circular migration is a “migration intended to be temporary, of a repetitive and/or cyclical nature, but not necessarily seasonal, which is driven by economic factors, whilst retaining links to the country of origin” (...while in) Sweden (...) circular migration is regarded as “temporary or more long-term and usually recurring legal movements between two countries” (UNECE, 2016, p. 5).

²³ Defining and Measuring Circular Migration, United Nations, 2016 (https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECESTAT20165_E.pdf).

²⁴ European Commission (2007). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on circular migration and mobility

in multiple migrations between a country of origin and destination, usually within temporary recruitment and employment frameworks for a limited period of time (for work, study, training), within a return perspective²⁵.

Moreover, based on the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary employed by the European Commission (EC), circular migration is the “repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries”. According to the EMN definition (2011²⁶), circular migration overlaps with the concept of return migration, as return is part of the circular movement. In particular²⁷, circular migration may include “third-country nationals settled in the EU,” and “persons residing in a third country”. In this latter case: “circular migration could create an opportunity to **come to the EU temporarily for work, study, training or a combination of these**, on the condition that, at the end of the period for which they were granted entry, they must re-establish their main residence and their main activity in their country of origin. **Circularity can be enhanced by giving migrants the possibility, once they have returned, to retain some form of privileged mobility to and from EU Member States** where they were formerly residing, for example in the form of simplified admission/re-entry procedures”²⁸.

Overall, circular legal migrants are persons that tend to be temporarily present and employed in a country of destination (and therefore temporarily absent from home), according to the legal schemes in use, with the intention to return home/actually returning home²⁹ (Hugo 1982; Keshri and Bhagat, 2004³⁰).

partnerships between the European Union and third countries. COM (2007) 248 final. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52007DC0248>

²⁵ The statistical definition that fits best is: “A circular migrant is a person who has crossed the national borders of the reporting country at least 3 times over a 10-year period, each time with duration of stay (abroad or in the country) of at least 90 days” (Unece Task Force, 2016: p. 19) (https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2016/October/18Add1-CircularMigration_for_Bureau_final.pdf).

²⁶ European Migration Network (2011), Temporary and Circular Migration: empirical evidence, current policy practice and future options in EU Member States (http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/circularmigration/0a_emn_synthesis_report_temporary_circular_migration_final_sept_2011_en.pdf)

²⁷ [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/circular-migration_en#:~:text=Definition\(s\),between%20two%20or%20more%20countries](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/circular-migration_en#:~:text=Definition(s),between%20two%20or%20more%20countries).

²⁸ The definition continues: “this category covers a wide array of situations, spanning the whole spectrum of migrants, including:

- third-country nationals wishing to work temporarily in the EU, e.g. in seasonal employment;
- third-country nationals wishing to study or train in Europe before returning to their country;
- third-country nationals who, after having completed their studies, wish to be employed in the EU (e.g. as trainees) to acquire professional experience which is difficult to obtain at home, before returning;
- third-country researchers wishing to carry out a research project in the EU;
- third-country nationals who wish to take part in intercultural people-to-people exchanges and other activities in the field of culture, active citizenship, education and youth (such as, for example, training courses, seminars, events, study visits);
- third-country nationals who wish to carry out an unremunerated voluntary service pursuing objectives of general interest in the EU”.

²⁹ The definition here adopted does not include “spontaneous movements”, but only those that take place through organized frameworks (workers official schemes or other temporary migration under bilateral agreements between states) (Newland, K. (2009). *Circular Migration and Human Development*. Human Development Research Paper 2009/42. United Nations Development Programme, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdrp_2009_42.pdf).

³⁰ Keshri, K and R B Bhagat (2004): “Temporary and Seasonal Migration in India: The Magnitude, Pattern and Characteristics”, Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography, 35(1-2): 17-30.

Today's literature tends to converge on considering circular migration (Migration Policy Institute)³¹ as “a continuing, long-term, and **fluid pattern of international mobility of people among countries that occupy what is now increasingly recognized as a single economic space**”, including migrant profiles such as temporary/seasonal, non-seasonal low-wage labour workers, and professionals, academics, and transnational entrepreneurs alike.

Current circular migration schemes differ according to the **(high or low) skill level of the migrant population** targeted, the duration of stay abroad³², the size of the population involved³³, the return intention to the home country, either encouraged or requested. Circular legal migration is the concurrence of different legal instruments that can either: explicitly mention the term “circular migration”, or that do not explicitly mention it, but contain elements concerning circular migration, or that do not refer to circular migration, but they allow migrant-led trajectories of circular migration (Vankova, 2020, p. 65-66³⁴).

³¹ K. Newland, D. Agunias, and A. Terrazas, *Learning by Doing: Experiences of Circular Migration*, Migration Policy Group, Washington, DC, USA, 2008.

³² Based on a global review of CM schemes (UNU-CRIS, 2021, p. 9-10), considering a period from 6 weeks to 5 years, low-skilled workers are more likely attracted towards temporary labour recruitment mechanisms, while the highly qualified ones are more easily developing strategies for long-term settlement.

³³ Early guest workers schemes were applied to many foreign workers, (as the ones applied in Germany during the 1970s) mainly to fill low-skilled jobs (Castles, 1986). Contemporary schemes tend to involve small scale groups of individuals, mostly determined through quotas (UNU-CRIS, 2021, 10).

³⁴ Z. Vankova, *Circular Migration and the Rights of Migrant Workers in Central and Eastern Europe*, Imiscoe Research Series, 2020.

CIRCULARITY WITHIN THE MENTOR2 PROJECT

The Mentor2 project aimed at matching skills of third country nationals with labour market needs in Italy, implementing mobility schemes for young graduates and workers from Morocco and Tunisia. According to its objectives: “Mentor2 intends to pursue a wider approach of circular migration, stimulating the trainee to become promoter of socio-economic relations and mutual development between the territories involved also in a longer perspective, beyond six months Internship” (project document). Circular mobility has been linked to **territorial development cooperation** and based on an **equal partnership framework approach** between Italy, Morocco and Tunisia. Because the Mentor2 project did not include a return conditionality after the training³⁵, the trainees were able and free to consider any post-project opportunity – in line with their legal permit situation.

In the final phase of the project activities, **circularity did not appear as a likely option** for the majority of trainees: due to legal and administrative restrictions linked to the trainees permit to stay, back and forth movements are de facto discouraged. The assessment of reinsertion opportunities in the origin country together with personal work and life aspirations contributed to a diffuse preference to extend the permanence in Italy, whose duration depends on the individual capacity to look for employment, the commitment of employer companies, and the possibilities granted by the legal framework. Out of the 41 trainees, 12 persons returned to the home country, while 29 remained in Italy: more specifically 20 Tunisian persons and 9 Moroccan persons did not go back (October 2024), thanks to the extension of the apprenticeship in the same company or to new employment opportunities.

Circular mobility can therefore be stretched along a longer and more fluid outlook, resulting from the interaction between **personal ambitions**, an assessment of existing **labour opportunities** (in Italy and in the origin country), and **legal mobility possibilities**. Circularity can therefore last more than 3-12 months (as by technical definition), turning into a longer migratory experience including occasional back-and-forth movements or permanent returns later in time, making clear that circular mobility is promoted as vehicle to transfer skills and competences and to contribute to development without time boundaries. **Mobility expectations** are therefore clearly anchored to the legal opportunities offered by the permit to stay in use, by the labour market attractiveness and general socio-economic stability (in the origin and destination countries) and by the individual evaluation of the work experience abroad and its impact on career and life chances.

3. Labour shortages and migration schemes

The green and digital transition and the ageing of Europe’s population will have a large impact in EU, leading to new skills requirements, transforming national and European labour markets and entire sectors of the regional economy. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the labour supply especially in some specific sectors (healthcare, mechanical industry and IT), while the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis also modified the EU labor market and economy.

The EU labour market not only needs highly skilled workers, but also middle and low skilled ones. A total of 28 occupations (employing 14% of the EU workforce in 2020 - 27 million), suffer from labour shortages. 19 have been classified as shortages of *high magnitude*: healthcare occupations result prominent and science and technology occupations show shortages at all levels. Among the sectors more deeply hit by labour shortage are health, construction, tourism and gastronomy, and transport (drivers) (see tables below). Many

³⁵ In the previous Mentor1 pilot project, post training return was expected and required.

of these shortages are widespread; consequently, the potential matching between shortages and surpluses across EU borders is limited. EU Member States are therefore in competition for skills and professions inadequately represented on the internal EU market, requiring new recruitment pools. Despite data on of (low-medium and high) skill shortages, EU countries and polices appear more largely oriented to highly skilled professionals³⁶.

Most often reported shortage occupations (Table 2.1).
Source: Analysis of the data submitted by Eures National Coordination offices

Occupation	Number of reporting countries/regions	Occupation	Number of reporting countries/regions
Plumbers and Pipe Fitters	19	Applications Programmers	11
Nursing Professionals	18	Health Care Assistants	11
Systems Analysts	17	Motor Vehicle Mechanics, Repairers	11
Welders and Flame Cutters	17	Nursing Associate Professionals	11
Heavy Truck and Lorry Drivers	16	Specialist Medical Practitioners	11
Civil Engineers	14	Civil Engineering Technicians	10
Software Developers	14	Metal Working Machine Tool Setters	10
Carpenters and Joiners	13	Toolmakers and Related Workers	10
Concrete Placers and Finishers etc.	13	Accountants	9
Generalist Medical Practitioners	13	Air Conditioning/Refrigeration Mech.	9
Agricultural & Ind. Machinery Mechanics	12	Cooks	9
Bricklayers and Related Workers	12	Roofers	9
Building and Related Electricians	12	Software Developers nec.	9
Electrical Mechanics and Fitters	12	Web and Multimedia Developers	9

High magnitude shortages reported by the highest number of countries/regions (Table 2.3)
Source: Analysis of the data submitted by Eures National Coordination offices

Occupation	Number stating high magnitude of shortage	Occupation	Number stating high magnitude of shortage
Nursing Professionals	9	Health Care Assistants	5
Plumbers and Pipe Fitters	7	Civil Engineering Technicians	4
Software Developers	7	Civil Engineers	4
Systems Analysts	7	Concrete Placers and Finishers etc.	4
Welders and Flame Cutters	7	Contact Centre Information Clerks	4
Bricklayers and Related Workers	6	Home-based Personal Care Workers	4
Heavy Truck and Lorry Drivers	6	Nursing Associate Professionals	4
Applications Programmers	5	Sheet Metal Workers	4
Carpenters and Joiners	5	Web and Multimedia Developers	4
Generalist Medical Practitioners	5		

Source: European Labour Authority – 2021: Report on Labour Shortages and Surpluses, John McGrath³⁷

The main measures to address skill shortages in the EU shall look at: **improving the attractiveness** of specific regions, sectors, or occupations; **overcoming labour market barriers** faced by specific groups (as persons with disabilities, women, **migrants** or ethnic minorities); and enhancing job matching services, addressing skills mismatches and preventing the exit from the labour market. While migrant workers in the EU are largely represented in low skilled professions and in some sectors³⁸, and despite existing current restrictions and obstacles in accessing labour markets for third country nationals, **migration is one of the strategies to address (low-medium-high skill) labour shortages**. In addition to other measures, new legal pathways are

³⁶ https://emn.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/00_labour_migration_roundtable_briefing_paper.pdf

³⁷ <https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-12/2021%20Labour%20shortages%20%20surpluses%20report.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/migration/international-migration-outlook-1999124x.htm>

therefore needed to face current and future labour needs in EU. Similar instruments shall be part of a reviewed EU **migration management** while being also included in national **labour market policies and strategies**. Overall, **the feasibility of these mechanisms would be granted by an improved exchange and convergence at EU level** (between the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and DG Home Affairs), **as well as at national level** (among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

THE RECRUITMENT OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO SKILL AND LABOUR SHORTAGE: A SURVEY AMONG MENTOR2 COMPANIES

Within the Mentor 2 project, CeSPI undertook a study (2024) aimed at analysing if/to what extent the **companies involved in Mentor2 experience skill/labour shortage** and whether the recruitment of profiles from third countries could be a possible solution, and/or if it can facilitate **internationalisation** or **sub-contracting** business strategies.

The research highlights that **the recruitment of professional profiles from third countries today is not a widely used** or a envisaged practice to face skill/labour shortage. However, the recruitment of profiles from third countries also appears as potentially viable and valid depending on certain facilitating conditions.

A first element concerns the **size and structure of the company**: the more cosmopolitan and open to global markets the company is, the more margins for success exist. The more the company is concretely interested in opening up to **foreign markets** (internationalisation, trade, sub-contracting), the more tangible is the added value of recruiting persons from target countries.

Managing the recognition of qualifications and competences is a key aspect that implies the presence of efficient **intermediation bodies**.

Apprenticeship can respond both to **fostering circular mobility** and to strengthening candidates' skills. Making **intentions and goals clearer** on both sides can be helpful, while leaving **room for flexibility** during the course of the action.

The more the **matching process** between companies' needs and the characteristics of candidates is **participative** and the clearer expectations and working conditions will be, the more satisfactory the outcomes will be.

Adequate preparation is necessary for both companies and candidates, in terms of mutual knowledge, practical-logical aspects as well as personal and socio-cultural dimensions.

Bureaucracy is an enemy for businesses and public and private entities. No enterprise can adapt to the time-consuming bureaucracy (for visa, permits, certifications...). These aspects are a clear deterrent, making this **labour mobility channel de facto unavailable for company needs and capacity**.

More and detailed information is available in the published document [here](#): ***Affrontare lo skill shortage in Italia tramite il reclutamento di profili professionali in paesi terzi***, A. Ferro (2024)

4. Framing circular legal migration

Circular migration is not a new phenomenon. In the context of current labor mobility policies, the debate on circular legal migration has been growing (Wickramasekara 2011³⁹), especially in the EU agenda. Circular migration schemes have been advocated as policy instruments to regulate skills and labour shortages, brain drain from sending countries, and irregular migration, while their implications can be questioned according to positive and negative impacts.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Circular migrants fill labor shortages in host countries. ○ Migrants do not stay in host countries if they cannot find a job. ○ Remittances sent home by migrants contribute to the economic development of sending countries. ○ Circular migration reduces the brain drain and encourages the transfer of skills and know-how (“brain circulation”). ○ Circular migrants benefit from back-and-forth mobility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restricting circular migration increases the likelihood of illegal immigration and overstaying visas’ expiration in receiving countries. ○ Restrictions may result in more non-economic migrants, including family members and people on welfare. ○ Out-migration can lead to labor market shortages in sending countries. ○ Circular migrants may remain stuck in low levels of employment and may be exposed to abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.

Source: *Circular migration - Why restricting labor mobility can be counterproductive*, Klaus F. Zimmermann, IZA World of Labor 2014, May, p. 1 (<https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/1/pdfs/circular-migration.pdf>)

At **international level**, most of the global experiences of circular migration are/were inspired or implemented within the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** framework and objectives (5-section d and 6) (2018) stressing on the importance to enhance pathways for legal migration to facilitate labour mobility and decent work. Along this approach, circular mobility is globally considered a **quadruple win solution** for countries of origin and destination, migrant workers and the private sector⁴⁰. At the same time, circular migration de facto tends to be ruled by bilateral agreements that either respond to limited objectives (as specific labour market needs in destination countries) or multiple objectives (as labour shortages, irregular migration reduction, readmissions, development of origin countries), overall hindering the possibility of a larger impact (Wickramasekara 2015; UNI-CRIS. 2021, p, 11).

In the international scene, **Global skill partnerships**⁴¹ are proposed as a model to address imbalances, to curb brain drain and to support the development of origin countries. What makes them different from other legal migration schemes refers to their components: official cooperation/agreements between the countries involved, multi-stakeholder engagement, training, skills recognition, and a clear scheme of migration/mobility.

³⁹ “Circular Migration: A Triple Win or a Dead End”, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1834762

⁴⁰ Circular migration is considered a solution allowing: *destination countries* and companies to employ flexible workforce, *origin countries* to gain remittances and skills, and *migrants* to access higher income and legal employment opportunities, avoiding illegal routes and possibly gaining new skills.

⁴¹https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_653993.pdf

THE GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The *Global Skill Partnership* is a model designed by the economist Michael Clemence⁴² to address demographic imbalances and future migration pressure, skill shortages in the destination countries altogether with “brain drain” risks, while contributing to the development of the origin countries. The model mainly focuses on **mid-skill professions** (healthcare, construction, engineering, ICT, hospitality, and tourism) and it could be used to facilitate temporary, long-term or permanent labour movements.

The Global Skill Partnership consists in a **pre-migration agreement** between two countries, involving their governments and private-sector players. The **agreement is demand-driven by the employers** in the destination country. The partners agree on the training in the origin country targeting defined and negotiated key sectors/skilled professions/skills/certifications for both destination and origin country. Part of the trained human capital will be destined to employment opportunities abroad, while a large part will stay in the origin country and contribute to local development plans.

This model has been tested by the development agency Enabel (Palim project) and it finally turned into a national approach adopted by Belgium to frame migration, development and labour policies. More information on the Palim project is available in the second chapter. Other examples include for instance a partnership between Germany and Kosovo⁴³, between Australia and various pacific islands (with the Australia Pacific Training Coalition), between Lithuania and Nigeria (digital explorers) and the recently launched Thamm Plus programme (Italy, Morocco and Tunisia).

IOM, ILO (International Labour Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IOE (International Employers Organization) and ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation), launched the *Global Skills Partnership for Migration*⁴⁴ (GSPM) initiative to mobilize resources and build platforms to help stakeholders develop sustainable mobility schemes – such as the *Skills Mobility Partnerships*⁴⁵.

5. The EU policy framework of labour migration

EU Member States maintain the right to determine the number of labour admissions of third-country nationals (determining the number of employed and self-employed work admissions - excluding family reunification and asylum-seeking from any quota system). While Member States maintain their competence on legal migration flows, the EU has committed to expanding legal channels and has increasingly enriched a shared competence on legal migration (offering funding facilities as the MPF or Talent Partnership, or with the Blu Card permit). Labour immigration is nevertheless a critical policy area, and it is important for the EU to integrate and support Member State policies through added value measures.

⁴² <https://izajolp.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40173-014-0028-z>

⁴³ <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/maximizing-shared-benefits-legal-migration-pathways>

⁴⁴ <https://eca.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1666/files/documents/Skills-Mobility-Partnerships-Infosheet.pdf>

⁴⁵ That are typically bilateral or multilateral agreements between States that, despite their inner differences, they all include the following components: formalized State cooperation, multi-stakeholder involvement, training, skills recognition, migration/mobility (https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_653993.pdf).

In the last twenty years, the **EU developed a legal framework**⁴⁶ aiming at balancing Member States' entry and residence conditions for labour purposes, targeting some categories of extra-EU workers. Particular attention is dedicated to attract **skills and talents** in the EU (highly qualified workers - *Blue Card*, the *single procedure* and a single permit for both the right to work and stay in EU for third country nationals admitted under Member States' national schemes, intra-corporate transferees, *students* and *researchers*), in addition to permanent residence right⁴⁷ ('long-term residence'). This approach is clear in the von der Leyen speech (July 2024)⁴⁸ illustrating the EU Commission political agenda: a "fair and firm approach to managing migration will enable us to open up legal pathways. We will support Member States and companies with legal migration based on the skills needs of our economies and our regions. We will help match the skills of third country nationals with labour market gaps in Europe and we will make it easier to attract the right talent with harmonised rules on the recognition of qualifications".

To date, an evaluation (fitness check) on legal migration⁴⁹ was completed by the European Commission in 2019, which underlined a framework with a **high fragmentation**, limited coverage of EU regulations, inconsistency between the various directives, complexity of procedures and incorrect implementation.

THE EU SINGLE PERMIT DIRECTIVE

The EU *Blue Card Directive* and the EU *Single Permit Directive* (Directive 2011/98/EU) are two instruments aiming at sustaining a more flexible migrant EU admission system, while fostering migrant skills' labour equivalence insertion. *The EU Blue Card refers to the admission of highly-skilled workers from third countries.* The *Single Permit* consists of a single application procedure for non-EU citizens, providing different rights⁵⁰ as the possibility to move, work and reside freely in the issuing EU country. The Single Permit Directive does not create a right for third-country national workers to enter a State for employment, it only introduces *a single application procedure*. Member States ultimately decide on the number of third-country workers they want to admit to their labour market.

The Single Permit Directive is a sort of "one-stop shop mechanism", a framework or 'horizontal' directive, which covers third-country workers also admitted to a Member State according to its national migration law. The directive covers all 25 EU Member States, with the exception of Denmark and Ireland⁵¹. In 2021, 2.9 million non-EU citizens obtained the right to both reside and work in the EU through the single permit administrative procedure. France, Italy, Spain and Portugal together issued 70 % of the single permits recorded in 2021, giving the right to non-EU citizens to both reside and work in the EU. Moreover, 29.000 highly qualified non-EU workers received a EU Blue Card in 2021, giving them comprehensive socio-economic rights and a residence

⁴⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A657%3AFIN&qid=1651223944578>

⁴⁷ In November 2023 EU member states agreed their negotiating mandate for updating the EU long-term residents directive. This directive sets out the conditions under which third-country nationals can acquire EU long-term resident status (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/23/third-country-nationals-eu-updates-rules-for-long-term-resident-status/>).

⁴⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

⁴⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/legal-migration-fitness-check_en

⁵⁰ It also offers the same conditions as provided to nationals of the issuing country regarding working conditions, education and training, recognition of qualifications, certain aspects of social security, tax benefits, access to goods and services and employment advice services.

⁵¹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739289/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)739289_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739289/EPRS_BRI(2023)739289_EN.pdf)

in the EU⁵². Nevertheless, different problems were highlighted with the procedure implementation⁵³, urging for a need to update and review the Single Permit Directive⁵⁴.

An impact assessment was presented by the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the 27th of April 2022, reporting some of the main problems:

1. Complex and inefficient application procedures and unclear rights resulting from a fragmented implementation reduces EU attractiveness for third country nationals.
2. Lack of EU level coverage of certain migrant categories, differing admission conditions for low- and medium-skilled third country nationals.
3. Insufficient protection of third-country workers from exploitation.

In the European Parliament, the recast proposal of the Single Permit Directive has been assigned to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. The proposal is part of the "Skills and talent" package aiming to attract skills and talents for the EU needs. As of April 2024, the Council adopted a **revision of the Single Permit Directive** that provides for a shortened application procedure (3 months) and aims to strengthen the rights of third-country workers by allowing a change of employer and a limited period of unemployment⁵⁵.

The EU has also developed **labour mobility schemes** between EU Member States and third countries. In December 2006, the European Council invited the Commission to explore: a) **how to integrate legal migration opportunities** into the Union's external policies⁵⁶ in partnership with third countries and in accordance to specific EU Member States' labour market needs, and b) **how to facilitate circular and temporary migration**. The Commission proposed to negotiate **mobility partnerships** (in support of the external dimension of the EU migration policy) between the EU/Member States and third countries to manage migration flows, fight illegal migration, and create legal migration opportunities and short-term movements. In addition, the Commission suggested to develop legislative and non-legislative measures to facilitate **circular migration** (involving especially highly skilled migrants, seasonal migrants, and migrant trainees).

THE MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP FACILITY

Among the EU instruments and tools, the **Migration Partnership Facility (MPF)** – a programme funded by DG HOME and implemented by ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development) - was launched in 2016 to support the external dimension of EU migration policy. Its aim is to reinforce cooperation and projects on migration and mobility, now aligned with the *proposed EU Talent Partnerships*, between Member States and

⁵² Data extracted in December 2022, Eurostat: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_%E2%80%93_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work#:~:text=2.9%20million%20single%20permits%20were%20issued%20in%20the%20EU%20in%202021&text=This%20number%20remained%20relatively%20stable,2021%20\(see%20figure%201](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_%E2%80%93_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work#:~:text=2.9%20million%20single%20permits%20were%20issued%20in%20the%20EU%20in%202021&text=This%20number%20remained%20relatively%20stable,2021%20(see%20figure%201)

⁵³ Member States may restrict equal treatment by limiting social security and/or tax benefits, as well as access to goods and services, such as housing. Member States can also choose to only apply the directive's equal treatment provisions to people in employment or who have been employed and those registered as unemployed.

⁵⁴ <https://epthinktank.eu/2023/01/13/revision-of-directive-2011-98-eu-on-the-single-permit-to-reside-and-work-eu-legislation-in-progress/#:~:text=The%20Single%20Permit%20Directive%20lays,residing%20in%20an%20EU%20country.>

⁵⁵ A third-country worker can submit an application from the territory of a third-country or, if he or she is a holder of a valid residence permit, from within the EU. If a member state decides to issue the single permit, this decision will serve as both residence permit and work permit (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/04/12/legal-migration-council-gives-green-light-to-single-work-and-stay-permit-for-non-eu-nationals/>).

⁵⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_07_197

key partner countries outside the EU⁵⁷. Mobility Partnership Declarations were signed between the EU and different third countries⁵⁸. The facility has funded over 60 projects involving 15 Member States and partner countries (especially involving youth from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Moldova) with a total budget exceeding 30 million euros. In fact, **Mentor2 is an initiative financed under the MPF III.**

Today, at EU level, legal circular migration is currently ascribed within the *Global Approach to Migration and Mobility*, COM (2011)⁵⁹, that is the framework for the cooperation of the EU with **third countries** concerning migration and asylum⁶⁰. Under the *New Pact on Migration and Asylum* (2020)⁶¹, in addition to reinforcing border controls and reviewing the solidarity relocation mechanism⁶², the need to boost mutually beneficial international mobility procedures is addressed. The ‘mobility partnerships’ are relaunched with the **Talent Partnerships**⁶³ to support mobility for study, work or training purposes, and ensure capacity building assistance to partner countries. Kick off countries are Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt (with Bangladesh and Pakistan as additional target countries). The initiative relies on a first analysis of mutual key sectors, target occupations, skills levels and training needs. Italy entered the Talent Partnership with activities in three countries: Egypt – to train and recruit workers in the touristic sector by establishing an Italian-Egyptian

⁵⁷ The MPF can support initiatives of: legal migration and mobility, international protection and asylum policy, trafficking in human beings, return and reintegration, border management, anti-smuggling, capacity building for migration management (<https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/storage/files/mpf-policy-brief-pilot-projects-1020.pdf>).

⁵⁸ The focus is on countries of strategic relevance to migration management and governance, including: Western Balkans and Türkiye, Eastern Partnership and Southern Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan African countries, Silk Route countries (<https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/labour-mobility>).

⁵⁹ First defined as Global Approach to Migration (GAM) by the European Council in December 2005 (COM(2007) 247), further developed in 2007 and 2008, GAM offered a comprehensive strategy to address irregular migration and human trafficking, and to link migration management and development policies, promoting circular migration (especially for highly skilled) and mobility packages/partnerships signed as agreements between the EU and origin countries collaborative on border controls, returns and readmissions. The GAM had been revised in 2011 to further strengthen the EU external migration policy, becoming the GAMM (Communication on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (COM 2011) 743 final).

⁶⁰ Along four priorities: improving the organization of legal migration and ease mobility, preventing and reducing irregular migration in an efficient, yet humane way, strengthening the synergies between migration and development, and strengthening international protection systems and the external dimension of asylum.

⁶¹ Since the 2015 migratory crisis, the failure of the current “Dublin III Regulation” had been largely recognized, urging for a different relocation mechanism among Member States. In 2024 the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) replaced the current “Dublin III Regulation” within the New Pact for Migration and Asylum; nevertheless, the obligation to apply for protection in the Member State of first entry is maintained. A mandatory but flexible system of solidarity for Member States facing migratory pressure has been established including different measures/options (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en#:~:text=On%2010%20April%202024%2C%20the,issues%20with%20determination%20and%20ingenuity;https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1706

⁶² In January 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen sent a letter to EU Member States to relaunch the “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” addressing the priority to: 1) strengthening of external borders; 2) improving procedures of repatriation and return; 3) developing more effective relocation via the voluntary solidarity mechanism, (a precursor to a permanent mechanism); 4) intensifying the cooperation with partners, to improve the management of migration and returns, particular focus on Africa. In 2024 the reform of the legal framework came to a point with the European Parliament voting in favour of the new rules on migration, followed by their formal adoption by the Council of the EU, on 14 May 2024.

⁶³ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en

recruitment hub, Morocco - with a focus on the mechatronic sector, and Tunisia – with a focus on the construction sector⁶⁴.

However, effectively integrating and advancing the Talent Partnerships within national migration systems can be challenging. This process requires not only efficient and effective legal migration systems, but also coordination between labour market assessments, the identification of current and future migration needs, and information on the skill profiles and economic needs of partner countries.

A forthcoming initiative is the **Talent Pool**⁶⁵, a platform that will facilitate a direct matching between labour offer/companies in EU and labour demand/individuals in third countries. Commitment to the platform was first indicated in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the idea was then developed under the 2022 Skills and Talent package.

THAMM PLUS - Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in Italy and North Africa

Funded by the European Union and managed by IOM, THAMM Plus is a trans-regional programme (2024-2026) in line with the implementation of the EU Talent Partnerships approach and in continuation with the regional action 'Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa' (THAMM) previous phases⁶⁶. THAMM Plus (launched in October 2024) aims to promote the mobility of skilled workers between Morocco and Tunisia and Italy to address labour shortages identified jointly by the North African authorities and three Italian Regions (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto). The programme aims at piloting a mobility model based on the Article 23 of the Italian Immigration Act (*Testo Unico*) that places extra quotas for foreign workers in Morocco/Tunisia who completed vocational and civic-linguistic training regulated and approved by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The sector identified for Morocco is mechatronics (and it will involve approximately 1.000 persons), while construction is the selected sector for Tunisian workers (approximately 2.000 persons) and it includes the partnership with ANCE, the Italian association of construction companies. Once trained in the origin country, the candidate workers appointed for the Italian labour market will be selected and hired by Italian companies.

Not all EU Member countries managed initiatives of circular labour mobility within the Migration Facility: an EMN survey verified that, out of 23 member states, 15 have no experience⁶⁷ at all. At the same time, Germany, Belgium and Spain gained more experience. While the central public authority is the main responsible for shaping the mobility legal framework, a large variety of projects and initiatives of legal labour /circular migration included a multitude of (non-public) stakeholders. Macro-economic impacts are far from being visible, given the small size and the pilot nature of the initiatives.

⁶⁴ https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2024/02/partecipazione-italiana-ai-partenariati-per-il-talento-della-ue-per-lattrazione-di-manodopera-qualificata-dallestero/

⁶⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13716-EU-Talent-Pool_en.

⁶⁶ Phase I and II financed by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and phase III financed by the EU Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NCIDI) - Global Europe (NDICI-GE).

⁶⁷ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/202144_ahq_for_emn_inform_on_skills_mobility_partnerships.pdf

MENTOR2 AND THE ITALIAN "ARTICLE No. 27" FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Mentor2 is a circular mobility initiative funded under the EU MPF III (Migration Partnership Facility III) targeting 41 young highly qualified persons from Tunisia and Morocco to accomplish 6 months of professional training in two Italian Regions - Lombardy (Milan) and Piedmont (Turin). The return option was not mandatory.

Italy currently promotes several policy measures of active employment; traineeships are an active policy measure, aimed at creating direct contact between employers and trainees. In Italy, internships are a tool for school-work transition and an employment measure with the intermediation of specialized registered agencies. The Regional administrative level is the main reference to manage professional trainings.

Within the Italian Immigration Act (*Testo Unico*), **Article 27** (D.Lgs. 286/1998, art. 27, co.1, lett. F) offers **professional training opportunities in Italy for non-EU citizens**⁶⁸. Within this mobility scheme, 7.500 entries for courses to get a certification or a degree and 7.500 entries for professional training/internships under the regional guidelines have been planned (2023/2025). In the previous three-year period, this measure had been under-used with only 3.219 persons admitted compared to the 15.000 quotas forecasted. Permits to stay for study/training reasons can now be converted into work permits, out of national work quotas⁶⁹.

Each Region differently regulates specific aspects of Article 27: for example, the Lombardy Region (DGR No. 4732, 22nd of January 2016) applies only to newly graduated students (within one year from their graduation in the third country) and requires companies with at least 6 employees (with permanent contract). The Piedmont Region has no similar limitations.

Mentor2 applied **Article 27** as a circular labour mobility scheme between Morocco, Tunisia and Italy (Milan and Turin). The candidate profiles were identified in different areas in **Morocco** (Béni Mellal–Khénifra, Tanger) and in **Tunisia** (Tunis and Sfax) with the support of two Italian NGOs operating there (Soletterre and Anolf) and the commitment of the national public employment agencies (ANETI and ANAPEC). On the Italian side, the candidate hosting enterprises applied to a public call with the support of Promos (agency of the Chamber of Commerce in Milan) and CeiPiemonte (that offers services in the field of internalization and diversity management). Two employment agencies in Italy (AFOL and APL) were involved in the matching and training monitoring phases. The joint **matching process** between candidate profiles and hosting companies tried to take into consideration the **economic vocation of each territory**, making value of the professional profiles. Nevertheless, because Mentor2 was not designed with a focus on specific occupations or sectors, training opportunities offered by the Italian companies participating in the project basically determined the selection process. 100% of the trainees prove **highly educated**.

In Turin, the automotive industry – also flourishing in Tangeri-Tétouan-Al Hoceima, absorbed most of its traineeships' positions. In Milan, with its service oriented urban economy, the trainees were hosted in a variety of businesses (for instance, in a social enterprise, a municipal company, IT and automotive companies, communications etc.). Some territories in Morocco and Tunisia branded by an agricultural vocation could not find perfect correspondence with the two Italian city economies and labour markets.

Overall: **38 companies** were involved (19 in Milan and 17 in Turin) and **41** young boys and girls were trained. At the end of the project, **29 trainees** remained in Italy (October 2024). As for the post training phase, most trainees received a financial support to start entrepreneurship projects (11 persons) and to improve their employability (28 persons). Despite the different outcomes and personal trajectories, trainees gained a significant life and work experience through their professional internship, they improved Italian language

⁶⁸ Some recent changes were introduced based on the so-called *Decreto Cutro* - DL 20 of March, n. 23 turned into law the 5th of May 2023, n. 50 (<https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legge:2023-03-10;20!vig=2023-06-23>).

⁶⁹ <https://integrazioneimmigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/3301/Conversione-del-permesso-di-soggiorno-da-studio-a-lavoro-Cosa-e-cambiato-con-il-decreto-Cutro>

knowledge as well as soft skills (that in many cases represented an obstacle during their stage – highlighting the importance of pre-departure preparation, including both language and life skills).

Despite the abundant **administrative challenges** faced (length of the procedures for title recognition and visa/permit to stay entitlement, compliance with the rigid regional requirements), the project positively managed the trainings. The project established **direct relations and dialogue** with the national employment agencies in Morocco and Tunisia, highlighting the important effort to build a multi-country and multi-stakeholder governance and network, despite some asymmetries between peers. In some cases, organizational asymmetries emerged (between national and local scales). While the project **improved awareness** about Article 27 especially among the Italian private sector, Article 27 as a **channel of legal labour migration** and/or as a tool to **reduce skill/labour shortage** in Italy underlined existing difficulties and obstacles. In terms of policy recommendations, Mentor2 registers that **improved harmonization and simplification** are needed, due to the administrative and bureaucratic burdens, heterogeneity in regional regulations and complexity of title recognition procedures. Due to its **administrative complexity** and time requirements, the **private sector** is not able to autonomously apply Article 27. A time discrepancy exists between companies' decisions and labour needs and the length of administrative processes. If attracting talents is the objective of legal mobility schemes and policies, the reality-check contradicts the expected outcomes.

Nevertheless, the potential of Article 27 and the higher win-win manifestation of circular labour migration can be particularly identified in **certain company profiles**: import-export companies, or companies with subsidiary branches abroad, or companies with commercial partners or strategies abroad. The business nature of these companies between Italy and Morocco/Tunisia requires workers who can link and connect the two national contexts with back-and-forth movements. The test with highly skilled workers (that improved their CV, life and professional experience, gained different competences that can be valuable in both origin and destination labour markets) shall find application also for other profiles.

Additionally, one of the key positive contributions of Mentor2 refers to its **multilevel governance** and diversified partnership engagement among the three countries and six territories involved. This originates in a territorial approach aiming to create horizontal dialogues and shared objectives (youth employment, equal and safe mobility, development) among peers. The ambition of this goal goes hand in hand with the complex challenges for its implementation.

6. The debated EU approach to legal/circular migration

While migration is still a controversial political issue for the electoral pressure in electoral cycles at national and at EU level, with variations among Member States, at the same time, migration is both an asset for origin countries and an essential resource for the EU. The political and public opinion debate is highly instrumentalized, but also overall schizophrenic, simultaneously addressing preoccupation for incoming migrant flows as well as for labor shortages that cannot be filled with national/EU citizens.

A level of criticism on legal/circular mobility schemes highlights a discrepancy between the importance on paper to reinforce labour migration channels, and the priority given to border controls and security, revealing a growing securitarian approach to migration at the EU level. Evidence⁷⁰ comes from the tendency and preference to concentrate on the externalization of migration management, border controls, and

⁷⁰ See the von der Leyen 2024 speech on the political guidelines for the EC commission. "More secure borders will also help us to manage migration in a more structured and fair way. The Migration and Asylum Pact is a huge step forward. (...) We need a common approach on returns, to make them more effective and dignified. And we need to develop our comprehensive partnerships, in particular across our Southern neighbourhood".

agreements with third countries to obtain collaboration for border controls, returns and readmissions⁷¹. Since the EU main priority is to curb down irregular migration and scale up security, defense and returns, labour mobility pathways are firstly inscribed under this framework rather than envisaged as a long-term strategy to pursue economic growth and cooperation (ETTG, 2/2024)⁷². This is due to the political nature of the debate on migration that will likely increase the defensive approach. Nevertheless, as clarified in the political guidelines for the EU Commission (2024-29)⁷³ by President von der Leyen, labour migration represents one of the solutions to support the good health of EU companies and economic competitiveness: “we will support Member States and companies with legal migration based on the skills needs of our economies and our regions. We will help match the skills of third country nationals with labour market gaps in Europe and we will make it easier to attract the right talent with harmonised rules on the recognition of qualifications”. The example of the Austrian-Indian Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (into force in 2023) explains clearly the use of legal schemes to face the increase in irregular migration from India to Austria (ENM, Austria - Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023, A. Ammann). This mobility agreement resulted in a reduction of asylum applications from Indian citizens and an increase in the number of visas issued (short-stay, skilled workers, students, youth temporary jobs) with a subsequent higher contribution to the formal labour market⁷⁴.

While EU Member States maintain their competence to manage national labour migration flows (determining the number of labour admissions of third-country nationals), the EU has increasingly committed to expand legal channels (offering funding facilities like the MPF, Talent Partnerships, and other instruments such as the Single Permit or the Blue Card permit). Most of the existing and fragmented initiatives of circular/legal migration in EU (see *Chapter 2* and annex) are nevertheless constituted by **costly pilot projects** that hardly scaled up into larger programmes and that did not resolve labour shortages. The low implementation of circular/legal mobility instruments is also due to their **scarce integration** into national labour and migration policies, with more policy coordination needed. This implies that migration shall refer to an employment strategy, a component of foreign policy and diplomacy, and a public competence to guarantee asylum, protection and integration rights and procedures. A remote risk exists that human rights’ centrality is granted more for those that employ safe, regular, and orderly legal channels, and less for asylum seekers and undocumented persons that are already in the EU.

Moreover, despite some exceptions, measures to fill EU shortages have been focusing more on attracting missing skills and workers to fill gaps (as looking for nurses or medical doctors), instead of building stable

⁷¹ The European Council for Refugees in Exile (ECRE) criticized migration partnerships (p. 3-4) for being “too weak and for promoting the EU’s interests (cooperation with third countries to stop irregular migration; mobility limited to high-skilled migration to meet labour shortages in Europe) without offering tangible integration prospects to third country nationals (...). The Migrant Rights Network (MRN) denounced it as a “law and order” strategy where cooperation with third countries served the purpose of creating stricter border controls and visa policies rather than the integration of migrants. Frequent reference to the ill-defined concept of “illegal migration”, combined with compulsory cooperation on readmission of irregular migrants by third countries in exchange for the mobility/visa procedures for some of their nationals, highlights “the flawed perspectives on which the EU states were basing their positions.” (<https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/analyses/no-215-gamm-state-of-play.pdf>).

⁷² European Think Tanks Group, The EU-Africa migration agenda realising a new partnership, <https://ettg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Migrations-ETTG-Brief-September-2024.pdf>

⁷³ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

⁷⁴ In 2022 India was the second country in asylum applications (19.855 - 18.1%), while in 2023 other countries ranked in the top three countries; from 2022 to 2023 the number of short-stay visas issued in consulate countries increased from 18.835 to 31.926 (EMN country fact sheet – Austria 2023).

recruitment and mobility channels with third countries (as nurses or other professions from a specific country). While the initiatives of labour mobility have demonstrated no significant impact in terms of volume of workforce mobilized, they still represent a preferable scheme (especially addressing highly skilled workers) to long-term migration due to the general anti-immigration sentiment in many EU Member States (UNU-Crisis, 2021)⁷⁵. This explains also why similar mechanisms tend to address highly skilled workers (including youth exchanges, graduates or qualified professionals), instead of low skilled ones. Additionally, within circular migration schemes aiming to attract high-skilled migrants, workers are more easily offered permanent residency in destination countries compared to schemes that recruit low-skilled migrants (in the form of regulated or managed migration schemes) (UNU-Crisis, 2021)⁷⁶. An additional aspect to be further discussed attains to the definition of what a highly skilled worker or a talent is in different countries and contexts.

Moving away from the project/pilot approach (which is still good and necessary to understand enabling factors, challenges and good replicable practices and methods), fair and clear mechanisms and rules at EU/Member States level are needed. Human labour mobility to reduce existing/forecasted shortages has to happen without hindering economic and youth employment growth in third countries and without causing a drainage of key competences (either low, medium or high). To respond to these challenges, **the Global Skill Partnership**⁷⁷ model is increasingly promoted for its assumed capacity to address imbalances, avoid brain drain and support the development of origin countries. Different legal mobility initiatives are currently inspired by this model centered on skill shortages, youth training and employability, but implementation challenges exist (matching needs, sectors, profiles, titles, competences, trainings between different countries and contexts). Nevertheless, developing and offering programmes and mechanisms that promote legal migration (as with the incoming initiatives of the Talent Partnerships, Talent Pool, Thamm Plus etc) does not mean to consequently have and increase in legal migration (as demonstrated by such obstacles as bureaucratic and administrative burdens or complexity in existing procedures). Legal migration in EU as it is today is a selective and demand driven process that needs clear, just and viable rules, legitimately vigilant and rigorous to guarantee and safeguard all players involved within a human centered approach.

As the need to increase and improve the availability of feasible legal migration channels and labour entry schemes has become imperative in the EU, a certain change in the dialogue between EU/Member States and third- countries over the years can be observed. From a focus on preventing irregular migration and facilitating readmissions only, partnerships today see many origin countries negotiate labour mobility agreements taking into greater consideration diaspora contribution, nationals' skills and qualifications development and workers' rights protection, beyond remittances. Today, mobility schemes negotiations have to include: labour market assessment in an agreed balance between skills and competences needed and offered, selective, technical and life-skills pre-departure trainings, decent and fair regular work conditions and support to integration in the destination country/territories, safeguarding migrant workers' rights, back-and-forth movements and reintegration (including investments, entrepreneurship, certified qualifications and acquired competences). Many origin countries also started addressing welfare policy aspects (and developing or providing services) related to social protection, insurances, pensions. Some

⁷⁵ <https://cris.unu.edu/sites/cris.unu.edu/files/WP21.03%20-%20Rahim%20Rayp%20and%20Ruysen.pdf>

⁷⁶ <https://cris.unu.edu/sites/cris.unu.edu/files/WP21.03%20-%20Rahim%20Rayp%20and%20Ruysen.pdf>

⁷⁷ Based on a pre-migration agreement, it engages governments and private-sector players. The agreement is demand-driven by the employers in the destination country. The partners identify common key economic sectors affected by skill shortage; the training of skilled professionals is supposed to employ these workers in both destination and origin country (<https://gsp.cgdev.org/>)

countries of origin are trying to combine the benefits of migration policies with national skills development policies.

EU countries are now competing with other players and countries (on the demand side) on the global recruitment market, and the negotiations can be more favorable for countries on the manpower offer side. At the same time, a long-term perspective and regional EU strategy responding to internal collective and national shortages (of skills, labour and population) is required as a political responsibility although challenged and confronted by a securitarian approach to migration. A need for institutional cooperation is mandatory as migration management requires national and European political competences and coherent decisions affecting different Ministries (Social affairs, Employment and Inclusion, Interior and Foreign Affairs). Initiatives such as Mentor2 are an institutional test to concretely verify the feasibility of a norm for legal mobility and the feasibility of multi-stakeholder and multi-country governance for recruiting, matching and training foreign workers. Mentor2 offers clear evidence of the need to further develop policy instruments, removing obstacles and offering fair, respectful and inclusive options feasible on paper and in practice.

II. SELECTED (good) PRACTICES OF LEGAL LABOUR MIGRATION IN EU

The CeSPI's research activity aimed at analyzing different initiatives of legal mobility/circular migration in EU, in an "exchange of practices" exercise. The analysis explores the existing variety of mechanisms⁷⁸. Detailed information on the Mentor2 implemented activities is here shared.

Eleven initiatives (plus Mentor2) different from one another were analyzed⁷⁹, covering a variety of schemes (temporary, circular, medium-long term, permanent), skills, professions and sector orientations. Examples have been collected from Germany, Spain, Belgium, and France (and some multi-country initiatives).

The analysis aimed at investigating different mobility schemes, addressing their advantages (enabling factors) **and weaknesses** (obstacle faced). The research methodology employed desk analysis (literature review, web search⁸⁰), interviews⁸¹ and an "exchange of good practices" tool⁸².

An internal online seminar had been organized to facilitate cross-exchanges among some selected practices (12/12/2023).

The outcome of this comparative exercise underlines the **complexity of framing legal labour migration schemes**, the importance of taking solid **transnational evidence-based decisions** in designing them, and the need to assess the **challenges and opportunities** they can generate.

The chapter concludes with the **recommendations** gathered at the Mentor2 Final National Conference held in Rome in 2024.

⁷⁸ EU funded projects, mostly from the MPF, or Government Programmes.

⁷⁹ In the annex section detailed information sheets are available – compiled by A. Gallietta. The selection list of initiatives has been validated by experts and confirmed by the existing literature.

⁸⁰ The web information collected was not always complete, due to lack of data availability.

⁸¹ Expert – LampForum; Expert – LampForum and previous Project Manager at THAMM (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa), GIZ; Project Manager at THAMM/GIZ; Hand in Hand - Federal Employment Agency and DIHK Service GmbH; different staff at Move Green – Famsi/Andalucia Solidaria; Lead expert Migration and Development, THAMM/PALIM projects, Enabel; IOM - Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg, MATCH Project and BE-TN Youth employability project).

⁸² The methodology of data collection, applied throughout the interviews with representatives of the initiatives, was also supported by a synthetic template, including advice for replicability.

INIATIATIVE	COUNTRY IN EU	THIRD COUNTRY	MOBILITY SCHEME	TARGET SECTOR IN EU
THAMM	Germany, Belgium, France	Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt	Medium-long term labour migration to respond to EU labour/ sector shortages offering vocational training for skilled workers (Thamm represents a form of continuation of Palim)	Hotel and restaurant, electrical, metalworking, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, logistics, bakery, construction and IT sectors
MATCH	Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg	Senegal, Nigeria	Short-term circular mobility of skilled workers with a possible perspective of long-term migration	ICT, communications, healthcare, pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors
BE-TN Youth employability	Belgium	Tunisia	Circular mobility scheme (6 months internship) to enhance the professional skills and employability of Tunisian youth between Belgium and Tunisia	Different sectors related to the young graduate studies matching with Belgium skill shortage
Triple Win	Germany	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Jordan.	Medium-long term labour migration of qualified nurses, offering pre-departure preparation/language training and mentoring	Qualified nurses
Specialized	Germany	Jordan, Colombia and Mexico	Medium term labour migration programme to recruit foreign medical personnel, offering the training in German hospitals required for the national recognition/qualification.	General practitioner
Hand in Hand for International Talents	Germany	Brazil, India and Vietnam	Medium-long term labour migration programme based on previous feasibility assessments and agreements with country of origin to recruit skilled workers in German's labour shortage sectors; pre-departure language preparation.	Construction electricians, electrical operating technology, electrical engineering; professions in computer science, information technology, telecommunications technology and software development; cooks, professions in hotel service, professions in catering service and in system catering.
Move Green	Spain	Morocco	Temporary and circular training mobility opportunity (4 months) with internships for 18 final year students/ graduates (BAC+5) from Morocco in Andalusian companies	Renewable energy
Young Generation as Change Agents (YGCA)	Spain	Morocco	Short term circular mobility scheme for Moroccan students to attend a Master in Spain and improve their entrepreneurship projects once back home	Main sectors in Morocco: energy engineering, data sciences, cybersecurity, sustainable development, biotechnology and tourism.
Gecco	Spain	Argentina, Cape Verde, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Paraguay, the Philippines, Senegal, and Ukraine.	Seasonal migration scheme (9-12 months). Temporary unskilled workforce has been recruited for the last 20 years, especially in the agriculture sector, via agreements with origin countries. Home return after the season work is expected.	Agriculture
Palim	Belgium	Morocco	Pilot project to train ICT skilled workers in Morocco, partly to be recruited in Belgium and partly to stimulate the Moroccan ICT labour market	ICT
HOMERe	France	Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt (initially in 2014 involving Algeria,	Short term (6 months) internships in EU to improve private sector development in North Africa	ICT, electrical engineering, Accounting, Business administration, Electro mechanics, Civil engineering, Power engineering,

		Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia)		Marketing, Communication networks, Textile industry, Logistics, Industrial engineering
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1. Main findings: elements of success and challenges of the selected initiatives for likely replicability

In this section, lessons learned are presented to offer inspiration for future initiatives or to review existing ones. In general terms, the contexts and conditions of applicability can be very different and might not always be replicable (for instance country differences exist in terms of salaries offered, language skills required, integration and cultural aspects, private sector response etc.). While all initiatives have been successful in some areas, no initiative presented only positive results, facing challenges of different nature.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1) ***Build the legal mobility framework and obtain governance and institutional engagement in EU-your country (ensuring the timely feasibility of administrative arrangements and procedures, and identifying risk and feasibility factors that can require possible flexibility).***
- 2) ***Negotiate and obtain the country-of-origin Government's alliance and commitment***
- 3) ***Raise awareness and involve different stakeholders in both origin and destination countries, including diaspora's commitment***

1.1 Build a transnational governance structure and engage key stakeholders

*A positive result of the initiatives analyzed relies on the capacity to build a **solid network, partnership and governance of committed and competent public/private stakeholders** (including diaspora). It is essential to invest in committing and training all stakeholders in origin and destination countries in legal migration aspects. Planning a multi-country governance structure with dedicated staff and involving transnational actors (including companies with branches or connections in the target countries, public/private representative bodies/unions in countries of origin and destination, employment agencies and training actors) can influence (and contribute to) the success of the initiative. Moreover, a result-oriented institutional engagement in EU and in the origin-country shall be ensured in all phases; in addition to the Governments' involvement, close cooperation is needed with universities, vocational training centers and companies and business associations of the key sectors.*

A difficulty is to go beyond a "pilot project" dimension and consider how to scale up to medium-long term programmes and approaches.

Planning a transnational and multistakeholder governance involving the origin and destination countries requires a thoughtful architecture, resources, and a medium-to-long time perspective.

Involving different actors in both countries requires that knowledge and common capacities are built in the field of migration management and legal migration and in sharing responsibilities and resources.

- The IOM project “BE-TN *Enhancing Tunisian Youth Employability through Professional Internships in Belgian Companies*” highlighted that labor migration projects can succeed only if all stakeholders are truly on board, taking ownership of the project by investing their own resources. Additionally, setting up an enabling environment is a key starting point that requires time and can be affected by complex procedures (for instance skills recognition). The outcome seems to be different whether the mobility initiative is referred to temporary internships, or long-term employment of third-country nationals.
- The German project *Hand in Hand* has a multi-country organizational structure that relies on the transnational presence, in the origin country, of a German Chamber of Commerce that guarantees exchanges and supervision. The *THAMM* (Germany) project refers of the importance of strong cooperation and trust with the employment agencies in Germany and of teams interacting with the North African partners on a day-to-day basis.
- The IOM project *MATCH* particularly succeeded in raising awareness and in training stakeholders in both countries on legal mobility schemes and on the legal and practical aspects of international recruitment, also involving the diaspora⁸³.
- The *Palim* project relies on the engagement of different administrative levels (municipal, regional, and central) in Belgium, including Enabel (International Cooperation Agency) and stakeholders in Morocco (as the national Employment Agency). *Palim* underlines that coordinating operational and strategic outcomes can be difficult, and that building and managing the partnership network is extremely time and labor-consuming.
- The French project *HOMERe* contributed to build a regional network and to create organizational and legal structures in partner countries.
- *THAMM* (Germany) confirms that trustful and cooperative partnerships were established with the countries of origin; it recommends to invest in *trust and relationship building* with sending country partners, and do not underestimate the need of time and money.
- *Mentor2* engaged 18 partners between Italy, Morocco and Tunisia including national/local employment agencies, regional/local authorities, NGOs, two organizations offering services to private sector in Italy and a think tank. A *Mentor2 internal document*⁸⁴, based on consultations with the project partners, highlighted existing potentials and benefits, but also challenges of the multistakeholder territorial approach to circular labour migration. Differences in visions, competences, missions and on the regulatory frameworks among origin and destination countries require a consistent concertation and reciprocal understanding. The temporary duration of initiatives like *Mentor2* requires instead continuity of dialogue. Additionally, when public partners refer to different and asymmetrical levels of authority (local, regional, national) their understanding and exchange can differ and add complexity. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties to manage and engage a large group of partners with different scopes and territorial agency, successful results are visible in some MoUs signed⁸⁵ and in the positive engagement

⁸³ A support that beneficiaries can rely on, if needed.

⁸⁴ CeSPI, “L'approccio territoriale alla governance delle migrazioni internazionali I risultati della riflessione condivisa realizzata dai partner del progetto Mentor2”, June 2024.

⁸⁵ As between the city of Turin and the city of Khouribga, the city of Milan and the city of Tanger.

in local committees (as the one organized in Turin, involving all local stakeholders interested in Morocco/Tunisia).

LESSONS LEARNED

- 4) *Define key sectors, professions and profiles and manage the reintegration process*
- 5) *Properly identify recruitment pools*

The schemes analyzed differ for the sector, the foreign workers' skill level, and the duration of the initiative.

- **Circular short-term mobility are mostly pilot initiatives** that address *junior target profiles* (students, graduated, highly skilled) basically offering (3-6 months) internships or skill training in **strategic sectors** (especially ICT, scientific disciplines) to curb down youth unemployment in origin countries. Short-term circular mobility projects addressing *senior profiles* result less viable, as junior profiles are more prepared to work abroad starting with an internship.
- **Seasonal temporary labour recruitment programmes** (up to 1 year) address low skilled workers for target sectors (mostly agriculture and tourism as in Spain).
- **Medium-long term labour recruitment programmes** tend to focus on longer time perspectives and solutions to fill sectoral labour shortages, mainly addressing medium and highly skilled workers (nurses and doctors; skilled professionals).

The duration framework of the migratory scheme (short, medium or long term/permanent) differently implies the immediate expectation of a return/reintegration phase.

1.2 Target sector agreed between origin and destination countries

*The ability to successfully reach, involve, and recruit the **target skills and competences in third countries** appears to be crucial. An in-depth context specificity analyses may affect the results' sustainability, including countermeasures and remedial actions. Deep knowledge of the economic trends and labour market dynamics (including presence or absence of talent pools) in both origin and destination countries is key; the **pre-definition and mutual negotiation** of the **target sectors and professions** responds to the development needs of both economies; it helps facilitate the selection process and the involvement of private companies.*

The identification of the target sector or target profiles (in the origin and in the destination country) with the highest potential for mutual impact is a prerequisite of many initiatives, underlying the willingness to match demand and supply requests, to avoid brain drain and to pursue reciprocal labour market and sector goals. **More than the sector itself, what is important is the way the sector is identified and agreed upon** (matching demand and supply). The presence of clear and functioning institutional agreements between origin and destination countries is an essential requirement of any legal labour migration initiative, in a win-win cooperation perspective.

- **ICT** – solely or together with other STEM related sectors - is targeted by many initiatives (6/11) [*Match, Thamm, Hand in Hand, YGCA, Palim, Homere*]. In the Belgian case of Palim, ICT candidates are trained in Morocco partly to fill the labour shortage in Belgium, but mostly to boost the Moroccan ICT labour market.
- **Renewable energy** is the industry sector of *Move Green*, a Spanish initiative of circular mobility for professional youth training. The sector has drawn the attention of the different actors involved (the EU Delegation in Morocco, public and private entities in Morocco and in Andalusia); the need of skilled employees in both countries is increasing, national *sectoral investments* in Morocco (wind, solar and geothermic power, biomass energy...) are also increasing. *Move Green* demonstrated the importance to build up transnational consensus and consortium starting from a shared economic interest.
- The success of the German project *Hand in Hand* (that addresses different sectors, including **hospitality, construction, engineering, and computer science**) is due to a previous feasibility assessment of the migration corridor developed by the Federal Agency of Labour. The selection of the partner third country is based on the following criteria: a) **demographic analysis** of the local population, highlighting a large youth segment already willing to migrate; b) a bilateral **Government agreement** on the initiative; c) presence of a **German Chamber of Commerce** in the target country.
- The **health sector** is targeted by some dedicated initiatives and approaches (recruiting nurses and medical doctors, including professional specializations abroad), mostly offering medium/long-term contract opportunities to retain medical professionals in the destination country, based on previous agreements with the countries of origin [*Triple win, Specialized!*].
- *Mentor2 was designed to address highly skilled young trainees from Morocco and Tunisia. At the same time Mentor2 did not focus on a specific economic sector in Italy; in Tunisia and Morocco an initial analysis has been undertaken to collect information on the economic vocation of each territory involved in the project (Tanger, the Region of Beni Mellal – Khenifra, Sfax, Tunis). The attempt to perfectly match the economic vocation of the country-of-origin territories and that of the two destination cities in Italy (Milan and Turin) has occasionally succeeded. The nature of the Italian enterprises that applied to the Mentor2 project has determined a demand driven approach to the Moroccan and Tunisian skilled candidates.*

All **circular mobility** initiatives refer to **highly skilled profiles** (*MATCH, Move Green, YGCA, Enhancing Youth Employability*, as well as *Mentor2*), in line with national and EU policies promoting the immigration of highly skilled workers. Likewise, **medium-long term labour** recruitment programmes tend to address medium-highly skilled (nurses, doctors, ICT specialists, engineers etc.). Only **seasonal programmes** as *Gecco* refers to **low skilled workforce** (agriculture).

Reaching out to human capital in third countries is feasible, especially when extensively involving **local channels** (universities, recruitment fairs/days, recruitment agencies), while a critical aspect refers to thriving on the **motivations** and awareness of those interested in a medium/long term work experience.

LESSON LEARNED

6) *Face the challenges of bureaucracy, find ways to speed up procedures.*

Most pilot initiatives of circular mobility reported difficulties in managing **slow bureaucratic aspects** related to permit issuing, administrative requirements and consular/embassies' responses (as in the case of *Move Green*, *MATCH*, and *Mentor2* itself). These delays represent a bottleneck in the mobility channels, and they can play a disincentive role in the private sector. Problems have been faced also by *THAMM*, with bureaucratic hurdles and long waiting periods for visa appointments at some of the German Embassies.

On the contrary, other initiatives (*Palim*, *Hand in Hand*) were able to commit and involve key actors to grant practical support and quick procedures. *Hand in Hand* reports that "visas are not a problem as the information of what immigration regulation to apply has been clarified and Embassies have been largely informed on the project" (interview with *Hand in Hand* Project Manager). In the case of *Palim* the direct involvement at central level ensures fewer visa complexities.

Additionally, the time needed for **titles recognition** can occasionally represent a problem, based on the specific requirements in the destination country (collect reference letters, prepare curricula, obtain validation from specific authorities). As indicated for the *Palim/THAMM* project, based on the sectors identified, *work certifications* can represent a problem. Computer specialists can easily demonstrate their skills, but some other technical professions in the ICT in Morocco and in Belgium can be differently certified according to national systems and authorities. In the specific case of medical personnel, when the recruitment channels are clear, solid and well established, procedures for title recognition can go smoother (and still responding to national requirements).

- The *Palim* project took into consideration that **certifications and titles** obtained in the origin country could not meet the quality expectations and standards required by the companies in Belgium. To avoid this risk, *Palim* reinforced the quality of the training in the origin country. The training in Morocco was therefore meant to fill the gap between the level of individual qualifications and the competence needed by the companies in Belgium. Additionally, when candidates were re-skilled to be fit for purpose in Belgium – but lacked work experience in the target profession - a preliminary employment phase in Morocco has been granted.
- *Mentor2* met consistent administrative burdens (in terms of requirements for title recognition in Italy, visa process, permit to stay) that caused delays for both trainees and enterprises, and consequently for all project activities. The necessity to uniform local, regional and national law requirements in Italy is crucial in order to build permanent labour migration initiatives (and meet companies timelines); procedures shall improve in rapidity and time predictability.

LESSON LEARNED

7) *Manage pre-departure activities, candidates' expectations and integration issues.*

1.3 Manage pre-departure preparation, integration and/or reintegration aspects

All initiatives (excluding seasonal schemes) address **pre-departure activities** (*THAMM*, *Hand in Hand*, *MATCH*, *Move Green*, *HOMERe* mostly include a language course, from A2 to B level). Language knowledge is a mean of integration, nevertheless language skills varied tremendously depending on country and on candidate batch. There are in fact some language gaps between the country of origin and the country of destination that make it more difficult for third country nationals to properly pick up the language for working use. This is especially the case of Germany, always offering pre-departure language training, but also frequently facing individual difficulties, with high drop-out rates from German language classes (*Hand in Hand*, *THAMM*). **Language, soft skills and cultural integration aspects** could be considered both as a success and an obstacle due to very mixed results. Short term initiatives (*Move Green*, *Enhancing Tunisian Youth Employability through Professional Internships in Belgian Companies*, *YGCA*, *HOMERe*) tend to report positive experiences of students/graduates. For other medium-long term initiatives, high quality *pre-departure training* and *pre-integration measures* (including managing personal beneficiaries' expectations and motivations, and work ethic-related aspects) might mitigate, to a certain extent, subsequent problems. Housing aspects for medium-long term third country nationals might be problematic. The *MATCH* project mentioned some difficulties for some drop-out candidates, due to the low attractiveness of the EU hiring companies and countries, and to mismatches in terms of expectations, especially regarding the financial offer.

- *Within Mentor2 different companies highlighted language difficulties due to the weak Italian knowledge of most trainees and the frequent inability to proficiently speak English or French in the Italian enterprises. On the contrary, some multinational groups and companies active in foreign commerce demonstrated their affinity to multicultural work environments. The necessity to reinforce the predeparture language knowledge is fundamental for the success of the work experience abroad. The selection of the host company shall also take into consideration some key aspects (size of the company, the commercial interest for the trainee's country of origin, existing relationships or delocalizing/subcontracting strategies).*

Not all initiatives fall into a complete migration cycle; short term circular mobility projects tend to offer a **reintegration and follow up phase** to support the beneficiaries in finding employment in the local labour market or in building an entrepreneurial project. *Move Green* reports about fluctuating levels of engagement and interest among returnees.

The *IOM BE-TN Youth employability project* idea (2018-19) proves particularly interesting for the reintegration phase. BE-TN is a circular migration scheme for 31 interns from Tunisia matched with 12 companies in Belgium. All the young graduates involved in the project returned home to transfer their skills after their training. For the reintegration, the project selected and involved also 21 companies in Tunisia, and in the end, 25 trainees finally found a job and were successfully employed back home⁸⁶. Only 3 were employed abroad⁸⁷.

- *In the case of Mentor2, out of the 41 Mentor2 trainees, at the end of the project 12 returned to the home country (October 2024): out of the 18 Moroccan persons, 9 remained in Italy, while 9 returned to Morocco. Out of the 23 Tunisian trainees, 20 stayed in Italy and 3 returned to*

⁸⁶ Five of which were recruited by a local branch in Tunisia of the Belgian company.

⁸⁷ Two were employed in Belgium by the same company that offered then internship and one in France.

Tunisia. The project offered some financial resources and mentoring to address entrepreneurial or professional projects (ongoing activity). The prevalent decision to stay among Tunisian trainees can be explained by the different opportunities in the origin country (compared to the Moroccan counterpart or the Italian context). As return was not a mandatory condition in the project, it cannot be considered.

To be noted, some initiatives (as *MATCH, Palim, HOMERe*) took place during Covid-19 outbreak, impacting different aspects.

It is also important to highlight that individual trajectories of candidates/trainees can also change overtime, due to personal and context conditions (economic and legal) or changing opportunities.

LESSON LEARNED

8) Engage the private sector in the destination country

1.4 Engaging the private sector

One of the drivers of legal labour migration initiatives is to respond to skill and labour shortages mostly in the private sector (and in the public/private health sector) in EU.

The **private sector** engagement can be a tricky aspect: professional/industry associations, when involved in the project stakeholder's network, play a positive role. Nevertheless, private companies frequently tend to show a skeptical and reluctant attitude towards migrant workers recruited abroad, despite the skill/labour shortages. This attitude appears as more evident in **smaller cities/rural areas** where companies tend to be more reluctant to hire foreign workers, and it varies according to the **company nature and size** (multinational companies or companies with branches in the target countries tend to be less reluctant compared to smaller ones).

Also, cultural/language aspects may influence the recruitment/integration process. **A consistent all-inclusive preparatory capacity building and continuous commitment with employers in the EU is essential.**

The nature and duration of the work abroad experience (be it for temporary training, visiting, or permanent working) highlight a variety of responses and degrees of readiness by the private sector to truly adopt legal migration pathways. The longer and the more permanent the working experience abroad is, the more questionable the true commitment of recruiting companies seems to be (still with differences based on rural/urban contexts and the nature and multicultural environment of the company). Nevertheless, the effort needed for companies to implement short term mobility schemes seems also challenging.

- The pilot project *HOMERe* offered six months internships to limit the skills' gap between EU and North Africa and improve private sector development in the region. Fifty students/graduates were trained in *companies based in France and operating in North Africa (Morocco and Tunisia)*. 70% of

beneficiaries found employment in the origin country (either in the company where they conducted their internship or in another). **Focusing on transnational companies with branches in the target countries can be a successful decision.**

- *THAMM* mentions the importance to build strong cooperation and trust with local employment agencies in Germany (the German Employment Agency is a project partner); at the same time, the effort to persuade the private sector and the extensive collaboration necessary with the SMEs involved are significant.
- In the *Hand in Hand* project, it was not easy to find *German companies* interested in the project; nevertheless, the companies that joined the project truly confirmed their interest to continue the collaboration.
- *Move Green* did not experienced problems with companies in Andalusia as the profile of students captured the attention of the local renewable energy companies interested in internationalizing in Morocco. The creation of a circular mobility system between Andalusia and Morocco in this field has been very well received by all involved parties.
- The *Palim* project highlights the matching difficulties due to: language issues, the fast evolution of the ICT sector, and the global pandemic context. Also, the administrative burden to go through the work permit **procedures** might suggest that medium-big companies fit better than small companies. The early involvement of public employment agencies and of employers' federations is a key factor.
- *Mentor2* met some difficulties to engage companies in Italy. Many Italian companies were more motivated by their corporate social responsibility compared to the potential benefits of the training as a skill shortage response or as a strategy for import-export foreign market penetration. A prior sector/company selection would have facilitated the process. Better designed matching mechanisms prove to be crucial to meet companies and migrant trainees needs and characteristics, to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers and to facilitate the correspondence between educational pathways in the origin countries and companies' skills needs and requirements.
- Two different IOM labour mobility projects (MATCH and BE-TN) were analyzed: within **short term circular mobility** schemes (as in the BE-TN, but also in the Spanish Move Green Project), companies seemed less worried to host trainees for a six-month internship, due to a lower degree of internal investment, compared to hiring a **medium-long term candidate** from a third country. This aspect is linked to the **different definitions and meanings of "labour circularity"** between internship schemes (where circularity is expected to be immediate, with the return due after the training) and medium-long term employment (the circularity can exist in the long term). Also, legal migration initiatives should better try to involve **companies interested in third country markets** (those with a branch in the target country or those looking for opportunities of internationalization or international subcontracting).
- Additionally, the national economic migration landscape is not always clearly understandable for companies that need to be deeply **informed, assisted, and reassured** during the whole mobility process through a clear communication. Those companies with positive experiences of legal mobility can be involved as **ambassadors**, to reach the desired audience.

LESSON LEARNED

- 9) *Stimulate and reinforce local authority's involvement. EU local authorities' role has to be clearly defined according to their direct competences on migration management, available capacities and resources, existing relationships with third-country peers and with local labour market stakeholders.*

Local authorities are not a frequent partner within labour mobility initiatives – excluding the FAMS/Move Green project in Spain and Mentor2. To address this topic, desk analysis of other EU labour mobility initiatives and a closed-door online seminar took place to discuss the potential role and contribution that Municipalities can bring in.

The limited engagement of local authorities is often explained by the **central institutional responsibility in migration and labour employment**. The role that local authorities can play in labour mobility may be more significant when framed within the *Global Skill Partnership*⁸⁸ model (as within the Belgian Palim project). Nevertheless, this process requires a long time to establish links and connections between public and private actors (in both origin and destination countries) and, more importantly, in building clear agreements on labour training, recruitment, and mobility between Governments, also involving municipalities.

In some cases, exchanges between local authorities in origin and destination countries have been established to learn how public services are differently addressing and managing specific sectors (like sustainability and renewable energy for FAMS/Move Green). As a matter of fact, the Municipality of Milan is among the founders of the Mayors Migration Council - to promote dialogue and exchanges on the city role on the international agenda on migrations, and among the promoters of the Mayors Dialogue on Growth & Solidarity that gathers almost twenty large European and African cities interested to discuss on innovation and concrete solutions on human mobility. Nevertheless, the CeSPI's attempt of investigation in other EU cities⁸⁹ shows that not only are they very rarely involved in labour mobility, but their lack of direct competences and mandate can limit or discourage their commitment.

In Italy, local authorities have no direct competences, responsibility or institutional mandate in human mobility management, third-country labour employment quotas or on professional traineeship. On the contrary, municipalities have a large experience in international cooperation/decentralized cooperation on the one side, and in local migrant integration and inclusion, on the other side, being at the forefront in facing the needs of their local population. Cities represent overall the most suitable observer of the impacts of the manpower international mobility in the local economy (including also their capacity to be directly aware of territorial labour needs in the private sector thanks to their proximity and knowledge of the local context). Moreover, a critical aspect for large parts of the migrant population in Italy concerns housing issues, where Municipalities can potentially play a significant role.

⁸⁸ <https://gsp.cgdev.org/>

⁸⁹ A survey was launched along the Eurocities network of European cities with no replies. Other cities demonstrating a certain interest in the topic were identified through desk analysis (Utrecht, Monaco, Grenoble, Barcelona), but no further direct information has been collected.

- *IOM*, during the closed-doors Mentor2 seminar, confirms that – within the *BE-TN and Match* project – the aim has been to follow a *society at large approach*, involving all key public and private stakeholders in both origin and destination countries. Limited engagement of local authorities in *Belgium* is mainly explained by the institutional responsibility in migration and employment (a shared competence between the Federal level and the regional level) compared to the direct role (with a less evident response) of Municipalities.
- Moving on from a pilot project perspective to an institutional approach, *Enabel* underlines the role that local authorities can play in third country labour mobility when framed within the *Global Skill Partnership* model. The current Belgian institutional regulatory framework adopted the Global Skill Partnership approach to promote fair skilled training and mobility between countries. At local municipality level in Belgium, detailed skill and professional shortages are identified and launched in an international labour recruitment call. In this way, the local/municipal dimension can interact with the federal and regional competences in migration and labour. Yet, this process requires a long time to establish links and connections between public and private actors (in both origin and destination countries) and, more importantly, in building clear agreements on labour training, recruitment, and mobility between Governments.
- Within the *FAMSI project*, as migration management attains at the central level, exchanges between the Municipalities in Morocco and Andalusia were established to learn how public services are differently addressing and managing sustainability and renewable energy.
- *Mentor2 project is originally about city development cooperation, with the Municipality of Milan and the Municipality of Turin as project partners. The two Municipalities were previously involved in a project (Salem) to prevent irregular migration from Morocco and Tunisia. This experience convinced them to challenge migration engagement issues, even if local authorities in Italy have no direct competences or responsibility in human mobility management, third-country labour employment quotas or professional traineeship. On the contrary, Municipalities have a large experience in international cooperation and in local migrant integration and inclusion. Cities represent the most suitable observer of the impacts of the manpower international mobility in the local economy.*
- *Mentor2 partners were involved in an internal consultation (in 2024, undertaken by CeSPI) to comment on the multistakeholder territorial approach. Despite agreeing on the importance to involve public authorities in origin and destination countries on migration management, the capacity of a local initiative to impact national or regional policies on innovative models of migration governance is considered as quite weak.*
- *Mentor (1 and 2) project offered an opportunity to test the local authority direct commitment in legal labour mobility, within an extended development cooperation perspective. One of the results of the project is related to the agreements that the Municipality of Milan signed with the Municipality of Tanger and the Municipality of Turin signed with the City of Khouribga. Additionally, the Regional Council of Beni Mellal Khenifra has included migration among its key areas of interest.*
- *Many are the challenges for cities willing to manage similar initiatives, but multilevel partnerships have to include also local authorities. The Mentor2 model highlights the importance to keep building dialogue and partnerships between peer institutional and non-institutional actors, with outcomes that are under their direct capacity and competence. Measures and mechanisms to favor urban and transnational migration governance need nevertheless further experimentation, requiring a renewed legal and political more supportive framework and mandate.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MENTOR2 FINAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN ROME IN 2024

The Mentor2 national conference was held in Rome in March 2024 involving different stakeholders with the aim to discuss key aspects that had emerged along the Mentor2 project implementation activities.

Several institutional actors and representatives participated: the EU Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs), the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior, several regions such as the Lombardy Region, the Piedmont Region, the Emilia Romagna Region, and the Lazio region, the Municipality of Milan as the Mentor2 leading partner, and the Municipality of Turin, Mentor2 partner. Additionally, other panellists were invited from international organisations, representatives of the private sector including companies involved in Mentor2 or representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, as well all Italian project partners which contributed to ensuring a comprehensive discussion on circular labour migration initiatives.

A legacy of Mentor2 is an infographic⁹⁰, produced along the duration of the project, highlighting all the steps and challenges encountered in the implementation of a regular mobility pathway for third-country nationals, using Article 27 of the Italian Immigration Law for professional training. The infographic shares the information accumulated in the course of the project and signals critical elements and alerts which can be useful for anybody aiming to replicate the procedure. The project insofar in a sustainable perspective has experimented if and how Article 27 can be used as a recruitment channel to possibly fill skills and labour shortages in Italy; it has positively established transnational networks between key actors which might differ in their mission as well as nature/levels (i.e. employment agencies acting at the national or at the regional/provincial levels) and it has drafted and signed agreements between territories/municipalities).

The main aspects which have been highlighted along the discussion can be summarised as follows:

- The national conference was an important opportunity to promote dialogue and discussion between the different government levels involved in international migration management and in testing new legal entry channels. In fact opportunities to gather all key public actors involved in circular legal mobility are often missing, while institutional participants/panellists at the conference highlighted the need to concretely reinforce a dialogue and open discussion among key stakeholders on a systematic basis.
- Representatives of Italian and European institutions underlined the coherence between the Mentor2 project and approaches and policies implemented at the Italian and European levels. Mentor2 is among the few EU initiatives that experimented a model of regular circular migration, putting local authorities in Italy at the centre of the action. Mentor2 stands out particularly for its ability to experiment an existing model of circular mobility, that could be capable to respond to labour market needs in the EU, reinforcing knowledge transfer, while possibly avoiding/reducing brain drain effects in the countries of origin.
- Institutional cooperation in Mentor2, which operated at the transnational level - despite existing asymmetries between different actors – worked well. It took some time to build trustworthy relationships between all actors that were meant to work together, but a good level of bilateral collaboration based on competences was reached.
- However, in the Mentor2 implementation phase in Italy, it must be noted that several problems were encountered in particular linked to the different regional normative and regulations (i.e. on professional training for non-EU citizens resident in third countries and to the bureaucratic complexity in administrative procedures as permits to stay/visas).

⁹⁰ <https://mentor2.org/materiali/guida-al-tirocinio-per-le-aziende/> which is accessible both Italian and in French

- Thanks to the dialogue launched by the conference, the Ministries involved improved their knowledge and awareness on existing complexities linked to regular and labour migration paths and on the need to further coordinate between these same institutions involved at all levels.
- The conference was also the occasion to explain some of the causes linked to the slow management procedures. The Ministry of Interior denounced that institutions suffer for being under-staffed in personnel, while all Ministries highlighted that existing complexities linked to security impose very thorough and timely controls. It appeared clear that there is a misalignment between requests and the effective needs on behalf of companies and the capacity to respond on behalf of the public administration.
- Representatives of companies involved in the Mentor2 project expressed their interest in the use of professional training schemes, but they recognised also their necessity to rely on intermediaries to manage the entire recruitment/administrative process and to reconsider the length of all procedures.
- It thus seems clear that at the companies' level there is a need, on the one hand, to 'plan' in advance in order to allow for procedures to be completed and, on the other hand, to accelerate procedures.
- Among the possible solutions suggested, the very first one which was brought up by the regions themselves, goes in the direction of simplifying and harmonising regulations on traineeships for non-EU Nationals residing abroad between the different Italian regions. Perhaps some norms need to be updated as they refer to national and international context that has changed over time.
- A second suggestion, brought up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consists in the possibility to have specific periods dedicated to permits' applications for professional traineeships and the creation of a platform to better connect its offices abroad, linking these to the traineeships' process during fixed periods of the year.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs underlined the need to increase its staff and to proceed with multiannual planning, improving its ability to detect and respond to the needs of the private sector.
- The Emilia Romagna Region highlighted the positive use of Article 27 of the Immigration Law on traineeships in relationship to some key sectors and with respect to the proactivity and interest of immigrant entrepreneurs there based.

In conclusion the success of the model experimented by Mentor 2 and its sustainable perspective can be best ensured with a regional legislation adequately modified and harmonized, with administrative burdens simplified and with an extended institutional cooperation at national and transnational level, involving the private sector as well as other key stakeholders such as universities, professional training centres, and third sector.

ANNEX TO CHAPTER I

SOME NATIONAL APPROACHES TO LEGAL LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE EU

The admission of foreign workers is still largely ruled by the interests and authority of every single EU Member State and influenced by local economic and labour market situations, despite the EU need and interest to develop legal pathways, granting migrants safe and legal options. National authorities and governments independently define their labour migration systems (visa entry, quotas, etc). All circular/legal migration measures and schemes that the EU is developing offer new frameworks for EU Member States to design and experiment national policy tools for the future. The synthetic overview of some national approaches (Belgium, Spain, Germany, Portugal, France) presented below, offers a background understanding of some legal and national systems on legal labour migration.

1. The Belgian legal labour migration approach⁹¹

During the past seventy years, the immigration legislation in Belgium moved from an “attractive migration approach” to a “selective migration policy”, today mainly addressing highly skilled workers or specific professional labour shortages (Carlier and Sarolea, 2016⁹²).

Since 1999 (law of 30 April 1999) priority has been given to the domestic labour force, vis-à-vis foreign workforce. Low-skilled labour is granted by intra-EU mobility, particularly from Eastern Europe (Paul, 2015⁹³). Today, the main migration inflows from third countries are for family reunification.

Since 2014, the admission of foreign workers has been a regional prerogative and each region can develop autonomous policies. Since then, the employment conditions of foreign workers have been under the jurisdiction of the Belgian regions. The Federal authority remains responsible for such issues as the access to the territory and the residence status of foreigners.

Due to the “regionalization” of the labour immigration policy, the adoption of the 2011 EU *Single permit Directive*⁹⁴ in Belgium took a very long time as competences had to be internally distributed among the various authorities (the federal state, the regions and communities) to define the procedures leading to issuing the single permit.

⁹¹ UCLouvain, EDEM, October 2020
(<https://alfresco.uclouvain.be/alfresco/service/guest/streamDownload/workspace/SpacesStore/92694dee-8840-4f27-92d3-a03f83475151/UCLouvain-201030-PALIM%20in%20the%20BE+EU%20migration%20context.pdf?guest=true>)

⁹² Le droit des étrangers, Brussels, Bruylant, 2016.

⁹³ The Political Economy of Border Drawing: Arranging Legality in European Labor Migration Policies, Oxford, Berghahn, 2015

⁹⁴ Third-country nationals wishing to work in Belgium for more than 90 days must apply for a work permit to the authorized Region via their employer. This application is equivalent to an application for a residence permit (single permit). (<https://dofi.ibz.be/en/themas/onderdanen-van-der-de-landen/werk/single-permit>).

The Belgian case, with the adoption of the *Global Skill Partnership* approach that targets labour shortage sectors/professions in both origin and destination countries and the setting up of training and mobility schemes, demonstrates that linking labour, migration and development policies is a long process⁹⁵.

2. The German legal labour migration approach

Germany⁹⁶ suffers from skill and labour shortages in different sectors⁹⁷. Today, the German labour migration system is very open to highly educated migrants⁹⁸, while it is more rarely used to recruit migrants for medium-skilled jobs, although skill shortages are registered also for many unskilled occupations.

In the last fifteen-twenty years, foreign workers of all skill levels in Germany came from southern European countries, from new EU Member States (in their transition phase⁹⁹), and through the Western Balkans Regulation¹⁰⁰ (2015).

In 2011, the German Federal Government adopted a plan to mobilize the domestic labor potential and to attract qualified migrants. At the same time, the German international cooperation highlighted the potential trends of migration and the risks of brain drain. In 2012, Germany adopted the EU Blue Card Directive, addressing mainly skilled foreign workers with academic qualifications¹⁰¹.

In 2019 the German government approved eight bills on immigration (implementing or complementing existing EU rules, but mostly reducing obstacles to the immigration of highly skilled workers). A Skilled Immigration Act was introduced and has recently reformed (August 2023). The law will be entering into force in three steps, between 2023 and 2024, with the aim to attract skilled foreign workers. An increase by up to 60.000 non-EU workers in Germany per year is expected¹⁰². The

⁹⁵ The *Palim* project (<https://gsp.cgdev.org/2021/06/30/pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models-palim/>) (see also next chapter and the *annex information sheet*) is in line with the EU and Belgium highly skilled selective policies, while fitting with the Belgian regionalization of immigration (as confirmed by the Flemish ICT economic interest). Nevertheless, it also responds to a development and cooperation strategy with third countries, formalized by the adoption of a Partnership for Mobility with Morocco. Being a pilot test and realization of the *Global skills partnership*, the project *Palim* found continuation in the THAMM project. The Belgian cooperation agency Enabel plays a liaison role in a complex governance with the three administrative levels (local, regional, and central) involved, altogether with private and institutional partners in third countries.

⁹⁶ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/1b03278725f9fff007a3b91dc9301135-0050062023/original/230331-Schneider-Background-Paper-FINAL.pdf>;

⁹⁷ Germany needs skilled craftspeople, electrical engineers, IT specialists, carers, nurses, catering and hospitality professionals. Hospitality, Warehousing and Storage, Service and Manufacturing sectors all miss workers (<https://www.ifo.de/en/publications/2021/article-journal/shortage-skilled-workers-increasingly-becoming-burden-german>).

⁹⁸ In 2000 is dated the first “Immediate Action Program to Meet the Demand for IT Specialists”, known as the German green card.

⁹⁹ 2004; 2007; 2013; 2015

¹⁰⁰ The Western Balkans channel – initially open for skilled and low-skilled workers (in Construction, Hospitality, Industry, Healthcare), now turned into an immigration channel for skilled migrants (Beirens et al. 2019).

¹⁰¹ Excluding skilled workers with vocation training certificate.

¹⁰² <https://www.euronews.com/travel/2023/10/16/skilled-workers-are-in-demand-as-germany-tackles-labour-shortage-with-new-points-based-vis#:~:text=The%20German%20government%20gave%20its,labour%20shortages%20in%20the%20country>.

German Skilled Immigration Act reflects the scenario of a national demographic change and of the shortage of skilled labour in some sectors/skill areas.

The new Skilled Immigration Act¹⁰³ expands the possibility of entering Germany to obtain a recognition of foreign professional qualifications (excluding only those regulated professions that need a specific German recognition). Foreign skilled workers with university degrees or vocational certificates (from abroad) will not need to precisely match the qualification requests. The Act can therefore reduce the barrier foreign workers used to face for not being able to meet the German system¹⁰⁴ standards for vocational education and training (VET). Since June 2024 an *opportunity card (Chancenkarte)* will be introduced with a point-based system to enable workers with the required skills to enter Germany according to yearly quotas based on labour shortages. Three out of four criteria must be granted: a degree or vocational training, three years of professional experience, language skills or a previous stay in Germany, 35 years or less of age.

According to this Act, foreign skilled workers with vocational training and skilled workers academically qualified will also be eligible for a job-search visa, provided they can prove to have enough private funds to live without working (notwithstanding shortage occupations). IT specialists will not need a qualification.

The *Western Balkans Regulation* for citizens from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia has been extended indefinitely and the quota increased to 50,000 workers per year.

3. The Spanish legal labour migration approach

Spain has been traditionally an emigration country, which then became a migratory destination in the 21st century¹⁰⁵.

While experiencing large irregular migration flows, mostly low and middle skilled migrants have entered the Spanish labour market. According to the general regime for labour migration, employers sponsor foreign workers, while the local employment office verifies that no Spanish/EU worker can fill that vacancy.

A collective management system has been established to recruit short-term/temporary workers, according to bilateral agreements developing recruitment corridors with third countries. From 2000 on, the Spanish Government has entered consultations with trade unions and employers' associations to define quotas. Different circular migration programmes have been designed to reduce illegal migration flows and respond to sectoral labour shortages (especially in agriculture). This is particularly true for the Gecco programme between Spain and Morocco, selecting women with children as main participants (approx. 15.000 persons per year), ensuring an incentive for them to return home¹⁰⁶. The programme has been replicated with the Senegalese corridor, without the same effectiveness. Spain

¹⁰³ <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/news-new-skilled-immigration-act.php>

¹⁰⁴ Based on national public education and private training.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/MPIE-SpainMigrationPathways-Final.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ Within this mobility framework, the project Wafira has been financed by the MPF

(<https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/34-wafira-women-as-financially-independent-rural-actors/preview#:~:text=WAFIRA%20%2D%20Women%20As%20Financially%20Independent%20Rural%20Actors%2C%20is%20an%20initiative,in%20a%20circular%20migration%20scheme>)

developed also different regular migration pathways, for example signing agreements with Latin American countries for seasonal work: Dominican Republic (2001), Ecuador (2001), Colombia (2001), Honduras (2021), and Guatemala (2023)¹⁰⁷.

A well-known case concerns the province of Huelva, in Andalusia, where the strawberry agriculture sector since 2021 has attracted seasonal workers along circular mobility programmes.

The governance structure of these initiatives consists of national and regional administrations deciding on annual quotas and designing selection mechanisms. The local administrations play a role in assisting seasonal workers on inclusion aspects (language opportunities, municipal information offices, access to healthcare and social services).

Today in Spain, labour shortage-related issues have influenced recent changes in the immigration system. In 2022 the Government modified the immigration law, to better incorporate migrant workers on the labour market. The conditions to obtain a permit for employment and family reunification have been updated, exposing to the risk of irregular situations both migrants in Spain and potential labour migrants in their country of origin. A labour shortage catalogue has been redrafted, including updates every 3 months on specific professions and with a specific geographical focus on areas affected by skill shortages, enabling the direct recruitment of foreign workers while in their own country.

Foreigners living in Spain irregularly can have access to new residency options if they commit to formal training for employment (in professions affected by skill/labour shortage).

Foreign students in Spain can now obtain work permits (up to 30 hours a week) that are compatible with student residency permits that can be modified into work permits.

In 2022 Spain developed a program for high-skilled workers targeting 3.700 people from Colombia and Central America countries¹⁰⁸.

As part of the plan to reinforce the audio-visual sector industry in Spain, in 2021 new entry procedures were established to attract foreign talent professionals in the audio-visual sector.

Simplified procedures for different permits to stay have been introduced (with short, medium, long duration + 180 days).

4. The French legal labour migration approach

France has historically represented a migratory destination for European workers, for former colony citizens and for global current flows.

The French system has no entry quotas established, but there has been a recurrent debate to introduce them. France started to show an increasing interest towards a selective immigration system (more accessible for students and highly skilled workers - artistic, cultural, and scientific professionals)¹⁰⁹, balancing inflows due to family reunification or humanitarian reasons.

Work permits for third country nationals living outside the EU are issued in absence of candidates on the local labour market¹¹⁰. Nevertheless, given the rising labour shortages employers are facing, the

¹⁰⁷ <https://arbor.revistas.csic.es/index.php/arbor/article/download/2090/2694?inline=1>

¹⁰⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/joint-statement-administrator-samantha-power-secretary-alejandra-mayorkas-canadian-minister-sean-fraser-and-spanish-minister-jose-luis-escriva>

¹⁰⁹ Article: France Reckons with Immigration Amid Real. | migrationpolicy.org

¹¹⁰ <https://www.welcometofrance.com/fiche/demander-une-autorisation-de-travail>

French authorities drew up a list of needed jobs that can be directly offered to foreign nationals (without promoting the job offer on the local labour market)¹¹¹.

A recent new immigration bill (2023) has been presented¹¹², to meet labour needs, addressing undocumented migrants, to facilitate the regularization process, and missing skills. A new comprehensive immigration law has been finally issued on January 27, 2024. The new law is mainly intended to combat irregular migration. Undocumented workers can apply for a temporary “skills in demand” residence permit in understaffed sectors to legalize their status, proving they have been living in France for at least three years. The law creates a new, four-year (renewable) residence permit for non-EU doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and midwives. The French authorities are in fact also willing to attract highly skilled workers and procedures of visa applications have been simplified as for scientists, architects, teachers, medical professionals (doctors, pharmacists) executives of foreign companies. Highly qualified workers (foreign employees and talented self-employed individuals) need to obtain a “passport talent” residence permit according to the EU Blue card, with a minimum of a one-year contract and a minimum yearly gross salary (53.000 euros).

France also signed specific agreements¹¹³ with emigration countries to manage migratory flows according to mutual needs. For instance, 17 agreements¹¹⁴ were signed regarding young professionals (*Échange de jeunes professionnels*): with Russia (2009) for professional migration, with Serbia (2009) on the mobility of young people and professionals. Similar agreements were signed also with Morocco (2001)¹¹⁵ and Tunisia (2003), involving maximum 100 persons per Country.

5. The Portuguese legal labour migration approach

Portugal has traditionally been an emigration country, while also receiving citizens from former colonies. In the late 1990s it started to attract workers from eastern and south eastern Europe, and more recently from Asia – as well as Portuguese descendants from abroad. Recent flows are especially due to the labour low-skilled demand in the construction sector¹¹⁶. Large segments of foreign workers have been working in the informal economy, as confirmed by past regularizations. Season labour demand affects particularly the agricultural and tourist sector. Portugal is likely to increase its unskilled labour demand in 2022-2030 especially due to the expected growth in the manufacturing and construction sectors¹¹⁷.

¹¹¹ The list established by the government has a geographical indication. The main missing occupations include nurses and other paramedical professionals, drivers, domestic workers, plumbers, engineers, IT professionals, chefs.

¹¹² What's in the French government's new immigration bill? (lemonde.fr)

¹¹³ <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Les-accords-bilateraux/Les-accords-bilateraux-relatifs-a-la-mobilite-professionnelle>

¹¹⁴ The work permit (Carte de séjour «salarié» or «travailleur temporaire») is based on a list of different jobs for different third countries' agreement signed (<https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Les-accords-bilateraux/Les-accords-bilateraux-relatifs-a-la-mobilite-professionnelle>).

¹¹⁵ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000406429>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/portugal/41708423.pdf>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/knowledge/resources/11-reports/81-rethinking-approaches-to-labour-migration-case-study-summary-portugal>

Third country nationals living abroad can apply for a work visa at Portuguese embassies and consulates (no nationality or job restrictions exist) only showing a job offer or labour contract¹¹⁸. Nevertheless, this pathway has not been successful and neither quotas at sectoral or general level have been effective to regulate foreign workers' entry.

Most third country nationals entered the country as tourists – being able to obtain, right after, a work permit in front of a work contract promise. Another entry pathway is with a study visa that allows part time work and one extra year to find a job or set up a company after completing the studies.

Seasonal workers (especially in agriculture and tourism) can apply for the short-stay visa (up to 90 days of stay) or a temporary-stay visa (up to one year) whose applications at the Portuguese embassies can take up to 6 months. To avoid the length and bureaucracy of the procedures, undocumented migrants or persons with tourist visas cover de facto the seasonal labour needs.

Since 2022, a job search visa was introduced allowing people (excluding CPLP - Community of Portuguese Language - country nationals) to go to Portugal looking for work (while demonstrating means of subsistence and health insurance). This visa is not restricted to any nationality or job type.

Mobility agreements were signed with India¹¹⁹ (2021), and Morocco (2022) to fill Portuguese skill and labour shortages thanks to the matching between the Portuguese Employment Agency and the Indian and Moroccan employment platforms. An agreement - broader in its scope - was signed with 9 CPLP (Community of Portuguese Language) countries, complemented by thematic agreements. For instance, in 2022, a labour mobility agreement was signed between Portugal and Cape Vert especially targeting tourism and agriculture¹²⁰.

The EU Blue card is not employed as an entry option, while the EU Single Permit Directive has been largely used by employers and employees.

Even if highly skilled migrants are neither the majority nor the target of immigration policies, Portugal offers an IT visa, a TECH visa, a start-up visa and a residence visa to undertake a highly qualified professional activity, not to mention the nomad visa. Nevertheless, salaries for highly skilled workers, as ICT profiles, are lower in Portugal compared to other EU countries.

Language courses are easily offered to foreign nationals.

¹¹⁸ <https://picum.org/blog/labour-migration-policies-portugal/>

¹¹⁹ <https://portugal.iom.int/news/iom-portugal-carries-out-visit-india-discuss-labor-mobility-schemes>

¹²⁰ The Portuguese players involved include: Immigration Office (SEF), the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), the Algarve Hotel Association (AHETA), the Algarve Hotel Industry Owners Association (AIHSA), the Odemira and Aljezur Horticulturist, Flower Growers and Fruit Growers Association (AHSA), and several agricultural companies.

ANNEX TO CHAPTER II

Eleven initiatives of legal/circular labour migration in EU were analyzed mostly based on desk review (literature review, web search) and with some interviews. The web information collected was not always complete, due to lack of available data. The different aspects collected include: detailed information on the initiative (countries involved, partners, donors, web references), the objectives and expected results, the conditions motivating the project design and implementation, the target profiles/sectors and actions planned, the elements of success and obstacle and the indications for replicability. This section was carried out by Antonio Galiotta in 2023.

Multi-country initiatives

Title	1. THAMM Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa
Countries involved in EU	Germany, Belgium and France
Countries involved extra EU	Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt
Partners	Commissioned by: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) Implemented by ENABEL - Belgian Development Agency International Organization for Migration ILO - International Labour Organization the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) The French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) has also recently joined the programme.
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The programme supports partner institutions in North Africa to draft and implement policies and mechanisms for safe, orderly and regular migration. Additionally, it fosters cooperation and regional exchange between relevant stakeholders in North Africa.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The programme supports the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive policy frameworks improving the governance of labour migration and the protection of migrant workers in the North of Africa. It also contributes to preparing, putting in place or expanding legal migration and mobility schemes.

Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	Young women and men in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, who are interested in a dual-track vocational training for skilled workers seeking employment in Germany, Belgium or France. The sectors involved include: hotel and restaurant, electrical, metalworking, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, logistics, bakery, construction and IT sectors. The health sector is excluded because it is the focus of the Triple Win programme.
Donor/funding	European Union; German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Website	https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/92649.html https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/our-programmes/towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-north-africa_en https://migrationnetwork.un.org/practice/towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-north-africa https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2022-de-thamm-flyer-fuer-arbeitgeber-2.pdf https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2022-de-programm-thamm-faire-gewinnung-von-fachkraefte.pdf
Context analysis	The programme is framed within the Mobility Partnerships agreements that Morocco and Tunisia signed with the EU and a number of Member States. This agreement aims at a more effective governance of legal and labor migration, as well as at strengthening cooperation on migration and development with North Africa.
Challenges/obstacles	The greatest difficulty reported concerns the challenges in identifying and collecting all due documents of beneficiaries in the countries of origin. Smaller companies in more remote areas in EU countries are overall skeptical about the positive effects of the programme. Finally, a difficulty has been reported in the integration process of foreign workers in EU countries (especially in the case of Egyptians).
Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination between European institutions, and coordination with stakeholders and African organizations; - ability to capitalize from previous projects; - identify the sectors in EU; - Pre-departure training and mentoring on arrival for migrant workers.
Elements of weakness	- Identification of all necessary documents for North African workers;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breaking the skepticism of small businesses in remote EU areas; - Integration difficulties, especially due to language challenges in Germany;
Conditions for replicability	The programme started in Germany, it was later expanded to Belgium and France. An updated version of the programme is expected to start in autumn 2023 after the pilot experience.
General comment	Coordination, between stakeholders and at sub-regional level, is crucial for the success of the programme also the tutoring of foreign workers from pre-departure (language courses, soft skills) to their arrival in the destination countries, as well as training. THAMM was able to positively capitalize the experience of ENABEL in labour migration and the experience of Triple Win project made it possible to identify the most desired sectors and job positions required in advance.

Title	<p style="text-align: center;">2. MATCH</p> <p>Migration of African Talents through Capacity building and Hiring</p>
Countries involved in EU	Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg
Countries involved extra EU	Senegal and Nigeria
Partners	IOM and EU
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	MATCH is a 39-month initiative funded by the European Union (EU) aimed at providing skilled talents to European private sector companies whose needs for qualified staff could not be satisfied by the EU labour market.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The long-term goal of the project is the promotion of a local private ecosystem to enable the return and relocation of circular labour migrants.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	Although the MATCH project was initially designed to support companies active in sectors with labour shortages, conversations with companies revealed a growing interest in recruiting beyond the usual sectors with labour shortages. Recruitment has been initiated with companies operating in the ICT, communications, healthcare, pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors.

Donor/funding	Funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)
Website	https://eea.iom.int/match-hiring-african-talents#:~:text=The%20project%20is%20funded%20by,January%202020%20to%20December%202022. https://eea.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl666/files/documents/MATCH-Info-Sheet-EN-online.pdf
Context analysis	<p>The project took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, both physical relocations to Europe and a series of hybrid and/or remote customized working arrangements were foreseen. There was also the possibility for companies to opt for a mixed approach, e.g. with one or more periods of remote work combined with short/long-term assignments in the EU. In the case of mobility to the EU, visa and relocation costs were covered by the recruiting company, while the talent was responsible for finding accommodation.</p> <p>The MATCH also provided support to the participating Nigerian and Senegalese talents through preparatory sessions for the job interviews, soft skills trainings, pre-departure orientation, as well as assistance with the administrative procedures related to international recruitment.</p>
Challenges/obstacles	The main challenge was undoubtedly the outbreak of the pandemic. A hybrid or even remote mechanism was developed, affecting the quality of the final result.
Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexibility to change the initial plan due to the pandemic; - the creation of a good relationship with all the stakeholders involved; - the creation of a solid platform in partner countries that can be used for further projects in the future
Elements of weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-selection activities not satisfying high enough quality standards - companies that in some cases abandoned the project during the selection phase - highly complicated administrative procedures due to the absence of a direct exchange channel with partner countries
Conditions for replicability	For the replicability of the project, its flexibility has been appreciated. The needs and gaps in the labour market, however, must be defined jointly between the countries of origin and destination to ensure that future initiatives are mutually beneficial. Furthermore, efforts are still needed to raise awareness in companies on the benefits of the mobility programme.

General comment	The project strengthened skills in the partner countries and improved the collection and management of data useful for developing employment strategies and analyzing labour markets. The project also had a positive impact on the Nigerian and Senegalese private sectors. Due in part to the pandemic, however, the final result was very poor compared to the effort made. A very small proportion of the pre-selected workers reached the final goal.
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Initiatives in Germany

Title	3. Triple Win Programme
Countries involved in EU	Germany
Countries involved extra EU	Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, India (Kerala) , Vietnam and Jordan.
Partners	Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and The German Federal Employment Agency's International Placement Services (ZAV)
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	This programme aims at the recruitment of qualified nurses from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, Kerala (India), Viet Nam and Jordan. Foreign nurses are then employed in Germany
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The project generates threefold benefits (hence 'triple win'): 1. Pressure is eased on labor markets in the countries of origin whilst brain drain in the health sector is minimized 2. Migrants' remittances contribute to sustainable development in countries of origin 3. The shortage of nurses in Germany is alleviated and global mobility schemes are supported.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	The project facilitates migration of healthcare personnel, in particular qualified nurses.
Website	https://migrationnetwork.un.org/projects/triple-win-programme https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/projects-programs/health-and-care/triple-win https://www.giz.de/en/workingwithgiz/11666.html

Context analysis	While Germany faces a shortage of nurses, qualified nurses abroad are often unemployed. The programme is only working with countries that have a surplus of well-qualified nurses. ZAV and employment agencies in the partner countries cooperate in the selection of nurses who are provided with language training before starting to work.
Challenges and obstacles	The main obstacle encountered in the programme seems to lie in the challenges of long-term integration of workers in Germany.
Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The programme relies on feasibility studies and analysis of the labour market both in the workers' home country and in Germany; - Clear and precise selection process; - Easy recognition of foreign qualifications; - Language courses before departure.
Elements of weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding employers willing to participate in the programme; - Long-term integration in Germany
Conditions for replicability	The programme has been running since 2013. In Indonesia, the 2021 agreement signed was addressed to the labour shortage of nurses; currently, the possibility to extend the agreement to hospitality and restaurant sectors is under discussion.
General comment	The programme is characterised by a precise organization. The selected nurses show high level of professional ability, and the German employers are satisfied. After the recognition in Germany of the foreign qualifications, the nurses can find an appropriate employment in the medium term, they can be regularly entitled to a residence permit. The project seems to show very positive replicability conditions both in other countries and in other sectors.

Title	4. Specialized!
Countries involved in EU	Germany
Countries involved extra EU	Jordan, Colombia and Mexico
Partners	The Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Employment Agency (BA), the Federal Office

	for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the Foreign Office.
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The programme aims to enable medical doctors from Mexico, Colombia and Jordan complete their specialist medical training in German hospitals (especially in some rural areas/regions where medical professionals are hardly found and hired).
Expected results/impacts	All parties can benefit from the programme. Clinics in Germany, to cover staff shortages. The foreign medical professionals, who often lack the opportunity to complete their specialist training in their home country. The home countries, as some of the specialist doctors trained in Germany actually come back with new acquired skills.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	Medical doctors without specialization
Website	https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/faktor-a/mitarbeiter-finden/aerzte-rekrutieren-im-ausland-specialized?pk_vid=6e91e6638f91e52a16849451457bc310
General comment	In many German rural areas there is a shortage of nurses and medical specialists. The aim of the Specialized! programme is to recruit foreign medical personnel offering the qualification training required for the national recognition procedures. The foreign professionals refer to a contact person at the Federal Employment Agency in Germany offering help and assistance throughout the process. Due to the success of the programme in 2022, it will be extended nationwide in 2023.

Title	5. Hand in Hand for International Talents
Countries involved in EU	Germany (in particular the German regions of Erfurt, Düsseldorf, Lübeck, Munich, Offenbach, Reutlingen and Rostock)
Countries involved extra EU	Brazil, India and Vietnam
Partners	Implemented by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) Federal Employment Agency (BA) Employer Service of the Federal Employment Agency

	(AGS) Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK) in Brazil, India and Vietnam BA's Central Placement Office (ZAV)
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The project is directed at recruiting skilled professionals in electro, IT and gastronomy industry who are looking for opportunities to work and live in Germany.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The project aims at establishing a cooperation process and a successful procedure for skilled labour immigration
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	The required qualified workers belong to the following IHK professions: professions in construction electrics, electrical operating technology, electrical engineering; professions in computer science, information technology, telecommunications technology and software development; cooks, professions in hotel service, professions in catering service and in system catering.
Donor/funding	Funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (80% from German Government and 20% from private sector)
Website	https://www.dihk-service-gmbh.de/de/unsere-projekte/fachkraefte-standortsicherung/hand-in-hand-for-international-talents
Context analysis	The project offers the following services free of charge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language training and qualification up to level B1 - Support and tutorship in the recognition process of the professional qualification by ProRecognition (IGCC) - Hand-holding through the Recognition procedure - Placement in a permanent job position through the Federal Employment Agency in Germany - Necessary technical qualifications to achieve full equivalence of the professional qualification (if required) - Support in finding accommodation and with bureaucratic processes in Germany - Support with operational and social integration in Germany
Challenges/obstacles	Helping foreign workers to get prepared for their migration to Germany: preparation from the point of view of the language, culture, working environment. Another crucial aspect consists in making companies understand the importance of the social-cultural integration of foreign workers.

Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the process is monitored and accompanied step by step - close cooperation with all organizations involved - agreements with German embassies and Chamber of Industry and Commerce in selected countries - family reunifications are facilitated
Elements of weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognition of previous qualifications and experience - difficulty in finding companies willing to participate in the programme, even if they suffer from labour shortages - the language difficulty holds back many workers
Conditions for replicability	The replicability depends mainly on the presence of a German-like organization in the partner countries, (such as the presence of chambers of commerce).
General comment	The project is based on the preliminary study of the partner countries' suitability, (considering demographic and labour market issues). Workers are tutored during the whole migration process. The reticence of German companies is an obstacle, while the language barrier seems insurmountable for many.

Initiatives in Spain

Title	6. MOVE GREEN
Countries involved in EU	Spain (Andalusia)
Countries involved extra EU	(North of) Morocco: Regional Council Tanger-Tetuan-Alhucemas.
Partners	managed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the Andalusian Municipalities Fund for International Solidarity (FAMSI)
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The project offered a training opportunity in Morocco and Andalusia, and internships in companies in the renewable energy sector involving 18 final year students or graduates (BAC+5),
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The Move Green project is a pilot experience that aims to contribute to the improvement of the employability and entrepreneurship of young Moroccans through a circular mobility process and the strengthening of public-private

	partnerships in the green economy sectors in Andalusia and northern Morocco.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	Final year students or graduates (BAC+5)
Donor/funding	Co-financed by the European Union through the "Migration Partnership Facility" programme and FAMSI
Website	http://www.andaluciasolidaria.org/noticias/itemlist/tag/Move%20Green https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/26-e-co-development-for-innovation-and-employment-in-green-and-circular-economy-between-andalusia-and-morocco-move-green
Context analysis	In the first phase of the project, an analysis of the more required professional profiles in the green sector has been undertaken, both in Andalusia and in two regions in northern Morocco. Subsequently, the young Moroccans selected have been staying four-month in Andalusia receiving theoretical and practical training. The Spanish language training has been offered to strengthen the communication skills of the group. In the last phase of the project, participants have attended a course and face-to-face sessions in Tanger.
Challenges/obstacles	Co-ordination with the private and public organizations involved in both countries. The language issue was addressed through the partnership with the Cervantes Institute.
Elements of strength	The most important element of success in MOVE GREEN is the fact that the project is focused on renewable energies. In Morocco there is an increasing need of skilled employees in renewable energies, where large investments are made (wind, solar, thermic, biomass...). Therefore, the creation of a circular migration system between Andalusia and Morocco in this field has been very well received by all involved parties.
Elements of weakness	Regarding visa issues: the lack of experience of Spanish Consulates in circular migration. Reintegration process of the first group, due to the different level of engagement of the beneficiaries. The follow up of beneficiaries was very difficult.
Conditions for replicability	It is important to involve the country of origin from the very beginning in order to ensure that it is truly interested and willing to support.

General comment	The strength of the project is the focus on renewable energy, a topic close to the hearts of both Spanish and Moroccan companies. FAMSI's organizational experience and partnerships with the Cervantes Institute and the ANMAR Federation (the Federation of Municipalities of the North of Morocco and Andalusia which is the contact point with public entities) allow an easy exchange of young project participants. Stakeholders positively responded in Spain and Morocco.
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Title	7. Young Generation as Change Agents (YGCA)
Countries involved in EU	Spain
Countries involved extra EU	Morocco
Partners	implemented by the Spanish Ministry of Science, innovation and Universities via SEPIE (the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education) in cooperation with the Spanish Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security, the Moroccan Ministry in charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs, the Moroccan Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The goal of the YGCA project is to establish a circular legal migration scheme between Spain and Morocco. Young Moroccan graduates are selected for a one-year master degree in Spain. This, in turn, allows for their insertion into the labour market and the implementation of business and entrepreneurship projects upon their return to Morocco.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The aim of the project is to facilitate a legal circular migration scheme between Spain and Morocco. Moroccan students can acquire knowledge attending Master degrees in the different Spanish universities. After the presentation of their Master thesis, the students return to Morocco where they are reintegrated in the labour market. Those with the highest scores are awarded with an extra-funding to implement an entrepreneurship project in Morocco.

Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	98 Moroccan graduated students, attending Masters related to 20 different strategic sectors in Morocco. The key social and economic sectors are energy engineering, data sciences, cybersecurity, sustainable development, biotechnology and tourism.
Website	https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practice/young-generation-change-agents-ygca_en https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/18-young-generation-as-change-agents
General comment	The master courses offered in the context of the project address the specific needs of the Moroccan Labour market, with a strong focus on entrepreneurship.

Title	8. GECCO programme “Gestión Colectiva de las Contrataciones en Origen”
Countries involved in EU	Spain
Countries involved extra EU	Currently, the list of countries includes: Argentina, Cape Verde, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Paraguay, the Philippines, Senegal, and Ukraine.
Partners	the GECCO program is managed, complemented and supported by the Spanish migratory authorities (Directorate General for Migration)
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The programme aims at recruiting foreign workers in sectors with labour shortages, in particular agriculture.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	Foreign workers are allowed to temporarily come to Spain to carry out a remunerated activity so that upon their return they can use and capitalize the knowledge acquired once returned and thus facilitate their employability in the local labour market.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	There are three pathways under this system:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporary jobs: usually seasonal agricultural work that lasts up to nine months in a one-year period 2. Stable jobs: jobs in in-demand sectors such as construction and hospitality, permits are granted for at least one year with the possibility to be renewed 3. Three-month job-search visas: available to descendants, children or grandchildren of Spanish nationals and to people seeking work in specific regions or occupations facing labor shortages
Donor/funding (indicate also the cost of the initiative)	Spanish Government
Website	<p>https://gsp.cgdev.org/legalpathway/collective-management-of-hiring-in-the-country-of-origin/</p> <p>https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/202126_talent_partnerships.pdf</p> <p>https://www.freshplaza.com/europe/article/9464779/spain-presents-plans-to-hire-over-16-000-agri-workers-from-morocco/</p>
Context analysis	The programme was conceived in response to shortages of workers in the agriculture sector during the 1990s and 2000s. Since then, it has been applied in provinces in southern and northern Spain also with a view to enhance circular migration.
Challenges/obstacles	NN
Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government has created special entry visas for these workers under the Gecco programme; - Seasonal workers do not need special skills screening; - the programme succeeds in filling an internal shortage with an external surplus of labour force.
Conditions for replicability	The programme project has been renewed in Spain for more than twenty years and the number of seasonal workers allowed to enter the country is increasingly growing year by year.

General comment	The programme allows firms to recruit foreign workers to fill seasonal vacancies in the agricultural sector. Work permits are temporary, have a with a specific duration, and can be used only for activities related to seasonal agricultural activities. Ministerial orders regulate the annual number of seasonal workers hired through the program. The workers recruited can receive work permits for up to nine months a year. After the permit expires, they are requested to return to their country of origin.
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Initiatives in Belgium

Title	<p style="text-align: center;">9. PALIM</p> <p>Pilot Project Addressing Labour Shortages through Innovative Labour Migration Models</p>
Countries involved in EU	Belgium
Countries involved extra EU	Morocco
Partners	This project was implemented by Enabel, the Belgian development agency, in cooperation with public and private actors in Morocco and Belgium
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	<p>The project tested labour migration model linking Morocco's growing ICT sector and Belgian Flanders, which has a shortage of skilled ICT workers. While aiming to attract skilled workers and fill a labour need in the ICT in Belgium, the projects has also a development component to stimulate the Moroccan ICT labour market technical training candidates on the needs of participating Moroccan companies.</p> <p>Mobility to Belgium only concerns a minority of candidates. The aim of the project is to train Moroccan job seekers and to help them enter the Flemish job market but mostly the Moroccan labour market</p>
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The project addressed the shortage in the Belgian ICT sector and simultaneously exploited the high number of unemployed Moroccan experts in the sector. The project also aimed at improving migration management. The return from Belgium to Morocco is not mandatory.

Target beneficiaries/Skill level /professions and sectors	120 young Moroccan ICT experts (selected from 9,677 applications) from 35 different cities throughout Morocco attended additional technical, language and soft skills courses.
Donor/funding (indicate also the cost of the initiative)	95% of funding from AMIF
Website	https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/17-completed-action-pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models-palim/preview https://map.gsp.cgdev.org/2021/06/30/pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models-palim/ https://open.enabel.be/en/BEL/2337/updates/pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models.html
Context analysis	The programme was framed within the Mobility Partnership Facility agreements that Morocco signed with the EU and a number of Member States. In order to adequately respond to the market needs, the project started with a mapping of all relevant stakeholders in Belgium (potential companies and organizations dealing with youth and employment) and Morocco as well as an assessment of labour needs in the ICT sector and definition of the skills' profile.
Challenges/obstacles	The Covid-19 pandemic started during the initial implementation phase of the project, causing some organizational difficulties. Special attention in the project was given to the coordination of all parties involved. These actors fall under different levels of power, which required much coordination work.
Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENABEL, the Belgian Development Agency, has extensive experience in legal labour migration projects. - The Moroccan talents attended pre-departure informative information sessions on working and living in Belgium, so as to be well informed when applying for international jobs. - The project set up two matching platforms for Belgian and Moroccan employers, which enabled skilled ICT workers fit to candidate to introduce themselves to companies. These matching platforms were consulted by hundreds of companies. 43 talents were selected for Belgian companies and 116 for Moroccan ones; and dozens of recruitment processes were launched in the two countries. Unfortunately, international mobility did not materialize during the implementation period

	<p>of this MPF-funded project, but it is planned to take place under the EU-funded THAMM project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project facilitated an exchange of good practices in international job placement between ANAPEC, VDAB and Actiris (the public employment services in Morocco, Flanders and Brussels Regions) respectively, resulting in a strong institutional capacity building -
Conditions for replicability	This pilot project was so successful that it offered lessons learned to form the basis for the subsequent THAMM project.
General comment	The project facilitated an exchange of good practices in international job placement between ANAPEC, VDAB and Actiris - the public employment services in Morocco, Flanders and Brussels Regions (Belgium) respectively – resulting in a strong institutional capacity building. The multi-actor partnerships between the two countries have allowed and favoured the evolution of the approaches and methods of cooperation in the area of labour migration and skills development.

Title	10. Enhancing Tunisian Youth Employability through Professional Internships in Belgian Companies
Countries involved in EU	Belgium
Countries involved extra EU	Tunisia
Partners	Implemented by IOM. Among the partners are: the Tunisian Government and the Belgian Government, Universities, academic institutes and private sector in Tunisia and Belgium.
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	The project aims at supporting the efforts of the Tunisian Government to reduce the high unemployment rates among young Tunisians by offering 30 internships and apprenticeships in Belgium in order to reinforce knowledge, acquire new professional competences, and increase the job opportunities on the Tunisian labour market.

Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The project aims at improving youth employability in Tunisia through targeted short-term employment assignments in Belgium, providing concrete opportunities for young graduates to scale-up their skills and increase job insertion opportunities or entrepreneurship. All parties involved improve their understanding of regular migration; companies and interns are helped to explore the opportunities and potentials between Belgium and Tunisia.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/professions and sectors	Tunisian young graduates
Website	https://belgium.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1286/files/documents/Factsheet%20Enhancing%20Tunisian%20Youth%20Employability_EN.pdf https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/enhancing-tunisian-youth-employability-through-internships-belgian-companies
General comment	The project addresses unemployment among young graduates. 31 Tunisian graduates were selected for an internship with 12 Belgian companies to upscale their professional skills. After the internships, 24 were employed in Tunisia; 2 interns decided to continue their studies; 3 were employed abroad; and 2 were dismissed by their host companies for unsatisfactory performance. Most of the host companies evaluated the project positively and were even open to participating in similar initiatives in the future.

Initiatives in France

Title	11. HOMERe High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment
Countries involved in EU	France
Countries involved extra EU	Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt

Partners	Project supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Union for the Mediterranean.
Objective/s of the initiative/programme/project	Enhance the employability of young high-level graduates from the partner countries, and in particular improve their access to quality first jobs, by means of a 6-month international work placement at the head office of a company in the Mediterranean region.
Expected results/impacts in origin and destination country	The mission of the project is to meet the needs of companies, students, universities, management/engineering schools, local authorities, etc. in the Euro-Mediterranean area.
Target beneficiaries/Skill level/ professions and sectors	The internships took place in the following sectors: ICT (60%), electrical engineering (10%), and accounting, Business administration, Electro mechanics, Civil engineering, Power engineering, Marketing, Communication networks, Textile industry, Logistics, Industrial engineering (30%).
Donor/funding	40% funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The second phase of the project (2019-2020) was promoted by HOMERe France within the framework of the <u>Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs)</u> .
Website	https://www.homere-med.com/ https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/33-high-opportunity-for-mediterranean-executive-recruitment-homere https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/homere/
Context analysis	HOMERe uses mobility internships as a tool to reduce the skills' gap between EU and North Africa. Through its network of academic institutions, the project aims to attract transnational private companies from EU in the Mediterranean region that are searching for qualified employees. The programme provides help in the identification, preparation and mentoring of appropriately qualified students, while the host companies commit to allocating a tutor to their interns and to pay them a monthly salary.
Challenges/obstacles	In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, youth unemployment often increases with the increase of education levels. This happens because students often lack soft skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving and leadership. It is precisely in this context that the project operates.

Elements of strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify a weakness in the North African labour market; - Create a network of collaborations between companies and universities - Create organizational and legal structures in partner countries - Use the experience gained in Europe for the worker in the country of origin
Conditions for replicability	<p>The project has been running for a few years and was replicated in different contexts, thanks to the cooperation between universities and companies.</p>
General comment	<p>The study of the North African context was crucial in understanding where to operate. The project was successful with 70% participants getting a job in their home country at the end of their training. The creation of a networking platform was the second major achievement of the programme.</p>

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