

SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS: EXPLORING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LABOUR MIGRATION

EMN-OECD INFORM

March 2022



1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of unprecedented demographic changes, technological development and growing mobility of workers, skills shortages in the EU are becoming more pronounced, and Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) with third countries are increasingly being considered as part of the solution.¹ SMPs are a relatively new concept promoting a sustainable approach to skilled migration and mobility with the idea of building skills both for the benefit of countries of origin and destination. SMPs are inextricably linked to two other highly similar and often interchangeable concepts - Talent Partnerships (TPs) and Global Skills Partnerships (GSPs).

Although SMPs may vary in form, modality and type of stakeholder involvement, they all place skills development, mobility and mutual benefit of countries of origin and

destination at the heart of their efforts.² Furthermore, as highlighted by a recent report by the European Parliament,³ providing vocational training in the countries of origin can be a central element of SMPs. SMPs aim to create a “quadruple win” solution for countries of origin, destination, migrant workers as well as employers and the private sector, thus enhancing the positive effects of migration on development.

SMPs typically include the following five components: (1) formalised state cooperation, (2) multi-stakeholder involvement (3) training, (4) skills recognition, and (5) migration/mobility.⁴ SMPs can among other things include (vocational) training in the origin or destination country, internships in the destination country, or scholarships.⁵



2. METHODOLOGY

This inform presents experiences with implementing SMPs and similar initiatives in the EU and globally, exploring the main challenges and benefits. Due to the diversity of related initiatives and multitude of actors involved, this inform does not aim to provide an exhaustive mapping of SMPs and SMP-related initiatives, but rather aims to provide an initial overview of the types of initiatives

implemented. In doing so, it highlights not only experiences by EU Member States, but also draws on experiences from other countries and international organisations. Thus, the inform aims to form a basis for further discussion at EU and national levels.

The analysis was prepared on the basis of contributions from 23 EU Member States⁶ and the Organisation for

- 1 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 'Skills Mobility Partnerships', available at: <https://eea.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl666/files/documents/Skills-Mobility-Partnerships-Infosheet.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022. See also OECD, 'What would make Skills partnerships work in Practice?', 2018 available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 European Parliamentary Research Service, 'Legal migration policy and law: European added value assessment', 2021, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694211/EPRS_STU\(2021\)694211_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694211/EPRS_STU(2021)694211_EN.pdf), last accessed 22 February 2022.
- 4 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 'Skills Mobility Partnership's', available at: <https://eea.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl666/files/documents/Skills-Mobility-Partnerships-Infosheet.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The following Member States provided responses to the Ad-hoc query 2021.44 "Skills mobility partnerships": Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. Ad-Hoc Queries are a tool for the EMN National Contact Points and the European Commission to collect comparative information on asylum and migration matters of relevance to policy development in Member States.

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Centre for Global Development (CGD) and the association of crafts and SMEs in Europe (SME United)⁷. It also builds on information provided in the EMN inform on New Legal Pathways to fulfil labour needs.⁸ More specifically:

- Section 4 was based on desk research and contributions provided by European Training Foundation (ETF) and Centre for Global Development (CGD).

- Section 5.1. was based on 23 EMN NCP responses to a common set of questions via an ad-hoc query.
- Section 5.2. was prepared by OECD providing non-EU examples of SMPs.
- Sections 6.1 and 6.2. were based on the analysis of EMN responses and partner contributions.
- Section 6.3. was prepared by OECD providing an analysis of the future outlook, drawing from material presented in this inform.

3. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

SMPs are increasingly recognised as a policy tool to promote a sustainable approach to skilled migration and mobility, and build skills both for the benefit of countries of origin and destination. SMPs are inextricably linked to two other very similar and often interchangeable concepts - Talent Partnerships and Global Skills Partnerships.

At EU level, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum calls for Talent Partnerships to boost mutually beneficial international mobility, based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries.

Overall, SMPs are not a wide-spread policy tool in the EU to date, as most EU Member States⁹ do not have any SMP or SMP-like agreements/formalised cooperation in place, nor do they have prior experience with this kind of partnership. Some countries,¹⁰ however, have longstanding experience and multiple initiatives in place.

The experience of EU Member States with SMPs is diverse in terms of focus, objectives and implementation modes. Most SMPs focus on youth exchanges, mobility of young, qualified professionals or graduates as well as circular migration in the field of higher education. SMPs can be implemented through bilateral or multilateral agreements, programmes and pilot projects.

While some SMPs are typically implemented with partner countries or regions which are considered of strategic importance for the country of destination, others are open to multiple partner countries. Specific sectors addressed by SMPs include healthcare, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and agriculture.

Challenges identified in relation to SMPs include their scalability, their relatively high cost and the difficulties encountered to involve multiple stakeholders, including employers. In terms of opportunities, SMPs can contribute to unlocking the potential of skilled mobility based on a more sustainable approach. What distinguishes SMPs (as well as TPs and GSPs) from other approaches to labour migration is that they specifically aim for a “quadruple win”, benefiting the individual and the employer, as well as the destination state and the country of origin more widely. Well-designed and implemented SMPs may in the future act as vehicles for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enhance migration and mobility that harness the potential of migrants’ skills in a way that allows for countries of origin to benefit, whilst at the same time addressing EU employers’ most pressing skills and labour needs.

4. POLICY CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF SMPs

4.1. EU LEVEL

At EU level, in 2011, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)¹¹ placed emphasis on the importance of the skills dimension in migration and mobility initiatives with third countries and proposed to integrate all aspects of migration and mobility of third-country nationals into overarching “mobility partnerships”. Following this approach, Mobility Partnerships Declarations were signed between the EU and nine third countries in the European Neighbourhood, which allowed the EU to subsequently include provisions for cooperation on labour matching, education and training in its mobility partnerships and migration dialogues with third countries (see Box 1).

Box 1: EU mobility partnerships

Due to the importance of the migration flows from European Neighbourhood countries, the European Commission signed Mobility Partnership Declarations with Cape Verde (2008), Moldova (2008), Georgia (2009), Armenia (2011), Azerbaijan (2013), Morocco (2013), Tunisia (2014), Jordan (2014) and Belarus (2016)¹². These partnerships brought together all migration-related issues in a single package, following the four pillars of the GAMM (legal migration/mobility; migration and development; irregular migration; and international protection/asylum). Each declaration makes explicit reference to the skills dimension of

7 Special thanks go to Helen Dempster from the Centre for Global Development (CGD) and Ivan Martin from University Pompeu Fabra (UPF) for sharing their expertise in the process of writing this EMN Inform.

8 EMN inform, ‘Exploring legal pathways to fulfil labour needs’, 2021, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2021-07/oo_eu_legal_pathways_inform_2021_en.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022.

9 CY, CZ, EE, EL, FI, HU, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE.

10 AT, BE, BG, DE, ES, FR, IE, LU.

11 European Commission, ‘Communication on Global Approach to Migration and Mobility’, COM/2011/0743 final, 2011, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0743>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

12 For more information on the evaluation of some of the mobility partnerships, please see: <https://macimide.maastrichtuniversity.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Evaluation-of-EU-Mobility-Partnerships.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

migration under the first two pillars such as job creation, labour/skills matching, employment support to migrants and returnees, and recognition and/or validation of migrants' qualifications and skills. Given its mandate regarding human capital development in support to the external policies of the EU, the ETF was one of the EU agencies contributing to the implementation of these mobility partnerships.¹³

In 2020, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum emphasised the importance of creating new legal pathways in the context of labour migration, skills matching and addressing labour shortages.¹⁴ It gave the concept of 'mobility partnerships' a new impetus with the announcement of 'Talent Partnerships', aimed at providing a comprehensive policy framework, as well as funding, to boost mutually beneficial international mobility, based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries. Talent Partnerships will aim to provide direct support for mobility to study, work or for training, as well as will ensure capacity building assistance to partner countries.¹⁵

The New Pact calls for Talent Partnerships to be inclusive, building strong cooperation between concerned institutions (such as Ministries of Labour and Education, employers and social partners, education and training providers, and diaspora associations). The Commission aims to stimulate this cooperation through dedicated outreach and build a network of involved enterprises. To start this process, the relevant implementing partners at EU level will have to learn from experiences already made by stakeholders in the EU and abroad, as well as build upon partnerships already established.

4.2. International level

In 2018, the United Nation's General Assembly, as part of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and

Regular Migration¹⁶ (GCM) called for building GSPs "among countries that strengthen training capacities of national authorities and relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and trade unions, and foster skills development of workers in countries of origin and migrants in countries of destination with a view to preparing trainees for employability in the labour markets of all participating countries". In that same year, several international organisations¹⁷ joined forces to support the GSP model.¹⁸

The Centre for Global Development (CGD) has been one of the main promoters of GSPs as a migration model, which can serve four main purposes: to address demographic imbalances and future migration pressure, address skills shortages, combat "brain drain" and contribute to development of countries of origin.¹⁹ According to CGD, "the GSP model envisages that the country of destination provides technology and finance, to train potential migrants with targeted skills in the country of origin, and hosts migrants with the skills they need to integrate and contribute best upon arrival, while the country of origin provides that training and receives support for the training of non-migrants with the aim of increasing human capital".²⁰

The partnerships formed are thus expected to contribute to human development, by improving (potential) migrants' skills sets, individual career prospects and remittances, and they help destination countries to meet skill shortages and labour market needs. Furthermore, by actively involving the private sector in the development of these partnerships, the costs and benefits are shared not only between governments, but also with employers. This multi-stakeholder approach may help to overcome the often-encountered lack of sustainability, due to the temporary nature of project-based approaches, and the high costs of interventions, which frequently requires funding by international donors.²¹



5. SMPS IN PRACTICE

5.1. EU member states' experience with implementing SMPs

23 EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) responded to the EMN ad-hoc query on SMPs, providing information based on a common set of questions. The results showed that EU Member States experiences in implementing SMPs differ significantly: of the 23 Member States that participated in

this inform, 15 Member States²² did not have any SMPs in place, whilst eight Member States did.²³ Even though the majority of EU Member States did not have experience, some (such as the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia) reported on relevant initiatives with at least some elements of SMPs. For example, Lithuania reported on development cooperation projects involving the development

13 ETF supports activities including addressing the root causes of migration by improving policies for skills development mechanisms; analyses of the education, training, and employment systems of source countries; improving their labour market information and skills anticipation and matching capacity; recognition and validation of qualifications of migrants in all migration stages; and providing skills-related inputs to EU Mobility Partnerships and pilot legal migration projects.

14 Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM(2020) 609 final, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en, last accessed on 22 February 2022.

15 See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en, last accessed 22 February 2022.

16 UN General Assembly, 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration' adopted 19 December 2018, available at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195, last accessed 22 February 2022.

17 Notably International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

18 International Labour Organisation, Global Skills Partnerships for Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_653993.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022. See also: ILO, IOM, UNESCO and International Organisation of Employers (IOE), Global Skills Partnership on Migration, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_821274.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022.

19 Centre for Global Development – Global Skills Partnerships <https://gsp.cgdev.org/learn-more/>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

20 Ibid.

21 Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) & Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM), 'An EU-Africa partnership scheme for human capital formation and skill mobility', 2018, https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Barlund-et-al-Scheme_training_migration.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022.

22 CY, CZ, EE, FI, EL, HR, HU, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE.

23 AT, BE, BG, FR, DE, IE, LU, ES.

of skills, multi-stakeholder involvement, training, and mobility, specifically with Eastern European countries.²⁴

The experience of EU Member States with SMPs is diverse in terms of focus, objectives and implementation modes, with some countries, such as Belgium and Germany, having longstanding experience and several different initiatives in place. SMPs with third countries can take different forms, and are currently being implemented through bilateral agreements, programmes and pilot projects. Most SMPs focus on youth exchanges, mobility of young, qualified professionals or graduates as well as circular migration in the field of higher education. While some SMPs are typically implemented with partner countries or regions which are considered of strategic importance for the country of destination, others are open to multiple partner countries. Specific sectors include healthcare (e.g. Belgium²⁵, Germany, Ireland), information and communication technology – ICT (e.g. Belgium, Germany) and agriculture (e.g. Spain).

Some Member States elaborated on migration opportunities for third country nationals for employment and/or education purposes but do not consider these opportunities SMPs, because relevant programmes lack one or several key components of SMPs. For example, a few Member States²⁶ reported on mobility schemes, including scholarships for foreign students, or explained their general approach as regards the recruitment of workers from third countries.

5.2. EU-level programmes and projects

Through its various funding programmes, the EU has been facilitating and financing a number of SMPs and SMP-like programmes and projects. The Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), for example, is an EU-funded initiative, implemented by ICMPD, which seeks to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and partner countries across a broad range of migration-related themes aligned to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. This includes labour mobility pilots, dialogue with countries of origin on migration, projects to enhance migration management processes and those that maximise the development impact of migration in the country of origin.²⁷ The boxes below showcase examples of SMPs facilitated by the EU.

Box 2: Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular migration (MENTOR) II²⁸

MENTOR II is a multi-sector circular mobility scheme, financed by the MPF, that offers professional traineeship opportunities to young Moroccans and Tunisians in Northern Italy. Building on the results from its predecessor project MENTOR I, this multi-stakeholder initiative applies a territorial approach to develop sustainable cooperation and dialogue across governance levels (local, regional, national) in Italy and its partner countries. Under the scheme, a new expanded governance structure has been developed that reflects the diversity of actors required to support labour schemes, to ensure that the enabling environment is present for the various processes required from skills matching to visas, to training.

Box 3: Digital Talents for Moldova – Slovakia: Labour mobility programme of ICT graduates between Slovakia and Moldova (DIGI TALENTS)²⁹

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

Box 4: THAMM programme “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa”

The THAMM programme aims to contribute to improving the governance of labour migration and the protection of migrant workers from selected North African countries, namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.³⁰ THAMM is implemented by Belgium and Germany in collaboration with IOM and ILO. It offers an innovative mobility scheme (following the GSP approach), based on partnership, skills development and support for talent to access employment opportunities both in the countries of origin and host countries. THAMM includes a focus on knowledge transfers for the active management of migration in the partner countries as well as piloting placements of qualified personnel and trainees to Belgium and in Germany.

In Belgium, THAMM is implemented by ENABEL, the Belgian Development Agency. The period of

24 An example of such project is training of mental health professionals in Ukraine. In 2016-2019, the Vilnius City Mental Health Centre participated in a project to reform the mental health services sector (e.g., psychosocial rehabilitation, crisis interventions, and suicide prevention etc.) in Eastern Ukraine. The project provided theoretical training to doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers in Ukraine, while practical trainings were conducted in Lithuania.

25 In Belgium, a healthcare project funded by AMIF is planned in 2022.

26 e.g. EE, LV, NL, SE.

27 For more information see: <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

28 For more information see: <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/30-mediterranean-network-for-training-orientation-to-regular-migration-mentor-ii>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

29 For more information see: <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/24-digital-talents-for-moldova-slovakia-for-talents-labour-mobility-programme-of-ict-graduates-between-slovakia-and-moldova-digi-talents>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

30 Germany's partner countries are Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, while Belgium partners are only Tunisia and Morocco

implementation is 2021³¹ – 2023, where THAMM aims to provide training of 350 young people in Morocco and Tunisia of which one fourth would get the opportunity to work in Belgium.³² In Germany, among other measures, a pilot group of 600 migrants is to be placed either in dual vocational training or employment in the German labour market, following intensive pre-departure preparation.

In Germany, THAMM is implemented by the German Development Agency (GIZ), in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency, from 2019 until 2023. Since its start, the programme has linguistically and culturally prepared 127 prospective apprentices from Morocco and Tunisia for living and working in Germany, primarily focusing on the hotel and catering industry.³³

Box 5: IOM-MATCH-project (Migration of African Talents through Capacity building and Hiring)

Under the demand-driven circular migration IOM-MATCH-project³⁴ (between Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Nigeria and Senegal), vocational training in the destination country is accompanied by a temporary job placement in one of the four participating EU Member States, with the aim of upskilling, increasing employability upon return to the home countries whilst (temporarily) filling labour shortages in the countries of destination. The project concerns in particular, but not exclusively, sectors with labour shortages in the destination countries such as ICT, technology and engineering. The project duration is 36 months – i.e. from January 2020 to December 2022.

5.3. Country level programmes and projects

This section provides a country-by-country overview of those Member States that have SMPs or SMP-like initiatives in place.

AUSTRIA

Six SMPs have been implemented in Austria within its framework for International Higher Education Cooperation, together covering a large number of different third countries. The SMPs focus on higher education, scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange, with target groups including students, teachers and academic researchers, who are allowed to stay temporarily in Austria and receive funding for subsistence and travel costs. The key actors

involved in implementing SMPs in Austria include the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research; the Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD); the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) as well as Austrian and international universities and research institutions.

The SMPs each have different thematic and regional focuses and vary in terms of duration and total funding allocated. Partner regions of the SMPs include Africa (i.e. Africa-UniNet³⁵); Asia (i.e. ASEA-UniNet,³⁶ Eurasia-Pacific UniNet³⁷ and Taiwan-Austria Funding Programme³⁸) and Eastern Europe (CEEPUS Programme³⁹).

BELGIUM

Five SMPs have been implemented in Belgium with African partner countries, including Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia and Senegal. The SMPs adopted innovative approaches to labour mobility and skills development of migrants. The target groups of the SMPs are young graduates from specific sectors, such as biotechnology and ICT. The implementing organisations are the Belgian Development Agency Enabel and IOM. SMPs reported by Belgium also include multi-national programmes funded by the EU and with participation of other Member States, such as THAMM and IOM-Match (please see section above). In some of the initiatives (i.e. THAMM and PALIM), sectors and occupations are chosen together with public and private partners from countries of origin and destination. Training is then provided in the country of origin, whereas upskilling takes place in the country of destination.

Box 6: SMPs implemented in Belgium

- The PALIM project,⁴⁰ implemented between March 2019 and April 2021, aimed to support the mobility of ICT Moroccan workers in the Flanders region to address labour shortages, and to enhance their ICT skills and employability in Morocco and the international labour market. PALIM tested the GSP approach, based on the assumption that labour mobility better benefits the parties when talents are able to find a qualified job both in their country of origin and in the country of destination.
- The PEM project⁴¹ with Senegal (2021-2024) is an entrepreneurial mobility scheme. Internships and training are organised in Belgium offering temporary mobility to owners of micro and nano businesses. Furthermore, assistance provided by business support mechanisms in Belgium (including universities based in the three regions and/or enterprises themselves). Beneficiaries include micro and nano entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs and diaspora-led enterprises, business support mechanisms,

31 THAMM-Enabel was signed in August 2020 but concretely started in March 2021, with the progressive deployment of the project team in the three countries covered (Belgium, Morocco and Tunisia).

32 For more information see: <https://open.enabel.be/nl/MAR/2460/updates/towards-a-holistic-approach-to-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-in-north-africa.html> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

33 For more information see: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/92649.html> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

34 For more information see: <https://eea.iom.int/match-hiring-african-talents> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

35 For more information see: <https://www.africa-uninet.at/> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

36 For more information see: <https://asea-uninet.org/> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

37 For more information see: <http://www.eurasiapacific.net/> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

38 For more information see: <https://oead.at/en/news/article/2020/06/funding-programme-taiwan-austria-1> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

39 For more information see: <https://www.ceepus.info/> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

40 More information available at <https://open.enabel.be/en/MAR/2337/p/projet-pilote-rpondant-aux-pnuries-de-main-d-oeuvre-grce-des-modles-innovants-de-mobilit.html> and <https://www.enabel.be/content/pilot-projetc-enabel-becomes-european-future-fit-project-model> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

41 More information available at: <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/27-pilot-project-for-business-mobility-between-belgium-and-senegal-pem> , last accessed 22 February 2022.

incubators, networks of incubators and agencies supporting export and/or economic development in countries of origin and destination. The internships are facilitated by Enabel and implemented by private partners (both in Belgium and Senegal) to implement the project and brings these partners into contact with each other.

- The project “Enhancing Tunisian youth employability through vocational apprenticeships and professional internships in Belgian companies” (March 2018 - August 2019), implemented by IOM, aimed to provide 30 Tunisian young graduates the opportunity to gain experience in Belgium as unpaid interns for a period of 6 months, before returning to Tunisia for employment linked to the work experience gained in Belgium. Interns received accommodation and a monthly expenses allowance in line with the cost of living in Belgium by IOM Belgium.

BULGARIA

Since 2017, Bulgaria has concluded several bilateral agreements on labour migration regulation (BALMR) with specific third countries, as part of its National Strategy for Migration (2021-2025). Three BALMR have been concluded with Armenia, Moldova and Georgia, whilst negotiations are ongoing with Ukraine and Belarus and there is a mandate for starting negotiations with Albania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The BALMR allow for temporary migration with access to the Bulgarian labour market for one year and nine months for seasonal work, without the need to obtain a work permit. The agreements do not specify any sectors or occupations, but they do include safeguards, including on fair recruitment and equal treatment of workers.

FRANCE

France concluded seven bilateral agreements for the management of migration flows, based on three distinct yet complementary components: the organisation of legal migration, the fight against irregular immigration, and solidarity-based development. Four of these bilateral agreements (three have entered into force and one has been signed) relate solely to economic migration, circular migration and mobility, to facilitate the employment and promote job mobility of young professionals or graduates from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, India and United States.⁴²

An additional current initiative, the Young Professionals scheme⁴³ allows young people from 17 third countries, who are already active in the labour market, to gain professional experience in France for a up to 18 months, thus focussing on circular and temporary migration. The maximum period of employment, the employment sector and applicable quota vary by country. The scheme is underpinned by 11 agreements specifically targeting young people, and six general international agreements also addressing this

target group. The programme is managed by the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII).

GERMANY

Germany is the EU Member State with most SMP initiatives, as one way to counter the labour and skills shortages in certain sectors that the country is experiencing. Several initiatives for the admission of skilled workers from third countries are in place, including SMPs. In addition to the recruitment of skilled workers, SMPs shall also make sure that international standards on fair recruitment are negotiated and monitored together with partners.

Firstly, the German Federal Employment Agency concludes bilateral placement agreements for specific occupations with partner authorities in third countries. These agreements provide facilitated admission into Germany and allow third-country nationals to already work in Germany in the respective occupational field as an ‘assistant’ in their specific field while the procedure to recognise their skills and qualifications is being completed.

Secondly, to secure the needed skilled labour force, several initiatives for the admission of skilled workers from third countries have been put in place, including SMPs. The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development aims at piloting partnerships with selected countries to test scalable, sustainable and development-oriented models for vocational training and labour migration to Germany.

Box 7: SMPs in Germany

- Commissioned by GIZ is piloting new models for skills partnerships. Within the Programme on “**Partnership Approaches for Development-oriented Vocational Training and Labour Migration (PAM)**”⁴⁴ specific mobility models between Germany and the selected partner countries - Ecuador, Nigeria, Kosovo and Vietnam - are being developed for testing with partners, including partnerships between stakeholders from the public and private sector, and civil society.
- In the healthcare sector, the **Triple-Win programme**⁴⁵ aims to recruit and train nursing staff from various countries. In addition, Federal Employment Agency recruits young people in El Salvador and Vietnam taking part in vocational training in nursing. Furthermore, GIZ implements a pilot project called “Global Skills Partnerships Nursing”, with a focus on shortening recognition processes in Germany by inserting relevant training content in the curricula in partner countries and fostering knowledge exchanges between partner institutions.
- The pilot project “**Hand in Hand for International Talents**”⁴⁶ matches companies with international qualified professionals from Brazil, India and Vietnam in a number of skilled occupations. The project supports small and medium-sized companies in the recruitment of international skilled workers in specific occupations and accompanies

42 More information at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000038821427> and <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000038431154>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

43 More information available at: <https://www.ofii.fr/procedure/recruter-un-travailleur-etranger>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

44 For more information see: <https://www.ngocentre.org.vn/jobs/programme-officer-%E2%80%9Cpam%E2%80%9D>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

45 For more information see: <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2012-en-akzente04-triple-win-pilot-project.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

46 For more information see: <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/pilot-project-hand-in-hand-for-international-talents-brings-companies-and-skilled-workers-together>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

businesses and skilled workers throughout the entire process.

- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development also commissioned GIZ with the implementation of a Skills Partnership for Mobility in Kosovo between 2016 and 2020. In cooperation with the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK), the programme created job prospects in the construction sector for young people in Kosovo while opening up employment opportunities for them on the German labour market.⁴⁷ A large scale project with Georgia was also implemented by GIZ.⁴⁸ The project included a range of objectives, including capacity building of Georgian policy-makers, testing a pilot scheme on circular migration and engagement with diaspora.

IRELAND

Whilst in Ireland SMPs are not part of a national strategy on labour migration and satisfying skills shortages, a number of relevant initiatives are in place, including some specifically for healthcare professionals, nurses and medical graduates. The SMPs are diverse in scope, target groups and mobility requirements, as illustrated in the box below.

Box 8: SMPs in Ireland

- In 2013, the International Medical Graduate Training Initiative (IMGTI) was launched which supports qualified doctors from Pakistan, Sudan and some Gulf States to carry out post-graduate medical training in Ireland offered by relevant training colleges. Permission is initially granted for a maximum of 24 months and can be renewed for an additional 12 months, by application, if the relevant training is still being undertaken. The Initiative has been based on Memoranda of Understanding signed by counterparts in third countries.
- Ireland's employment permits system includes an Exchange Agreement Employment Permit, based on formal agreements with third countries and designed to facilitate the employment of foreign nationals in Ireland pursuant to exchange agreements to which Ireland is a party. Such permits may be issued for differing periods up to a maximum of two years, depending on the type of exchange agreement, and there are currently five agreements facilitating study, research, teaching and other educational activities.
- Furthermore, under a separate scheme known as the Atypical Working Scheme, non-EEA nurses may be given short term permission to complete the skills recognition process in Ireland, with a view to taking up longer-term employment.
- Irish Aid (Government's programme for overseas cooperation) administers the Ireland Fellows Programme, which brings professionals from Ireland's partner countries to study for a fully funded one-year master's-level qualification at

a University or Institute of Technology in Ireland. The aims of the Programme are to nurture future leaders; to develop in-country capacity to achieve national Sustainable Development Goals; and to build positive relationships with Ireland.

LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg has concluded one bilateral agreement with Cape Verde, which entered into force in 2020. The Agreement aims to promote the movement of persons between the two countries and includes specific arrangements for admission and issuance of residence permits. It allows young professionals from Cape Verde to come and work in Luxembourg to improve their career perspectives in a company active in the field of health, or which carry out activities of a social, agricultural, craft, industrial, commercial or liberal nature. The scheme targets individuals between 18 and 35 years of age and the duration of the exchange can be from three months to 18 months. The number of young Cape Verdean admitted may not exceed 10 per year.

SPAIN

Spain has been implementing two SMPs. Firstly, the GECCO Programme managed by the Directorate General for Migration, aims at recruiting workers in sectors with labour shortages, such as agriculture, which are difficult to fill with the national labour force. Foreign workers are allowed to temporarily come to Spain to carry out a remunerated activity with the objective that upon their return they can use and capitalise the knowledge acquired and thus facilitate their employability in the local labour market. Spain is taking steps to facilitate entrepreneurial skills in women selected through the GECCO Order. With this objective, it is designing, also with Morocco, the WAFIRA project (Women as Independently Financial Rural Actors).

Furthermore, between 2019–2021 Spain implemented a pilot project entitled “Young generation as change agents”, offering higher education students a scholarship to complete a master's degree in Spain. This project, co-financed by the EU, provided 100 Moroccan graduates with the opportunity to graduate in one of the strategic sectors that had been selected by the Moroccan government. It was a temporary migratory scheme requiring participants to return to Morocco after their studies. The project also had a return and reintegration component, assisting the students with their integration in the local labour market.

5.4. Non-EU Examples of SMPs

In the past decade, a number of SMPs or SMP-like initiatives have also been developed outside the EU,⁴⁹ such as the Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC). Created with support from the Australian international cooperation agency in 2006, the APTC comprises training centres in five different Pacific nations. It was designed to train Pacific nationals up to Australian standards for vocational careers throughout the Pacific region. At the same time, it was meant to build the capacity of the Pacific training institutions, and to provide qualifications which would allow some graduates to qualify for labour migration programmes

⁴⁷ For more information see: <https://gsp.cgdev.org/2021/07/07/youth-employment-and-skills-in-kosovo-yes/>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

⁴⁸ For more information see: https://migration.commission.ge/files/pcms_en_final.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022.

⁴⁹ OECD/ADBI/ILO, 'Innovative Approaches for the Management of Labor Migration in Asia', 2018, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/be84707b-en>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

in Australia. The initial project achieved its training goals but not the expected mobility; revisions to the programme addressed issues in mobility and cost-sharing.

Box 9: Main lessons learnt from the APTC SMP implemented in Australia

More than 10 000 graduated from the programme in the first 8 years, although few (less than 2%) went to Australia to take up the higher-paid jobs for which they were trained. This was surprising since many had migration intentions. The fact that participants were older (on average, 32 years old) and often already employed reduced migration, but an external evaluation of the programme identified a number of obstacles.⁵⁰ These included the fact that the APTC project was not connected to a regular labour migration channel or international matching mechanism, so graduates had to conduct their own international job search. Further, while the APTC trained to the Australian standard, Australia's skilled migration programme still imposed a costly recognition procedure. Finally, since APTC trainers were sent from Australia, the programme cost as much as it would have cost to train in Australia. Major changes were introduced in the third stage of APTC, starting in 2018. APTC now includes coalitions with relevant stakeholders to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET) reform and the Australian aid programme. The cost-sharing model now includes some of the beneficiaries of training: individuals, individual enterprises, industries, national governments. The new stage includes connecting graduates to legal labour migration pathways.

In Korea, the Employment Permit System (EPS) for temporary non-professional employment is based on bilateral relations with 16 partner countries. EPS was instituted in 2005 and brings 40 000 - 50 000 new workers annually. While primarily a labour migration programme, EPS integrates training before and during the stay – which can last up to 10 years. When the programme was introduced in 2005, the expectation was that workers would capitalise on the skills acquired during their employment in Korea to return to the same activity, but in practice returnees have generally undertaken a different activity upon their return. This has led to a shift in training.

Box 10: Main lessons learnt from training in the EPS implemented in Korea

In the Employment Permit System (EPS), learning the Korean language is the responsibility of candidates in countries of origin. To support applicants, Human Resource Development Korea (HRD Korea), the agency managing the programme, offers a self-preparation curriculum for the exam, something which has boosted private language schools in several of the partner countries.

Following selection, HRD Korea provides additional specific training necessary for the Korean workplace to foreign workers upon their arrival and before they start their employment. They also offer training during the temporary stay of foreign workers to improve their vocational skills and to prepare for their reintegration in the country of origin. While only about 3% of EPS workers participate in this training, this still has amounted to more than 30 000 individuals over the past decade. The training initially focused on typical sectors of employment in Korea, but HRD Korea discovered that few workers returned to work in the same sectors and functions. Since then, the training has shifted focus towards employment possibilities upon return to the home country in other roles. In addition, it trains workers to become suppliers or qualified sales staff for their former Korean employers once they return home.

Another non-EU example can be found in Japan, where small-scale bilateral programmes for recruitment of nurses and care workers – initially from the Philippines and Indonesia – involve Japanese government agencies in certifying and training workers in the origin country and in Japan. These initiatives are small compared to the long-standing Technical Intern Training Program (TITP),⁵¹ first created decades ago as a form of international cooperation; firms employing TITP participants had to commit to a skills development plan. In practice, TITP skills development was limited and the programme functioned primarily as a low-skilled labour migration channel. With the introduction in 2019 of the Specified Skilled Worker programme, which is based on language and skills certification, Japanese employers have begun to operate language and skills training centres in countries of origin.



6. OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR SMPS

6.1. SMP as a policy tool for skills development and labour mobility

This inform has shown that Member States have different experiences with SMPs. Some Member States, such as Belgium and Germany, have long-standing experience with SMPs as per the IOM definition, in the sense that they cover all five identified components⁵², and include (vocational) training in the origin or destination country,

and on-the-job training in the destination country. Other Member States, such as Bulgaria, France and Luxembourg, have SMP-like initiatives and forms of cooperation (such as bilateral mobility agreements) that may not include all the five components of the definition, but which have strong mobility, circular migration and labour market features as well as solidarity-based development (France). Some Member States (such as Austria), on the other hand, are implementing mobility partnerships which focus on higher education instead.

⁵⁰ Education Resource Facility, 'Independent review of the Australia-Pacific Technical College: Final Report', 2014, available at: www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/aptc-independent-review.pdf, last accessed 22 February 2022.

⁵¹ For more information see: <https://gsp.cgdev.org/legalpathway/technical-intern-training-program-titp/>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

⁵² (1) formalised State cooperation, (2) multi-stakeholder involvement (3) training, (4) skills recognition, (5) migration/mobility

Overall, SMPs are not a wide-spread policy tool in the EU to date, as most EU Member States⁵³ do not have any SMP or SMP-like agreements/formalised cooperation in place, nor do they have any prior experience with this kind of partnership. Understanding why SMPs have had a relatively low implementation rate across EU Member States can be valuable for policy-makers who are considering to use SMPs and TPs as a tool for skills development and labour mobility in the future.

In most Member States, irrespective of whether they are implementing SMPs or not, this type of mobility partnerships is also not part of their overall labour migration or development assistance strategy or policy. The reasons for this differ, but are overall linked to Member States mostly focusing on attracting workers rather than on establishing a 'special' relationship with one or more third countries in particular. For example, Sweden does not focus on specific countries of origin, nationalities, professions/ occupations or sectors, as the Swedish system is employer-driven and open to labour migrants from all countries. Sweden also has a number of mobility schemes for international students in place, including scholarships, but does not consider them SMPs. The Netherlands also reported to already have favourable conditions in place for highly-skilled migrants, and considered that SMPs would not offer any additional possibilities within the current framework. In relation to other migrants, such as medium skilled migrants, the Dutch migration policy is rather restrictive, applying a labour market test.

However, what distinguishes SMPs (as well as TPs and GSPs) from other approaches to labour migration is that they specifically aim for a "quadruple win", benefiting the individual and the employer, as well as the destination state and the country of origin more widely. This should be achieved through a sustainable approach, which implies avoiding brain drain, enhancing capabilities and skills in both countries (hence pursuing brain gain) and, to some extent, promoting circular migration. This is very much in line with the New Pact on Asylum and Migration, which emphasises the need for a partnership-based approach to legal pathways: *"A reinforced and more comprehensive approach, would offer cooperation with partner countries and help boost mutually-beneficial international mobility."*⁵⁴ SMPs can thus act as an innovative and mutually beneficial tool for skills development and labour mobility.

There are indications that a few Member States are increasingly interested in adopting SMPs and SMP-like initiatives. For example, three Member States reported on public discussions on SMPs (Finland, Poland and Portugal). In Finland, for example, SMPs are currently under evaluation and scrutiny as one possible tool for the Member State to increase education and work-based immigration. In Slovakia, a proposal for a Labour Mobility Scheme envisages the development of SMPs. As part of the scheme a set

of factors will be taken into account in order to select the particular countries or regions to partner with. The factors include labour market needs (both in country of origin and destination country) and education structure in the country of origin.

6.2. Success factors and lessons learnt from SMP implementation

In those Member States where SMPs and similar initiatives have been implemented, the majority of SMPs were relatively new (some in pilot stages) and had not yet been evaluated; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that the initial results have been positive in terms of migrant mobility and skills development.

In Germany, cooperation initiatives, such as the 'Triple Win' programme concerning the recruitment of nurses have already been running successfully for several years with various third countries. Building on these achievements, the programme is currently being scaled up and expanded to other countries. In Ireland, the IMGTI was analysed as a case study as part of a research project "The Brain Drain to Brain Gain- Supporting the WHO Code of Practice on the recruitment of health personnel". The evaluation of the programme is positive in general and the IMGTI is presented by the WHO as a good practice example of a brain gain programme. In Austria, an evaluation of the CEEPUS programme showed that the programme was highly regarded in the academic sector. In France, on the other hand, some bilateral agreements covered low numbers of beneficiaries and thus, there are no plans to extend these agreements.

Although some of the mobility partnerships implemented have proven to meet the objective of combining international development cooperation with migration management policies, they have not been scaled up systematically. One of the reasons is the lack of involvement of stakeholders, especially employers, in both origin and destination countries.⁵⁵ The evaluation of a Belgian-Tunisian Skills Mobility Partnership implemented by IOM has shown that employer needs assessments, multiple stakeholder participation, and a focus on the participants' aspirations and plans are crucial success criteria.⁵⁶ Furthermore, IOM has formulated eight essential prerequisites⁵⁷ to ensure SMPs are effective, sustainable and benefitting all stakeholders involved.⁵⁸

Information provided by SME United⁵⁹ shows that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) overall welcome programmes such as SMPs to address skills gaps and skills mismatches. The systematic involvement of social partners, as well as assessment and recognition of qualifications and skills of candidates, are seen as key prerequisites for the success of the SMPs. Furthermore, according to SME United, entrepreneurship among migrants should be encouraged through

53 CY, CZ, EE, FI, EL, HU, LV, LT, PL, NL, PT, SK, SI, SE.

54 Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM(2020) 609 final, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en, last accessed 22 February 2022.

55 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice?', 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

56 For more information please see: <https://eea.iom.int/sites/eea/files/publication/document/Paving-the-way-for-future-labour-migration-Belgian-Tunisian-skills-mobility.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

57 1) Long- and mid-term planning; 2) Multi-stakeholder approach and policy coherence; 3) Data for evidence-based policy; 4) Local development and job creation; 5) Skills classification and recognition at national level and beyond; 6) Address the social aspects of employment and mobility; 7) Incorporate migration considerations; 8) Cost reduction and sharing.

58 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Skills Mobility Partnerships, Available at: <https://eea.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl6666/files/documents/Skills-Mobility-Partnerships-Infosheet.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

59 SME United, formerly known as UEAPME, is the association of crafts and SMEs in Europe with around 70 member organisations from over 30 European countries. <https://www.smeunited.eu>

tailored training and mentoring programmes to foster job creation in the EU and in the home countries.

According to recent ETF research⁶⁰, SMPs have a strong human capital development element and have the advantage of enhancing skills supply also at home in the medium and long run, assuming that not all the trained workers will decide to migrate or – in cases when they migrate – remain permanently in the host countries. Furthermore, the training element in the countries of origin funded by the country of destination can contribute to quality improvements of vocational training and the easier process of recognition of

educational qualifications. Thus, in the long run, SMPs can contribute positively to human capital formation as well as the quality of staff trained in the countries of origin. ETF also draws attention to the existing examples of private skills development programmes for mobility in internationally demanded professions (e.g. Heimerer college⁶¹ and DEKRA academy in the Western Balkans) for their sustainability, which indicates the agility of private sector in taking up opportunities on skills development for mobility in the third countries.

7. FUTURE OUTLOOK

As a relatively new policy tool, SMPs bear challenges and opportunities. As EU Member States are confronted with a need for new skills and labour, prompted by technologisation, digitisation and demographic shifts, SMPs present one possible response for the future of work. SMPs require time and resources to build structures and partnerships that meet the needs of EU countries and third-country partners alike, to enhance overall human capital formation. As such, SMPs are no short-term intervention, but rather a long-term tool and forward-looking investment built around sustainable and effective partnerships. Well-designed and implemented SMPs may in the future act as a vehicle for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enhance migration and mobility that harnesses the potential of migrants' skills in a way that allows for countries of origin to benefit, whilst at the same time addressing EU employers' most pressing skills and labour needs.

Yet, challenges persist. Most of the examples of SMPs cited and under development share a common issue: they are small scale, fragmented and generally costly.⁶² This is not the result of a single administrative bottleneck but rather due to the nature of the laboriously negotiated design and implementation, around specific national contexts and sector requirements. Increasing the number of participants in each project is one way to scale up, but the cost savings do not appear to be enormous from scale. Providing the individual with the necessary training and skills validation still has a largely fixed unit cost. Multiplying the number of programmes is another way to scale up, but brings no cost savings and increases the complexity of what is already emerging as a landscape of bespoke projects and niche initiatives. Each programme requires its own curriculum and its own network of partners. Arguably, investments for the set-up of SMPs would pay off over time, once structures are established and workers become contributing employees. But the issue of high costs should also be placed in the context of the costs deriving from unfilled vacancies and the growing demand for skilled workers left unmet, as well as in relation to other factors such as brain drain, where much of the costs for educating and skilling workers are borne by countries of origin.

To transform this approach into a major stream for labour migration would require increasing the number of projects and/or the number of people receiving skills upgrades and migrating under each programme. In addition, more structural interventions such as aligning or mutually recognising qualifications and skills between EU and third countries would support higher volume channels. Such interventions are conceivable even if still far off. In any case, experience has shown that two elements are indispensable for programmes to scale up: the use or development of appropriate legal migration channels and the ability to meet employers' needs. The questions of the assessment and recognition of foreign credential or the lack of sustainable funding of the programmes might also appear as concrete operational obstacles for scaling up.

One potential means to make such programmes more available to employers is the creation of a “clearinghouse” or hub for skills mobility partnerships.⁶³ The clearinghouse would serve all stakeholders, allowing employers and their representatives to go straight to a single place for access to states, training institutes, and certification and recognition bodies developing and implementing SMPs. The clearinghouse could contribute to increase participation in existing SMPs and help spur development of new ones.

In addition to a clearinghouse for programmes, the SMPs approach could be developed by a clearinghouse for candidates. Here, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, in addition to mentioning Talent Partnerships, also commits to exploring the development of an EU Talent Pool. The Talent Pool is a clearinghouse for individual candidates for mobility: it allows skilled third-country nationals interested in working in the EU to be matched with EU employers.⁶⁴ Criteria for admission in the Talent Pool can include participation in SMP-type programmes including skills development and certification. However, whether or not the Talent Pool concept works in practice will depend on whether interested third-country nationals and EU destination countries actually make use of it. “Mutualisation” of SMPs – where multiple destination and origin countries participate in the same programme – could be an option to share the costs, however, they also face several challenges. First, training expectations vary significantly across destinations. Second,

60 ETF (forthcoming), How do labour markets, human capital and migration interact in the six Western Balkan countries?

61 For more information see: <https://kolegji-heimerer.eu/en/>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

62 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice?', 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022. See also: ETF, 'Migrant Support Measures from Employment and Skills Perspective (MISMES): Global Inventory with a focus on Countries of Origin', 2015, available at: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES_global_inventory, last accessed 22 February 2022.

63 OECD, 'What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice?', available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

64 OECD, 'Building an EU Talent Pool: A New Approach to Migration Management [for Europe]', 2019, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/6ea982a0-en>, last accessed 22 February 2022.

there may be concern over “poaching”, where destination countries which have not subsidised the SMP recruit candidates whose training has been paid for by public or private funds in another country.

Ultimately, for EU Member States to unlock the potential of skilled mobility for their national labour markets requires forward-thinking approaches and innovative solutions that are embedded in and aligned with existing EU and national instruments. Given the early days of SMPs and similar initiatives, looking forward, there is a need for continuous evaluation to ensure that such partnerships are functional, sustainable and of mutual benefit.

PUBLISHED

March, 2022

Suggested citation:

European Migration Network (2022). Skills mobility partnerships: Exploring innovative approaches to labour migration- EMN Inform. Brussels: European Migration Network.

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