

European Commission Communication on Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU

Proposal for a Legal Migration Package

In addressing its future labour market needs, the European Commission is trying to match its Member States labour demand and supply for skills by addressing its lengthy immigration requirements and the diverging requirements across Member States. It aims at helping to attract the talent needed in our economies in tackling these gaps locally whilst ensuring that there are safe and streamlined channels for migrant works to use. The main drivers of this proposal were brought on by several challenges that the European economy has faced in recent years. These include the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the affects it has left on the EU's economy, the shortages within the EU's labour market which can be attributed to the dominant ageing population and the more recent challenge of catering for the integration of Ukrainian workers fleeing the war following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Three Key Pillars of a Sustainable EU Policy on Legal Migration

The **first pillar** highlighted in this Communication is the legislative pillar which includes the changes to the already adopted directives: (1) the Long-Term Residents Directive and (2) the Single Permit Directive. Both aim at simplifying procedures of legal entry as well as facilitating intra-EU mobility for those third country migrants already resident in the EU.

The two sets of legislation – the Long-Term Residents Directive and the Single Permit Directive have not been meeting their objectives since their adoption. In the case of the Long-Term Residents Directive, it is not being used to its full potential in allowing for and facilitating intra-EU mobility.

On the other hand, the **Single Permit Directive** is not completely simplifying admission procedures. In its essence, the Single Permit Directive as the name suggests, is the procedure in having non-EU workers migrating to the EU apply through a singular procedure combining their work and residence permit as well as protecting their rights. The aim for the recast of this Directive is to make it more effective. The changes proposed address:

- a. the possibility for applicants to apply for permits from both Member States and non-EU countries,
- b. reduce the processing duration for these permits,
- c. ensure the protection of such immigrants especially in terms of labour exploitation,
- d. provide labour migrants with the right to change employer without losing their legal resident status, and
- e. oblige Member States to create checks and balances against employers who are infringing this Directive.

The **Long-Term Residents Directive** will be recast to make it easier for non-EU migrant workers to acquire EU long-term resident status. This is aimed to be achieved through the following changes:

- a. the duration of residence cumulation can be fulfilled in different Member States,
- b. legal residence status to be extended to those legally residing as students etc.,
- c. allow for family reunification and the possibility for family members to move and work, and
- d. allowing legal migrants to change member states when changing jobs in helping to address labour shortages.

The term “circular migration” is the basis for these five steps within the re-casted Directive in allowing migrants to move from one country to the next in meeting labour needs without losing their rights.

The **second pillar** is the operational pillar which includes concrete and actionable steps with key partner countries. The operational cooperation is sought to be achieved through the setup of two initiatives, (i) *Talent Partnerships* and (ii) the *EU Talent Pool*.

The **Talent Partnerships Initiative**’s main aim is to facilitate cooperation between Member States and countries of origin in ensuring that there is increased labour mobility that caters for the skills of labour migrants in a way that it ensures that the effects of a brain drain are minimised. The idea underlying such an initiative stems from the need to develop legal pathways that should also result in the reduction of illegal migration. These partnerships will be tailor made according to the needs of the collaborating countries and will be available to all skill levels across most economic sectors. Mobility that will be facilitated under these talent partnerships will include temporary, long-term and circular mobilities. The launch is prevised for end of 2022 starting with collaboration with North African partners.

The **EU Talent Pool** is envisioned to be an EU-wide platform and matching tool that will help employers and third country nationals address the needs of the labour markets based on the talent available. The test phase, which is set to be launched by Summer 2022, will be available to Ukrainian citizens. The web portal will allow migrant workers to register in helping employers in Member States to find the right skill sets they require. The formal launch of this web portal is set for mid-2023.

Operational discussions for both these initiatives will be supported by the Commission’s launch of a new platform.

The **third and last pillar** is based on three priorities that are to guide the EU’s policy on migration: (1) care, (2) youth and (3) mobility. These three policy areas aim to set the course for the EU’s medium to long term needs. These three areas are all important political priorities: the need for low and medium skill workers was exacerbated by the shortages experienced during the global health pandemic, the need to create more opportunities for youth within the EU and those from non-EU Member States and the investment needed in

promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech in ensuring the EU meets its digital and green transition goals.

Next steps

Given that this proposal is viewed as the pragmatic way with which the Commission can address the EU's economic recovery, the Commission is seeking to build momentum for this proposal as well as secure commitments from all parties' involvement including at EU level, affected stakeholders and partner countries. In doing so, **a conference launching the EU's platform for a sustainable and legal labour migration strategy will be launched in the third quarter of 2022.** This conference will launch the new EU platform on labour migration and further pave the way towards a sustainable EU legal migration policy.

The full text of the Commission communication can be accessed via the following link:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A657%3AFIN&qid=1651223944578>

For questions or more detailed information please contact EU Affairs Manager Daniel Debono and Policy Executive Christine Said on infobrussels@mbb.org.mt

