

Budapest Process

Thematic Working Group Meeting on Legal Pathways for Migration: Understanding Challenges, Needs and Opportunities for Improving Labour Migration

Date: 7-8 May 2024

Location: Istanbul, Türkiye

Summary (draft)

1. Budapest Process representatives from all participating and observer states were invited to attend this first meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways for Migration. The **meeting gathered 69 participants from 28 countries and 7 organisations** – Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom as well as the European Commission (EU), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Labour Organization (ILO), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Anolf Piemonte.

2. Meeting background and objectives: The key objectives of the thematic meeting were to:

- understand the labour mobility priorities and market needs of BP participating states, including preferred sectors and skill standards;
- share lessons and best practices from existing skills partnerships;
- explore opportunities for cooperation on skills development and partnerships.

Additionally, the meeting aimed to explore pilot initiatives under the Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways for Migration for the future.

3. This was the first meeting of the Thematic Working Group for Legal Pathways for Migration, established in December 2022, convened by the Thematic Working Group Co-Chairs Italy and Pakistan, supported by ICMPD, acting as the Budapest Process Secretariat.

4. The opening remarks were delivered by the Thematic Working Group Co-Chairs Pakistan and Italy, the EU (DG HOME), and the Head of the BP Secretariat (ICMPD), highlighting the significance of promoting legal pathways for migration and the importance of employing a holistic approach to labour migration governance.

5. These were followed by the “**Setting the Scene**” session which saw presentations of two renowned Migration Policy Institute and ICMPD experts who provided a comprehensive introduction into the topic of Legal Pathways for Migration and presented an overview of past Budapest Process related studies and initiatives in the Silk Routes Region related to Labour Mobility and Skills Partnerships, further discussion was built around the key objectives of the meeting.

6. For the rest of the meeting, delegates took part in topical discussions structured around three main sessions. **Session 1: Labour Migration Pathways – Concrete Ways to Enhance Operational Cooperation** discussed concrete ways in which labour migration partnerships can be enhanced from the perspective of BP partner countries. Within this session, participants had the chance to reflect on

presentations from national authority experts from both countries of origin and destination. Within this session, representatives of Pakistan, Italy, Bangladesh and Germany presented their respective labour priorities and/or labour market needs, recent developments of relevant policy and institutional frameworks, as well as practical challenges associated with the establishment of labour migration partnerships. The discussion showed increasing linkages between the sending and receiving countries aimed at facilitating smoother migration processes, as well as that the BP countries have been investing considerable efforts into developing their respective legislative and operational capacities in the process of preparing themselves for the labour migration corridors.

7. Within Session 2: Skills Mobility Partnerships in Practice participants discussed innovative and successful practises that have emerged from past and existing skills and labour mobility partnerships. Within Session 2, participants heard presentations from both BP partner countries and organisations. Presentations were delivered by Migration Partnership Facility, OECD, and ILO experts, national representatives of India, Australia, as well as an Italian civil society organisation representative from Anolf Piemonte. Presentations and subsequent discussion dived deeper into how government-to-government cooperation can be tailored to specific sectors, industries and professions, as well as how can private and educational sectors in countries of origin and destination be brought into labour migration partnership schemes.

8. During Session 3 participants were split into two different working groups which engaged in separate, simultaneous discussions that explored concrete actions that the Budapest Process Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways can take on board and turn into concrete pilot initiatives, in line with the Budapest Process Moto of turning Dialogue into action. **Working Group 1 discussed the topic of Skills Development.** Discussion was moderated by ICMPD expert and focused on labour market supply/demand needs in the countries of origin and destination; the existing frameworks/models for collaboration in skills development that can be adapted or improved; as well as the role of public-private partnerships in enhancing skill development. **Working Group 2 discussed the topic of Skills Partnerships.** Discussion was moderated by MPI expert and focused on the issues of skills matching and qualification, including how can stakeholders from countries collaborate more effectively in skills matching between the workforce and industry needs, including the examples of the existing successful models and associated challenges; as well on the issue of certification and mutual recognition of skills, including best practices and lessons learned from the existing models recognition of qualifications obtained in countries of origin and the integration of skilled migrants into the workforce of destination countries.

As a result of the interventions and discussions on good practices and lessons learned, the following key messages and recommendations for future action and labour migration cooperation were made:

Key messages and main conclusions

- **Legal Pathways for Migration:** Legal pathways are essential for addressing labour shortages and supporting development.
- **Labor Migration Trends:** There is an increasing demand for migrant workers, especially in Europe, in various sectors such as healthcare, construction, and ICT.
- **Skill Recognition, Training and Accreditation:** There is a growing need for standardisation and mutual skill recognition. The meeting highlighted several ongoing partnerships and existing efforts to provide skill training and international accreditation for workers.
- **Importance of evidence-based policies and solid legal frameworks:** The robust matching mechanisms depend on the availability of accurate data and regular evaluations. The overall

effectiveness of policies depends on their flexibility to adapt to the evolving needs of the market. Several countries resorted to legislative changes and initiatives to facilitate labour migration, including development of new legal frameworks for skilled migration.

- **Skills Development and Vocational Training:** The goal of matching skills with the labour market needs can be successfully achieved through joint skills development initiatives, ranging from dual certification initiatives, curriculum alignment and “last-mile” training in Country of Destination.
- **Vital role of Skills Mobility Partnerships:** Skills mobility partnerships and other collaborative solutions that promote mutually beneficial arrangements leading to establishment of robust labour migration initiatives and are essential for enhancement of labour market connectivity.
- **Private sector involvement:** Involvement of employers and other relevant stakeholders can contribute to establishment of transparent and efficient migration processes and skills mobility partnerships. Private sector engagement was also highlighted with respect to their potential role in visa processing and establishment of successful training partnerships.
- **Decent work conditions:** The meeting highlighted the significance of ensuring decent work conditions for migrants, recruitment monitoring and pre-departure training, including access to comprehensive and reliable information on job opportunities and working conditions in destination countries.
- **Identified challenges:** Some of the challenges discussed included complexities in recognising skills and qualifications, inadequate data sharing and job matching, as well as the cultural and language barriers that impede integration.

Recommendations on the way forward for the Thematic Working Group on Labour Migration

- Explore possibilities for the launching of concrete pilot labour migration cooperation initiatives and skills mobility partnerships under the Thematic Working Group that address the needs of both origin and destination countries and ensure mutual labour migration benefits.
- Explore possibilities to replicate existing successful models across the BP countries to:
 - Develop robust data-sharing mechanisms and job matching systems, invest in high-quality skill training programmes aligned with international standards, as well as provide comprehensive pre-departure and post-arrival orientation sessions for migrant workers.
 - Establish standardized skill assessment processes through designated testing facilities and improve skill recognition processes through development of mutual recognition agreements, standardisation of qualifications.
 - Promote data sharing and evidence-based policies, utilising of technology for labour market analysis, accurate labour market forecasting and skills matching.
 - Foster multi-stakeholder involvement and encourage active involvement of the private sector, particularly SMEs in training and public-private partnerships.
 - Enhance support for migrants through provision of comprehensive orientation sessions, continuous upskilling opportunities and addressing of cultural and language barriers to improve integration.
 - Ensure sustainable and ethical migration pathways through implementation of good quality frameworks for migration programmes that support fair recruitment.

- Continue dialogue under the framework of the BP Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways for Migration to ensure continuity of exchange on the best practices and lessons learned.