



INSPIRE PROJECT CLOSING EVENT REPORT

CO-CREATION: FORGING SUCCESS IN SKILLS AND LABOUR MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Meet the Speakers



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Maureen Kiambuthi, Principal Immigration Officer, Secretariat of National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, Kenya



Katarina Kunert, Senior Manager Projects and Partnerships, Afrika Verein



Eden Alemayehu, Inspire Project Manager, ICMPD



Camilla Fogli, Independent Expert



Andrea Salvini, Expert, Siloe Labour Solutions



Ali Attar, Co-Founder at Realtyna



Elisa Trossero, Senior Executive Advisor, Migration Dialogues and Cooperation Directorate, ICMPD



Salvatore Petronella, Knowledge and Influence Lead, Labour Mobility Partnerships (LaMP)



Giuliana Benedetto, Policy Officer, Legal Pathways and Integration, Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Commission



Christian Storci, Managing Director, Atlantic Fluid Tech



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Introduction

This report summarises the outcomes and discussions from the Inspire Project's Closing Event, held by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) on 20 February 2024 in Brussels. The event gathered 72 participants, including representatives from the public and private sectors of Inspire's focus countries, national and international organisations, migration specialists, and the European Commission, both online and in-person. The event's goal was to present the Inspire Project's achievements, share lessons learned, and facilitate an exchange of best practices and innovative approaches in the field of skills and mobility partnerships.

The following sections synthesise the main discussions, takeaways, and innovative approaches explored during the event. They provide insights and lessons poised to guide future initiatives in skills partnerships and labour migration. Ultimately, the reflections documented in this report aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and the development of effective strategies within this field.



Welcoming Remarks



The event started with remarks from Sedef Dearing, Director of Migration Dialogues and Cooperation at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and Stefanie Scharf, Head of the Division for Policy Issues of Displacement and Migration at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Sedef Dearing highlighted the collaborative essence of the Inspire Project and its success in creating platforms for dialogue that allowed diverse stakeholders from both sending and receiving countries to converge and jointly design skills partnership schemes that are mutually beneficial. She acknowledged the challenges encountered during the project, particularly in engaging the private sector and aligning the diverse interests of the public, educational, and private sectors. She also noted that, despite these obstacles, the project has been instrumental in proposing partnership solutions that use well-managed migration, thereby adding to the diversity of labour migration practices.

Stefanie Scharf provided insights from the German perspective within the broader European context. She outlined Germany's commitment to incorporating migration into its development framework, acknowledging the vital role of skilled labour migration in achieving sustainable development goals. Stefanie detailed the German government's initiatives to streamline legal pathways for migration, spotlighting recent legal reforms and the creation of a new role aimed at facilitating migration agreements.

Both speakers commended the timeliness of the Inspire Project, noting its focus on key sectors such as green energy and digital industries, which aligns with current labour market demands and the future of work. Stefanie, in particular, emphasised the importance of investing in developing green skills on a global scale. She argued that coupling this investment with the creation of labour pathways is crucial for preparing economies for a sustainable transformation, contributing to environmental preservation, and opening up new economic opportunities.



Keynote Presentation: Harnessing Skills Partnerships for Sustainable Growth in Green and Digital Frontiers

Helen Dempster, from the Center for Global Development, emphasised the critical role of skills partnerships in fostering sustainable growth within the green and digital sectors - sectors currently facing significant skill shortages. She noted the insufficiency of domestic training programmes in destination countries to fulfil these growing demands, proposing a comprehensive approach that includes enhancing work conditions, tapping into underutilised workforce segments, embracing automation and outsourcing, and increasing skilled immigration.

Helen recommended linking skilled migration with investments in training and education in countries of origin, aiming to mitigate brain drain while supporting sustainable development. Despite the theoretical appeal of such initiatives, practical challenges remain, notably the precedence of border security and migration management concerns over labour migration, as well as the political and public fears hindering the provision of legal pathways at scale. She observed that addressing such issues requires narrative-level work and more pilots, such as the Inspire project, for testing, evaluating, and scaling effective pathways for labour mobility.

She stressed the need for experimentation with diverse models, as no single approach fits all situations while recommending the Global Skill Partnership as a good example, where investments are made in training workers in their home countries for skills demanded globally, thus benefiting both the origin and destination countries and the workers themselves.

Helen highlighted alternative models that facilitate circular mobility, support migration alongside infrastructural investments, and encourage diaspora involvement. She concluded that the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on their structured implementation and the mutual benefits they provide rather than the specific models used.



Maureen Kiambuthi, representing Kenya's National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, offered valuable insights from the perspective of a country of origin. Her intervention centred on Kenya's strategic initiatives to leverage its growing youthful and educated population to meet global labour demands, especially in the green and digital sectors. Kenya's labour mobility approach is closely tied to its development agenda, aiming to capitalise on remittances and skills transfer to strengthen its green agenda and digital transformation. Maureen's presentation shed light on the proactive measures taken by the Kenyan government to align its educational and



training programmes with global market demands, demonstrating a model of how labour mobility can act as a catalyst for both domestic and international development. She also underscored Kenya's interest in skills partnerships that enable technology transfer, knowledge exchange, and collaboration with technical institutions and the private sector of destination countries to enhance skill levels and meet international standards.

Katarina Kunert, from Afrika Verein (German-African Business Association), offered insights on the crucial role of Germany's private sector, particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in skills partnership schemes, highlighting Germany's investments in Africa and the consequent demand for skilled labour. Katarina proposed that investments in African nations, particularly those facilitated by governments of destination countries, should inherently incorporate skills development or capacity-building components. In sectors such as energy, this methodology has already been applied, with funding tied to the inclusion of skills development initiatives. This strategy guarantees that investments yield financial

benefits while fostering long-term workforce development in the recipient countries. She also noted that while many skill development initiatives in Africa exist, most are led by development actors, emphasising the need for private sector involvement to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives.

Katarina also discussed the importance of creating favourable conditions for SMEs to participate in labour mobility initiatives. She addressed SMEs' bureaucratic challenges when recruiting from non-European countries, particularly with visa applications within Germany's administrative system. Katarina welcomed recent legislative changes, such as the Skilled Labour Immigration Act, which has begun streamlining labour immigration processes. Additionally, she touched on the high fees charged by recruitment agencies and the risk of recruit dropouts, suggesting internships and traineeships as strategies to align employer and employee expectations better. Lastly, Katarina highlighted the mutual benefits of circular migration, which can address Germany's demographic shifts and labour shortages, arguing that it benefits both the countries of origin and destination.



Insights into the Inspire Project's learnings and achievements

The session featured presentations by Eden Alemayehu, the Inspire Project Manager at ICMPD, Camilla Fogli, an Independent Expert, and Andrea Salvini, an Expert at Siloe Labour Solutions. They provided insights into the operational dynamics, key learnings, and tangible outcomes of the Inspire Project, focusing on two incubated initiatives:

1

The Georgia-France-Germany skills partnership scheme aims to advance Georgia's technology and innovation ecosystem by strengthening institutional capacity, fostering tech startups, empowering accelerators, and driving innovation exchange via cross-border partnerships.

2

The Ghana-Germany skills partnership scheme is designed to implement a scalable and adaptable framework that aligns the skills supply in Ghana with the demand in Germany.

The session delved into the project's methodologies, lessons learned, and challenges faced, particularly in mobilising the private sector to participate in the schemes and fundraising for their operation. The resource mobilisation efforts will continue beyond the lifecycle of the Inspire Project, demonstrating ICMPD's commitment to operationalising the incubated schemes.

Eden provided an in-depth look into the Inspire Project's journey, detailing the strategic approach to identifying and engaging with partner countries, facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues, and co-designing partnership schemes to address specific labour mobility challenges. Camilla Fogli and Andrea Salvini highlighted the project's emphasis on practical outcomes, showcasing the development of tailored solutions that meet both the labour market demands of receiving countries and the development needs of sending countries.





Panel Discussion: Insights from Partners on the Inspire Project Journey and Outcomes

The panel assembled a diverse group of stakeholders closely involved in shaping the project's trajectory and its resultant skills partnership schemes. The session enabled panellists to share their unique perspectives on the project's impact, the challenges encountered, and the lessons learned through their collaborative efforts.

Salome Napetvaridze from Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency and Lucy Afi Ahiakpor from Ghana's National Labour Department represented the viewpoints of the partner countries. They looked closer at the local impacts and contributions to the Inspire Project. Salome welcomed the scheme's focus on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. She highlighted how the temporary mobility of Georgian entrepreneurs to France and potentially other EU countries is seen as crucial for gaining experience and exposure. The strategic focus on making Georgian startups globally scalable and internationally competitive is a key takeaway, underscoring the importance of the global market for startup success and the need for international collaboration and exposure.

Lucy's intervention offered insights into the potential of the Ghana-Germany scheme to tackle unemployment among Ghanaian youth in Germany. She emphasised the potential for job opportunities in Germany and reintegration into the Ghanaian labour market. Lucy elaborated on the scheme's dual focus on easing migration processes, such as language and visa requirements, and on the sustainability and funding challenges

inherent in ensuring the long-term viability of such initiatives. Her discussion underlined the importance of infrastructure and strategic planning in supporting returnees, the need for extended project durations – beyond the 36 months foreseen for the Ghana-Germany scheme - to ensure skill transfer and adaptation to new trends, and the potential of such schemes to reduce irregular migration by providing viable employment alternatives within Ghana.

Hugo Debroise, representing the Embassy of France in Georgia, and Ali Attar, a co-founder at Realtyna, brought perspectives from the destination country and private sectors, respectively. Hugo spoke to the geopolitical implications and the benefits of such partnership schemes in enhancing bilateral relations. He emphasised that the scheme connecting Georgia with France and Germany, which seeks to advance skill development and bolster the startup environment in Georgia, serves a wider goal of reinforcing economic and cultural ties without requiring Georgian startups' permanent relocation to France. Through such collaborative models, the scheme promotes a sustainable, globally integrated startup ecosystem, offering a blueprint for future innovation and international cooperation. However, alongside the positive aspects, Hugo pointed out that the current lack of funds to back the scheme was a limitation. Addressing these financial challenges is crucial for demonstrating the model's value and ensuring its sustainability and ease of replication across different contexts and sectors. Ali's insights delved into the practical challenges of engaging French incubators and accelerators in skills partnerships.

Incubating Effective and Sustainable Labour Mobility Systems and Skills Partnerships: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

The final panel discussion offered a deep dive into the complexities and nuances of designing and implementing labour mobility and skills partnership schemes catering to diverse stakeholders' interests and needs.



Salvatore Petronella emphasised a ground-up approach, advocating for projects rooted in the real-world contexts of migrants and involved countries. He highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and economic arguments that showcase the mutual benefits of labour mobility. Central to his intervention was the recognition of significant barriers that hinder the actualisation of labour mobility, notably the lack of political will, inadequate legal frameworks, and language and skill barriers. Salvatore also stressed the importance of including migrant voices in policymaking and reframing labour mobility within institutional narratives. He advocated for legal mobility channels to counter irregular migration, positioning labour mobility as a key component of sustainable development and international cooperation.

He recommended that well-designed, incentive-based labour mobility systems can enhance economic and social outcomes for migrants, employers, and countries, marking progress in the overall dialogue on migration.

Giuliana, representing the European Union's perspective on labour mobility, delved into the complexities of navigating the multi-stakeholder environment at the EU level. Focusing on Talent Partnerships, Giuliana outlined the intricate process of aligning the diverse needs and expectations of Member States, private sectors (both as beneficiaries and triggers of labour mobility), countries of origin, and workers themselves. She highlighted the challenges of coordinating across different national authorities and sectors and the delicate balance needed for addressing Member States' labour needs while considering the potential impacts on countries of origin, such as brain drain. To overcome these multifaceted challenges, Giuliana underscored the necessity of time, flexibility, robust governance systems (including advisory groups and forums for ongoing discussions), and stakeholder involvement. Most importantly, she emphasised the importance of putting workers at the heart of labour mobility schemes, ensuring that their rights are protected and that their mobility ultimately enhances their quality of life.



Christian Storci, from Atlantic Fluid Tech, introduced Atlantic Academy as a response to the group's rapid growth and consequent need for skilled personnel. The academy was established to address high turnover, retraining costs, and skill-job mismatches. Atlantic Academy, characterised by its sector-specific skills training, local enterprise concentration, and address the needs of rapidly growing businesses, operates on a unique model that includes using production machines for training, employing current and retired professionals as trainers, and establishing a broad network of partnerships with local authorities, public and private vocational training schools for maximising trainee outreach. The model has trained many individuals, with a high hiring rate post-training, contributing to the local employment ecosystem. Initially funded by the Atlantic Fluid Tech, the academy now enjoys the support of various district companies, showcasing a successful private sector-driven approach to vocational training and labour mobility, which can be extended to and replicated in the context of skills partnerships with non-EU countries.

The discussion concluded with a consensus on the need for innovative, practice-oriented models that address the real-world needs of migrants and employers, advocating for a multi-stakeholder approach as the key to advancing labour mobility and skills partnerships for mutual benefit.



Conclusions

The Inspire Project Closing Event served as a valuable platform for stakeholders to exchange knowledge, discuss challenges, and explore innovative approaches to advancing skills partnerships and labour mobility. The event highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts between governments, the private sector, and other key actors in designing and implementing mutually beneficial skills partnership schemes. Beyond the insights and lessons already outlined, additional key takeaways highlighted include:

- The complexity and length of bureaucratic procedures, notably in visa applications and qualification recognition, consistently emerge as significant challenges. Streamlining these processes could benefit SMEs by making the procedure more manageable and accessible. This simplification could encourage a broader spectrum of businesses to participate in labour mobility initiatives with non-EU countries.
- Employers in destination countries express growing concern over high dropout rates and the challenges associated with retaining foreign workers long-term. To address these concerns effectively, there is a recognised need to create direct pathways from education to industry, such as traineeships, internships, and apprenticeships.
- Investments from foreign direct investors, especially those supported by destination country governments in countries of origin, stand to benefit from incorporating local skills development and capacity building. This balanced approach promises financial returns and supports the sustainable growth of the local workforce, ensuring long-term benefits for investors and the communities involved.
- Engaging the private sector early on can lead to a deeper understanding and trust in skills partnerships. Presenting clear, streamlined partnership models and value propositions at the outset minimises potential confusion, fostering stronger collaboration.
- Organising visits for companies to partner countries for exposure and familiarisation can significantly enhance trust in the local workforce's skills and capabilities. Such direct engagement with local talent, training institutions, and business environments can clarify the process of hiring foreign talent and underscore the advantages of these schemes.
- Investing in sensitisation and educational campaigns aimed at the private sector regarding the merits of participating in labour mobility schemes can help dispel misconceptions and policy gaps. Showcasing successful case studies and providing concrete data on how these schemes mitigate labour shortages can dispel fears and build confidence.
- Facilitating dialogue and exchange among all parties involved in labour migration and skills development is crucial for aligning expectations with reality. This cooperative strategy ensures that initiatives are co-created to meet all stakeholders' varied needs and expectations, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful and sustainable labour mobility schemes.