Best Practices for Designing and Managing Labour Migration Corridors to Europe

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

AIMA	Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum)
BAOS	Bureau d'Accueil, d'Orientation et de Suivi (Senegalese Reception and Orientation Office)
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (Bangladesh)
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd.
CASC	Coordinadora d'Associacions Senegaleses de Catalunya (Coordinator of Senegalese Associations of Catalonia)
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission
DIHK	Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer (German Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
EMN	European Migration Network
GDP	Gross domestic product
GECCO	Gestión de la Contratación en el Origen (Spanish Collective Management of Hiring in Countries of Origin)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
ICT	Information and communications technology
IEFP	Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training Services)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (Bangladesh)
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
MPI Europe	Migration Policy Institute Europe
NSDC	National Skill Development Cooperation (India)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAM	Partnerschaften für entwicklungsorientierte Ausbildungs- und Arbeitsmigration (Partnerships for Development-Oriented Labour Migration)
PRIME Africa	Platform for Remittances, Investments, and Migrants' Entrepreneurship in Africa
SEPE	Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (Spanish State Public Employment Service)
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SMP	Skills mobility partnership

Executive Summary

Labour and skills shortages across the European Union threaten the bloc's economic growth. Seventy-eight per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reported difficulties finding workers with the right skills as of 2023. These hiring challenges are likely to worsen as more workers retire and workforces shrink, and as the digital and green transitions transform which skill sets are most valued. As of 2023, more than four in ten Europeans reported lacking basic digital skills, illustrating the extent of this skills mismatch.

The European Union's Union of Skills sets out a manifesto for tackling this skills and labour crisis through investments in skills development for residents, support for free movement within the Union to enable people with sought-after skills to move more easily for work, and measures to attract, develop, and retain talent. But as countries around the world compete for human capital in sectors such as health care and clean energy, it is critical that European efforts to attract talent do not come at the expense of low- and middle-income countries. Avoiding this brain drain will require the European Union and its Member States to think holistically about ways to promote a 'quadruple win', in which countries of destination and origin, workers, and employers can all benefit from migration through the careful design and implementation of migration policies, together with related skills development and skills recognition interventions. These interventions could also include targeted skills mobility partnerships that combine mobility opportunities with other investments in skills development, such as the EU Talent Partnerships underway with Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Tunisia.

> *As countries around the world compete for human capital in sectors such as health care and clean energy, it is critical that European efforts to attract talent do not come at the expense of low- and middle-income countries.*

Against this backdrop, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and MPI Europe carried out a research study for the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) that examined best practices for designing and managing labour migration corridors involving EU Member States and non-EU partner countries. The research team reviewed quantitative data and relevant academic and grey literature, including policy and programme documents from governments, international organisations, and nongovernmental organisations, to understand the state of play for labour migration flows to Europe and bilateral mobility partnerships, which produced data resources to inform future EU work this area. Based on this mapping exercise, as well as insights from DG INTPA experts, the research team then identified five migration corridors for further study—Bangladesh-Portugal, India-Germany, Peru-Italy, Senegal-Spain, and Vietnam-Hungary—through in-person and remote fieldwork that included interviews with employers and migrant workers at destination. These corridors provide a snapshot of the diversity of labour migration to EU Member States, covering a range of industries and skills profiles and showcasing very different migration and recruitment contexts.

Drawing on the fieldwork and earlier mapping, this report provides a comparative analysis of the five migration corridors. It explores, among other things, who is moving and how labour migration became established along the corridors, the mechanisms for connecting employers with workers, the extent to which skills needs and availability are tracked and shared, what skills development opportunities are available to labour migrants, and the ease with which migrants moving along these corridors can apply their skills at destination. The study also examines lessons learnt and opportunities for scale, delving into issues regarding accessing visas, worker-employer matching, building skills, protecting workers, improving intergovernmental coordination and data-sharing, boosting development benefits, and mitigating concerns about brain drain and brain waste (when skilled workers are either unemployed or underemployed).

The report offers a series of recommendations for how the European Union could support and potentially help scale labour migration corridors, including:

- **Tackling information gaps on migration opportunities and in recruitment processes and immigration procedures** by supporting the creation of centralised resources and outreach. These resources should be tailored to specific recruitment and migration contexts, and their effectiveness hinges on a commitment to keep the information updated and to promote use of the resources among employers and workers.
- **Building the labour migration governance capacity of partner countries**, for example, through funding capacity-building to improve data collection and exchange and programming to promote ethical recruitment practices.
- **Supporting effective worker-employer matching**, whether through the EU Talent Pool regulation under negotiation or by providing seed funding to test different matching models, including digital tools or options for working with private intermediaries.
- **Improving visa processing by exploring options for greater efficiencies at the EU level**, such as joint consular activities or guidance on streamlining documentation requirements, online applications, or best practices for remote interviews.
- **Strengthening predeparture and post-arrival support for migrant workers** by providing resources and financial support for orientations that are tailored to working and living in Europe.
- **Investing in language training** by helping expand capacity in partner countries to meet demand, supporting quality-control efforts, and exploring innovative financing options to facilitate access by workers and encourage employers to meet some or all of these costs.
- **Mainstreaming skills development opportunities** by identifying where mobility components could be added to existing livelihoods and training programming so as to achieve scale more quickly.
- **Offering soft skills training alongside vocational training**, with the European Union helping to facilitate this by collecting insights from employers and industry representatives on the soft skills they prioritise and integrating this feedback into training curricula and selection criteria.
- **Improving skills recognition procedures** through ongoing EU work to expedite recognition for regulated professions and by supporting research that could test ways to build employers' understanding of and trust in foreign-acquired skills and experience.
- **Tackling design and implementation challenges in circular mobility schemes**. Addressing issues such as shorter-than-expected employment periods, unethical recruitment practices, poor

working conditions, and a lack of return incentives or reintegration support would help enhance the benefits of these schemes for workers, employers, and countries of destination and origin.

- **Maximising the development impacts of migration and supporting circular mobility** through investments in remittance-linked income-generating activities, capturing and promoting best practices for skills assessments that can benefit migrants returning to their countries of origin after working abroad, and promoting the portability of social benefits.
- **Supporting knowledge and data exchange between governments**, for example, by facilitating regular exchanges between policymakers, supporting the negotiation of formal data-sharing agreements, and helping address interoperability and ethical data exchange concerns.
- **Promoting better oversight and worker protection in high-risk sectors** (such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work) by encouraging employers to comply with ethical recruitment standards, supporting consistent and more effective enforcement, and partnering with civil society and governments to ensure migrants know their rights and can report abuse and seek help.
- **Encouraging fair cost-sharing in labour corridors and reducing debt burdens for workers** by improving visibility over what workers and employers actually pay in different industries and migration corridors and reconciling different norms regarding who pays for recruitment fees and associated costs in bilateral or regional partnerships. While working towards shifting recruitment costs from workers to employers, the European Union and other stakeholders can reduce the financial burden for migrants by providing them with more sustainable lending options and exploring innovative financing tools that could see employers take on more costs.

Creating effective and responsive labour migration pathways to attract global talent is essential to Europe's future competitiveness. Yet as the five migration corridors studied in this report illustrate, a number of persistent barriers prevent employers and otherwise-qualified workers from accessing these pathways. By enhancing labour migration governance, strengthening international recruitment channels, and investing in skills development and circulation, Europe can better leverage the benefits of well-managed migration—not only to meet its own labour market needs but also to enhance the development impacts of migration for countries of origin and migrant workers.

1 Introduction

Europe faces a looming skills and labour crisis. In 2023, 74 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe reported being unable to fill at least one job in their company, while 78 per cent reported that it was difficult to find workers with the right skills.[1] Just over half of adults in Europe had basic digital skills at a time where digital literacy is at a premium.[2] As European societies age and more people retire, pressures on workforces are likely to grow. In construction, for example, one-third of workers were ages 50 to 64 as of 2021, raising questions about how the sector will meet rising demand for housebuilding and retrofitting to new green standards in the coming years.[3] As the European Commission's Union of Skills and the Draghi report on EU competitiveness both note, these skills gaps

1 European Union, 'Flash Eurobarometer 529: European Year of Skills: Skills Shortages, Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises', updated September 2023.
2 Eurostat, 'Individuals' Level of Digital Skills (from 2021 onwards) [isoc_sk_dskl_i21]', 17 December 2024.
3 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 'Construction Workers: Skills Opportunities and Challenges (2023 Update)', updated 19 December 2023.

risk impeding Europe's digital and green transitions and choking off its competitiveness and economic growth.[4]

Addressing the skills and labour crisis will require massive investments to tackle skills mismatch and skills shortages, along with investments to help stabilise the size of workforces and source workers for hard-to-fill jobs, including through immigrant admissions. Non-EU citizens already make up an outsize share of workforces in construction and other critical sectors such as personal care, which is slated to grow significantly as populations age and require more support.[5] Policymakers will need to create a roster of policies that can help locals access appropriate jobs and training, including both the native born and foreign-trained people already residing in their countries, alongside reviewing their immigration policy frameworks to address current and future needs. At the EU level, officials will need to explore where coordination is needed most and can bear the most fruit.

A vexing policy question is how to lay the groundwork for the migration of people with sought-after skills in a way that avoids becoming a zero-sum game. Around the world, high-income countries with ageing populations are seeking to support their own digital and green transitions by attracting workers from abroad, but many of the low- and middle-income countries from which workers come are also experiencing falling birth rates that may require them to compete for skilled migrants in the coming decades.[6] For example, Vietnam is one of the fastest ageing societies in the world and is projected to become an aged society by 2036.[7] A scenario in which advanced economies compete for scarce workers in priority sectors such as clean energy, health care, and technology can exacerbate shortages and cause significant harm in low- and middle-income countries that cannot offer the same pay or opportunities.

Thus, interest is growing in how to best achieve what some analysts call a 'quadruple win', in which the benefits of migration are shared among countries of destination and origin, employers, and migrant workers.[8] This approach considers how to reduce the risk of brain drain through the careful design of selection and recruitment policies, as well as investing in training that can grow the overall talent pool in sought-after sectors. At the EU level, support for the Talent Partnerships initiative would couple cooperation on labour migration with investments in skills development and other mobility- and skills-

Interest is growing in how to best achieve what some analysts call a 'quadruple win', in which the benefits of migration are shared among countries of destination and origin, employers, and migrant workers.

4 European Commission, 'The Draghi Report on EU Competitiveness', updated September 2025; European Commission, 'The Union of Skills: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions' (COM [2025] 90 final, Brussels, 5 March 2025).

5 European Commission, 'Statistics on Migration to Europe', updated 5 November 2024.

6 By 2050, 80 per cent of people older than age 60 will be living in low- and middle-income countries, raising fears that many of these countries will 'grow old before they grow rich' and will need to support older populations with far fewer resources. See Nikkil Sudharsanan and David E. Bloom, 'The Demography of Aging in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Chronological versus Functional Perspectives', in *Future Directions for the Demography of Aging: Proceedings of a Workshop*, eds. Malay K. Majmundar and Mark D. Hayward (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2018); Diego Wachs, Gustavo Demarco, and Fiona Stewart, 'Lessons for Aging Countries: Navigating the Challenges of a Growing Elderly Population', World Bank, 20 December 2024.

7 United Nations Population Fund in Vietnam, 'Ageing', accessed 19 April 2025.

8 The 'triple win' framing is used more widely, but the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and others introduced the 'quadruple win' framing to include employers as a beneficiary group. See European Migration Network (EMN), 'Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration' (EMN-OECD Inform, Brussels, March 2022).

related interventions, although to date, the scope of these agreements and related mobility schemes remains small-scale.[9] This report uses the term *skills mobility partnerships* as inclusive of the Global Skill Partnership and Talent Partnership models, as well as other types of mobility schemes linked with skills development initiatives.

This report summarises the findings of a research study undertaken by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and MPI Europe for the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) examining best practices for designing and managing labour migration corridors involving EU Member States and non-EU countries. Drawing on desk research and fieldwork along five migration corridors to Europe (described in Section 2 and in more detail in the report's appendices), it provides context on how these labour migration corridors were established and are governed while drawing out broader lessons about managing and potentially scaling labour migration corridors, supporting skills development, supporting worker-employer matching, improving recognition of skills at destination, and promoting a quadruple win. While skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) were in place or under development in only some of the countries studied, the analysis in this report can also inform future efforts to design development-oriented SMPs.

2 Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on extensive desk research, detailed fieldwork and analysis of five selected migration corridors, and a targeted quantitative survey conducted by the research team in selected countries. Overall, the research methodology combined a comprehensive mapping of bilateral labour migration flows with in-depth qualitative research, drawing on both statistical data and contextual insights to better understand how labour mobility systems function across different corridors. Because a primary aim of this research is to provide actionable recommendations to guide future work by the European Commission on labour migration management and inform the design of future mobility partnerships, the MPI and MPI Europe researchers consulted with DG INTPA experts during the design of this study, including the selection of migration corridors for deeper analysis; however, the study's analysis and findings are solely those of the MPI and MPI Europe researchers.

The project took place in four phases. The **inception phase** involved a review of relevant grey literature on mobility partnerships, including policy documents from governmental bodies, international organisations, and nongovernmental organisations, and quantitative data on bilateral labour migration flows to define corridor selection criteria, refine the research scope, and write an inception report describing these initial project design parameters. This report laid the foundation for the **quantitative mapping phase**, during which the researchers gathered and analysed data on labour migration flows and bilateral mobility partnerships to inform an initial list of corridors that could be included in the study's in-depth analysis, offering insights into the magnitude of bilateral flows into EU Member States and where formal partnerships were in place. The researchers used Eurostat data on first residence permits as the primary source for the mapping because the data offered the most consistent and comparable cross-country information.[10] The data gathered by the MPI-MPI Europe research team

9 Kate Hooper and Ravenna Sohst, *Competing for Talent: What Role Can Employment- and Skills-Based Mobility Projects Play?* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2024).

10 Eurostat, 'Database—Residence Permits [migr_res]', accessed 30 October 2025.

mapped 122 labour migration corridors from DG INTPA partner countries[11] to all 27 EU Member States, based on an overview of first residence permits issued annually for employment purposes, disaggregated by country of origin and gender for each corridor (see Appendix D for highlights).[12] The mapping phase also included examination of relevant bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), mobility schemes, and projects associated with each corridor. This quantitative exercise provided a comprehensive and comparable overview of labour migration dynamics and existing bilateral engagement between EU Member States and partner countries, illustrating how the magnitude of key labour mobility flows has evolved since 2019.[13]

Next, the **in-depth analysis phase** focused on five migration corridors between EU Member States and non-EU partner countries: Bangladesh-Portugal, India-Germany, Peru-Italy, Senegal-Spain, and Vietnam-Hungary. The selection of these corridors was informed by the quantitative mapping and the predefined criteria set out in the inception report—that is, based on data availability, geographic representation, labour market features, migration context, and strategic EU interest in future cooperation.[14] To ensure the selections aligned with overall project goals, the research team considered the broader context for migration and cooperation—including the presence of ongoing or emerging mobility partnerships or other collaboration in training and skills development, and the institutional capacity of partner countries to support mobility partnerships—so as to offer meaningful insights for future policy design.

Based on these criteria, the research team identified a shortlist of ten labour mobility corridors for deeper analysis.[15] The goal was to ensure a balanced and diverse selection representing all of DG INTPA's priority regions and varied migration dynamics and contexts, including different employment sectors (e.g., health care, agriculture, and technology), skill levels, and gender dynamics. The shortlist included three corridors involving partner countries in Africa, three in Latin America, and four in Asia. After consulting DG INTPA experts to gather their feedback on the shortlisted corridors, the following five were selected:

- **Bangladesh-Portugal:** Portugal has issued a growing number of employment permits to Bangladeshi workers since 2019 to work in sectors such as agriculture and hospitality, alongside workers from other South Asian countries, including India, Nepal, and Pakistan. This significant rise in permit issuance in recent years, combined with Bangladesh's inclusion in the first EU Talent Partnerships, factored into this selection.

11 The mapping of labour migration corridors focused on DG INTPA partner countries, located in the priority regions of sub-Saharan Africa; the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific; and the Americas and the Caribbean. For the full list of countries included in this mapping, see European Commission, 'Countries', accessed 30 October 2025.

12 Data were initially extracted from the Eurostat database in November 2024 and covered the period 2019–23. These data were used to inform the selection of migration corridors for deeper analysis and in the analysis presented in this report. Additional data for 2024, which only became available after the study had largely been completed, were extracted in October 2025 and are included in Appendix C of this report for the labour corridors selected for in-depth analysis.

13 In addition to informing corridor selection for this study, the data and contextual information gathered during this phase was compiled into a user-friendly Excel resource and shared with DG INTPA experts. Accompanied by a methodological note, it is intended to serve as an easy-to-update resource for future planning of projects related to labour migration and bilateral engagement between Member States and partner countries.

14 Data-related criteria included (1) whether labour migration flows along the selected corridors were ongoing for at least two years—within the top ten inflows for the Member State—and experienced growth over the five-year period for which data were available; and (2) data quality, with priority given to corridors offering robust statistics on migration flows, visa categories, occupational profiles, and demographic characteristics. See Appendix D for more details.

15 The ten shortlisted labour migration corridors were: Bangladesh-Greece, Brazil-Germany, Brazil-Portugal, Colombia-Spain, Ghana-Netherlands, Mali-France, Philippines-Czechia, Senegal-Spain, Thailand-Sweden, and Uzbekistan-Poland.

- **India-Germany:** Germany and India signed a bilateral agreement on migration and mobility in 2022, and India represents the largest source of labour migration to Germany among all DG INTPA partner countries, with an increasing number of male and female migrants at different skill levels and in different sectors moving along this corridor.

- **Peru-Italy:** The Peruvian diaspora in Italy is well-established, rooted in longstanding cultural connections and a rich history of migration between the two countries. From 2021 to 2023, Peru ranked among the top five origin countries for labour migrants to Italy among non-EU countries in DG INTPA priority regions. This corridor provided an opportunity to focus on a migration flow characterised by a higher proportion of women moving for work, many of whom are employed in the care sector.

- **Senegal-Spain:** Spain and Senegal have a long history of cooperation on migration management, and the dynamics of this corridor align with broader EU efforts to integrate migration management with development goals in African partner countries. Senegal participates in Spain's seasonal work programme, Gestión de la Contratación en el Origen (GECCO; Spanish Collective Management of Hiring in Countries of Origin), and in 2020, the two countries signed a bilateral social security agreement that aims to prevent double taxation and ensure migrants receive pension benefits. Spain is the leading destination for Senegalese migrant workers within the European Union, and the quantitative mapping exercise showed that labour migration between the two countries has risen steadily year over year.

- **Vietnam-Hungary:** Since 2018, Vietnam has emerged as the major non-EU country of origin for recipients of employment-related permits issued by Hungary. The Vietnamese diaspora has become one of the largest non-EU migrant communities in Hungary, with Vietnam increasingly sending workers to take on roles in a range of sectors, including manufacturing, construction, hospitality, and nursing.

During the in-depth analysis phase, the research team conducted 169 interviews across the ten case study countries (see Appendix B for interview guides). Interviewees included government officials, employers, training providers, recruiters, a few civil-society representatives, and migrants, with the research team seeking to speak with around ten migrants and five employers (or employer associations) per corridor (see Box 1 and Appendix A for details). The team conducted in-person interviews in seven of the ten countries, but held remote interviews for stakeholders in Hungary, Italy, and Peru to maximise staff time available for other segments of the research. While based on a relatively small sample of migrants and employers, the interviews offered critical insights into the real-world implementation of labour migration policies, shedding light on recruitment practices, skills matching challenges, and the factors influencing migrant integration outcomes and employer engagement. The findings should thus be interpreted as anecdotal and illustrative of these issues rather than statistically representative.

BOX 1
Profile of migrants and employers interviewed

As part of the study, the research team spoke with a small but diverse sample of migrants (including members of diaspora organisations) and employers, as well as trade unions, chambers of commerce, and industry groups. While the sample is not statistically representative, the perspectives gathered provided valuable on-the-ground insights for this study.

Among the migrants interviewed, Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal were mainly involved in agriculture and small businesses, including self-employment in farming. Indian migrants interviewed in Germany worked in both vocational and skilled service roles across a range of sectors such as logistics, maintenance, child care, and consulting. In Spain, the interviewed Senegalese migrants included members of diaspora organisations with experience in construction, agriculture, and retail, as well as individuals currently engaged in civil society, journalism, and the arts. Interviewees also included recurrent participants in the GECCO programme in the agriculture sector. The interviewed Vietnamese migrants in Hungary were predominantly employed in manufacturing and related industries, with roles spanning electronics, plastics, textiles, automotive, and maintenance. Meanwhile, Peruvian migrants interviewed in Italy were engaged primarily in the health-care sector—particularly nursing—alongside roles in nonprofit organisations, international cooperation, and government and as small business owners.

On the employer side, interviews covered a range of employers and organisations, from national trade unions to sector-specific associations and chambers of commerce. In Portugal, Madre Fruta—a regional association of fruit and vegetable producers—spoke about employers' experiences in the agriculture sector. In Spain, the Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos (Union of Small Farmers and Ranchers) provided the perspective of small-scale agricultural employers. In Germany and Hungary, chambers of commerce and industry groups represented broader employer interests across multiple sectors. In Italy, employer interviews focused on the health-care sector, including service providers and national-level associations. Across corridors, interviews also included perspectives from public employment services and recruiters, which provided insight into labour needs and recruitment dynamics.

The gender breakdown of interviewed migrants varied somewhat by corridor. Male migrants made up the majority of interviewees overall, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. However, more female migrants were interviewed in Italy and Germany, especially those working in health care, care work, hospitality, and services. One respondent identified as nonbinary.

To supplement the data collected through the initial mapping and interviews, the research team circulated a standardised questionnaire (see Appendix B) to points of contact in national governments, including national statistics offices and other relevant national institutions in the case-study countries, to gather additional details, such as data disaggregated by occupation or sector. Data gaps were addressed, where possible, with national-level data to support the final analysis (see Appendix C for more details).

This report, the product of the **results phase**, consolidates key findings and data from the mapping, interviews, survey questionnaires, and other project activities into a comprehensive, comparative analysis. It highlights cross-cutting insights across migration corridors and policy approaches and provides actionable recommendations.

BOX 2
Lessons for future research

The fieldwork conducted across EU Member States and partner countries produced substantive qualitative findings and offered valuable methodological insights that can help guide future research. Several aspects of the methodological approach adopted by the MPI–MPI Europe team proved particularly effective in researching mobility along these bilateral corridors. These included:

- **Tailoring outreach strategies to the specific national context, sectoral focus, and target stakeholder groups.** This was done in each country and enhanced the success and responsiveness of engagement. For instance, local diaspora organisations and networks played a crucial role in facilitating connections with migrants in EU Member States such as Hungary and Italy. In target sectors that were composed predominantly of SMEs or where employers were harder to reach, such as agriculture, employer associations emerged as key intermediaries, helping to overcome challenges with direct employer outreach.
- **Conducting preliminary background calls with researchers and civil-society organisations.** These early conversations with figures involved in relevant work along the migration corridors enabled the MPI–MPI Europe team to tap into established networks and enhance the depth of the fieldwork by building on existing findings.
- **Having field researchers positioned at both ends of the migration corridors.** This two-sided approach, and consistent communication between the researchers on either end of a migration corridor, proved instrumental in developing a rich understanding of mobility along these five corridors.

At the same time, several challenges and limitations were encountered during fieldwork that offer lessons for future research efforts, including:

- **Political considerations and challenging national contexts can pose significant obstacles to fieldwork along certain corridors.** For example, stakeholder engagement along the Vietnam-Hungary corridor was constrained by ongoing government restructuring in Vietnam and negotiations in the aftermath of the recent suspension of Hungary's guestworker agreement with Vietnam in January 2025. These challenges highlight the importance of proactively engaging with EU delegations during corridor selection to better understand strategic priorities and identify opportunities for stakeholder engagement.
- **The value of having a reliable intermediary or hosting organisation capable of facilitating local connections in partner countries cannot be overstated.** This should be a key consideration when selecting fieldwork locations. In contexts without such intermediaries or existing networks, this limitation should be factored into project planning to ensure adequate time is allotted for building relationships and establishing a foundation for meaningful stakeholder engagement.

3 A Comparative Analysis of Migration Corridors

The five migration corridors selected offer a rich array of insights into how labour migration patterns emerge and scale, and their connections to skills development and circulation. While some corridors are rooted in bilateral cooperation and accompanying programming, others are characterised by little or no government engagement, with recruitment and any skill development opportunities occurring instead through a network of private intermediaries. Similarly, approaches to training, credential recognition, and mobility pathways differ significantly across corridors, with important implications for both migrant outcomes and the needs of receiving labour markets.

None of the migration corridors studied in this report is currently covered by a dedicated SMP, although a few of the selected countries have embarked on cooperation agreements or projects with other countries that could be classified as SMPs. By examining the broader conditions for labour migration along these corridors, this study offers insights into what the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) identifies as the five components essential for an SMP: formalised state cooperation, multistakeholder involvement, training (tied to mobility), skills recognition, and migration or mobility.[16] These reflections could inform future decisions related to labour migration conditions or specifically the scope for introducing an SMP or similar model in these corridors. The analysis also reflects on the benefits and costs of labour migration for different stakeholders, including countries of destination and origin, migrant workers, and employers—all of whom the SMP framework seeks to engage in order to achieve a quadruple win.[17]

This section draws on the fieldwork from across the five migration corridors, alongside the team's data mapping and desk research, to investigate these different approaches to managing labour migration corridors and related skills development and skills circulation issues. By examining the state of play and context for labour migration, approaches to matching and assessing skills needs and availability, access to skills development opportunities, and migrants' ability to apply their skills fully at destination, this section offers insights into these variations in design and identifies what works, in which contexts, for whom, and why.

A. Who is moving along these corridors?

The profile of labour migrants moving along each corridor varies widely (see Table 1), with this diversity reflecting the different needs of destination labour markets. In some cases, specific sectors have been prioritised explicitly through formal bilateral initiatives, for example, the circular mobility programme relaunched in 2019 between Spain and Senegal, which focuses on the agricultural sector. A growing number of initiatives at the regional level in Italy seek to recruit nurses and care workers from Peru, although efforts are fragmented and the involvement of numerous recruitment agencies makes it difficult to determine exact figures.[18] The India-Germany corridor originally centred on a limited group of workers—mainly health-care professionals and highly skilled professionals in the information and communications technology (ICT) and engineering sectors. But the scope of recruitment has expanded to cover a wider range of occupational profiles and skill levels since reforms introduced under Germany's 2023 Skilled Immigration Act.

16 IOM defines skills mobility partnership (SMPs) as 'bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements or arrangements between states that promote skills development and skills-based mobility for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. They vary in terms of form, modalities, and level of stakeholder involvement, but all focus on skills development. SMPs promote a skills-focused approach to labour mobility that is grounded in labour market and skills data and centred on skills development, recognition, and matching to the benefit of labour markets, employers, communities and migrants'. Other frameworks, such as the EU Talent Partnerships or the Global Skill Partnership model, could fall under this broad definition. See IOM, *Skills Mobility Partnerships: Recommendations and Guidance for Policymakers and Practitioners* (Geneva: IOM, 2023); EMN, 'Skills Mobility Partnerships'.

17 EMN, 'Skills Mobility Partnerships'.

18 Government of Spain and Government of Senegal, 'Declaración conjunta entre el reino de España y la República de Senegal', 29 August 2024; author interview with representative from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.

Recruitment processes

The degree of government involvement in recruitment processes also varies. Recruitment from Senegal to Spain via the GECCO programme occurs through government-to-government cooperation, alongside significant irregular migration, but for the other four corridors, private recruiters play a more prominent role. Private recruiters facilitate much of the labour migration from India to Germany, Peru to Italy, and Vietnam to Hungary (although the India-Germany corridor also sees some government-run placements). In the case of Bangladesh and Portugal, no formal bilateral initiative exists to facilitate labour migration. Instead, most individuals enter Portugal via other European countries and take up work in sectors such as agriculture, construction, or the gig economy—often through diaspora-led recruitment channels.

TABLE 1

Overview of recruitment trends for legal migration pathways in corridors studied

Corridor	Who leads the recruitment process?	Which sectors/occupations are prioritised?	What is the typical skill level of people moving?
Bangladesh-Portugal	Private recruiters	Agriculture, construction	Low to medium
India-Germany	Both government agencies and private recruiters	Nurses and engineers initially but now all sectors	All
Peru-Italy	Mainly private recruiters	Nurses and care workers but also doctors	Medium
Senegal-Spain	Mainly government-to-government cooperation	Agriculture	Low
Vietnam-Hungary	Private recruiters	Construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and nursing	Low to medium

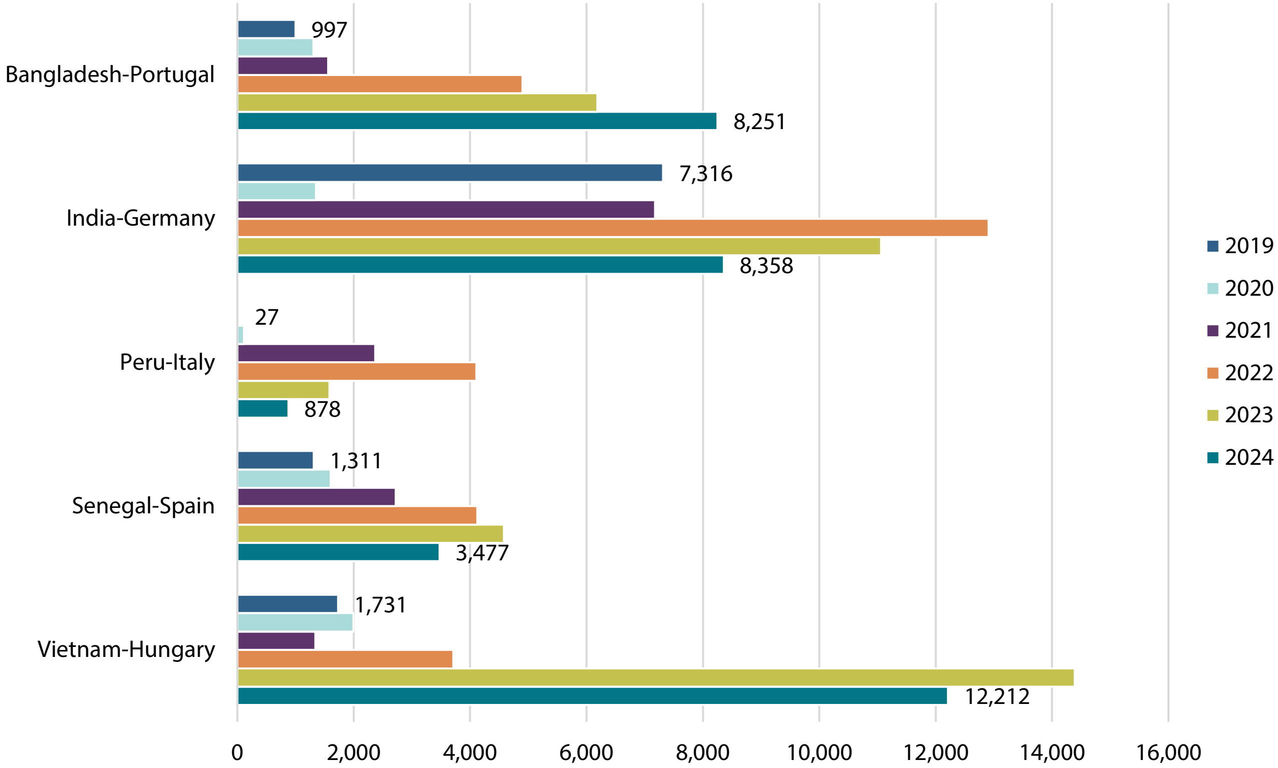
Notes: This table documents recruitment trends for people moving through legal migration pathways, although in some corridors (discussed further in Section 3.C.), there is significant movement outside these formal channels (e.g., using unlicensed recruitment agencies, entering on a tourist visa and then overstaying, or paying a smuggler to cross into a country illegally). Skill level is defined according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations, with skill level one (elementary occupations) equivalent to low-skilled; skill level two (clerical support workers; service and sales workers; skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers; crafts and related trades workers; plant and machine operators; and assemblers) equivalent to medium-skilled; and skill levels three and four (managers, professionals, and technicians and associate professionals) equivalent to high-skilled.
Sources: Author analysis of data from Eurostat and various national sources, as outlined in Appendix C. On skill level classifications, see International Labour Organisation (ILO), 'International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)', accessed 5 May 2025.

While all of the corridors examined have seen growth in labour migration (see Figure 1), the Hungary-Vietnam corridor showed the most rapid expansion over the 2019–24 period (the latest for which Eurostat data were available). However, Hungarian authorities' decision to remove Vietnam as an eligible country of origin for its residence permit for the purpose of employment and its guestworker residence permits as of January 2025 (because Vietnam did not meet the set readmission criteria[19]) means that movement along this corridor is likely to fall substantially.

19 Fragomen, 'Hungary: Eligibility Limited for Two Work Permits', updated 13 February 2025.

FIGURE 1

First residence permits issued for employment by labour migration corridor, 2019–24



Notes: The selection of corridors and analysis in this report were based on 2019–23 data extracted in November 2024; figures for 2024 were unavailable at the time. Residence permit data for 2024 were subsequently added in October 2025, once they became available. These figures capture residence permits issued but not the number of entries into the five destination countries. See Appendix C for additional data on these corridors.
Source: Author analysis of data from Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed November 2024 and October 2025.

The profile of migrants in the five corridors

In some cases, migrants travelling along these corridors join significant diasporas at destination (see Table 2). In Spain, the Senegalese diaspora has grown steadily over the past two decades, driven by continued arrivals and the gradual regularisation of status.[20] Senegal now ranks just behind Morocco in terms of annual residence permits and family reunification requests—signs of both long-term settlement and integration. In Portugal, the Bangladeshi community is among the fastest-growing, increasing by 222 per cent between 2019 and 2023.[21] In Italy, the Peruvian diaspora is well-established, underpinned by strong cultural ties and decades of migration, and it is now the 15th largest nationality among non-EU citizens legally residing in Italy.[22] In Hungary, even though the Vietnamese population is relatively small (especially compared with longstanding Vietnamese communities in Western Europe), it

20 For context, though, Senegalese migrants in Spain account for only 7 per cent of all African nationals holding residence permits in the country and approximately 1 per cent of the total foreign population. Migration from Africa to Spain is still about one-third the scale of migration from the Americas. See Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal—Perfil sociodemográfico y distribución territorial', updated October 2023.

21 Sílvia Lopes and Alexandra Sousa, *Relatório de migrações e asilo - 2023* (Lisbon: Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum, 2024); Rui Machado et al., *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2019* (Lisbon: Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service, June 2020).

22 This refers to noncitizen residents of Italy and thus excludes individuals who have been naturalised. See Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *XIV Rapporto Annuale: Gli stranieri nel mercato del lavoro in Italia* (Rome: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2024).

is the third-largest non-EU citizen group in the country,[23] and the migrants' presence largely shaped by private recruitment agencies instead of deep-rooted diaspora networks.[24]

TABLE 2
Summary of partner-country migrant populations in the EU countries studied

Corridor	Number of partner-country nationals residing in the EU Member State*	Top sectors of employment
Senegal-Spain	76,024 (as of 2022)	Services (retail and hospitality); agriculture; industry (fishing, mining, manufacturing); and construction
Bangladesh-Portugal	25,666 (as of 2023)	Agriculture and fishing, business, transport and storage, accommodation, and catering
India-Germany	277,455 (as of 2024)	Information and communications technology; real estate; freelance, scientific, and technical services; and manufacturing
Vietnam-Hungary	27,045 (as of 2025)	Manufacturing, construction, hospitality, retail, and garment industry
Peru-Italy	98,733 (as of 2023)	Public, social, and personal services; transport and other business services

* The population data in this figure are from different years, as indicated, based on the latest available data. In all cases, the data capture the population of partner-country nationals legally residing in the EU Member State; they do not count naturalised migrants who now hold the destination country's citizenship, nor migrants without legal status. For example, in addition to the Senegalese population holding residence permits (as per the table), 15,767 Senegalese individuals became naturalised Spanish citizens between 2009 and 2022 and an estimated 9,688 Senegalese irregular migrants lived in the country as of 2023.
Sources: Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal', updated October 2023; Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 'Balances e Informes', accessed 20 April 2025; Sílvia Lopes and Alexandra Sousa, *Relatório de migrações e asilo - 2023* (Lisbon: Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum, 2024); German Federal Statistical Office, 'Ausländische Bevölkerung nach Geschlecht und ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten', updated 31 December 2024; German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, *Fachkräftestrategie Indien: Indien als starker Partner für Deutschland* (Berlin: German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2024); statistical data on Vietnamese citizens shared with the authors by the Hungarian National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, 30 April 2025; Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information, *Peru: Estadisticas de La Migracion Internacional, al 2024 Una Vision Desde Los Registros Administrativos* (Lima: Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information, 2024); Italian National Institute of Statistics, 'Foreign Census Population', accessed 21 April 2024.

From a gender perspective, the Peru-Italy corridor stands out as the only one among those examined where female labour migrants have outnumbered their male counterparts in recent years: from 2019 to 2023, 72 per cent of first work permits issued along this corridor were to female migrants.[25] In many cases, Peruvian women migrate independently and later initiate family reunification, contributing to more stable and longer-term settlement by encouraging integration and reducing onward mobility.[26] By contrast, male migrants dominate labour migration along the other four corridors, particularly Bangladesh-Portugal and Senegal-Spain, where 98 per cent and 95 per cent of first work permits, respectively, were issued to male migrants during the same period. In interviews, Senegalese migrants mentioned that while some men moving to Spain eventually sponsor their families, others choose to stay long term without them, using remittances to support spouses and children left behind.[27] This situation has led some Senegalese women to seek their own migration opportunities, whether through regular or irregular channels. The gender distribution is somewhat more balanced in the India-Germany and Vietnam-Hungary corridors, where male migrants accounted for 60 per cent and 63 per cent of

23 This is based on 2022 census data. See Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 'Census Database – Population by Citizenship, County and Type of Settlement', accessed 20 April 2025.
24 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture, 16 March 2025.
25 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Age, Sex and Citizenship [migr_resfas]', updated 5 May 2025.
26 Author interviews with Peruvian migrants in Italy, multiple dates.
27 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.

work permits, respectively, between 2019 and 2023.[28] For some corridors (including Peru-Italy and Senegal-Spain), anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests that informal migration largely mirrors the gender patterns observed in formal channels.[29] However, because of data limitations, it remains unclear whether these gender patterns hold consistently among those moving irregularly. Furthermore, the age distribution across the corridors was similar, with the average age ranging from early to late 30s for Bangladesh-Portugal, India-Germany, Peru-Italy, and Senegal-Spain.[30]

Employment trends also vary across the corridors studied (see Table 2), with some migrant populations showing a strong concentration in specific labour market sectors and others having a more diverse distribution. More than 40 per cent of Peruvian migrants in Italy are employed in the public, social, and personal services sectors, for example.[31] Among Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal, agriculture emerges as the dominant labour market sector.[32] Similarly, in the Senegal-Spain corridor, the service (hospitality and retail) and agriculture sectors together account for more than 75 per cent of employment among Senegalese migrants.[33] By contrast, the India-Germany corridor—the largest among those studied in terms of total labour migration since 2019—shows a more diversified sectoral profile. Indian migrants in Germany are distributed relatively evenly across various sectors, including ICT, manufacturing, hospitality, and more.[34] Similarly, Vietnamese migrants in Hungary work across a broad range of sectors, spanning manufacturing, construction, and hospitality.

Employment trends also vary across the corridors studied . . . with some migrant populations showing a strong concentration in specific labour market sectors and others having a more diverse distribution.

Broader migration trends along each corridor

While labour migration is the central focus of this study and remains a top priority along many mobility corridors between the European Union and partner countries, it represents only one facet of a much more complex picture. Mobility along these corridors is driven by diverse personal, educational, and familial motivations that intersect with and are not limited to economic needs. For instance, family reunification and longstanding cultural or familial ties motivate many Peruvians moving to Italy, reflecting deep-rooted patterns of settlement and integration. Migration for family reasons also drives a significant portion of migration between Senegal and Spain, where long-term visas are granted

28 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Age, Sex and Citizenship'.

29 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates; author interviews with Peruvian migrants in Italy, multiple dates; author interview with representative from La Casa de Panchita, 25 February 2025; author interview with representative from Fundación Cepaim Dakar office, 6 February 2025.

30 An age breakdown was not available for the Vietnam-Hungary corridor. Data from the remaining corridors were pulled from national sources: German Federal Statistical Office, 'Ausländische Bevölkerung nach Geschlecht und ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten', accessed 5 June 2025; Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico. Jun. 2024* (Lisbon: Bank of Portugal, 2024), 44; Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'; Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunita Peruviana In Italia: Rapporto annuale sulla presenza dei migranti* (Rome: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023).

31 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunita Peruviana*.

32 Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico*.

33 Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 'Trabajadores Extranjeros afiliados a la Seguridad Social en Alta Laboral', accessed 22 April 2025.

34 German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, *Fachkräftestrategie Indien: Indien als starker Partner für Deutschland* (Berlin: German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2024).

predominantly for family reunification.[35] In addition to family reunification, in the India-Germany corridor, migration for education exceeds that for employment, with growing numbers of Indian students seeking university degrees and professional training in Germany.[36]

In some cases, formal labour migration pathways coexist alongside significant levels of irregular migration. The study found that irregular migration has tended to occur either where access to regular pathways is limited or when lax enforcement means that irregular routes offer a cheaper and faster way to access the destination country's labour market. These movements outside formal channels take different forms, ranging from using unlicensed recruitment agencies (and thus falling outside of 'formal' recruitment as defined by the Vietnamese government) to illegal entry or overstaying a tourist visa to secondary migration within Europe. In the Peru-Italy corridor, some Peruvian migrants have made use of the visa-free regime with the European Union to enter Italy as tourists and then overstay and take informal jobs, particularly in domestic care.[37] In Spain, the majority of Senegalese migrants arrive irregularly, often through dangerous boat crossings to the Canary Islands, taking on informal work as street vendors or finding work in agriculture, hospitality, and construction—sectors that often depend on informal labour—until they are able to regularise their status through *arraigo*.[38] Many Bangladeshi migrants arrive in Portugal through secondary movement, bypassing international recruitment channels completely, while many Vietnamese migrants arrive in Hungary but subsequently leave for other European destinations such as Germany, often without the requisite papers.[39]

> *In some cases, formal labour migration pathways coexist alongside significant levels of irregular migration.*

Entries through irregular pathways could result in employment across a wider set of sectors and skill levels than those targeted through formal labour migration agreements or mobility schemes. But a lack of reliable data for informal employment and irregular migrant populations limited the research team's ability to examine these employment trends, beyond insights offered through stakeholder interviews or documented in past research, and thus presented a significant analytical limitation in corridors marked by high levels of irregular migration or informal employment. When possible, the analysis drew on stakeholder interviews to explore the implications of irregular migration or informal employment for migrants' rights, job security, working conditions, and opportunities for career growth and for governments' approaches to managing or growing labour migration along certain corridors. However, due to these data limitations, this analysis focused predominantly on labour migration happening through regular pathways.

Available data on residence permits issued do not cover how long new arrivals stay in the destination country. In Hungary, for example, Vietnamese migrants often engage in secondary migration to other destinations in the European Union, with fieldwork findings indicating that up to 80 per cent

35 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración (OPI)', accessed 15 May 2025.

36 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resfirst]', updated 19 May 2025.

37 Author interview with representative from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.

38 'Arraigo' (literally, 'rootedness' or 'establishment') refers to a special residency authorisation granted to migrants who can demonstrate strong ties to Spain, either socially, professionally, or through family connections. Additionally, in recent years, a significant number of Senegalese migrants in Spain have been granted 'arraigo for exceptional circumstances', with more flexible requirements.

39 Mimi Vu, *Analysis on Labour Migration from Vietnam to Germany: Protecting Vulnerable and Unskilled Groups* (Hanoi: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Vietnam Office, 2024).

of Vietnamese workers leave Hungary shortly after arrival (and before the end of their employment contract), heading primarily to Germany, Poland, or other Schengen Area countries that offer higher wages, improved working conditions, and more opportunities for family reunification.[40] Migrant-smuggling networks have incentivised this trend by offering packages for some Vietnamese migrants that charge up to tens of thousands of U.S. dollars for a route that starts with a work, study, or tourist visa to Hungary or another country in Eastern Europe, and then transits across the Schengen Area to other European destinations, sometimes ending with a maritime crossing to the United Kingdom.[41]

Anecdotally, the research suggests that some Vietnamese migrants enter Hungary already with the intention of moving to another Schengen country, while others decide to move on at some point after arriving. Reasons mentioned for leaving include limited family reunification options and uncertainty about securing longer-term residence. Additionally, higher wages abroad—about 1,400 euros net in Germany compared with 800 to 1,100 euros net in Hungary—make moving tempting, especially given pressure to repay recruitment debts and send remittances monthly. Others mentioned difficulties adapting to the cold weather, long shifts, and language barriers. Despite these challenges, some migrants interviewed said they would like to stay if they could bring their families and switch employers freely. As one migrant said, 'I like Budapest cafés and architecture, but I need stability'.[42] Many of the Vietnamese migrants interviewed eventually hope to save enough money to return to Vietnam and invest in a home. The high rates of overstay and secondary migration have raised concerns among Hungarian employers and authorities, contributing to Hungary's decision in early 2025 to remove Vietnam from the list of countries whose nationals are eligible for guestworker permits. Interviewees in a few Hungarian industries mentioned that some employers are calling for targeted retention measures such as sectoral job mobility, long-stay bonuses, family reunification pilots, and multiyear hiring schemes.[43] Some stakeholders, for example, proposed a formal MoU with Vietnamese authorities to improve recruitment standards and orientation. But ministries remain cautious, citing administrative hurdles and political sensitivities about migration.

By contrast, even though Portugal is often not the first destination for Bangladeshi migrants coming to Europe, migrants interviewed for this study planned to settle there long term and bring family members from Bangladesh rather than returning home, often incentivised by diaspora networks and local context.[44] As a few explained, the overall quality of life in Portugal—including the climate, food, and sense of community—made it a more desirable place to build a future, despite the appeal of higher wages in other countries.[45] For some, the clearer legal path to long-term residency and the possibility of family reunification also made staying in Portugal attractive. However, some Bangladeshi migrants noted that the process has become slower and more difficult because family members must apply for the visa in India (the nearest embassy processing work visas to Portugal), and as some pointed out, obtaining a visa to enter India has become more difficult than securing one for Portugal.[46]

The Peru-Italy and Senegal-Spain corridors present a more mixed picture. Interviews with migrants and employers in the health-care sector revealed diverse intentions: some Peruvian workers hope to build a long-term future in Italy and integrate into the well-established diaspora community, while others

40 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Trade Union Confederation, 6 March 2025.
41 IOM, *Vietnam Migration Profile 2023* (Hanoi: IOM, 2024).
42 Author interview with a Vietnamese migrant in Hungary, 9 March 2025.
43 Author interviews with representatives of chambers of commerce and trade unions in Hungary, multiple dates.
44 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal, multiple dates.
45 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal, multiple dates.
46 Saddif Ovee, 'Visa Hurdles Intensify for Bangladeshis across Countries', *Dhaka Tribune*, 24 September 2025.

see their migration as temporary and plan to return to Peru after a few years.[47] Spain's circular mobility programme with Senegal is designed explicitly for short-term employment, yet one of the persistent challenges—especially in previous phases of the programme—has been participants' failure to return and their desire to stay in Spain. While Spain was once seen as a transit country for onward movement within the European Union, Senegalese migrant workers interviewed for this study said this perception had shifted for them and, in their view, for many others as well because many choose to remain and put down roots in Spain.[48]

B. *How did labour migration along the five corridors become established?*

Labour migration along the five corridors examined in this study emerged for a variety of economic, social, and political reasons, shaped by an interplay of dynamic push and pull factors in the respective EU Member States and partner countries. Some corridors, notably India-Germany and Senegal-Spain, have been formalised through bilateral cooperation frameworks[49] or mobility schemes,[50] while the other three corridors developed more organically with limited government involvement or oversight, relying instead on private intermediaries or informal networks to facilitate mobility.[51]

These five corridors show that no one-size-fits-all approach exists to seeding and growing a labour migration corridor. The availability of visas is critical, but policymakers should also consider the broader ecosystem for facilitating international recruitment, whether through government-to-government efforts or a thriving market of private recruitment agencies that can offer competitive matching and relocation services. Furthermore, some factors that can make a destination country attractive to prospective migrants are so broad (e.g., higher wages) or intangible (e.g., quality-of-life considerations) that policymakers can do little to move the needle.[52]

Migration corridors often emerge where deep-rooted cultural, historical, or economic ties exist between countries. This pattern can be observed in migration between former colonies and colonial powers, where shared language and institutional familiarity often facilitate integration and serve as important pull factors for people who decide to move for employment reasons.[53] Although this study did not examine former colonial relationships, several of the selected corridors exhibit long histories of migration:

- **Peruvian migration to Italy** traces back to the early 20th century when descendants of Italian families who had previously settled in Peru began to return, driven by economic instability and

47 Author interviews with Peruvian migrants and with employers in Italy, multiple dates.
48 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.
49 For instance, India and Germany concluded the Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement, which came into force in March 2023. See Government of India and Government of Germany, 'A Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership', signed 5 December 2022.
50 Spain's seasonal labour migration pilot programme for young Senegalese workers in the agricultural sector under GECCO (Gestión de la Contratación en el Origen) offers a prime example. Author interviews with government stakeholders in Spain, multiple dates.
51 Author interviews with various stakeholders in Italy, Portugal, and Hungary, multiple dates.
52 Anna Rosińska, *Drivers of Migration: Dimensions and Indicators: A Policy-Oriented Literature Review* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024).
53 Examples of this migration pattern include postcolonial migration from Indonesia to the Netherlands or from Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean to the United Kingdom in the aftermath of World War II. See UK Home Office, *The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal: Independent Research Report* (London: UK Home Office, 2024); Pieter C. Emmer and Leo Lucassen, 'Migration from the Colonies to Western Europe since 1800', European History Online, 13 November 2012.

political changes in Peru. Migration continued in subsequent decades, sustained by expanding diaspora networks and perceived linguistic and cultural proximity. Italy also emerged as an alternative destination to Spain for some migrants concerned about competition for jobs among Spain's large Latin American population.[54]

- **Migration from Senegal to Spain**, meanwhile, first emerged in the 1980s after France's increasingly restrictive immigration policies during the 1970s, prompting Senegalese migrants to seek alternative destinations.[55] In interviews, Senegalese migrants highlighted that a well-established diaspora in Spain, together with ongoing economic challenges and a lack of opportunities in Senegal, continue to drive many young Senegalese to migrate, often via irregular routes.[56] These interviews also underscored the strong migration culture among Senegalese, with migration widely regarded as the norm and an expected life strategy within many communities.[57] Within the circular migration programme, Spanish employers recruiting Senegalese migrants have expressed concerns about migrants not returning to Senegal as expected, as well as the high number who leave their jobs shortly after arrival and before completing their contracts, at least in previous pilots.[58]

- **Migration from Vietnam to Hungary**, and to Europe more broadly, increased during the Vietnam War, followed by further movement to the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War era.[59] However, many Vietnamese workers now perceive Hungary as a transitional country, serving as a stepping stone towards employment opportunities in Western European nations that offer higher wages and more robust social benefits.[60]

The labour migration corridor between Germany and India stood out in the study as a pathway that has been strategically pursued and increasingly formalised through bilateral government-to-government cooperation. Coordination on skilled migration between the two countries dates back several decades—particularly through partnerships with the Indian state of Kerala—but has expanded and deepened significantly in recent years, driven largely by Germany's growing demand for skilled labour in response to an ageing population and the declining availability of intra-EU workers.[61] From India's perspective, Germany has emerged as an attractive destination for Indian workers, who are often motivated by comparatively high income levels, the prospect of family reunification, and the opportunity to obtain German citizenship after a relatively short period of five years. Key policy developments have reinforced this momentum, most notably Germany's 2024 strategy to attract skilled Indian workers, and the signing of the Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement, which entered into force in March 2023.[62] Despite Germany's appeal, meeting German language requirements for securing a job (and a visa in some cases) can be a deterrent because it involves significant up-front investments of time and money. However, long-term ambitions and prospects for settlement, family reunification, and citizenship

54 Author interviews with Peruvian migrants in Italy, multiple dates.
55 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025.
56 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.
57 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.
58 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025.
59 G. Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 'The Vietnamese Communities in Central and Eastern Europe as Part of the Global Vietnamese Diaspora', *Central and European Migration Review* 4, no. 1 (2015): 5–10; Christina Schwenkel, 'Vietnamese in Central Europe: An Unintended Diaspora', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 12, no. 1 (2017): 1–9.
60 Author interviews with Vietnamese migrants in Hungary, multiple dates.
61 German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 'Freizügigkeitsmonitoring', accessed 28 March 2025.
62 Government of India and Government of Germany, 'A Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership'.

often offset these challenges. Some migrants circumvent the language requirement by first arriving as students, a status with lower requirements, and later transitioning into the labour market.[63]

Over the last decade, cooperation on labour migration between the Spanish and Senegalese governments has increased as part of a broader effort to address high rates of irregular migration. Senegal is now included in the GECCO programme, for example. But for the other three corridors, government-to-government cooperation on managing labour migration has been. For the Vietnam-Hungary corridor, recruitment has occurred through private recruitment agencies. Hungary's decision to remove Vietnam from the list of countries whose nationals are eligible for the guestworker permit as of January 2025 potentially speaks to the broader state of cooperation on migration issues, given the reasons Hungarian policymakers provided for the change included not having signed a readmission agreement with Vietnam. At the time of writing, labour migration opportunities along this corridor were largely frozen, with no clear timeline for when an agreement might be reached and restrictions lifted.

The Bangladesh-Portugal corridor lacks any formal governmental coordination and is primarily characterised by irregular migration for employment in sectors such as agriculture and the gig economy.[64] Similarly, no bilateral agreements exist governing labour mobility between Peru and Italy, and migration along this corridor largely occurs outside of formal frameworks, with many Peruvian migrants entering Italy on tourist visas and then overstaying.[65] National government involvement in this corridor is limited to the inclusion of Peru in Italy's national flow planning and two recent pilot projects approving the entry of Peruvian care workers outside of the national quota system.[66]

The research found mixed attitudes among employers about hiring workers from the selected countries of origin.

Finally, the research found mixed attitudes among employers about hiring workers from the selected countries of origin. In Spain's agricultural sector, for example, stakeholders noted that some employers involved in circular migration programmes tend to prefer hiring from northern Morocco rather than Senegal because of perceptions that hiring Moroccan workers involves lower travel costs and that the workers are more likely to return home at the end of the season. Under the GECCO programme, even though employers can suggest preferred countries of origin, final decisions are made in coordination with the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration (specifically, its Directorate-General for Migration), and through discussions with the government, employers have agreed to include Senegal as a source country.[67] By contrast, the Peru-Italy corridor benefits from decades of Peruvian diaspora presence and positive experiences in the health-care and domestic sectors, which have contributed to a favourable perception of Peruvian workers among Italian employers, alongside their strong push and desire to recruit more nurses and care workers from Peru (and South America in general). In Portugal, the agricultural sector is the primary industry in which employers have shown a preference for hiring South Asian migrant workers, including those

63 Author interviews with Indian migrants in Germany, multiple dates.
64 Author interview with representatives from the Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (AIMA), 28 February 2025.
65 Author interview with representative from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.
66 Author interview with representative from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025; Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 'Programmi Di Formazione All'estero Approvati Dal MLPS', accessed 4 April 2025.
67 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025.

from Bangladesh.[68] This preference is largely because of the presence of an established community of agricultural migrant workers from this region of the world, which helps minimise language barriers and contributes to positive employer perceptions. In interviews, employers recruiting new workers described leveraging the personal networks of Bangladeshi workers already in the country, rather than setting up formal recruitment processes abroad.[69]

C. *What are the mechanisms for connecting employers with workers?*

Employer sponsorship is required for most of the available work visas in the five corridors studied. Germany is a notable exception through its job seeker visa, which allows qualified third-country nationals to enter the country for up to six months and search for employment without a prior job offer.[70] For the pathways requiring employer sponsorship, forging this connection between destination-country employers and prospective employees in another country can be challenging, especially where networks may be weaker or public institutions may lack the capacity or resources to oversee this process.

Across the five corridors studied, there is a great deal of variety in how employers connect with prospective workers and the degree of government involvement in this matching process, even in formal procedures set out in legislation.

- **India-Germany:** Despite several government-run or funded initiatives to train and recruit workers, including the Triple Win project,[71] most recruitment to Germany is still facilitated through private intermediaries. The government of India (as well as state governments such as Kerala) has taken steps to regulate recruitment practices, although gaps remain. The governments of Germany and India cooperate closely on this migration corridor, having signed the Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement that went into force in 2023 and holding regular high-level government consultations, which could lead to additional programming or oversight of matching down the road.
- **Vietnam-Hungary:** This corridor is characterised by a reliance on private recruitment agencies to connect employers and workers and to provide training or orientation services. Hungary's rules for visas and permits do not envision a direct role for the government in connecting employers with prospective workers, with private recruitment agencies stepping into this position instead.[72] Meanwhile, Vietnamese law assigns responsibility for matching employers and workers to licensed private recruitment agencies, although most people moving along this corridor either rely on unlicensed recruitment agencies or access jobs independently.

68 Author interview with representative from the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), 28 February 2025.
69 Author interview with representative from Madre Fruta, 27 February 2025.
70 This visa is open to individuals from all countries outside the European Union and European Economic Area or Switzerland, provided they meet certain criteria such as having proof of training recognised in Germany and sufficient financial means to support themselves during their stay. See Germany Visa, 'Germany Job Seeker Visa', accessed 4 June 2025.
71 Implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ; German Corporation for International Cooperation), this programme recruits qualified nurses from countries including the Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, Jordan, and India (Kerala and Telangana) to address Germany's nursing shortage. First launched in 2013, it has been highlighted as a promising practice by organisations including the IOM and the International Trade Union Confederation, with programme monitoring demonstrating high rates of employer satisfaction. See GIZ, 'A Win-Win-Win Situation - More Nurses for Germany' (news release, 23 October 2025).
72 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Association for Migrants, 18 March 2025.

- **Peru-Italy:** With no bilateral labour agreements in place, private intermediaries (including diaspora networks and recruitment agencies in both countries) often play a role in disseminating information about job opportunities and immigration procedures. Some Peruvians relocate to Italy using other routes and find work on arrival; for example, some take up domestic work after visa-free entry into the Schengen Area or entry with a tourist visa that overstay, thus lapsing into irregular status.[73] Regularising their stay is difficult, though, because unlike Spain, Italy lacks a standing regularisation procedure. Instead, it periodically launches a *sanatoria*—a temporary amnesty programme allowing irregular migrants to obtain legal status under specific conditions. The last regularisation campaign in 2020 resulted in 5,980 new residence permits issued to Peruvian nationals who met specific criteria.[74]

- **Bangladesh-Portugal:** This corridor lacks any formal structures or systems to regulate labour migration.[75] Instead, job recruitment often happens through word of mouth when workers in Portugal recommend family or friends to their employers for job openings. Labour migration along this corridor is thus characterised by a high degree of informality both in terms of how prospective workers access employment opportunities and how they enter Portugal.[76] Historically, the most common pathway for Bangladeshi labour migrants to gain resident status in Portugal has been to enter on a tourist visa, secure employment, then obtain a renewable residence permit on the basis of engaging in a professional activity after making 12 months of social security contributions and submitting an expression-of-interest form.[77] The lack of formal agreements between the two countries means that Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd. (BOESL) and the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET) play only a small role in this corridor, despite their responsibilities in other corridors for licensing recruitment agencies, overseeing their activities, and regulating recruitment fees.[78]

- **Senegal-Spain:** Senegal is included in Spain's seasonal labour migration scheme (under GECCO), in which recruitment takes place via a selection committee made up of representatives of the Senegalese and Spanish governments, Spanish employers or employer associations, and labour unions. The Spanish side provides details on jobs to be filled, with groups of ten or more workers selected at the same time to fill these vacancies. The Senegalese side—currently the offices of the Bureau d'Accueil, d'Orientation et de Suivi (BAOS; Senegalese Reception and Orientation Office)—shortlists candidates through interviews and tests and based on the job descriptions, and then invites shortlisted candidates to Dakar for assessment and potential selection. But the limited numbers of visas available to Senegalese nationals through this route (ranging from 100 in 2022 to

73 Author interview with representative from Equilibrium Cende, 7 February 2025; author interview with representative from International Labour Organisation (ILO), 10 February 2025.

74 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia: Informe anual sobre la presencia de migrantes* (Rome: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2022).

75 Author interview with representatives from AIMA, 28 February 2025.

76 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.

77 This permit finds its legal basis in Article 88, paragraph 2 of Portugal's Immigration Act. The expression-of-interest scheme allowed third-country nationals to begin employment after entering Portugal on a nonwork visa and regularise their status after 12 months. However, this pathway was suspended by the Portuguese national government in June 2024. See Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 'Decreto-Lei n.o 37-A/2024, de 3 de Junho', *Diário da República n.o106/2024, Suplemento, Série I de 2024-06-03* (3 June 2024); AIMA, 'Autorização de Residência para Exercício de Atividade Profissional Subordinada, com Dispensa de Visto de Residência – Art. 88.o, n.o2', updated 4 June 2024.

78 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd. (BOESL), 25 February 2025; author interview with representative from the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET), 26 February 2025.

655 in 2025),[79] coupled with the short duration of stay (typically, three to four months in practice) and the difficulties of applying for other visas, means that some Senegalese nationals opt for dangerous, irregular journeys to Spanish territory and search for work on arrival.

In most of the corridors studied, private intermediaries such as recruitment agencies or brokers (or even more informal social networks) play a key role in matching employers and workers. Such private intermediaries offer a sought-after service for employers and workers, especially in contexts where public employment agencies or other government institutions are unable to play this role at all or to do so at the desired scale. The drawback is less oversight over the terms under which migrant workers are recruited, the costs they are charged, and the conditions they experience during recruitment and relocation, which can leave migrants exposed to scams, exploitation, and debt bondage.[80]

> *Well-documented issues include workers being defrauded when searching for a job . . . or workers arriving in destination countries only to discover that they were misled about their employment terms and conditions.*

Relying on private intermediaries thus comes with significant risks. Well-documented issues include workers being defrauded when searching for a job (for example, when an agent disappears after a candidate pays up front for a language test or other recruitment expenses),[81] or workers arriving in destination countries only to discover that they were misled about their employment terms and conditions.[82] The Indian government has established a web portal for publishing the names of blacklisted recruitment agencies, while the state of Kerala operates a taskforce tackling illegal recruitment practices and provides victims with a hotline for reporting fraud. But the scale of the problem and the difficulties of seeking remedy are significant, especially when it comes to tracing the perpetrators of online scams.[83]

Some recruiters also charge sizeable fees for their services, which often fall to workers to meet even as more governments move to prohibit or regulate recruitment fees.[84] For example, while data on recruitment fees are patchy, a 2021 survey of Vietnamese workers moving overseas to all destinations found that on average, they paid the equivalent of 7.4 months of their salary in recruitment fees.[85] Costs were highest for workers using a private recruitment organisation, followed by an individual recruiter or broker, and costs varied by destination—Korea was the most expensive destination for which a national

79 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Elma Saiz reafirma en Senegal la apuesta de España por los proyectos de migración circular, "una fórmula en la que todos ganamos"', updated 10 April 2025; author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 17 January 2025; author interview with multiple Senegalese migrants participating in Senegal-Spain circular mobility programme and associated with Association de Anciens, 12 February 2025.

80 See, for example: Beate Andrees, Alix Nasri, and Peter Swiniarski, *Regulating Labour Recruitment to Prevent Human Trafficking and to Foster Fair Migration: Models, Challenges and Opportunities* (Geneva: ILO, 2015).

81 In the India-Germany corridor, for example, see: Toby Antony, 'Cops Book Kochi Consultancy Firm over German Language Test Fraud', *The New Indian Express*, 5 August 2024; Mahima Jain, 'How Not to Be Deported: India's Nurses Seeking Work Abroad Learn How to Migrate Safely', *The Guardian*, 12 March 2025.

82 See, for example, reports of Moroccan workers being sold fake employment contracts for Germany or discovering their employer offered lower wages and worse working conditions on arrival: Majda Bouazza, 'Fake Employment Contracts: Young Moroccans Fall Victim to Scam to Reach Germany', InfoMigrants, 7 February 2022.

83 Surbhi Gloria Singh, 'Visa Fraud: Kerala Govt Forms Task Force to Check Illegal Recruitment', *Business Standard*, 22 October 2024; Jain, 'How Not to Be Deported'.

84 ILO, *Global Study on Recruitment Fees and Related Costs* (Geneva: ILO, 2024).

85 ILO, *Measuring Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 10.7.1 on Recruitment Costs of Vietnamese Workers Overseas: Results of the Labour Force Survey 2021* (Geneva: ILO, 2022).

breakdown was available.[86] These fees are much higher than those allowed under Vietnamese law, which caps fees at one and a half months' salary for a 36-month contract.[87]

All five EU Member States studied prohibit charging any recruitment fees to workers, whether they are recruited nationally or internationally. Instead, following International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines and the Employer Pays Principle, employers are supposed to cover the costs of recruitment. For partner countries, policies vary. While Peru and Senegal also prohibit charging recruitment fees to workers, Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam instead cap recruitment fees charged to workers moving internationally.[88] Along with Vietnam, reporting from India and Bangladesh suggests that official caps on recruitment fees and how much migrant workers can be charged are often flouted, and workers frequently resort to informal loans to cover those expenses.[89]

In turn, practices vary on how other recruitment costs (such as travel, accommodation, and testing) are assigned, which can also leave migrant workers with significant expenses. For example, in the Senegal-Spain corridor, employers are responsible for paying for their workers' flights to Spain, while workers pay for their internal travel to Dakar for the selection process (and their visa, if they are hired); their return ticket to Dakar; and often, the employer-provided accommodation.[90] The result is that workers recruited to Member States may still enter with recruitment-related debts, which impacts the remittances they can send home and can leave them in a more financially precarious position and at greater risk of exploitation as they service their debts.[91]

Regulating the activities of private intermediaries requires carefully designed regulations and resourcing to incentivise compliance. Vietnam and Peru both operate licensing systems for recruitment agencies, but under closer scrutiny, neither system works well.

- **Vietnam** operates a licensing system for recruitment agencies, which must apply for a licence from the government to send workers overseas. As of 2020, 421 recruitment agencies had received this licence to send workers to Europe and other destinations. The licence also specifies contract conditions—for example, as of 2020, agencies were approved to send workers for jobs in agriculture and industry in Hungary, charging a fee of USD 1,650.[92] But in practice, many employers and workers circumvent the official system with relatively few consequences because workers can still apply for a visa and move. Vietnamese data recorded only 1,539 departures for Hungary, as reported by licensed recruitment agencies, yet in 2023, Hungary issued 14,387 first permits for

86 This survey provided national breakdowns for the three top destinations for Vietnamese workers: Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.
87 The legal cap was lowered from three months in Circular 02/2024/IT-BLDTBXH, effective from 15 May 2024.
88 ILO, *Global Study on Recruitment Fees and Related Costs*; ILO, *A Global Comparative Study on Defining Recruitment Fees and Related Costs: Interregional Research on Law, Policy, and Practice* (Geneva: ILO, 2020).
89 India regulates recruitment fees charged to workers recruited internationally at 45 days of wages or up to 30,000 rupees (approximately USD 350), but surveys of Indian workers in the Gulf States found that they were paying much more than this. Similarly, Bangladesh sets a ceiling for recruitment fees for different groups of workers, but this is regularly flouted by recruitment agencies and excludes informal brokers or subagents from its scope, who also charge high fees. See ILO, *A Global Comparative Study*; Laurent Bossavie, 'Low-Skilled Temporary Migration Policies: The Case of Bangladesh' (background paper to the *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*, World Bank, Washington, DC, April 2023); Philip Martin, 'Recruitment Costs' (data bulletin, IOM, Geneva, December 2018).
90 Author interview with Spanish government representative in Senegal, 12 February 2025.
91 Henrik Alffram, Lisa Denney, Pilar Domingo, Sasha Jesperson, and Andika Wahab, *Debt, Exploitation and Trafficking of Labour Migrants* (London: ODI, 2023).
92 The article noted that monthly salaries for European destinations (including Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Turkey) ranged from 360–850 euros (equivalent to about USD 411 to USD 970). See Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Center for WTO and International Trade, 'Vietnam's Labour Exports Eye the European Market in 2020', updated 2 March 2020.

work to Vietnamese nationals.[93] In some cases, Vietnamese nationals may have received a permit but ultimately did not relocate. However, several interviewees suggested that the gap in numbers likely reflects workers moving outside of this official channel, for example, by using the services of an unlicensed recruitment agency or securing a job independently, although data on these channels are not publicly available.[94]

- A similar licensing system exists in **Peru**, where recruitment agencies are required to have a registered address, be officially licensed by the government, and notify the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion each time a Peruvian worker migrates abroad using their services. However, the absence of expiration dates on these licences weakens oversight and limits the effectiveness of control mechanisms. Furthermore, interviewed stakeholders noted that although a public list of licensed agencies is available, many Peruvians are either unaware of it or do not consult it, often relying instead on agencies discovered through platforms such as Facebook.[95] In some cases, unlicensed recruiters approach Peruvians who have migrated to Italy through licensed agencies and offer them better working conditions, prompting some to leave their original placements without affecting their visa status.

Such circumventing of official channels speaks to the broader challenge of competing in a market in which unlicensed and more informal actors can be quicker and cheaper for employers and workers to access. Using official routes can take more time and bring more costs, creating powerful incentives to find alternatives, especially if there are few consequences. For example, research from 2016–17 in Italy found that immigrants from West Africa entering through regular channels ended up paying more than their counterparts entering through irregular channels, whose payments to smugglers were less than the accumulated costs of applying for a visa and other expenses.[96] For Senegalese travelling to Spain, this study found that the cost of applying for a visa—which often involves paying 500–1,000 euros just to secure an appointment within two weeks—can be comparable to or even higher than the approximately 600 euros typically paid for an irregular boat crossing. Encouraging the use of regular pathways is not just a question of designing and implementing new regulations and building up sufficient capacity to meet demand but also closing access to these more informal options through greater oversight and enforcement.

D. How are skills needs and availability tracked and shared?

At the time of writing, none of the corridors studied had mechanisms in place to exchange real-time labour market data that could inform policymaking on labour migration, recruitment, or skills development and recognition. Labour market data are generated with domestic priorities in mind, and while governments are known to draw on these datasets to inform their immigration policies (such as the shortage occupation lists or quotas in effect in Germany, Italy, and Spain), no channels or structured frameworks exist for regular data-sharing with other governments.

In turn, the quality of data on skills needs and availability is varied. The destination countries studied have robust data collection on labour market trends, for example, but delays in compiling and analysing

93 Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', updated 5 May 2025; IOM, *Vietnam Migration Profile 2023*.
94 Author interview with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025.
95 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.
96 Pietro Cingolani, Ferrucio Pastore, and Ester Salis, 'Measuring Migration Costs of West African Migrants to Italy' (working paper, Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione, July 2017).

these data make it hard to draw timely, reliable insights. While these data can illuminate hiring trends, they do not necessarily indicate what factors are driving shortages or where immigration could be an appropriate policy response. Meanwhile, in the countries of origin studied, data limitations make it difficult to form a comprehensive picture of available talent. One issue is the limited capacity of government agencies to collect, manage, and integrate data on jobseekers and other prospective migrants (who may currently hold a job) and their skills. Another issue is the prevalence of informal work, which compounded data collection challenges.

Assessing skills needs in EU destination countries

All of the Member States studied have centralised systems in place to collect data, monitor labour market trends, and identify skills imbalances, led by national ministries or specialised public employment agencies. These include Spain's State Public Employment Service (Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal, or SEPE), Hungary's Public Employment Service (Nemzeti Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat), Germany's Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), Portugal's Institute for Employment and Vocational Training Services (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, or IEFP), and Italy's National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (L'Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche) and National Agency for Active Labour Policies (Agenzia Nazionale Politiche Attive Lavoro). These ministries' and agencies' systems use a mix of data sources to assess skills needs, such as job vacancy data, employer surveys, and sectoral reports, although they differ in data collection and analysis methods and frequency. Box 3 provides a snapshot of recent data on shortage occupations across the five countries.

Labour market data can shed light on where employers are struggling to hire workers and even the reasons they report for these hiring difficulties. But for government agencies, the challenge lies in analysing what is really driving these shortages and the extent to which they reflect genuine skills gaps that could and should be addressed through immigration. For example, in some cases, employers may not be offering competitive wages or working conditions relative to the industry or to other occupations open to workers at similar skill levels. While immigration could help fill pressing short-term gaps, the real issue is how to attract and retain qualified local candidates and what scope there is to adjust the pay and terms of employment in these jobs. In other cases, a genuine lack of qualified workers may exist locally, which might point to targeting immigrant admissions to fill these skills gaps, alongside investments in the local training pipeline.

For government agencies, the challenge lies in analysing what is really driving these shortages and the extent to which they reflect genuine skills gaps that could and should be addressed through immigration.

In some cases, governments connect these dots by tapping labour market data to inform immigration policy. For example, Germany's Federal Employment Agency compiles a list of shortage occupations, although reforms since 2023 have given this list a less significant role in shaping immigrant admissions.[97] However, Spain's national catalogue of hard-to-fill occupations illustrates the challenges of

97 Since the introduction of the Skilled Immigration Act, Germany has stopped working with the shortage list as a tool to manage skilled immigration and instead allows candidates in any occupation who fulfil the legal requirements to come work in Germany. Shortage occupations still play a role in the EU Blue Card by lowering the required annual salary for granting a work permit. Prior to these reforms, the shortage occupation list used to be central in granting work permits to third-country nationals, helping to fast-track applications in sectors facing acute shortages.

this process, which can be resource-intensive and reliant on regular data inputs and consultations. The catalogue was intended to simplify recruitment from third countries by exempting the listed roles from labour market tests, with the list compiled via tripartite discussions with the government, employers, and trade unions.[98] But in practice, Spain's list has not been updated meaningfully since the 2008 financial crisis, mostly because of political sensitivities about domestic unemployment, and it is now largely misaligned with actual labour market needs.[99]

> *Nongovernmental, private actors such as recruitment platforms and employer associations often collect detailed labour market information to inform their planning.*

In addition to government-led efforts, private and EU-level (or international) initiatives also operate across EU countries to collect and analyse labour market information. Nongovernmental, private actors such as recruitment platforms and employer associations often collect detailed labour market information to inform their planning. However, those actors typically lack formal mechanisms to contribute their data to national labour market assessments or influence labour migration policies, resulting in fragmented efforts.

Several EU-level initiatives also assess skills shortages and mismatches across Member States. The European Skills and Jobs Survey from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), for example, surveys workers about their skill use and its importance and about mismatch in their current roles, offering insights into cognitive, digital, transversal, and job-specific skills. Additionally, Cedefop's Skills Forecast provides biennial projections of employment and skills trends by sector and occupational groups across EU countries.[100] In parallel, the European Employment Services' network platform provides real-time data on job vacancies and worker profiles across countries, highlighting cross-border demand for specific skills.[101] Typically, these initiatives' data are less granular than national-level assessments, but the initiatives often use harmonised methodologies and up-to-date datasets on skills that facilitate direct comparisons and projections regarding vacancies and future skills needs in Member States, all of which could inform future agreements.

98 The catalogue of hard-to-fill vacancies, updated quarterly by the Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE) for each autonomous community aims to streamline recruitment for occupations where the regional SEPEs have struggled to find suitable candidates, based on employers' input. The catalogue is, however, developed through tripartite discussions involving SEPE, employers, and major trade unions and must be approved by the minister of employment before taking effect. Once published, it remains valid until the last business day of the following quarter, serving as a reference for facilitating the hiring of foreign workers in sectors included in the catalogue.

99 Author interview with former director general for migration in Spain, 14 February 2025.

100 Cedefop, 'Welcome to the Skills Intelligence Online Tool', updated 31 January 2024.

101 European Employment Services, 'Labour Shortages and Surpluses in Europe', accessed 18 April 2025.

BOX 3
A snapshot of shortage occupations across the EU Member States studied

National agencies' data offer a snapshot of which jobs are hard to fill, although these data do not necessarily explain the reasons or draw direct comparisons to the availability of qualified local workers. These data reveal that skills shortages span all skill levels, but there is significant concentration in low- to medium-skilled occupations, particularly roles requiring technical proficiency or manual labour. This raises interesting immigration policy questions, given that labour migration pathways for third-country nationals tend to skew towards admitting high-skilled workers.

- In **Spain**, SEPE's analysis identified 79,545 hard-to-fill vacancies* in 2024, with 91.88 per cent in the service sector, followed by 5.04 per cent in industry (including mining, manufacturing, and fishing) and 3.08 per cent in construction. According to surveys with employers, the top ten most cited shortage occupations include a broad mix of technical and service-related roles such as waitstaff, cooks, bricklayers, truck drivers, vehicle mechanics, electricians, plumbers, welders, sheet metal workers, boilermakers, and nonspecialised nurses.
- In **Germany**, sectors facing skills and labour gaps span all levels and sectors, but the most significant shortages are in nursing, professional driving, medical assistance, construction, child-care, and automotive engineering occupations. In 2024, an average 694,000 vacancies were registered with employment agencies and job centres. A survey by the Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer (DIHK; German Chamber of Commerce and Industry) indicated that 43 per cent of companies faced hiring difficulties in 2024.
- In **Hungary**, shortage occupation lists have featured skilled trades such as welding and carpentry, as well as line operator roles in sectors such as automotive and electronics assembly. Persistent shortages have been reported in recruiting essential technical and industrial roles in key manufacturing hubs such as Győr and Debrecen and in the outskirts of Budapest. But recent data suggest that the picture is improving: while earlier estimates indicated more than 60,000 unfilled positions in Hungary's private sector, by the fourth quarter of 2024, the job vacancy rate in the manufacturing sector had declined to 1.7 per cent, corresponding to 11,974 vacancies, suggesting that the sector may be gradually stabilising. During the same period, other sectors faced more acute shortages, including health and social work activities (3.9 per cent), public administration and defence (3.7 per cent), and administrative and support service activities (3.5 per cent).
- In **Italy**, data collected by Excelsior—an information system created by Unioncamere (the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce) to monitor the professional, training, and skills needs of Italian firms—points to ongoing shortages in areas such as ICT, technical and construction trades, and health professions (including an estimated shortfall of about 65,000 nurses). These data reveal that approximately 47.9 per cent of the 427,000 planned hires in November 2024 were considered hard-to-fill positions.
- In **Portugal**, the most recent shortages report (February 2025) shows that unmet labour demand is increasingly concentrated in low-skilled roles, with 39 per cent of pending job offers falling under the 'unskilled workers' category. At the same time, the ICT sector is experiencing acute shortages, with 288 per cent more vacancies per employed person than the average job.

* In the Spanish context, SEPE defines hard-to-fill vacancies as positions that remain open for more than 90 days.
Sources: SEPE, 'Mismatch between Labour Supply and Demand', accessed 15 April 2025; German Federal Employment Agency, 'Einzelausgaben - Fachkräfteengpassanalyse', accessed 18 April 2025; Make it in Germany, 'Professions in Demand', accessed 16 April 2025; German Federal Employment Agency, *The German Labour Market in 2024* (Nuremberg: Federal Employment Agency, 2024); Maria Martinez, 'Labour Shortages Ease in Germany's Economy, Survey Shows', Reuters, 19 December 2024; author interviews with Vietnamese migrants in Hungary, multiple dates; *The Debrecen Sun*, 'Business Fest: Debrecen Prepares for a Massive Workforce Surge', *The Debrecen Sun*, 8 November 2024; Kisalfold, 'Itt vannak a hiányszakmák: hónapokig keresik ezeket a szakembereket Győrben', Kisalfold.hu, 27 March 2025; Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 'Number of Job Vacancies and Job Vacancy Rate, by Economic Branch, Quarterly', accessed 5 June 2025; Silvia Anna Maria Camussi, Andrea Locatelli, Graziella Mendicino, and Francesca Modena, *Labour Shortages in Italy: Determinants, Firms' Responses and Employment Prospects* (Rome: Bank of Italy, 2024); Unioncamere, 'Labour: 427 Thousand Hirings Expected By Companies in November' (press release, 11 November 2024); author interview with representative from the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), 28 February 2025; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 'Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2024 – Country Notes: Portugal', updated 28 November 2024.

Assessing skills availability in partner countries

Data on skills availability in countries of origin can play a dual role from an emigration standpoint, highlighting sectors vulnerable to brain drain while also identifying untapped labour surpluses. This information can help inform decisions about where protective measures are needed to avoid undermining local labour markets and economic growth and where mobility could provide an outlet for unemployed workers in oversaturated sectors. Yet in the five partner countries studied, limited institutional capacity to collect and analyse these data means that no comprehensive picture of workforce and skills availability currently exists.[102]

In all countries studied, government institutions play a role in collecting and managing data on skills availability, though capacity, coordination, and coverage vary. In Bangladesh, BMET is the main agency responsible for migration-related labour market data, and it operates an online registration system that tracks jobseekers' skills and migration preferences. However, coverage remains partial because not all prospective migrants register. Technical training centres in Bangladesh also gather data on trainee profiles and skill availability. In India, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship leads national skilling data collection and oversight (supported by the Ministry of Labour and Employment) and publishes annual reports detailing training participation and workforce readiness. In Peru, the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, through its Directorate of Employment and Training, maintains records of high-demand professions, using employer surveys to assess future needs in the formal labour market. Senegal relies on its National Agency for Statistics and Demography to manage data from surveys and census. In Vietnam, employment service centres at the provincial level collect data on jobseekers and skills, though these systems are not linked centrally, and thus data are fragmented and potentially duplicative at the national level.

Data collection, verification, and analysis can also be fragmented. For example, in Bangladesh, both BMET and technical training centres collect data, but their systems are not integrated, which complicates skills verification.[103] In practice, many workers receive training from public institutions yet are placed abroad through private agents operating outside formal channels, undermining the ability to trace people who move and their profiles. In Vietnam, limitations on how data are collected and integrated mean that foreign partners—such as Finland, Germany, or Hungary—often rely on direct engagement with large recruitment agencies in Vietnam to understand the pool of available workers.

Even where centralised labour market data systems are in place, widespread informality in local labour market poses a major challenge to data representativeness. In Peru, for example, despite government efforts to conduct periodic employment surveys, 73.5 per cent of the workforce is employed informally, meaning that official statistics offer only a partial picture of real labour market conditions. The same is true in Senegal. Both countries conduct surveys targeting the informal sector—such as Senegal's Enquête nationale sur le secteur informel (National Survey on the Informal Sector) and Peru's Encuesta Nacional de Hogares (National Household Survey)—but their granularity and accuracy can be limited.[104] Many of the Peruvian and Senegalese migrants interviewed worked in the informal sector in their home countries and chose to migrate because of limited opportunities. Peruvian migrants highlighted that

102 European Training Foundation, 'Labour Market Information Systems: Collecting Information and Data on Labour Market Trends' (issue brief, February 2017); ILO, *Anticipating and Matching Skills and Jobs* (Geneva: ILO, 2015), 8.

103 Author interview with representative from BMET, 26 February 2025; author interview with representative from the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, 25 February 2025.

104 Peruvian Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 'Tablero interactivo del sector informal', accessed 28 May 2025.

formal jobs in Italy pay more than multiple informal jobs in Peru combined, motivating their move.[105] Conversely, some noted that those already in formal health-care roles in Peru see less financial gain from migrating, making relocation less appealing.[106]

Sharing information on skills between origin and destination countries

Across the five corridors studied, no institutionalised mechanisms are currently in place for systematically sharing labour market data between EU Member States and partner countries. The data collected on vacancies, skills needs, or jobseeker profiles are largely geared towards domestic use and are seldom disseminated to support cross-border mobility.

Job portals exist in all EU countries offering detailed information on job vacancies and, to varying degrees, candidate profiles. In Italy, private recruitment firms such as Randstad, Adecco, and Manpower mostly run these portals,[107] while national employment services operate job portals in Germany and Spain.[108] These platforms are usually designed for a domestic audience, rather than international recruitment. As a result, they can be difficult to navigate for users in other countries and lack clarity on visa eligibility. Crucially, these platforms do not filter or flag vacancies suitable for international recruitment.

In practice, private actors lead information-sharing efforts. Multinational companies, employer associations, and recruitment agencies are the primary facilitators of cross-border recruitment, sharing job openings and identifying suitable candidates for overseas employment opportunities. This trend is particularly visible in the Vietnam-Hungary and Peru-Italy corridors, where private recruitment agencies have taken on much of the matchmaking function. While these arrangements help meet immediate labour demand, they are largely disconnected from broader workforce planning or development strategies and may not align with government priorities on issues such as brain drain.

Government-to-government data-sharing is far less common. Most EU Member States lack formal procedures or mandates to share vacancy or labour market data with third countries. Spain's GECCO system is perhaps one of the few structured mechanisms, allowing the government to notify governments in third countries of hard-to-fill vacancies as long as employers request ten or more workers and domestic recruitment has been exhausted (after a negative labour market test). In Spain's circular migration scheme with Senegal, the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration shares employer demands with the Spanish embassy in Dakar, which then coordinates with Senegalese authorities to relay the information to the agency overseeing recruitment (currently, BAOS). Germany's recently formed bilateral working group on labour migration with India also signals interest in more structured collaboration, but no formal data exchange has taken place

Germany's recently formed bilateral working group on labour migration with India also signals interest in more structured collaboration, but no formal data exchange has taken place so far.

105 Peru's 2022 household survey shows that informal employment is concentrated primarily in the service sector (31.9 per cent, or about 4.2 million people), followed by agriculture (31.1 per cent) and retail (19.9 per cent). Nearly half (45.2 per cent) of informal workers were self-employed, while 34.6 per cent were employed by others, and 12.7 per cent were classified as unpaid family workers. Notably, 88.6 per cent of those in informal employment were working in microenterprises with ten or fewer employees. Peruvian Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 'Tablero interactivo del sector informal'.

106 Author interviews with Peruvian migrants in Italy, multiple dates.

107 Randstad, 'Lavori d'ufficio e settore impiegatizio: scopri la specialty office', accessed 15 April 2025.

108 Empléate, 'Bienvenido al portal de empleo Empléate', accessed 18 April 2025.

so far. Led by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and India's Ministry of External Affairs, the group may create space for more regular exchange of labour market intelligence, but it is still in its infancy.

Structured government-to-government data-sharing or the establishment of centralised online platforms compiling labour market needs and identifying roles suitable for third-country nationals (or both) could make employment opportunities more visible to prospective migrants and potentially inform parallel discussions about workforce planning and development priorities. Yet for now, this potential remains largely untapped. Most bilateral frameworks lack concrete mechanisms for the regular exchange of information on vacancies, in-demand skills, or workforce preparedness, missing opportunities to strategically align training systems or support joint workforce planning. Fragmented data infrastructure, inconsistent definitions of shortages, weak interagency coordination, and data protection concerns constrain cooperation further, while outdated or slow reporting systems undermine timely action.[109] Deeper cooperation and support for capacity building is needed if governments wish to exchange information on skills needs and availability on a more systematic basis along these corridors.

E. *What skills development opportunities are available as part of these migration corridors?*

Targeted skills development can help unlock migration opportunities for more people, whether in the form of providing destination-country language training to help prospective migrants access employment opportunities and qualify for a work visa, vocational training to meet destination-country standards in a particular profession, or soft skills or orientation support to help prospective migrants prepare for life in another country.

Skills development can be critical for preventing brain waste and de-skilling,[110] whether by narrowing skills gaps and smoothing the way for skills recognition on arrival or by fostering the language skills that allow a prospective migrant to find an appropriate role in their chosen profession.[111] Among the Bangladeshi migrant community in Portugal, for example, the research team found examples of brain waste. Bangladeshi migrants with advanced degrees frequently work in low-skilled occupations and struggle to break into professional roles because of a lack of Portuguese language proficiency and difficulties getting their credentials recognised.[112] For instance, several interviewed migrants held bachelor's or master's degrees but came to Portugal and discovered they could find employment only in low-skilled roles in agriculture or hospitality. The most commonly cited reason was the language barrier, which limited access to higher-skilled professional employment, and several interviewees were aided by the presence of a large Bangladeshi community in these sectors, which helped facilitate job opportunities through personal networks.[113] Language training can be critical for finding a job

109 Madeleine Sumption, 'Shortages, High-Demand Occupations, and the Post-Brexit UK Immigration System', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 38, no. 1 (25 January 2022): 97–111.

110 'Brain waste' refers to when professionals cannot fully utilize their skills and education in the workplace, which in some cases can lead to a loss of skills (de-skilling) due to lack of use.

111 Entry into a regulated profession typically requires passing a destination-country language test, as well as demonstrating professional competences. In Italy, for example, foreign nurses seeking to enrol in the professional register must pass an exam assessing their Italian language skills and understanding of professional regulations (although participants in the training courses set out by the Cutro decree can now skip the latter part). See Federazione Nazionale degli Ordini delle Professioni Infermieristiche, 'For Foreign Nurses', accessed 31 October 2025.

112 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrant workers in Portugal, multiple dates.

113 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrant workers in Portugal, multiple dates.

and settling into the destination country, as well as for accessing visas that set minimum language requirements for applicants, as for some work visas in Germany.[114]

While the case for offering skills development opportunities for prospective migrants is compelling, it comes with trade-offs. Technical and language skills training needs to be tailored for specific sectors and destinations and may, as a result, not produce transferrable skills. For less popular destinations or languages not commonly spoken outside a specific destination country, this adds risk for workers who may embark on significant training without guarantees of employment at the end to help them recoup the costs of their investment. For some foreign workers, both the cost and the time and effort involved make such training a hard sell, particularly when the language is entirely unfamiliar. A recruitment agency in Peru, for example, noted that Germany's efforts to recruit Peruvian workers received limited uptake because many were unwilling to invest in learning German when they could access opportunities more easily in Spain or in markets such as Italy, where the language feels more approachable.[115]

Technical and language skills training needs to be tailored for specific sectors and destinations and may, as a result, not produce transferrable skills.

There are relatively few examples of dedicated skills development opportunities tied explicitly to migration for the studied corridors. In some cases, prospective migrants could access state-funded predeparture orientation services, although they often were not tailored to different destination-country contexts. In Vietnam, for example, predeparture orientation services set out by the government focus on preparing people for top destinations in East and Southeast Asia (for example, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan) with little attention to European contexts.[116] Recruitment agencies often step into this gap by providing additional orientation and training for life in the destination country. In an interview, one representative of a Vietnamese recruitment agency described providing simulations in the workplace, the supermarket, and other common settings, for example. But services such as these are built into the fees the agencies charge, and the extent and quality of training likely varies among providers.[117]

Some recruitment agencies in Vietnam offer extensive training for prospective migrants as part of their package of services, in line with employer specifications. The same recruitment agency mentioned above provides about eight to ten months of language training before trainees enter the pool of candidates for matching with prospective employers.[118] The recruitment agency operates a dedicated training centre specialising in the construction, food production, and health-care sectors, although the chief executive officer noted that the extent of training depended on employer preferences, with some asking for experienced workers and others preferring to deliver training themselves. For the most part, the agency sends trainees rather than qualified professionals, and they were not involved in preparing workers for skill-recognition procedures. Employers might choose to cover some share of the training

114 Several but not all of Germany's work and training visas set minimum language requirements, such as its Chancenkarte (which requires German language skills at the A1 level or English language skills at least at the B2 level), its visas for the recognition of foreign qualifications and for employment within the framework of a recognition partnership (which require German language skills at the A2 level), and its vocational training visas (which require German language skills at the B1 level). However, its work visas for qualified professionals or professionally experienced workers, the Blue Card, and self-employment do not set formal language requirements. See German Federal Government, 'Required German Language Skills Depending on the Type of Visa According to the Residence Act (AufenthG)', updated January 2024.

115 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.

116 Author interview with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025.

117 Author interview with representative from a recruitment agency in Vietnam, 27 March 2025.

118 Author interview with representative from a recruitment agency in Vietnam, 27 March 2025.

costs, but Vietnamese law does not require it, and while the law states that workers should not pay more than three months' worth of their salary in total recruitment fees (which would include all training provided), reports on actual recruitment fees paid by workers suggest this rule is poorly enforced. In Peru, recruitment agencies often assist workers by helping them access training and language courses, as well as signalling the documentation necessary for their migration journey. Migrants typically cover these costs themselves.[119]

Likewise, language training was typically delivered through private providers, with availability depending on demand. Perhaps unsurprisingly, options for learning Hungarian were limited in Vietnam (and relatively few options were available for learning German), although English courses (and French to a lesser extent) are more common in the country. The India-Germany corridor had the most extensive infrastructure for language and technical skills training tied to migration, although private services outstripped the number of government-run and subsidised or free services. Prospective Indian migrants can access government-run resources about life in Germany, such as the web portal Make it in Germany, which offers information and webinars for skilled workers seeking to immigrate to Germany, and the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce's ProRecognition initiative, which offers free advice to Indian professionals about their job search and getting their qualifications recognised in Germany.[120]

Germany's government also supports several projects that operate in India and Vietnam and offer a combination of matching and skills development services in different sectors. For example, the German government currently funds two projects that match Indian nationals with German employers and provide some skills development as part of the service: Triple Win, which recruits nurses from Kerala to Germany (and from several other sending countries, including Vietnam until recently), and Hand-in-Hand for International Talents, which recruits Indian professionals for jobs in engineering and electronics in Germany. The German government also funds Partnerschaften für entwicklungsorientierte Ausbildungs- und Arbeitsmigration (PAM; Partnerships for Development- Oriented Labour Migration), which operates in Vietnam (as well as Ecuador and Jordan) by matching German employers with graduates from German-supported technical and vocational education schools. Additionally, it funds a Hand-in-Hand project in Vietnam to recruit Vietnamese professionals for culinary and hospitality jobs.[121] But in all these projects, the number of people who ultimately move for jobs is fairly small, raising questions about avenues to scale (see Box 4).

In all these projects, the number of people who ultimately move for jobs is fairly small, raising questions about avenues to scale.

119 Except for the Italian government-approved training programmes financed by employers. Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.

120 German Federal Government, 'Make it in Germany', accessed 23 April 2025; ProRecognition, 'Our Services', accessed 23 April 2025.

121 GIZ, 'Fostering Effective Partnerships for Fair Migration for Trainees and Skilled Workers', updated August 2024.

BOX 4
Germany's public-funded matching and skills development projects in India and Vietnam

The German government funds several projects offering matching for overseas placements and skills development opportunities in India and Vietnam. Employers pay a fee for the services offered, and the project subsidises most or all of the services provided to prospective migrants. These projects include:

- **Triple Win:** The Triple Win project was established in 2013 to recruit nurses sustainably from partner countries (selected based on having a surplus of qualified nurses, with a placement agreement signed between the German Federal Employment Agency and the partner-country employment agency). At time of writing, the Triple Win project was operating in India in the states of Kerala and Telangana and in Indonesia, Jordan, the Philippines, and Tunisia. A related project placing more than 450 Vietnamese trainees in German hospitals and nursing homes is wrapping up in 2025. Triple Win matches workers and employers, provides support for relocation and qualification recognition services, and provides language training up to the B1 level, with the costs incurred by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ; German Corporation for International Cooperation) covered through a flat fee charged to employers (7,900 euros), excluding travel and recognition procedure costs.
- **Hand-in-Hand for International Talents:** This project is run by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce offices in Brazil, India, and Vietnam. It seeks to recruit workers with vocational qualifications in the hotel and catering, ICT, and electronics and engineering industries.* The project offers job matching, language training up to the B1 level, and support for qualification recognition and integration in Germany. Participants must cover their travel, health insurance, and living costs during their language training, but the project covers the rest of the fees, charging employers differential fees (ranging from 2,900 to 5,400 euros) linked to their size.
- **Partnerships for Development-Oriented Labour Migration:** The PAM project aims to help employers recruit workers by connecting employers with vocational training schools in Ecuador, Jordan, and Vietnam (participating countries at the time of writing). In Vietnam, the first phase of the project was with one vocational training school that had previously received support to provide 'German-style' vocational training for the local labour market, resulting in the placement of 13 people in the mechatronics and electronics industries. The costs charged to employers have not been published.
- **Skills Partnerships:** GIZ is also developing a skills partnership with Ghana and Senegal, which aims to set up a dual-track training programme in the construction sector, with up to 360 participants in the 'home' track and up to 180 participants moving to Germany to continue their apprenticeships. The European Union is also providing support for GIZ's Ghanaian-European Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Development (formerly operating between Ghana and Germany), which provides information about employment and regular migration opportunities in Ghana, West Africa, and Europe; supports reintegration; and promotes knowledge exchange between Ghanaian and European counterparts.

Other projects are also in the works, including GIZ's Indo-German Skills Programme, which seeks to boost Indian women's participation in vocational education and training for green jobs and to align training curricula with German and international standards, with a focus on supporting international labour migration, although it remains to be seen how this will translate into concrete migration opportunities and at what scale.

* The Hand-in-Hand for International Talents project recruits for hotel and catering workers in Vietnam; for hotel and catering, ICT, and electronics and engineering workers in India; and for electronics, engineering, mechanics, metallurgy, mechatronics, and industrial automation workers in Brazil.

Sources: GIZ, 'A Win-Win-Win Situation - More Nurses for Germany' (news release, 23 October 2025); author correspondence with GIZ representative, January 2025; GIZ, 'Triple Win Programme - Recruiting Nurses from Abroad Sustainably' (fact sheet, 2021); Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Vietnam, 'Hand in Hand for International Talents', accessed 23 April 2025; Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in India, 'Hand in Hand for International Talents', accessed 23 April 2025; Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Brazil, 'Hand in Hand for International Talents', accessed 23 February 2025; DIHK, 'Neue Wege gehen – "Hand in Hand for International Talents" findet qualifizierte Fachkräfte' (fact sheet, n.d.); Migration Partnership Facility, 'Skills Partnerships between Senegal/Ghana and Germany (fact sheet, n.d.); GIZ, 'Unlocking Opportunities: Germany and EU Join Forces to Boost Employment and Migration in Ghana', accessed 5 June 2025; GIZ, 'Promoting Equal Access to Green Jobs: Indo German Green Skills Programme (IGGSP)', updated December 2024.

In India, some emerging skills development initiatives tied to migration are led by other actors, though they are in early stages. India's National Skill Development Cooperation (NSDC), overseen by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, opened its International Academy in early 2025 to provide language training and professional training courses adapted to international standards. Identified cooperation countries include Australia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom and several countries in the Middle East.[122] The sectors targeted vary by agreement: for instance, cooperation with Israel has focused on construction workers and caregivers,[123] while in Japan, NSDC has recruited crop farmers.[124] Funding for these programmes also differs by context, drawing from employers, workers, or grants facilitated through NSDC. The Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence recently entered discussions with Deutsche Bahn and NSDC to potentially set up a training centre in Kerala for train conductors and electronic technicians. At the time of writing, one scenario under discussion was the NSDC owning and operating the centre (with Deutsche Bahn supplying the machinery and training materials for the centre and training local trainers) and the Goethe Institute providing German language courses, although this may change as negotiations continue.[125]

Beyond the India-Germany corridor, however, fewer skills development opportunities were tied explicitly to migration opportunities along the studied corridors. One exception is the Cutro Decree in Italy, which opened an expedited route for nurses and care workers in several countries (including Peru) for those who undergo specialist training funded by Italy (80 hours of language and cultural instruction and 40 hours of technical skills training). Participants can then work in Italy without needing to go through a full recognition procedure because regional authorities can simply verify their registration with the Peruvian nursing board. The training is part of the Italian Ministry of Labour-approved programmes in which most costs (such as language instruction, technical preparation, and accommodation upon arrival) are covered by employers, with migrants typically responsible only for their travel expenses.[126] Two recent programmes that follow this model are the Samaritanus Care Project and Progetto Zefiro, both led by the religious organisation Uneba Veneto and their partners in the health-care sector to recruit nurses and nursing assistants, respectively, from Peru. Both projects remain in their early stages, so empirical evaluations are still unavailable.[127] In Senegal, the Spanish government funds skills development opportunities including through the Alianza Avanza Africa and the Tierra Firme project. The latter combines vocational training with job placement support, although it currently targets employment within Senegal, without a mobility component.[128] Other initiatives that offer skills development for participants in the Spanish GECCO programme include the Women as Financially Independent Rural Actors Project, which trained 209 female participants in GECCO to set up income-generating activities on their return to Morocco in its first phase.[129]

122 National Skill Development Cooperation (NSDC) India, 'India's Global Skill Revolution | NSDC International Academy Leading the Way!' (video, YouTube, 2025).
123 NSDC, 'Construction Workers Opportunity in Israel', accessed 24 April 2025.
124 NSDC, 'Crop Farming', accessed 24 April 2025.
125 Author interview with the chief operating officer of Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence, 7 March 2025; author interview with representative from the Goethe Institute in Trivandrum, 6 March 2025.
126 Author interview with representative from Uneba Veneto, 10 March 2025; author interview with representative from Randstad, 17 March 2025.
127 Author interview with representative from Uneba Veneto, 10 March 2025.
128 Spanish Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Business, 'España y Senegal ponen en marcha la "Alianza África Avanza" para potenciar inversiones generadoras de crecimiento y empleo', updated 29 August 2024.
129 Migration Partnership Facility, 'WAFIRA - Women As Financially Independent Rural Actors' (fact sheet, 2025).

Costs are fundamental to discussions about how to design and deliver skills development services. Responsibility for costs is especially pertinent for longer-term investments such as intensive language training. For example, research suggests that it can take 12 to 18 months for Indian nationals to learn enough German to qualify for a visa (e.g., B1 level proficiency).[130] But employers can be reluctant to front the costs of tuition and other expenses at such an early stage, which can result in prospective migrants taking out loans with extremely high interest rates. While recruitment agencies can charge these costs at the end of their services (when migrants have in theory secured a job with a future income stream), if a worker does not secure a job offer or the anticipated pay that would make the services worthwhile, the worker can be left with debts that are impossible to service. Under ILO guidelines, employers are supposed to pay all migration-related costs, yet ample evidence shows that this does not happen in practice, either because recruiters and employers knowingly flout the rules or disagree about what related costs should be covered, especially around training completed prior to receiving a job offer. Until these gaps are addressed, workers will bear this shortfall. There is thus a pressing need to explore ways to reduce this debt burden for migrants and improve their access to migration opportunities, including via innovative financing solutions.

Responsibility for costs is especially pertinent for longer-term investments such as intensive language training.

F. How easily can foreign-trained workers apply their skills?

Skills waste is a common challenge across the corridors studied, tied to difficulties in getting skills and experience fully recognised at destination. Migrants qualified to work in regulated professions such as nursing are generally required to undergo a formal recognition procedure as part of the process of obtaining a licence to practise in another country. In Germany, formal recognition procedures are also required to work in a much broader range of professions. But migrants can also encounter more general barriers to applying their skills, for example, when destination-country employers do not know how to 'translate' their foreign-acquired experience and training to local standards and thus hire someone in a more junior role, or when language barriers preclude a migrant from working at the level they did in their origin country.

Barriers to fully applying skills present a clear challenge to the ambition of achieving a quadruple win. With skills waste come lost earnings (and in turn, reduced remittances) and a risk of de-skilling. While experimentation with innovative ways to recognise skills (such as Sweden's Fast Tracks) has spread across Europe since 2015–16, questions remain about how to roll out some of these resource-intensive interventions and opportunities to streamline requirements and/or realise economies of scale nationally or in cooperation with other countries. The subsections that follow explore the challenges that migrants entering the studied corridors face in applying their skills at destination, both in navigating formal recognition procedures for regulated professions and in overcoming barriers to applying their skills in unregulated roles.

130 The Labor Mobility Partnerships nonprofit is developing a financing pilot to help Indian nationals meet the costs of German language training instead of relying on lenders that charge high interest rates (up to 20 per cent through formal channels, and up to 50 per cent through informal channels). However, this has required navigating numerous challenges, including Indian financial institutions' reluctance to engage in cross-border lending (where someone would take out a loan in India but repay from Germany). See Labor Mobility Partnerships, 'Language without Borders: Designing a Financial Solution to Scale Language Training for Migrant Workers', updated 14 September 2023; author interview with representatives from Labor Mobility Partnerships, August 2024.

Formal recognition procedures for regulated professions

For migrants entering the corridors under regulated professions, formal recognition systems are in place to recognise candidates' qualifications and help them work towards obtaining a license to practise. Yet the individual assessment processes are often lengthy, fragmented, administratively burdensome, and potentially costly. Moreover, different sectoral authorities may oversee recognition procedures depending on the sector and the degree of regulation, as in Portugal.[131] The research team found that challenges related to recognition procedures and sitting licensing exams meant that some Bangladeshi nurses in Portugal ultimately opted for work as lower-skilled domestic help or in caregiving jobs instead.

> *Challenges related to recognition procedures and sitting licensing exams meant that some Bangladeshi nurses in Portugal ultimately opted for work as lower-skilled domestic help or in caregiving jobs instead.*

Practices for handling formal recognition procedures vary widely by EU Member State, and in turn, by the profile of the person undergoing the procedure, including their nationality and profession. Indian technical professionals in Germany and Peruvian nurses in Italy, for example, benefit from clearer procedures for validating their credentials, which increases their chances of securing employment aligned with their qualifications. In Italy, migrant nurses and care workers (from Peru and other countries) benefit from a streamlined recognition process introduced by Article 13 of Legislative Decree 18/2020 in response to health-care staffing needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.[132] This article temporarily suspended the usual rules governing the recognition of foreign health professional qualifications, allowing foreign-trained professionals to practice in Italy upon approval of an application and the submission of proof of registration in their home country's professional registry to regional authorities in Italy. Additional legislative reforms, such as the Cutro Decree, allow professionals who have completed specific government-recognised training in non-EU countries—including language, cultural, and technical preparation—to bypass additional assessments upon arrival.[133] Despite these more supportive frameworks for qualification recognition of nurses and care workers, however, other Peruvian health-care professionals with advanced qualifications still face significant barriers to applying their skills in Italy. Specialist doctors, for instance, encounter significant challenges in having their advanced qualifications formally recognised, often being reclassified as general practitioners without acknowledgement of their specialisations, contributing to underemployment and potentially de-skilling.

Another challenge for prospective workers and employers to navigate is working out who is responsible for handling the recognition procedure in their specific sector. For example, recognition of qualifications for engineers and architects in Germany and health-care professionals in Italy falls under regional jurisdiction.[134] The result is that applicants with identical qualifications may receive different outcomes depending on the city in which they seek to work, leading to inconsistencies in treatment across a country. Meanwhile, recognition in certain occupations—such as sailors and seafarers, specific categories of transport operators, professionals handling toxic substances, lawyers, and commercial

131 Author interview with representatives from AIMA, 28 February 2025.

132 Italian Official Gazette, *Decreto-Legge 17 marzo 2020, n. 18* (17 March 2020).

133 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025; author interviews with Peruvian migrants in Italy, multiple dates.

134 German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 'Anerkennung in Deutschland - Federal States Recognition Acts', accessed 22 April 2025; Fondazione Iniziative E Studi Sulla Multietnicità, 'Non mettiamoci un cerotto: il reclutamento di infermieri all'estero nel quadro di una nuova governance della professione infermieristica', accessed 24 April 2025.

agents—is governed at the EU level.[135] In the Senegal-Spain corridor, for instance, efforts to recruit Senegalese truck drivers have stalled partly because of EU regulations requiring that professional training and certification (such as the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence) be completed within the European Union. As a result, training and licences obtained in Senegal are not recognised, obliging candidates to undergo costly retraining in Spain. This delays recruitment and raises questions about who should cover the training costs, limiting progress despite mutual interest. A potential solution can be drawn from a 2024 agreement between Spain and Morocco, which allows Moroccan truck drivers to use their national licences in Spain without undergoing additional theoretical or practical tests. Aimed at addressing Spain's shortage of professional drivers, the agreement facilitates the recruitment of Moroccan drivers by recognising their existing qualifications.[136] Adopting a similar approach in the Senegal-Spain corridor could facilitate the recruitment of Senegalese drivers.[137]

Tailored support can help make formal recognition procedures more accessible, although the resource-intensive nature of this work can be difficult to scale. In Italy, the Magallanes Professionals programme (led by the Gulliver Centre) has supported South American nurses entering the Italian labour market under the regional framework for recognition of their qualifications.[138] Under this project, support from the Gulliver Centre has been crucial in helping nurses navigate the framework and manage the bureaucratic aspects of the application process. Without it, the lengthy and complex procedure would likely have discouraged both international candidates and local facilities from pursuing foreign recruitment.[139]

Digital tools can help address some needs related to formal recognition, potentially at a much lower cost per person once they are established. Germany, for instance, provides an online portal that helps applicants navigate the recognition procedure and identify the responsible authority based on their profession and city of destination.[140] Furthermore, ProRecognition, an advisory service of the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad, offers free, one-on-one guidance for Indian professionals navigating Germany's recognition procedures.[141]

Barriers to applying skills in unregulated professions

Practices for assessing and validating migrants' skills in unregulated professions are much more varied within and across the corridors studied, often hinging on employers' skills assessments at the interview stage. While some government-run procedures exist to validate academic qualifications, particularly for university-educated migrants, most innovation comes from the private sector, including through the use of digital credentials and specific tests to showcase skills.

135 European Commission, 'Professions Falling under Specific Legislation', accessed 22 April 2025.

136 Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE), *BOE-A-2024-5839* (BOE núm. 73, 23 March 2024), 34034–34036.

137 European Commission, *Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on driving licences* (Official Journal of the European Union, 2006).

138 Under this framework, regional authorities are responsible for verifying the presence of a diploma and registration with the nursing board in the country of origin. Fondazione Iniziative E Studi Sulla Multietnicità, 'Non mettiamoci un cerotto'.

139 Fieldwork findings indicate that this entire process takes at least six months, covering the period from requesting authorisation from regional authorities to ultimately securing the visa. However, significant delays in issuing authorisations are frequently recorded, often lasting several months or one year, as experienced by two candidates recruited through Operatori Sanitari Associati. Furthermore, procedures vary at the regional level, so having support from entities that are more familiar with region-specific processes facilitates the process of foreign recruitment. Fondazione Iniziative E Studi Sulla Multietnicità, 'Non Mettiamoci Un Cerotto'; author interview with representative from Operatori Sanitari Associati, 7 March 2025.

140 German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 'Anerkennung in Deutschland – Recognition Finder', accessed 24 April 2025.

141 ProRecognition, 'Why Recognition?', accessed 20 April 2025.

Migrants with higher-education credentials in unregulated professions can, in many cases, have their qualifications formally recognised in EU Member States, though the relevance and ease of doing so often depend on the profession and local recognition practices. Germany's Anabin database allows applicants to quickly verify whether their degree has already been evaluated against German standards. If an identical degree from the same institution has been recognised previously, the same assessment typically applies, speeding up the process. Since 2025, the Spanish government has been undertaking major reforms to speed up the recognition of foreign university degrees. Key changes include introducing 'positive precedents' (automatically recognising degrees previously approved), processing groups of similar applications together, and implementing automation to streamline and accelerate procedures.[142]

Approaches to verifying foreign workers' skills differ across the corridors for low- and middle-skilled roles. For example, Senegalese workers participating in Spain's seasonal agricultural programmes are not subject to official qualification checks; instead, recruitment is based on basic, practical assessments that test physical ability rather than verified skills or experience. Early versions of the programme required agricultural diplomas but dropped this condition after it excluded many informally trained workers. Recruitment now relies on experience-based criteria and physical checks (such as looking for calloused hands) as well as informal geographic targeting of candidates from farming regions. Similarly, in Hungary, Vietnamese lower- and mid-skilled workers commonly undergo informal, hands-on tests in place of formal certification or equivalency procedures. These trade tests are typically conducted in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City at the recruitment agency's own workshop, in front of the Hungarian employer's technical staff or via live video if travel is not possible. For example, welders (metal inert gas/metal active gas and tungsten inert gas)[143] may be asked to weld a 10-millimeter carbon steel or stainless steel coupon in multiple positions (horizontal-flat, vertical-up, and overhead) according to international standards,[144] and the weld is inspected visually and sometimes bend-tested.[145] Pipe-fitters and steel erectors may be required to read an isometric drawing, fabricate a pipe spool, operate a bevelling machine, and complete a pressure leak test.[146] Carpenters are typically required to produce a mortise-and-tenon joint or assemble a shuttering panel within a time limit, with accuracy and tool handling assessed.[147] If the employer is satisfied that the candidate meets EU industry standards, the worker is cleared to proceed with the work permit application without any need for formal skills-equivalency documentation.[148]

In Hungary, Vietnamese lower- and mid-skilled workers commonly undergo informal, hands-on tests in place of formal certification or equivalency procedures.

142 Elisa Silió, 'Las homologaciones de títulos extranjeros se doblan en un año, con 80.000 como meta en 2025', *El País*, 5 February 2025.

143 Metal inert gas/metal active gas and tungsten inert gas welding are widely used arc welding techniques. The first is commonly used in the sheet metal industry, particularly in the car industry, body shops, and small industry. Tungsten inert gas welding is primarily used for pipeline and pipe welding, but it also plays a key role in various industries, including aviation, aerospace, and sheet metal fabrication.

144 Specifically, ISO 9606-1:2012 HL-045, which refers to a welding position used to certify welders in fusion welding of steel, specifically for performing upward welding in an inclined position.

145 Vietnam Manpower Supply Group, 'Vietnam Manpower Carried Out Recruitment Campaign to Supply 50 Qualified MIG–MAG Welders For Stakotra Manufacturing S.R.O from Hungary and Slovakia', accessed 20 April 2025.

146 Vietnam Manpower Supply Group, 'Supplying Labor for Welders, Carpenters, Structural Workers for Construction Projects in Hungary for the Contractors IREM', accessed 20 April 2025.

147 As demonstrated in multiple agency 'carpenter test for Hungary' videos. See, for example, HR Labcoop, 'Test Vietnamese Carpenter to Work in Hungary: Han Van Thanh' (video, YouTube, 2022).

148 Vietnam Manpower Supply Group, 'Hiring Process - Interview and Trade Test by Client', accessed 20 April 2025.

These informal assessments can help verify migrants' skills for employers while bypassing more formal and potentially resource-intensive recognition procedures. At the same time, consistency and transparency about how some procedures work is lacking, potentially leading to disparities in treatment between employers. It also remains to be seen whether the decision of an employer to hire a foreign-trained worker (thus vouching for their qualifications) suffices when securing future employment or whether a more formal credential can also help bridge this divide for migrants.

The growing market for digital credentials and online skills assessments could offer a low-cost option in this respect. For example, platforms such as LinkedIn have promoted skills-based hiring and developed a host of microcredentials and digital badges to help users document their specific skill sets. Meanwhile, the Digital Credentials Consortium, a collaboration led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and global universities, is developing verifiable digital academic credentials that can be recognised across borders and thus potentially benefit migrants who face challenges in accessing or validating paper-based qualifications.[149]

4 Lessons Learnt and Opportunities for Scalability of Labour Migration Corridors

Support for scaling labour migration varies widely across the corridors studied. The India-Germany corridor has seen the highest degree of government engagement and investment in infrastructure, with significant motivation in both countries to expand migration opportunities moving forward. Over the past few years, Senegal and Spain have also expanded cooperation on labour migration, with allotted space under the GECCO programme reaching 655 in 2025, up from 150 in 2024. Yet demand outstrips supply, as evidenced by more than 35,000 people applying for GECCO positions in 2024.[150] This corridor remains high on the Spanish national agenda, evidenced by Spain's plans to reinforce its Cooperation Office in Senegal and the recently launched Plan África, which emphasises the role of the African diaspora in addressing labour shortages.[151] Similarly, interest in promoting labour migration from Peru to Italy is growing among both government and private-sector stakeholders, particularly in the health-care sector.[152]

By contrast, buy-in is limited at this time for scaling labour migration along the Bangladesh-Portugal and Vietnam-Hungary corridors. While Bangladeshi stakeholders and some Portuguese employers in the agriculture sector expressed interest in advancing migration opportunities to Portugal, the Portuguese government does not currently view Bangladesh as a priority source country, citing perceived challenges related to migrant integration, a preference for recruiting from Portuguese-speaking countries, and concerns about the lack of transparency in recruitment practices in Bangladesh.[153] However, this government stance is somewhat at odds with that of agricultural employers who continue to hire workers from Bangladesh and other South Asian countries.[154] Meanwhile, recruitment along

149 Digital Credentials Consortium, 'The Digital Credentials Consortium', accessed 26 April 2025.

150 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants, multiple dates; author interview with former director general for migration in Spain, 14 February 2025.

151 Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Union, and Cooperation, 'Estrategia España-África 2025–2028', updated 13 December 2024.

152 Both programmes in Peru approved by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies for training and entry outside of the national quota system fall under the care sector. See Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 'Programmi Di Formazione'.

153 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.

154 Author interview with representative from Madre Fruta, 27 February 2025.

the Vietnam-Hungary corridor is largely halted after Vietnam's removal from Hungary's guestworker permit country list, and rejection rates are rising for other work permits, likely reflecting the same concerns about secondary migration, potential overstays, and difficulties carrying out returns. Informal consultations suggest that negotiations regarding a readmission agreement are progressing very slowly, though such an agreement could open the door to Vietnam being added to the country list again. Thus, at this time, it is difficult to say when or even if admissions will return to their previous pace.

Addressing labour shortages was often cited in discussions about scaling labour migration in the five EU Member States. In many Member States, international recruitment to fill low-wage seasonal jobs in agriculture is common, including from third countries. Employment in agriculture is already a feature of the Bangladesh-Portugal and Senegal-Spain corridors, for example. Meanwhile, in Italy, growing shortages in the care sector have spurred interest in recruiting health-care workers internationally from countries such as Peru.[155] Initiatives to encourage mobility led by private-sector actors and nongovernmental organisations have emerged at the regional level, particularly in Lombardy, such as the Magallanes programmes in Varese, but they remain relatively small in scale.[156]

For partner countries, labour migration is often viewed as a strategy to relieve pressure on saturated domestic labour markets; this is the case in India and Bangladesh, where economic growth has struggled to keep up with the growing number of new labour market entrants each year.[157] Broader economic drivers motivating workers in partner countries to emigrate include comparatively low wages, high rates of informal employment, and limited opportunities for growth in domestic labour markets, as seen in countries such as Senegal.[158] Additionally, political instability has been a significant factor driving migration from Peru, prompting many workers to seek more stable opportunities abroad, including in Italy.[159] Furthermore, the economic impact of remittances is a strong incentive for partner countries. Remittances account for 5 per cent and 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in Bangladesh and India, respectively, reinforcing national governments' motivation to expand legal migration opportunities.[160]

For partner countries, labour migration is often viewed as a strategy to relieve pressure on saturated domestic labour markets.

Despite the incentives that exist on both sides, a number of concerns and structural obstacles need to be addressed if corridors are to grow. In Spain, some employers in the agriculture sector seem to be reluctant to recruit workers from Senegal, citing issues with the quality of recruitment through GECCO,

155 Author interview with representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.

156 Author interview with representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.

157 Approximately 2 million workers enter the Bangladesh labour market each year. Despite significant recent economic growth, official estimates show that only 1.2 million new jobs are generated annually, yielding a significant gap. See Mustahsin-Ul-Aziz, 'Skilling up Bangladesh's Youth for a Changing Job Market', World Bank, 7 October 2019.

158 Author interview with representative from Equilibrium Cende, 7 February 2025; author interview with experts from Universidad del Pacifico, 20 February 2025. Furthermore, according to a recent survey of the Peruvian workforce by Equilibrium Cende, 70 per cent of respondents expressed a desire to leave the country. The strongest interest came from young university graduates frustrated by limited job opportunities and low wages. However, when asked about concrete plans to emigrate within the next 12 months, only about 26 per cent of the workers surveyed said they intended to do so. This group of prospective emigrants had a notably different profile: primarily young adults with lower levels of education and fewer economic resources, many of whom were planning to seek employment abroad in sectors such as construction or domestic care.

159 Author interview with experts from Universidad del Pacifico, 20 February 2025; author interview with representative from ILO, 27 February 2025.

160 World Bank Group, 'Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP) - India, Bangladesh', accessed 28 April 2025.

workers leaving before their contracts end, or the higher recruitment costs (for example, 400–600 euros for flights from Senegal to Spain compared with 30–60 euros for boat trips from Morocco).[161] In Germany, some stakeholders noted limited engagement from SMEs in recruiting from India, citing both the length of the recruitment process and a broader set of challenges, including high costs, administrative burden, perceived risks, and concerns about cultural differences and integration.[162] Concerns about large-scale secondary migration have weakened interest in the Vietnam-Hungary corridor, and difficulties in monitoring informal recruitment practices and managing risks of exploitation present significant barriers to expanding mobility along the Bangladesh-Portugal corridor. The risk of brain drain is also a recurring issue, for example, in relation to sustainably growing the recruitment of health-care workers in the Peru-Italy corridor.

Another set of challenges relates to capacity issues in both destination and origin countries: difficulties in securing visas, slow processing times, and bureaucratic hurdles make recruiting from abroad less appealing to employers and can even push prospective migrants to turn to informal or irregular channels.[163] Moreover, institutional challenges—such as the absence of a Portuguese embassy in Bangladesh—and gaps in reliable data on skills needs and availability hinder effective planning and bilateral coordination, reducing political will to invest in formal mechanisms for mobility. From foreign workers' perspective, these challenges can make labour pathways to Europe (and the specific destination countries studied) appear less accessible or attractive. As a result, some migrants may either resort to irregular pathways (as seen in several of the corridors studied) or turn to non-EU destinations perceived as more welcoming. This includes destinations that offer clearer legal pathways (for migrants and their families), less red tape, English-speaking environments, or better financial prospects, further intensifying global competition for talent.[164]

In fact, despite rising efforts to bridge critical labour market gaps with migration across skill levels and sectors, Europe continues to fall behind in the global competition for talent; skilled third-country workers often favour destinations such as Australia and Canada.[165] Particularly in the countries of origin studied in Asia (Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam), significantly more labour migrants move to non-EU destinations than EU destinations.[166] For instance, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries are the top destinations for labour migrants from Bangladesh and account for more than 70 per cent of all overseas employment, with the largest share employed in Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates and Oman.[167]

The following subsections outline key factors for scaling labour migration corridors between EU Member States and partner countries, examining the conditions that support scalability along existing corridors and important considerations for investments in new pathways in the future.

161 Author interview with representative from Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos, 27 March 2025; author interview with former director general for migration in Spain, 14 February 2025.
162 Author interview with representative from the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, 24 January 2025.
163 For instance, it can take up to two years for prospective Senegalese migrants to schedule a visa appointment in order to pursue employment opportunities in Spain.
164 Author interviews with migrants in several destination countries, multiple dates.
165 OECD, 'Talent Attractiveness 2023', accessed 28 April 2025.
166 ILO, 'TRIANGLE in ASEAN – April - June 2019' (quarterly briefing note, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2019); Keshav Padmanabhan, 'Nearly 4 Lakh Indians Migrated for Work in 2023. Here's a Look at India's Labour Mobility', ThePrint, 25 November 2024.
167 BMET, 'Statistical Reports – Overseas Employment', accessed 20 May 2025.

A. Building skills for destination-country labour markets

Building for scale will require investing in the pipeline of talent in partner countries to facilitate a smooth transition into destination-country labour markets. The fieldwork for this study identified skill gaps in three areas that can stymie a smooth entry into destination-country labour markets: (1) adequate destination-country context, (2) destination-country language skills, and (3) professional skills for sought-after occupations.

Destination-country context

The first gap is a full grasp of the destination-country context, which can support a smooth arrival and integration process for new arrivals and, crucially, help safeguard against potential labour market exploitation. Ideally, this predeparture training is tailored to different destination-country contexts and can go beyond explaining the basics about life in the country (for example, employment and finding accommodation) to consider the soft skills that will set up new arrivals for success, such as cultural norms and communication skills in the workplace and social settings.

The challenge is that while the sending countries surveyed in this study financed predeparture orientations, including for different sectors, the orientations were not tailored to European destinations. For example, Vietnamese law requires 74 hours of predeparture orientation, including topics such as employment terms and conditions, financial advice, and day-to-day tips on labour disputes, educational opportunities, and accessing accommodation, transport, or food. However, this advice is tailored to the largest markets (e.g., Japan, Korea, the Middle East), and Hungary- or Europe-specific modules have yet to be developed.[168] Recruitment agencies might step in to fill some gaps, but without oversight, it is hard to glean the extent or quality of this instruction.

Cooperation with destination-country governments and sectoral bodies or employer associations can help address some of these gaps, particularly regarding highly sought-after sectors or profiles. For example, the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce provides individualised support for skilled workers on job searches and understanding employer expectations, as well as advice on recruitment and recognition procedures, funded by the German government.[169] Alongside more targeted advice on life and workplace norms in the destination country, this approach can also address sector-specific needs. For example, Bangladesh has a surplus of construction workers who could help address shortages in Portugal's construction sector, but while the technical skills for masonry, carpentry, welding, and scaffolding are fairly portable, stakeholders identified gaps in knowledge of EU building codes, advanced tools, and on-site safety requirements.[170] Providing some or all of this instruction before departure—as done in Italy's technical and cultural training for nurses and care workers in countries of origin—could facilitate swift labour market entry on arrival and lessen the burden on smaller employers who may otherwise struggle to provide this training on site.

Alongside more targeted advice on life and workplace norms in the destination country, this approach can also address sector-specific needs.

168 Author interview with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025.
169 ProRecognition, 'Our Services'.
170 Author interview with representative from Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, 27 February 2025; author interview with representative from Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2025.

Furthermore, in circular mobility programmes such as the Senegal-Spain corridor, the role of return is important both for the long-term sustainability of the scheme and to ensure participants remain eligible for future recruitment rounds. To better address this, in 2025, Senegalese workers heading to Spain received predeparture training supported by the Spanish and Senegalese governments, alumni of previous cohorts, and IOM on their rights in Spain and the importance of completing the return phase of the programme.

Language training

Fluency in the destination-country language can be essential for securing employment at the appropriate level and, in some cases, even qualifying for a work visa, as well as supporting workers' integration into their local communities. While the use of a lingua franca such as English can be viable in a few sectors, such as ICT, destination-country language fluency is the norm for many jobs, including customer-facing roles at all skill levels. Countries such as Spain or Portugal can draw on large Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities for prospective migration and often prioritise selection from these countries as a result. But for other destination countries whose languages are less commonly spoken globally, such as Germany and Hungary, or for migrants coming from elsewhere, investing in language training is crucial for scaling labour migration. In Portugal, language barriers for Bangladeshi workers have contributed to de-skilling and brain waste, because many are unable to fully apply their qualifications and skills. Addressing these gaps is vital to improve job matching and maximise the benefits of migration for both workers and employers.

Countries such as Spain or Portugal can draw on large Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities for prospective migration and often prioritise selection from these countries as a result.

Language training can, however, be a major investment of time and money for prospective migrants. The Goethe Institute estimates that it can take between 470 and 900 hours of instruction for a non-German speaker to attain a B1 level of German, or between 630 and 1,150 lessons of 45 minutes.[171] While demonstrating basic German at a B1 level would be sufficient for securing a work visa, in practice, employers may have higher expectations for German language skills when recruiting for primarily German-speaking roles. Although this skill set can be non-negotiable for employers, they are often unwilling to cover the costs of language training, which typically fall to migrant workers and by one estimate can amount to more than USD 2,000.[172] Identifying financing options for migrants to help cover the expenses of language training, whether through government subsidies or accessible loans, is an important consideration for future scale. In turn, digital language learning could reduce some instruction costs, although further study is needed to assess quality and whether this would save time when preparing for a language test.

Demand for German instruction has grown in the India-Germany corridor, with the number of private language schools offering German classes in Kerala expanding significantly, for example. But recruiting qualified German language teachers can be an important bottleneck for scale.[173] Stakeholder interviews

171 Goethe Institute, 'FAQ German Courses and Exams', accessed 28 April 2025.
172 Elicia Carmichael and Prerna Choudhury, 'Unlocking Migration through Finance: A Loan Product to Make Language Learning Accessible for Aspiring Migrants', Labor Mobility Partnerships, 3 July 2024.
173 Author interview with representative from the Goethe Institute in Trivandrum, 6 March 2025.

also indicated that quality of instruction is a concern, with some students failing language exams at the Goethe Institute's official testing centres.[174] The NSDC International Academy also provides German language courses, the capacity and quality of which are unclear.[175] The prospect of paying for additional instruction and multiple exams can significantly add to the overall cost for migrants.[176] In Kerala, German and Indian stakeholders are working on a quality certification system for private language schools in the state, but efforts to improve regulation and quality elsewhere are less advanced.

In some corridors, language training infrastructure remains limited. In Vietnam, for example, no dedicated institution currently offers Hungarian language instruction to migrants prior to departure, despite the number of people moving along this corridor in recent years. While Hungarian language proficiency is not required when applying for a work visa in Hungary, it is important for securing a job offer, day-to-day interactions, and ensuring workplace safety. In some cases, employers offer basic language classes, typically once or twice a week, but these are often insufficient to build the level of proficiency needed and are provided only after arrival. This lack of comprehensive language training highlights the need for targeted investment and innovative solutions—such as digital instruction platforms—to fill these gaps and enable prospective migrants to learn less commonly spoken destination-country languages.

Building professional and technical skills

Investing in skills development in priority sectors could help expand the pipeline for labour migration, for example by addressing specific skills gaps that can emerge for migrants entering European markets (such as knowledge of EU- and Portugal-specific construction requirements among Bangladeshi workers). Alternatively, European stakeholders could explore options to subsidise and shape curricula in specific sectors to create more portable qualifications. This approach is being tested by different governments (including Germany, outside the India corridor) and development actors through various Global Skill Partnership pilot projects, although to date these projects have struggled to establish fully functioning home and away tracks with successful placements in both settings.[177]

At the time of writing, only a few initiatives offered skills development tailored to migration opportunities in the five migration corridors, and none were identified in Vietnam or Bangladesh. These programmes remain small-scale and relatively costly per person. While the Triple Win project is regarded as a best practice for mobility schemes in terms of the numbers matched, costs shared, and the project's longevity, it has still placed only around 8,000 people since 2013 across 400 health-care and nursing facilities, roughly 6,000 of whom have already arrived in Germany (as of October 2025).[178] In Spain, the Government of the Canary Islands has launched a regional programme allowing a small number of Senegalese youth (about five to six participants per year) to undertake internships in internationally oriented companies in the Canary Islands on (non-labour) internship visas, providing valuable professional experience that can improve job prospects back home. Separately, the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Senegal is leading the Tierra Firme project, which combines vocational training with job placement support, but this initiative currently focuses exclusively on placing Senegalese participants in jobs in Senegal, without a mobility component. Italy has also invested in training at origin for nurses and care workers, including in Peru. Alongside language and cultural preparation, participants must

174 Author interview with representative from the Goethe Institute in New Delhi, 4 March 2025.
175 NSDC International Limited, 'Your Career in Germany Is Just a Step Away'' (Instagram post, 9 September 2024).
176 Goethe Institute India, 'Goethe-Zertifikat B1', accessed 28 April 2025.
177 Hooper and Sohst, *Competing for Talent.*
178 GIZ, 'A Win-Win-Win Situation'; *Times of India*, 'Norka Marks Triple Win Project Success', *Times of India*, 10 November 2024.

complete 40 hours of technical training in their field before departure—a model that helps accelerate labour market integration upon arrival, though it remains limited in scale: 20 Peruvian nurses and care workers undertook the training in 2024, with 40 to 60 expected to complete it in 2025.[179] Another promising example regarding apprenticeships is Italy's Magallanes Students programme, launched in 2024, which allows final-year medical students from Peru, Paraguay, and soon Argentina to complete part of their apprenticeship training at the University of Varese.[180] The programme includes one month of specialised training and a four-month work placement in elder-care centres. The programme aims for students to help address current health-care shortages in Italy while alleviating pressure on Peru's saturated apprenticeship market for nurses.[181]

Private-sector-led initiatives such as the proposed Deutsche Bahn training centres in Kerala may be the most viable option for now because they can explore how to deliver targeted training for employer needs in ways that could inform future development programming. In the meantime, governments could focus on quality-control measures in the market, such as certifying language and training schools, as well as working with financial institutions to explore ways to help prospective migrants and employers cover the costs of training more sustainably. For example, Spain's State Secretary of Migration is working with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to map occupations in demand in Spain with prospective talent pools in Latin American countries, with the possibility of then providing training in countries of origin to reduce costs.[182]

B. Matching employers and prospective workers effectively

With employer sponsorship required for most labour migration pathways along the five corridors, matching employers and prospective workers is another essential ingredient for achieving scale. The Senegal-Spain corridor offers the only example of a government-to-government selection process, though limited to specific sectors (currently, only seasonal agriculture) and recruits small numbers, with 655 places allocated to Senegal under the GECCO programme for 2025—including 130 participants repeating the experience.[183] The India-Germany corridor includes some public initiatives for matching employers and workers, such as the Triple Win project, but most Indians coming to Germany for work rely on private intermediaries to connect with employers. Likewise, private intermediaries—whether private recruitment agencies or social networks—were central to matching employers and workers in the Bangladesh-Portugal and Vietnam-Hungary corridors and, to a lesser extent, the Peru-Italy corridor.

The India-Germany corridor also benefits from investments in technology platforms and web-based services that aim to demystify the recruitment, immigration, and skills-recognition process for prospective employers and workers, such as the Make it in Germany website and the ProRecognition initiative. By tackling information gaps, these resources could help reduce employers' and prospective workers' reliance on recruitment intermediaries, although they do not yet address the lack of networks that makes it difficult

By tackling information gaps, these resources could help reduce employers' and prospective workers' reliance on recruitment intermediaries.

179 Author interview with representative from Universidad Católica Sedes Sapientiae, 28 February 2025.
180 This is after a selection process and after undergoing Italian language training before departure.
181 Author interview with experts involved in the Magallanes programmes in Italy, 28 February 2025.
182 Author interview with representative from the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 14 February 2025.
183 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Elma Saiz reafirma en Senegal la apuesta de España'.

for employers to connect with workers in the first place or offer direct matching services, whether through an integrated artificial intelligence tool or through linked recruitment agencies. In addition, these resources focus on skilled workers and may need adjustments if rolled out to serve employers and candidates for low- or middle-skilled jobs, for example, to navigate different norms related to finding jobs and paying associated fees, or varying levels of digital literacy.

Delivering on ambitions to grow labour migration, whether in the India-Germany corridor or elsewhere, will likely need to include private intermediaries, at least in the short to medium term. Regulating the activities of these intermediaries in line with international standards and guidelines is essential to reduce the risks of misconduct and exploitation but requires careful consideration of design and implementation to ensure that regulations are practical and workable.[184] As discussed in Section 3, ample evidence shows that current regulations in Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam on licensing or capping recruitment fees are being flouted, but also that overly bureaucratic or costly procedures can encourage some migrants to opt for irregular routes instead. Improvements to regulations—for example, ensuring that informal subagents are covered by regulatory frameworks—should be accompanied by measures that encourage compliance, such as expedited access to visas, and investments in enforcement, such as additional staffing for inspection agencies and ensuring that they can carry out proactive (and potentially joint) investigations focused on intermediaries and employers rather than workers.

C. *Improving access to visas*

Improving access to visas is essential for labour migration corridors to grow. Without reliable, efficient visa processes, even well-designed mobility schemes will struggle to meet demand and expand over time.[185] Lengthy and unpredictable visa processing times for both employees and their families can discourage employer engagement, make destination countries less attractive to foreign talent, or drive migrants towards alternative or irregular routes.[186]

Across the corridors studied, barriers to securing visas have emerged as major bottlenecks in partner countries, frustrating both migrants and employers. In the Senegal-Spain corridor, for instance, securing a visa appointment at the Spanish consulate in Dakar (for uncapped pathways outside the GECCO system) can take up to two years, making it nearly impossible to plan for time-sensitive labour mobility. The delay is caused by limited staff capacity but also by intermediaries exploiting the backlog by booking and reselling short-term appointments (within two weeks) for a fee of between 500 euros and 1,000 euros, which people are forced to pay if they need an appointment urgently. Even after securing an appointment, Senegalese applicants frequently reported difficulties accessing visas, including for work and family reunification, citing the unpredictability of the process and the uncertainty of

184 At time of writing, about half of EU Member States had ratified ILO Convention No. 181, which sets out principles for regulating private employment agencies, including that they should not charge any costs to workers. See ILO, 'C181 – Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)', accessed 20 May 2025. Other relevant ILO standards include: ILO, 'R188 – Private Employment Agencies Recommendation, 1997 (No. 188)', accessed 20 May 2025. Meanwhile, IOM's Montreal Recommendations (2020) and the IRIS Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection provide guidance on regulating private intermediaries, including registration or licensing and mechanisms for encouraging compliance. IOM, *The Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation* (Geneva: IOM, 2020); IRIS, *IRIS Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection* (Geneva: IOM, 2022).

185 Pablo Acosta et al., *Global Skill Partnerships for Migration: Preparing Tomorrow's Workers for Home and Abroad* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2025).

186 OECD, 'What Is the Best Country for Global Talents in the OECD?' (Migration Policy Debates no. 29, Geneva, OECD, March 2023).

approvals.[187] In the Bangladesh-Portugal corridor, the absence of a Portuguese embassy forces workers to travel to New Delhi in India for a visa, navigating a complex, costly, and uncertain process.[188] Several Bangladeshi workers also noted that this situation presents a key obstacle to family reunification, as family members must undergo the same burdensome process.[189] In India, some interviewed government stakeholders mentioned that limited awareness and understanding of the various visa options and application requirements for Germany—particularly among low-skilled workers—make the visa application process difficult to navigate.[190] This information gap often leads prospective migrants to rely on private intermediaries, whose quality and reliability can be difficult to assess.[191] As a result, some migrants fall prey to untrustworthy agents charging excessive fees, while others face failed exams or visa rejections because of poor preparation.

Inefficiencies linked to visa processes also often push migrants towards alternative or irregular pathways. Senegalese workers, for example, often resort to dangerous—yet cheaper—boat journeys to the Canary Islands (estimated at about 600 euros), while Bangladeshi workers frequently enter Europe through secondary destinations before eventually reaching Portugal. In Italy, the Magallanes Professionals programme, which recruits nurses from South America, also highlighted the complexity of visa issuance, noting that embassy procedures vary widely, with each embassy following its own distinct rules and operational methods.[192]

Strengthening access to work visas in partner countries will require greater efforts, investment, and innovation to expand embassy infrastructure and staffing, enhance the labour migration management capabilities of staff, prevent the reselling of appointments, and leverage digital technologies.

Canada's Global Skills Strategy offers expedited work permit processing through specialised visa units, enabling employers to hire international talent in as little as two weeks.

Expanding the capacity of destination countries' embassies through increasing staff resources or deploying mobile visa services can help reduce the lengthy waiting times that currently affect corridors such as Senegal-Spain and address access issues in Bangladesh-Portugal. Innovative models—such as periodic visa missions, digitalised appointment systems, or dedicated labour migration units within consulates—offer promising solutions. Canada's Global Skills Strategy offers expedited work permit processing through specialised visa units, enabling employers to hire international talent in as little as two weeks.[193] Mobile offices, meanwhile, are often used to provide consular services to nationals in other countries, but could be explored as a way to address backlogs in underserved regions.

Beyond boosting embassy infrastructure and staffing, enhancing the labour migration knowledge and management capabilities of embassy personnel through trainings is equally important to ensure visa access is not hindered by additional barriers. In Ghana, IOM conducted a capacity-building workshop for consular desk officers in the Middle East and North Africa region to support migrant workers by

187 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.
188 There is a consulate in Dhaka, but long-term visa applications must go through the embassy in New Delhi.
189 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal and Senegalese migrants in Spain, multiple dates.
190 Author interview with representative from German Embassy New Delhi, 4 March 2025.
191 Author interview with representative from German Embassy New Delhi, 4 March 2025.
192 Fondazione Iniziative E Studi Sulla Multietnicità, 'Non Mettiamoci Un Cerotto'.
193 Government of Canada, 'Hire Through the Global Skills Strategy', updated 12 September 2024.

enhancing their knowledge of labour migration governance and ethical recruitment practices.[194] In Egypt, the Integrated Migration Information Systems Project strengthened government institutions' capacity to manage labour migration by implementing a quality assurance system for skills testing and certification, while enhancing national capabilities to meet international labour market demands.[195] Some countries have also implemented mechanisms to strengthen oversight of visa appointment systems and prevent intermediaries from monopolising and reselling slots. Canada requires applicants to book biometric appointments through official channels, ensuring that only legitimate individuals can access and book appointments.[196] Similarly, Poland is developing a new system that will require biometric verification before booking appointments, aiming to curb abuses; a pilot phase will launch in selected countries, including India.[197] Research by the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (Berlin Social Science Centre) proposes a model that replaces the first-come-first-served system with a deferred system, in which applications are collected over a set period and slots allocated randomly.[198] Cancelled slots are reallocated in the next period, preventing scalpers from transferring slots booked under false names. The proposed model makes the allocation process unpredictable and nontransferable, aiming to eliminate the speed advantage and prevent scalping, though it remains to be tested.

The use of digital tools and processes, such as online case management systems and semi-automated decision-making, can further streamline visa processing and help expand access. Estonia, for example, allows applicants to submit visa applications online, cutting down on administrative delays and improving efficiency.[199] Canada has taken this further by using machine learning to automatically sort visa applications into categories, processing the simplest cases automatically—which could be used to sort labour migration applications.[200] With proper oversight, artificial intelligence can also enhance the verification of background checks and documents, easing the workload for human staff while ensuring compliance with legal standards. Furthermore, digital platforms, such as Germany's Make it in Germany portal, and artificial-intelligence-powered chatbots can provide user-friendly support to help applicants navigate visa procedures more efficiently.

Ensuring that visa access is timely, transparent, and scaled to match mobility opportunities will be critical if labour migration corridors are to grow and become truly sustainable options for workers and employers alike. At the same time, creating additional opportunities for regular migration and addressing system gaps—such as those that allow for unintended use of mechanisms such as Portugal's expression of interest—can help ensure regular pathways are accessible and more attractive than irregular alternatives. While Member States will play a central role in the investments mentioned, the European Union could also step up its support for these efforts through funding and trainings.

194 IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa, 'IOM Enhances Capacities of Consular Missions in the MENA Region on Labour Migration Governance and Ethical Recruitment', updated 5 November 2024.
195 Abigail Goldfarb, Jasmijn Slootjes, and Belen Zanzuchi, 'Efforts to Tackle Skills Shortages Across Policy Domains: Reflections from Migration, Education, and Development Policies' (working paper no. 8, Global Strategy for Skills, Migration and Development, 2025).
196 Government of Canada, 'Biometrics: How to Give Your Fingerprints and Photo', updated 14 April 2025.
197 Bleona Restelica, 'Poland to Launch Special System That Blocks Intermediaries from Exploiting Visa Appointments', SchengenNews, 19 February 2025.
198 Rustamdjan Hakimov, Christian-Philipp Heller, Dorothea Kübler, and Morimitsu Kurino, 'How to Avoid Black Markets for Appointments with Online Booking Systems', *American Economic Review* 111, no. 7 (2021): 2127–51.
199 Goldfarb, Slootjes, and Zanzuchi, 'Efforts to Tackle Skills Shortages'.
200 Lucía Salgado and Hanne Beirens, *What Role Could Digital Technologies Play in the New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum?* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2023).

D. Tackling worker vulnerability and exploitation

The five migration corridors studied offer important insights into the risks that migrant workers can encounter, as well as the different risk factors that can make some groups of migrant workers—especially women—vulnerable to exploitation. Discussions about ways to scale up labour migration pathways, including a potentially expanded role for private intermediaries in some contexts, should consider the potential benefits and costs for migrant workers and identify areas where additional safeguards or services may be needed.

The advent of online job postings has improved access but also given rise to new and increasingly sophisticated scams.

In countries of origin, these discussions should consider how prospective migrants access information about legal migration opportunities and job prospects, and whether better ways exist to consolidate and verify this information. The advent of online job postings has improved access but also given rise to new and increasingly sophisticated scams.[201] One option is to explore government-run or government-supported job portals that are open to foreign applicants and promoted among them, such as the Make it in Germany and the Work in Finland portals.[202] These national platforms provide multilingual guidance on immigration, employment opportunities, and sector-specific demand, along with curated job portals tailored to international jobseekers. Another option is to explore ways to verify or validate information, for example, by issuing a trust seal for approved third-party job portals or by supporting initiatives such as the International Trade Union Confederation's Recruitment Advisor, which allows migrant workers to review the recruiters they have used.[203] Improving the user experience for accessing government services by digitalising and consolidating services in one place (as with India's e-Migrate platform for migrant workers, which offers emigration clearance checks and other services in one place) or by simply making the visa application process quicker and easier to complete can also reduce reliance on private intermediaries who often charge considerable fees.

Efforts to scale should also explore ways to expand capacity for supporting migrant workers in destination countries. There are worrying signs that the welfare of migrant workers is falling through the cracks, due to inadequate regulation and the limited capacity of local consulates (on the part of origin countries) and destination-country authorities. For example, Vietnamese law tasks recruitment agencies with supporting deployed workers while in destination countries and requires agencies

201 See, for example, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Hundreds of Thousands Trafficked to Work as Online Scammers in SE Asia, Says UN Report' (press release, 29 August 2023).

202 Make it in Germany is a central platform operated by the German government that offers multilingual resources, including guidance on immigration pathways, sector-specific demand insights, and a job listings section curated in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency. Work in Finland is a national initiative supported by Business Finland and other public agencies. It offers information for international jobseekers, including guidance on living and working in Finland, as well as a curated job portal that features English-speaking and internationally oriented positions. See German Federal Government, 'Make it in Germany', accessed 15 April 2025; Work in Finland, 'Build Your Dream Career in Finland', accessed 15 April 2025.

203 Recruitment Advisor is a joint initiative created by a consortium of trade unions across various countries. It operates with coordination teams based in several nations, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Bahrain, and Jordan. In collaboration with numerous local organisations in each of these countries, the teams engage directly with workers to promote awareness of their rights to fair recruitment, in line with the ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. They also encourage workers to share experiences and access information about ethical recruitment practices through Recruitment Advisor. See Recruitment Advisor, 'Who We Are', accessed 25 May 2025.

larger than a certain size to have an employee present in the country. Yet this creates a clear conflict of interest because the same employee may be tasked with challenging employer behaviour while also soliciting additional business from the same employer for future hires. A promising model is the labour attaché system developed by the Philippines, which embeds trained migration officers in embassies abroad to protect workers' rights, facilitate recruitment, and support regular migration. Bangladesh has also deployed labour attachés, who play a central role in verifying recruitment documents, resolving workplace disputes, and assisting with compensation and repatriation.[204] Peru and Senegal did not appear to have a similar system in place, and information about the current deployment of labour attachés by India and Vietnam is limited.[205] At the same time, interviewees indicated that workers might be reluctant to approach the Vietnamese embassy directly if they had used an informal channel. Building trust and clarifying that migrant workers can approach labour attachés for support—regardless of legal status—is critical.

Oversight of working conditions typically falls to destination-country labour inspectorates, which often have limited resources relative to the size of the labour market.[206] They may also not be familiar with the particular vulnerabilities that migrant workers face because of their immigration status or the circumstances of their recruitment or understand the nuances of encouraging migrant workers to report exploitative working conditions.[207] In Italy, for instance, many Peruvian women overstay short-term visas and take up informal domestic care work; their irregular status leaves them vulnerable, with limited bargaining power and little protection because fear of deportation can discourage them from challenging exploitative conditions.[208] In response to growing concerns, the Peruvian government and civil-society organisations have launched initiatives to raise awareness of migrant rights and the role of embassies in offering support where needed.[209] In Spain, a 2023 case involving Senegalese agricultural workers participating in the GECCO programme exposed significant shortcomings, with workers living in inadequate accommodation and facing poor working conditions.[210] The Senegalese consulate intervened, and Spanish authorities also responded quickly by identifying new employers offering fairer terms. The incident underscored the need for stronger controls—particularly regarding accommodation—as well as clearer mechanisms for oversight and accountability throughout the employment period.

204 Bossavie, 'Low-Skilled Temporary Migration Policies'.

205 C. R. Abrar, S. Irudaya Rajan, L. K. Ruhunage, and Tasneem Siddiqui, 'Institutional Strengthening of the Office of Labour Attaché: Research Findings from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka' (working paper 23, Department for International Development, London, November 2014); ILO, 'The Role of ASEAN Labour Attachés in the Protection of Migrant Workers' (policy brief no. 1, ILO, Geneva, October 2015).

206 According to the latest available ILO data, Germany had 1.4 labour inspectors per 10,000 workers, Hungary had 0.6, Portugal had 0.9, and Spain had 1.1. Data were not available for Italy. See ILO, 'Inspectors per 10,000 Employed Persons - Annual', updated 1 June 2025.

207 The IRIS Handbook includes a chapter on inspectorates, with details on why nonreporting occurs among migrant workers (tied to risks and practical barriers) and recommendations on migrant-sensitive inspections, such as anonymous multilingual hotlines and creating a firewall between inspectorates and immigration authorities so that reporting adverse working conditions does not result in immigration enforcement. See IRIS, 'Chapter 3 – Strengthening the Effectiveness of Inspectorates', in *IRIS Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection* (Geneva: IOM, 2023).

208 Author interview with representative from La Casa de Panchita, 25 February 2025.

209 Author interview with representative from La Casa de Panchita, 25 February 2025; author interview with Spanish government representative, 24 February 2025; Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 'Detenidas 13 personas que practicaban amaños en procedimientos de contratación de personas extranjeras para explotarlas laboralmente', updated 3 July 2024.

210 Author interview with representative from the Consulate of Senegal in Madrid, 13 February 2025; author interview with former director general for migration in Spain, 14 February 2025.

E. *Building capacity for government coordination and data-sharing at scale*

Fieldwork across the selected corridors revealed critical gaps in sharing data and information about migration opportunities and practices between countries. Governments can play a key role in this area by facilitating regular data-sharing and exchanging information about recruitment conditions and priorities. While bilateral agreements can be a helpful first step, they should be accompanied by measures to strengthen institutional partnerships and build capacity as needed, for example, through more systematic data collection and analysis. Under their bilateral agreement with India, for instance, the Portuguese government staffs a labour attaché in the embassy in New Delhi. Their role is seen as vital, working closely with Indian counterparts to provide information to migrant workers, check employment contracts, and assist with visa processing.[211]

One coordination hurdle cited across the corridors studied was managing differences in recruitment norms along migration corridors. For example, while some countries prohibit recruitment fees, others regulate them, and significant regional disparities can exist.[212] The use of recruitment intermediaries also varies widely by country. When these disparities in law or practice arise, policymakers should consider building on existing regional partnerships and potentially mobility schemes run by other Member States that have already taken steps to reconcile and align these standards, which can otherwise be a challenging and slow-moving process. For instance, Portuguese officials noted that developing labour migration pathways with countries such as Morocco has been relatively straightforward because Morocco has cooperative frameworks with France and Spain. This experience has allowed Portugal to adapt existing procedures rather than start from scratch.[213]

While some countries prohibit recruitment fees, others regulate them, and significant regional disparities can exist.

On the data side, governments may lack sufficient capacity to collect data on skills availability and labour market needs. Capacity levels varied across the corridors, particularly in origin countries. While all countries studied have some form of ongoing data collection, limited institutional capacity and the prevalence of informal labour markets have made it difficult to develop systematic, comprehensive, and policy-relevant labour market information systems. For example, Vietnam lacks a centralised labour market information system, and available data are fragmented.[214] Bangladesh and India face similar challenges, with a range of fragmented, uncoordinated initiatives attempting to assess skills availability. Building the capacity to gather, verify, and integrate data on labour markets into national systems requires additional investment in institutions with the technical capacity and mandate to update data regularly and use it strategically. For instance, the ILO has supported the development of labour market information systems in countries such as Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay: these virtual platforms make it possible to visualise and disseminate current labour market data easily, which can be used to inform

211 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.
212 ILO, *Global Study on Recruitment Fees and Related Costs*.
213 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.
214 ILO, 'Labour Market Information Systems: International Experiences and Considerations for the Revision of the Viet Nam Employment Law' (policy brief, September 2024).

policymaking.[215] Similarly, the World Bank's Skills Toward Employability and Productivity programme has assisted low- and middle-income countries in gathering household- and employer-level data on cognitive and job-relevant skills to better inform skills development strategies.[216] Other emerging tools or mechanisms to build capacity for data collection include regional skills observatories, public-private partnerships in data collection, and advanced analytics such as web-scraped vacancy analysis and forecasting efforts, which offer valuable opportunities to enhance data-driven labour mobility planning. In Peru, for example, the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion maintains an artificial-intelligence-powered public job bank website that showcases job openings in different sectors.[217] In Portugal, the Qualification Needs Anticipation System, established in 2015, aims to synthesise data from diverse skills-anticipation efforts and inform policymaking on skills, education, and training.[218] However, to date, only limited evidence exists of the long-term impact of these initiatives on strengthening institutional capacity or informing sustained policy development.

Collecting data and having the capacity to analyse and incorporate the data into national labour and migration policies are equally important. Understanding why mobility does not always occur—despite skills availability in origin countries and demand in destination countries—is key to identifying issues and developing potential solutions, such as public-private partnerships that link training to employment (e.g., train-to-hire models), digital skills passports for credential verification, and sector-specific mobility agreements. These mechanisms could bridge gaps between supply and demand, ensuring that labour mobility policies respond more effectively to real-time needs.

Intergovernmental coordination to share data on skills needs and availability across corridors can enable governments to adapt and plan future labour mobility programming in line with shared priorities. Effective data-sharing initiatives depend on long-term cooperation, mutual trust, and continuous information exchange. These efforts can succeed only if supported by trusted institutions on both sides of the corridor and underpinned by sustained political will. The absence of formal structures for sharing labour market data remains a major bottleneck. The 2023 EU-Tunisia MoU includes a commitment to implement a Talent Partnership that links legal migration pathways with support for skills development and improved labour market data exchange. Similarly, the EU Talent Partnership with Bangladesh aims to connect existing skills programmes with mobility opportunities, while improving coordination and information-sharing between institutions. However, cooperation remains uneven, and systematic, reciprocal data-sharing continues to be a significant policy gap across corridors. Often, there is no clear consensus on what data should be shared, who should be responsible for sharing it, or how it should inform policymaking. This uncertainty—particularly regarding the roles of public institutions and private recruiters—limits the ability to promote data-driven collaboration. To address this, developing formal data-sharing agreements (e.g., MoUs), ethical data protocols, and interoperable systems is essential to support the regular exchange of relevant labour market insights. The creation of interoperable databases and bilateral or regional platforms could also facilitate the more effective flow of labour market intelligence, improving transparency, coordination, and policy alignment between countries of origin and destination.

215 ILO, 'Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS)', accessed 24 April 2025.

216 OECD and ILO, *Global Skills Gaps Measurement and Monitoring: Towards a Collaborative Framework. Technical Paper Prepared for the 1st Meeting of the Employment Working Group under Indian Presidency* (Paris and Geneva: OECD Publishing and ILO, 2023).

217 Peruvian Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 'Empleos Perú', accessed 5 April 2025.

218 Cedefop, 'Skills Anticipation in Portugal (2022 Update)', 21 March 2023.

F. *Mitigating brain drain and maximising the development impacts of migration*

Across the migration corridors studied, concerns were raised about brain drain and the loss of young talent, particularly among some stakeholders from Bangladesh, Peru, and Senegal, because limited local economic opportunities push many to migrate.[219] While stakeholders in countries of origin acknowledged the benefits of migration (such as remittances, some technology transfer when returnees bring new skills, and partial relief of local unemployment), they also highlighted significant challenges, including the loss of mid- and high-skilled workers, limited opportunities for migrants to contribute to progress at home, and exploitation by subagents charging inflated fees. In Bangladesh, trade unions noted that although migration offers opportunities, government labour agreements often overlook local skills gaps, focusing instead on large government-to-government deals without sufficient consultation with domestic industries.[220]

These dynamics show that the development impacts of migration depend on how many people move and who moves. As labour migration corridors expand, managing this growth sustainably to ensure mutual benefits is critical. Mitigating brain drain and maximising the development potential of migration require proactive strategies to retain and replenish talent, strengthen local skills systems, support returning migrants, and engage diaspora communities throughout the migration cycle. Scope exists to maximise economic benefits by making remittance transfers cheaper and easier and by promoting decent work with fair wages. At the same time, concerns about brain drain highlight the need for safeguards and policies that balance labour mobility with the protection of critical sectors and human capital in origin countries.

Mitigating brain drain and maximising the development potential of migration require proactive strategies to retain and replenish talent, strengthen local skills systems, support returning migrants, and engage diaspora communities throughout the migration cycle.

In some cases, protective measures can and have been used to retain workers at origin. Bonding agreements, for instance, require individuals who receive publicly funded education or training—especially in critical sectors such as health care—to work in their home country for a specified period after graduation, aiming to ensure that public investments in human capital directly benefit national development before any potential emigration. While such schemes do not currently exist in the countries studied, several Caribbean nations, such as Jamaica, require medical graduates to serve in the national health system for a set number of years as a condition of government scholarships.[221] In addition to service obligations, some countries have introduced tax incentives to encourage their skilled workers to remain or return, preventing further shortages. Alongside growing efforts to attract foreign talent through partnerships with Cape Verde, India, Morocco, and other Portuguese-speaking

219 Author interview with representative from Fundación Cepaim Dakar office, 6 February 2025; author interview with experts from Universidad del Pacifico, 20 February 2025; author interview with representative from the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2025.

220 Author interview with representative from the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2025.

221 OECD, 'The Future of Health Systems', accessed 15 April 2025.

countries,[222] Portugal has proposed a decade-long progressive tax break for young professionals to stem the loss of talent and revitalise its domestic workforce through stronger retention.[223] However, whether these protective measures are effective in mitigating brain drain is unclear and merits further study. Other protective instruments, such as the World Health Organisation Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, shift the focus by promoting ethical recruitment in low- and middle-income countries and encouraging investment in the health systems of origin countries, though such instruments are nonbinding.

Recognising the limitations of protective measures in preventing brain drain, some initiatives have instead sought to strengthen human capital in countries of origin by linking migration more directly to robust training systems. This approach aims to expand the local talent base, create a more sustainable pipeline of skilled workers, and reduce the risk of brain drain, benefitting both origin and destination countries. Efforts in this regard have included investment in strengthening vocational education at origin or train-the-trainer initiatives. One recent example is Magallanes for Teachers, a programme led by the Gulliver Centre to train a small number of Peruvian health-care educators by enabling them to travel to Italy to gain insights into the Italian education system and explore opportunities for dual-degree programmes. Still, efforts in this area remain limited and are typically confined to a narrow set of occupations and skills levels, often disincentivised by difficulties in aligning curricula between countries.

Beyond mechanisms aimed at preventing or mitigating brain drain through government engagement, some initiatives have instead focused on engaging diaspora communities to maximise the development impact of remittances and better harness the benefits of international mobility. Bangladesh, for example, offers a 2.5 per cent cash incentive on remittances sent through official channels and tax-exempt diaspora bonds such as the Wage Earner Development Bond, designed to capture savings from abroad and channel them into domestic development.[224]

Some efforts have also targeted a more strategic use of remittances to strengthen local economies, moving beyond basic income support towards more transformative investment.[225] One example is the Platform for Remittances, Investments, and Migrants' Entrepreneurship in Africa (PRIME Africa), a project funded by the European Union (15 million euros) that worked to maximise the development impact of remittances in seven countries through remittance-linked financial services and support for initiatives that promote cheap and fast remittance transfers from Europe to Africa.[226] To support this shift, financial literacy programmes for migrants and their families and efforts to promote the use of mobile remittances aim to encourage investing remittances in entrepreneurship and skills development back home. Through the PRIME Africa project, the European Union funded a grant to the digital payments

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222 Author interview with representative from IOM, 27 February 2025; author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.

223 Sam Jones, 'Portugal Proposes Decade of Tax Breaks for Young People to Stem Brain Drain', *The Guardian*, 10 October 2024.

224 For example, if a sender remits 100,000 BDT, the recipient receives 102,500 BDT. See RemitFinder, 'Bangladesh Remittance Cash Incentive: All You Need to Know', updated 24 January 2025.

225 In 2023, remittances represented a significant share of GDP in several origin countries: Senegal had the highest reliance, with remittances accounting for 10.6 per cent of its GDP, followed by Bangladesh (5.0 per cent), India (3.4 per cent), Vietnam (3.3 per cent), and Peru (1.7 per cent). See World Bank Group, 'Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP)', accessed 22 April 2025. While remittances are a vital source of income for all partner countries studied, and they exceed foreign direct investment and official development assistance in Africa and Central America, their full development potential often remains untapped. Most remittances are spent on immediate consumption needs rather than longer-term investments that could drive structural economic change.

226 International Fund for Agricultural Development, *PRIME Africa: Improving the Management of Remittances and their Use for Development Impact in Africa* (Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development, n.d.).

company MFS Africa to promote mobile remittance services and financial inclusion in marginalised rural areas across five African countries, including Senegal.[227] Still, the number of initiatives aimed at influencing how remittances are used remains limited, partly because of the difficulty of intervening in personal financial decisions and the competing priorities faced by family members at home.

Beyond remittances, other initiatives have aimed to leverage and mobilise the skills, expertise, and networks of diaspora groups to support development in their countries of origin. Conversations with Senegalese migrants in Spain underscored the vital role the diaspora plays in supporting development in Senegal. For instance, one of the founders of Fassulo, a small nongovernmental organisation founded by diaspora members, mentioned that they collaborate closely with local communities on projects prioritising vulnerable groups and key sectors such as education and health, while also often supporting Senegalese farmers with alternative agricultural strategies. Similarly, members of the Coordinadora d'Associacions Senegaleses de Catalunya (CASC; Coordinator of Senegalese Associations of Catalonia) emphasised the importance of setting up platforms that allow diaspora members to share skills and experiences with peers in Senegal, thereby enhancing their collective contribution to sustainable development. In line with this, programmes such as IOM's MIDA Somalia (short for Migration for Development in Africa Initiative – Somalia) and the European Union's Global Diaspora Facility[228] have aimed to mobilise the skills, expertise, and networks of migrants abroad to strengthen critical sectors back home.[229] A project in Italy, the DRAFT the Future! Towards a Diaspora Forum, funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and implemented by IOM, funds microprojects in migrants' countries of origin, enabling diaspora-led initiatives to contribute directly to local development.[230] By facilitating knowledge-sharing or diaspora-led investment projects, these programmes have sought to turn migration into a driver of capacity-building rather than a source of depletion, though they remain small-scale.

A final set of efforts has focused on better supporting the successful labour market reintegration of returning migrants, including through socioeconomic reintegration programmes and social security agreements to support access to benefits earned in other countries. In several countries, returnees can access public employment services on the same basis as other citizens (such as job placement assistance, vocational training, or start-up support). However, few of these services are tailored specifically to the needs of returning migrant workers. In the Senegal-Spain corridor, IOM and other civil-society actors (such as Fundación Cepaim) offer reintegration support that assists returnees with planning and starting small businesses.[231] Yet these initiatives sometimes struggle to align with returnees' skills, plans, and aspirations. The experiences of some Senegalese workers returning from the seasonal agriculture programme in Spain show that poorly adapted support can have unintended consequences. In some cases, assistance has focused on helping returnees set up full-time businesses,

227 International Fund for Agricultural Development, 'Mobile Remittances to Lead Digital Revolution in Marginal Rural Areas in Five African Countries Thanks to IFAD Grant Funded by the EU' (press release, 12 September 2022).

228 European Commission, 'European Union Global Diaspora Facility II (Eudif II): Empowering Diaspora For Global Development', accessed 5 May 2025.

229 IOM Somalia, 'The MIDA Programme', accessed 24 April 2025.

230 European Commission, 'EMN Inform Provides an Overview of the Implementation of the Migration-Development Nexus in the EMN Member Countries and Serbia', updated 12 September 2024.

231 For migrants who have been in Spain less than three months, IOM offers plane tickets and 450 euros in cash. For migrants who have been in Spain for longer, IOM supports them in setting up a business plan and provides 2,500 euros to start the business in Senegal. Author interview with representatives from IOM, 13 February 2025; author interview with representative from Fundación Cepaim Spain, 29 January 2025.

even for individuals intending to continue circular migration for another year or more.[232] In other cases, returnees have received livestock (chickens) without sufficient training on their care or the costs involved, which led to additional expenses and significant debt for many.[233]

In addition to reintegration programmes, social security agreements such as the one between Spain and Senegal, which ensure access to social security benefits earned abroad, can help mitigate brain drain by influencing return decisions. These agreements make return more attractive and provide vital resources for returnees to reinvest in their communities. By contrast, Peru has sought a similar agreement with Italy for decades but has yet to secure one, making return a far less attractive option because migrants risk losing up to one-third of their savings to double taxation.

Finally, returning migrants can be powerful drivers of innovation and productivity, but only if their skills are recognised and valued. More investment is needed across the corridors to develop mechanisms that recognise and validate skills acquired abroad, which are essential for enabling returnees to fully leverage their expertise and integrate effectively into local labour markets.[234] For example, in the Senegal-Spain corridor, returnees often struggle to apply the skills gained abroad, highlighting the need for stronger follow-up opportunities to maximise the development impacts of migration programmes. Some countries have taken steps to address this gap. Mexico, for example, has a programme to assist repatriated citizens in reintegrating into the formal workforce by certifying job skills acquired abroad through training and letters of recommendation, thus providing better employment opportunities.[235] This is an important gap in all of the corridors studied, pointing to a need for stronger coordination between countries.

> *Returning migrants can be powerful drivers of innovation and productivity, but only if their skills are recognised and valued.*

Despite the range of efforts and initiatives aimed at tackling or mitigating the impact of brain drain, a persistent challenge is the lack of reliable, up-to-date data to guide and assess these actions. Without accurate information on skills availability and labour market needs in countries of origin, it becomes difficult to target investments effectively, design relevant training strategies, or ensure that mobility schemes do not inadvertently deplete critical sectors. Moreover, a deeper understanding of the temporal dynamics of brain drain—how, when, and in what contexts it unfolds—is lacking. More research is needed to interpret both flow and stock data in ways that can inform policy and planning meaningfully.

232 In 2019, some returnees received chickens to start a small business. However, feeding the chickens quickly became too expensive, which led some returning migrants to take out a loan or invest their savings into the chicken business. Ultimately, the businesses failed, and several returning migrants were left without money or with debt to repay. Author interviews with Senegalese migrants, January 2025.

233 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants, January 2025.

234 German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Skills for Reintegration: Support for Sustainable Return and Reintegration- Pilot Measures in The Gambia, Niger, Mexico and Kyrgyzstan* (Berlin: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, June 2020).

235 Government of Mexico, '"Mexico Recognizes Your Experience": Job Skills Certificate for Repatriated Migrants', updated 9 June 2021.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussions about scaling labour migration are occurring at a politically sensitive moment for Europe. While skills shortages at all levels are well documented, public support for migration has dipped in many Member States amid concerns about the scale of recent arrivals across all immigration categories and pressures on local infrastructure and services. This shifting perspective may influence which corridors gain more political buy-in, for example, if investing in regular pathways is seen as a way to reduce irregular arrivals to Europe. Meanwhile, geopolitical developments are leading to an uncertain economic outlook for Europe, which complicates efforts to project near- and longer-term labour needs.

The five migration corridors analysed in this research study offer a diverse set of insights into how labour migration can take root and grow, and into the potential roles that government, the private sector, and civil society can play. The corridors also shed light on challenges that can emerge in managing labour migration, efficiently matching employers and workers, protecting the rights of migrant workers, and promoting the effective circulation of skills.

Momentum for growing labour migration was most apparent in the India-Germany and Senegal-Spain corridors, where active government-to-government cooperation and mobility initiatives are underway. But tailored actions could be considered for each of the five corridors to support regular pathways and potentially grow labour migration in the future.

- **Bangladesh-Portugal corridor:** A lack of interest from the current Portuguese government and the absence of a Portuguese embassy in Bangladesh present key obstacles to formalising and scaling labour mobility pathways between the two countries. However, beyond these barriers to scale, broader efforts to promote Portuguese language acquisition and facilitate skills recognition present opportunities to improve the labour market integration of Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal, including those already in the country.
- **India-Germany corridor:** The route to expanding labour migration lies in greater employer engagement, coupled with investments to unlock language training for more participants. While the most viable path to scaling up matching lies with private recruiters, incidents of scams and exploitation highlight the need to improve oversight of recruiters and strengthen enforcement against bad actors.
- **Peru-Italy corridor:** Efforts to recruit health-care workers and expedite the process of recognising their qualifications hold promise but will require additional investment and coordination to grow this pathway in ways that address concerns about potential brain drain. At the same time, the use of irregular routes, such as entering and overstaying a tourist visa, is common and may reduce the uptake of regular pathways unless these practices are curtailed.
- **Senegal-Spain corridor:** Similar trade-offs are at play here, with demand far outstripping the supply of legal migration opportunities, leading some Senegalese workers to opt for dangerous irregular maritime journeys. Alongside the two countries' ongoing cooperation on enforcement, opportunities exist to shift the balance in favour of regular pathways by exploring the scope to expand places under the GECCO scheme and tackling barriers to accessing regular migration opportunities, such as the illicit trade in visa appointments.

- **Vietnam-Hungary corridor:** Future labour migration flows hinge on the fate of behind-the-scenes negotiations on readmissions, which could lead to Vietnam being added again to the list of eligible countries for Hungary's guestworker permit. Further cooperation will then be needed to tackle the high incidence of secondary movements from Hungary to other European countries by cracking down on recruiters that pre-emptively offer this option to prospective migrants and by working with Hungarian employers and authorities to improve the retention of Vietnamese workers.

The research study identifies a range of actions that can help promote and potentially scale well-managed labour migration corridors. Many of these actions lie in the hands of governments, such as expanding legal migration and training opportunities, speeding up visa processing, or determining the degree of coordination and data-sharing they are willing to pursue to facilitate recruitment. Employers and private intermediaries are likely to play a significant role in matching processes, providing skill development opportunities, and covering travel and other costs associated with labour migration. Civil-society organisations in countries of origin and destination also contribute significantly by supporting migrants before departure and after arrival, helping to ensure smoother integration and safeguarding rights throughout the process. However, the European Union has considerable scope to support efforts to scale labour migration corridors by addressing shared gaps and exploring ways to achieve economies of scale.

The actions identified include the following:

- **Tackle information gaps.** By supporting the creation of centralised, multilingual platforms or other outreach and dissemination efforts that aggregate and deliver reliable information for migrants, employers, and governments alike, the European Union could help address gaps in information on migration opportunities, recruitment processes, and immigration procedures. These resources would need to be tailored to specific recruitment contexts; for example, in countries where using recruitment agencies is common, the European Union could provide information about the rules of engagement, and explore ways to integrate with other resources that list licensed recruitment agencies and provide insights into migrant worker experiences with recruiters (such as the Recruitment Advisor platform run by the International Trade Union Confederation). Their effectiveness also hinges on a commitment to keep information current and to promote these resources among employers and workers. Otherwise, the resources could go unused and inadvertently add to the problem of diffuse and inaccurate information sources. In addition to digital platforms, establishing or expanding migrant information centres or offices in countries of origin provides another avenue for delivering tailored support, guidance, and resources to labour migrants.[236] However, robust, empirical evidence on the impact of these initiatives within the examined migration corridors remains scarce because this approach has not been explored comprehensively in the selected countries of origin. Further research is therefore needed, particularly to assess the unique value the European Union can bring and to identify the specific gaps that such initiatives can realistically fill.
- **Build labour migration governance capacity in partner countries**. The corridors studied illustrate the diverse roles that government and nongovernment stakeholders in partner countries

236 Examples of such resource and advisory centres include the International Centre for Migration Policy Development's Migrant Resource Centres, one of which exists in Bangladesh. The research team did not identify such offices established by the respective EU Member States in selected origin countries along the bilateral corridors; however, GIZ established a migration advice centre in Senegal in 2018. See Migrant Resource Centre-Bangladesh, 'Who We Are', accessed 15 May 2025; GIZ, 'Migration Advice Centre in Senegal Successfully Up and Running' (news release, 12 April 2018).

can play in labour migration. A few common gaps emerged where the European Union could step in, for example, providing funding for capacity building to improve data collection and exchange in strategic corridors, which could inform labour market services and training in partner countries and help governments review whether their immigration policy settings reflect the latest information on labour market needs and skills availability. The European Union could also consider financial support for programming by ILO, IOM, or others to promote ethical recruitment practices in priority countries, making the case that such practices lead to better labour market outcomes at destination.

- **Support effective matching.** Negotiations on the Talent Pool Regulation are ongoing, so it is too early to anticipate its impact on connecting employers with jobseekers in third countries. The outcome will likely depend on securing sufficient buy-in from governments, employers, and workers, as well as finding ways to integrate the Talent Pool into existing immigration and recruitment processes to encourage uptake. Alongside the Talent Pool, the European Union could provide seed funding to test different models for matching employers and workers (including digital tools) or to encourage ethical recruitment practices by private intermediaries, potentially as part of future mobility schemes. Testing different approaches and providing critical evidence about what works and why can guide efforts by governments, private-sector actors, and civil society to support efficient and fair matching in third countries.

- **Improve visa processing.** Difficulty in accessing visas (unpredictable processing times, long wait times for visa appointments, challenges meeting documentation requirements, or the lack of a nearby consular office) was a recurring theme in stakeholder consultations across the countries studied. For example, the absence of a Portuguese embassy in Bangladesh means that long-term visa applicants must travel to India, placing a significant burden on prospective labour migrants and complicating bilateral coordination.[237] Similar issues have also been documented in recent mobility schemes funded by the Migration Partnership Facility, such as the Digital Explorers project in Nigeria, where limited consular processing capacity forces Nigerian applicants to go to South Africa for a visa appointment before returning home and then travelling to Lithuania for their four-month placement.[238] While decisions about issuing visas lie with Member States, the European Union could explore options for greater efficiencies, such as joint consular activities, guidance on streamlining documentation requirements, and providing best practices for remote interviews or the establishment of systems that prevent the resale of appointments.

- **Enhance predeparture and post-arrival support.** Effective labour migration relies on recruitment and how well migrants settle and integrate. Yet most of the corridors studied lack targeted orientation and support services geared towards the realities of living and working in Europe. The European Union could help bridge this gap by providing origin-country authorities with information and resources, as well as exploring options for financial support to deliver these services.

- **Invest in language training.** Proficiency in either the destination-country language or another widely used language such as English, French, or Spanish is critical for securing an employment offer and, in some cases, a work visa. Destination-country language skills are also important for long-term career prospects and social integration, as noted by Peruvians in Italy, Bangladeshis

237 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.
238 Kate Hooper, Tesseltje de Lange, and Jasmijn Slootjes, *How Can Labour Migration Policies Help Tackle Europe's Looming Skills Crisis?* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2025).

in Portugal, and Indians in Germany. For some corridors, investing in language training will need to be a key priority, and the European Union and Member State governments in particular could work with partner countries to expand capacity and support quality control. One example is Italy's programme for nurses and care workers, which mandates 80 hours of government-funded language instruction provided by trusted institutions. However, the need to explore ways to help employers and workers cover the costs of language training at scale is urgent—for example, finding options to reduce costs (such as a greater digital instruction component) or supporting low-cost loans for migrant workers or testing financing options for SMEs that can spread out recruitment expenses for these types of additional recruitment expenses.

- **Mainstream skills development opportunities.** Only a few examples exist of skills training tailored to migration opportunities in the specific corridors studied, and where they do exist, the projects are small-scale, benefit few people, and lack a clear pathway to significant growth. Rather than building from scratch, a better route to scale may be to add a mobility component onto existing livelihoods and training investments. For instance, Germany's PAM project added tailored language and mobility-related training onto existing projects supporting technical and vocational education and training in Vietnam and other countries. Similarly, the EU Talent Partnerships with Bangladesh and Pakistan aim to add mobility components to established technical and vocational education training programmes. This blended approach can yield benefits for workers in origin-country labour markets and for prospective migrants.
- **Offer soft skills training.** Alongside investments in developing vocational skills, the European Union could encourage employers and industry representatives to specify the soft skills they view as important for successful recruitment and retention, such as problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and creative thinking. These insights could then feed into training curricula to prepare prospective migrants for migration, as well as immigration and recruitment procedures to ensure that these attributes are considered as part of the selection process.
- **Improve skills recognition procedures.** The Union of Skills has identified steps to simplify the recognition of foreign qualifications across the European Union, including a pledge to explore ways to streamline recognition procedures for third-country nationals, which insights from this study could support. Alongside best practices to expedite recognition for regulated professions, the European Union could also explore how to build employers' understanding and trust in foreign-acquired qualifications and training through additional research and engagement.
- **Explore improvements to circular migration schemes.** While circular migration is gaining attention as a tool to address labour shortages in Europe, many programmes face design and implementation challenges. These include stays that are shorter than necessary (and possible), which limit migrants' ability to recoup their up-front investments; difficulties with fair and efficient selection processes; limited reintegration support; and a lack of effective return incentives. For example, Senegalese migrants have noted that three to four months of work is insufficient to sustain themselves for the rest of the year. Peruvian workers often decline circular migration offers because of the long travel distances and high return ticket costs, which reduce the programmes' attractiveness. Addressing these issues will be critical for sustaining and scaling circular migration programmes alongside other labour migration pathways, and for enhancing their benefits for workers, employers, and countries of destination and origin.

- **Maximise the development impacts of migration.** The European Union could amplify the positive development benefits of migration (regardless of its duration) by supporting remittance-linked income-generating activities, exploring best practices for skills assessments that capture migrants' new expertise and experience,[239] and ensuring the portability of social benefits through bilateral social security agreements. Supporting knowledge sharing by migrants returning temporarily or permanently—through funding short-term return visits for training or creating platforms to facilitate exchange—can generate significant benefits for communities of origin and strengthen migrant workers' contributions to their countries of origin and destination.

- **Support knowledge and data exchange to inform programming.** The European Union can support information sharing between governments through convenings and investments in capacity building. Alongside providing forums for Member States to exchange knowledge about programming and contexts, the European Union could improve the exchange of labour market data between countries of origin and destination, for example, by supporting the negotiation of formal data-sharing agreements, addressing interoperability concerns, and developing and promoting ethical data-exchange protocols. Building reciprocal, systematic exchange mechanisms would improve transparency, coordination, and evidence-based policymaking across migration corridors.

- **Promote better oversight and protection in high-risk sectors.** Migrants and stakeholders raised concerns about poor working conditions in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and especially domestic care. For example, Peruvian women in Italy—many of whom overstay visas and live at their workplace—face particular vulnerabilities because of their isolation and lack of formal protections. Without oversight of what happens behind closed doors, exploitation often goes unchecked. The European Union can support better outcomes by promoting minimum ethical recruitment standards, encouraging more consistent enforcement across Member States (including risk-based assessments and migrant-sensitive approaches), and working with governments and civil society in both origin and destination countries to ensure that workers know their rights and have clear channels to report abuse or seek help.

- **Encourage fair cost-sharing in labour corridors.** Despite ILO guidelines stating that workers should not bear the cost of their recruitment, some or all of these costs can still fall to migrant workers. These financial burdens can limit participation and the scalability of migration corridors, and therefore the possibility of tackling labour shortages in Europe. To make progress on this issue, the European Union should consider several actions, such as supporting research to shed light on where recruitment fees or related costs are charged to workers coming to Europe and promoting the Employer Pays Principle (that employers, not workers, should bear the costs of recruitment).[240] The European Union can also support efforts to reconcile different recruitment practices and associated costs in bilateral or regional partnerships. While working towards eliminating costs for migrant workers, the European Union and other stakeholders can also take steps to reduce this financial burden for migrants in the short term by exploring innovative financing tools—such as subsidised employer contributions, mobility-linked development funds, or public-private risk-sharing mechanisms—that can offer more sustainable lending options for migrants and encourage employers to cover more of these costs.

239 Such skills assessments are especially important for returnees seeking better job opportunities in their home countries.
240 Institute for Human Rights and Business, 'The Employer Pays Principle', accessed 30 October 2025.

As Europe continues to navigate demographic shifts and evolving labour market pressures, well-managed labour migration pathways offer a timely opportunity to meet emerging labour needs and promote economic growth. Recent EU initiatives—including the Talent Pool, the Talent Partnerships, the Skills Agenda, and the European Qualifications Framework—have aimed to address some of the gaps that prevent migrant workers and employers from utilising labour migration channels. Yet, as is clear from the analysis of migration corridors in this study, there is still significant room for action. The concrete steps outlined in this report would help to enhance labour migration governance, build institutional and recruitment capacity, expand skills development and migrant support services, and strengthen collaboration with partner countries. Effectively implementing these measures is critical not only for Europe's competitiveness, but also for ensuring that international recruitment channels can grow in a sustainable and mutually beneficial way.

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Appendices

Appendix A. List of interviews conducted

This appendix provides a list of interviews conducted by the research team as part of the study. It begins with a summary of the types of stakeholders consulted in each country (Table A–1), followed by detailed information organised by migration corridor (Tables A–2 to A–17). The latter tables also highlight sectoral characteristics and gender of the employers and migrant workers interviewed.

TABLE A–1
Summary of interviewees

Category	BD	PT	IN	DE	PE	IT	SN	ES	VN	HU	Total
Intergovernmental organisation	-	1	2	-	5	1	2	2	3	-	**16**
Government	7	2	9	8	8	4	12	4	2	-	**56**
Civil society	4	1	2	2	2	3	-	2	-	3	**19**
Experts	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	**5**
Academia	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	**2**
Public employment services	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	**5**
Recruitment agency	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	**5**
Chamber of commerce / industry group	3	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	2	**8**
Trade union	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	**6**
Employer	-	1	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	-	**7**
Migrant	-	7	-	6	-	6	3	7	-	10	**39**
Prospective migrant	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**1**
Total	**15**	**13**	**15**	**18**	**22**	**18**	**18**	**22**	**9**	**19**	**169**

Detailed list of interviewees per corridor

The Bangladesh-Portugal corridor

TABLE A–2
Interviewees in Bangladesh

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Government	BRAC Migration Programme (Part of BRAC)	28 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE)	24 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET)	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd. (BOESL)	25 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	24 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Ministry of Home Affairs	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Wage Earners Welfare Board	24 Feb. 2025	In person

TABLE A–2 (cont.)
Interviewees in Bangladesh

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Civil society	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies	25 Feb. 2025	In person
Civil society	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program	27 Feb. 2025	In person
Civil society	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit	27 Feb. 2025	In person
Civil society	Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladeshi Emigrants Development Foundation	28 Feb. 2025	In person
Trade union	Bangladesh Employers' Federation	27 Feb. 2025	In person
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry	28 Feb. 2025	In person
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress	26 Feb. 2025	In person

TABLE A–3
Governmental and nongovernmental organisation interviewees in Portugal

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Portugal	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (AIMA)	28 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	AIMA	28 Feb. 2025	In person
Civil society	Associação Solidariedade Imigrante	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Public employment service	Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)	28 Feb. 2025	In person

TABLE A–4
Migrant and employer interviewees in Portugal

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Employer	Agriculture	Madre Fruta (organisation of fruit and vegetable producers in the Algarve)	N/A	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Business	Small business owner	Male	25 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Business	Support representative	Female	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Government	Social worker	Male	26 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Government	Activist and interpreter	Male	27 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Agriculture	Small business owner	Male	5 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Agriculture	Small business owner	Male	7 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Agriculture and travel	Small business owner	Male	12 Mar. 2025	Remote

The India-Germany corridor

TABLE A–5
Interviewees in India

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	International Labour Organisation (ILO)	3 Mar. 2025	In person
Intergovernmental organisation	International Centre for Migration Policy Development	4 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Ministry of External Affairs	3 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	National Skill Development Cooperation (NSDC)	3 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	4 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Goethe Institute New Delhi	4 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	German Embassy New Delhi	4 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Norka Institute for Foreign Languages	5 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Norka Roots	5 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Goethe Institute Trivandrum	6 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence	7 Mar. 2025	In person
Civil society	Policy and Development Advisory Group	3 Mar. 2025	In person
Civil society	International Institute of Migration and Development	7 Mar. 2025	In person
Expert	(formerly) Ministry of External Affairs	17 Feb. 2025	Remote
Prospective migrants	Students (German language)	5 Mar. 2025	In person

TABLE A–6
Governmental and nongovernmental organisation interviewees in Germany

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Government	GIZ	17 Jan. 2025	In person
Government	GIZ	20 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	GIZ	20 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training	28 Jan. 2025	Remote
Government	Federal Employment Agency	28 Jan. 2025	In person
Government	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	29 Jan. 2025	In person
Government	Federal Foreign Office	29 Jan. 2025	In person
Government	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	31 Jan. 2025	Remote
Civil society	German Institute for International and Security Affairs	24 Jan. 2025	In person
Civil society	Labor Mobility Partnerships	5 Feb. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–7
Migrant and employer interviewees in Germany

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Employer	Transport	Deutsche Bahn Rail Academy	N/A	5 Feb. 2025	Remote
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Various	Indo-German Chamber of Commerce	N/A	24 Jan. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Child care	Au pair	Female	20 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Logistics	Skilled professional	Male	3 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Logistics	Skilled professional	Female	17 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Domestic	Stay-at-home mother	Female	17 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Maintenance	In vocational training	Male	3 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Consulting	Skilled professional	Female	24 Jan. 2025	Remote

The Peru-Italy corridor

TABLE A–8
Interviewees in Peru

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European External Action Service, Peru	24 Jan. 2025	Remote
Intergovernmental organisation	Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), Desk Peru	31 Jan. 2025	Remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	19 Feb. 2025	Remote
Intergovernmental organisation	ILO labour migration expert	10 Feb. 2025	Remote
Intergovernmental organisation	ILO	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	GIZ	25 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Migrations, Superintendencia de Migraciones	6 Mar. 2025	Remote
Government	Public Prosecutor’s Office, International Cooperation Office	21 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of the Interior, Directorate Against Organised Crime	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals	28 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, Directorate of Social Migration and Labour Migration	24 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, Directorate of Social Migration and Labour Migration	24 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Public Prosecutor’s Office	24 Feb. 2025	Remote
Academia	Universidad del Pacifico	20 Feb. 2025	Remote
Civil society	Equilibrium Cende	7 Feb. 2025	Remote
Civil society	La Casa de Panchita	25 Feb. 2025	Remote
Expert	Former doctor, engaged in Magallanes programmes in Italy	28 Feb. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–8 (cont.)
Interviewees in Peru

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Expert	Universidad Católica Sedes Sapientiae	28 Feb. 2025	Remote
Expert	Universidad Católica Sedes Sapientiae	3 Mar. 2025	Remote
Recruitment agency	Lavoro Peru	6 Mar. 2025	Remote
Public employment service	National Employment Service of Peru	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Employer	Es Hoy	5 Jan. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–9
Governmental and nongovernmental organisation interviewees in Italy

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	UN High Commissioner for Refugees, with expertise on labour migration corridors	18 Mar. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Sviluppo Lavoro Italia	17 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Directorate-General for Immigration and Integration Policies	17 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	Municipality of Turin, International Cooperation	13 Mar. 2025	Remote
Government	Municipality of Turin, International Cooperation	13 Mar. 2025	Remote
Civil society	Caritas Italiana	12 Mar. 2025	Remote
Civil society	National Federation of Orders for Nursing Professions	20 Mar. 2025	Remote
Civil society	National Federation of Orders for Nursing Professions	20 Mar. 2025	Remote
Recruitment agency	Randstad Italia	17 Mar. 2025	Remote
Recruitment agency	OpenJobMetis	6 Mar. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–10
Migrant and employer interviewees in Italy

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Employer	Health care	Operatori Sanitari Associati	N/A	7 Mar. 2025	Remote
Employer	Health care	Uneba, National Union of Social Assistance Institutions and Initiatives	N/A	10 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Health care	Nurse	Female	19 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Health care	Nurse	Female	19 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Nonprofit	Cultural mediator	Male	12 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	International cooperation	Project manager	Female	17 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Government	Diversity manager	Female	25 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Service	Business owner	Male	25 Mar. 2025	Remote

The Senegal-Spain corridor

TABLE A–11

Governmental and nongovernmental interviewees in Senegal

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European Union Agency for Asylum	17 Jan. 2025	Remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European Union Delegation in Dakar	11 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	French Office for Immigraiton and Integration	14 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	GIZ	14 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	General Directorate for Support to Senegalese Abroad	10 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	General Directorate for Support to Senegalese Abroad	10 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	General Directorate for Support to Senegalese Abroad	10 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	General Directorate for Support to Senegalese Abroad	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	General Directorate for Support to Senegalese Abroad	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Association Nationale des Partenaires Migrantes	11 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	National Agency of Statistics and Demography	11 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Spanish Embassy in Dakar	12 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Relations with Institutions	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Senegal	14 Feb. 2025	In person

TABLE A–12

Migrant interviewees in Senegal

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Migrant	Agriculture	Gestión de la Contratación en el Origen (GECCO) participant and associated with Association de Anciens	Male	12 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Agriculture	GECCO participant and associated with Association de Anciens	Male	12 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Agriculture	GECCO participant and associated with Association de Anciens	Male	12 Feb. 2025	In person

TABLE A–13

Governmental and nongovernmental organisation interviewees in Spain

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European External Action Service	17 Jan. 2025 and 30 Jan. 2025	In person
Intergovernmental organisation	IOM Spain	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, Dakar Office	11 Mar. 2025	Remote
Government	Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, Office of the Secretary of State	14 Feb. 2025	In person
Government	Government of Canary Islands, General Directorate of Relations with Africa	7 Mar. 2025	Remote
Government	Consulate of Senegal in Madrid	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Civil society	Fundación Cepaim, Dakar	6 Feb. 2025	Remote
Civil society	Fundación Cepaim, Spain	29 Jan. 2025	Remote
Expert	Former director general for migration	29 Jan. 2025 and 14 Feb. 2025	Remote and in person
Public employment service	Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE), Directorate General of Statistics and Information	6 Mar. 2025	Remote
Public employment service	Regional Employment Service of Huelva	24 Feb. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–14

Migrant and employer interviewees in Spain

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Employer	Industry and technology	Instituto Tecnológico de Canarias	N/A	26 Feb. 2025	Remote
Employer	Agriculture	Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos	N/A	27 Mar. 2025	In person
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Various	Chamber Institute for the Creation and Development of Enterprises, Development Department	N/A	12 Feb. 2025	In person
Trade union	Various	Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras)	N/A	21 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Diaspora engagement (previously, construction, agriculture, and retail)	Asociación de los Inmigrantes Senegaleses en España	Male	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Diaspora engagement	Coordinadora d'Associacions Senegaleses de Catalunya (CASC)	Male	5 Mar. 2025	In person
Migrant	Diaspora engagement	CASC	Male	5 Mar. 2025	In person

TABLE A–14 (cont.)
Migrant and employer interviewees in Spain

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Migrant	Government (previously, construction and retail)	Civil servant	Male	13 Feb. 2025	In person
Migrant	Media	Journalist	Female	28 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Media	Journalist	Male	24 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Arts	Cultural agent and artist	Male	28 Feb. 2025	Remote

The Vietnam-Hungary corridor

TABLE A–15
Interviewees in Vietnam

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Intergovernmental organisation	European Return Liaison Officer in Vietnam	26 Mar. 2025	In person
Intergovernmental organisation	ILO Country Office for Viet Nam	27 Mar. 2025	In person
Intergovernmental organisation	IOM Vietnam	27 Mar. 2025	In person
Government	GIZ	19 Feb. 2025	Remote
Government	GIZ	25 Mar. 2025	In person
Academia	Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences	26 Mar. 2025	In person
Public employment service	Ha Tinh Employment Service Centre	16 Apr. 2025	Remote
Recruitment agency	Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply	26 Mar. 2025	In person
Recruitment agency	An Duong Group	27 Mar. 2025	In person

TABLE A–16
Governmental and nongovernmental organisation interviewees in Hungary

Category	Organisation	Interview date	In person or remote
Civil society	Hungarian Association for Migrants	18 Mar. 2025	Remote
Civil society	Vietnamese-Hungary Friendship Association	20 Mar. 2025	Remote
Civil society	Hungarian-Vietnamese Friendship Association (Headquarters)	21 Mar. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–17
Migrant and employer interviewees in Hungary

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Agriculture	Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture	N/A	16 Mar. 2025	Remote
Chamber of commerce / industry group	Various	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hungarian-Vietnamese Business Council	N/A	26 Feb. 2025	Remote

TABLE A–17 (cont.)

Migrant and employer interviewees in Hungary

Category	Sector/ industry	Occupation (migrants)/ organisation (employers)	Gender (migrants only)	Interview date	In person or remote
Trade union	Various	National Association of Employers and Industrialists	N/A	17 Mar. 2025	Remote
Trade union	Various	Trade Union Cooperation Forum	N/A	27 Feb. 2025	Remote
Trade union	Various	Hungarian Trade Union Confederation	N/A	6 Mar. 2025	Remote
Trade union	Various	National Federation of Works Councils	N/A	25 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Manufacturing	Electronics assembly worker	Female	7 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Construction	Construction welder	Male	28 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Hospitality	Hotel housekeeper	Female	13 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Manufacturing	EV battery line operator	Male	4 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Manufacturing	Plastic manufacturing worker	Nonbinary	25 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Maintenance	Mechanical maintenance worker	Male	1 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Textile	Seamstress in a garment factory	Female	20 Feb. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Automotive	Automotive spare parts employee	Male	5 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Retail	Retail worker	Female	9 Mar. 2025	Remote
Migrant	Manufacturing	Skilled furniture maker	Male	14 Mar. 2025	Remote

Appendix B. Standardised questionnaire and interview guides

This appendix contains the standardised questionnaire circulated to points of contact in national governments, including national statistics offices and other relevant national institutions identified through fieldwork (Part 1), followed by the interview guides leveraged by the research team during fieldwork, broken out by stakeholder type.

PART 1: Statistical survey questionnaire

Diaspora population size

1. What is the official estimate of the [NATIONALITY] diaspora population currently living in [MS]?

Labour market distribution of [NATIONALITY] migrants

2. Top sectors of employment
   a. What are the **top five sectors of employment** of [NATIONALITY] migrants in [MS]?
   b. What is the number of employed workers of this nationality in each of these respective sectors?

3 Occupational insights

  a What are the **top five occupations** held by [NATIONALITY] migrants in [MS]?

  b What is the number of employed workers of this nationality in each of these respective occupations?

PART 2: Interview guides

Interview guide for employers

Employer profile

1 Can you tell me about your business and your role and responsibilities (e.g., sector, where they operate, size and number of employees)?

  a Does your business have any current or planned ties to X country (e.g., an office or operations in that country)?

2 Where is your company currently experiencing shortages?

  a Why have you struggled to fill these roles with local workers?

  b How long have these shortages persisted? What's driving them, in your opinion?

3 What share of your workforce comes from other countries?

  a Did you hire these workers directly from other countries, or hire them after they arrived in your country?

Experience with international recruitment

4 How many workers from X country do you currently employ, and in what role(s)/at what level?

  a When did you start recruiting workers from X country?

  b How did you learn about this opportunity?

  c Who did you work with when recruiting workers from X country (e.g., participating in a government-run mobility scheme, working with a private recruiter locally or in X country, direct advertising in X country, etc.)?

  d How long did the recruitment process take?

  e What costs did you have to pay for recruiting these workers? How do these costs compare to other recruitment channels you've used before?

5 What support have you offered to workers from X country on arrival (e.g., connecting with housing or services, mentoring, social events)?

  a Did workers receive any vocational/language training on arrival?

  b Were any workers accompanied by family members, and if yes, did you provide any support to family members?

   c. (If applicable) How did these services compare to the services you've provided for other foreign hires?

6. Are you satisfied with the workers you've recruited from X country?
   a. Are there any gaps in training (vocational, language) that you've needed to address?
   b. What are the retention rates?

Plans for the future

7. Would you hire workers from X country again?
   a. If yes/no, why?
8. Lessons for the future/any recommendations for improvements going forward:
   a. Thoughts on recruitment process?
   b. Thoughts on reception/integration process?

Interview guide for migrant workers

Life in origin country

1. Can you describe your situation in X country before you started thinking about moving abroad?
   a. What was your education level?
   b. What was your employment situation?
   c. What was your family status?
2. How did you first hear about opportunities to work in Y country?
   a. Did you know anyone who had moved to Y country before?
   b. Did family or friends influence your decision?
   c. What knowledge did you have about Y country before migrating?
3. What sources of information did you rely on?
4. Did you have any expectations about life and work in Y country?

Preparation for migration

5. What steps did you take to prepare for your move?
   a. Did you take any language courses? If yes:
      i. How long did you study?
      ii. How was the course paid for?
      iii. Up to which level did you study?

b Which type of visa did you apply for?

i How was your experience with the visa process?

ii Did you receive any support from an agency, friends, or a migration programme?

c Did you need to get your qualifications or skills recognised in Y country?

i If yes, was it a full or partial recognition?

ii What was your experience with the application procedures?

iii Were there any delays, and how long did the process take?

Post-arrival support and life in Y country

6 Who covered the cost of your migration (e.g., flight, initial accommodation)?

7 What was your experience upon arrival in Y country?

a Did you receive any assistance with settling in (e.g., finding housing, applying for a residence permit)?

b What were the biggest challenges you faced after arriving?

i Have you found stability in your current situation?

8 How do you feel about your work?

a How is your relationship with your colleagues?

b Have you been able to build a social network outside of work?

c Have you made friends outside of work?

9 Are you in touch with other co-nationals in Y country?

10 Are you currently repaying any debt from your migration process?

11 Are you sending money to your family in X country?

Future outlook

12 What are your plans for the coming months and years?

a Do you see yourself staying in Y country long term?

b Do you plan on returning to X country, or moving to another country? Which one?

c Do you plan on bringing your family/partner to Y country?

13 Are you thinking about changing jobs in the future?

a If yes, what kind of job are you looking for?

b What factors influence your decision to stay in your current job or move to a new one?

Closing questions

14 Is there anything else about your migration journey that you would like to share?

Interview guide for key informants in destination countries

Introduction

1. Background on the stakeholder, their organisation, and their role:
   a. What are your current responsibilities in relation to managing labour migration/skills mobility/skills recognition?

Context for labour migration corridor

2. Details on flows along this corridor:
   a. How many people move along this corridor annually?
   b. What do we know about the profile of people moving (e.g., demographics, skills profile, sector/occupation)? What visa(s) are they using?
3. What factors drove the establishment of this migration corridor (e.g., economic, historic, cultural, social, political, other), and when?
   a. What impacts has this mobility had (positive and negative)?
   b. Who is responsible for facilitating skilled mobility along this corridor, including at the recruitment/selection/immigration and relocation/integration phases?
4. How/to what extent are national government actors coordinating with their counterparts in partner countries on managing flows?
   a. How are the costs shared among different actors?

Assessing skills needs

5. How are job vacancies and skills shortages tracked at a national and regional level?
   a. Can you give me some examples of sectors that are currently experiencing skill shortages?
6. How is information about job opportunities and skills shortages shared with counterparts managing this migration corridor?
   a. How formal is this process?
   b. What criteria are used to 'vet' this list of shortages for inclusion (e.g., licensing requirements and/or recognition procedures, compatibility of training, availability of workers in origin country)? Can you give examples of sectors/occupations that were included or excluded on these grounds?

Procedures for matching and skills recognition

7. What is the process for matching prospective employers with prospective employees along this corridor?
   a. Which actors are involved in this recruitment and selection process, and why?
   b. Does this approach vary by sector or occupation?
   c. Lessons learnt/best practices/scope for improvement?
8. What is the process for facilitating skills recognition for people moving along this corridor?
   a. Which sectors/occupations does this primarily apply to?
   b. Which actors are involved in this process, and why?
   c. Lessons learnt/best practices/scope for improvement?
9. How/to what extent is training delivered to prospective participants as part of this mobility (e.g., language, vocational, orientation)?
   a. Who is responsible for designing and delivering this training?
   b. Who is responsible for the costs?

Scale and sustainability

10. Are there plans to scale up migration flows along this corridor? (If yes/no, why?)
    a. What would this require in terms of resources, capacity building, etc.?
    b. How could project-based programming be institutionalised to facilitate flows?
11. How are the costs associated with mobility along this corridor currently shared among different stakeholders (e.g., government, employers, migrants themselves)?
    a. How sustainable is this funding model going forward?
12. What alternative funding options could be considered to help scale up flows (e.g., in terms of cost-sharing arrangements and investments in infrastructure)?

Key takeaways/recommendations

13. What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of mobility along this corridor?
    a. Opportunities to boost the development/skills benefits for participants?
14. What investments in training could be considered to help meet skills needs?
    a. Other best practices/lessons learnt for consideration in our research report?

Interview guide for key informants in origin countries

Introduction

1. Background on the stakeholder, their organisation, and their role:
   a. What are your current responsibilities in relation to managing labour migration/skills mobility/skills recognition?

Context for labour migration corridor

2. Details on flows along this corridor:
   a. How many people move along this corridor annually?
   b. What do we know about the profile of people moving (e.g., demographics, skills profile, sector/occupation)? What visa(s) are they using?
3. What factors drove the establishment of this migration corridor (e.g., economic, historic, cultural, social, political, other), and when?
   a. What impacts has this mobility had (positive and negative) on different stakeholders (e.g., nationally, community level, families, sectoral)?
4. Who is responsible for facilitating skilled mobility along this corridor, including at the recruitment/selection/immigration and relocation phases?
   a. What role (if any) do recruiters or other third-party intermediaries play? How are their activities regulated and supervised, and according to what standards? Are these safeguards sufficient?
   b. How are the costs shared among different actors?

Assessing skills availability

5. What data do you currently collect on jobseekers and their profile (demographics, skills, experience) at the national and regional levels?
   a. Who is responsible for collecting these data?
   b. How reliable are these data? Is there scope for further investment or capacity building?
6. What is the process for collecting and sharing information about skills availability and job candidates with destination-country counterparts?
   a. Who is responsible for gathering this information?
   b. What criteria are used to 'vet' this list for inclusion (e.g., unemployment rates and other economic/sector dynamics, compatibility of training, candidates' interest in migrating)? Can you give examples of sectors/occupations that were included/excluded on these grounds?
   c. Does this process offer sufficient protections against the potential risk of brain drain?

Training and skills development opportunities

7 How/to what extent is training delivered to prospective participants as part of this mobility (e.g., language training, vocational training, predeparture orientation)?

   a Who is responsible for designing and delivering this training?

   b Who covers the costs?

Scale and sustainability

8 Are there plans to scale up migration flows along this corridor? (If yes/no, why?)

9 What would this require in terms of resources, capacity building, etc.?

   a How could project-based programming be institutionalised to facilitate flows?

10 How are the costs associated with mobility along this corridor currently shared among different stakeholders (e.g., government, employers, migrants themselves)?

   a How sustainable is this funding model going forward?

   b What alternative funding options could be considered to help scale up flows (e.g., in terms of cost-sharing arrangements and investments in infrastructure)?

Key takeaways/recommendations

11 What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of mobility along this corridor?

   a Opportunities to boost the development/skills benefits for participants?

   b What investments in training could be considered to help meet skills needs?

12 Other best practices/lessons learnt for consideration in our research report?

Appendix C. Key findings from the quantitative data collection on bilateral labour migration corridors

This appendix presents key findings from the quantitative data collection exercise conducted as part of this study. It contains key figures on the five labour migration corridors selected for in-depth analysis between EU Member States and partner countries in the project's final report, drawing on a range of national and international data sources. Residence permit data for each corridor were extracted from Eurostat for 2019–23 in November 2024, and data for 2024 were subsequently added in October 2025.

TABLE A–18

Bangladesh-Portugal migration corridor

Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal		**First residence permits issued to Bangladeshi nationals for employment (Portugal)**		**First residence permits issued to Bangladeshi nationals for employment (EU)**	
		Year	Value	Year	Value
25,666		**2019**	997	**2019**	5,347
		2020	1,310	**2020**	5,607
Gender breakdown		**2021**	1,560	**2021**	10,007
% male	% female	**2022**	4,898	**2022**	22,006
79.5%	20.5%	**2023**	6,187	**2023**	33,406
		2024	8,251	**2024**	32,104
Description: Resident population of Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal, as of 2023. **Source**: Sílvia Lopes and Alexandra Sousa, *Relatório de migrações e asilo - 2023* (Lisbon: Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum, 2024).		**Description**: First residence permits issued by Portugal to Bangladeshi citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by all EU countries to Bangladeshi citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.	
Highest level of education completed (employed Bangladeshi nationals)		**Top sectors of employment for Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal**		**Top occupations of Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal**	
Education level	% of workers	Sector	% of workers	Occupation type	% of workers
Basic	44.0%	Agriculture and fishing	13.8%	–	–
Secondary	35.7%	Business	7.9%	–	–
Higher	20.3%	Transport and storage	7.6%	–	–
		Accommodation and catering	5.5%	–	–
		Extractive industries	2.7%	–	–
Description: Employed population of Bangladeshi nationals in Portugal by level of maximum teaching, as of 2021 census. **Source**: Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico. Jun. 2024* (Lisbon: Bank of Portugal, 2024).		**Description:** Distribution of foreign workers of Bangladeshi nationality in each sector in Portugal, as of 2023. (Note: Percentages correspond to the Bangladeshi share of workers by sector, rather than the share of all Bangladeshi workers in a sector.) **Source**: Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico*.		**Note:** An occupational breakdown of Bangladeshi nationals working in Portugal was not available.	

TABLE A–19

India-Germany migration corridor

Indian nationals in Germany		First residence permits issued to Indian nationals for employment (Germany)		First residence permits issued to Indian nationals for employment (EU)	
		Year	Value	Year	Value
277,455		**2019**	7,316	**2019**	51,208
		2020	1,349	**2020**	35,267
Gender breakdown		**2021**	7,176	**2021**	49,290
% Male	% Female	**2022**	12,910	**2022**	88,307
58.8%	41.2%	**2023**	11,063	**2023**	95,270
		2024	8,358	**2024**	84,426
Description: Population of Indian nationals in Germany, as of 31 December 2024. **Source**: German Federal Statistical Office, 'Ausländische Bevölkerung nach Geschlecht und ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten', accessed 29 October 2025.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by Germany to Indian citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by all EU countries to Indian citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.	

Highest level of education completed (total Indian migrant population)		Top sectors of employment for Indian nationals in Germany		Top occupations for Indian nationals in Germany	
Education level	% of migrants	Sector	% of workers	Occupation type	% of workers
No educational qualification	12%	Information and communications technology	18.6%	Supporting workers	16.7%
Vocational qualification	2%	Real estate; freelance, scientific, and technical services	17.7%	Skilled workers	27.1%
University degree	86%	Manufacturing	13.8%	Specialists	17.2%
		Hospitality	12.7%	Experts	39.0%
Description: The data show all migrants born in India living in Germany, broken down by their educational background. **Source**: Davit Adunts et al., *Indische Arbeitskräfte in Deutschland* (Nuremberg: Institute for Employment Research, 2024).		**Description**: Distribution of Indian employees subject to social insurance contributions by sector, as of 2023. **Source:** German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, *Fachkräftestrategie Indien: Indien als starker Partner für Deutschland* (Berlin: German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2024).		**Description**: Indian employees subject to social insurance contributions by level according to the German Classification of Occupations 2010 (KldB 2010), as of 31 December 2022. **Source**: Adunts et al., *Indische Arbeitskräfte in Deutschland*.	

TABLE A–20
Peru-Italy migration corridor

Peruvian nationals in Italy
98,733

Gender breakdown	
% male	% female
42.1%	57.9%

Description: Foreign census of Peruvian citizens legally residing in Italy, as of 1 January 2023. Statistics include all foreigners in possession of a valid residence document. Widespread dual citizenship and the presence of a large community of Peruvians with irregular status make it difficult to calculate an exact estimate. By contrast, according to Peru's National Institute of Statistics and Information, as of 2023, there were 356,033 Peruvians in Italy.
Source: Italian National Institute of Statistics, 'Foreign Census Population on 1st January', accessed 29 October 2025.

First residence permits issued to Peruvian nationals for employment (Italy)	
Year	Value
2019	27
2020	115
2021	2,370
2022	4,105
2023	1,580
2024	878

Description: First residence permits issued by Italy to Peruvian citizens for remunerated activities.
Source: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.

First residence permits issued to Peruvian nationals for employment (EU)	
Year	Value
2019	4,255
2020	3,438
2021	7,377
2022	14,507
2023	12,682
2024	11,229

Description: First residence permits issued by all EU countries to Peruvian citizens for remunerated activities.
Source: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.

Highest level of education completed (employed Peruvian migrant population)	
Education level	% of workers
School diploma holders	43%
University graduates	7.8%

Description: Share of university graduates and school diploma holders among Peruvian job holders in Italy, as of 2022.
Source: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *The Peruvian Community in Italy: Migration Population Annual Report - 2022*The Peruvian Community in Italy: Migrant Population Annual Report Executive Summary, Executive Summary (Rome: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023).

Top sectors of employment for Peruvian nationals in Italy	
Sector	% of workers
Public, social, and personal services	40.4%
Transport and other business services	14.9%
Industry (in the strict sense, incl. manufacturing, mining, energy)	12.3%
Public administration, education, and health	11.1%
Hotels and restaurants	8.7%

Description: Distribution of labour market sectors of employment among Peruvian nationals working in Italy.
Source: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *XIV Rapporto Annuale: Gli stranieri nel mercato del lavoro in Italia* (Rome: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2024).

Top occupations for Peruvian nationals in Italy	
Occupation type	% of workers
Clerical, sales, and personal service roles	40.5%
Unskilled manual workers	37.9%
Skilled manual workers	15.5%
Managers or professionals in intellectual and technical fields	6.1%

Description: Distribution of occupational types among Peruvian nationals working in Italy.
Source: Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *XIV Rapporto Annuale*.

TABLE A–21

Senegal-Spain migration corridor

Senegalese nationals in Spain		**First residence permits issued to Senegalese nationals for employment (Spain)**		**First residence permits issued to Senegalese nationals for employment (EU)**	
		Year	Value	Year	Value
76,024		**2019**	1,311	**2019**	2,806
		2020	1,603	**2020**	3,159
Gender breakdown		**2021**	2,721	**2021**	5,672
% Male	% Female	**2022**	4,123	**2022**	8,427
77%	23%	**2023**	4,582	**2023**	7,697
		2024	3,477	**2024**	6,185
Description: In addition to those with residence permits, note that 15,767 Senegalese naturalised Spanish (between 2009 and 2022) and 9,688 are estimated to be in an irregular situation, as of 2023. **Source**: Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal', updated October 2023.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by Spain to Senegalese citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by all EU countries to Senegalese citizens for remunerated activities. **Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.	

Highest level of education completed (total Senegalese migrant population)		**Top sectors of employment of Senegalese nationals in Spain**		**Top occupations of Senegalese nationals in Spain**	
Education level	% of migrants	Sector	% of workers	Occupation type	% of workers
Primary and lower education	51.6%	Services (incl. retail trade and hospitality)	42.3%	–	–
First stage of secondary education and similar	33.7%	Agriculture	34.1%	–	–
Second stage of secondary education and non-higher postsecondary education	11.1%	Industry (incl. mining, manufacturing, energy, fishing, water/waste)	14.6%	–	–
Higher education	3.7%	Construction (incl. building, civil engineering, electrical/ plumbing, finishing work)	9.1%	–	–
Description: This statistic shows the level of education among Senegalese nationals residing in Spain based on the latest available population census data. **Source**: Spanish National Statistics Institute, 'Censo anual de población (Educación y Relación con la actividad) 2021-2023', accessed 29 October 2025.		**Description**: Distribution of labour market sectors of employment among Senegalese employees affiliated with social security in Spain. **Source**: Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 'Trabajadores Extranjeros afiliados a la Seguridad Social en Alta Laboral—AEX-6 Trabajadores extranjeros afiliados a la Seguridad Social en alta laboral, según sector de actividad, por país de nacionalidad', accessed March 2025.		**Note:** An occupational breakdown of Senegalese nationals working in Spain was not available.	

TABLE A–22

Vietnam-Hungary migration corridor

Vietnamese nationals in Hungary		First residence permits issued to Vietnamese nationals for employment (Hungary)		First residence permits issued to Vietnamese nationals for employment (EU)	
		Year	Value	Year	Value
27,045		**2019**	1,731	**2019**	13,290
		2020	1,996	**2020**	8,047
Gender breakdown		**2021**	1,340	**2021**	6,518
% Male	% Female	**2022**	3,713	**2022**	10,704
–	–	**2023**	14,387	**2023**	23,746
		2024	12,212	**2024**	22,543
Description: This figure corresponds to the stock of valid residence permits held by Vietnamese citizens as of 30 April 2025. A gender breakdown of this population was not included in the data shared by Hungarian authorities and could not be identified in publicly available sources.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by Hungary to Vietnamese citizens for remunerated activities.		**Description**: First residence permits issued by all EU countries to Vietnamese citizens for remunerated activities.	
Source: Statistical data on Vietnamese citizens shared with the authors by the Hungarian National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, 30 April 2025.		**Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.		**Source**: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.	

Highest level of education completed (employed Vietnamese migrant population)		Top sectors of employment for Vietnamese nationals in Hungary		Top occupations for Vietnamese nationals in Hungary	
Education level	% of workers	Sector	% of workers	Occupation type	% of workers
Lower than primary school	5.8%	Administrative and support services	38%	–	–
Primary school completed	17.5%	Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles	35%	–	–
Secondary (final vocational exam)	6.7%	Manufacturing	13%	–	–
Secondary (final examination)	46.8%	Accommodation and food services	7%	–	–
Tertiary	23.2%	Other sectors (construction, transport, etc.)	7%	–	–
Description: Population with Vietnamese citizenship in Hungary, as of 2022 census data.		**Description**: Labour market distribution of Vietnamese nationals working in Hungary, calculated based on data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office analysed in the source below.		**Note:** An occupational breakdown of Vietnamese nationals working in Hungary was not available.	
Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 'Census Database – Population by Citizenship, County and Type of Settlement', accessed 20 April 2025.		**Source:** Krisztofer Bodor, *Foreign Workers in Hungary: Key Facts and Labor Market Challenges* (Budapest: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2024).			

Appendix D. Summary of main insights from mapping exercise

This appendix summarises key takeaways from the quantitative mapping of labour migration flows between EU Member States and partner countries, including an overview of insights from the holistic mapping exercise (Part 1) followed by insights for the five selected corridors, including trends over time and gender composition (Part 2).

PART 1: Insights from holistic mapping exercise

In total, the 27 EU Member States issued 1,275,215 first permits for employment purposes to third-country nationals in 2023. Of these, 549,281 were issued to nationals of DG INTPA partner countries (those in the priority regions of sub-Saharan Africa; the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific; and the Americas and the Caribbean[241]). Table A-23 outlines the total number of first permits issued for employment purposes by EU Member States in 2023 and the number of those permits issued to nationals of DG INTPA partner countries. The largest of these source countries are listed based on the flow mapping exercise (as outlined by the project criteria).

The top ten largest bilateral migration corridors identified during the overall mapping exercise, based on data for the latest five-year period available (from 2019 to 2023), were: Brazil-Portugal (90,471 first permits issued for employment), Colombia-Spain (69,506), Honduras-Spain (44,096), India-Germany (39,814), India-Poland (31,579), Peru-Spain (30,542), Thailand-Sweden (28,119), India-Portugal (28,054), India-Netherlands (25,970), and Nepal-Croatia (24,930).

TABLE A–23

EU Member States' issuance of first permits for employment, 2023

EU Member State (by descending population)	First permits issued for employment (to nationals of all third countries)	First permits issued for employment (only to nationals of DG INTPA partner countries)	Top countries of citizenship for recipients of first permits (only DG INTPA partner countries, in descending order)
Germany	102,411	37,677	India, China, Philippines, Iran, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam
France	58,762	21,241	India, Mali, Guinea, China, Senegal, Brazil, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Pakistan, Philippines
Italy	38,103	19,334	India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Peru, China, Senegal, Philippines, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Brazil
Spain	128,844	93,001	Colombia, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Brazil, Senegal, Pakistan, Argentina, Cuba
Poland	427,162	58,151	India, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, China, Turkmenistan
Romania	44,662	37,016	Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam
Netherlands	27,439	15,223	India, China, South Africa, Brazil, Iran

241 For region definitions, see European Commission, 'Countries', accessed 18 October 2025.

TABLE A–23 (cont.)

EU Member States' issuance of first permits for employment, 2023

EU Member State (by descending population)	First permits issued for employment (to nationals of all third countries)	First permits issued for employment (only to nationals of DG INTPA partner countries)	Top countries of citizenship for recipients of first permits (only DG INTPA partner countries, in descending order)
Belgium	8,631	3,285	India, China, Brazil, Philippines, South Africa
Czechia	13,688	8,351	Philippines, Mongolia, India, China, Vietnam
Portugal	55,161	46,405	Brazil, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan
Sweden	19,124	14,219	Thailand, India, China, Pakistan, Iraq
Greece	11,838	7,759	Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Philippines, China
Hungary	53,542	36,994	Vietnam, Philippines, India
Austria	7,166	2,875	India, China, Iran
Bulgaria	6,466	2,909	Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, India
Denmark	13,935	8,461	India, Philippines, China
Finland	15,410	9,643	Philippines, India, China
Slovakia	20,042	5,158	Vietnam, India, Kyrgyzstan
Ireland	23,918	19,357	India, Philippines, Brazil
Croatia	77,541	38,448	Nepal, India
Lithuania	46,920	24,681	Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan
Slovenia	20,714	1,615	India, China
Latvia	3,838	2,464	Uzbekistan, India
Estonia	2,065	615	India, Uzbekistan
Cyprus	16,874	10,051	Nepal, India
Luxembourg	3,151	1,661	India, China
Malta	27,808	22,687	India, Nepal

Source: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [migr_resocc]', accessed 30 October 2025.

PART 2: Further insights for selected corridors of study

TABLE A–24

Key characteristics of selected migration corridors, 2019–23

Corridor	Description	First permits issued for employment (2019–23)	Gender composition of permit recipients (2019–23)
Bangladesh-Portugal	Bangladesh is the third largest source country for employment permit recipients in Portugal among all DG INTPA partner countries, after Brazil and India. The number of permits issued for employment to Bangladeshi citizens has been steadily rising, with more than 98 per cent issued to male migrant workers.	2019: 997 2020: 1,310 2021: 1,560 2022: 4,898 2023: 6,187 **Total: 14,952**	Male: 14,698 (98.3%) Female: 254 (1.7%)
India-Germany	India is by far the largest source country for employment permit recipients in Germany among DG INTPA partner countries, with flows on the rise in recent years. Nearly 40,000 permits were issued to Indian nationals, mostly men, for employment between 2019 and 2023.	2019: 7,316 2020: 1,349 2021: 7,176 2022: 12,910 2023: 11,063 **Total: 39,814**	Male: 23,703 (73.0%) Female: 8,777 (27.0%)
Peru-Italy	Peru is the fourth-largest source country for employment permit recipients among DG INTPA partner countries, following India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Peruvian labour migrants are predominantly female, receiving 72 per cent of employment permits issued during this time period.	2019: 27 2020: 115 2021: 2,370 2022: 4,105 2023: 1,580 **Total: 8,197**	Male: 2,296 (28.0%) Female: 5,901 (72.0%)
Senegal-Spain	Senegal is the seventh-largest DG INTPA source country for employment permit recipients in Spain, and the Senegal-Spain corridor has seen sustained growth year over year since 2019. Labour migrants in this corridor are predominantly male, representing nearly 95 per cent of all permits issued.	2019: 1,311 2020: 1,603 2021: 2,721 2022: 4,123 2023: 4,582 **Total: 14,340**	Male: 13,569 (94.6%) Female: 771 (5.4%)
Vietnam-Hungary	Vietnam is the largest source country among DG INTPA partner countries for labour migrants moving to Hungary, followed by the Philippines and India. Permits for employment issued to Vietnamese nationals saw a significant increase in 2023 over prior years. Nearly two-thirds of Vietnamese permit recipients are men.	2019: 1,731 2020: 1,996 2021: 1,340 2022: 3,713 2023: 14,387 **Total: 23,167**	Male: 14,593 (63.0%) Female: 8,574 (37.0%)

Sources: Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'; Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Age, Sex and Citizenship [migr_resfas]', accessed 30 October 2025.

TABLE A–25

Mobility agreements and schemes in the selected migration corridors

Corridor	Existing bilateral labour migration agreements and memoranda of understanding	Relevant Mobility Schemes
Bangladesh-Portugal	N/A	• Portugal is not taking part in the EU Talent Partnership with Bangladesh • Skilled Driver Mobility for Europe (SDM4EU) (2024); in a preliminary scoping phase focused on research, planning, and framework development
India-Germany	• German-Indian Migration and Mobility Agreement (2022) • Bilateral Placement Agreement in the Health and Nursing Care Sector (2021)	• Sustainable Recruitment of Nurses (Triple Win) (2013); Kerala added in December 2021, and Telangana added in early 2024 • Hand-in-Hand for International Talents (2020)
Peru-Italy	N/A	• Magallanes programmes; second edition launching in June 2025 • Samaritanus Care Project; in start-up phase • Progetto Zefiro; in start-up phase
Senegal-Spain	• Bilateral Social Security Agreement (2020) • Circular Migration Agreement (2024)	• Gestión de la Contratación en el Origen (GECCO) Seasonal Labour Migration Programme (pilot 2007; reintroduced 2019)
Vietnam-Hungary	N/A	• Short-Term Guestworker Programme (until 2025)

Appendix E. Fieldwork summaries

The Bangladesh-Portugal corridor

Key findings from Bangladesh

Bangladesh's economy has grown to nearly USD 450 billion in GDP, yet it struggles to generate adequate employment for about 2 million new labour market entrants each year, creating an annual shortfall of about 800,000 positions.[242] Underemployment—13.8 million people at last estimate—remains a persistent driver for overseas migration.[243] Until recently, Portugal received less than 1 per cent of the total outflow of Bangladeshi migrants, but irregular channels and indirect routes through Romania or Croatia add an unknown volume of arrivals.[244] Despite this informality, interviews suggest intensifying interest on both sides of this corridor, with some Portuguese firms citing severe labour deficits in construction and agriculture.[245]

242 Author interview with representative from Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, 27 February 2025.
243 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress, 26 February 2025.
244 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs, 26 February 2025.
245 Author interview with representative from Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2025.

Most Bangladeshis heading to Portugal are men ages 20–45, though a rising number of female spouses and family members arrive via reunification.[246] Many finance their trips through high-interest loans or selling family assets, often incurring debts well above officially capped costs.[247] Most workers engage in seasonal farm work in rural regions.[248] Other newcomers join the construction industry as masons, carpenters, or general labourers.[249] And still others take hospitality jobs in small Bangladeshi restaurants or Portuguese hotels. A small but expanding contingent of ICT professionals struggle with formal skill recognition, limiting wider placements in advanced roles.[250]

Though overshadowed by established routes such as Bangladesh-Italy, the corridor to Portugal has drawn attention from Bangladeshi policymakers seeking to diversify beyond Gulf markets.[251] Some migrants proceed via irregular pathways—crossing Eastern Europe before regularising in Portugal under favourable legislation—indicative of the corridor's ad hoc nature.[252] Discussions hint at a potential future MoU or similar bilateral arrangement that could emulate best practices from other corridors.[253]

Key takeaways and prospects for scale:

- **Stakeholder support and concerns.** Government officials see Portugal as an avenue to diversify beyond Gulf corridors, while Portuguese employers highlight severe labour gaps, especially in physically demanding construction and seasonal agriculture. Private recruiters are focused on profits but worry about subagent clampdowns, whereas nongovernmental organisations such as the Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program advocate for robust oversight and standardised skill criteria. Fee inflation remains a major concern: many migrants report paying USD 3,000–10,000, with subagents taking a large cut.[254]

- **Plans or ambitions to scale.** The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) informally mentioned potential MoUs with Portugal, while diaspora groups have proposed direct diaspora-led recruitment channels.[255] If approached systematically, a pilot could mirror Korea's Employment Permit System, testing prospective migrants' language ability and verifying their skill sets in Bangladesh. Employer delegations from Portugal might conduct selection fairs on-site, reducing reliance on subagents, but require official guidance.

- **Identified needs.** These include employer engagement, information-sharing, and skills recognition. Greater dialogue between Portuguese construction federations, agricultural cooperatives, or restaurant associations and Bangladeshi institutions (BMET and technical training centres) could standardise skill requirements.[256] A corridor-specific portal or a re-engineered e-registration system referencing real-time logs of technical training centres would bolster mutual

246 Author interview with representative from BRAC Migration Program, 28 February 2025.
247 Author interview with representative from the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, 25 February 2025.
248 Author interview with representative from BOESL, 25 February 2025.
249 Author interview with representative from Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, 27 February 2025.
250 Author interview with representative from Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2025.
251 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), 24 February 2025.
252 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs, 26 February 2025.
253 Author interview with representative from the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 February 2025.
254 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress, 26 February 2025.
255 Author interview with representative from MoEWOE, 24 February 2025.
256 Author interview with representative from Bangladesh Employers' Federation, 27 February 2025.

confidence in worker capabilities. Cost-sharing mechanisms (for example, diaspora or foreign employer subsidies) could reduce the heavy loan burdens.[257]

- **Lessons from parallel corridors.** South Korea's Employment Permit System offers a transparent fee structure, mandatory skill or language exams, and government-led matching. Japan's Technical Intern Training Program invests in language instruction and strict oversight. Italy's Flussi Decree segments quotas by sector, sometimes including family reunification. Any adaptation for Portugal hinges on official negotiation, skill recognition frameworks, and worker protections.
- **Ethical recruitment and migrant protections.** Reducing subagent exploitation requires stricter licensing, digital monitoring (for example, verifying subagent identity in real time), and a robust local-level complaint system. Predeparture orientation, including for language, is essential for smoother workplace integration. This is particularly critical for climate-affected communities seeking more stable livelihoods abroad.

Overall, while the Bangladesh-Portugal corridor remains modest, it displays growing promise. A structured or pilot government-to-government arrangement could lower fees, mandate skill verifications, and foster better alignment between Bangladesh's surplus labour and Portugal's workforce needs. By building on insights from advanced corridors (such as Korea and Japan), improving data-sharing, engaging diaspora groups, and investing in language or vocational bridging courses, both countries stand to gain from a more regulated, skill-oriented migration pathway.

Key findings from Portugal

Migration between Bangladesh and Portugal began in the late 1980s and 1990s, with small numbers of migrants arriving in Portugal in search of economic opportunities.[258] In recent years, this migration corridor has seen immense growth—driven by Portugal's economic expansion, increasing demand for labour—and relatively accessible pathways to permanent residency. As a result, the Bangladeshi diaspora is one of the fastest growing in Portugal: according to statistics from the national Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (AIMA), the resident population has grown from just 1,733 in 2013 to 25,666 in 2023, experiencing a 222 per cent increase in the five years from 2019 to 2023 alone.[259] Similarly, migrant communities from other South Asian countries, such as India, Nepal, and Pakistan, have also experienced notable growth in recent years.

Historically, the majority of Portuguese residence permits granted to Bangladeshis have been for employment reasons. In 2022, the most recent year for which this detailed breakdown was published in the national Immigration, Borders, and Asylum Report, professional activities were the number one reason for which residence permits were issued to Bangladeshi nationals (80 per cent), followed by family reunification (17 per cent).[260] Despite fluctuations year over year, employment has persisted as the top reason for residence permit issuance among this population for years.

From a gender perspective, migrants moving along this corridor for labour reasons are overwhelmingly male. Between 2019 and 2023, 98 per cent of first permits issued for employment reasons were to

257 Author interview with representative from BRAC, 28 February 2025.
258 Clara Saraiva, and José Mapril, 'Le lieu de la "bonne mort" pour les migrants guinéens et bangladais au Portugal', *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 28, no. 3 (2012): 51–70.
259 Lopes and Sousa, *Relatório de migrações e asilo - 2023*; Machado et al., *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2019*.
260 Sílvia Mota Lopes and Rui Machado, *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2022* (Lisbon: Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service, May 2023).

male migrants.[261] This trend is further validated by stock data for the Bangladeshi migrant workforce in Portugal, where Bangladeshis have the lowest share of women among workers in Portugal of all top nationalities, at only 2.6 per cent.[262]

The Bangladeshi community is well-segmented in terms of labour market participation in Portugal, with workers largely concentrated into two main categories. Many work in the agricultural sector in rural areas, predominantly in the southern part of the country farming tropical fruits and berries. Odemira, a municipality in the Alentejo region of Portugal, is frequently cited as a prominent area with a significant population of Bangladeshi migrant workers.[263] It is known for its berry production and hosts the operations of several major agricultural companies. Many Bangladeshi migrants also settle in urban centres such as Lisbon and Porto, where they are commonly employed by small businesses or working in the gig economy in sectors such as hospitality or tourism. Because of language barriers, many Bangladeshi migrants work in roles that do not require advanced Portuguese proficiency, such as kitchen staff in restaurants or hotels, owners of small shops, or employees in the tourism industry.[264] Official data on the leading sectors of employment for Bangladeshi workers across Portugal identify the top sectors as: agriculture and fishing, business, transport and storage, and accommodation and catering.[265]

The mobility patterns of Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal are largely influenced by networks they have established within the country.[266] For instance, several interviewed migrants reported initially arriving in major urban centres, such as Lisbon, before relocating to more rural areas to secure employment in agriculture through personal networks.[267] After obtaining a residence permit through employment, some return to urban areas to pursue opportunities in small businesses.

Another notable feature of this migration corridor is that Portugal often serves as a secondary destination for Bangladeshi migrants in Europe, rather than their initial point of arrival. Migrant workers interviewed for this study frequently reported arriving in another European country—including Italy, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Hungary—before migrating to Portugal, looking to obtain permanent resident status through employment.

Lastly, it is crucial to note that this corridor between Portugal and Bangladesh is not institutionalised in any manner, meaning it is not governed or regulated by any formal structures or established systems.[268] This lack of institutionalisation sets it apart from structured labour migration corridors governed by bilateral agreements or frameworks, which are more often subject to strict oversight or mechanisms to support mobility. The current pattern of Bangladeshi migration to Portugal serves as an example of 'chain migration', a process by which migrants move to a destination based on connections with family or friends who have previously settled there. The situation is characterised by very high levels of informality, unregulated recruitment practices, and a lack of transparency regarding the actors involved in recruitment, creating a situation in which irregular migration networks can flourish.[269] The cost of migration falls upon the migrants themselves in this system.

261 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Age, Sex and Citizenship'.
262 Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico*.
263 Author interview with representative from Madre Fruta, 27 February 2025.
264 Author interview with representative from IOM, 27 February 2025.
265 Bank of Portugal, *Boletim Económico*.
266 Author interview with representative from IOM, 27 February 2025.
267 Author interviews with Bangladeshi migrants in Portugal, multiple dates.
268 Author interview with representatives from AIMA, 28 February 2025.
269 Author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale:

- **Limited government interest in scaling up this corridor or establishing a formal bilateral agreement governing labour mobility at this time.** The absence of a Portuguese embassy in Bangladesh presents a crucial obstacle and complicates coordination efforts, limiting the capacity to formalise and streamline labour migration procedures. Moreover, stakeholders highlighted the perceived risks of engaging with a region of the world where the level of informality in recruitment processes is high and lacks a public employment agency. The slow and complex implementation of the bilateral agreement with India demonstrates the challenges Portugal faces in expanding similar agreements, making Bangladesh a lower priority for formalised labour mobility agreements.

- **Shifting political priorities and a strong emphasis on recruiting migrant workers from Portuguese-speaking countries.** Language barriers between Bangladeshi workers and employers in Portugal discourage companies in many sectors from actively recruiting Bangladeshi migrants; besides the agricultural sector, employers strongly prefer workers from Portuguese-speaking countries to facilitate communication and integration. These employer preferences and broader political trends in the country have translated into legislation that maintains a clear preference for immigrants from Community of Portuguese Language Countries, who benefit from expedited procedures, specific visa categories, and targeted educational initiatives to attract preferred immigration profiles. Another important point raised by government stakeholders in Portugal is the limited interest in scaling migrant labour recruitment more broadly because of the relatively small size of the Portuguese labour market and the very high proportion of SMEs and microenterprises in the country.

- **Tension between political priorities and employer preferences in the agricultural sector.** The agricultural sector was highlighted as the one sector that prefers to recruit South Asian migrants and relies heavily on foreign labour from this region, especially in fruit and berry farming in the southern part of the country.[270] However, Portugal's political focus has shifted towards recruiting migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries rather than expanding labour migration from Bangladesh and other countries in South Asia, creating a mismatch between government priorities and the preferences of agricultural employers. This has intensified pressure on the sector to adapt its recruitment practices, with stakeholders anticipating difficulties after the abolition of the expression-of-interest pathway for regularisation through employment.

- **Persistent challenges and areas of opportunities with skills recognition and language training.** The complex and bureaucratic process for recognising foreign credentials and validating skills, combined with language barriers, often leads to widespread de-skilling among this community. Bangladeshi migrants often end up in lower-wage, low-skill jobs despite holding advanced degrees. Enhancing Portuguese language training is a priority of the national government; the national Action Plan for Migration launched in April 2024 contains several strategic measures on language, such as reforming curricula, increasing flexibility, and exploring pilot projects to expand Portuguese language training in origin countries.[271] Promoting the automatic recognition of foreign qualifications and continuing to invest in language training to improve migrants' access to better jobs will help Portugal leverage migrants' skills, benefitting migrant workers and the Portuguese economy alike.

270 Author interview with representative from Madre Fruta, 27 February 2025; author interview with representative from IEFP, 28 February 2025.

271 Author interview with representative from AIMA, 28 February 2025.

The India-Germany corridor

Key findings from India

Over the past decade, Germany has become an increasingly important destination for Indian workers. The two countries concluded a Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement that came into force in March 2023, and held high-level government consultations in New Delhi in October 2024.[272] While bilateral cooperation on migration dates back several decades (nurses from Kerala began migrating to Germany as early as the 1960s, for example), the scale and depth of engagement have expanded significantly in recent years.[273] The rise of Germany as a destination for Indian workers is particularly pronounced compared with longstanding destinations such as the Gulf states, North America, or the United Kingdom. In addition, a proliferation of public and private recruitment initiatives has contributed to Indian workers' awareness of opportunities in Germany. Income levels remain a main motivation for those migrating to Germany, but factors such as the possibility to bring family members and obtain German citizenship after a relatively short period of time (five years, since the latest reform, and even shorter in some circumstances) are also important drivers.

The growing interest in working in Germany also brings challenges for both aspiring migrants and Indian policymakers. For migrants, the processes for securing a visa and a suitable job remain opaque, with little transparency about requirements or pathways. Many turn to private intermediaries for assistance with visa applications, language exams, and job placements, but they often lack the means to assess the quality and reliability of these services. As a result, some fall prey to untrustworthy intermediaries who charge excessive fees, while others struggle with failed exams or visa rejections because of inadequate preparation. For Indian policymakers, international recruitment is a sensitive issue because it implicitly acknowledges the difficulty of creating enough quality jobs at home. Over the past decade, the government has invested heavily in upskilling and reskilling initiatives to improve domestic employment prospects. However, international mobility is increasingly framed as a key solution to India's unemployment challenges. At the same time, India's legal framework for managing international migration is outdated (the current Indian Emigration Act dates from 1983, even though updated text was proposed in 2021),[274] and its ability to coordinate the diverse range of stakeholders across the country is limited.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

Germany is widely regarded as an attractive destination for Indian workers, offering good income opportunities, fair treatment, and promising long-term prospects. Indian policymakers have also received clear signals from Germany that it sees India as a key partner in addressing its labour shortages and ageing population. This has raised expectations among Indian stakeholders, who are eager to expand migration opportunities, particularly given the pressures of domestic labour market saturation. However, a major challenge for this corridor is managing these expectations, because capacity in India and demand in Germany are both still in flux. For instance, high-quality language training remains scarce, and while employers show interest in hiring from India, demand is uneven across sectors. Additionally, procedural barriers, such as visa processing and the need for stronger oversight of private

272 Government of India and Government of Germany, 'A Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership'.
273 Piotr Plewa, *Indian Diaspora in Germany* (Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2021).
274 India Code, 'The Emigration Act, 1983', accessed 26 September 2025; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'Draft Emigration Bill 2021', accessed 26 September 2025.

recruitment intermediaries, need to be addressed to ensure that migration can scale in a structured and sustainable way.

A defining feature of this corridor—both a potential risk and an opportunity—is the strong involvement of private intermediaries, including language schools, training centres, and placement agencies. Given the scale of demand, public initiatives alone cannot meet workforce needs, making cooperation with private actors essential for expanding migration pathways. However, in India, these intermediaries operate with limited oversight, which raises concerns about quality standards. Inefficient or substandard training can waste prospective migrants' time and money and create bottlenecks by taking up limited embassy appointments or testing centre slots. More critically, the lack of regulation increases the risk of exploitative recruitment practices, such as excessive fees and migrant indebtedness. To ensure fair and effective migration processes, proactive engagement will be needed from both German and Indian partners, whether through improved regulatory frameworks, stricter accreditation requirements, or clearer standards for ethical recruitment.

A final lesson from this corridor is the high degree of internal variation within India in terms of migration experience, institutional readiness, and workforce skills. Kerala is widely regarded as a model for well-managed migration, but as recruitment expands beyond this state, new challenges will emerge. Some states may require greater investment in training and institutional capacity-building to ensure that migration remains both beneficial and ethical. A measured approach to scaling, with tailored strategies for different regions, will be essential, as will be the strategic selection of regions and partners that correspond to the needs of Germany's labour market.

Key findings from Germany

Germany has progressively reformed its skilled immigration policy, culminating in the full implementation of the Skilled Immigration Act in June 2024.[275] These reforms have been driven by Germany's ageing population, the declining availability of intra-EU workers, and the resulting demand for skilled labour. India has been designated as Germany's top priority country for attracting skilled workers. While bilateral cooperation on skilled migration dates back decades—particularly through partnerships with the Indian state of Kerala—it has expanded significantly in recent years. This acceleration has been marked by the signing of the Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement in December 2022 and Germany's 2024 strategy to attract skilled Indian workers.[276] As a result, India has become Germany's most important non-EU country of origin for both employment- and study-related migration. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of German visas issued to Indian nationals surged by 35 per cent, particularly in sectors such as information and communications technology, engineering, health care, and nursing.[277] Over the past decade, the number of Indian workers in Germany has increased from 23,000 to 137,000 in 2024, with half employed in professions classified as experts or specialists.[278]

Yet the broadening of immigration opportunities also brings challenges. The high demand in India for language courses, visa processing, and training is testing the capacities of the German embassy, the

275 Make it in Germany, 'The New Skilled Immigration Act at a Glance', accessed 26 September 2025.
276 Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'Signing of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on a Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership' (press release, 5 December 2022); Deutsche Welle, 'Germany Takes Steps to Attract Skilled Indian Workers', Deutsche Welle, 16 October 2024.
277 Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.
278 iMove, 'New Opportunities for Indian Skilled Workers', accessed 26 September 2025.

Goethe Institute, and other partner institutions. Additionally, labour-adjacent migration pathways to Germany—most notably student migration and au pair programmes—are expanding and raise concerns about the living conditions of these groups, as well as their long-term integration and employment prospects. Finally, with the simultaneous liberalisation of Germany's visa regime and the expansion of private and public actors involved in training and recruitment, questions have arisen about who is best placed to ensure standards (in terms of training quality and ethical recruitment practices) and who can cater to the new scale of interest and candidates.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

In media and public discussions, India has repeatedly been described as an ideal candidate for Germany's efforts to recruit skilled workers from abroad: it combines a large pool of workers looking for opportunities abroad, a longstanding history of and experience with sending workers abroad, a network of training institutions, and good bilateral relations that can help foster recruitment efforts. Indians in Germany also benefit from a particularly well-regarded image that has been driven by the largely highly educated health-care and ICT workers who have come to Germany. The efforts undertaken by Germany in recent years are evidence of Germany's intention to deepen and expand bilateral cooperation on skilled migration.

However, despite progress and the growing number of Indian workers coming to Germany, there are also challenges that need to be addressed to achieve a sustainable partnership at scale.

First, despite apparent shortages, many employers in Germany remain hesitant to recruit from abroad. In 2022, only 17 per cent of German companies reported recruiting staff from abroad.[279] Foresight is lacking in sectors where demand is less pressing to date, combined with concerns about large up-front investments, the risks of candidates dropping out of preparatory language or qualification classes, low retention rates once workers have arrived in Germany, and uncertainty about their own companies' capacity to provide relocation and integration support.[280] In addition, Germany's economic conditions have been worsening since 2022, with minimal growth and hesitations about hiring.[281] The question of cost-related risks is particularly important to employers. For example, companies hiring via Hand-in-Hand for International Talents used to pay between 4,000 and 10,000 euros per worker before the person arrived in Germany (the cost depending on the size of the company). To help de-risk this investment and account for dropouts, the Deutsche Auslandshandelskammern (German Chambers of Commerce Abroad) moved to only charging employers once their employee arrives in Germany and is starting their employment contract.[282] Another company, Hapag Lloyd, is subcontracting several companies to support its recruitment in India and post-arrival needs, including a specialised law firm and a relocation company. These services can cost up to 30,000 euros per worker.[283] Finally, Indians who have arrived in southern Germany in recent years to work in the meat industry reportedly have been recruited via private intermediaries that can charge the worker about 5,000 euros in recruitment fees—a practice that is at odds with the Employer Pays Principle.[284] These examples show the variation in costs that different companies bear for foreign recruitment. However, many companies are not (yet) willing to pay the full price, at least not without a public subsidy or de-risking support.

279 Susanne U. Schultz, *Fachkräftemigrationsmonitor 2022* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung: 2022).
280 Author interview with representative from the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, 24 January 2025.
281 German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), 'Growth? - Nowhere in Sight!', *DIHK Economic Survey* (February 2025).
282 Author interview with representative from the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, 24 January 2025.
283 Kristina Läsker, 'Hereinspaziert durchs Nadelöhr', *Die Zeit*, 9 February 2025.
284 Author interview with representative from the Labor Mobility Partnerships initiative, 5 February 2025.

Second, despite Germany's principle of self-organised migration, skilled immigration to Germany remains complex and requires advice and support to navigate the process. A flourishing migration industry has developed in recent decades in India, to support candidates along each step. Yet within the large ecosystem of private intermediaries, some have been shown to scam candidates or simply provide subpar services to their clients. This raises challenges for both Indian workers, who can lose money and time, and Germany's embassies and consulates, who must detect and reject fraudulent applications, which have added to a large backlog of visa applications. The way forward is still unclear on how to better regulate private intermediaries because the capacity of the Indian government appears to be limited on this front, and German initiatives so far have been focused on the health-care sector (via the Fair Recruitment quality seal).

Third, for many hoping to work in Germany, the most accessible route is through education or initiatives such as au pair programmes. While these individuals do not arrive on skilled worker visas, the ultimate goal for many is long-term employment in Germany, which can be a practical strategy. For migrants, it offers a legal entry point, and for Germany, it attracts foreign talent who can learn the language, adapt to the culture, and potentially gain a German qualification. Efforts should therefore be strengthened to help those arriving through these channels develop their long-term prospects. However, these indirect labour migration pathways should be carefully overseen to prevent exploitative conditions or situations where migrants become stuck. For example, attention should be paid to the growing number of Indian students working in Germany's gig economy to ensure these students can attend courses at their universities and obtain a degree.

The Peru-Italy corridor

Key findings from Peru

Peruvian migration to Italy traces back to the early 20th century, when descendants of Italian families who had previously settled in Peru began to return. The first major wave of migration occurred in the late 1970s, driven by economic instability and political changes in Peru. Early migrants were mostly professionals or entrepreneurs of Italian descent. A second wave followed in the late 1980s and 1990s during Peru's severe economic and social crisis, often referred to as the Lost Decade. After that, the profile of Peruvian migrants to Italy shifted, with a growing number of lower-income, less-educated individuals from rural areas migrating in search of better opportunities abroad.[285] These migrants often secured jobs in agriculture, industry, domestic work, and elder care, aligning with Italy's growing demand for labour. Many nurses have also left Peru for Italy, especially between 2003 and 2012.[286] By the year 2000, more than 25,000 agencies—most based in Peru—were facilitating labour contracts for South Americans heading to Italy.[287] And by 2011, Peruvians had become the largest Latin American community in the country.[288]

After 2012, Peruvian migration to Italy slowed because of improvements in the country's economic and political situation. In the following years, two more waves of migration were registered, one after the European Union lifted visa requirements for Peruvians in 2016 and another after the COVID-19

285 Author interview with representative from Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals, 28 February 2025.

286 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.

287 Author interview with representative from Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals, 28 February 2025.

288 Government of Peru, Office of the Ombudsman, *Una mirada a la migración peruana en Italia: Experiencias en Milán, Génova y Turín* (Lima: Government of Peru, 2012).

pandemic, characterised primarily by the migration of nurses.[289] Since 2022, the number of Peruvians leaving the country to Italy (and other destinations) has started to grow again, driven by political and social turmoil. An ongoing power struggle between the executive and legislative branches, persistent state weakness, government corruption, and widespread social unrest have deepened the crisis, jeopardised socioeconomic development, and led to tragic losses of life.[290] As social exclusion, political instability, and economic hardship intensify, more Peruvians are seeking stability and better opportunities abroad.

While the United States remains the primary destination for Peruvian emigrants (hosting 30.4 per cent of this population), Italy is among the top five destinations, after the United States, Spain (16.1 per cent), Argentina (12.9 per cent), and Chile (11.6 per cent).[291] According to Peru's National Institute of Statistics and Information, as of 2023, the Peruvian community in Italy was estimated at 356,033 people, making up 10.2 percentage of all Peruvians who have emigrated over the past 33 years.[292] The presence of family in Italy (from previous and ongoing periods of migration) has been a key pull factor, with many choosing the country because of family and social ties.[293] The perceived linguistic similarity between Spanish and Italian has further encouraged migration, making integration seem more accessible.[294] Women make up the majority of Peruvians in Italy, comprising nearly 60 per cent of the community. In terms of demographics, 87 per cent of Peruvians in Italy are adults, with the average age of Peruvian migrants being 38.7 years. The community is primarily made up of medium-sized families (three to four members), but the proportion of single-person households is also notable, which at 17.7 per cent exceeds the average for non-EU migrants. Geographically, Peruvians are concentrated in northern Italy (68 per cent), particularly in Lombardy (44.1 per cent), followed by Lazio (15.6 per cent), Piedmont (12 per cent), and Tuscany (11 per cent).[295]

A defining characteristic of the Peruvian community in Italy is its high rate of permanent residency. According to a 2023 report, 63.5 per cent of Peruvians hold long-term residence permits, positioning the community ninth among non-EU groups.[296] Peruvian workers in Italy also seem to be well-integrated into the labour market, boasting an employment rate of 72.1 per cent in 2023, which surpassed the general non-EU average of 59.2 per cent. The employment rate for women is even higher at 72.7 per cent. The unemployment rate for Peruvians stands at 10.3 per cent, slightly below the non-EU average of 12 per cent. In terms of education, 43 per cent of Peruvians in Italy hold secondary diplomas, while 7.8 per cent have university degrees.[297]

Historically, the primary employment sectors for Peruvians in Italy are personal and social services (40.4 per cent), particularly domestic and care work, followed by transport and business services (14.9 per cent) and industry (12.3 per cent).[298] Peruvians make up the fourth-largest foreign workforce in domestic

289 Author interview with representative from Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals, 28 February 2025.

290 Author interview with representative from ILO, 10 February 2025; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 'Peru Country Report 2024', updated 2024.

291 Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information, *Perú: Estadísticas de la Migración Internacional al 2024* (Lima: National Institute of Statistics and Information, 2024).

292 Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information, *Perú: Estadísticas de la Migración Internacional*.

293 Author interview with experts from Universidad del Pacifico, 20 February 2025; author interview with representative from La Casa de Panchita, 25 February 2025.

294 Author interview with representative from Equilibrium Cende, 7 February 2025.

295 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*.

296 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*.

297 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia.*

298 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia.*

services, following Romanians, Ukrainians, and Filipinos. In recent years, a growing number of Peruvians have been working as social- and health-care assistants or nurses, in response to both challenges in the Peruvian labour market and the evolving needs of Italy's labour market. Peruvian men traditionally found work in construction, as machine operators, or as drivers,[299] though more have been working as social- and health-care assistants in recent years.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

As Peru experiences ongoing political and economic instability, coupled with the effects of climate change driving internal migration, a growing number of Peruvians are considering emigration in search of better opportunities.[300] Over the past 30 years, the United States has been the primary destination for many Peruvians. However, with the stricter border and immigration policies introduced by the Trump administration, many potential migrants may prioritise alternatives. It is possible that countries such as Italy and Spain—both long-established destinations for Peruvians—may see an increase in Peruvian immigration.[301] Until 2000, Latin Americans, including Peruvians, often faced prejudice in Italy. However, years of positive experiences with Peruvian workers, particularly in the health-care and domestic sectors, have led to growing demand from employers for more Peruvian professionals.[302] This could be an opportunity for Italy to address persistent labour shortages in the health-care sector (estimated at 65,000) and other sectors by attracting Peruvian talent. The following challenges should be addressed to better tap into this opportunity:

- **Strengthening bilateral agreements to support mobility**. Since the 2000s, Peru has been requesting a bilateral social security agreement with Italy and recognition of Peruvian driving licences. The proposed social security agreement aims to prevent double taxation and ensure migrants can access health care and pension benefits—both essential for facilitating migration and incentivising return. While negotiations on driving licence recognition are underway, the social security agreement remains largely unresolved.[303] Another major gap in bilateral relations is Peru's repatriation law, which imposes a 30 per cent tax on savings brought back to the country, discouraging many Peruvians from returning, despite an existing provision that allows them to ship personal belongings tax free. Addressing these barriers could enhance mobility and support more sustainable migration for all sectors.[304]

- **Facilitating the recognition of degrees, especially in health care.** Enhancing the process for recognising degrees, particularly in health care, is crucial. Given the longstanding de facto relationship between the two countries in the sector, workers in this field would benefit from a more favourable and streamlined process. The absence of a permanent and comprehensive agreement between Italy and Peru (and South America, more broadly) on the recognition of professional qualifications, especially for specialised doctors, is a major obstacle for scaling opportunities.[305] Addressing these regulatory and institutional barriers could strengthen labour

299 Government of Peru, Office of the Ombudsman, *Una mirada a la migración peruana en Italia*.
300 Author interview with representative from Equilibrium Cende, 7 February 2025. See also Equilibrium Cende, 'Pulso migratorio. Monitor de percepción ciudadana sobre migración', accessed 31 October 2025.
301 Author interview with experts from Universidad del Pacifico, 20 February 2025.
302 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.
303 Author interview with representative from Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals, 28 February 2025.
304 Author interview with representative from Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Protection and Assistance to Nationals, 28 February 2025.
305 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.

mobility and improve migration outcomes for both Peru and Italy. In the meantime, additional train-to-hire programmes that help align curricula and facilitate movement of skilled workers between the two countries could be explored to support more entry routes into the Italian health-care system while addressing concerns about brain drain.

- **Enhancing monitoring mechanisms and oversight of intermediaries.** With private intermediaries playing a central role in job matching for Peruvians, introducing more rigorous oversight is essential. This should involve implementing awareness-raising programmes to help workers identify reliable intermediaries, as well as requiring Peruvian intermediaries to renew their registration periodically, rather than granting them long-term permits, for example.

- **Supporting predeparture orientation and post-arrival integration.** Proper predeparture orientation can be crucial for successful migration, helping to ensure migrants are ready for the process and to prevent exploitation. Organisations such as La Casa de Panchita, which works with domestic workers in Peru, offer vital orientation services, helping workers understand the importance of securing formal contracts before travelling and connecting them with others who have already made the journey.[306] Similarly, the Peruvian Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion provides information sheets detailing workers' rights, minimum wage, and useful contact points in countries such as Italy. Fostering (and disseminating) similar resources is an important way of ensuring migrants are well informed and know their rights before travelling to Italy. Furthermore, post-arrival support can be just as crucial; for example, helping navigate cultural differences among employers and employees by employing intercultural mediators.[307]

- **Expanding labour migration to new sectors.** A detailed mapping of employment needs in both Peru and Italy could be instrumental in identifying mutually beneficial opportunities. By aligning the skills and needs of the Peruvian workforce with Italy's labour market demands, it may be possible to create a more sustainable and well-managed migration corridor, benefitting both countries. Skills development and mobility tracks, as in the Global Skill Partnership model, could be useful in this regard.

- **Supporting labour migration governance and infrastructure building.** To date, EU-Peru investments have centred on addressing organised crime (for instance, with El Pacto 2.0 programme) or supporting the integration of Venezuelans and local vulnerable groups in Peru, with far less emphasis on building capacity for labour migration, despite its growing importance.[308] Future efforts should also focus on enhancing Peru's institutional capacity and services to effectively manage international migration and deliver targeted training programmes.[309] They could also focus on strengthening collaboration with Italian embassies to ensure they are well-informed and engaged in supporting labour migration initiatives.

Key findings from Italy

The Peruvian community in Italy is a well-established one, with longstanding cultural ties and a long history of migration. Peruvians rank 15th among third-country national populations in Italy, with a total foreign resident population of 98,733 according to the most recent annual statistics from the Italian

306 Author interview with representative from La Casa de Panchita, 25 February 2025.
307 Author interview with representative from Lavoro Peru, 6 March 2025.
308 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, Peru, 24 January 2025.
309 Author interview with representative from ILO, 10 February 2025.

Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.[310] Migratory patterns between Peru and Italy were first formally recorded in the 1960s, initially dominated by male migrants seeking economic opportunities in Italy and other European countries.[311] Since the 1980s, periods of macroeconomic stagnation were compounded by social and political upheaval in Peru, causing larger numbers of Peruvians to emigrate, with more women choosing to make the journey. Migration along this corridor continued to grow over time until about 2011, when relative macroeconomic stability and productive economic growth in Peru reduced migration outflows and caused many Peruvian emigrants to return to their country of origin. In recent years, however, mobility along this corridor has gradually increased once again, with a growing number of residence permits issued for employment reasons.

The vast majority of Italian residence permits granted to Peruvians have historically fallen under two main categories: employment and family reunification. In 2023, work was the number one reason for which residence permits were issued to Peruvian nationals (46 per cent), followed by family reasons (41 per cent).[312]

From a gender perspective, migrants moving along this corridor for labour reasons are predominantly female. Between 2019 and 2023, 72 per cent of first permits issued for work reasons were to female migrants.[313] A similar gender disparity can be seen in sociodemographic data on the entire Peruvian migrant community legally residing in Italy: the most recent data report that 59 per cent of Peruvian national residents in Italy are female, and 41 per cent are male.[314]

The most common sector of employment for the growing Peruvian community in Italy is personal care services, with Peruvians taking on a range of roles in the health-care sector, both in traditional hospital settings and by providing in-home care to people who are elderly or disabled.[315] In official data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, this employment is characterised under the economic sector 'other public, social, and personal services', which accounts for more than 40 per cent of employed Peruvian nationals in Italy.[316] Additional top sectors of employment include 'transport and other business services' (15 per cent), 'industry in the strict sense' (12 per cent), and 'public administration, education, and health' (11 per cent).

Finally, regarding geographic distribution, Peruvians are concentrated in northern Italy, with 68 per cent located in the north of the country. Lombardy alone is home to 44 per cent of Peruvian nationals legally residing in Italy.[317] Given significant regional differences in both skills shortages and migration and integration policies, understanding the regional context is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of labour migration between Peru and Italy and the integration of Peruvian nationals into the Italian labour market.[318]

310 This refers to the number of noncitizen residents of Italy and thus does not include individuals who have been naturalised. See Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *XIV Rapporto Annuale*.
311 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*.
312 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunita Peruviana*.
313 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Age, Sex and Citizenship'.
314 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*.
315 Author interview with representative from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 17 February 2025.
316 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*.
317 Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, *La Comunidad Peruana en Italia*
318 Author interview with representative from UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 18 March 2025.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale:

- **Stakeholder interest in scaling mobility along the Peru-Italy corridor.** The Peruvian community in Italy is quite large and well-established, with growing engagement in the Italian labour market, predominantly in the care sector. There is government interest in scaling this corridor, particularly for sectors with chronic labour shortages such as health care. Interview participants cited cultural and linguistic similarities as key factors that facilitate the smooth integration of Peruvians into Italian society. Although no specific bilateral agreements exist, initiatives such as the Magallanes programmes and broader institutional reforms to recruit foreign workers with greater flexibility demonstrate the potential for further growth along this migration corridor and the potential value of negotiating bilateral agreements or mobility partnerships.

- **Challenges for managing labour migration and the importance of expanding innovative pathways to facilitate labour recruitment from Peru outside of the Flow Decree**. The limitations of the Flow Decree system highlight the need for innovative pathways to address Italy's labour market shortages. The quota system has been ineffective in meeting evolving labour demands, and new legislative measures (such as bypassing the Flow Decree for specific training programmes or skilled professionals) offer a promising alternative. Initiatives such as the training programme for care workers in Peru illustrate how targeted, flexible pathways can facilitate the recruitment of skilled workers without restrictive bureaucratic delays, and this pilot programme can offer valuable insights for further scaling mobility along this corridor.

- **Opportunities to close regional gaps in labour mobility practices and skills recognition procedures.** One key area of frustration expressed by stakeholders in Italy recruiting migrant workers from Peru was the vast differences in procedures across regions in Italy, with some regions featuring unique bureaucratic obstacles that create bottlenecks in the recruitment of foreign workers. These regional discrepancies can create confusion and inefficiency, ultimately hindering the smooth integration of skilled migrants into the Italian labour market. Addressing these inconsistencies by standardising procedures for skills recognition across regions could improve the overall effectiveness of labour migration policies. This would facilitate the entry of more skilled Peruvian workers into Italy and reduce the administrative burdens on both employers and migrant workers, ensuring a more seamless process for everyone involved.

- **Importance of local partners in facilitating labour mobility and recruitment.** Local partnerships play a critical role in ensuring the success of migration and recruitment processes, particularly in sectors such as health care. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of working with trusted local partners in Peru to identify qualified candidates, build rapport, and ensure that workers are well-prepared for their new roles in Italy. By partnering with local organisations, recruitment agencies can better assess candidates' qualifications, soft skills, and cultural adaptability, ensuring that workers are both technically capable and suited to the specific needs of Italian employers. Collaborations with nonprofit organisations or educational institutions offer an additional layer of support, enhancing workers' integration and supporting more sustainable long-term outcomes for migrants.

The Senegal-Spain corridor

Key findings from Senegal

In Senegal, cooperation with Spain on legal migration is driven primarily by an absence of economic opportunity, which leaves limited prospects for young people at home, and by persistent migratory pressures that lead to dangerous, irregular journeys via Senegal and neighbouring Mauritania to the Canary Islands. Spain is seen as an attractive destination because of its relative proximity, demand for low-wage labour in sectors such as agriculture, and its growing Senegalese diaspora. Some Senegalese migrants also view Spain as a transit country, hoping to move onward to destinations such as France, where linguistic and cultural ties may ease integration. However, legal migration opportunities to Spain and other European countries remain scarce and difficult to access, with few pathways available for low- and mid-skilled workers and persistent barriers in visa application processes, including difficulties securing appointments.

In response, Spain launched the GECCO seasonal labour migration scheme, first piloted in Senegal in 2007 and reactivated in 2019 as a recurring programme.[319] While GECCO enjoys high visibility and interest in Senegal, it faces significant operational hurdles, including challenges in selecting suitable participants, ensuring return after the contract period, and linking the scheme to broader development benefits. Scaling up has also proved difficult: whereas Spain expects to recruit nearly 18,000 seasonal workers from Morocco in 2025,[320] Senegal is preparing to send just 350.[321] Still, the programme enjoys strong political backing on both sides. In 2024, Spain expanded its GECCO programme to two of Senegal's neighbouring countries, The Gambia and Mauritania, and ongoing efforts in Senegal and Spain aim to address past shortcomings and expand the scheme gradually.[322]

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

Stakeholders interviewed in Senegal expressed generally positive views of cooperation with Spain and a clear desire to expand opportunities for more Senegalese to work in Spain. Interest in Senegal is driven by a severe lack of opportunities in the domestic labour market and the reliance of many Senegalese on irregular migration routes, particularly the dangerous journey to the Canary Islands. They noted significant challenges that need to be addressed in the broader framework governing legal migration opportunities and in the circular migration scheme between Senegal to Spain.

While the circular migration scheme is the only dedicated programme to offer regular labour migration opportunities from Senegal to Spain, it is worth considering the broader objective of the programme. At its core, the initiative was conceived as a way to build legal labour migration pathways and offer concrete alternatives to irregular migration. Given the very limited number of participants and the persistent economic pressures and strong migration aspirations in Senegal, it is clear that the programme, in its current form, does not represent a viable alternative for most Senegalese who wish to migrate. To have a meaningful impact, broader reforms would be required—most notably,

319 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 17 January 2025; Jeroen Doomernik, Blanca Garcés-Mascarenas, and Berta Güell, 'Seasonal Workers in Agriculture: The Cases of Spain and The Netherlands in Times of Covid-19', in *Migration Control Logics and Strategies in Europe,* eds. Claudia Finotelli and Irene Ponzo (International Migration Research Network Research Series, 2023).

320 Adil Faouzi, 'Wafira Expands as 17,807 Moroccan Women Join Seasonal Work in Spain', Morocco World News, 24 January 2025.

321 The numbers for 2025 are preliminary because the selection process was ongoing at the time of the fieldwork.

322 European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, 'Spain: New Order for Migrant Employment and Circular Migration', updated 13 January 2025.

improvements in visa processing, including addressing the illicit trade of visa appointments, reducing waiting times, expanding family reunification, and expanding access to regular migration channels significantly.

Challenges of the seasonal labour migration scheme

Four main challenges emerge from the interviews. First, one of the main concerns in the circular migration scheme is **the selection and predeparture process**, which has faced persistent issues. The selection mechanism has lacked transparency, sometimes favouring candidates based on personal connections rather than suitability for agricultural work. As a result, some candidates selected to work in Spain have not met the qualification requirements and expectations of their employers, which risks undercutting interest in the scheme among Spanish companies. Some Senegalese applicants have also felt like their applications were not fairly treated, which has created additional tensions. In response to these difficulties, the selection process has been continuously adapted, with varying success. In 2025, responsibility for preselection of candidates was decentralised across BAOS offices in Senegal. Yet when applications opened in early 2025, more than 10,000 submissions were received within the first two days, overwhelming the capacities of the offices tasked with their initial screening and raising concerns about whether the screening process would be fair.[323]

Second, **return rates among participants have been notoriously low**, which has raised concerns about the programme's long-term sustainability. In 2019, for instance, 29 of 47 workers did not return to Senegal at the end of their contracts.[324] Even if return rates have increased since then, it is unclear how the selection process can favour those respecting their obligation to return, and how the programme could better incentivise return. For instance, selecting migrants with family ties at home has been discussed as a promising practice in Spain's circular migration programme with Morocco, where Spain mainly recruits female agricultural workers. In addition, Spain's reform of the GECCO programme could be a powerful incentive to adhere to the circularity rule because it rewards those who have successfully completed four years of seasonal work with the possibility to obtain a longer-term work and residence permit in Spain.[325] However, this incentive has been underused to date because of a lack of clarity and communication about these options.

Third, **greater scrutiny of companies is needed to ensure compliance with fair and ethical recruitment standards**. In 2024, Spanish authorities initiated criminal proceedings against a major recruiting company due to exploitative working conditions.[326] While migrant workers were aware of the conditions, they felt a general sense of dependency and unable to stand up for their rights. For instance, several workers expressed concern that the criminal proceedings might have a negative impact on their employment outlook because the company, which had been the largest employer to date, would not be able to participate in the programme anymore. Others showed work injuries that they let go untreated for fear they would be returned early or not selected for the coming year. These experiences underscore the vulnerability of migrant workers and the need to conduct frequent and thorough compliance checks of companies.

323 Senenews, 'Circular Migration: New Revelations on the Recruitment of Senegalese by Spain', Senenews, 31 January 2025.
324 Belén Carreno, 'Spain to Extend Seasonal Migrant Workers Programme to Senegal', CNBC Africa, 2 March 2023.
325 European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, 'Spain: New Order for Migrant Employment'.
326 Hespress, 'Spain Dismantles Criminal Organization Exploiting Migrant Workers from Morocco', Hespress, 4 July 2024.

Fourth, a major challenge identified in conversations with Senegalese workers participating in the scheme is the **lack of long-term development or career prospects**. While the Spanish legal framework allows for a maximum work period of nine months per year in Spain, in practice, most migrants work for a significantly shorter amount of time. In 2019 and 2020, participants only worked for three months, in 2023 for four months, and in 2024 for six months.[327] Weather unpredictability (such as heavy rains) can shorten harvesting periods, and employment contracts guarantee only a few months of work with the initial employer, just enough to cover the harvest. After that, workers rely on an informal coordination system among agricultural companies to secure another contract, which is neither guaranteed nor predictable, leaving workers in constant uncertainty. As a result, many migrants return to Senegal earlier and with less savings than they had hoped for. In addition, the financial instability the migrant workers face is compounded by the absence of viable opportunities to leverage experience gained in Spain after returning home. Without sufficient savings to sustain themselves for the rest of the year, many take up informal, temporary jobs upon return, such as construction work, to make ends meet until they can leave for Spain again.

Strategies for maximising the development impact of the programme include creating follow-up opportunities for migrant workers upon their return to Senegal that offer clearer career prospects and pathways for longer-term stays in Spain. One existing mechanism is the support available to returnees via reintegration projects. However, in its initial phase, this support was poorly tailored to the skills and needs of returning workers, leading in some cases to debt and project failures.[328] Since then, some migrants have submitted multiple proposals for business ventures based on their agricultural expertise but have yet to receive any concrete support. Alternatively, providing clearer pathways for career advancement in Spain could improve the programme's long-term prospects. For example, some workers hope to transition from seasonal harvesting to higher-skilled roles, such as tractor operators, but current visa regulations restrict their employment to short-term, seasonal contracts. While there have been indications that participants may be able to apply for longer-term visas after completing this year's programme, conflicting information has created uncertainty. This highlights the need for clearer and more proactive communication to ensure migrants fully understand their options and can plan their futures accordingly.

Key findings from Spain

Migration from Senegal to Spain began to take shape in the 1980s when Senegalese migrants started settling in Spain after France tightened restrictions on professional migration in the 1970s.[329] Today, alongside Italy and France, Spain is one of the primary European destinations for Senegalese migrants.[330] A significant rise in Senegalese migration to Spain began in 2003, driven by economic challenges and political instability across West Africa, as well as increasingly restrictive EU visa policies.[331] This surge peaked in 2006 during the so-called cayucos crisis, but it was somewhat curbed by Spain's strengthened

327 Author interview with multiple Senegalese migrants participating in Senegal-Spain circular mobility programme and associated with Association de Anciens, 12 February 2025.

328 In 2019, some returnees received chickens to start a small business. However, feeding the chickens quickly became too expensive, which led some returning migrants to take out a loan or invest their savings into the chicken business. Ultimately, the businesses failed, and several returning migrants were left without money or with debt to repay.

329 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025.

330 By October 2023, Italy, France, and Spain remained the main destinations for Senegalese arriving in Europe, with a total of 108,600 Senegalese in Italy, 101,600 in France, and 76,000 in Spain. See Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'.

331 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants, multiple dates.

repatriation policies and enhanced coastal controls enforced by Senegalese authorities.[332] By 2023, persistent economic challenges in Senegal—including growing unemployment (particularly in the fishing sector) and limited economic opportunities—continued to drive Senegalese to migrate to Spain in search of better livelihoods.[333] In addition to economic hardships, migrants consulted during this study highlighted the deep-rooted culture of migration in Senegal, where the aspiration to travel is reinforced by family and community expectations.

Between 2003 and 2023, the Senegalese population in Spain expanded significantly, reflecting both the sustained arrival of Senegalese migrants and the gradual regularisation of their status. After Morocco, Senegal is the African country whose nationals receive the highest annual number of residence permits and who have the most family reunification procedures.[334] In 2003, Spain was home to 16,889 Senegalese nationals holding legal residence. This number had more than doubled by 2010 (after the cayucos crisis), reaching 41,425 Senegalese. The upward trend continued over the next decade, reaching 76,024 by the end of 2022.[335] Additionally, between 2009 and 2022, 15,767 Senegalese nationals acquired Spanish citizenship through residency,[336] bringing the total number of Senegalese-origin individuals in Spain to more than 91,000, excluding those residing irregularly.[337] By 2023, the majority of Senegalese nationals with residence permits in Spain—68,661 out of the 76,024 (more than 90 per cent)—were authorised under the General Immigration Regime with most obtaining their permits through *arraigo*[338] (including for social or labour integration) or civil partnership rather than through direct employment pathways (that is, Senegalese sponsored for a specific job).[339]

Residency permit records reveal the Senegalese community in Spain is predominantly male, with about 77 per cent of the population consisting of men.[340] The records also reveal a predominantly youthful population, with an average age of 34 for men and few individuals older than 65. As of 29 September 2023, 51,055 Senegalese nationals were affiliated with Spain's social security system, making up 3 per cent of all non-EU/European Free Trade Association workers.[341] Among them, 86 per cent were men and 14 per cent were women. Most Senegalese affiliated workers reside along the Mediterranean coast, with the largest shares concentrated in the autonomous communities of Cataluña (30.3 per cent), Andalucía

332 The cayucos crisis refers to a sharp surge in irregular migration to the Canary Islands that began in 2003 and peaked in 2006. This episode largely featured the use of Senegalese and Mauritanian fishing boats, known as cayucos, to undertake the perilous journey across the Atlantic. At its peak, more than 31,000 irregular migrants arrived on the islands. See European Council, 'Migration Flows on the Western Routes', accessed 26 September 2025.

333 Associated Press, 'A Record Number of Migrants Have Arrived in Spain's Canary Islands This Year. Most Are from Senegal', U.S. News, 6 November 2023.

334 For context, though, Senegalese migrants in Spain account for only 7 per cent of all African nationals holding residence permits in the country and approximately 1 per cent of the total foreign population. Migration from Africa to Spain is still about one-third the scale of migration from the Americas. See Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'.

335 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'.

336 In 2022, 1,817 individuals were naturalised. Of Senegalese who acquired Spanish citizenship, 87 per cent did so through residency requirements. Among them, 780 met the ten-year residency threshold, while 909 were born in Spain and granted nationality after one year of residence. See Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'.

337 Senegalese migrants who acquired Spanish nationality no longer appear in residency statistics.

338 'Arraigo' (literally, 'rootedness' or 'establishment') refers to a special residency authorisation granted to migrants who can demonstrate strong ties to Spain, either socially, professionally, or through family connections. Additionally, in recent years, a significant number of Senegalese migrants in Spain have been granted 'arraigo for exceptional circumstances', with more flexible requirements.

339 The general immigration regime in Spain includes residence permits for work, family reunification, study, and temporary and permanent residency, as well as on humanitarian grounds such as refugee status.

340 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Indicadores migratorios Senegal'.

341 In 2023, Spain granted 245,786 residence permits to foreigners, with 8,223 of those (about 3 per cent) granted to Senegalese nationals.

(20.0 per cent), Aragón (6.7 per cent), Baleares Islands (6.6 per cent), and Comunitat Valenciana (6.6 per cent).[342] In terms of sectoral distribution, available data highlight a trend towards employment in the tertiary sector and agricultural activities, with most Senegalese employed in the service sector (42 per cent), followed by agriculture (34 per cent), industry (15 per cent),[343] and construction (9 per cent).[344]

The evolution of total work authorisations for Senegalese since 2016 highlights an increase in permits issued, particularly after 2021, driven mainly by the expansion in the number of Senegalese accessing residence and work permit under *arraigo* and an increase in the issuance of temporary employment permits.[345] In 2023, 8,223 Senegalese nationals were granted work permits (though only about 300 obtained these for the first time). About 4,000 obtained them through temporary residence permits for employment and the other half through *arraigo*. By comparison, between 5 and 30 Senegalese obtain high-skilled work visas each year,[346] and a small number are directly recruited from Senegal through programmes hiring directly at origin for temporary positions.[347]

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

Stakeholders consulted during this study broadly agree that while Spain's circular mobility programme with Senegal holds geopolitical significance and helps reinforce bilateral collaboration, it remains limited in addressing the broader need for regular migration pathways. In 2025, more than 35,000 Senegalese applied for the seasonal mobility programme that would benefit 250 Senegalese workers, highlighting the scale of demand for legal pathways.[348] Considering Spain's restrictive visa policies, Senegal's migration culture, and the well-established Senegalese community in Spain, irregular migration is likely to remain the primary route for many seeking opportunities in Spain. At the same time, Spain's persistent labour and skills shortages underscore the need for a more robust and scalable approach to legal migration pathways. As underlined by Spain's Plan África 2025–2028, Spain-Senegal relations are expected to remain high on the agenda, with the plan emphasising the role of the African diaspora in addressing labour shortages and stating Spain's intention to reinforce its Cooperation Office in Senegal.[349] Conversations with relevant stakeholders and a review of relevant literature point to the following areas for improvement to enhance the impact, predictability, and sustainability of labour mobility between Senegal and Spain:

- **Enhancing length predictability for workers entering circular mobility programmes**. One challenge with the current mobility programme between Spain and Senegal is its short duration. While the temporary work visa allows participants to stay for up to nine months, Senegalese workers typically stay in Spain for three to four months, which is often insufficient for them to save enough money to support themselves (and their families) for the rest of the year or even, in some cases, to cover return travel costs. Interviewed stakeholders emphasised the need for better planning mechanisms to allow for longer stays and greater employment continuity, for instance,

342 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración'.
343 Including agriculture industry.
344 Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 'Trabajadores Extranjeros'; Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 'Autorizaciones de trabajo a extranjeros (PTE)', accessed 26 September 2025.
345 Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 'Estadisticas: Mercado de trabajo - Trabajadores Extranjeros Afiliados a la Seguridad Social en Alta Laboral', accessed 26 September 2025.
346 Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.
347 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, 'Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración'.
348 Author interviews with Senegalese migrants, multiple dates; author interview with former director general for migration in Spain, 14 February 2025.
349 Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Union, and Cooperation, 'Estrategia España-África 2025-2028'.

by coordinating among multiple employers with staggered labour needs and maintaining a database to facilitate worker mobility among companies.[350] The Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos in Huelva, for example, mentioned they are working to better link seasonal job opportunities across Spanish regions, creating a continuous employment cycle.[351] Such a system could provide a more sustainable framework.

- **Improving the selection process for workers and employers in circular mobility programmes**. For the Senegal-Spain circular mobility programme to scale effectively, stakeholders consulted agreed that worker and employer selection processes need refinement. On the worker side, stakeholders mentioned the need to improve job postings (for example, being more explicit about required experience) and to better assess whether candidates possess relevant agricultural skills and experience and a genuine intent to return—two issues seen as having undermined the programme so far. Some stakeholders also mentioned the need to extend the application deadline to allow for workers from rural areas to learn about this opportunity and apply.[352] On the employer side, stakeholders suggested a stronger vetting process is needed to ensure that participating companies genuinely need the number of workers they request and that they offer fair working conditions.[353] Furthermore, providing guidance and technical assistance for Senegalese stakeholders at the preselection stage was also identified as a way to enhance selection.[354]

- **Enhancing workers' and employers' awareness and preparedness predeparture**. For circular mobility programmes, predeparture orientation for migrants is particularly critical in promoting return. These sessions should provide clear guidance on programme participation and future re-employment opportunities and address workers' concerns about having to repeat the selection process.[355] Beyond improving awareness of such topics among migrants, stakeholders mentioned the need for broader community-based outreach to help reshape perceptions of circular migration and reduce social or family pressure to remain in Spain, as well as stigma surrounding return migration.[356] At the same time, targeted predeparture engagement with Spanish employers and diversity training programmes are needed to address concerns and encourage greater participation in hiring from Senegal, particularly in light of past challenges.[357]

- **Expanding sectors for temporary work**. Circular migration programmes for Senegalese could extend beyond agriculture to other sectors with temporary employment needs in Spain—such as fishing, construction, truck driving, and hospitality—where Senegalese could also use their skills and knowledge. To achieve this, more could be done to improve data collection and align Senegalese skills and labour market demand in Spain, particularly addressing areas of underemployment, such as those in Senegal's fishing sector, which could benefit from targeted skills development to match opportunities abroad while preventing brain drain.

350 Author interview with representative from the Regional Employment Service of Huelva, 24 February 2025.
351 Author interview with representative from the Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos, 27 March 2025.
352 Author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025; author interview with representative from the Consulate of Senegal in Madrid, 13 February 2025.
353 Author interview with representative from the Regional Employment Service of Huelva, 24 February 2025.
354 Author interview with representative from Fundación Cepaim, 29 January 2025.
355 Author interview with former government worker at SEM, 14 February 2025.
356 Author interview with representative from Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, 11 March 2025.
357 For instance, in the 2019 programme, 29 out of the 47 workers who ultimately travelled to Spain did not return to Senegal, and their performance at the company was below expectations. Author interview with representative from the Regional Employment Service of Huelva, 24 February 2025; author interview with representative from the European External Action Service, 30 January 2025.

- **Enhancing access to skills development and mobility pathways.** More training courses would be needed to expand and diversify the sectors and positions targeted in temporary or permanent mobility programmes, ensuring that participants are well-prepared.[358] Moreover, apprenticeship programmes could be useful in scaling employers' participation by helping address scepticism and concerns in hiring Senegalese workers. Initiatives such as the short-term apprenticeship programmes organised by the Canary Islands' Directorate of Relations with Africa have yielded positive experiences for employers hiring Senegalese workers on a short-term basis, highlighting the value of apprenticeships in building trust.

- **Enhancing access to other stable work pathways.** Stakeholders consulted emphasised the need for legal migration channels that provide access to stable, long-term employment in Spain. Initiatives piloted in 2007–08 facilitated migration in sectors such as construction, services, and tourism—industries that continue to struggle with labour and skills shortages today. Reviving and expanding these pathways could offer a more sustainable solution, helping to address both Spain's workforce needs and the aspirations of Senegalese workers while potentially reducing irregular migration. A key challenge in scaling up regular migration channels is the inefficiency of visa processing.[359] Strengthening the capacity of consular offices to quickly process applications and reduce long waiting times would be essential. Additionally, tighter oversight of the appointment system is needed to prevent intermediaries from monopolising slots and reselling them.

- **Maximising the development impacts of migration**. The signing of the social security agreement between Spain and Senegal in 2020 marked a significant milestone in preventing double taxation, facilitating access to pensions, and tentatively shaping decisions to return. Yet to maximise migration's potential to support Senegal's development, the Spanish government and civil-society actors could explore additional mechanisms in this regard, for instance, by promoting more effective use of remittances (e.g., by delivering financial literacy training), empowering the diaspora to contribute to their countries' development (e.g., by sharing their knowledge, expertise, and skills to improve processes back home), and supporting the recognition in Senegal of skills acquired in Spain.[360]

- **Investing in monitoring structures**. As labour pathways between Senegal and Spain expand, these programmes will need strong oversight mechanisms if they are to function well. In 2024, a case emerged of a Spanish company that required Senegalese workers to work excessive hours without proper compensation and offered substandard accommodation. This situation underscored the urgent need to strengthen selection and matching mechanisms and the oversight of Spanish enterprises hiring foreign workers to ensure the terms outlined in employment agreements are upheld and to prevent exploitation. In addition to more oversight, intercultural mediation structures could support migrants' integration and conflict resolution between workers and employers.[361]

358 Author interview with representative from Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, 11 March 2025.
359 Author interview with representative from Fundación Cepaim Dakar office, 6 February 2025.
360 Author interview with representative from Coordinadora d'Associacions Senegaleses de Catalunya (CASC), 5 March 2025; author interview with representative from Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, 11 March 2025.
361 Author interview with government worker at SEM, 14 February 2025.

The Vietnam-Hungary corridor

Key findings from Vietnam

Starting in 2018, Vietnam began to send increasing numbers of workers to Hungary to work in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, hospitality, and nursing. In 2023, Hungary issued 14,387 first permits for work to Vietnamese nationals, up from 932 in 2018.[362] However, Vietnamese data record only 1,500 workers moving to Hungary through official channels—in this case, deployments reported by licensed recruitment agencies—pointing to widespread use of more informal channels, such as using unlicensed recruiters or workers accessing a job directly but not completing all government-required checks (for example, reviews of contract, which can be slow and unpredictable).[363]

While the Hungary-Vietnam corridor represents a small share of overall emigration for work from Vietnam (in 2023, Vietnam sent 160,000 workers overseas through official recorded channels),[364] it quickly grew as a destination for Vietnamese workers over a five-year span. But starting in 2024, the tide began to turn for this migration corridor. Many workers have been moving through unofficial channels, either by securing job offers independently (for example, through online advertisements or word of mouth) or by using unlicensed recruiters.

Secondary migration from Hungary to other European destinations (e.g., the United Kingdom and Germany) is an important concern for this corridor. Meanwhile, challenges in returning Vietnamese nationals resulted in the suspension of Hungary's guestworker agreement with Vietnam and seven other countries as of January 2025, while negotiations on a readmission agreement continue behind the scenes. For now, the future of the corridor is uncertain, especially while other European countries such as Germany and Finland pursue cooperation with Vietnam and offer prospective workers higher pay and potentially better working and living conditions.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

The future of the Vietnam-Hungary corridor remains uncertain while negotiations continue on readmissions and tackling secondary migration, and thus the focus on this corridor surprised some stakeholders. Until these negotiations conclude and Vietnam is again added to the list of eligible countries for Hungary's employment-based and guestworker residence permits, it is hard to see much investment happening in this corridor to support recruitment and skills development and transfer.

Even if recruitment along this corridor resumes, several stakeholders expressed doubts about its long-term viability. Wages in Hungary for Vietnamese workers are relatively low (with figures cited between USD 600 and 800 monthly for low-skilled workers) and comparable to steady jobs in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. With greater earning potential in other destinations (for example, USD 1,000 to 1,200 per month in Japan or USD 2,000 to 2,500 per month in South Korea), stakeholders speculated as to why Vietnamese workers might choose to move to Hungary instead, for example, because of age restrictions or stringent language requirements along other corridors, family ties in Europe, or possibly the draw of

362 Eurostat, 'First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities'.

363 Author interviews with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025; author interview with representative from ILO, 27 March 2025.

364 Author interview with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025.

moving to other European countries.[365] While the availability of opportunities for less-skilled workers varies, stakeholders felt that migration to other European destinations such as Germany, France, or Poland might be more appealing, citing reasons such as higher earning potential, better prospects for staying longer-term, larger Vietnamese diasporas, and a more welcoming environment for immigrants more generally.

Key findings from Hungary

Increased Vietnamese immigration in recent years has expanded Hungary's existing Vietnamese community. Once rooted in socialist-era education programs, this movement is increasingly oriented towards filling labour shortages in manufacturing, construction, and hospitality. Despite this continued growth, however, Hungary's Vietnamese population remains smaller compared with other well-established diasporas in Western Europe.[366] However, evidence suggests that the combination of Hungary's evolving labour demands and Vietnamese workers' readiness to move for better wages or opportunities may continue to fuel these inflows. Several factors drive Vietnamese nationals to choose Hungary. Although Hungarian wages may not rival those in more prosperous EU nations, employer-provided housing and meals can make the total compensation package comparatively attractive when measured against some Asian labour markets.[367]

In practice, many Vietnamese workers view Hungary as either a transitional or stepping-stone destination, with the ultimate aspiration of securing employment in Western European countries offering higher salaries and more robust social benefits. Nevertheless, the initial draw to Hungary—particularly in manufacturing and service industries—remains significant, given the immediate availability of positions and relatively accessible entry channels.

Hungary's immigration policy framework for non-EU nationals has undergone considerable changes, partly in response to secondary migration. While Vietnamese workers are arriving in larger numbers than in previous decades, a substantial share does not remain in Hungary for the long term. Data from multiple sources indicate that up to 80 per cent of Vietnamese workers leave Hungary prematurely, primarily heading to Germany, Poland, or other Schengen Area countries that offer higher wages and improved working conditions.[368] This propensity for onward migration has triggered a recalibration of Hungary's labour and immigration rules. Specifically, Hungarian policymakers have cited these patterns to justify more restrictive visa regimes and guestworker quotas aimed at stemming what they see as a route for migrants ultimately bound for other EU Member States.[369] In mid-2023, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's cabinet announced a substantial reduction in the annual guestworker quota, scaling it down from 65,000 to 35,000. At the same time, authorities excluded several origin countries—including Vietnam—from simplified guestworker eligibility. Looking ahead, the Hungarian government plans to tighten these rules further from 2025 onward, stipulating that only nationals from countries with formal repatriation agreements will qualify for work-related entry. This move is intended to ensure that individuals who overstay or violate the terms of their residence can be returned more efficiently, reflecting Hungary's overall concern about irregular secondary migration within the Schengen Area.[370]

365 Author interview with representative from An Duong recruitment group, 27 March 2025; author interview with representative from Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, 26 March 2025; author interview with academic from the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 26 March 2025.
366 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture, 16 March 2025.
367 Author interview with representative from Hungarian-Vietnamese Friendship Association, 21 March 2025.
368 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Trade Union Confederation, 6 March 2025.
369 Author interview with representative from Trade Union Cooperation Forum, 27 February 2025.
370 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Association for Migrants, 18 March 2025.

Key takeaways and prospects for scale

The Vietnam-Hungary labour migration corridor sits at the intersection of Hungary's urgent labour needs and a political imperative to curb stepping-stone migration.[371] Although Hungarian employers in automotive, manufacturing, and construction highlight pressing skill shortages, the removal of Vietnam from the simplified guestworker scheme—coupled with newly tightened quota rules—undercuts larger-scale recruitment. Many Hungarian businesses that once invested in Vietnamese labour, only to see recruits depart quickly, have become wary of continuing these efforts.[372]

Yet expansions in automotive and battery production still demand thousands of additional workers, leading some factories to advocate quietly for Vietnam's reinclusion, provided the government obtains firmer repatriation commitments.[373] Until the high departure rate is curbed, officials seem unwilling to revisit Vietnam's eligibility. A future bilateral agreement could satisfy concerns about transit migration, but negotiations appear limited.[374]

Multiple stakeholders have called for transparent recruitment (capping fees and clarifying wage packages) and integration supports (for example, language basics and cultural orientation) to incentivise workers to remain.[375] Permit flexibility, such as portability or allowing family reunification, might deter onward moves, although the Hungarian government has shown little interest in revising these constraints.[376] Unless a structured bilateral solution addresses these issues through supportive onboarding, regulated fees, and enforceable return provisions, the corridor will remain restricted, likely leaving some labour gaps in Hungary unfilled.[377]

371 Author interview with representative from Trade Union Cooperation Forum, 27 February 2025.
372 Author interviews with Vietnamese migrants in Hungary, multiple dates.
373 Author interview with a Vietnamese migrant in Hungary, 9 March 2025.
374 Author interview with representative from National Association of Employers and Industrialists, 17 March 2025.
375 Author interview with a Vietnamese migrant in Hungary, 13 March 2025.
376 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Association for Migrants, 18 March 2025.
377 Author interview with representative from Hungarian Association for Migrants, 18 March 2025.

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