

**SKILLS MOBILITY
PARTNERSHIPS
IN THE PRAGUE
PROCESS REGION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) are emerging as an increasingly important policy tool for addressing labour shortages, skills mismatches, and demographic pressures, while expanding legal migration opportunities and promoting skills development. SMPs combine mobility and training components through bilateral or multilateral cooperation between the origin and destination, with the aim of generating mutual benefits for governments, employers, and migrants.

This study examines governmental SMPs involving selected non-EU Prague Process participating states, focusing on the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and Eastern European and Central Asian countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan). Based on desk research and comparative analysis of 39 identified SMPs, this paper provides an overview of partnership design and highlights takeaways for states in the region wishing to launch or refine SMPs, whether as an origin or destination.

This mapping illustrates that the states under study currently act primarily as an origin of skills mobility within SMPs, although several countries, particularly in the Western Balkans, are increasingly also becoming destinations. Most partnerships involve EU Member States, especially Germany, and are commonly structured either as formal agreements or as project-based initiatives. SMPs in the region frequently target specific labour shortages in the destination, particularly in sectors such as construction, healthcare, tourism, and ICT.

The analysis demonstrates that SMPs are highly flexible in design: They vary in terms of mobility duration, targeted skill levels, skilling approaches, and institutional arrangements. Most partnerships target medium- and high-skilled individuals and combine mobility with skills development measures such as apprenticeships, other on-the-job training, language learning, or professional development courses. While many SMPs foresee participants' return to the origin, reintegration support remains limited. Similarly, although qualification recognition is a key challenge for labour migrants, only a few partnerships actively incorporate mechanisms to support recognition or alignment of qualifications. The findings also highlight several emerging trends. Dual 'home and away' track models, where only part of the trained cohort migrates while others remain in the origin labour market, are becoming increasingly common, particularly in project-based initiatives.

Overall, the study suggests that SMPs can offer Prague Process states a flexible framework for developing mutually beneficial labour mobility arrangements. They can support skills development, facilitate better-managed migration pathways, strengthen cooperation between countries, and help address labour shortages while mitigating risks associated with brain drain. At the same time, the analysis highlights the importance of ensuring that future partnerships systematically address issues such as qualification recognition, reintegration support, and long-term sustainability not yet consistently visible in existing partnerships.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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I. Introduction

As Prague Process participating states continue to strengthen cooperation on legal migration and work to make mobility a positive force for development, skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) offer a practical and proven tool for aligning skills development with labour market needs across Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) and the Western Balkans (WB) – supporting countries of origin and destination alike to manage labour migration in a way that is orderly, mutually beneficial, and sustainable. The Prague Process Action Plan 2023-2027¹ explicitly calls on participating states to strengthen cooperation on the assessment of migrants' skills and competencies, to avoid brain waste, and to maximise the benefits of circular migration and return – priorities that SMPs are well placed to advance. This paper examines current and recent governmental SMPs in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Georgia, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. It explores different aspects of their design, based on a mapping conducted by ICMPD. This exercise builds on ICMPD mappings of SMPs in other countries (referred to as the 'overall mapping' in the text) and regions, and compares SMPs in the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states with this broader pool of data. Based on the analysis, the paper draws takeaways for Prague Process participating states wishing to launch or refine such initiatives.

SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS

For the purposes of this paper, SMPs are understood as government-to-government partnerships that integrate practical skills development with mobility for some or all participants, with the aim of generating concrete benefits for all parties involved. In recent years, SMPs – including similar frameworks such as Global Skill Partnerships² and Talent Partnerships³ – have gained considerable momentum, though they still represent a small share of overall global labour mobility. SMPs have gained prominence in the context of labour shortages and demographic challenges in many origin and destination societies, as well as concerns about potential negative impacts of traditional labour migration approaches.⁴

SMPs can offer greater mutual benefits compared to more traditional (and more prevalent) labour migration approaches, which often rely on the skills migrants have already acquired – often invested in by origin countries – and disproportionately benefit destination countries.⁵ This is particularly relevant for countries of origin, given the potential impact of emigration on their labour markets and societies. In this regard, SMPs are envisioned as an innovative mechanism to more fairly share the costs and benefits of migration and mobility – and to serve the interests of migrants, communities, and employers. While SMPs vary in terms of design and specific objectives, all SMPs include some form of skills development alongside a mobility component.⁶

How are such mutual benefits achieved, given the wide range of priorities held by these stakeholders, public and private, individual and institutional? Rather than draining human capital from countries of origin, well-structured partnerships can help offset or even reverse the fiscal losses associated with migration, while still enabling worker mobility and addressing skill shortages in destination countries.⁷ This can be done, for example, by investing in skilling to expand the available pool of skilled individuals through internships, traineeships, and apprenticeships – in other words, investing in skills development rather than simply recruiting those who already possess the desired skills. The use of dual 'home' and 'away' tracks is another way that some SMPs aim to address needs in both origin and destination countries, by targeting sectors that are in-demand in both places facilitating the skilling of persons, some of whom are planned to move and some to stay. Yet other SMPs offer different types of mobility duration, combining short-, medium-, and/or long-term mobility so that some skilled individuals remain in the destination country longer, aligned often with employer needs, while others return (sooner) to work in origin countries.

LABOUR MOBILITY TRENDS FROM EASTERN EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA, AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

Looking at labour mobility more broadly, the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states act as both origin and destination, although emigration continues to outweigh immigration in almost all cases. In 2023, all selected countries except Montenegro experienced negative net migration, as more individuals left than arrived. Combined, the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states saw the emigration of over 19 million people in 2024 (including war-related displacement from Ukraine).⁸ Migration patterns are characterised by considerable heterogeneity and evolving pressures. Migration comes in response to various drivers, including income differentials, economic opportunity, quality of services and governance, demographic pressures, and networks, in addition to displacement spurred by war.⁹ It encompasses temporary and long-term movements for formal and informal work in a variety of sectors at a range of skill levels.¹⁰

Emigration

Emigration rates vary considerably across the region.¹¹ Between 1990 and 2020, the Western Balkans recorded the highest emigration rate relative to population (30%), followed by the Caucasus (17%) and Eastern Europe at 15%.¹² BiH is the largest sending country in relative terms, with an estimated 46% of its population living outside the country, followed by Moldova (41%), Albania (40%), Armenia (29%), and Georgia and Kazakhstan (approximately 22% each).¹³

International migration represents a crucial source of employment opportunities and income for workers from EECA and the WB, whilst creating benefits for migrants and their places of origin.¹⁴ Emigration can generate benefits for origin countries via remittances, knowledge transfers, development of human capital, and return.¹⁵ The researched countries in EECA, for instance, gained more than USD 45 billion in 2024 in remittances; the WB gained over USD 12 billion that same year,¹⁶ illustrating that migration generates considerable financial transfers. In the medium term, emigration can reduce labour market pressures by offering employment opportunities, especially for youth.¹⁷ Many of the researched countries depend on labour migration, particularly to address labour surpluses and youth unemployment. For example, demographic pressure in Uzbekistan, whose annual population increases by 700-800,000 per year, combined with limited labour market absorption capacities, are important factors in emigration from the country.¹⁸ In the long term, emigration can spur interest in investing in tertiary education systems; additionally, migrants may return and contribute their skills and finances to the origin labour market, bringing further benefits to origin countries.¹⁹

Although the EU is a key destination for most migrants from the EECA and WB regions,²⁰ destination patterns vary sharply by subregion. While WB emigrants are concentrated heavily in the EU-15²¹ (from just over half of Serbian emigrants to roughly three-quarters of Albanians), the majority of emigrants from Central Asia head instead to Russia,²² despite recent geopolitical developments, growing xenophobia, and tightening migration controls.²³ At the same time, migrants from the region have also gone to other destinations, including the United States, Gulf countries, and the European Union.

In EU Member States, at the end of 2024, more than 1.33 million residence permits issued for employment were held by EECA nationals – almost one-quarter of all valid work permits held by non-EU nationals that year – illustrating the important role that migrants from EECA countries play in EU economies.²⁴ Within the EU, migrants from EECA countries are concentrated particularly in Poland, Lithuania, and Italy, while traditional destinations for migrants from the WB include Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden, as well as Italy and Greece for Albanians.²⁵ Migrants from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, and Georgia together accounted for over 90% of all valid (1.25 million) and 90% of first-time (366,000) employment-related residence permits held by EECA nationals in 2024. Ukrainians are the largest group by far among both EECA and all non-EU employment permit holders in the EU.²⁶ Data on the number of permits increasingly reflects the retention of existing migrants in EU countries more than the arrival of new immigrants from the Eastern Europe.²⁷ Meanwhile, labour migration from Central Asian countries remains low – representing approximately 1.5% of all valid work permits issued to third country nationals in EU Member States in 2024 and 6.4% of such permits issued to EECA nationals – yet the number of permits has increased sharply since 2018. The largest increases have come from Uzbekistani workers, followed by those from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.²⁸ Meanwhile, EU-27

countries issued almost 88,000 first residence permits to WB nationals in 2024 specifically for employment reasons, with BiH (24%), Serbia (27%), and Albania (22%) the largest origin countries.²⁹

Alongside traditional labour migration drivers in the EECA region, newer factors such as the war in Ukraine and both economic and geopolitical uncertainties are shaping migration patterns in the region.³⁰ Yet shifts in (labour) mobility trends should be attributed not only to changes in the EECA region, but also to parallel ones in Europe, which is looking to new countries of origin for foreign workers. Aside from concrete labour migration policies, including skills mobility partnerships, other policy decisions can be supportive of labour mobility. Notably, the EU has visa-free arrangements with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, which allow stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period for purposes like tourism, business, or family visits. While work permission requires a separate permit, visa liberalisation can strengthen migration networks and lower the cost of exploring work opportunities abroad. In some instances, such as seasonal work in Germany, visa-free arrangements have facilitated labour mobility.³¹ In other cases, policies grant access to the labour market more explicitly: Germany's Western Balkans Regulation, for example, simplifies access to the German labour market for WB nationals.³²

Impacts of emigration

While emigration has brought opportunities for many, it has also created challenges for countries in the region, especially where it leads to shortages in key sectors or occupations that are in demand domestically.³³ Impacts of high-skilled emigration are especially strong if emigrants have a higher skill level than the general (non-migrant) population – which is the case for most origin countries in Europe and Central Asia – and when emigration occurs at higher rates – as is the case in parts of the WB.³⁴ Emigration can contribute to labour shortages, including in essential occupations, if policies are not in place to address this. It may also increase gaps between lower and higher income countries.³⁵ Additionally, emigration can contribute to population decline. Moldova, for example, has seen a population reduction of 14%, driven primarily by emigration, particularly of youth, over the past decade. Similarly, the WB continues to experience net emigration, leading to local labour shortages and brain drain, as here too particularly young and educated populations tend to emigrate.³⁶ Given high emigration rates and demographic decrease, WB economies simultaneously experience acute labour shortages, necessitating growing reliance on foreign labour. An estimated 40% of employers report difficulties in finding required skills, particularly in (health)care, construction and skilled trades, manufacturing, transport and logistics, tourism, agriculture, and IT – many of which have been traditional sectors of employment among WB emigrants.³⁷

Immigration

Local demographic shifts and labour market needs, exacerbated by the emigration of skilled migrant workers, have compelled those in the WB region to examine ways to foster labour immigration. As a destination, work permits in the region have doubled in just a few years, from approximately 46,000 in 2018 to over 100,000 in 2024. These are primarily from countries in South and Southeast Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and the Philippines). According to the World Bank, of the top 15 migrant-receiving countries in Europe and Central Asia between 1990 and 2020, only two are non-EU Prague Process participating states: Ukraine and Kazakhstan.³⁸ However, when measured as a share of the population, only Kazakhstan ranked among the top 15 destinations.³⁹ Administrative and structural barriers, such as quota-based systems and slow administrative procedures, hinder recruitment and labour retention efforts,⁴⁰ highlighting room for improvement in labour migration governance.

II. Analysis of skills mobility partnerships in selected Prague Process states

This section shares the key findings of ICMPD's mapping of SMPs in selected non-EU Prague Process participating states (see Annexes 2,3 and 4 for more information on the research methodology). It analyses the various aspects of SMP design – i.e. how SMPs have been structured in terms of stakeholders involved, planned mobility, and skilling elements. While most of the SMPs identified include EECA or WB partners as origins rather than destinations, the insights also point to lessons that can be taken up for those engaging in SMPs as a destination. This section also highlights how SMPs involving partners in the EECA and the WB compare to the complementary mappings conducted by ICMPD both in an international research project (Link4Skills) and also in support of other regional consultative processes, including the Budapest Process and the Africa-EU Migration and Mobility Dialogue (the Rabat and Khartoum Processes).¹

The mapping includes SMPs that:

- engage government bodies on both sides (at any level);
- combine practical skills development with mobility for some or all participants;
- include one of the selected EECA countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, or Uzbekistan) or WB partners (Albania, BiH, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia); and
- were launched or in operation at any point between January 2015 and December 2025.

Based on these criteria, 39 SMPs in total were identified in the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states – 27 SMPs in EECA and 16 SMPs¹¹ in the WB (see Annex 1). For the purpose of this mapping, all the selected countries are referred to as 'selected non-EU Prague Process participating states'.

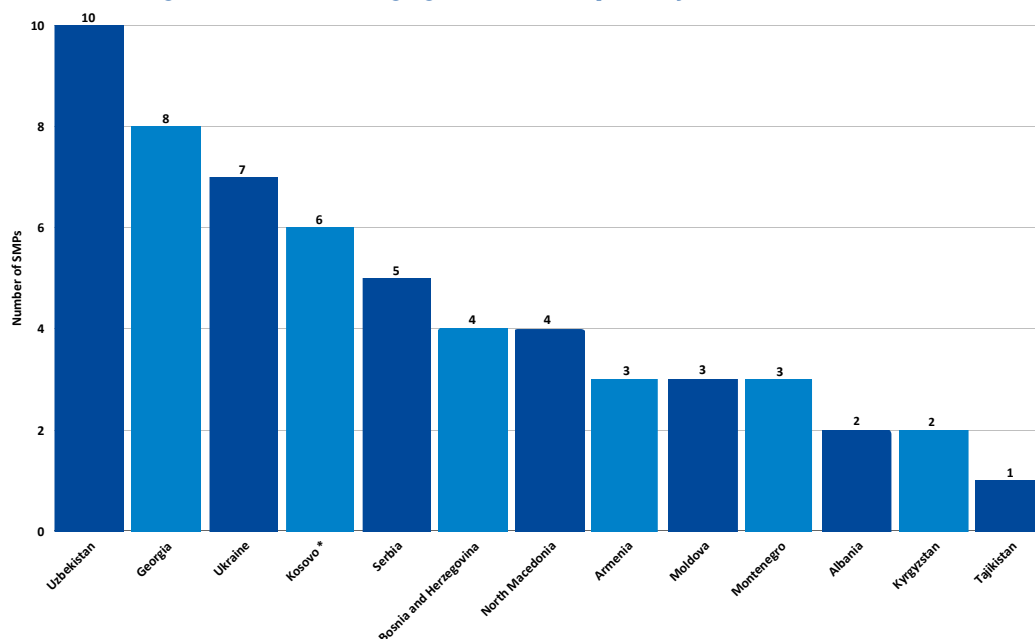
¹ 'Europe and Central Asia,' as used in the World Bank report, refers to: EU-27, Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Russian Federation, Türkiye, Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine), EFTA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), and the United Kingdom. See Bossavie, L., Garrote Sánchez, D. & Makovec, M. (2024), *The Journey Ahead: Supporting Successful Migration in Europe and Central Asia*, Europe and Central Asia Studies, Washington, DC: The World Bank, p. liii.

¹¹ This includes mapping under the EU-funded Link4Skills project covering SMPs involving Austria, Canada, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, and Ukraine, alongside ongoing mappings in West and South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Jordan, and Lebanon) and West and East Africa (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Senegal). As of 14 July 2026, 176 SMPs had been mapped. The mappings were supported through the Prague Process Migration Observatory, Link4Skills Horizon Europe, PSIMM, the Budapest Process, and the EU-funded MMD III programme. The Prague Process and PSIMM are EU-funded through the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), while the Budapest Process combines EU/MPF and bilateral funding from Türkiye, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Australia. These initiatives are implemented by ICMPD.

¹² Some SMPs involved partners in both the EECA and WB regions and are counted in both regional figures accordingly. The overall total avoids this duplication by counting each SMP only once, which is why the total SMPs is lower than the numbers both regions calculated together.

Engagement level

Figure 1: Some governments engage more frequently in SMPs than others.



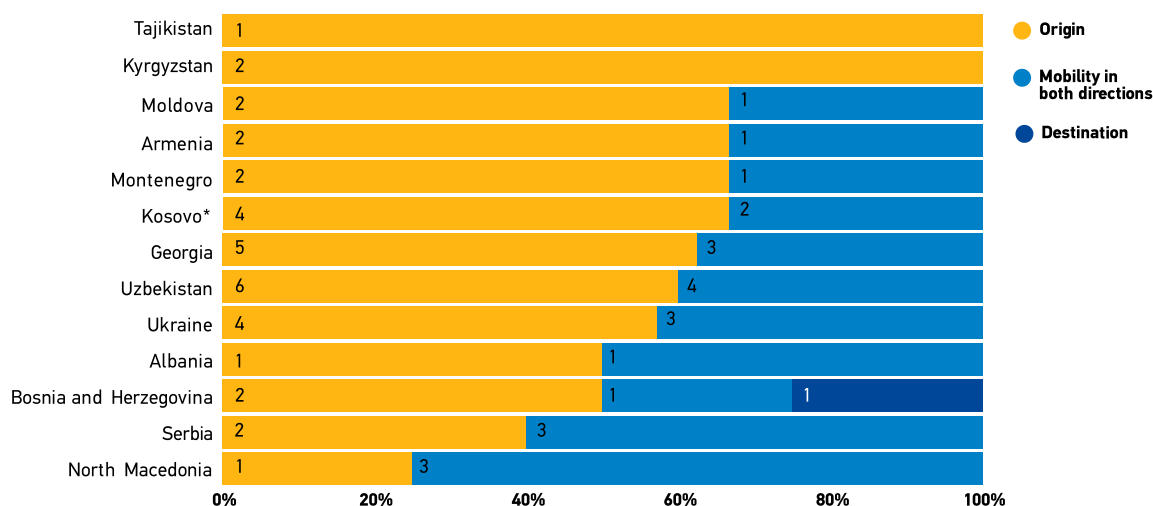
*Note: All references to Kosovo in this content should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Figure 1 illustrates how often each partner has participated in an SMP, whether as the origin, the destination, or both. All the selected geographies have at least one SMP between 2015 and 2025. While there is some variation, all partners are currently engaged in a relatively small number of SMPs (between 1 and 10 SMPs). Many of the 39 identified SMPs engage multiple countries as origin or destination.

Uzbekistan is the most active country among the cases examined, reflecting its high population growth, substantial labour surplus, and limited domestic employment opportunities, which has increased the importance of international labour mobility as a pathway for employment. Accordingly, the Government of Uzbekistan has actively promoted labour migration through bilateral and multilateral initiatives.⁴¹ A recent example is the *Comprehensive migration and mobility partnership agreement* signed with Germany in 2024, which includes training measures for prospective labour migrants from Uzbekistan. In comparison, engagement in SMPs has been more limited elsewhere in Central Asia in the period studied, with Kyrgyzstan participating in two SMPs and Tajikistan in one. There is also variation in terms of the number of SMPs in the WB, although to a more limited extent.

Direction of mobility

Figure 2: EECA and the WB act primarily as an origin within SMPs; however, most are engaged in reciprocal SMPs that facilitate mobility in both directions.



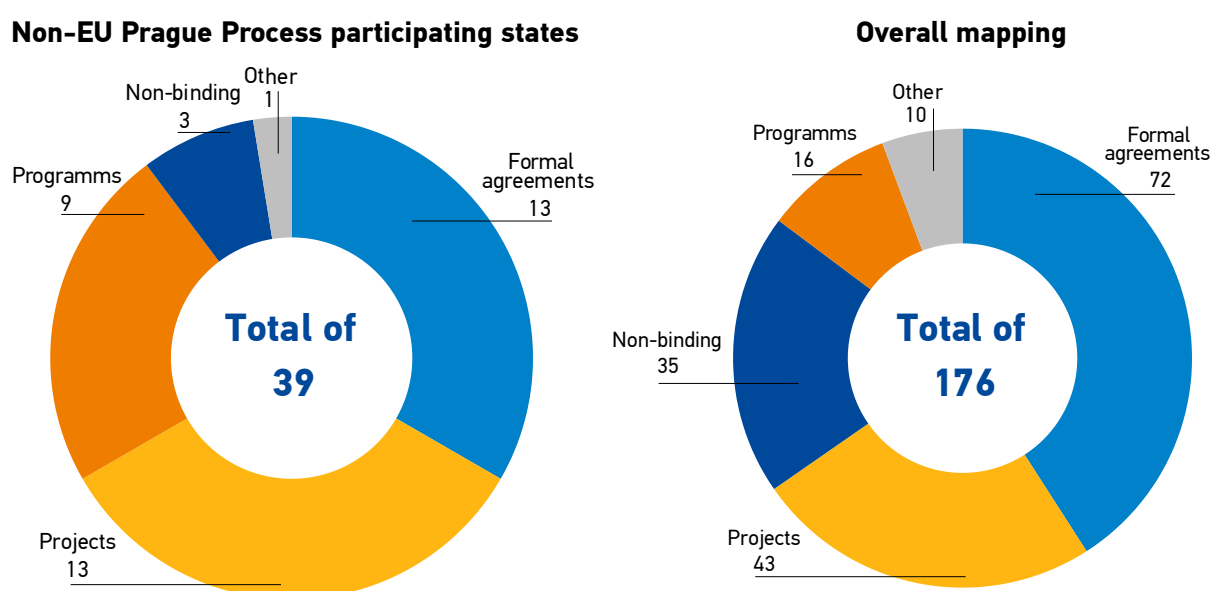
Although EECA and WB primarily act as places of origin, most of those studied (11 of the 13) are part of reciprocal SMPs that allow mobility in both directions, as shown in Figure 2. One example is the Erasmus+ Traineeships programme, which supports two-way mobility and includes, among other partners, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The main destinations for SMPs involving the non-EU Prague Process participating states are EU+ states: 31 of the 39 SMPs include the EU itself, at least one EU Member State, and/or Switzerland. Germany stands out as particularly active, participating in 14 of these partnerships. This is also the case in the overall mapping,^{iv} where Germany was the most active among countries studied.⁴²

The sole example in which a country acts as a destination partner is the bilateral *Cooperation Protocol* to enhance labour mobility signed between BiH and Egypt in December 2025. Focused on strengthening labour mobility, skills exchange and workforce development, the agreement may reflect the Western Balkans' emerging role as a destination region for labour migration, particularly given that all other SMPs identified in the WB were concluded before 2022.

Types of partnerships

Figure 3: Most SMPs are formal agreements or projects.



SMPs are flexible and may adopt a range of approaches, reflecting the different forms and needs of current and potential cooperation between partners. These may include formal agreements, such as legally binding bilateral accords that set out clear obligations between parties; non-binding arrangements, such as memoranda of understanding or memoranda of cooperation, which define shared objectives and frameworks for future collaboration without creating legal enforceability; and projects, which are specific, often time-limited initiatives designed to achieve particular outcomes, including pilot activities. Each form of cooperation may offer distinct advantages, depending on the specific objectives of the partners and stakeholders involved. Formal agreements are often broad and flexible, with limited specification of sectors or entry requirements. In contrast, project-based SMPs tend to be more targeted, operating within a defined timeframe and focusing on specific labour market sectors. Projects, therefore, may be utilised to pilot labour mobility among partners and to address acute labour shortages/surpluses in specific sectors.

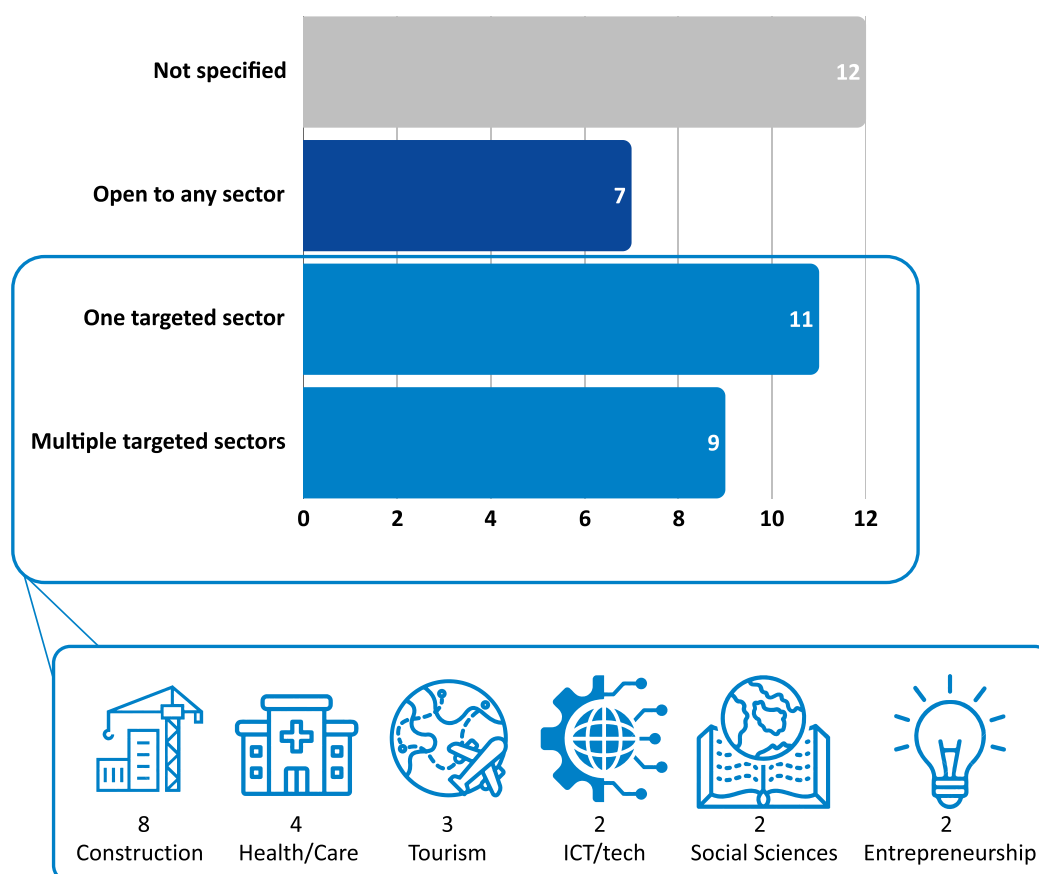
Figure 3 illustrates the various types of partnerships identified in the overall mapping and the mapping of the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states. Formal agreements and projects are the most common types in both cases; however, unlike the overall mapping, where formal agreements are considerably more common than projects, the non-EU Prague Process participating states show an

⁸ Refer to the previous footnote.

equal distribution between the two. Among the non-EU Prague Process participating states, formal agreements are typically bilateral migration or cooperation agreements, in which mobility and skills development form one part of a wider framework. An example is the *Agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Georgia on Migration and Mobility*.⁴³

Sectors targeted

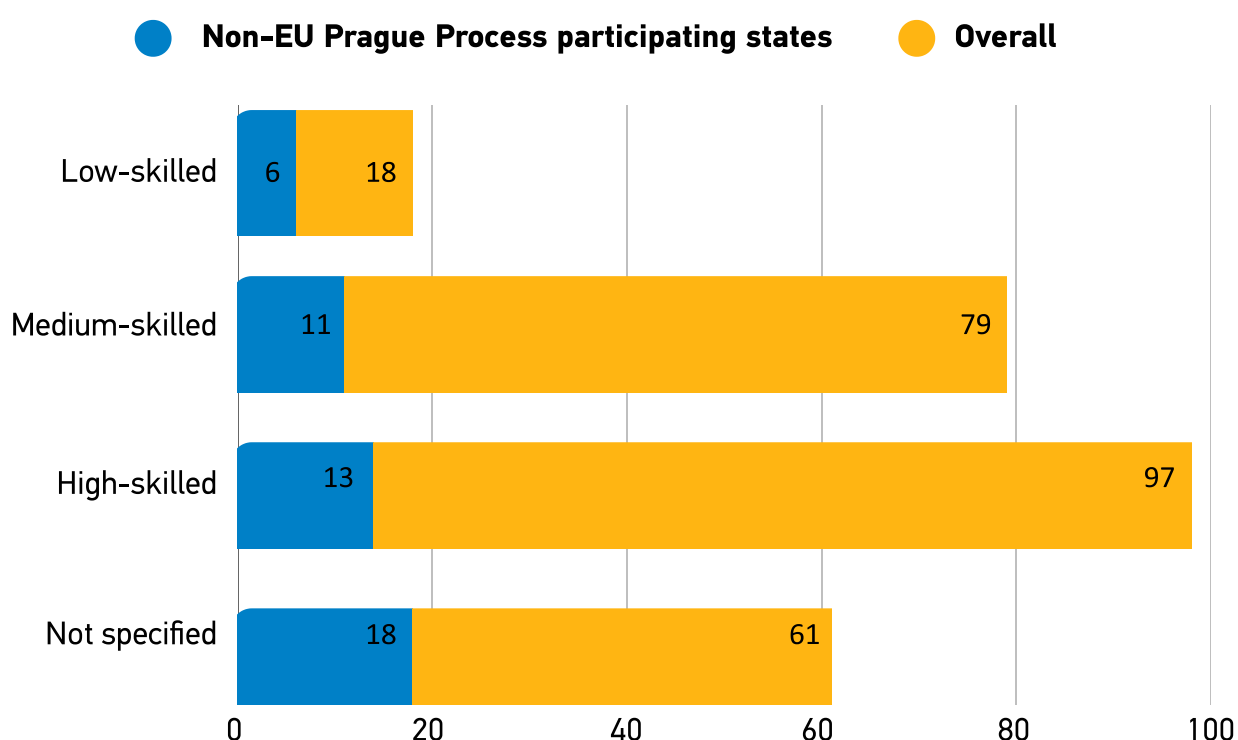
Figure 4: Approximately half of the SMPs target specific sectors or occupations, while the remaining half leave the sector or occupation open or unspecified.



Some SMPs target one or multiple sectors to address specific labour market needs in the origin and/or destination, while other SMPs do not identify a sectoral focus. In both the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states and overall mappings, around half of the identified SMPs target one or more sectors. Construction and healthcare are the most common sectors involving both EECA and WB partners (see Figure 4). Beyond these sectors, SMPs involving EECA countries also target tourism, ICT, entrepreneurship, and the social sciences, including history and international relations, whereas SMPs involving WB partners also target the care sector. Germany dominates among the SMPs facilitating mobility in the sectors of construction and healthcare, reflecting its own labour shortages and needs. Of the eight SMPs targeting construction, six include Germany as a destination. Of the four health and care initiatives, three facilitate mobility to Germany. The three SMPs targeting the tourism sector are all agreements involving Uzbekistan, which specifically promote cooperation in tourism, including internship opportunities. While Uzbekistan has concluded tourism agreements with several countries, not all include a skilling element, and other agreements therefore fall outside the scope of this research. Entrepreneurship is a relatively niche focus area within the overall mapping, with only three SMPs identified. Notably, two of these involve Georgia: *Strengthening the Development Potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through Targeted Circular Migration and Diaspora Mobilization with Germany* and *Strengthening the Partnership between Belgium and Georgia through Temporary Mobility of Entrepreneurs (EMLINK)*. This suggests a special emphasis on entrepreneurship and business mobility within Georgia's SMP portfolio.

Skill levels targeted

Figure 5: SMPs in non-EU Prague Process participating states most commonly target high-skilled and medium-skilled participants.



Note: Overlap exists, as SMPs may enable the participation of more than one skill level.

Figure 5 shows the skill levels targeted by the SMPs in terms of entry requirements for participants at the start of their participation, both for the non-EU Prague Process participating states and for the overall mapping. High-skilled participants are those with advanced expertise and qualifications, often evidenced by higher education degrees or specialised certifications in their respective fields. They have acquired in-depth knowledge and technical capabilities, enabling them to perform effectively in complex roles. Middle-skilled participants may hold technical or vocational qualifications, such as associate degrees, and possess intermediate-level skills that enable them to carry out specialised tasks across various industries. Current students who are still working towards a higher education degree are also included in the middle-skilled group. By contrast, low-skilled participants have basic skills and limited formal education or training, and are often engaged in routine, manual, or unskilled work that does not require extensive qualifications.

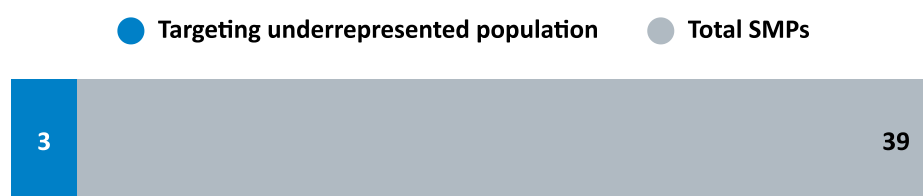
In the non-EU Prague Process participating states, the most commonly targeted skill level in SMPs is high skilled, followed by middle skilled, with only a few SMPs targeting lower skilled individuals. Compared to the overall mapping, the gap between SMPs targeted high- and medium-skilled in non-EU Prague Process participating states is smaller. Notably, SMPs involving the WB are more likely to facilitate skilling and mobility for middle skilled individuals compared to those in the EECA. Most SMPs in the EECA do not specify a specific skill level – of the SMPs that do specify this, most require a high skill level, followed by middle and then low. Some SMPs use terms that could not be categorised along the high/medium/low continuum, e.g. ‘skilled workers’. One reason for the higher level of SMPs leaving the skill level unspecified is the high number of formal agreements; such agreements typically leave many specificities open in the initial SMP design.

The SMPs that require middle or high skills upon entry specify the sector more often than not in the mapping of SMPs in the non-EU Prague Process participating states; common sectors include ICT and engineering. This suggests that skilled SMPs tend to be more sector-specific by design – reflecting both the structured training pathways that exist in these fields and employers’ need to recruit for clearly defined technical roles.

Of the SMPs that require lower skills as an entry requirement, the most common sector (where specified) is construction. This aligns with broader labour market trends in receiving countries, where demand for low-skilled workers is concentrated in manual and trades-based industries – yet it also highlights a gap, given how rarely SMPs target this skill level overall. A key reason for this is that most labour migration pathways to EU countries focus on higher skilled occupations.⁴⁴

Underrepresented groups targeted

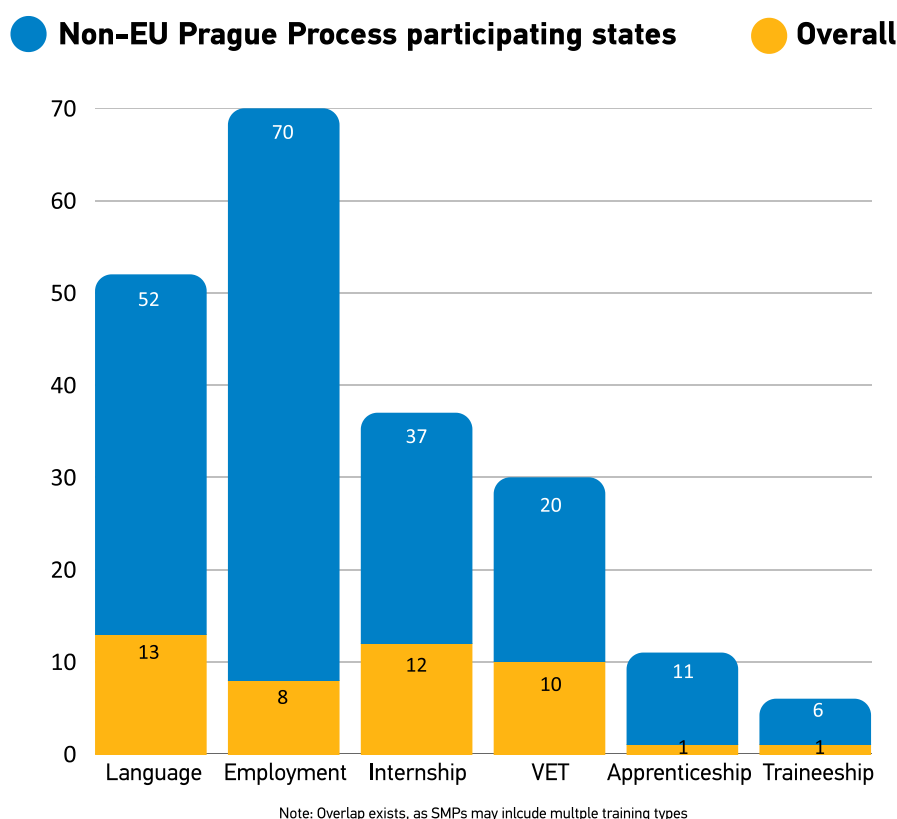
Figure 6: Three out of 39 SMPs specifically target underrepresented groups in their design.



In the overall SMP mapping, nine out of 176 (5%) SMPs target underrepresented groups – such as women, persons with disabilities, minorities, and vulnerable persons – in their design in some way. In comparison, three out of the 39 (8%) SMPs involving the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states explicitly target or include measures to facilitate the participation of underrepresented groups. The *Youth, Employment and Skills in Kosovo* (YES) project*, an SMP between Kosovo* and Germany, actively supports the inclusion of women, people with disabilities, and vulnerable groups. The *Cooperation Protocol to enhance labour mobility from Egypt to BiH* prioritises support for women, youth, and people with disabilities. Moreover, the *Labour Mobility programme of ICT graduates between Slovakia, Ukraine, and Moldova (DIGI TALENTS)* project targets women.

Skilling elements

Figure 7: Around ¾ of SMPs offer on-the-job training as a skilling element.



SMPs adopt different types of skilling approaches: Some primarily provide training that enables individuals to practise the same occupation in another country (e.g. language training and/or support with recognition of qualifications), while others aim to more substantially expand the global skills pool (e.g. multi-year apprenticeships). Skilling may take place in the country of origin, in the destination country, or in both.

The non-EU Prague Process participating states closely mirror the overall trend, with three in four SMPs offering some form of an on-the-job training (the types of which are bolded in Figure 8, above). Such training is typically delivered in the country of destination and may take the form of internships, vocational training, or traineeships. The remaining 25% of SMPs do not include on-the-job training. Instead, they entail a range of skilling components such as language training, professional development courses, and specialised courses in areas such as ICT and management (not included in the figure above). These skilling components can be delivered in both the origin and destination. In the non-EU Prague Process participating states, skilling primality takes place in the destination, with on-the-job-training or internships. The training that takes place in the origin is primarily pre-departure language training.

Mobility models

Figure 8: Most SMPs facilitate mobility for all participants.

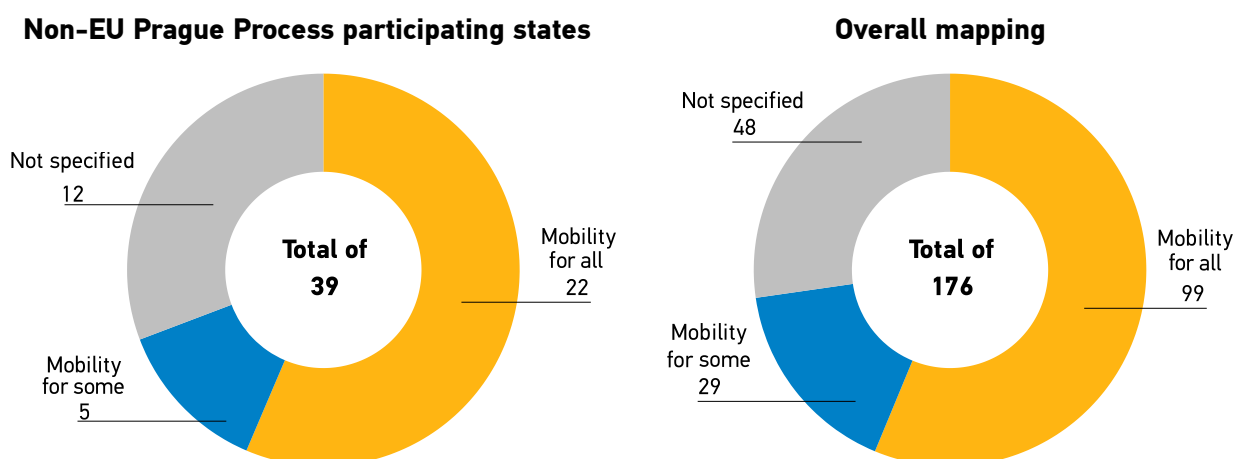
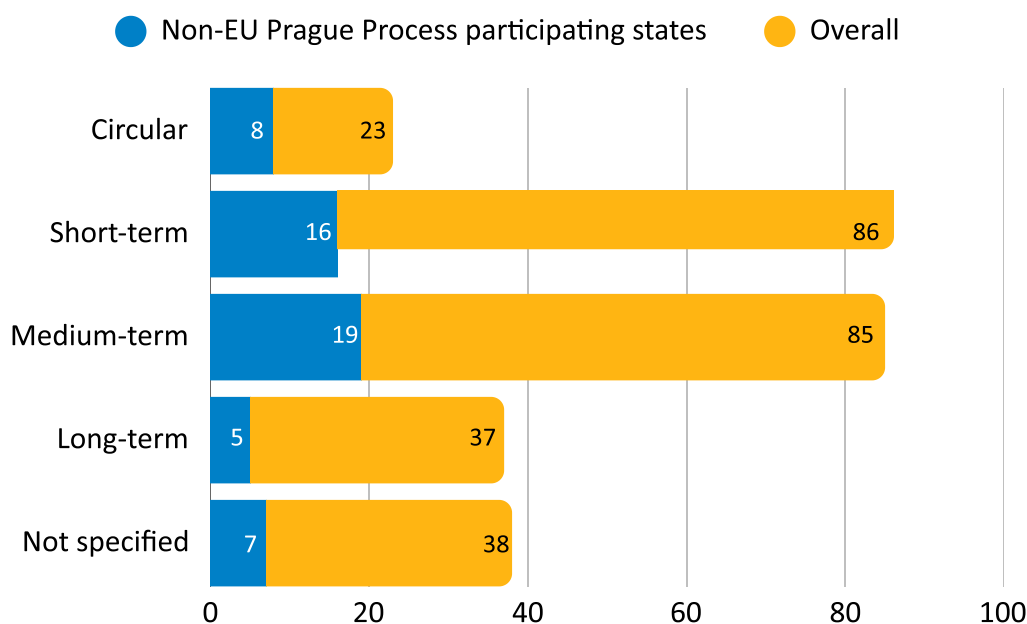


Figure 8 indicates whether SMPs facilitate mobility for all participants or only for a subset of them. In EECA and the WB, more than half of SMPs identified facilitate mobility for all participants, meaning that every individual participating in the initiative moves to the destination for a certain amount of time. By contrast, dual home and away tracks are less common, with only five SMPs using the two-track model: *Digital Explorers II*; *DIGI TALENTS*; *Temporary Labour Migration of Georgian Workers to Poland and Estonia*; *tQMP Bau Academy*; and *YES*. Of these, four are projects. In the overall mapping, 16 out of the 29 SMPs offering home and away tracks are also projects, suggesting that this model is most commonly implemented through project-based partnerships.

Furthermore, the overall mapping indicates growing interest in this approach: 55% of the identified SMPs with two tracks were launched in 2023 or after. This suggests that the model is gaining popularity and may offer a useful option for the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states to consider in future SMP negotiations. With the promotion of the Global Skill Partnership and EU Talent Partnership approaches to combining skilling and mobility, SMPs combining home and away tracks are becoming increasingly common as a strategy for generating mutual benefits by providing skilling both for those meant to move to a destination abroad for a certain period of time and those meant to remain in origin labour markets. At the same time, there have been concerns that the skills development taking place in origin countries is often not aligned with the needs of origin labour markets⁴⁵ and that access to SMP participation (training and/or mobility) is typically still limited to those who have already benefitted from educational opportunities.⁴⁶

Length of mobility

Figure 9: SMPs in non-EU Prague Process participating states most commonly facilitate medium- and short-term mobility.



Note: Overlap exists, as SMPs may encompass more than one type of mobility.

SMPs facilitate different lengths of mobility and may offer more than one option. Short-term mobility refers to periods of less than one year; medium-term mobility encompasses one to five years; and long-term mobility refers to movements of five years or longer, often intended to lead to permanent settlement and sometimes including a pathway to citizenship.

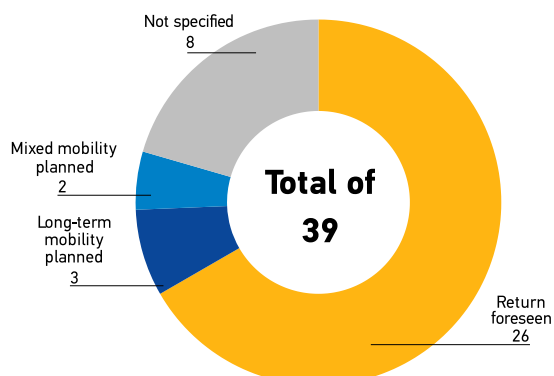
In the WB region, the most common length facilitated is short-term mobility (38%), followed by medium-term mobility (25%) and then circular and long-term mobility (13% each). This trend is roughly in line with the overall mapping. In EECA, however, the most common type is medium-term mobility (67%), followed by short-term (40%), circular (22%), and long-term (11%) mobility.

While these findings reflect the design of SMPs, actual mobility trajectories may differ in practice. For instance, individuals who are expected to return may instead transition to another status and remain in the destination, while those initially envisaged as long-term migrants may at some point decide to return. Such developments are not captured in this mapping, as they go beyond the data collected on the design of the partnerships.

Types of mobility design

Figure 10: More than half of mapped SMPs foresee the return of participants to the origin.

Non-EU Prague Process participating states



Overall mapping

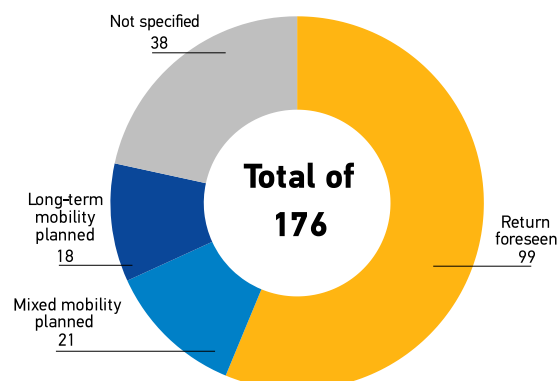


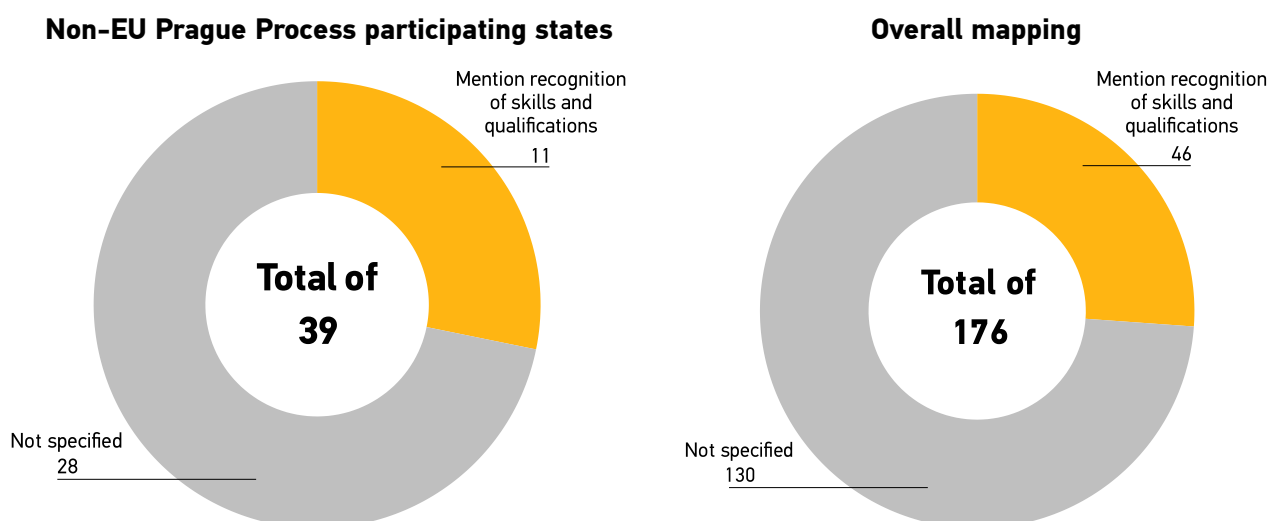
Figure 10 categorises the SMPs into three types of mobility design:

1. *Return foreseen* – Participants are expected to return to their country of origin after completing the mobility scheme. This is typically the case in SMPs based on short-term or circular mobility, and in some partnerships, return is explicitly noted.
2. *Long-term mobility planned* – SMPs facilitate long-term mobility, generally through mobility pathways lasting more than five years.
3. *Mixed mobility planned* – SMPs combine different forms of mobility, facilitating long-term stays for some participants while offering short-term, medium-term, and/or circular mobility opportunities for others.

In the overall mapping, the most common type is return foreseen, followed by mixed mobility planned and long-term mobility planned. In the non-EU Prague Process participating states, return foreseen is also the most common design; however, more SMPs facilitate long-term mobility than mixed mobility. Notably, none of SMPs identified in the WB region envisaged mixed mobility arrangements.

Recognition of skills and qualifications

Figure 11: A little over ¾ of SMPs do not account for the recognition of skills and qualifications.



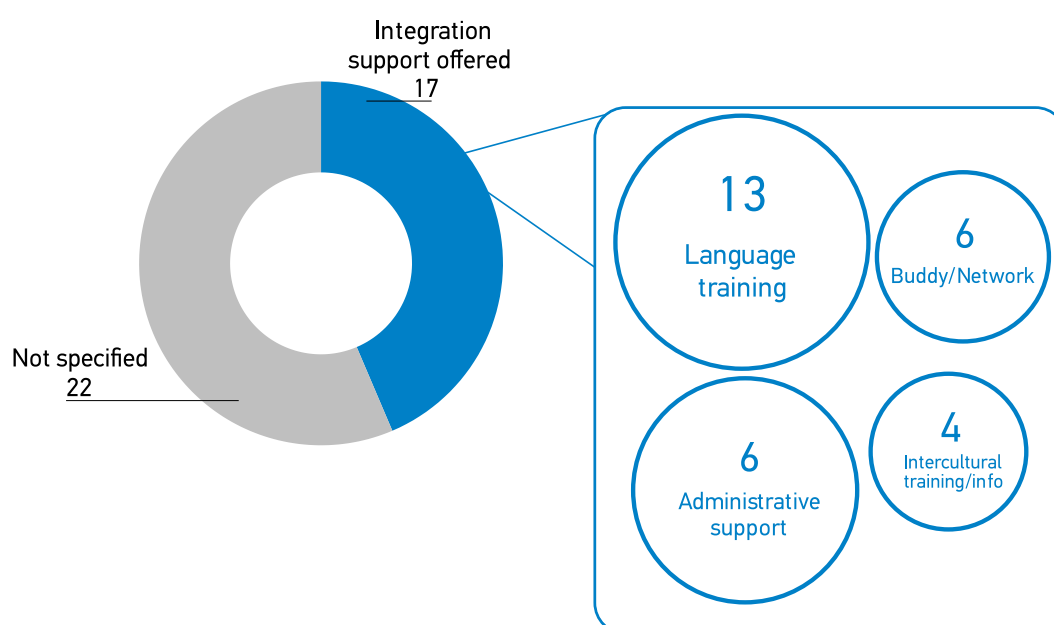
One of the key challenges faced by migrants in the context of labour mobility and labour market integration is the recognition of their existing skills and qualifications.⁴⁷ Effective validation and recognition mechanisms are essential to enable individuals to get a job that matches their existing experience and qualifications, thereby reducing the risk of deskilling and supporting sustainable labour market integration and thus talent retention. It also means that migrants – and employers – can make full use of skills and competencies obtained.

Of the 39 SMPs identified in non-EU Prague Process participating states, 11 include some form of support for the recognition of skills or qualifications. Such measures are slightly more common in SMPs involving WB partners, where they are included in 31% of cases, compared to 22% of SMPs involving EECA countries. However, it is important to note that five of these SMPs merely require participants to complete the standard recognition procedure upon arrival in the destination country, rather than providing dedicated recognition support or adapted procedures. As these procedures can be lengthy and complex, current SMPs relying on existing procedures do not necessarily reduce the barriers faced by participants. By supporting qualification recognition and alignment, SMPs can help participants make effective use of their skills in the destination country, while ensuring that the competencies acquired through the skilling component of the SMP are recognised and relevant in both the origin and destination labour market.

Some SMPs go beyond standard recognition procedures by actively supporting the recognition or alignment of skills and qualifications. For example, *Handwerk bietet Zukunft* between BiH and Germany assists participants with the recognition of their qualifications and provides adaptation training to help them acquire any skills needed for full recognition within the German vocational training system. Similarly, *tQMP Bau Academy* applies a curriculum co-design approach: the Bau Academy offers a three-year apprenticeship in Pristina based on the professional standards of the German vocational training system, while also tailoring the training to labour market needs in Kosovo*. *Future International Talents for German Climate Businesses*, between Uzbekistan, Colombia, and Germany, also supports adaptive qualification measures within the project where relevant. In some SMPs, consideration of qualification recognition is less concrete and remains at the level of policy commitments, such as within high-level agreements. For example, the *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt* states that the parties will consider the mutual recognition of academic, professional, and vocational qualifications.

Integration and reintegration support

Figure 12: Around 40% of SMPs in non-EU Prague Process participating states specify the provision of integration support.



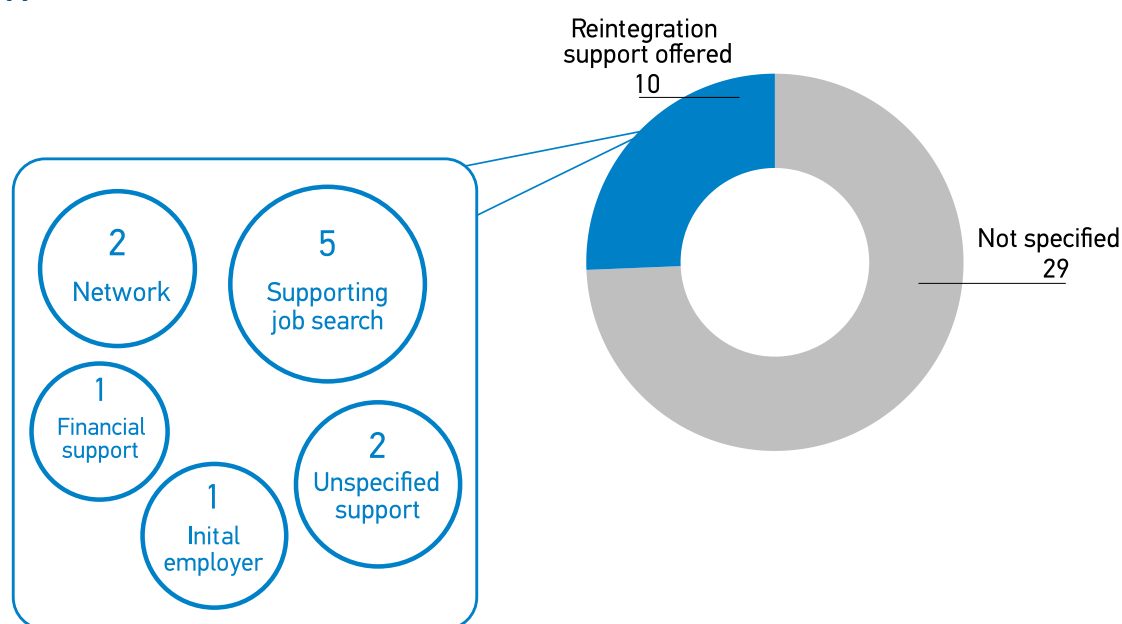
Note: Overlap exists, as SMPs may include more than one integration measure

Social integration support, aimed at assisting in the settlement process, can take many forms. Examples include language instruction, cultural orientation activities, administrative support, and mentorship programmes. Integration support can help reduce underemployment and improve the alignment between migrant skills and labour market needs, as well as support SMP participants after their move. Such support becomes increasingly important in the context of longer-term mobility and is closely linked to talent retention.⁴⁸

44% of SMPs in non-EU Prague Process participating states specify the provision of some type of integration support, most commonly language training (13 of 17 SMPs). In 9 of these 13 SMPs, integration support goes beyond language training alone, including buddy schemes, administrative support, or intercultural training upon arrival in the destination country. In comparison, in the overall mapping, social integration support was specified in 39% of SMPs, most commonly in the form of language training.

In the SMPs in non-EU Prague participating states, all of the SMPs that facilitate longer-term mobility in some way – either mixed mobility or long-term planned – also include some form of integration support. Similarly, in the overall mapping, 31 SMPs of the 39 SMPs that plan long-term mobility for some or for all include some form of integration support, showing when longer-term mobility is planned, integration support is more likely to be included.

Figure 13: 26% of SMPs in the non-EU Prague Process participating states offer reintegration support.



Note: Overlap exists, as SMPs may include more than one reintegration measure

Reintegration support refers to measures that help (prospective) returnees settle back into their origin; this could be offered before return (in the destination) or after return (in the origin). Examples include job search support, grants, alumni networks, buddy programmes, CV and interview preparation, professional guidance, and reintegration opportunities at the former employer.

Among the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states, two-thirds of SMPs foresee the return of participants (Figure 10), while a further 8% facilitate mixed mobility, meaning that at least some participants are expected to return. This illustrates that return is a significant feature of SMPs in the region. Yet, reintegration support is offered less often than integration support (see Figures 12 and 13). Nevertheless, only 10 of the 28^{vi} partnerships that envision return for some or all participants include specific reintegration support for returning participants; the most common measure is assistance with job search upon return. This points to an opportunity to enhance current SMPs by adding such support or linking returning participants with existing assistance.

A similar pattern can be observed in the overall mapping: Although 119 SMPs envision the return of some or all participants, only 25 of these SMPs include reintegration support. Despite this relatively low share, the inclusion of reintegration support appears to be gaining in importance – one-third (nine of 27) of the SMPs in the overall mapping that include such measures were launched since 2023.

^{vi} The overall supply of skilled workers available for employment across countries

III. Key takeaways for the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states

SMPs hold significant potential to address labour shortages while promoting skills development and youth exchange in ways that reflect the priorities of both countries of origin and destination. The analysis presented in this paper highlights the main characteristics of SMPs concluded with the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states, providing an evidence base to inform future negotiations, the development of new SMPs, and the enhancement of existing ones. The key takeaways below may serve as useful considerations in these efforts.

SMPs can serve as an effective diplomatic tool to strengthen international partnerships and formalise existing labour migration channels. The mapping of SMPs in the region indicates that both formal bilateral agreements and project-based partnerships are widely used for this purpose. For example, the *EMLINK* project between Georgia and Belgium explicitly identifies the strengthening of political and economic relations between the two countries as one of its intended outcomes.

The findings also demonstrate the flexibility of SMPs. They can take a variety of forms, from bilateral agreements to project-based initiatives, target specific sectors such as construction and health-care, and incorporate diverse approaches to skills development, including language training, vocational education, and on-the-job training delivered either in the country of origin or destination. Likewise, mobility arrangements can be tailored to meet the needs of both partners through models such as dual home-and-away tracks, varying mobility durations, or circular migration schemes. Where partner countries seek to strengthen cooperation – for example by improving the recognition of qualifications, aligning training with shared standards, or addressing labour shortages in specific sectors – SMPs can provide a structured framework for negotiating arrangements that deliver mutual benefits for both countries of origin and destination.

While most SMPs in the region foresee the return of participants, reintegration support is not consistently incorporated into partnership design. Moreover, short-term mobility may not always align with the preferences and long-term needs of either migrants or employers.⁴⁹ For the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states that primarily serve as countries of origin, strengthening reintegration support should be an important consideration in future SMP negotiations to facilitate participants' smoother return and reintegration. Where such measures are not included in new or existing partnerships, countries of origin can also ensure that returning participants are informed about and able to access available reintegration services. Conversely, should EECA or the WB engage in future SMPs as destination countries for longer-term migration, incorporating integration support into partnership design would be a valuable element to facilitate migrants' successful inclusion.

Many SMP participants already have qualifications, yet the recognition of these qualifications is not consistently part of the SMP design. Middle- and high-skilled individuals are most commonly targeted in SMPs among non-EU Prague Process participating states. However, only a little over one-quarter of SMPs elaborate an approach to the recognition of this experience – and half of these rely on the existing recognition processes. As the recognition of qualifications is widely acknowledged as a key enabler of skills mobility and skills-matched employment, countries should consider giving greater attention to this issue both within SMPs and through complementary policy measures. Potential approaches include investing in bridging courses, developing jointly designed curricula, establishing mutual recognition arrangements, and implementing other innovative mechanisms that facilitate qualification recognition beyond traditional approaches. In this context, the EU's forthcoming Skills Portability Initiative^v may provide a relevant framework for further action, including through proposed common rules to simplify procedures for the recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals.

^v Read more here: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/news/strengthening-labour-mobility-through-skills-portability-initiative-spi>

Dual home-and-away tracks have become increasingly common in recent years as a strategy to ensure that recruitment approaches contribute to building the global labour pool^{vi} and to strengthening the sustainability of skills mobility. Although this model is not yet widely used in the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states, it may represent a valuable option for future SMPs, particularly where there are concerns about brain drain or skills needs in countries of origin. This should be approached and designed carefully to ensure equal access to training programmes and alignment with the labour market needs of the country of origin.

SMPs have potential to address labour and skills shortages and surpluses in the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states. Geopolitical and demographic developments are reshaping labour mobility across the region, opening up the possibility for states to use SMPs to facilitate mobility that meets the needs of all partners. SMPs can serve as a tool to recruit needed labour in a more targeted and sustainable way. They can also help to alleviate skills mismatches and start language training prior to arrival, helping to address government concerns. For emerging destination countries, previous experience participating in SMPs as countries of origin provides a valuable foundation for designing development-sensitive partnerships from the destination perspective. At the same time, the selected non-EU Prague Process participating states may continue engaging in SMPs as countries of origin, with the aim of leveraging migration as a tool for development and pursuing governmental cooperation to help protect migrants' rights. In this context, the dual home-and-away tracks may offer a promising approach to simultaneously address labour market needs in both countries of origin and destination.

^{vi} The overall supply of skilled workers available for employment across countries

ANNEX 1: SMPS IDENTIFIED IN THE SELECTED NON-EU PRAGUE PROCESS PARTICIPATING STATES

SMP name	Origin	Destination	Partnership type	Start year	End year	Target sector(s) or occupation(s)	Mobility type 1
Agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Georgia on Migration and Mobility	Georgia	Germany	Bilateral agreement	2023	Not specified	Not specified	Circular (seasonal work), short-term, and medium-term
Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt	Egypt, Uzbekistan	Egypt, Uzbekistan	Bilateral agreement	2018	Ongoing	Humanitarian, natural, and applied sciences	Not specified
Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt on cooperation in the tourism sector	Egypt, Uzbekistan	Egypt, Uzbekistan	Multilateral Agreement	2019	Ongoing	Tourism	Not specified
Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Republic of India on cooperation in the tourism sector	India, Uzbekistan	India, Uzbekistan	Bilateral agreement	2018	Ongoing	Tourism	Not specified
Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Russian Federation on developing cooperation in the tourism sector	Russia, Uzbekistan	Russia, Uzbekistan	Bilateral agreement	2017	Ongoing	Tourism	Not specified
Agreement between Ukraine and Spain on the regulation and organisation of labour migration flows between the two states	Spain, Ukraine	Spain, Ukraine	Bilateral agreement	2010	Ongoing	Open to all	Short-term and medium-term (up to 12 months, extendable for 6 additional months depending on the employer's needs)
Comprehensive migration and mobility partnership agreement	Uzbekistan	Germany	Bilateral agreement	2024	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Cooperation Protocol to enhance labour mobility	Egypt	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Cooperation Protocol	Signed 2025	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified

Craftsmanship offers a future (Handwerk bietet Zukunft)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany (Koblenz, Potsdam, Munich)	Project	2020	2023	Electrical trade, metal construction and plant mechanics, and heating and air conditioning technology	Long-term
Digital Explorers II	Armenia, Kenya, Nigeria	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	Project	2023	Ongoing (until September 2026)	ICT	Short-term, medium-term, and long-term
Employment Permit System	Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam	Republic of Korea	Programme based on a series of MoUs	2004	Not specified	Not specified	Medium-term (EPS allows foreigners to work for 3 years, but workers' contracts may be renewed, allowing them to stay for up to 4 years and 10 months; afterward, they must return permanently to their home countries, unless the employer makes a special request for the worker)
Erasmus+ Traineeships	European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye	European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye	Programme	2014	Ongoing (with a 6-year timeline - first phase: 2014-2020; second phase: 2021-2027)	Not specified	Short-term
Erasmus+ training courses	European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye	European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye	Project	2014	Ongoing (with 6-year timeline - first phase: 2014-2020; second phase: 2021-2027)	Open to all	Short-term
European Solidarity Corps	European Union, Iceland, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Liechtenstein; partner countries neighbouring the EU: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt,	European Union, Iceland, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Liechtenstein; partner countries neighbouring the EU: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina,	Project	2016	Ongoing	Not specified	Short-term

	Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo*, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, State of Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine	Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo*, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, State of Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine					
Future International Talents for German Climate Businesses	Colombia, Uzbekistan	Germany	Project	2024	Ongoing (until 2027)	Electronics technician for energy and building technology, metalworker/ metal fabricator, road construction worker/road builder, bricklayer/structural engineering worker, concrete and reinforced concrete worker/structural engineering worker, automotive mechatronics technician, finishing trade worker (specialisation: carpentry), plant mechanic for sanitary, heating, and air conditioning systems, and roofer	Long-term
International Experience Canada, Young Professional Program (YPP)	Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy,	Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany,	Programme based on bilateral reciprocal youth mobility agreements	1951	Ongoing	Open to all	Short-term and medium-term (visas are granted for 24 months depending on the applicant's nationality and the length of the job offer)

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

	Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom	Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom					
Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET)	Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam	Japan	Programme	1987	Ongoing	Education, sports, international relations (assistant language teachers (ALTs), coordinators for international relations (CIRs), or sports exchange advisors (SEAs)	Medium-term (minimum of 1 year, maximum of 5 years)
Joint Declaration of Intent between the Federal Ministry of Health of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kosovo*	Germany, Kosovo*	Germany, Kosovo*	Declaration of intent	2019	Not specified	Health and care	Short-term

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Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Georgia	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom	Multilateral agreement	2009	Not specified	Not specified	Short-term, medium-term, and circular
Labour Mobility programme of ICT graduates between Slovakia, Ukraine and Moldova (DIGI TALENTS)	Moldova, Ukraine	Slovakia	Programme	2021	2024	ICT	Short-term and medium-term (12-month job for Ukrainian and Moldovan participants or 3-month traineeship for Moldovan participants)
Memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of the Italian Republic and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Albania concerning the Implementation of the Agreement on labour migration	Albania	Italy	Memorandum of understanding	2009	Ongoing	Not specified	Circular should be encouraged
Memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a bilateral skills and mobility partnership	Kosovo*	Germany	Memorandum of understanding	2016	Not specified	Construction	Not specified
Professional Qualification for Future Specialists and Managers for North Macedonia	North Macedonia	Germany	Project	2021	2022	Not specified	Short-term
Scholarship Programme of the Government of Poland for Young Scientists	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan	Poland	Programme	2003	Ongoing	Priority sectors include specialisations within the humanities and social sciences such as history, international relations, political science, journalism, sociology, ethnology, cultural studies, social psychology, administration, management, law, and related fields	Short-term and medium-term mobility (10-12 months)

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Strengthening the Development Potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through Targeted Circular Migration and Diaspora Mobilization	Georgia, Germany	Georgia, Germany	Project	2013	2016	Healthcare, hospitality, and entrepreneurship	Medium-term, long-term, and circular
Strengthening the Partnership between Belgium and Georgia through Temporary Mobility of Entrepreneurs (EMLINK)	Georgia	Belgium	Project	2023	2025	Entrepreneurship	Short-term
Sustainable recruitment of nurses from foreign countries for employment in Germany (Triple Win Nurses)	Bosnia and Herzegovina, India (Kerala and Telangana), Indonesia, Jordan, Philippines, Tunisia	Germany	Project	2013	Not specified	Healthcare	Long-term
Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)	Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam	Japan	Programme	1993	Ongoing	Multiple ⁷	Medium-term (training up to 5 years)
Temporary Labour Migration of Georgian Workers to Poland and Estonia	Georgia	Estonia, Poland	Project	2015	2017	STEM, construction, and manufacturing	Circular
tQMP Bau Academy	Kosovo*	Germany	Project	2018	2021	Construction	Medium-term
Vocational Training Partnership: LBB Initiative	Kosovo*	Germany	Project	2017	Not specified	Construction	Circular mobility
Young Professional Bilateral Agreement	Switzerland, Ukraine	Switzerland, Ukraine	Bilateral agreement	2008	Ongoing	Not specified	Medium-term (18 months)

⁷ Agricultural cultivation, livestock agriculture, silviculture, fishing boat fisheries, aquaculture, manufacture of food products, manufacture of marine processed foods, manufacture of agricultural processed foods, manufacture of livestock processed foods, manufacture of tea, manufacture of bread, manufacture of confectionery, manufacture of fermented food, manufacture of noodles, manufacture of ready-made meals, manufacture of pickles, manufacture of salt, manufacture of dried food, manufacture of soy sauce, manufacture of miso, manufacture of tofu, manufacture of frozen food, manufacture of non-heated processed foods, manufacture of bottled and canned foods, manufacture of side dishes, manufacture of instant foods, manufacture of seasoning, manufacture of beverages, manufacture of oil and fat products, manufacture of flour, manufacture of sugar, textile manufacturing, knitting, dyeing, sewing, embroidery, manufacture of bedding, manufacture of curtains, manufacture of carpets, manufacture of canvas products, manufacture of clothing accessories, manufacture of leather products, manufacture of footwear, manufacture of bags, woodworking, furniture making, printing, book binding, paper product manufacturing, cardboard manufacturing, plastic moulding, reinforced plastic products manufacturing, rubber products manufacturing, metal casting, metal forging, die casting, machining, metal press, sheet metal, iron work, metal surface treatment, electroplating, welding, metal heat treatment, finishing, machine assembly, machine inspection, machine maintenance, electronic device assembly, electronic circuit assembly, print wiring board manufacturing, construction work, plumbing, piping, tiling, interior finishing, heat insulation, painting, waterproofing, scaffolding, carpentry, stone work, concrete work, formwork, rebar placement, road paving, well drilling, heavy equipment operation, automobile maintenance, motorcycle maintenance, shipbuilding, ship machinery installation, industrial packaging, instrument assembly, measuring instrument manufacturing, watch assembly, jewellery processing, glass product manufacturing, ceramic product manufacturing, brick and tile manufacturing, concrete product manufacturing, building cleaning management, care work, airport ground handling, cargo handling, cabin cleaning, agriculture machinery maintenance, forestry machinery maintenance, food processing machinery maintenance, textile machinery maintenance, machine tool maintenance, construction machinery maintenance, electrical equipment assembly, electrical wiring, control panel assembly, air-conditioning equipment installation, refrigeration equipment installation.

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Young Professional System	Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Canada, Cape Verde, Congo, Gabon, Georgia, Morocco, Mauritius, Montenegro, New Zealand, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, Tunisia, United States	France	Programme	2013	Ongoing	Open to all; in New Zealand there is a focus on agriculture	Medium-term
Young Professional System	Serbia	France	Bilateral agreement	2013	Ongoing	Open to all	Medium-term
Young Professional System	Montenegro	France	Bilateral agreement	2013	Ongoing	Open to all	Medium-term
Young Professional System	Georgia	France	Bilateral agreement	2013	Ongoing	Open to all	Medium-term
Young Professionals Programme/ International Trainee Exchange Agreements	Argentina, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Ukraine, United States	Switzerland	Programme	Not specified	Ongoing	Not specified	Short-term, medium-term, and circular (maximum of 18 months; several stays are possible as long as overall duration does not exceed a total of 18 months)
Young Professionals Programme/ International Trainee Exchange Agreements	Ukraine	Switzerland	Bilateral agreement	2002	Ongoing	Not specified	Short-term, medium-term, and circular (maximum of 18 months; several stays are possible as long as overall duration does not exceed a total of 18 months)
Youth, Employment and Skills in Kosovo* (YES)	Kosovo*	Germany	Project	2017	2021	Construction	Short-term

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ANNEX 2: METHODOLOGY

Drawing upon the broad definitions of SMPs articulated by IOM⁵⁰ and the OECD⁵¹, this mapping of SMPs takes a broad approach to analysing partnerships at the intersection of skilling and mobility. It includes SMPs that:

- engage government bodies on both sides (at any level);
- combine practical skills development with mobility for some or all participants;
- include one of the selected EECA countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, or Uzbekistan) or WB partners (Albania, BiH, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia); and
- were launched or in operation at any point between January 2015 and December 2025.

This paper builds on research conducted under the EU-funded Link4Skills project,⁵² which mapped SMPs involving one or more project countries (Austria, Canada, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, and Ukraine). It also draws on ongoing mappings conducted by ICMPD in selected countries in the Mediterranean, South Asia, and Africa. All mappings are based on extensive desk research, drawing on publicly available primary sources such as international agreements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), project websites, and news articles, as well as secondary sources. In addition, initial findings were shared with relevant partners of the selected countries at the Prague Process Workshop on Labour Migration (March 2026) for feedback and validation.

The inventory captures 18 data points (see Annex 3), which were selected and validated with partners and guided by both conceptual and practical considerations. The chosen parameters primarily reflect the design of SMPs, as these could be captured through desk research. They also include aspects that capture practical constraints and recurring criticism of labour mobility initiatives in the current policy debate; these include, for instance, the number of participants, and the recognition of qualifications.⁵³

ANNEX 3: INVENTORY DATA COLLECTION POINTS

- Partnership **name** is listed (in English).
- **Origin** and **destination** are specified, with subnational places of origin and destination highlighted where relevant.
- **Partnership type** refers to the formal arrangement underpinning the cooperation between partners, which can take several forms.
 - Formal agreements, such as bilateral agreements, are binding arrangements between two or more states or organisations.
 - Non-binding agreements, including MoUs or memoranda of cooperation, are less legally binding; however, they outline shared intentions and frameworks for future collaboration between the signatories.
 - Projects are more specific and often more time-bound initiatives designed to achieve a specific goal, including pilots.
 - Finally, the “other” category encompasses a range of arrangements, such as scholarship agreements and recruitment agreements, which support cooperation between signatories in a targeted and specified way.
- The **start year** and **end year** are marked, along with other relevant information such as the planned end date for ongoing initiatives or automatic renewal, when relevant.
- **Target sector(s) or profession(s)** refers to the main labour market area(s) of focus of the partnership, where this is specified. Some SMPs are explicitly open to participants from all professional backgrounds, while others specify a certain field or occupation, and yet others do not specify a focus.

- **Main stakeholders** outlines who leads, manages, and/or implements the partnership, including the signatories of agreements.
- **Funding** indicates who finances the initiatives, whether this is a specific entity, a stakeholder type, and/or co-financed.
- **Number of participants** records how many people were either planned to participate, or actually participated, in the partnership. Depending on the data available, this figure can refer either to the number of individuals named (e.g. capped participation) or targeted in the agreement regarding skilling and/or mobility, or to the number who have actually taken part in the SMP over a given period (for a particular year, cumulative, etc.).
- Where applicable, the inventory notes whether the SMP aims to **target underrepresented populations** such as women, persons with disabilities, particular minority groups, or persons in need of international protection.
- **Mobility type** describes the intended duration and scope of mobility planned under the SMP, including details where available.
 - Short-term mobility refers to mobility lasting less than 1 year.
 - Medium-term mobility refers to mobility lasting from 1 year up to 5 years.
 - Long-term mobility is 5 years or longer, often intended to lead to permanent settlement and sometimes including a pathway to citizenship.
 - Circular mobility refers to repeated movements between countries, where participants return and move again as part of a structured cycle, often short-term in temporality.

The inventory indicates whether an SMP provides **mobility opportunities for some or all** participants to another country. For example, some SMPs plan skilling for a certain number of participants in a country of origin but plan mobility only for a smaller subset of them.

- The inventory marks which **type of mobility design** each SMP uses, based on three approaches identified by the researchers across the mapped SMPs:
 1. mixed mobility planned;
 2. return foreseen; and
 3. long-term mobility planned.
- **Participant eligibility requirements** details whether the SMP targets a particular group, for instance related to career stage, occupation, or skill level. Eligibility requirements in the collected initiatives vary widely, from specific preconditions to have experience in a particular sector to broader classifications based on skill levels. To simplify this diversity of data, the requirements were categorised in three main sub-categories:
 1. career stage (e.g. current student or recent graduate);
 2. occupation (e.g. currently working in a certain field or profession); and
 3. skill level as defined in the SMP agreement (e.g. high, medium, or low where this could be determined, or the specific language of the SMP if this did not align with the team's high/medium/low classification, e.g. "skilled talent").

Where additional criteria are explicitly stated in SMP documents, for instance relating to language proficiency or the lack of a criminal record, these are also included.

- **Training type and location** summarises what kind of skills development is offered, such as on-the-job training including work placements, vocational training, and internships, as well as other skilling components such as language courses, professional development, and specialised training. The location is also mentioned where this information is available (i.e. in the origin or destination).
- **Recognition of qualifications and skills** outlines whether and how participants' qualifications are recognised (if specified). Some SMPs do not mention the recognition of skills and qualifications or specify how this is to be dealt with.

- **Social integration support** covers settlement assistance offered to participants, such as language instruction or cultural orientation activities, which may be offered pre-departure or post-arrival. This was not always specified.
- **Reintegration support** refers to measures to help (prospective) returnees settle back into their home country, which may be offered before or after return. This was not always specified.
- **Evaluation** lists publicly available evaluations and assessments, where applicable.
- **For more information** lists the information sources used for each SMP.

ANNEX 4: LIMITATIONS

While the inventory offers a robust evidence base, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the inventory is limited to government-to-government partnerships. Although some of these include private sector or civil society actors, the mapping does not include SMPs in which there is only a government partner on one side. This scope was chosen to focus on the role of government-to-government partnerships as an interesting point of analysis and contribution to the research base. Second, the mapping concentrated on initiatives with a clear and structured practical skilling element. For this reason, while study-related internship programmes were included, the inventory does not cover SMPs that only include academic university study, such as student exchanges or scholarship programmes. Third, the inventory focused on partnership design; fewer data points are focused on outcomes and impact. This was purposeful in the research design due to the limited information typically available on SMPs via desk research, in particular public evaluations, as well as the understanding that broader success factors may not always be captured by evaluations or specific metrics (e.g. participation numbers). Finally, the depth of information available varies considerably across initiatives. Detailed data on design, implementation, and outcomes are often particularly scarce for high-level agreements and for newer initiatives that have not yet undergone evaluation (or where the evaluation is not publicly available).

¹ See Prague Process (2022), Repository - Prague Process Action Plan 2023-2027.

² See Center for Global Development (n.d.), "Global Skill Partnerships."

³ See European Commission (2025), "Talent Partnerships."

⁴ Katsiaficas, C. & Kessler, S. (2026), "Skills Mobility Partnerships: Addressing global skills shortages more fairly?" Grabowska, I. & Setrana, M.B. (eds.), *Fair Skilled Mobility: A Manifesto*, London: Routledge.

⁵ For more see Katsiaficas & Kessler, "Skills Mobility Partnerships: Addressing global skills shortages more fairly?"

⁶ IOM (2023), *Skills Mobility Partnerships: Recommendations and Guidance for Policymakers and Practitioners*, Geneva: IOM; OECD & European Migration Network (EMN) (2022), *Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring Innovative Approaches to Labour Migration*, Paris: OECD.

⁷ Clemens, M. A. (2015), "Global Skill Partnerships: a proposal for technical training in a mobile world," *IZA Journal of Labor Policy*, 4(1): 1-18.

⁸ UN DESA, net migration rate, 2024, as presented in Migration Data Portal, IOM, accessed 9 July 2026.

⁹ Bossavie, L., Garrote Sánchez, D. & Makovec, M. (2024), *The Journey Ahead: Supporting Successful Migration in Europe and Central Asia*, Europe and Central Asia Studies, Washington, DC: The World Bank, pp. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 30.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 11.

¹² Ibid, p. 19.

¹³ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁴ Bossavie, L., & Bartl, E. (2025), *Temporary migration from the Kyrgyz Republic: Opportunities, challenges, and policy solutions*, KNOMAD Paper 68, Washington, DC: World Bank; Lepša-Rogoz, M., Lubarovska, B. & Grujičić, G. (2026), *Between emigration and attraction: Governance, challenges and EU convergence. A report on the current labour migration management infrastructure in the Western Balkans*, Vienna: ICMPD.

¹⁵ Bossavie, Garrote Sánchez & Makovec, *The Journey Ahead*, p. 187.

- ¹⁶ World Bank, Annual remittance inflows in 2024, 2025, as presented in Migration Data Portal, IOM, https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?t=2024&i=remit_inflows&cm49=860, accessed 9 July 2026.
- ¹⁷ Bossavie, Garrote Sánchez & Makovec, *The Journey Ahead*, p. 187.
- ¹⁸ Eraliev, S. (2025), “Shifting Horizons: The Evolving Geography of Uzbek Labor Migration to the European Union,” Mörner, N. (ed.), *Changing migration patterns: A comparative study on the movement of people and the impact for countries in the region*, CBEES State of the Region Report No. 5, Södertörn University, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, pp. 48–54.
- ¹⁹ Bossavie, Garrote Sánchez & Makovec, *The Journey Ahead*, p. 187.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 42.
- ²¹ The EU-15 refers to EU Member States before the 2004 enlargement.
- ²² Bossavie, Garrote Sánchez & Makovec, *The Journey Ahead*, p. 22-23.
- ²³ ICMPD, *ICMPD Migration Outlook 2026: Eastern Europe & Central Asia*, Vienna: ICMPD.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42.
- ²⁵ Heusala, A-L (2025), “Transnational Migration as a Political Tool,” Mörner, N. (ed.), *Changing migration patterns: A comparative study on the movement of people and the impact for countries in the region*, CBEES State of the Region Report No. 5, Södertörn University, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, 46-47; Qaisrani, A. et al. (2023), *Study of the diaspora’s contributions to the socio economic development in the Western Balkans*, Vienna: ICMPD.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 43.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 46.
- ²⁹ Eurostat, First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship [migr_resfirst], accessed 5 August 2026.
- ³⁰ ICMPD (2025), *Migration Outlook 2025: Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, Vienna: ICMPD.
- ³¹ Federal Employment Agency, Germany (n.d.), “Seasonal work in Germany,”
- ³² Federal Employment Agency, Germany (n.d.), “Westbalkanregelung.”
- ³³ *Ibid*, p. 186.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 202.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 205.
- ³⁶ Lepša-Rogoz, Lubarovska & Grujičić, *Between emigration and attraction*.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*.
- ³⁸ Bossavie, Garrote Sánchez & Makovec, *The Journey Ahead*, p. 17.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*.
- ⁴¹ Eraliev, “Shifting Horizons.”
- ⁴² Hohwieler, L. et al. (2026), *Link4Skills Partnership Inventory*, ICMPD, Link4Skills Working Paper 14/2026; Link4Skills (forthcoming), *Partnership Inventory*, Link4Skills project.
- ⁴³ Michaelis, N. (2023). *Migrationsabkommen mit Georgien: So wird die Zuwanderung künftig geregelt*, Vorwärts.
- ⁴⁴ Knoll, A. (2024), *Re-thinking approaches to labour migration. Potentials and gaps in EU member states’ migration infrastructures*, Migration Partnership Facility, Brussels: ICMPD.
- ⁴⁵ See *Global strategy for skills, migration and development project*, <https://gs4s.eu/>.
- ⁴⁶ Katsiaficas & Kessler, *Six ways to improve the mutual benefits of labour mobility*; Kessler & Katsiaficas, “Skills Mobility Partnerships.”
- ⁴⁷ Katsiaficas & Kessler, “Skills Mobility Partnerships;” OECD (2017), *Making Integration Work: Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*. Paris: OECD.
- ⁴⁸ Kessler, S., Boukari, S. & Katsiaficas, C. (forthcoming), *Beyond recruitment: Why integration holds the key to talent retention*, ICMPD Policy Insights blog.
- ⁴⁹ Kessler & Katsiaficas, “Skills Mobility Partnerships.”
- ⁵⁰ IOM (n.d.), *Skills mobility partnerships: Towards a global approach to skills development and labour mobility*.
- ⁵¹ OECD (2024), *Engaging with Employers in Skills Mobility Partnerships*, policy paper no. 2024/01, Paris: OECD.
- ⁵² See <https://link4skills.eu/>.
- ⁵³ See for example OECD & EMN, *Skills mobility partnerships: Exploring innovative approaches to labour migration*.