



**Rabat Process**  
Euro-African Dialogue on  
Migration and Development

# Joint High-Level Meeting

## Khartoum Process and Rabat Process

*Empowering EU-Africa cooperation: innovative pathways for skills mobility*

16-17 October 2024 | Lisbon, Portugal

### Policy takeaways and joint recommendations

Migration can be a powerful tool for sustainable socioeconomic development and prosperity. When managed effectively, skills mobility becomes a 'triple win' benefiting migrants, countries of origin and destination. It creates a shared opportunity for Africa and Europe, calling for joint efforts to support the movement of skills, ideas, innovation, and culture. Origin countries can address (youth) unemployment, support skills development, and tap into remittances. Destination countries benefit from new talent and energy, helping to address labour shortages and demographic challenges. To fully realise these benefits, migration must be safe, orderly, and regular. Thoughtful negotiation, coordination, and multidimensional frameworks can help maximise mutual benefits and avoid brain drain and brain waste.

Against this backdrop, delegations at the October 2024 Joint High-Level Meeting of the Khartoum Process and Rabat Process met to discuss labour migration, skills development, and mobility in the respective regions. The below policy takeaways and recommendations reflect the exchanges among partner countries, on tackling common challenges, enhancing synergies, and identifying opportunities to unlock potential across both continents.

#### 1. Rethinking what skills are in demand and reflecting these in diverse migration pathways

A range of professions contribute to society, and a variety of skills at all levels are in demand. Yet most migration pathways to Europe are reserved for those deemed highly skilled, leaving many prospective migrants ineligible for mobility opportunities. Additionally, there may be a mismatch between the demand for and availability of skilled workers, while origin countries might not only want to send abroad their most skilled workers but also those who can further develop their skills and bring them back. Meanwhile, short-term, circular, and long-term migration each provide valuable benefits. Short-term mobility can support skills development and enrich the local talent pool through, for instance, study and training opportunities. Circular mobility can mitigate brain drain in origin countries. Long-term migration opportunities can enhance talent attraction for destination countries and provide greater potential for remittances. A balanced approach is therefore important, in terms of migrant profiles and length of mobility.

#### Recommendations:

- Develop labour migration pathways that consider different skill levels and offer different forms of mobility including short-term, circular, and long-term migration. Increase pathways for low and technical-skilled roles and shift from a focus on academic experience toward increased consideration of professional experience.
- Engage the private sector in defining labour and skills needs to increase alignment between labour needs and pathways.
- Invest in forward-looking skills development, particularly in emerging sectors such as the green economy, to provide specialised opportunities that build specific occupational skills and address current and future labour needs.

#### 2. Ensuring worker protection and good working conditions across the entire migration journey

Protecting the rights and ensuring fair treatment of labour migrants is essential at every stage of their journey. This requires proactive efforts to uphold and monitor worker protection and working conditions. Bilateral labour agreements (BLAs), multilateral labour agreements (MLAs), and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) can be effective tools to incorporate such protection into skills mobility, but these must be well implemented to be

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effective. The provision of information is also important so that labour migrants are aware of their rights as well as expectations of them (for instance regarding circularity).

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure pathways are clear and well structured, encouraging safe, orderly, and regular migration.
- Raise awareness in destination countries about the need for and role of migrant workers to promote positive attitudes toward and fair treatment of this population.
- Deploy labour attachés to monitor the situation of migrant workers, alongside other efforts to monitor violations.
- Effectively regulate job agencies working with origin countries and create a system to vet job offers and employers.
- Engage in more BLAs that include worker protection to increase the share of labour migrants who move to places that fall under such agreements.

**3. Accompanying mobility with (re)integration support**

Labour migration involves more than just securing employment—it also encompasses the integration of migrants into society. Job matching alone is not enough; comprehensive support is needed to help migrants adapt to their new environment, including assistance with employment, entrepreneurship, and other aspects of life. This support should be coordinated with the involvement of employment actors. For those who are returning to their origin country, there is a need to thoughtfully consider what happens after their return. While migrants can bring back valuable knowledge and contribute to development, effective reintegration support and job creation are key for enabling them to apply their skills and knowledge productively.

**Recommendations:**

- Support employers to adapt their operation models so that they can successfully onboard and include international hires.
- Provide clear and structured pathways for long-term integration, including the recognition of skills and qualifications, access to social protection and legal safeguards, family reunification, and the transition from temporary to long-term residency. Boost the uptake of long-term residence status in Europe by the eligible population.
- Offer upskilling and career advancement opportunities for migrants and returnees. Include both employment and entrepreneurship as part of (re)integration support to reflect individual interests and profiles.
- Prepare individuals before migrating by sharing information about their rights and the culture in the destination country and connecting them with the diaspora.
- Ensure the portability of social security to support migrants who wish to move.

**4. Reaching multiple groups with the same skills and mobility structures**

Many countries are simultaneously countries of origin and destination. At the same time, many citizens do not move across international borders. By designing skills and mobility programmes that cater to multiple groups—such as those remaining in the country, those migrating, and those returning – valuable synergies can be unlocked. This includes supporting emigrants, immigrants, and refugees, as well as addressing both regional and intercontinental employment needs. It can also create opportunities for both employment and entrepreneurship.

**Recommendations:**

- Locate multiple services in one place to make it easier for different populations to access a variety of support related to mobility, skills, and/or (re)integration.
- Develop continent-to-continent skills exchange platforms, connecting African workers with job opportunities both within Africa and abroad.
- Extend legal pathways to people currently or recently affected by conflict to provide livelihood opportunities and avoid irregularity. Include refugees in labour mobility schemes to boost self-reliance, labour market integration, and more equal responsibility/burden sharing.

- Engage diasporas and encourage them to return for shorter or longer periods to contribute to development in their origin countries.

### 5. Improving the efficiency and accessibility of existing pathways

There are numerous initiatives focused on skills mobility, but significant potential remains to optimize and improve the existing pathways. This includes the careful implementation and monitoring of current initiatives, peer learning, and incorporation of lessons learned. It is not only about the availability of pathways, but also about ensuring they are efficient and accessible. Many skills mobility partnerships remain at the pilot stage and target small numbers of participants. While pilots are useful for testing and refining approaches, a persistence of pilots may cause frustration at the limited impact. Additionally, more research can deepen understanding and drive evidence-informed policies that maximise the development benefits of skills mobility.

#### Recommendations:

- Test new approaches via pilots while also scaling up what works.
- Engage in continuous dialogue regarding what works and what does not, including proactive monitoring, to refine skills mobility schemes as needed.
- Shorten processing times to improve the situation of workers and employers. This can include the development of swift and simplified procedures in cooperation with the private sector. It can also include the deployment of labour attachés to speed up processing.
- Improve the operation of existing pathways by focusing on a particular sector, tailoring mobility schemes to meet targeted industry demands.
- Ensure that policies and frameworks are grounded in research and data, including by conducting additional research on the migration-development nexus to maximise benefits.

### 6. Enhancing skills development and recognition

Skills development and recognition are key to making mutually beneficial labour mobility work. It is not just about recruiting talent; it also involves investing in the development of talent. To secure needed skills, efforts must extend beyond simple job matching to encompass strategic investment in the skills that are in demand now and in the future. This requires increased investment in origin countries and investments that also benefit the local labour pool, with a focus on skills needed in both local and international labour markets. It is essential to invest in youth, who represent the future of our labour markets and our societies. Meanwhile, the recognition of foreign skills and qualifications is critical for enabling workers to put their knowledge to full use. This has been a key hurdle, and challenges here may mean that initiatives remain at the pilot stage or that migrants are underemployed, both of which mean that skills mobility is not reaching its full potential. Yet, skills are underemphasised in many current skills mobility agreements.

#### Recommendations:

- Foster ongoing skills mobility partnerships, with input from the private sector and a focus on streamlined skills recognition. Focus on training more individuals than those who will migrate, thereby boosting the local labour market with enhanced skills.
- Increase investments in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and education in Africa, aligning with job markets, connecting to employers, and considering forward-looking skills needs.
- Place increased emphasis on skills in the negotiation of BLAs. Develop comprehensive agreements that cover multiple aspects such as recognition of prior learning, upskilling, and reintegration.
- Encourage cooperation between governments, educational institutions, professional bodies, and employers to standardise recognition frameworks and provide bridging support for migrants where necessary.
- Implement and expand dual certification programmes and strengthen university cooperation, including dual degrees. Invest in short-term pathways for apprenticeships, internships, and study programs to facilitate skills development.
- Advocate for the establishment of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) to facilitate the full use of skills across multiple labour markets.
- Improve the harmonisation of skills and qualifications recognition within regions to support free movement.

## 7. Getting necessary stakeholders on board

Labour mobility is a complex process that involves various government sectors in both origin and destination countries, including ministries responsible for labour, education, foreign affairs, visa policies, and public employment services. Additionally, the participation of employers, trade unions, and civil society is crucial for ensuring that migration pathways are effective – protecting migrants' rights, addressing business needs, and fostering development. To achieve this, it is essential to involve a broad range of stakeholders and ensure robust collaboration and coordination.

### Recommendations:

- Involve employers and social partners from the outset in the design of labour mobility schemes so that their needs and perspectives are understood and incorporated, and projects gain their buy-in.
- Bring European Member States together for information sharing and joint action to avoid duplication of effort and enhance efficiency.
- Align EU development initiatives with the AU's Agenda 2063, fostering synergies that will benefit both continents by addressing shared challenges and unlocking mutual opportunities.