



EMN BELGIUM NATIONAL CONFERENCE Skills Mobility Partnerships

Wednesday 1 June & Thursday 2 June 2022

Résidence Palace (Brussels) or online

Concept Note

EMN Belgium, in cooperation with Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency and the International Organisation (IOM) for Migration Belgium & Luxembourg welcomes you to the national conference on Skills Mobility Partnerships. This event is the fruit of an intensive dialogue of EMN Belgium, Enabel and IOM Belgium and Luxembourg with local, regional, national and European stakeholders that are involved in the development of Skills Mobility Partnerships.

The event will be organised over two days, centred on the concept of Talent Partnerships as a whole, and Skills Mobility Partnerships in particular. On the first day, an EMN Roundtable will be organised to facilitate a meaningful policy debate. On the second day, the focus will shift towards the practical implementation on the national level, specifically in Belgium.

1. RATIONALE AND AIMS

With an increasing shortage on the EU labour market, a parallel need of work force, and the increasingly complex infrastructure of labour mobility to the EU, new legal labour migration avenues have come at the centre of EU migration policy.

In the context of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU Commission presented the Talent Partnerships as “a key initiative under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum that will help to address skills shortages in the European Union and to strengthen mutually-beneficial partnerships on migration with third countries”.¹ Subsequently, on 27 April 2022, the EU Commission presented the Skills and Talent Package, of which the third pillar prescribes the improvement of EU cooperation with partner countries through Talent Partnerships.² On the other side of the isle, the European Parliament has shown to be keen on discussing a complete overhaul of the economic migration system in the EU, advocating for new legal labour migration avenues to the EU³, an EU Talent Pool⁴ and a more holistic view⁵ on legal migration. In addition, other EU and international actors have studied the possible designs of a more efficient and

¹ [Talent Partnerships: Commission launches new initiative to address EU skills shortages and improve migration cooperation with partner countries](#), *European Commission Press Corner*, 11 June 2021.

² [Legal Migration: attracting skills and talent to the EU](#), *European Commission Press Corner*, 27 April 2022.

³ [European Parliament resolution on new avenues for legal labour migration](#), *European Parliament*, 20 May 2021.

⁴ [Legal Migration: an EU talent pool and more options for immigrant entrepreneurs](#), *European Parliament Press Room*, 27 October 2021.

⁵ [Legal migration policy and law](#), *European Parliament Research Service*, 1 September 2021.

encompassing EU policy, that not only takes into account the EU-labour market perspective, but also emphasizes the partnerships with third countries and the triple-win that these policies can engender.

These developments show the increased interest of the European cosmos to discuss and adapt the current way in which extra-EU labour mobility is organised. In this context, Skills Mobility Partnerships (hereafter: SMPs), which is understood as a subform of the 'Talent Partnerships' presented by the EU Commission, have been tested in several EU Member States. Their originality lies in their output: while the aim is to enhance and facilitate the mobility of skills and talent, they also nurture the creation of partnerships and foster international cooperation that goes beyond migration. This is what is called the 'quadruple win' of SMPs, given that they not only offer the countries of origin and destination a win, but also migrant workers as well as employers and the private sector.

The organizing partners wish to transfer this positive and cooperative mindset to the two-day-event. The event will provide a platform for numerous stakeholders that are involved in Skills Partnerships on the international, EU, national, regional and local level. The idea is not only to listen, learn and debate, but also to exchange, to network and to build bridges between the different stakeholders that will be present at the event or will follow it online. EMN Belgium, Enabel and IOM Luxembourg and Belgium will provide participants with an encompassing event that mixes presentations, panel discussions and interactive Q&A's with an opportunity to network and to get to know different stakeholders in person and online.

In that context, the different participants are warmly invited to attend the networking lunch (on the EU-International day) and the networking lunch and drink (on the Belgian day) and to add their contact details to the contacting list that will be compiled with the consent of the participants that wish to appear on this list. Finally, by providing the online option and a tri-lingual (FR-EN-NL) interpretation, the organizing partners also hope to hear the perspective of third country stakeholders, who are warmly welcomed to attend the event online (or, if possible, in person) and to actively contribute to the different Q&A-sessions.

EMN ROUNDTABLE: TALENT AND SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS – THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

The EMN Roundtable event will focus on the European (and global) context in which Skills Mobility Partnerships (hereafter: SMPs) are tested and implemented. First, the European Parliament's Research Service will present its recent European Added Value Assessment study⁶ that was written with the aim of providing support to the European Parliament's legislative-initiative report on legal migration policy and law. The presentation will give an introduction to the different policy options that can be adopted on the EU level to improve the legal migration schemes. Subsequently, the EMN will present its recent joint EMN-OECD Study on Skills Mobility Partnerships⁷, which highlights the SMP-experiences of EU Member States, non-EU countries and international organisations. Furthermore, the EMN Roundtable will bring together various actors that are involved in developing and conceptualising new legal labour mobility avenues to contribute to a meaningful policy debate by presenting the panel several key findings extracted from the EMN Inform as well as the EPRS study.

The **European Commission** has identified Talent Partnerships as a key initiative under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum because 'the EU is currently losing the global race for talent'.⁸ To have the EU re-enter into this race, the Commission has recently published its Skills and Talent Package that "*will benefit the EU's economy, strengthen cooperation with non-EU countries and improve overall migration management in the long term*".⁹ One of the three pillars aims at supporting the better matching of skills and needs for the EU and its partner countries, while Talent Partnerships are identified as a means to boost international labour mobility and development of talent in a mutually beneficial and circular way.¹⁰

⁶ [Legal migration policy and law](#), European Parliament Research Service, 1 September 2021.

⁷ [Joint EMN-OECD Inform on Skills Mobility Partnerships](#), European Migration Network, March 2022.

⁸ [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), European Commission, 23 September 2020.

⁹ [Legal Migration: attracting skills and talent to the EU](#), European Commission Press Corner, 27 April 2022.

¹⁰ [Communication on attracting skills and talent to the EU](#), European Commission, 27 April 2022. P. 11.

A representative of the **Directorate-General on Migration and Home Affairs** will help to situate the recent policy developments, such as their Skills and Talent Package, in the overall framework of the EU Talent Partnerships and give their take on the lessons that they have learnt in supporting current pilot projects on the national level.

To complement these views, the European Commission's **Directorate-General on International Partnerships** will contribute to the discussion. It is important to remember that Talent Partnerships not only aim to benefit the EU market, but also the countries of origin. In that context, the circularity of the skills schemes and the adoption of the Global Skills Partnership-approach, which emphasizes the development goals of the countries of origin, are highly debated. DG INTPA will share its experience in the development of partnerships between countries of origin, the EU and its member states and contribute to the discussion from a 'migration and development'-nexus perspective.

In addition to the European Commission's focus on supporting the development of legal pathways for migration and the promotion of Talent Partnerships as a means of attracting new talent, the **European Parliament** has echoed the need for a legal migration overhaul. More specifically, it has advocated the creation of additional legal pathways at the EU level, in order to help Member States to face upcoming demographic challenges and meet the demands of the labour markets that cannot be met by the domestic workforce.¹¹ In November 2021, this resulted in the adoption of a resolution that requested the Commission to submit a legislative proposal on legal migration.¹² The EP's work and point of view will be highlighted by the rapporteur of the legislative own-initiative report.

Furthermore, the current **EUTRIO of Member States** presiding the Council of the European Union has marked the investment in growth of the economy as one of their joint priorities.¹³ From 1 July 2022, the Czech Republic will hold the presidency and a representative of the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs's Unit on Foreign Employment in the Czech Republic**¹⁴ will contribute to the discussion from the perspective of the EUTRIO presidency.

Apart from the EU institutions, other stakeholders have studied and conceptualized Skills Partnerships. The **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** has done extensive research on Global Skills Partnerships within the framework of the discussions on the UN Global Compact for Migration¹⁵ and analyses migration from a development¹⁶ and attractiveness¹⁷ perspective. As an international institution, it will provide a global perspective to the panel, drawing on their analyses of the implementation of different forms of Skills Mobility Partnerships in the world and their work on 'talent attractiveness'.

The **Centre for Global Development** has been and is at the root of developing and promoting the Global Skills Partnerships (GSP) model.¹⁸ It has worked with different countries, such as Belgium, to pilot the GSP-model and has contributed to numerous publications, such as the EMN-OECD Inform on Skills Mobility Partnerships. In July 2021, it launched the Global Skill Partnership Portal that aims to provide detailed and practical information for countries that seek to implement the GSP-model.¹⁹ Therefore, the **Centre for Global Development** will give a more theoretical basis for the discussion on Skills Mobility, compare its GSP-model with the 'Talent Partnership'-model and provide its outlook on the future policy developments of partnerships in the framework of migration.

Finally, **Belgium** has invested both resources and energy in upping its skills on the implementation of SMPs. Several SMP-projects have been implemented and tested. The success of these projects was echoed by the federal Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration's policy declaration of 2020²⁰ and 2021²¹, which - amongst others - set out the goal

¹¹ [Report with recommendations to the Commission on legal migration policy and law](#), *European Parliament*, 4 November 2021.

¹² [European Parliament resolution with recommendations to the Commission on legal migration policy and law](#), *European Parliament*, 25 November 2021.

¹³ [Trio Programme](#), *Council of the European Union*, 7 March 2022.

¹⁴ The importance of legal migration for the future Presidency is also reflected in the upcoming EMN event of the Czech Republic, which will also concern economic migration.

¹⁵ [What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice](#), *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*, 15 May 2018.

¹⁶ [Migration and development](#), *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*, N.D.

¹⁷ [OECD Indicators of talent attractiveness](#), *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*, N.D.

¹⁸ [Global Skills Partnerships](#), *Centre for Global Development*: "This kind of partnerships is defined as 'a bilateral public-private partnership to link skill creation and skill mobility in a mutually beneficial and equitable way. Countries of migrant origin and destination agree ex ante who will bear the costs of training skilled migrants, and allow a small portion of the large economic gains from skill mobility to foster skill creation in origin countries.'"

¹⁹ [Start a Global Skill Partnership](#), *Centre for Global Development*, July 2021.

²⁰ [Note de politique générale: asile et migration](#), *State Secretary for Asylum and Migration*, 4 November 2020.

²¹ [Note de politique générale: asile et migration](#), *State Secretary for Asylum and Migration*, 3 November 2021.

of easing administrative procedures for foreign workers, attracting “bright minds” through study migration whilst putting particular emphasis on the circularity of this type of migration. The representative of the **State Secretary for Asylum and Migration in Belgium** will engage in the panel from the perspective of an EU Member State implementing various SMP projects and highlight the importance of this type of legal migration pathways for Belgium.

Belgium’s participation in the panel will provide the perfect connection between the first and the second day, given that the EU dimension discussed at the Roundtable also impacts the national discussion and vice versa. Over the years, Belgium’s stakeholders have piloted several Skills Mobility Projects with the financial and technical support of EU and international stakeholders, while the lessons learnt from these projects provide enriching input for the EU’s policy work on legal migration in which SMPs play a defining role.

SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS IN BELGIUM – LESSONS LEARNT FROM PRACTICE

After the EU-global perspective, the focus moves towards the practical implementation of SMPs on the national level, notably in Belgium. The aim is to discuss how SMP-pilots are conceptualized, established and implemented in Belgium, in addition to discussing good practices and lessons learnt from the different pilot schemes.

The research EMN Belgium conducted in the context of the EMN-OECD Inform on Skills Mobility Partnerships spurred a mapping exercise of the national projects. This mapping aims to identify the different stakeholders involved, to try to unravel the complexity of the projects and aspires to provide a guidance tool for the future. To do so, bridges were built with both **Enabel**, the Belgian Development Agency, and the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Belgium and Luxembourg**, who have implemented and tested the great majority of SMP-pilot projects in Belgium, in cooperation with numerous private and public stakeholders. EMN Belgium will present the key findings of this mapping exercise and will introduce the main axes on which the discussions of the rest of the day will be based (such as partnerships, ownership, regulatory and administrative complexity).

This presentation will be followed by a first project-focused panel, composed of the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Enabel and IOM Belgium and Luxembourg**. They will discuss their approach to Skills Mobility and the challenges and best practices that they have encountered during the implementation of their Skills Mobility projects. More specifically, they will discuss topics such as the circularity-component of their schemes, the approach that they adopt for the implementation of the projects and the roles that they award to the different stakeholders in the context of these projects. While the focus will lie strongly on the Belgian experience, the GIZ will provide for a comparative element for the best practices and challenges that Enabel and IOM Belgium and Luxembourg will share. At the end of the panel, the panellists will launch several poll-questions on specific problems that they have encountered in the implementation of the projects, and discuss the answers received from the audience. This setting should allow for an interactive discussion between the project-leads and the audience of economic migration stakeholders.

For any mobility scheme to work, not only the involvement of the implementing partners is needed, but also the establishment of a multi-stakeholder involvement. In a second panel, several ‘frontline’ stakeholders, who are either direct beneficiaries, actors or supporters of SMP-projects, will discuss their experiences, as SMP-actors, -under the guidance of an experienced moderator.

From the business side, it is clear that the Belgian demand of talents and labour is increasing and that this demand is not expected to slow down anytime soon. The Federation of Belgian Enterprises (VBO) concludes that for the current 140.000 job openings, the attraction of foreign talent is essential²², as does IT-sector Federation Agoria²³. The latter expects the Belgian labour gap to grow to 541.000 by 2030, if no additional measures are taken. That is why entities such as Agoria and the Flanders’ Chambers of Commerce and Industry West-Flanders (VOKA West-Vlaanderen) have jumped in the SMP-pool and have actively engaged with the Belgian SMP-projects.²⁴ At the event, **VOKA West-**

²² [Impact économique de la migration : la FEB préconise d’opérer sur deux plans](#), *Federation of Enterprises in Belgium*, 10 February 2021.

²³ [White Paper: Be the change: guidance and levers for a changing labour market](#), *Agoria*, 24 December 2020.

²⁴ [Match made in heaven with foreign talent](#), *VOKA West-Vlaanderen*, 19 March 2021.

Vlaanderen will explain why they have jumped into this pool, which gaps and pitfalls they have faced and what their expectations are for the future.

In Belgium, employment and labour migration policies fall under the regional competences. These policies aim not only at removing barriers that impede attracting top talent, but also providing a solution to meeting demand for structural bottleneck professions. One of these regions, Flanders, has laid-out its talent strategy: the attraction of talent is imperative, but has to happen in concentrating circles. More specifically, Flanders first targets Flemish talents, after which other regions and EU countries are targeted and, finally, the search continues for talent in third countries. As the labour gap is growing and the business call for attracting talents from outside of Europe is intensifying, the Flemish government has participated in some of the Belgian pilot projects, through its labour agency (VDAB) or directly as a funding or implementing partner. At the event, **the Flemish administration** will participate in the practitioners' panel and discuss how its measures and initiatives can contribute and are contributing to connecting business and foreign talent.

On the regional level, the problem to attract foreign top talent and match them with the right employer is a concern for the employment agencies. VDAB, the Flemish employment has been involved in various SMP-projects. They are not only jumping in the pool of enhancing skills through SMP-projects, but also aim to play a more comprehensive role in the development of the Pilot Project for Entrepreneurial Mobility, aiming to create an exchange between nano-, micro- and small entrepreneurs from Senegal and Belgium. **VDAB** will participate in the panel and explain why they have decided to delve into the internationalisation of work opportunities.

Skills Mobility Partnerships are not only about Skills and Mobility, but also about building Partnerships. At the local level, several partnerships exist. One of these Partnerships is Leuven MindGate²⁵, the product of fruitful cooperation on the local level, that aims at keeping Leuven attractive for international talents. A subcomponent of Leuven MindGate, the International House Leuven, serves as a one-stop-shop that constitutes an information, knowledge and service centre for internationals and their families. Organisations in the Leuven region employing international talent can use the International House Leuven as a Single Point of Contact. **International House Leuven** will participate in the panel and will share its experiences with international Skills Mobility and with the building of partnerships. Furthermore, they will detail which role the local level can play in connecting talents and employers and how the local level fits within the Belgian framework.

Lastly, **Enabel**, responsible for the implementation of SMP Pilot Projects, will discuss the gaps and pitfalls it has encountered in the implementation and will weigh in on how the other participants can help scaling up the pilot projects.

At the end of the conference, and to conclude it, the link between the EMN Roundtable (policy) and the Belgian case (practice) will be made. The goal is to get a better understanding of the different concepts (GSP, SMP and Talent Partnership) and to go home with some lessons learnt and recommendations for the future success of SMPs. At the same time, the different networking moments, including a reception at the end of the conference, provides the perfect opportunity to not only improve the participants' understanding of SMPs, but also their SMP-network. .

2. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Date	Wednesday 1 June 2022: 12h30 – 16h30: EMN Roundtable Talent and Skills Mobility Partnerships – The European dimension Thursday 2 June 2022: 09h30 – 16h45: Skills Mobility Partnerships in Belgium
Place	Résidence Palace (Brussels) or online
Language	English, Dutch and French (simultaneous translation will be provided)
Catering	Lunch will be provided on both days; a networking reception will close the event on the second day

²⁵ [Mindgate](#), City of Leuven, N.D.