



Rabat Process
Euro-African Dialogue on
Migration and Development

High-Level Thematic Meeting

“State Cooperation as Key to Success in Labour Migration”

29-30 September 2022

Malaga, Spain

Automobile and Fashion Museum

Avenida de Sor Teresa Prat 15, 29003 Málaga

**Outcome
document**



Under the Co-chairmanship of Spain and Nigeria

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Introduction

High-Level Thematic Meeting on State Cooperation as Key to Success in Labour Migration:

- Co-chaired by Spain and Nigeria;
- Echoing the priorities of Domain 2 of the Marrakech Action Plan 2018-2020 on legal migration and mobility;
- The meeting is a follow-up to the Rabat Process Thematic Meeting on Labour Migration, which took place virtually on 16-17 December 2021, co-chaired by Portugal and Cabo Verde;
- The meeting attracted a diverse audience of about 100 participants, from 32 European and African countries.

Objectives of the meeting:

- Reinforce an open dialogue between European and African countries on labour migration;
- Analyse the African and European perspectives on labour migration;
- Identify the needs of countries of origin and transit, the challenges that need to be addressed, good practices and areas for improvement and consensus building;
- Reflect on current and future labour migration pathways based on collaboration and cooperation between States.

Expected outcomes of the meeting:

- Identify challenges, priorities and opportunities on labour migration to better support policy making;
- Analyse good practices and relevant information on legal and labour migration in order to implement policies and programmes properly.

This document provides an overview of the main **conclusions of the meeting**, as well as **good practices, challenges and opportunities** related to cooperation on labour migration.

• High-level opening ceremony

The high-level opening ceremony was attended by Isabel Castro, Secretary of State for Migration of Spain, Sadiya Umar Farouq, Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development of Nigeria, Johannes Luchner, Deputy Director General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission and Monica Zanette, Senior Coordinator of ICMPD's Support Project to the EU-Africa Dialogue on Migration and Mobility (MMD).

During the opening ceremony, speakers agreed that the Rabat Process was a **key Process that provided a forum for meetings, debate and solidarity** in order to strengthen the links between European and African countries, to better understand the challenges and to design a comprehensive and integrated migration policy. It was recalled that it was necessary to focus on the **protection of migrant workers' rights**, including social protection, in order to avoid any form of exploitation, whether it be smuggling of migrants, human trafficking or xenophobia. Finally, the speakers all recognised the importance of legal migration, and more particularly labour migration, **as a counterweight against irregular migration** and as a major issue in ageing European societies.

• What are the African perspectives on labour migration?

Sharing African countries' experiences in the field of labour migration

This session allowed several African countries to detail their labour migration policies and share their **good practices**:

- **Morocco** has a national strategy for international labour mobility which focuses on three kinds of groups: 1) Moroccan nationals wishing to work abroad (approximately 30 to 40,000 people). For this purpose, 12 labour agreements have been signed, including 5 with Europe and 7 with Arab countries; 2) foreign nationals who wish to work in Morocco (about 10,000 people) who can use a digital portal for visas and work contracts; 3) people regularised by Morocco (50,000 people) for whom there is no opposability of the employment situation.
- **Nigeria** is a pioneer country in labour migration. It has bilateral agreements in place with Saudi Arabia, Namibia and soon Ethiopia and would like to establish agreements with European countries. Nigeria is faced with the departure of many Nigerian doctors, a situation that has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.
- **Senegal** has diverse experience in labour migration: 1) establishment of agreements and partnerships with various countries on the African, European, Asian and American continents; 2) respect of the principle of non-discrimination for foreign workers in Senegal, in line with international conventions (access to the same services as Senegalese regardless of their migration status).
- **Cameroon** does not yet have a formal policy on labour migration but has many bilateral agreements in place with European countries, notably Belgium, France and Switzerland, but also with the African Union and several African countries. According to Cameroon, there is a need to further develop bilateral agreements between Central African countries.
- **Niger** focuses its policy on skills identification, profiling of migrants (interviews and orientation towards training structures) and support of the labour market integration and business creation.
- **Burkina** has signed several agreements with neighbouring countries that receive a significant number of Burkinabe workers, such as Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire. Some agreements should nevertheless be reviewed and updated to take into account recent developments. Burkina is currently working on a national migration strategy that will include labour migration issues.
- **Mali** has a significant number of conventions in place but lacks a monitoring mechanism for their implementation, which has been identified as a challenge by many countries.
- **Ghana** also has bilateral agreements with Gulf countries and will sign agreements with Spain and Italy later this year. It would be useful to develop standardised templates for the agreements.

Although progress has been made in adopting policy frameworks for labour migration and building the capacity of public employment services, **several recommendations** were made:

- There is a need for an **integrated approach** to good cooperation on labour migration by reflecting on three key stages: 1) the selection process and preparation of candidates; and 2) reception and working conditions;
- There is a need to include labour migration as a **tool in the fight against irregular migration**;
- As there is high unemployment for youth and women in Africa, labour migration projects and policies should **target these two groups**, while prioritising the economic and social development of African countries to meet local employment demand;
- There is also a **need to renew partnerships** as necessary to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the labour market.

Some flagship projects implemented in partnership with African countries

Addressing labour shortages in Europe and improving the employability and competences of skilled workers in Africa: the MATCH project

The MATCH project implemented by IOM aims to address labour shortages in four EU Member States by enabling **young graduates from Nigeria and Senegal to work for companies in Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg or the Netherlands**, where sector-specific labour shortages have been identified (e.g. agriculture, health, engineering and infrastructure). The programme aims to improve the skills of young migrants and increase their employability, while addressing labour market shortages in the EU and contributing to the longer-term development of Nigeria and Senegal. In addition to work placements, MATCH also implements complementary activities such as skills development, capacity building of public employment services (including on the issue of worker profiling) and knowledge sharing between the participating European and African countries.

Pilot project for the mobility of entrepreneurs between Belgium and Senegal

This EU-funded project aims to contribute to the dialogue on migration governance between Senegal and Belgium by testing an innovative approach to circular labour mobility between economic operators in Senegal and Belgium. More specifically, it aims to provide young entrepreneurs and employees who have promising ideas with effective access to mentoring, learning and skills development services in both Belgium and Senegal. The project has two dimensions: on the one hand, support for entrepreneurship; on the other hand, international mobility in the context of an individual or collective project aimed at improving the performance of the company and/or the skills of employees. The project will specifically target about 60 innovative entrepreneurs - based on their business project and/or entrepreneurship modalities and the possibility to connect them with interested companies in Belgium and/or with adapted programmes offered by Belgian business incubators.

Intra-regional youth mobility project in Central Africa as a development factor: an entry through Cameroon

This OECD-funded project aims to take stock of youth mobility in Central Africa in the context of free movement. It will provide tools for understanding the leverage of skills to support economic development in Central Africa and give better insights into the skills profiles and needs of youth that can improve integration and economic development in the sub-region.

- **What are the prospects for the EU and the Member States as destination countries on labour migration?**

Sharing experiences of European countries on labour migration

At the European level, common challenges are the ageing population and the multi-level skills shortages (low, medium, high skilled workers) in different sectors such as construction, agriculture, health, ICT. These challenges are all the more important as there is no specific European legislation for labour migration.

This session allowed several European countries to detail their labour migration policies and share their **good practices**:

- **Spain's** policy is organised around several priorities: 1) the importance of trusting relationships between countries of origin and destination to identify sectors and needs of all parties; 2) the need to implement reintegration programmes in countries of origin to avoid brain drain; 3) the importance of changing normative

frameworks to adapt to the needs of the labour market; 4) the need to clearly communicate about the policies to citizens, both in countries of origin and in Spain.

- Since 2016, **France** has a "Talents Passport" which allows graduates and also people with sought-after skills to stay in France for 4 years. France has signed some fifteen agreements with African countries, all of which include monitoring committees ("*comité de suivi*"), which has been identified as a good practice. Finally, France has signed "young professionals" agreements with several African countries that allow young graduates to deepen their skills through an experience in a company in France.
- **Italy** has identified several priorities for legal migration after consultations with institutional actors, social partners, non-governmental organisations and universities. These economic priorities are in the areas of digital transition and the green economy. A programme on circular migration between Italy, Tunisia and Morocco is currently under discussion with the EU and the ILO.

Partnerships to attract talent: towards enhanced cooperation between the EU and partner countries

Under the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum, comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships with the EU's main countries of origin and transit will be put in place: Talent Partnerships. They aim to provide a comprehensive policy framework and financial support to stimulate mutually beneficial international mobility based on a better match of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries. They will be open to students, graduates and skilled workers. The Commission announced that it would launch the first Talent Partnerships with North African partners, in particular Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

Some flagship projects implemented in partnership with European countries

Projects supported by Spain in the field of labour migration

The **GECCO programme**, which has been in existence since the 1990s, aims to recruit workers (mainly women) from third countries to address labour shortages in certain sectors in Spain, mainly in the agricultural sector. This circular migration programme allows thousands of Moroccan women to come and work in Spain every year. As an extension and complement to this programme, the **WAFIRA initiative** is a pilot project between Spain and Morocco that aims to maximise the development impact of circular migration and mobility. WAFIRA will train and support 250 women participating in the GECCO programme for a sustainable socio-economic reintegration in their communities of origin. In addition, WAFIRA will strengthen Moroccan institutions to provide services to migrant workers for their reintegration into the Moroccan labour market.

The EU-funded **MigraSafe Africa project** aims to support safe, orderly and regular migration by promoting legal channels to the EU. The project will be implemented over two years in eight African countries: Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and Ethiopia. It will promote access to information on legal migration among institutional actors and civil society organisations, which act as informal sources of information to potential migrants, particularly in remote areas.

Challenges and opportunities identified by European and African countries in the field of labour migration

Challenges and opportunities identified by European and African countries in the field of labour migration

Coordination and cooperation between all actors:

- Policies should be developed in a **joint, constructive spirit** between countries of origin and destination, while taking into account the needs of actors on the ground. All decisions, from the outset, should be jointly discussed and adopted on the basis of mutual cooperation and trust, so that everyone wins. There are cross-cutting elements that need to be taken into account, such as changing demographics and labour needs.

- A **multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach** is key to successful cooperation on labour migration:
 - Stakeholders and governance must be clear from the outset;
 - It is necessary to involve all stakeholders (including public administrations, public employment services, the private sector, employers' associations, trade unions, civil society organisations) to develop concerted employment and vocational training policies;
 - Moreover, the involvement of the private sector is central and must be envisaged from the design phase of projects and agreements, giving priority to public-private partnerships;
 - Inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination is essential for effective policies.

Communication and exchange of information and experience:

- **Communication and awareness-raising** activities for migrants on legal migration channels should be strengthened.
- **Exchanges of experience** (including study visits) should be promoted to share North/South and South/South labour migration programmes.
- The **departure phase of migrant workers** should be better prepared by strengthening their knowledge of working conditions and their knowledge of the social and cultural rules of the host countries.

Better knowledge of the needs of companies and the profile of workers:

- There is a need to better **match the profiles and skills of migrant workers with the labour needs** of destination countries.
- The **quality and diversity of training** needs to be enhanced to improve the recruitment of workers in destination countries, both in sending and receiving countries.
- More work is needed in preparatory phases, including on the recruitment stages and the placement of migrants internationally.
- It is important to strengthen the **profiling of migrant workers**, especially young ones, to better meet the needs of employers.
- In addition, **legal frameworks** should be adapted to the needs, to ensure clarity for both the migrant and the hiring employer.
- Projects should be developed not only for skilled and highly skilled workers, but also for **low-skilled workers**, who are numerous, especially in the agricultural, tourism, health and construction sectors.

Cross-cutting challenges:

- **Reliable data** are important for the development of labour migration policies and programmes.
- **Sustainability and longevity** of projects are essential.
- **Evaluation and monitoring** are essential: this concerns monitoring and evaluation frameworks for conventions and agreements with measurable qualitative targets and indicators, as well as the results and lessons learned from pilot projects already developed.
- In order to **limit brain drain**, it is necessary to:
 - Exchange information on sectors, both in Africa and in Europe, where there is an urgent need;
 - Provide professional training not only in the country of destination but also in the country of origin, before departure;
 - Develop demographic projections, both in Africa and in Europe;
 - Include a component on voluntary return and reintegration of migrants in agreements and projects.
- **Circular labour migration programmes**, including seasonal migration, are essential. With these programmes, return and reintegration is ensured (training, new entrepreneurial skills, new personal ties, etc.) and mutual trust has been built up to allow for continuity of the programme.
- It is essential to promote and facilitate the **rapid recognition of skills, qualifications and work experience**, through appropriate and innovative instruments, so that all can benefit: the migrant, the

country of origin and the country of destination. There is still much room for improvement, especially in the development of standards.

- It is necessary to **respect the rights of migrant workers**, and to protect those who are more vulnerable to potential abuse. Working conditions and social security rights are all elements that need to be taken into account.
- The challenge of **scaling up pilot projects** is central to meeting the needs of sending and receiving countries, while taking into account the absorption capacity of administrations.

• **The state of Euro-African and intra-African cooperation on labour migration**

Skills mobility partnerships at the heart of labour migration

According to the OECD, Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) enable:

- Sharing of the costs and benefits of migration;
- Additional legal migration channels;
- A larger pool of skills in countries of origin and destination;
- Improved training capacity in countries of origin;
- Alignment of skills with labour markets (demand-driven).

The **challenges identified** in the context of Skills Mobility Partnerships are:

- Conducting research on labour market demand and skills mismatch;
- Collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders;
- Building trust between cooperation partners;
- Forming partnerships with all stakeholders;
- Linking candidates and employers;
- Fostering a clear policy and governmental framework;
- Strengthening the recognition of competences, including soft skills.

Some examples of Euro-African and intra-African cooperation on labour migration

The agreement on mobility between Member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (9 countries)

This agreement, signed in July 2021, aims to promote and facilitate the mobility of citizens within its territories. Portugal has recently amended its immigration law concerning the granting of visas and the right of residence in order to promote mobility and legal migration. In addition, Portugal has strengthened its cooperation with other countries through labour mobility agreements, a common visa centre in Praia, Cabo Verde, and the amendment of its law on foreigners. The ongoing reform of the SEF (Service for Foreigners and Borders) will allow the creation of an agency within the Ministry of Interior to manage migration and asylum.

Cabo Verde's experience in the field of labour migration

Cabo Verde has numerous agreements on migration management and labour migration with destination countries (Portugal, Angola, France, Luxembourg, Senegal, etc.). Recently, there are several advances in the field of labour migration in Cabo Verde: 1) Creation of the High Authority for Migration whose main mission is to define policies for the reception of immigrants and to promote their integration; 2) Adoption of a new law on nationality; 3) Proposed amendment of the labour migration agreement with Portugal; 4) Entry into force of the amendment of the Agreement on Visa Facilitation with the EU for short stays and the Agreement on Mobility in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries; 5) Joint mission of IOM, government officials and the private

sector of Portugal to Cabo Verde (July 2022) in the framework of the project "Promoting labour migration with Portugal" in the tourism sector.

Switzerland's experience: good practice of African circular migration in the hotel industry

Switzerland has been supporting a training project in the hotel industry for several years. This involves six-month training courses in Nairobi at a hotel school for Nigerians, Gambians, Cameroonians and soon Tunisians. The training is followed by a six-month internship in a 5-star hotel in the country of origin. The hotel school (<https://www.bihc.ac.ke>) is a partner of the Kenyan Red Cross and a renowned Swiss hotel school in Lucerne (B.H.M.S. Business & Hotel Management School).

It was mentioned that it could be interesting to develop these schools in other French-speaking African countries in a second phase of the project.

The THAMM initiative (Towards a holistic approach to the governance of migration and labour mobility in North Africa): a model for labour migration between the EU and North Africa

The beneficiary countries of the project are Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia (open to other North African countries for regional activities). This project is implemented by four partners: ILO, IOM, GIZ, Enabel and OFII.

The overall objective of the THAMM project is **to enable mutually beneficial opportunities for safe, regular and orderly migration and labour mobility** for North African countries.

To achieve this, the project aims to promote 5 important aspects:

- **Governance:** strengthening national legislation, policies and policy frameworks to integrate labour migration;
- **Skills:** strengthening the regulatory capacity of public employment services and promoting the recognition of qualifications and skills before and after return;
- **Data:** support public institutions in collecting data on international labour migration;
- **Mobility schemes:** to strengthen institutional capacity to manage labour migration processes and to improve partners' knowledge on the recognition of qualifications for foreign markets. This component is implemented by GIZ, Enabel and OFII. GIZ adopts a multi-sectoral approach including state actors (ministries, public employment services, and vocational training institutions), the private sector (chambers of commerce and industry, professional associations, enterprises) and civil society (integration services, diaspora).
- **Regional cooperation:** strengthening dialogue and cooperation between partner countries on labour migration and mobility.

- **Strengthening cooperation on labour migration through a multi-stakeholder approach**

During this panel, discussions focused on the practical challenges faced by the different actors dealing with labour migration issues, including the private sector.

IOM's policy approach to labour migration

IOM recognises that a successful labour migration policy is necessarily :

- **A long-term policy** that takes into account the impact of globalisation and digitalisation of labour markets and the transition to greener economies;
- **A labour market-friendly policy** that relies on accurate and reliable labour market data in origin and destination countries and the involvement of the private sector and employers from policy design to implementation;
- **A policy based on the human and labour rights** of migrant workers, based on fair and ethical recruitment;
- **A policy that is mutually beneficial** to sending and receiving countries as well as to migrants and their communities, including through local skills development initiatives and remittance mechanisms.

Practical aspects of bilateral migration-related projects: the Spanish experience

There are several challenges and opportunities during the life cycle of a project, including: 1) **the bilateral relationship** provides security for both countries in designing and implementing projects, usefulness of bilateral and multilateral social security agreements (Morocco, Senegal); 2) **identification of mutual needs** at the initiative of Spain and the partner country; 3) **design of a migration project**: type of migration, advantages and disadvantages of different types of migration; 4) **actors and governance**: importance of the role of the local administration and the participation of the private sector; 5) **the selection process of workers** (transparent procedures, access to information on the regulations of the destination countries, role of the home administration in pre-selecting candidates, e.g. the role of ANAPEC in bilateral projects with Morocco); 6) **travel and work**: Huge potential of circular migration, beyond remittances; 7) **return in the context of circular migration**; 8) **evaluation**; 9) **the new model of circular migration in Spain** that allows for multi-annual, 4-year authorisations that allow for work for up to 9 months per year.

International migration at the heart of the RIU hotel chain's expansion and growth

Geographical mobility of employees of the RIU hotel chain is strongly encouraged. This circular work mobility has enabled some employees based in the Canary Islands to go to work in Cabo Verde and some employees from Cabo Verde to go to work in Senegal. Subsequently, these same employees can return to the country where they were previously working or remain working in their new destination. In addition, local staff are recruited in each city where the hotel chain is located.

Analysis of meeting attendance*:

- The event attracted a diverse audience of around 100 participants from 32 countries.
- The thematic meeting fully met the expectations of the participants.
- Participants highlighted a number of recommendations, including the need to organise such meetings on a regular basis in order to promote regular labour migration channels between origin and host countries, and the interest of showing videos or audio-visual material on concrete experiences at these meetings.

* This analysis is based on the responses provided by participants to the evaluation forms.