



Building an EU Talent Pool

A NEW APPROACH TO MIGRATION MANAGEMENT
FOR EUROPE



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Foreword

The European Union is punching below its weight in the global competition for talent. According to the Database on Immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC), only one in four highly-educated migrants residing in the OECD in 2015-16 had chosen an EU destination, while almost two out of three had chosen to settle in North America or Oceania.

Today's policy barriers are not insurmountable for talented non-EU nationals with a job offer. Most high skilled individuals outside the EU can already meet admission requirements for the purpose of skilled employment in most Member States. Yet a fragmented migration system at the EU level has limited the potential for employers to draw on the wider EU Internal Market as a key factor of attractiveness for international talent. It isn't only the migration framework which is preventing skilled migration from helping to swiftly address unmet labour needs across the EU. Difficulties in international employment matching and in the recognition of foreign qualifications remain particularly stubborn obstacles.

In light of this, the 2015 European Agenda on Migration launched a process of assessment and review of the EU legal migration framework, including potential reform of the EU Blue Card. At the same time, the European Commission expanded its perspective to explore the potential for adapting elements of the Expression of Interest (EoI) system, used by New Zealand, Australia and Canada to manage skilled migration, to the European context.

The purpose of this report is to contribute to the ongoing reflections at the EU level on the extent to which an EU-wide version of the EoI system could be implemented in order to serve the collective needs of the EU Internal Market, while taking into account national prerogatives and needs in the area of legal migration.

The EoI model, as adopted in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, cannot be directly replicated EU-wide, due to both constitutional and contextual differences. While European institutions are increasingly committed to establish a common framework for the management of legal migration across the EU, Member States retain exclusive competence on permit issuance. Divergent national labour migration policies reflect uneven labour market situations and prospects across the EU. Further, immediate permanent residence as granted by most labour migration schemes currently using the EoI system is almost unknown in European national legislation, and not contemplated in the EU legal migration framework. Equally unknown are the backlogs of applications for highly skilled migration which drove the initial introduction of the EoI in settlement countries. Across the EU, labour migration systems have largely struggled to attract international talent.

Considering these constraints and contextual differences, the report suggests different ways in which EoI *elements* can support the EU legal migration framework for labour migration. It reviews the unaddressed needs in international employment matching across the EU and provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of the latest form of three existing EoI systems for selecting talent. This report also outlines possible scenarios for the adoption of an EU-wide EoI type of system.

The report addresses three main questions:

- What obstacles make Europe unattractive for recruitment of skills from third countries to match unmet labour demand?
- What features and elements of the EoI system could help address these obstacles?
- What are the concrete options for adapting such elements at the EU-wide level?

It is hoped that this report will contribute to efforts to enhance the attractiveness of the Internal Market for highly sought-after international talent and boost its global competitiveness.

This report builds upon a series of reviews of labour migration policies and international employment matching practices in the EU and its Member States carried out by the OECD over the past decade.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDA	Confederation of German Employers' Associations
CEC	Canadian Experience Class
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CETA	The Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CIIP	Canadian Immigrant Integration Project
CRS	Comprehensive Ranking System
CSOL	Consolidated Sponsored Occupations List
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DIOC	Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission
ECA	Assessment of Equivalency Educational Credentials
ECML	Council of Europe European Centre for Modern Languages
EEA	European Economic Area
ENIC	European Network of National Information Centres
EoI	Expression of Interest
EPS	Employment Permit System
EU	European Union
EURES	European Employment Services
FSTP	Federal Skilled Trades Programme
GiZ	German Society for International Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
ISCED	The International Standard Classification of Education
IT	Information Technology
ItA	Invitation to Apply
LMIA	Labour Market Impact Assessment

LMT	Labour Market Test
MLTSSL	Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NOC	National Occupation Classification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBS	Points Based System
PEA	Private Employment Agencies
PES	Proactive Employment Solutions
PQD	Professional Qualifications Directive
RFQ	Recognition of Foreign Qualifications
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
STCW	Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping
STSOL	Short-term Skilled Occupation List
TCN	Third Country National
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TSS	Temporary Skills Shortage
TTMRA	Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZAV	International Placement Services

Executive summary

How can the European Union as a whole become more attractive for talented professionals who are looking for job opportunities worldwide? Is there scope for action at the EU-level to support employers, private and public stakeholders in each Member State to better leverage international recruitment into the Single Market for inclusive growth? To what extent could the Expression of Interest (EoI) model of skilled migration management offer inspiration for such action? What elements of the EoI model are most promising for adaptation in the European context? To address these questions, the European Commission asked the OECD to provide a comparative report on labour migration policies and the role of “Expression of Interest” models and matching mechanisms.

This report builds upon the reviews of labour migration policies and international employment matching practices in the EU and its Member States carried out by the OECD over the past decade. It presents a new overview of the obstacles that continue to hamper the attraction and recruitment of skills from third countries, and discusses the role of both public and private initiatives to help overcome these barriers. In this context, the report provides a comparative analysis of the Expression of Interest system of migration management as implemented in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and assesses its potential to address the needs of the European labour migration system.

Although the European legal migration framework could benefit from reforms underway and, possibly, from the targeted introduction of additional schemes, current entry and residence conditions for migrant workers are not the main obstacle to attracting skills from third countries. Frictions and imperfections in the international job matching process account for the bulk of the problem. Adaptation of the screening, pooling and matching elements of the EoI system may contribute to improve the quality of matching, ensure that the scale and depth of the European labour market are fully leveraged, and attract more talent. To meet these objectives, the report presents several options and variants for adapting the EoI, step by step and EU-wide. The report examines the feasibility, constraints and advantages of the different options and variants.

Key findings

International job matching: Challenges and intermediation tools

- Labour migration of skilled professionals from third countries in the EU has remained below its potential. Absolute inflows are comparable in size to those in Australia, Canada and the United States. This is despite the larger size of the EU labour market and pressing demand for skills in many Member States.
- The demand-driven labour migration systems of EU Member States – whereby admission of skilled workers from abroad is conditional on a job offer – put the cross-border matching between employer demand and the skills of migration candidates at the core of the migration system. Yet persistent information barriers and costs affect the transfer of human capital across borders and undermine the international job matching process.
- Among the highest barriers to international job matching are obstacles to the recognition of foreign qualifications, insufficient language knowledge and cultural differences, limited opportunities for face-to-face interviews, unfamiliarity with migration and migration-related administrative procedures, and burdensome regulations. These obstacles affect both employers and migration candidates. On the employer side, they largely account for the widespread reluctance to hire from abroad, and explain why the European labour migration system underperforms.
- Firms and potential migrants who look for employment matching across borders typically use private intermediation channels and established networks to bridge international recruitment divides. Existing platforms for employment matching – both public and private – are currently unsuited or unable to ensure smooth international job matching for the whole spectrum of skills profiles and firm sizes across the EU. Private intermediation actors operating globally (i.e. agencies or virtual platforms) are starting to offer solutions to fill this market gap. Yet, private intermediation cannot resolve bottlenecks related to the regulatory framework.
- There is a case for public involvement in international job matching notably to service small markets, respond to demand for medium skilled workers as well as to better integrate the state's exclusive prerogative over migrants' pre-screening and admission. Complementarity to existing and expanding private instruments and enhanced fairness may justify the required investments of public funds and political capital.

- Public authorities can expand opportunities for international job matching by offering reliable and no-fee matching and information tools, and/or creating the regulatory conditions for international labour demand and supply to spontaneously match. Going even further, some existing assisted recruitment programmes and skill mobility partnerships indicate the potential of direct public involvement in recruitment.
- Buy-in from employers and skilled migration candidates is essential for the success of any public initiative in support of international job matching. However, this cannot be taken for granted. Publicly-led employment matching initiatives, at the national and international level, often suffer a negative reputation, for being skewed towards low-skilled client profiles, or designed to primarily serve other policy goals than employment matching. Hence, many such initiatives have been undersubscribed and failed to bring together sizeable and quality markets for international job matching. Existing success stories of industry-led international training and recruitment demonstrate the importance of involving employers from the outset and throughout all the steps of the design and implementation of the employment matching initiative.

The Expression of Interest system of migration management: Building blocks

- The Expression of Interest system is the most recent innovation in skilled labour migration management. First introduced in 2004 in New Zealand and later adopted in Australia (2012) and Canada (2015), EoI is a complex tool. EoI uses a pre-application phase in which potential migrants file an expression of interest in different migration programmes. Candidates who meet certain pre-screening requirements are admitted to a pool, where they are ranked based on several criteria. Expressions of interest are regularly drawn by ranking and only then candidates are able to lodge a visa application for a given migration programme.
- The pools have also been linked to job matching platforms, allowing employers or regional authorities to view the profiles of EoI candidates, or candidates to post their profiles in public job matching platforms.
- EoI's two-step selection procedure allows dynamic prioritisation of the most needed applicants according to different criteria (for instance, those with a job offer, or meeting certain labour market needs). It was introduced to respond to two objectives: reduce backlogs in migration systems offering permanent labour migration programmes – some of which do not require employer sponsorship – and enhance selection for skill demands.
- In 2015, the EoI system was used to admit 87% of permanent economic migrants in New Zealand, and 53% in Australia. This amounts to approximately 26 000, and 68 500 migrants. In Canada, in 2016 89 500 migrants were granted permanent residence through the EoI. The available data suggests that EoI systems have been successful in reducing processing time without increasing costs, and have likely improved the

employability of qualified candidates; however, evidence suggests that the job matching component has not played a significant role and could be improved.

- EoI systems differ in complexity and the number and types of supported programmes. They also differ in the selection methods used to enter in the pool and be invited to apply, in the use and design of point-based systems (PBS), in the importance of employer sponsorship, in the way the job matching platform is linked to the pool and in the role of employers and sub-national authorities.
- The three countries' experience demonstrates how EoI can be compatible with multiple selection methods and categories. Drawing on this experience, key design choices must be made. These include: the types of migration programmes supported; the extent of pre-screening of qualifications for pool admission; the selectivity of PBS for pool and/or programme admission and the weight of sponsorship; the way job-matching platforms are linked with the pool and the extent to which employers are allowed to access the pool. While EoI currently focuses on skilled labour migration, it can be extended to other types of programmes.

Scenarios for the adaptation of the EoI system to the European context

- A direct application of the original EoI system of migration management to the EU would not be *feasible*, due both to constitutional and contextual differences. In the EU, actual issuance of residence permits is the competence of Member States, which also have the prerogative to define the number of labour migrants to admit to their respective labour markets. Further, immediate permanent residence, as granted under EoI examples, is almost unknown in Member State legislation, and not contemplated in the EU legal migration framework. More broadly, where EoI systems are in place, they have built upon existing migration and employment management systems, in more unitary and coherent legislative and institutional contexts than those found in today's European Union.
- A direct application of the original EoI system to the EU would not be *useful*. There are currently no queues of highly skilled migrants awaiting admission in Europe. All qualifying sponsored candidates are admitted.
- However, an adaptation of *elements* of the EoI model would be highly relevant and could help improving the performance of the European labour migration system. Several scenarios – varying in terms of their possibility under the current legal framework and the resources and political capital required – can be identified for adaptation of the EoI model.
- A basic scenario for adopting the most relevant part of the EoI would create an EU-wide pool of highly-skilled migration candidates, to serve existing skilled labour migration schemes (EU and/or national). Admission to the pool would be conditional on basic credentials and migration requirements – for instance the standard qualification requirements of the

current EU Blue Card. Further to this, to enhance international job matching opportunities, the pool could either work as an employment-matching platform or such a platform would be created alongside the pool with similar entry criteria. Candidates receiving a job offer would be able to lodge their permit application under the qualifying national legal migration scheme. Different migration streams could be served.

- The implementation of this basic scenario would not require changes in the European legal migration framework. It would nonetheless be conditional on the establishment of a complex and costly infrastructure, including an overall governing body responsible for design and oversight; separate bodies tasked with language and education pre-screening; employer accreditation; and a managing secretariat. Employer engagement would be required, in the expectation of an enlarged talent pool.
- A second scenario – which would be an enhanced version of the basic scenario – would focus on one or more separate target sectors where credentials could be accepted – formally or on an industry-wide basis – throughout the EU. Enhanced pre-screening, prior validation of qualifications, matching and, possibly, intra-EU mobility features would be possible under this scenario. This variant would also allow for pooling demand (i.e., a fixed number of vacancies to fill), in light of uniform criteria, and for the creation of rosters of candidates who could be ranked and selected according to an optional points-based selection.
- Certain sectors with uniform skills requirements and/or pressing shortages could offer a promising ground to pilot this scenario, especially where employers and industry are already actively seeking and certifying skills internationally to improve matching. This could be the case, for instance, in the IT sector, where access to practice is not regulated by a professional body and where credentials are fairly international. The health sector could also benefit from the creation of an EU-wide pooling and matching mechanisms for skilled health professionals from third countries. However, this would require the agreement among Member States and their competent regulatory bodies on the mutual recognition of qualification recognition decisions issued to third-country nationals in each Member State.
- A skills development component could be added in such a scenario. For specific sectors in need of foreign labour, migration candidates could be trained from or for the pool using trusted and certified curricula. This variant could be implemented in the context of skills mobility frameworks, to ensure that the pool is populated with candidates holding sought-after skills. However, for the pool to cater to the whole Internal Market, the training curricula and the credentialing mechanism would have to be accepted all across the EU.

- A third scenario for the EoI adaptation would consist in a more comprehensive scheme-specific option whereby access to an EU-wide legal migration channel – either demand or supply driven – would *only* be possible through the EoI process. Admission to the pool would reflect pre-qualification for a specific type of permit. Under this scenario, admission to the pool would require meeting the eligibility criteria for recognition of foreign qualifications, where applicable, and pre-certification of other eligibility criteria as vetted by a central body at the EU-level. Employers would know that candidates could be quickly recruited under the scheme. Candidates would be able to promote themselves as eligible for rapid and simplified recruitment.
- The reference migration channel for the third scenario is the existing EU Blue Card scheme. As part of its review process, amendments could be introduced to make Blue Card issuance conditional on EoI selection. The third scenario could be expanded to include a new EU-wide job-search *permit*, which would mirror the supply-driven component of existing EoI systems. Introducing such a permit would require consensus among Member States for a substantial modification of the EU legal migration framework, which is unlikely to be achieved in the near future.
- A variant of the third scenario, requiring less modification, would be the possibility of using a short or long-stay *visa* to create a supply-driven migration stream for highly-qualified candidates admitted to a dedicated EU-wide pool with shared entry criteria. A central body at the EU level would issue Invitations to Apply to selected pool candidates, which would offer grounds for visa issuance by the Member States. The visa would allow holders to seek work in any Member State. By permitting in-person contact with employers, the visa would eliminate one of the main information barriers and asymmetries. Visa-holders who obtain a job offer while on the job-search visa would be able to apply for a permit in the Member State of employment without having to leave its territory, even if the visa was issued by another Member State.
- Overall, the scenarios add an enhanced matching tool where there is currently a gap. The third scenario and its visa variant are closest to the migration management mechanism under existing EoI models. Given the complexity of the EU legal migration competence framework and the level of interest from Member States in this area, the first scenario and the unregulated professions version of the second scenario appear most realistic in the medium term as they do not involve major policy and legislative changes.
- By allowing for in-person contact between the qualified migration candidate and the prospective employer, the job-search permit or visa served by a pre-screening and pooling mechanism can be an EoI-type of tool on its own. This tool would be naturally suited to serve the third scenario. Yet its introduction in the first two scenarios may also be

possible. Provided Member States' consensus on the required legislative changes or automatic pool selection rules, the supply-driven tool could offer a powerful means to overcome stubborn barriers to international employment matching throughout the EU.

- The development of an EU-wide matching tool for international recruitment will also allow experimentation of the settings and infrastructure necessary for integrating the platform into a migration management system, as a further step. Experimentation and evaluation are necessary for effective policy feedback.
- Many of the elements of EoI were developed in a national context, where the portability of qualifications is provided for. Any EU-wide implementation of an EoI model would be conditional on progress in the portability of qualifications across the EU. There is currently a disparity of treatment between EU nationals and third-country nationals in this area. Under the EU Professional Qualifications Directive EU Nationals in most cases obtain *de facto* automatic recognition of qualifications acquired in one Member State in each other Member State, while recognised third-country qualifications become portable after three years of practice and under certain conditions. Conversely, third-country nationals having obtained recognition of either third-country or EU qualifications in one Member State and who subsequently wish to work in different Member States, must seek recognition in each Member State. Since qualification recognition procedures are often complex and cumbersome, the lack of portability of qualifications recognition decisions for third-country nationals across the EU sharply constrains the mobility of international talent in the EU Internal Market.
- In the absence of progress in the portability of qualifications recognition decisions across the EU, adaptation of the EoI system to the EU cannot fully cater to the whole Internal Market. If mutual recognition of recognition qualifications decisions across the EU cannot be achieved in the near future, then EU-wide validity of assessments of equivalency of third-country educational credentials with national credentials (ECAs) should be pursued as a stepping-stone for the necessary advancement in this area.

Chapter 1. International job matching for labour migration: bridges and divides

This chapter reviews the barriers to international employment matching which continue to hamper international recruitment, as well as the intermediation channels available for employers and migration candidates to overcome such barriers. It then provides a detailed overview of publicly led instruments for international employment matching as currently implemented across the EU. It discusses the potential added value of such instruments as compared to private tools, and the conditions necessary for this potential to materialise.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Introduction

On occasion, labour market actors search for job matches beyond national borders. Similarly, employers may look for international candidates when they face qualitative or quantitative shortages. Potential migrant workers often need to find a job before their arrival since a job offer is either a necessary or a preferential requirement for labour migration. However, high information barriers and related costs – as compared with local recruitment – make hiring from abroad challenging.

This chapter reviews the barriers to international employment matching which continue to hamper international recruitment, as well as the intermediation channels available for employers and migration candidates to overcome such barriers. It then digs deeper to provide a detailed overview of publicly-led instruments for international employment matching implemented across the EU, and to discuss the potential added value of such instruments as compared to private tools and the conditions for this potential to materialize.

Public activities in support of international job matching are classified based on the extent of public authorities' involvement in actual recruitment. At one extreme, leveraging their regulatory prerogatives on migration and labour market management, public authorities can create smoother conditions for international labour demand and supply to spontaneously match. To facilitate this process, public authorities may also make available matching and information tools similar to those provided by private intermediation actors. At the other extreme, public authorities can take a more active role in actual recruitment, for instance by implementing assisted recruitment programmes and pre-departure training and job matching initiatives in the context of bilateral agreements. The size of the population potentially targeted by each type of initiative may vary (e.g. small groups for assisted recruitment programmes, virtually all interested population for information tools).

Labour migration management aims to address economic and skills needs

The rationale for labour migration management is selecting and attracting foreign workers capable of making a positive contribution to the receiving country economy. This can be defined as the capacity to complement the local labour force, by filling qualitative or quantitative labour shortages, or, more broadly, as the capacity to bring skills that generate an added value for the economy. The ability to make a positive contribution to the economy is also seen as a predictor of migrants' successful integration in the host society, which is a key goal of migration policy.

Labour migration policies across countries vary with respect to the relative emphasis they put on selecting and attracting migrants, and the set of admission and residence requirements they apply to this effect. These may involve conditions on the skills profile and/or on the type of employment migrant candidates can take up. Holding a qualifying job offer has traditionally been a

necessary admission criterion for labour migrants in European countries, whose demand-driven migration systems largely delegate migrant selection to employers. The job offer requirement is meant to ensure that migrant workers can swiftly contribute to the host country economy and integrate in the society.¹

Due to often weak economic integration outcomes for labour migrants admitted only on the basis of their skills characteristics, over the past decade the weight of the job offer requirement has also increased in the labour migration systems of settlement countries (such as Australia and Canada). These countries, which have traditionally implemented a more interventionist approach, with the state selecting applicants based on human capital characteristics meant to ensure long-term employability and broader contributions to the host society, have recently moved away from these purely supply-driven systems, towards hybrid models of labour migration management. In these new models, human capital criteria are applied to migrants who have a job offer in hand, with the job offer providing priority or higher ranking for migrants in complex selection mechanisms.² However, securing a job offer from abroad is not easy for labour migration candidates, notably due to the information barriers and imperfections that both migrants and firms face in international employment matching.

Labour migration plays a limited role in migration to the EU

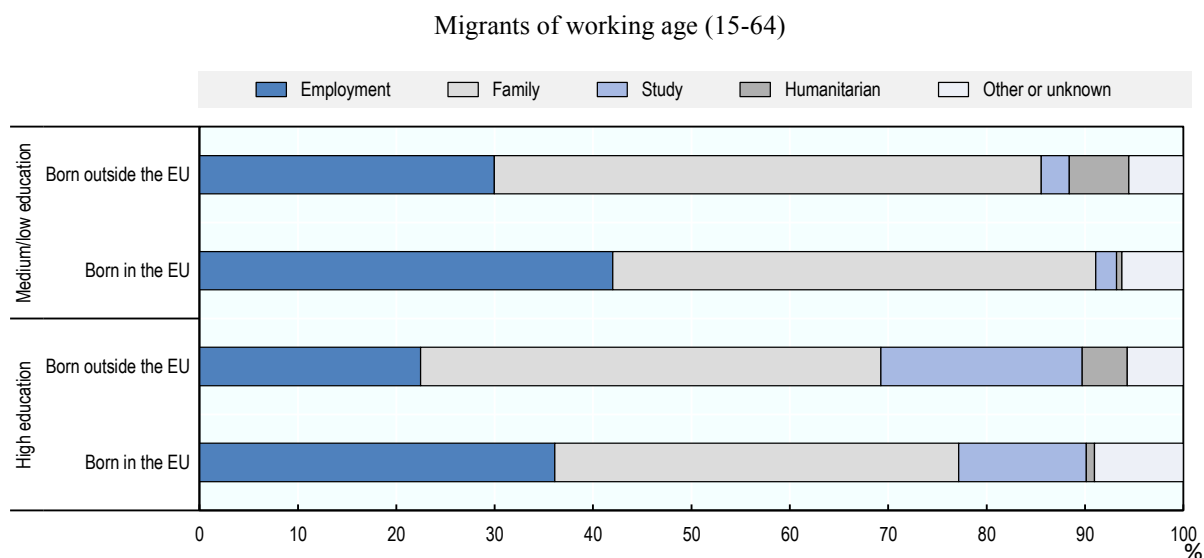
From the perspective of the EU as a whole, the main target group of labour migrants are citizens of non-EU countries, and this chapter therefore focuses on this group.³ As a destination for non-EU labour migrants, the EU stands in competition with many other destinations, especially in regards to highly-skilled labour migrants. By contrast, citizens of EU countries who exercise their right to free movement within the EU can be regarded as internal migrants. However, migrants from EU countries can serve as a useful benchmark for migration from outside the EU.

Figure 1.1 shows the main reason for migration given by migrants in the EU, distinguishing between those born in EU countries and those born outside the EU. Around 40% of migrants from EU countries indicate employment as their main reason for migration, irrespectively of their level of education. Shares are substantially lower for non-EU migrants: about 30% of non-EU migrants with a medium or low level of education indicate employment as main motive, and less than 25% of non-EU migrants with a high education level. This difference indicates that labour migration from non-EU countries, and in particular highly-skilled labour migration, has remained below its potential, using migrants from EU countries as a benchmark.

Earlier findings similarly suggest that the potential for labour migration to the EU is underutilised. In general, migrants coming to the EU tend to be younger and less educated than migrants to OECD countries outside Europe. In 2010, the EU hosted one-third of all highly-educated migrants residing in the OECD, compared to 57% hosted by the United States (OECD, 2016_[1]) (Gubert and Senne, 2016_[2]). At the same time, the potential for highly-skilled labour migration to the EU

appears large: according to the Gallup World Poll 2011-2014, highly-educated persons who would like to move abroad name the EU/EEA more often as destination of choice than the United States (27% compared to 21%) (OECD, 2016^[1]).

Figure 1.1. Reason for migration by skill level and place of birth, European Union, 2014



Note: Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included due to data availability. Values for EU-born refugees are not reliable due to sample sizes.

Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

Apart from labour migrants, those originally admitted for other purposes than work (e.g. study, family, humanitarian reasons) also represent a large pool of potential job seekers. Other-than-work migration channels may thus be functional alternatives to international recruitment, notably when smooth status change is possible. In the EU, over the period 2011-2015, status changes have amounted for at least two-thirds of the number of persons issued a residence permit for the first time for remunerated activities (European Migration Network, 2016^[3]). International students who stay and find work after graduation can represent an important source of highly-skilled workers for OECD countries. As shown in Figure 1.1, the gap between EU and non-EU migrants with a high education level shrinks considerably when international students and labour migrants are considered together. However, while the EU is the single leading destination for international students (OECD, 2016^[1]), often only a small fraction of graduates from non-EU countries stay (Weisser, 2016^[4]).

Ex-post regularisation of undocumented migrants holding a job may also function as an alternative channel to international employment matching. While informally employing irregular migrants, employers may test their skills before engaging ex post in the official procedures for international recruitment. In the past, employers in countries with inefficient labour migration regulations and a significant pool of

undocumented migrants, such as Italy or Spain, have had wide recourse to this strategy. In these countries, large-scale regularisation programmes for illegally employed migrants were cyclically implemented. Other countries have allowed for case-by-case regularisations – which are deemed a safer option to avoid stimulating a surge of irregular migration and illegal employment.⁴

Resident migrants may encounter greater challenges than natives in integrating in the local labour markets. However, barriers to international recruitment are generally higher. The remainder of this paper focuses on workers' recruitment from abroad through legal channels, and provides a comprehensive analysis of this issue, encompassing both the viewpoint of potential migrants and employers. It discusses available intermediation tools to facilitate international employment matching, and analyses in particular publicly-led initiatives in this area. The conclusions present reflections on how to possibly improve the effectiveness of public involvement in international job matching and its standing among employers and migrants.

International job matching is undermined by practical difficulties

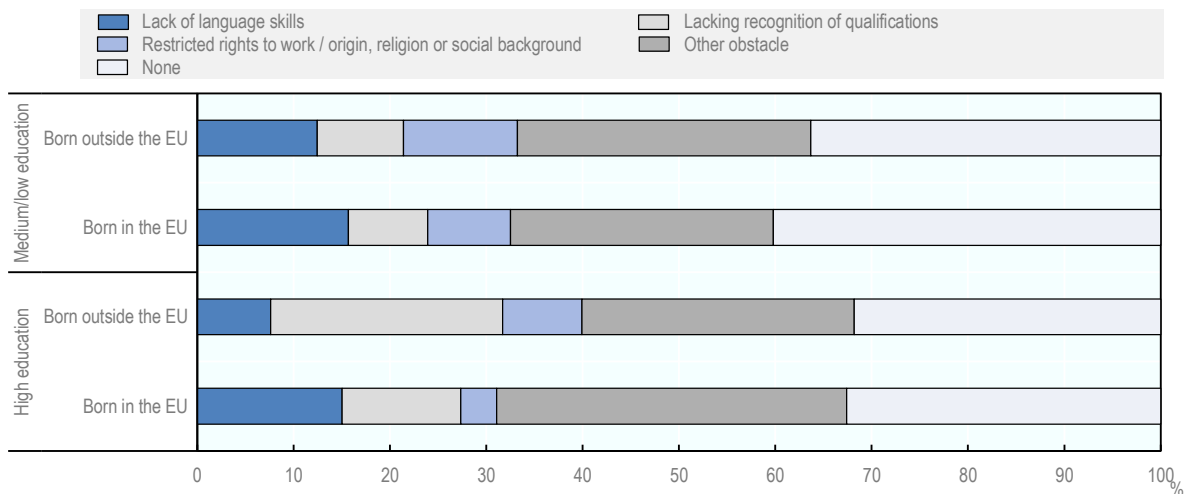
Labour markets – including those that transcend national borders – share a defining feature: job seekers need to be matched to vacancies. How well this process works strongly depends on how easy it is for job seekers and employers to come in contact with each other and assess the fit of the job seeker's profile to the vacancy. Significant resources in terms of time, money and effort may have to be invested on both sides before a match results, and contacts may often fail to ultimately lead to a match.

The difficulties or “frictions” involved in international job matching are considerable, making recruitment from abroad significantly more difficult than domestic recruitment: large geographical distances, language barriers and foreign qualifications can all create additional costs compared with domestic recruitment. This helps explain why employers are often not particularly keen on recruiting migrants from abroad. Many country-specific studies show that even in cases of labour shortage, employers has not usually considered recruitment from abroad (Box 1.1).

Figure 1.2 presents survey evidence of the main obstacles labour migrants in the EU encounter in their job search. While only some concrete obstacles were surveyed, the lack of language skills and lacking recognition of foreign qualifications were highlighted. Highly-educated labour migrants seem to be more often affected by lacking recognition of their qualifications. Highly-educated labour migrants from within the EU seem least affected by difficulties with restricted rights to work or related to origin, religion or social background. Overall, irrespective of origin and level of education, between 60% and 70% of labour migrants appear to encounter difficulties in their job search in the EU.

Figure 1.2. Labour migrants' difficulties in job search, European Union, 2014

Main obstacles to finding a (better) job encountered by labour migrants of working age (15-64)



Note: Figures refer to individuals who are either not employed or are employed but report being overqualified for their job. Labour migrants are identified by employment being their main (self-declared) reason for migration. The value for restricted rights/ background of highly-educated EU-born persons is not reliable due to sample sizes. Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included due to data availability.

Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

Box 1.1. Surveys show employers' reluctance to recruit from abroad

In the UK, a study by the SQW consultancy in 2010 found that hiring foreign workers was mainly unplanned (i.e., from the locally available pool) and only 10% of surveyed businesses stated that they would consider recruiting migrants from outside the EEA (Chen and Ward, 2013^[5]). In Norway, on average, 14% of employers recruit or try to recruit from abroad, and international recruitment mainly happens in a handful of sectors (OECD, 2014^[6]). In Austria, a survey carried out in 2010 revealed that employers consider active recruitment from abroad as only the sixth measure to take when trying to fill a vacancy (OECD, 2014^[7]). Higher-ranked options include nationwide recruitment efforts, hiring contract workers, training staff and offering flexible working hours.

Similarly, in Germany, only one in four employers who struggled to fill vacancies tried hiring workers from abroad, and only about half succeeded (OECD, 2013^[8]). Faced with growing shortages, only one in three large employers would consider the option of recruiting foreign workers in the near future and this share halves for SMEs (15%). The numbers are low also in Sweden, where a survey by the PES revealed that only 4% of businesses who suffered from shortages eventually recruited migrant workers (Chen and Ward, 2013^[5]).

The surveys above do not distinguish among different skill levels. However, employers seem more willing to recruit internationally highly skilled employees.

The Corporate Recruiters Survey Report 2016 found that more than half surveyed companies would hire or consider hiring international graduates, especially in consulting, technology, manufacturing and finance (Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), 2017^[9]).

In order to facilitate international job matching, the sources of frictions in this matching process need to be understood. To some extent, frictions in international matching are located in the same places as in domestic matching: making initial contact, exchanging information between the job seeker and the employer, assessing the suitability of the match needs by both sides, reaching agreement through negotiations. As in domestic matches, job seekers may have to relocate and employers may have to adapt workplaces. However, international job matching typically involves a number of additional difficulties:

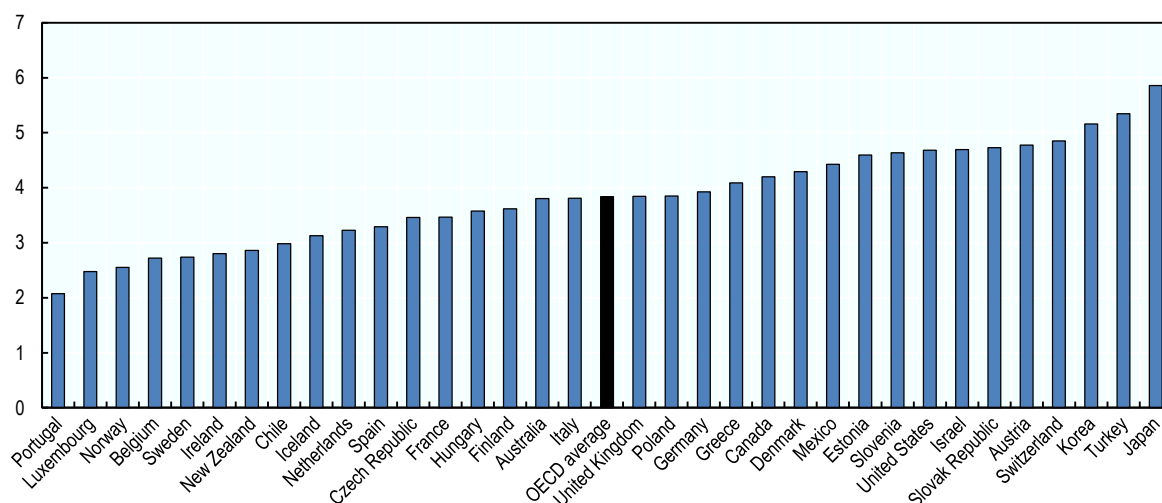
- **Language barriers:** many steps in the matching process will be more difficult if the job seeker does not have a high proficiency in the language of the destination country. In particular, making initial contact, gathering information, and agreeing on the terms of employment is more tedious for both sides when there is a language barrier. Misunderstandings can lead to considerable disappointment and set back or even derail the matching process. Additional costs are incurred when preparing applications or job descriptions in a foreign language and providing certified translations of official documents.
- **Higher information barriers:** gathering information on available candidates and channels to recruit them is more complex for international recruitment than for local hiring. When foreign workers abroad are identified, in order to hire them, employers need to collect information on labour migration procedures, their length and costs, and any other obligations incumbent upon employers, along with the specific rules on the salaries and working conditions employers must offer. Similarly, potential migrants may find it more difficult to gather information on employment opportunities, job-hunting strategies, working conditions, the migration schemes available and their regulations, as well as the rights associated with the migration status for the principal applicant and possible family members. Acquiring information on the comparability of foreign qualifications with domestic ones, and on recognition and licensing procedures may be an additional burden.
- **Limited access to networks:** recruitment is often facilitated by local networks – whether formal or informal (family, friends, colleagues, clients, partners, etc.). Migration candidates may have limited or no access to these networks. As a result, a significant matching channel may be closed to them. Similarly, the difficulties of identifying trusted referees for foreign candidates may put off employers. Ethnic or diaspora networks may partly compensate the lack of local networks, although they may lead to sub-optimal matching. The range of jobs available might be quite limited, and

job seekers might be more hesitant to bargain about the terms of employment.

- Limited opportunity for face-to-face interviews before hiring: geographical distance and international mobility restrictions for third-country nationals mean that candidates would need to travel possibly long distance to sit an interview, and invest resources in travel visa application, when needed. On the employers' side, these same elements may be a deterrent to inviting off-shore applicants for an interview. Interviews via video link can only partially address this problem because they might put candidates at a disadvantage compared to those who can present themselves in person and because many recruitment procedures necessarily include a face-to-face interview at least at a later stage.
- Burdensome and unpredictable migration procedures: depending on the level of efficiency, openness, transparency and predictability of the labour migration system in a given country, potential candidates and employers may face greater or lesser uncertainty on applications' success chances, time-lapse between submission of the application and issuance of the required documents and permits, as well as the costs involved in these procedures. Unpredictability, along with overly tight migration regulations are among the greatest deterrents to foreign recruitment as delays in filling vacancies may have negative consequences for firms, and particularly for SMEs. Figure 1.3 shows to what extent employers in OECD countries feel constrained by immigration laws. The same flaws may put off migration candidates, and notably the most skilled and sought after professionals who may prefer to look for alternative opportunities in other countries.
- Higher costs: gathering the additional information involved in international job matching – directly or through the intermediation of consultants and agencies – filing migration applications, waiting for their outcomes, fulfilling credential recognition requirements (if needed) all translate into supplementary costs for employers and migrants as compared with those involved in local matching. Even when local labour shortages or skill needs are acute, the high costs involved in foreign recruitment may lead firms to choose sub-optimal alternatives, such as increasing the workload of existing staff, hiring workers who are not sufficiently fit for the job, or dismiss expansion or internationalisation plans (OECD, 2013[10]). In the long-term these choices can lessen the firm's economic gains, and even harm the local economy. Similarly, migrants for whom international job matching through legal migration channels is unaffordable may choose to resort to alternative routes, including irregular migration.

Figure 1.3. Employers' satisfaction with labour migration laws, OECD countries, 2015

Index of employers indicating to be constrained in hiring foreign labour by immigration laws, from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest)



Note: Figures are based on surveys data on employers' approval of "immigration laws do not prevent your company from employing foreign labour".

Source: Institute for Management Development (2015), *World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015*, Lausanne, <http://www.imd.org/wcc/>.

- Intercultural differences and discrimination: cross-country differences in work cultures and expected behaviour can lead to misunderstandings that complicate the job matching process or, in case either party is alienated, terminate it. Such differences can for example relate to standards in application writing, formality in communication, or dress codes at the interview. The job matching process can be entirely undermined when employers harbour prejudices about a candidate's behaviour and performance based on origin country, ethnicity, religion or skin colour. Candidates might also have prejudices concerning the mentality or the working conditions with a foreign employer.
- International relocation of the family: where job seekers from abroad intend to bring family members, the concern for their needs can weigh on every stage of the matching process. Compared to relocations within a country, a range of additional issues arises when the family relocates across borders. The regulations on residence and work permits for family members can vary widely, often depending on the labour migration scheme used by the principal migrant. Due to requirements of further documents, proof of sufficient resources by the principal migrant, or administrative delays, it is not guaranteed that the family can arrive together with the principal migrant and a protracted time of uncertainty can ensue. Further challenges relate to finding adequate housing and managing the transition of children from one school system to another.

- Transfer of social security: through previous employment, labour migrants may have acquired entitlements to social security, and transferring them to the social security system of another country or to a particular employer might be possible only within limits or not at all. While some degree of transferability has been arranged between a number of OECD countries, details vary and lengthy administrative processes can be involved.

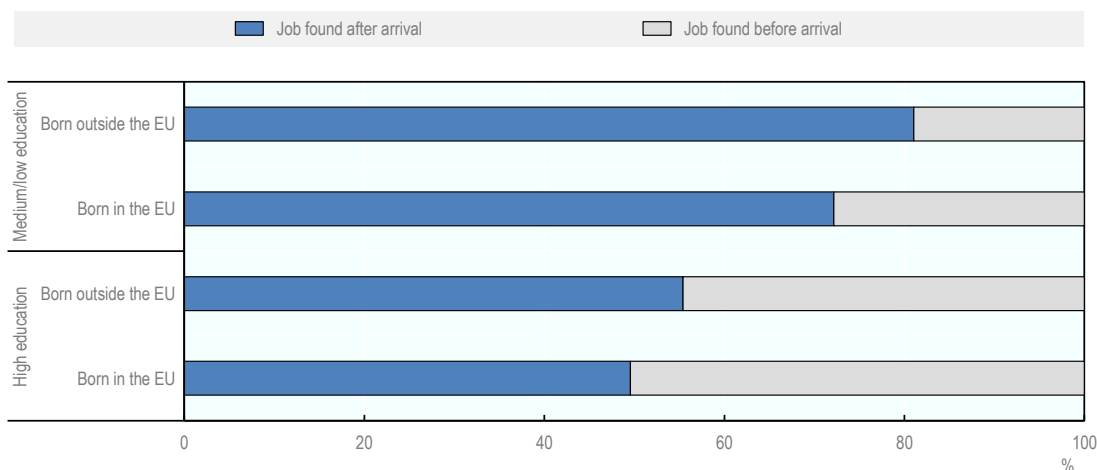
The various frictions involved in international job matching over and above job matching within the same country likely affect some job seekers and employers more than others. As an obvious example, job seekers who are already on the territory of the destination country do not face entry procedures anymore, they likely have better access to local networks, and they can attend face-to-face interviews as easily as native-born candidates. Such advantages are the main rationale behind job-search visas that have been introduced in a number of OECD countries to facilitate the job search of highly-skilled labour migrants.

In general, highly-skilled persons might find it easier to navigate the process of international job matching. Labour migration schemes for highly-skilled target groups typically feature fewer conditions for the principal migrant, more generous rules for family members or faster administrative procedures with little uncertainty about the outcome. Thanks to their skills, these labour migrants may be in a better position to learn the host country language, gather relevant information, and arrange for the recognition of qualifications or the transfer of social security entitlements. In addition, as they have already held well-paid jobs, they can more easily afford the costs involved. At the same time, highly-skilled persons typically search for more complex job profiles, possibly with more complex selection procedures. By consequence, they might encounter certain additional difficulties. For example, as shown in Figure 1.2, highly-educated labour migrants may be more affected by lacking recognition of their foreign qualifications.

Figure 1.4 depicts the share of labour migrants in the EU who had found a job before arrival in the destination country. As labour migrants might ideally want to arrange a job prior to their arrival, this measure indicates to what extent they have achieved this despite the frictions. The share among labour migrants from EU countries again serves as a benchmark: half of the highly-educated and 28% of those with a medium or low education level had found a job before arrival. The corresponding shares were somewhat lower for labour migrants from outside the EU: 45% of the highly-educated and 19% of those with a medium or low education level. This might reflect frictions notably from migration procedures that only apply to non-EU migrants. However, a larger difference than between EU and non-EU migrants arises between education levels: the shares of highly-educated labour migrants are 22-26 percentage points higher than for labour migrants with a medium or low education level. This difference suggests that highly-educated labour migrants encounter fewer difficulties. However, these figures may also be influenced by irregular labour migrants who often have low or medium education levels and arrive without pre-arranged jobs.⁵

Figure 1.4. Labour migrants with pre-arranged jobs by education and origin, European Union, 2014

Labour migrants of working age (15-64)



Note: Labour migrants are identified by employment being their main (self-declared) reason for migration. Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included due to data availability.

Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

Similarly, large firms might find it easier to engage in international recruitment than small or medium-sized enterprises. Large companies can both leverage greater human and financial resources to address the higher information obstacles, and face relatively lower unit-costs in light of the economies of scale they can realize through more frequent international hires. In the Netherlands, for example, highly-skilled labour migrants are over-represented at firms with more than 100 employees but under-represented at firms with less than 10 employees (OECD, 2016_[10]). However, this could also reflect the stronger export orientation of larger firms.

The remainder of this chapter explores how international job matching can succeed despite the practical difficulties highlighted above. The next section examines a comparatively easy way to address a range of frictions: the establishment of marketplaces for matching. The following section considers how public or private intermediaries can support matching. Next, policies are identified that can reduce specific frictions. The last section underlines the potential benefits of a better fit: facilitating international job matching will not only lead to more matches but also to *better* matches between job seekers and vacancies.

Marketplaces and intermediaries may facilitate international job matching

Marketplaces can alleviate many of the frictions associated with international job matching. When job seekers and employers are, by more than one measure, far from each other as in the case of international recruitment, establishing a

dedicated marketplace can bring them closer together. Marketplaces can boost both the quantity and the quality of matches.

More broadly, the matching processes can be facilitated by intermediaries who act as “match-makers”, actively bringing together the two sides of the market and arranging individual matches. In the context of international job matching, the involvement of intermediaries can be particularly useful and help reducing several kinds of frictions. Experienced intermediaries can disclose to their clients access to networks which they wouldn’t otherwise have access to. International employment intermediation actors can often operate in several languages and can bridge language and geographic distances also through an international network of partners.

For international job matching, the following kinds of marketplaces and intermediaries may be most relevant:

Online job boards and platforms

In recent years, marketplaces established by online platforms have been spectacularly successful in bringing together supply and demand that were previously distant: offers of private accommodation for tourists, venture capital investors and entrepreneurs, sellers and buyers of second-hand goods. Similarly, the web as a collector of information has allowed the development of low-cost and immediate tools of job matching, even beyond the local labour market (Kuhn, 2014^[11]). Open search engines that connect users to companies’ web-pages, or more structured platforms, like *LinkedIn*, *monster.com* or *Xing* allow employers and job candidates to look for suitable offers from all over the world at no cost. By channelling information into a fixed set of criteria, such platforms help reduce information barriers in international job matching. Furthermore, since the platforms can be used in multiple languages, they also help overcome language barriers.

Traditional job banks have also gone on-line, tremendously expanding job matching opportunities – in theory – across borders. Some of these are managed by public authorities, and linked with the immigration process. This is the case, for instance, with the Australia’s SkillSelect, Canada’s Job Bank or the NewZealandNow database and the related SkillFinder tool, which, however, all involve restrictions to access to vacancies by migration candidates (Box 1.2)

Job fairs

Job fairs are a traditional tool to reduce information barriers in employment by allowing employers and job-seekers to meet in person, in some cases based on a pre-selection by sector or skills. They can be organised by public authorities, private stakeholders (e.g. a given industry, a multinational or private recruitment agency), or a combination of both – as in the case of job fairs for graduates of public universities organised in cooperation with private firms.

International job fairs are costly and may be administratively burdensome when they involve authorization for foreign workers to travel to the event venue. As a

consequence, they are rare, and involve much smaller numbers of vacancies and profiles than online job-boards and platforms. Accurate targeting of participants is an essential condition for the cost-effectiveness of job fairs as an international job-matching tool. One way of achieving this may be to combine the advantages offered by on-line matching platforms (notably, the size and international nature of the market) and those offered by job-fairs (notably, the depth of the contact between the prospective employer and candidate) by using the filtering tools of on-line job boards to pre-select the most suitable candidates for in-person matching events, as it was done for the *LookSee Wellington* initiative in New Zealand (Box 1.2).

Box 1.2. A cross-border job board operated by public employment services: EURES

In the EU, free mobility means that public employment services can assist employers in filling vacancies with jobseekers from across the EU. Since 1993, the European network of Employment Services, EURES, has been developed to support the free movement of workers by facilitating job matching across the EU (as well as EEA countries and Switzerland). EURES functions through an EU network of advisors from the national PES of participating countries, and a matching platform, the EU job mobility portal (<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/fr/homepage>). In most participating countries, the advisors can simply flag existing entries of vacancies in their databases, so that they also appear in the EURES platform. This signals that the employer is interested in filling this vacancy from abroad.

Despite this, also in the EU, the recourse to public employment services by local employers to fill vacancies through international recruitment is limited. According to a survey carried out by the European Job Mobility Laboratory in 2011, less than 15% of the 3 672 responding employers used the PES to recruit from abroad, while 30% had recourse to private employment agencies, 40% to newspapers, magazines and journals, and more than 50% to on-line services (Coughtrie and Fuller, 2011^[12]). A 2014 EURES impact assessment from the European Commission estimated that EURES provided around 150 000 placements per year, of which two thirds originated from the portal and one third from EURES advisors. It is not possible to determine the market share of placements compared to total intra-EU mobility for employment. The reference figure of overall intra-EU mobility flow of around 1.5 million citizens in 2015 provides some indication, although not all placements are for an extended period, and somewhere between half and two-thirds of mobility is for employment.

The limited depth of EURES in terms of vacancy market share alongside with the uneven percentage of PES vacancies published on EURES across participating countries have undoubtedly affected its performance as an intra-EU job matching tool. To tackle these flaws and enhance the role of EURES in intra-EU matching as well as placement assistance, the new EURES Regulation adopted in 2016 has opened up to partnerships with private employment services, and has made it mandatory for EURES members and partners to make available on the EU job

mobility portal all vacancies publicly available at the national level, and equally share all job applications and CVs of workers who have allowed dissemination of this information.

Sources: (European Commission, 1993_[13]); (European Parliament, 2016_[14])

Informal networks and diaspora ties

Personal networks are important labour market intermediation tools. Evidence suggests that employers hire migrant workers more often through informal channels, such as professional and personal networks and word of mouth (Chen and Ward, 2013_[5]; IOM, 2013_[15]; OECD, 2011_[16]; McKay, 2009_[17]) (for opposite evidence, see (Behtoui, 2008_[18])), which are used to reduce the risks of adverse selection. This is especially true for low skilled workers, whose abilities may be less difficult to assess on paper and for which a trustworthy employee or professional partner may be a guarantor. Similarly, SMEs may prefer to recruit through informal networks due to lower capacity of human resource departments and the greater relative risk of poor hire in a small firm.

Personal networks in international recruitment often stem from diaspora ties, which may create sectoral employment opportunities for a given ethnic group. In Sweden, for instance, the Swedish Migration Agency statistics (IOM, 2013_[19]) show that employers who recruit Iraqi workers often recruit *only* Iraqi workers. Migrants already in countries of destination may also play an active role in international recruitment services by leveraging their networks and migration chains, e.g. in the agribusiness sector (Semprebon, Marzorati and Garrapa, 2017_[20]). Many diaspora initiatives include professional networking activities meant to facilitate professional circulation.

University and alumni networks

For skilled employment, universities and alumni associations can act as networks for international job matching. University career services often organise job fairs, thus offering foreign companies and local graduates the opportunity to market themselves internationally (IOM, 2013_[19]). Networks such as *Holland Alumni* – catering to all international graduates of Dutch universities – include online notice boards for jobs, PhD positions and internships.

Private recruitment agencies and immigration consultants

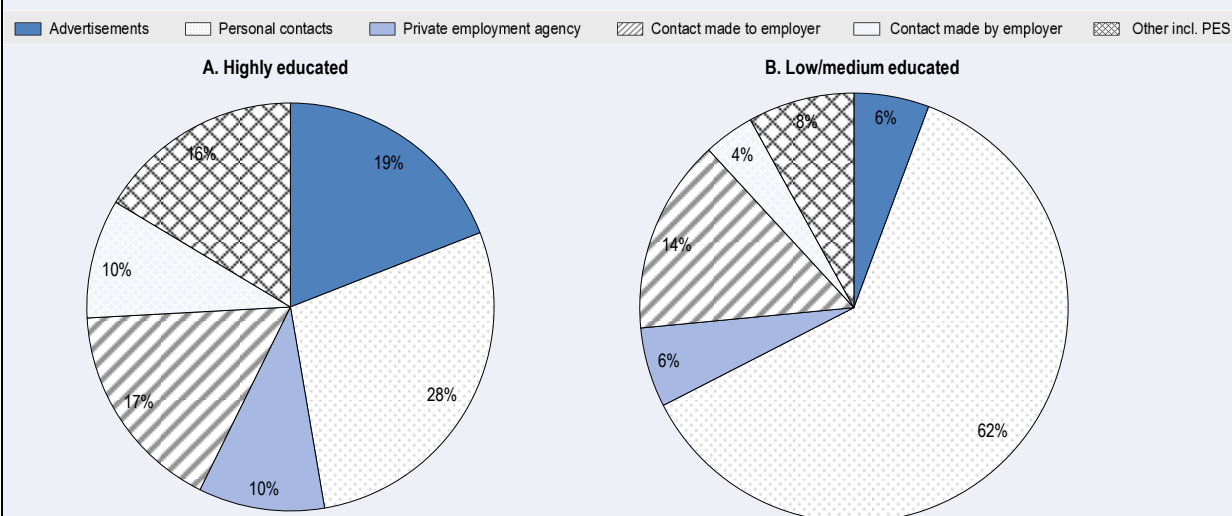
The private sector offers a wide range of services to support international recruitment, from targeted help with immigration procedures, which may be provided by immigration consultants or lawyers, to full packages involving complementary training, placement and settlement services, which are typically offered by international recruitment agencies. Using private support makes the procedure less time consuming for employers, who outsource recruitment tasks; however, it moves the responsibility of candidate screening and, in some cases, recruitment on to third actors, who charge rents for their ability to reduce uncertainty and risk.

Box 1.3. Most commonly used employment intermediation channels among migrants to the EU

For the EU as a whole, Figure 1.5 shows which job search method labour migrants from outside the EU have used to find their current job. The main job search method relies on personal contacts through relatives, friends or acquaintances: 28% of highly-educated non-EU labour migrants and more than 60% of those with a medium or low education level have found their current job this way. Using a private employment agency is an important job search method for highly-educated labour migrants from outside the EU, as indicated by 10% compared with 6% for those with a medium or low education level. Private employment agencies thus play a more important role than other formal intermediaries, notably the public employment services (PES) or education institutions (whose exact shares cannot be identified). Overall, almost half (48%) of highly-educated non-EU labour migrants found their job through intermediation by family, friends, private agencies, the PES or education institutions. Among those with a medium or low education level, this reaches three-quarters (74%).

Figure 1.5. Job search method used by non-EU labour migrants to find the current job, European Union, 2014

Labour migrants of working age (15-64)



Note: Sample sizes are too small to identify a separate share for the PES or for education institutions. Non-EU labour migrants are identified by a country of birth outside the EU, not by nationality. Labour migrants are identified by employment being their main (self-declared) reason for migration. Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included due to data availability.

Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants,

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

In Canada and the United Kingdom, for instance, intermediation from immigration consultants and lawyers is widely used. International recruitment agencies and consultants may organise their services across industry lines or roles in companies (e.g. top executive search firms, or firms recruiting workers in tech). Fee-based headhunting services are common in the British financial sector (IOM, 2013_[19]) and are growing in the tech sector. The same model is also used in the agribusiness sector when large-scale recruitment occurs. For instance, in Sweden, where there is a consolidated migration channel of berry pickers from Thailand, Swedish employers rely on a few large recruitment agencies based in Thailand (IOM, 2013_[19]). The British agribusiness sector also relied upon recruiting agencies before the 2004 EU enlargement (McCollum and Findlay, 2015_[21]). Private agencies are also used in the United States in the temporary agricultural programme (Martin, 2016_[22]).

Other available evidence and consultations with employers suggests that employers for whom international recruitment is routine – notably, large firms and firms operating in sectors highly dependent on foreign labour – often rely on the same private intermediation channel which they have come to trust. Conversely, employers for whom international recruitment is a one-off or new experience may struggle to access such channels.

To date, the availability of and recourse to private employment intermediation agencies' services to establish international labour matching at the middle of the skills spectrum (i.e. beyond the very highly-skilled/specialized profile on one hand and the low-skilled on the other) is rarer. Yet, these are in many cases the most sought-after and most difficult to identify profiles internationally.

Market size, reliable information and connection with the migration process are key to success of international employment intermediation tools

Network effects are a defining feature of marketplaces and other intermediation tools for job matching. Essentially these are agglomeration effects: the incentives to participate depend on the number of existing participants. Matching is typically expected to function better on “more crowded” marketplaces with many participants, as initial contacts may be made faster and the greater variety of participants allows for more optimal matches. Similarly, experienced intermediation actors with a broad portfolio of relevant clients are expected to offer better opportunities of appropriate employment matches across borders. Therefore, both job seekers and employers exhibit a tendency to find larger marketplaces and the established intermediaries who manage them more attractive. For example, preferences of employers and job seekers – and migrant jobseekers in particular – to locate in cities, despite higher costs, have long been linked to the larger local labour market available in cities (Andini et al., 2013_[23]).

The success of marketplaces and intermediaries for job matching also strongly depends on the accuracy and reliability of the information supplied on vacancies and candidates' profiles. In the case of open marketplaces, such as on-line job boards, the job descriptions and terms of employment that employers indicate in

vacancy postings may be very hard to verify, and likewise for the information conveyed in job seekers' profiles. Both sides may have an incentive to exaggerate the benefits of their offer so as to generate more contacts or mislead the counterpart into a match which favours one side. International job matching through private employment agents or consultants may offer more guarantees in this regard, if they properly assess and filter offers. However, private intermediation is not always reliable; profit-making agencies may exaggerate credentials or job characteristics, push clients to suboptimal matches. In many OECD countries, concern remains over private employment agencies, some of which misled large numbers of labour migrants and exploited their dependency (OECD, 2016^[24]).

In the context of international job matching, the risks stemming from adverse selection and suboptimal matches are higher than in local recruitment, especially when – as is largely the case in Europe – the employment offer drives the migration process. Employers may find out that they have not recruited the best candidate only after investing a great deal of time and money to go through the administrative steps required to get the foreign worker on the job. Labour migrants who have accepted a job based on unreliable information may find themselves dependent on their employer for their residence permit, and more susceptible to accept poor and exploitative working conditions in order to remain.

International employment matching platforms and other networking tools both virtual and in-person are likely to be more successful when they bring together a considerable number of potential employees and employers, and when profiles are accurately pre-screened and trustworthy.

Moreover, tools can benefit from being connected with actual migration opportunities. In the absence of smooth migration pathways for foreign candidates who are able to secure a job offer from a local employer, even the most sophisticated and reliable international employment matching tools have no value.

The case for public involvement in international job matching

Due to their remit over migration and employment regulations as well as their resources, public authorities are uniquely positioned to provide marketplaces and other employment intermediation tools which support successful job matches across borders throughout the skills spectrum.

Publicly-led international job matching initiatives may reach broader user-groups and ensure equity

Experience with job matching within a country strongly suggests that currently private-sector marketplaces would not serve the entire market but cater mostly to high-skill segments or particular occupations and sectors, including at the lower end of the skills spectrum, while the most comprehensive marketplace might be operated by a Public Employment Service (PES). Similarly, not all employers can afford the fee-based services of private recruitment agencies and consultants, while personal and ethnic networks are, by definition, only accessible by restricted

groups of people. Private no-fee job-matching platforms have emerged which offer to fill these gaps, yet so far they have not been used all throughout the skills and occupational spectrum.

In theory, public marketplaces may be broader than private ones. Other intermediation tools may also reach a broader user group as they are typically offered free of charge. Thus, state involvement in international job matching may be justified by concerns over equity. On the side of employers, the greater difficulties faced by SMEs, relative to large employers to afford private intermediation tools and fill vacancies through international recruitment. On the side of migrants, the greater barriers that candidates with less skills, resources, and/or networks may encounter to get access to reliable information and trustworthy employment offers across borders.

Moreover, state-led marketplaces may help avoid that the network effects involved in matching lead to a quasi-monopoly of a single private platform, as has been observed for social media. State-led solutions have been preferred in similar circumstances to prevent a monopoly from imposing high prices for access or from providing poor quality due to lack of competition. The concern for the quality of services arises equally when a dominant publicly-provided platform faces little competition.

Publicly-led international job-matching initiatives can offer greater guarantees on a smooth labour migration process

International job matching is subject to labour migration laws and regulations that may only be applied by public authorities. This includes implementation of labour market tests, the decision about admission of a job seeker, issuance of residence permits, recognition of foreign qualifications and questions concerning the transferability of social security. Where an international job matching platform is linked to a migration management and selection system involving the pre-screening of candidates for admission requirements, employers can be confident that candidates are eligible for immigration.

State-led initiatives in international matching have a unique asset in that they can directly address the regulatory barriers or inefficiencies that hamper foreign recruitment (e.g. cumbersome migration rules and procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications).

Besides the economic growth rationale of public support measures, public intervention in international job matching may also be motivated by public interest in ensuring compliance with applicable regulations by employers, recruiting agents and migrants themselves.

Publicly-led job-matching also protects users from the risks of undue rent-taking, illegal employment practices and other forms of misuse of information power, since there is no incentive for rent-taking or supporting suboptimal matching.

Box 1.4. Mixed experience with marketplaces operated by public employment services

The broad expertise in job matching, overview of vacancies and of labour market trends at the national level could represent key assets for the PES to play a strong role in support of international recruitment. Moreover, the involvement of the PES in the implementation of the labour market test puts the PES in a unique position to ensure that international recruitment covers only those cases where local workers are missing or where international workers could bring added value. Given its institutional capacities to implement complex procedures of administrative approval, such as those required for labour market tests, the PES could also be charged with a formal pre-selection of job seekers and vacancies for admission to a publicly provided marketplace. Use of the PES can also be mandated, either in general (mandatory publishing of all vacancies) or within the framework of international recruitment (as part of the labour market test). Many countries impose mandatory advertising requirements with the PES for all vacancies for which international recruitment is sought (see Table 3.A1.2 in OECD (2014_[25])).

The PES mandate is primarily to implement employment policies for local jobseekers, rather than to fill vacancies with workers from outside the country. This has hindered its role in international job matching. As priority is given to local job matching, the PES rarely acts as a match-maker for non-resident job seekers and such services are not necessarily integrated into more general employment services.

There are some notable exceptions to the very limited role of PES in international matching. Through the EURES network (Box 1.2), public employment services in EU countries do engage in match-making across borders, albeit with a limitation to job matching within the EU. In Korea, under the Employment Permit System, public authorities cooperate with employment agencies in countries of origin to find candidates and assign them to eligible employers in collaboration with the Korean PES. Within the German PES, the agency for International Placement Services (ZAV) is dedicated to international job matching and has cooperation programmes with the PES in migrants' countries of origin (notably in the Western Balkans and in Africa) – implemented by GiZ – that facilitate international job placement in target occupations. In Canada, migrants in Express Entry without a job offer are encouraged to register in the Job Bank, administered by the PES. Their profiles are thus visible to employers together with those of job-seekers residing in the country.

On paper, the PES appear well-placed to operate a marketplace for international job matching, provided the marketplace offers significant added value that makes it more attractive for job seekers and employers than marketplaces in the private sector. However in job matching at the national level, public employment services in several EU countries struggle to secure a competitive market share and to intercept a large portion of labour demand and applications. The same problem has been observed in the EURES system and portal for international job matching

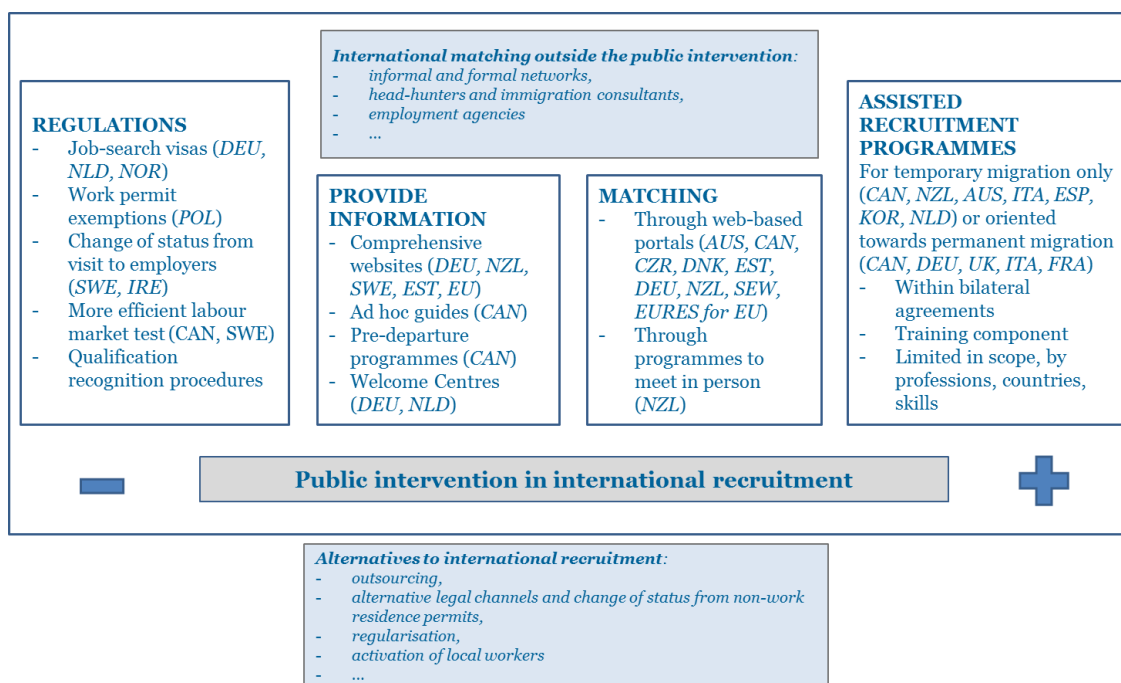
that public employment services of EU countries jointly operate at the European level (Box 1.2).

Moreover, the PES have often been associated with low and medium, rather than with highly-skilled, vacancies and job seekers. This skewed representation may be at odds with the migration system and labour migration needs (which are often more oriented towards highly-skilled segments) and could prove an obstacle to attract vacancies for high-skill jobs. Ultimately, employers interested in recruiting from abroad may still prefer other intermediation channels.

Publicly-led international job-matching initiatives: typology and overview

Publicly-led initiatives to facilitate and enhance international job matching may be categorised based on the extent to which public authorities are involved in actual recruitment (Figure 1.6). At one extreme, public support aims only at creating the most favourable conditions for employers and workers to meet. Employers select potential workers and vice versa, and the final decision to hire the individual candidate lies with employers only (while actual admission still rests with public authorities). At the other extreme, public authorities actively assist recruitment, co-operate with origin country counterparts (including public employment agencies), set the standards for pre-departure and post-arrival training and integration support, and have a say in the selection of candidates to present to employers, who do not necessarily meet or test them before hiring.

Figure 1.6. Degree of public intervention in international recruitment in different public initiatives in support of international job matching



Source: OECD Secretariat analysis.

Initiatives that create smoother regulatory conditions and opportunities for job search

Direct intervention on migration and employment-related regulations and their implementation is a state prerogative. While easing or smoothing labour immigration rules and related procedures is often a burdensome and complex exercise, for it involves political capital as well as legislative and/or administrative reform, this is where public intervention can make a big difference in addressing information barriers and costs in international recruitment, as compared with private initiatives.

More favourable migration regulations

Acting on migration regulations, public authorities may for instance opt to lower regulatory barriers for economic migration candidates to enter in the country and seek employment. This eliminates distance and allows employers and candidates to meet spontaneously or for interviews, thus also reducing part of the information risks and costs. Other obstacles may remain, including difficulties with the recognition of foreign qualifications, or with obtaining a work permit at a later stage. Existing examples of countries opening up their travel and migration regulations to allow for spontaneous matching between employers and migration candidates include:

- granting short-visit visas coupled with the possibility of an in-country status change to work permits. In Sweden, labour migration candidates are allowed to make in-country work permit applications after visiting an employer facing labour shortages. Similarly, in Ireland, highly skilled migrants are granted visas for job interviews and allowed in-country status changes if selected.
- granting temporary work-permit exemptions (to citizens of selected countries), as allowed in Poland for citizens of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the Republic of Armenia under the employer's declaration of intent to hire.
- granting temporary job search visas (generally to highly skilled migrants), as allowed in Germany, the Netherlands ('orientation year for highly educated persons'), and in Norway for a restricted group of skilled migrants. Purely supply-driven labour migration channels are still available in some settlement countries like Australia and Canada but may also be somewhat equated to job-search permits, in the sense that a job offer is not an absolute requirement for labour migration, and the matching can take place once the migrant is already in the host country. However, the selection process for these streams is very complex and competitive, as part of a peculiar migration strategy which has traditionally embedded long-term socio-economic and demographic objectives in the selection of labour migrants, who are granted permanent residence.

To support international job matching, public authorities may also act on regulations in key policy areas related to labour migration, notably rules of labour market access such as labour market testing and foreign qualifications recognition procedures.

Smoother labour market testing

Labour market testing is a widespread labour migration management tool across OECD countries (Table 1.1), used to protect the local labour from potential adverse effects of international recruitment. Countries may choose to make the labour market testing procedures less lengthy and/or more transparent to alleviate the deterrent for firms to recruit from abroad.

Many countries require employers to advertise vacancies locally – with public employment services and/or media – for a set period of time before being able to hire workers from abroad, so as to prioritise domestic labour force and/or demonstrate the unavailability of local workers to fill the job vacancy at the prevailing wage and working conditions. In line with this rationale, exemptions to the labour market test (LMT) may apply, notably for shortage occupations. Countries may adopt looser or tighter versions of LMTs, depending on the current labour market outlook and on how they interpret the trade-off between protecting local labour force and facilitating international matching for employers with unfilled or under-filled positions.

Table 1.1. Labour market tests imposed on non-EU migrants in EU countries, 2015

	EU Blue Card	National programme for highly qualified	General national programme
Austria	Yes (most cases)	Yes (some cases)	Yes
Belgium	Allowed (but not applied)	No	n.a.
Bulgaria	Yes (except shortage occupations)	n.a.	Yes
Czech Republic	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Estonia	No	No	No
Finland	No	No	Yes
France	No	Yes (some cases)	Yes
Germany	No	No	Yes
Greece	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Hungary	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Italy	Yes (except pre-approved employers)	Yes (except pre-approved employers)	Yes
Latvia	No	n.a.	Yes
Lithuania	Not if salary >3 times the average or shortage list	Yes	n.a.
Luxembourg	No	n.a.	Yes
Netherlands	No	No	Yes
Poland	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Portugal	No	Yes	Yes
Romania	No	n.a.	Yes
Slovak Republic	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Slovenia	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Spain	Yes	No	n.a.
Sweden	Yes	n.a.	Yes

Source: 2018 Revision by the Secretariat of Table 4.2 in OECD/EU (2016_[26]).

Examples of mechanisms and reforms that countries have adopted to reduce the LMT burden for employers include:

- expanding LMT exemptions, as was recently done in Canada. In 2013, Canada tightened its labour market testing requirements under the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA), assessing both vacancy and employer compliance. Responding to employers' concerns over the disproportionate constraints that the need to obtain a LMIA-backed job offer represented from some categories of permanent labour migration candidates (e.g. foreign workers already in Canada on LMIA-exempted temporary work permits, and intra-company transferees), in November 2016 the Canadian government introduced several exemptions to the LMIA requirements for candidates in Express Entry;
- loosening LMT requirements, as was done in Sweden after the 2008 liberalisation of labour migration regulations, by loosening advertisement requirements and removing the obligation for employers to consider applications from local candidates received in response to vacancy

publication, making the LMT nominal. Employers were encouraged to seek the non-binding opinion of the relevant trade union (OECD, 2011_[27]).

The trade-off between promptly allowing employers to fill job vacancies with foreign workers and the need to give locals priority to see and apply for jobs is a controversial one, and despite decades of experience with LMTs, there is still debate over the optimal balance in response to changing economic goals and needs (OECD, 2014_[25]).⁶

Smoother recognition of foreign qualifications

Making foreign qualifications recognition procedures more transparent and smooth is another key step to facilitate employment matching for professionals who were trained abroad – regardless of whether they reside in the country (e.g. asylum seekers, refugees and family migrants willing to access employment in their host country) or apply from elsewhere – as employers have a greater trust in local-equivalent qualifications. In regulated professions (e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, engineers, architects, as well as a wide range of skilled trades) formal recognition of foreign qualifications is a mandatory precondition to access the local labour market.

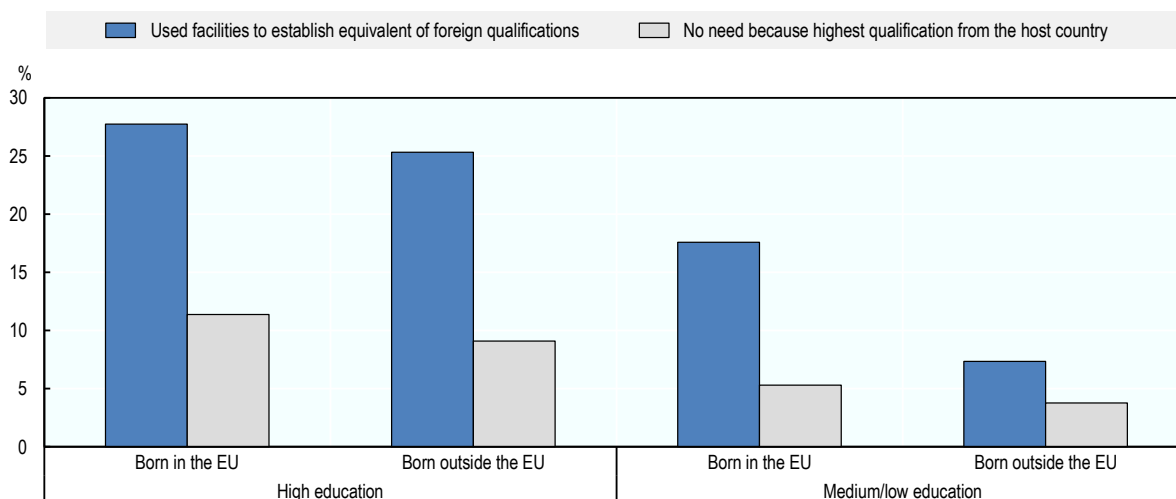
In EU countries, lacking recognition of foreign qualifications appears to be an issue especially for highly educated labour migrants from outside the EU (Figure 1.7). In this group, 29% indicate this as the main or second obstacle that keeps them from finding a suitable job. For highly educated mobile workers from within the EU, this share is only 18%, which likely reflects the achievements of a long-term process of harmonisation of qualifications standards between EU countries, and facilitated recognition rules under the EU Professional Qualifications Directive (EU PQD). The difference between highly educated labour migrants from within and outside the EU therefore hints at the potential for facilitating the validation and recognition of qualifications from outside the EU. Through appropriate measures, job obstacles for highly educated non-EU labour migrants could be reduced considerably. In contrast, among labour migrants with a medium or low education level, the shares affected by lacking recognition of foreign qualifications are essentially the same for migrants born within or outside the EU (14% and 13%, respectively).

At the same time, labour migrants from outside the EU tend to make less use of tools to have their foreign qualifications recognised in the host country, according to evidence from 2008 (Figure 1.7). The difference is small for highly-educated labour migrants: in this group, 28% of those born in the EU use such facilities, compared with 25% of those born outside the EU. A larger difference arises for labour migrants with a medium or low education level, 18% compared with 7%. The shares of labour migrants whose highest qualification is recognised because it was obtained in the host country are similar across origins (around 10% for highly-educated migrants and about 5% for migrants with a low or medium education level). Together, these results suggest that labour migrants from outside

the EU find it more difficult or less cost-effective to have foreign qualifications recognised.

Figure 1.7. Recognition of foreign qualifications, European Union, 2008/14

Labour migrants of working age (15-64)



Note: Labour migrants are identified by employment being their main (self-declared) reason for migration. Lacking recognition of foreign qualification may be indicated as main or second obstacle. Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included in Panel A due to data availability; Finland and Malta are not included in Panel B.

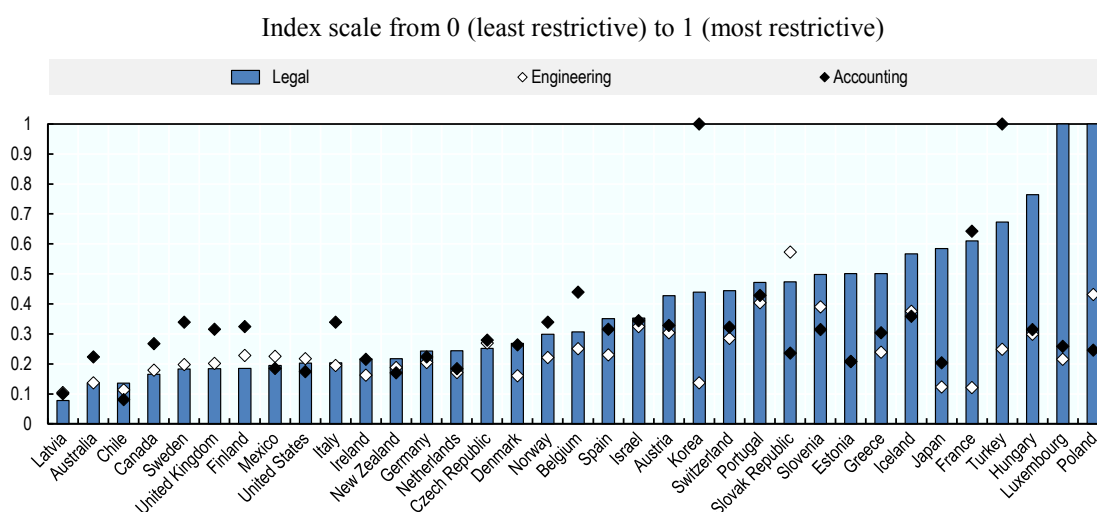
Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc modules 2008/2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

Streamlining the procedures for the recognition of qualifications can substantially improve labour migrants' ability to market their relevant skills to employers and reduce the risk of overqualification (OECD, 2014_[25]). For employers, it reduces the time needed for a qualified foreign recruit to start working and expands the overall pool of qualified candidates available to swiftly fill vacancies. Yet, since professional regulations are meant to ensure public safety and protection by denying labour market access to workers whose qualifications are below local professional standards, there are often limits to the extent to which access to regulated professions by foreign-qualified candidates may be streamlined. Existing examples of public intervention in the area of qualifications recognition to improve international job matching include:

- linking foreign credentials assessment with migration procedures by pre-screening candidates' qualifications, as in Australia and Canada where most of the labour migration streams require candidates to provide proof of local-equivalent educational qualifications, along with relevant language skills;

- allowing and encouraging pre-departure recognition of qualifications, as in Germany, where the 2012 Federal Law on Recognition of Foreign Qualifications has made it possible for prospective labour migrants to have their foreign qualifications assessed prior to arrival in the country. The procedure is supposed to be completed within three months of receiving all necessary documents. Similarly, in Canada initiatives like the Canadian Immigrant Integration Project (CIIP) help labour migrants bound for Canada to prepare for their integration at destination with support for pre-arrival assessment and/or recognition of foreign qualifications;
- concluding mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with target countries to facilitate local labour market access for workers qualified in these countries, as under the EU Professional Qualifications Directive (EU PQD); the Trans-Tasman MRA (TTMRA), the France-Québec umbrella agreement for the mutual recognition of qualifications, the ASEAN MRAs, as well as bilateral MRAs (Rannveig Mendoza et al., 2017_[28]);
- Drawing inspiration from streamlined procedures recently introduced in OECD countries to address the labour market integration needs of refugees (OECD, 2017_[29]). The procedures facilitate the qualifications recognition process for specific groups of migrants already in the country (generally those with skills which are in high demand). In Sweden, for example, a fast-track recognition procedure involving on the job testing, bridging training and mentoring has been available since 2015 to refugees enrolled in the introduction programme and who have qualifications in several shortage occupations in the health, hospitality and teaching sector. This approach to recognition requires that the worker is already in the country, and is applicable to training programmes and to residents, but can be integrated into training in the origin country.

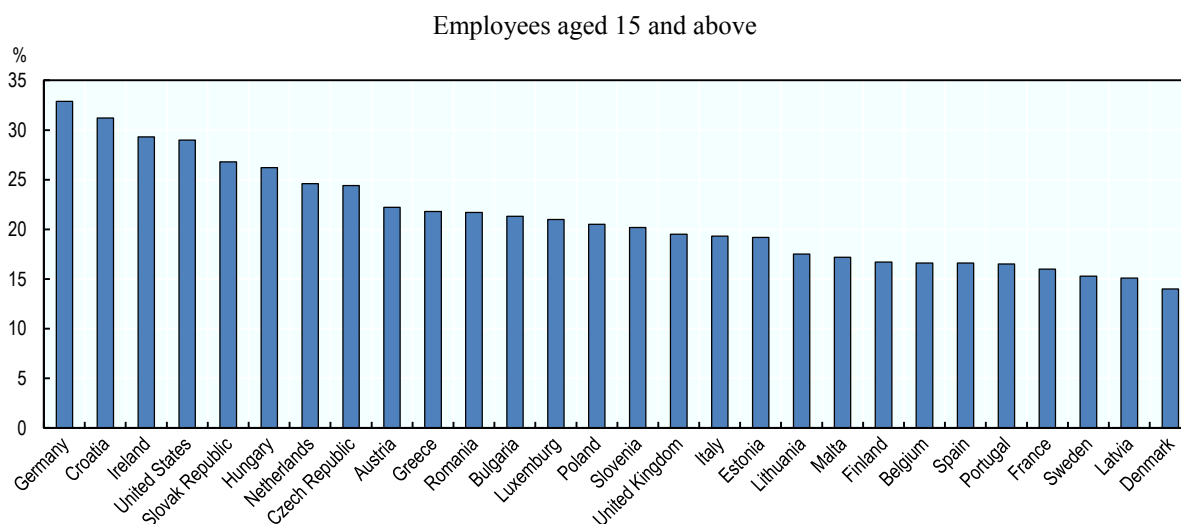
Figure 1.8 provides a measure of the restrictions on foreign entry into selected regulated professions. This shows, for instance, while restrictions on entry into engineering appear comparatively low, they can be high for accounting and legal professions. National governments do not control all the policy levers of qualifications recognition and professional accreditation for labour market access, as various other actors have a stake in this process – including local authorities, education providers, and, crucially professional regulatory bodies. In many OECD countries professional bodies play – by law or de facto – the role of labour market gatekeepers for foreign qualified professionals. As a result, there are often limits to the extent to which governments can facilitate professional qualifications recognition to improve international employment matching. This likely concerns a substantial part of vacancies: throughout EU countries, regulated professions account for sizeable shares of total employment, ranging from 14% in Denmark to 33% in Germany (Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8. Restrictions on foreign entry into regulated professions, OECD countries, 2017

Note: Figures refer to a subcategory of the Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI).

Source: OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index Regulatory Database,

<http://www.oecd.org/tad/services-trade/services-trade-restrictiveness-index.htm>.

Figure 1.9. Proportion of licensed workers in total employment, EU countries and United States, 2015 or latest available year

Note: The figure the United States refers to 2008.

Source: EU Survey of Regulated Occupations, <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof>, and Kleiner and Krueger (2013_[30]), <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/669060>.

The pre-screening of qualifications for labour migration candidates in Australia and Canada, for example, does not amount to full professional recognition, and foreign-qualified migrants with a job offer in a regulated profession would still need to get licensed by the local professional body before starting to work. Nonetheless, and particularly in labour migration systems which create pools of candidates (as the two-step EoI selection systems in Australia, Canada and New Zealand), embedding a publicly-coordinated pre-screening of qualifications in the

migration application process has the advantage of reducing part of the uncertainty – and associated information costs – that employers have to face when recruiting internationally. For migration candidates themselves, it offers a certified tool to market their qualifications and a time-saving first step into the recognition process.

Most often governments do not have the full remit over the conclusion of MRAs either – and in fact, in some cases (e.g. the Washington Accord in Engineering or the MRA between Architectural Licensing Authorities of Canada and the United States), MRAs have been concluded among professional bodies themselves without a great deal of public involvement. Regardless, governments can still play an important role by leveraging political capital and broader international relations to trigger the MRA negotiations and ensure that these bring results, as well as in monitoring and sustaining the implementation of MRAs. Thus, among the existing MRAs, those which grant a wider liberalisation of labour market access for professionals qualified in the partner countries – such as the EU PQD or the TTMRA – were embedded into broader economic or political integration processes. Negotiating and implementing MRAs is a complex and time consuming exercise which is more likely to be successful when broader economic or political interests are at stake on each side and/or where the professional qualifications standards of participating countries and bodies on each side are harmonised to some extent or at least compatible. By consequence, MRAs involving both developed and developing countries are rare, except when these are part of regional integration processes (as with the ASEAN MRAs which, however, present implementation challenges). This can prove a serious limitation for the recognition of qualifications from developing countries.

MRAs and other public interventions to facilitate local labour market access for foreign-qualified professionals may be linked to migration and mobility regulations – as in the case of the EU PQD which is meant to serve intra-EU mobility, or with the qualifications pre-screening in settlement countries. However, these interventions do not affect migration regulations themselves, and do not per se make them more liberal. Migration candidates who benefit from streamlined qualification recognition procedures are still subject to the applying migration regulations (e.g. MRAs themselves do not exempt candidates from immigration authorization).

Initiatives that provide targeted information and matching

In order to help migrants and employers overcome information barriers in international matching, countries can provide information on migration and employment regulations, practices and available support. In principle, as compared with the provision of information by informal networks and private agencies, public information tools come with the advantage of being free of charge for the user, as well as more authoritative, if comprehensive and regularly updated. Indeed, migration and job-matching information made available through diaspora or personal networks may be distorted by community or individual experience, and may therefore be partial, outdated, or not perfectly relevant to the

employer/candidate's situation. The provision of targeted information by private agencies generally comes at a cost, which might not be affordable by all migration candidates and employers.

To provide value added information tools, public channels ought to be comprehensive, well-designed, advertised and accessible by the different target stakeholders. Comprehensiveness of information is better achieved when the public tool stems from a whole-of-government effort to support international recruitment. Provision of information is more effective when multilingual, user-friendly and easy to find; simultaneously available through different channels (e.g., web-portals, live chat, hotline, email), up-to-date and active (e.g., e-mail alerts and newsletters).

Content can include real experiences, for example, interviews with migrants and employers, videos of the cities and working environment, and direct contact with mentors in the countries of origin. Matching tools such as job listings and interactive vacancy-migrant profile pairings may also be linked to information provision. Employers and migrants have different information needs for international matching and should be targeted separately. Differences by company size, employment sector, and skill level can also be made. Employer associations can be a primary source of targeted information for their members and may be especially effective in disseminating it through existing channels of communication (Box 1.5).

Box 1.5. The role of employer associations in supporting international recruitment

Over the past decade, employer associations – whether representative of public or private employers – have been increasingly involved in the migration debate. In countries and/or sectors affected by shortages of domestic workers, employer associations have actively supported their members’ international recruitment efforts by lobbying with national governments (and the EU administration) for more demand-driven and open migration regulations, as well as by providing targeted information tools. In some cases, as in the health sector, public employer associations have themselves engaged in international recruitment campaigns.

In the United Kingdom, against persistent shortages of health professionals, international recruitment is one in four core priorities of the workforce recruitment and planning agenda of the National Health Service (NHS) Employers organisation, which gathers British public health sector providers. To support employers, alongside lobbying the UK migration authorities and advisory bodies for regulatory adjustments, the NHS Employers also includes comprehensive section on international recruitment with updated information on regulations, resources on issues such as language assessment and upskilling as well as a code of practice for international recruitment (www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/recruit/employer-led-recruitment/international-recruitment).

In Sweden, where the berry-picking industry is heavily reliant on international recruitment, the Forestry and Agriculture Employer association provides relevant information to its members through published guides and meetings with the Migration Board, the Tax Authorities and the Public Employment Service (IOM, 2013_[19]). Similarly, a guide produced by the Federal Association of German Employers (BDA) provides information on recruiting migrant workers, both from abroad and among those already resident on the territory, including refugees (BDA, 2016_[31]).

Publicly-run labour migration information tools can take various forms, including comprehensive web portals, published guides for employers and migrants, information centres in countries of origin and pre-departure programmes for migrants. Countries may use a combination of different types of tools. Existing examples of public labour migration information tools in OECD countries include:

- comprehensive portals for migrants and employers, as in Germany, where the web-portal *Make it in Germany*,⁷ a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Federal Employment Agency, provides labour migration and international matching information tailored to qualified professionals and employers. The website section dedicated to prospective migrants contains multilingual information on occupations in demand (including available job listings from the Federal Employment Agency), labour

migration and social security regulations, opportunities for family members as well as life in Germany. It also links to another government-run website, *Recognition in Germany*,⁸ which provides a search engine for foreign professionals to access tailored information on the recognition procedures that they would have to apply for depending on their prospective occupation and work location. The employer section features detailed information on migration regulations, as well as diversity management and integration. Best practices in these areas are also presented. To enhance interactivity and accessibility the portal has a mobile application version and includes email, chat and hotline services. Similar initiatives exist in Estonia, where the *Work in Estonia*⁹ website provides tailored information to both employers and prospective migrants; in New Zealand, where the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment runs the *New Zealand Now*¹⁰ portal which functions as a matching tool between prospective migrants and employers through a registration feature; and in Sweden, with the *Working in Sweden*¹¹ portal. The European Commission has created an Immigration Portal, which provides an overview of migration regulations and links to national websites; national sites presenting the labour market and explaining how to seek work are linked where relevant. The EU Portal mostly refers to national sources, so the depth of information on how third-country nationals can seek employment depends on whether and how such information is presented on the national sites. In parallel, the Europass revision launched with the 2016 Skills Agenda for Europe has provided for the Europass online platform to include information on qualifications and qualifications frameworks or systems; opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning; recognition practices and relevant legislation in different countries, including third countries.

- guides and other forms of targeted information for employers recruiting from abroad, as in New Zealand, where the marketing team of the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment proactively support employers willing to recruit from abroad, or in Canada where the federal government publishes a *Roadmap to hiring and retaining internationally trained workers*¹², with a specific focus on SME needs; and the website *Hire Immigrants*¹³ features a variety of resources to encourage and support employers hiring immigrants (both in-land and from abroad);
- information centres and counsellors for potential migrants, such as the Migrant Resource Centres run by national authorities and agencies such as public employment agencies or international organisations in a number of migrants' countries of origin (see ETF (2015_[32]) and Chindea (2015_[33]), for example); and dedicated desks or counsellors in destination countries' embassies abroad – as the GIZ-trained migration advisors operating in India, Indonesia and Viet Nam;

- pre-departure information programmes for potential migrants, such as the pre-departure integration and orientation component of the German *Triple Win* project,¹⁴ jointly run by the federal Employment Agency's International Placement Services (ZAV) and GiZ, in cooperation with public employment agencies in partner countries of origin (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines and Tunisia) for the placement of qualified nurses with German companies; or the Planning for Canada¹⁵ initiative managed by the Canadian Orientation Abroad and the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program with government funding, providing free of charge pre-departure orientation and training, support with credential recognition, networking and job-matching to principal applicants and their spouses bound to migrate to Canada.

These different public initiatives, however, also face specific challenges. Static web portals may fail to reach a large share of interested persons, while too much information may be confusing, and users may find complex portals difficult to navigate. If they include an outreach element, like pre-arrival programmes in countries of origin, they may turn out to be very expensive and to cover only a limited number of persons. More broadly, when publicly-led information provision – and, particularly, pre-departure training – is not matched with a transparent and efficient labour migration system as well as sufficient labour migration opportunities, this may backfire by sparking frustration, disenchantment and mistrust among employers and prospective migrants.

Assisted recruitment programmes

A more comprehensive involvement of public authorities in international matching and selection may occur with assisted recruitment programmes. These programmes, which are often embedded in bilateral cooperation (i.e. bilateral agreements or partnerships), offer to match labour demand and supply across the countries party to the agreement by leveraging the public authorities' prerogative in migration management, alongside with structured accompanying measures (e.g. targeted training, pre-departure and post arrival provision of information and support to both involved migration candidates and employers), often provided in cooperation with NGOs and other private actors. Various public authorities in country origin – ranging from the local PES, to the ministry of foreign affairs, interior, education and labour – may be involved in these programmes.

The involvement of public authorities in bilateral labour matching programmes is more common in specific sectors – notably the agriculture sector where they are also partly geared towards reducing the risks of illegal employment practices and irregular migration or overstaying of seasonal workers. Bilateral labour agreements also offer a particular value for international matching in regulated professions, such as in the health sector, where they can facilitate effective selection and employability of foreign-qualified professionals through pre-departure and post-arrival support for the recognition of foreign qualifications, bridging training and other matching initiatives. Box 1.6 presents existing

examples of assisted recruitment programmes implemented in OECD countries in the context of bilateral agreements.

Box 1.6. Publicly assisted recruitment programmes

A number of international recruitment programmes are assisted by public authorities in order to facilitate matching, notably seasonal worker programmes, such as the ‘Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme’ (SAWP) in Canada, the ‘Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme’ in New Zealand, and the ‘Seasonal Worker Programme’ in Australia. These programmes all have a regional focus and target between ten and twelve neighbouring countries (Mexico and the Caribbean in the case of Canada, Pacific islands for Australia and New Zealand) in the context of institutional cooperation. Besides public authorities, accredited private recruitment agencies as well as civil society organisations are also involved in the recruitment and training/support activities.

These are consolidated programmes which have proven effective in helping to match unfilled seasonal vacancies, while providing economic support to neighbouring countries and also reducing the risks of irregular migration and employment. In 2015, more than 3300 seasonal vacancies were matched in Canada through the SAWP, while in New Zealand the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme placed 9 300 workers from the Pacific islands. Corresponding figures for the 2016 edition of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia amounted to just about 4 800 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2017^[34]).

Under Italy’s seasonal worker programme – which is subject to a quota, fixed at 17 000 for 2017 and open to workers from 28 countries – potential migrants can register to dedicated lists, as a means of fostering international matching. However, in practice, this option is rarely used and recruitment is most often carried out directly by employers, through informal channels. Spain also applies a ‘Collective Management of Hiring in Countries of Origin’ (formerly called “Contingente”) for seasonal workers in agriculture, whereby public authorities and employers participate in the selection of candidates in countries or origin in the context of bilateral agreements. In 2015, around 2 900 migrants were admitted under this scheme (Ministry of Employment and Social Security, 2017^[35]).

Sectoral Assisted Recruitment Programmes in regulated occupations provide another example, such as the ‘Triple Win’ pilot project for nurse recruitment run by the International Placement Services of the German federal employment agency (ZAV) and the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ), in co-operation with the public employment agencies of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Philippines, and Serbia.¹⁶ Under this project German employers willing to hire a foreign nurse pay a fee (around EUR 3 700) to benefit from a comprehensive package of publicly-provided services including the selection of candidates, language and orientation training, qualification recognition and bridging training both pre-departure and post-arrival, as well as integration

support. While judged satisfactory in terms of quality of matches and ethical recruitment, the programme has remained relatively small scale, with a total around 900 placements over the period 2012-16.

In light of the public safety issues at stake, the health sector is one where public assistance in international recruitment has been more common. In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS) has been very active in this area and has recently launched the International GP Recruitment Programme with an overall budget of 20 million GBP until 2020 to cover for the recruitment, relocation and training of qualified general practitioners.¹⁷ Pilots have also been implemented in the engineering sector, such as the 2012-13 joint ZAV and GIZ project offering traineeships and placements to engineers from the Philippines, Georgia, Vietnam and Tunisia (Desiderio and Hooper, 2015_[36]).

Systematic publicly assisted recruitment as part of broader labour migration programmes (in term of duration – i.e. non seasonal – and scope – i.e. non sectoral) is rare. The Korean ‘Employment Permit Programme’ (E-9) constitutes an exception, building on strong cooperation between the Korean government and public employment service, and government agencies in sixteen Asian countries. These agencies select potential migration candidates on the basis of skills, work experience and language proficiency. The pool is then approved by the Korean government and managed by the employment service. When Korean employers express to the employment service the intention to apply for the EPS, they are proposed candidates selected from the pool. Matched candidates benefit from further training in Korea, and are allowed to stay in the country for an initial five-year period, renewable (OECD, 2019_[37]).

Assisted recruitment programmes can be a powerful supporting tool for international recruitment, provided that they serve clear – and genuine – international labour matching needs, and that they are designed around these needs, with the involvement of employers. Among the advantages these programmes may provide to employers is the availability of a pool of pre-selected candidates, whose qualifications and training have been preliminarily screened, and topped-up with additional training, and who may benefit from preferential migration channels and enhanced integration support, if sponsored. For migration candidates, besides crucial matching support, these programmes may also offer guarantees in terms of salary and working conditions – which, in the context of such programmes, tend to be closely monitored by public authorities – and, in some cases, also facilitation for housing and local integration.

Conversely, programmes whose objectives are mixed and where, for instance, the choice of target countries, is led by policy considerations which aren’t primarily labour migration policy considerations, and which do not take in due account employers’ needs and interests, are bound to failure. When programmes have limited relevance to employers – either because they were not properly tuned to serve employers’ needs, or because they have, as it is often the case, limited scope and reach, or lengthy procedures – they end up being undersubscribed,

particularly if more straightforward recruitment tools are already available to employers (e.g., consolidated networks, irregularly residing migrants) (Box 1.7). Since assisted recruitment programmes are often the result of complex negotiation and implementation processes in the context of broader bilateral agreements between destination and origin country authorities and agencies, their failure to cater to the international job matching goals may result in the loss of significant public resources, and even harm diplomatic ties. Among potential migration candidates – notably those who were trained in origin countries but eventually did not manage to secure employer sponsorship, these programmes may spark frustration. Moreover, as assisted recruitment programmes embedded in broader bilateral agreements often have limited flexibility, an additional challenge is the difficulty to adapt them to rapidly shifting labour market needs at destination (e.g. an economic downturn that may reduce employers’ appetite for international recruitment overall).

A case in point is the Dutch ‘Blue Birds’ pilot project for circular migration with Indonesia and South Africa (Siegel and van der Vorst, 2012^[37]). The project ran between 2010 and 2011 and was then discontinued. Only 8 matches took place over the period, out of 160 that were expected. Project failure can be attributed to a number of factors, including insufficient attention to the needs of employers. Similarly, in Italy, the pilot project launched in 2012, ‘Facilitate a responsible and effective circular migration of Mauritian workers to Italy’ has suffered from fading interest from employers, with no vacancy available in 2017, despite the availability of bridging training and on-line matching services.

Box 1.7. Pre-departure training for labour migration in Italy: mixed ambitions, limited results

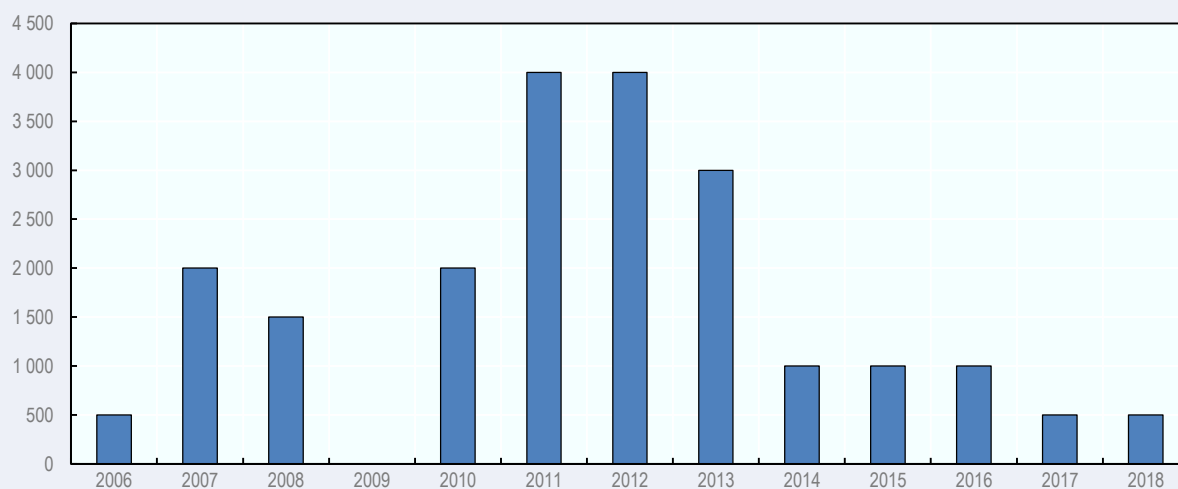
Since 2002 the Italian legislation on immigration has allowed preferential quotas (*Titolo di Prelazione*) for the admission of migrant workers who have attended qualifying pre-departure training courses in the countries of origin. Within this framework, various projects have been undertaken, with national and EU funding and with the active involvement of some Italian Regions and Provinces, as well as NGOs and labour intermediation agencies.

The first pilots, developed directly by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, were carried out between 2002 and 2005 in Moldova, Tunisia and Sri Lanka and involved a total of 550 workers in construction, manufacturing and personal care services. Several other projects were undertaken until 2011, with a few regions – notably Lazio, Lombardy, Tuscany, Umbria and Veneto – taking the lead, along with intermediation agencies such as Obiettivo Lavoro, which run projects involving a total of 700 nurses. Pre-departure training programmes were set up in a broader group of countries of origin co-operating with Italy in the fight against irregular migration.

According to data provided by the Italian Ministry of Labour, a total of about 3 000 workers were trained abroad under these projects over the period 2002-11.

This is far fewer than the total 20 000 places reserved in the Italian immigration flow decrees from 2006 to 2017 for migrant workers who attended pre-departure courses in origin countries. Available figures on actual admissions are even lower: of the 1 629 workers trained in their countries of origin under programmes authorized by the Italian Ministry of Labour over the period 2006-11, only 720 were admitted to Italy through employer sponsorship, while 909 workers are, at least in theory, still available for recruitment.¹⁸ For the main origin country of trained workers, Tunisia, most trained workers were not recruited.

Figure 1.10. Reserved quotas for pre-departure training abroad in annual flow decrees (2006-17)



Source: Ministry of Labour, Italy

Since the economic crisis in 2009, pre-departure trainings have been geared to integration rather than labour market objectives, and have been carried out in the countries of origin of migrant workers already residing in Italy with the objective of preparing their family members for successful integration upon family reunification.

All in all, the the *Titolo di Prelazione* has not translated into an effective tool for international employment matching. Mixed goals, insufficient language training and technical knowledge of migrant workers, and long procedures explain employer reluctance to use this channel for international recruitment.

Similarly, the facilitated labour migration conditions offered in France to selected groups of migration candidates from countries signatory of the *accords de gestion concertée*,¹⁹ have fallen short, due to lack of employers' awareness and interest (OECD, 2017_[39]).

Engaging with employers

In demand-led labour migration systems employers drive the international job-matching process. Without employer involvement, even the most sophisticated publicly-led initiative for international recruitment is bound to failure. Yet, employers' buy-in cannot be taken for granted. As the above examples have shown, many public initiatives for international job matching have struggled to attract employer interest. As a result, matching platforms have remained underpopulated and assisted recruitment programmes have not resulted in a cost-effective tool to fill labour shortages through migration.

Even at the national level, publicly led initiatives for employment matching have at times suffered from a negative reputation among employers. For instance, PES have often been regarded as skewed towards low-skilled client profiles and job offers and have thus played a limited role in matching demand and offer for skilled professionals. Similarly, in countries where the migration process has proven too cumbersome and lengthy to meet employer needs, employers also mistrust the capacity of ad hoc publicly led international job matching initiatives, including targeted assisted recruitment programmes, to produce optimal employment matches. Such initiatives have often gone undersubscribed and have failed to bring together sizeable and relevant markets for international job matching.

Often public interest has been perceived as not aligned with the real needs of the industry, for instance when assisted recruitment programmes have been created mainly as a compensation for countries co-operating on the fight against irregular migration rather than to cater to real labour needs. Conversely, examples of industry-led international training and recruitment initiatives exist which have resulted in sizeable numbers of optimal employment matches across borders (Box 1.8). Success is largely due to effective networks between employers, recruitment agencies and training institutions, and on direct employer involvement on curricula. One key lesson of these private intermediation success stories is the importance of securing employer buy-in at the outset – at the moment of setting the training parameters or other building blocks of the programme – rather than seeking it only at the end of the process, when trying to secure recruitment opportunities for programme participants.

Involving employers in the design and implementation of international job matching initiatives comes with its own caveats. In occupations like seafaring, where jobs and employers are themselves international and where consolidated international training and quality standards exist, allowing international employers to *drive* local training curricula along with the recruitment process has not proven to be socio-economically harmful for origin or destination countries. However, in other occupations, notably in the health sector, concerns may arise for instance over brain drain from origin countries, or service quality standards. Similarly, when permanent-type international migration is predominantly driven by immediate employer demand, long-term demographic and socio-economic goals which fall typically under public interest may go neglected.²⁰

Box 1.8. Training for international recruitment in the seafaring and health industries

Seafaring is often an international occupation, since most of the world's seafarers are employed on ships that are owned by firms in one country, often fly flags of convenience at sea, and are staffed by multinational crews. A mix of private and public institutions trains seafarers to standards established by the International Maritime Organization (www.imo.org), and graduates are often recruited by private staffing firms that have relationships with particular shipping firms. As of 2012, most of the world's 1.4 million seafarers were from Asia and Eastern Europe; the Philippines alone accounted for about 250 000.

International recruitment in the seafaring occupation largely relies upon trusted networks connecting shipping firms with specialized recruitment agencies and training centres – both public and private – in origin countries. The existence of standard curricula competency certificates established by the 133-member International Maritime Organization (the Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping, STCW) also concurs to reduce information barriers – and risks – and hence facilitates international employment matching.

In the Philippines, for instance, both government and private schools train seafarers and provide them with the STCW certification. Ship owners are actively involved in training, by providing equipment and advice on the curriculum. Moreover, schools have relationships with specialized private employment agencies, which in turn have relationships with shipping firms. Hence, the incentive to maintain quality standards passes from schools to employment to shipping firms. This creates network effects which minimise the risks of adverse hires for employers, while ensuring that schools maintain a good reputation and that students have appropriate returns on their investments in education.

Opposite to the seafarer example, occupations in the health sector rely on national training standards and certifications. Hence, direct international recruitment of health professionals from abroad can only happen when the qualifications acquired by the foreign professionals are equivalent or recognised as equivalent to the local qualifications allowing access to professional practice in a given country. The few cases of functioning Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) in the health sector – and, notably, the EU Professional Qualifications Directive – allow for this, as do efficient qualifications recognition procedures which can be initiated when the foreign worker is still in the country of origin. Another way of overcoming the qualifications barrier in foreign recruitment is training in origin countries to the destination country standards.

In India, the Philippines and other developing countries private schools exist which train doctors and nurses to destination country standards. These private schools have features similar to the seafarer model, with respect to employer involvement or training to standards required in particular foreign countries, worker investment in training, and networks that link schools with recruiters and foreign employers, as well as incentives to achieve and maintain high test pass

rates for graduates and satisfactory performance abroad.

The private nurse-training systems in the Philippines allow students to get loans for training that can be repaid via higher foreign earnings. Many of these loans are from relatives already abroad rather than banks or other lenders due to the absence of assurance of successfully completing the training and finding a foreign job.

Government-run training institutions are generally less flexible in adopting and enforcing training to foreign country standards, and they often find it difficult to mix local taxes and foreign aid to train some or all workers to another country's standards and expect some to stay behind. Brain drain concerns come into the equation. Hence, some governments require those who attended government-subsidized schools training to foreign standards to serve a year or two in rural or remote areas at low wages and poor conditions. This, however, may increase the desire to emigrate as soon as possible.

Striking the optimal balance between employer involvement and public interest remains a difficult yet essential exercise for the success and long-term sustainability of any international job matching initiative.

Table 1.2 presents advantages and disadvantages for the main forms of public involvement in international job matching: (re-)designing regulation on labour migration and related areas, providing targeted information and marketplaces to both job seekers and employers, acting as an intermediary in the matching process, and supporting the operation of assisted recruitment programmes.

Table 1.2. Public initiatives to support international recruitment, their elements of success and drawbacks

Measure	Elements of success	Drawbacks
Favourable regulatory conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liberal temporary labour migration channels: _ Open labour migration system; - (or) Restricted and low-risk target group (highly-skilled, students, neighbouring partner countries); - clear paths for status change and longer-term residence; - Safeguards against welfare dependency; - Employer involvement in design. Reasonable, predictable and transparent labour market testing procedures: Exemptions for shortage occupations; - Exemptions/less stringent requirements for specific low risk groups. <p>Transparent and smooth qualifications recognition procedures and rules of labour market access for foreign-qualified professionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-screening migration candidates for qualifications; Allowing pre-departure qualifications recognition and support; - Concluding and effectively implementing MRAs with target countries and/or in target sectors to facilitate labour market access for qualified professionals from partner countries; - Supporting international comparability of qualifications and skills; - Facilitating recognition procedures and accelerating access to professional practice for foreign qualified professionals in shortage occupations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of misuse and over-staying; - Poor monitoring mechanism; - Low awareness and trust among employers. - Risk of unfair competition with local labour force. - High cost of qualification pre-screening may discourage candidates; - Limited trust of local employers in qualification equivalencies; - Resourceful MRA negotiation and implementation processes - Autonomy of professional bodies from central government and fragmentation of qualifications recognition actors; - High cost of bridging mechanisms for highly qualified professionals (e.g. medical doctors); - Harm to public safety protection principle and industrial standards.
Provision of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive, reliable and updated information, integrated with multiple information channels, covering a wide range of topics (migration options, labour market, qualifications recognition, life-style, work culture, etc.); - Multilingual, user-friendly, easy to find information; - Multi-channels and personalised exchange options (email, hotline, chat, offices) and newsletter or email alerts to keep users up-to-date; - Tailored information for employers and potential migrants, addressing specific needs (e.g. for employers, diversity management, benefits of recruiting abroad), by profiles (e.g. SMEs, highly skilled workers); - Displaying genuine experience, e.g. interviews, video, etc., or linking with mentoring opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When static not effective in reaching out all interested persons; - When a dynamic element is included (e.g. pre-arrival programmes in countries of origin), costs are high and the number of persons covered lower; - Too much information can create confusion and over-complication; - When information is disconnected from actual migration and employment matching opportunities it can spark frustration and backfire

Measure	Elements of success	Drawbacks
Intermediation of job matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration with information services and the migration management system (e.g. through pre-screening, by skills and eligibility to migration programmes; - Employers' involvement and awareness; - Targeted for specific sectors or skill level;- - Substantial number of vacancies and CVs available; - Information displayed in English; - Tools matching vacancies with CVs; - Careful technical implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low share of available vacancies and CVs (as with PES or EURES); - Low quality of vacancies and profiles (e.g. only low and middle-skilled) - Low trust among users and adverse selection; - Poor technical implementation and flaws in the matching mechanism; - Poor marketing and mainstreaming.
Assisted recruitment programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Genuine and clear labour migration and international job matching goals; - Broad stakeholder involvement, including countries of origin authorities and employers; - Development of professional networks in countries of origin and destination; - Specific target, by skills, sectors, countries of origin; - Migration paths available to programme participants; - Training component to align migrants' skills with the skills in the countries of destination; - Certification component of skills and qualifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack genuine labour migration goals and channels; - Lack of interest by employers; - High costs for the administration or for employers; - Excessive bureaucratisation; - Poor technical implementation; - - Presence of easier migration alternatives which make the programme irrelevant; - Conflicting goals between origin and destination countries.

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis.

Benefits of making international job matching easier

The previous sections have discussed how marketplaces, intermediaries and specific policies can reduce frictions in international job matching. This section briefly explores the benefits that come with lower frictions. In general, if international job matching becomes easier, both employers and potential labour migrants will be more willing to engage in it. Marketplaces for international job matching thus grow in size, but also in variety as the new participants may have different profiles. The increase in size and variety is reinforced through network effects: marketplaces with a greater number of employers are more attractive for labour migrants, and marketplaces with a greater number of labour migrants are more attractive for employers (Diamond, 1982_[39]).

Among several possible destinations for labour migrants, those with a greater number and variety of employers will often appear more promising. Therefore, reducing frictions in international job matching can substantially increase the competitiveness of a particular destination. In the case of the EU, for example, a well-functioning common system for international job matching can help attract highly-skilled labour migrants from outside the EU who might also have opportunities in several other destinations. Due to the network effects that favour size, a marketplace for the entire EU would likely be more attractive for labour migrants from outside the EU than marketplaces at the national level. If many candidates would register – perhaps exclusively – with the marketplace at the EU

level, employers across EU countries would also have a greater incentive to join, thereby reinforcing its attractiveness for potential labour migrants. Especially the highly-skilled migrants who seek very specific vacancies might prefer large marketplaces for their variety. The pre-selection for a marketplace at EU level could be valid for several EU countries with comparable requirements, which would save labour migrants going through multiple procedures. Information on the respective requirements could be provided for all EU countries. As a by-product of a unified and transparent marketplace, however, employers from across the EU would enter into competition for the same candidates, which might disadvantage employers in low-wage regions.

Another important effect of lower frictions arises because the employers and labour migrants involved adjust their search strategies: if search becomes easier, it will more often lead to a good match, in the sense that the profile of the labour migrant corresponds well to the job requirements. While both employers and labour migrants may accept a mediocre match when high frictions make it difficult to find a better match, many will only settle for a good match when frictions are low. Reducing frictions should therefore improve the sorting of labour migrants across the available jobs, with several desirable consequences: better use is made of labour migrants' skills, so that they are more productive and make a greater economic contribution to the host country. Labour migrants themselves likely experience greater job satisfaction and are less inclined to leave again.

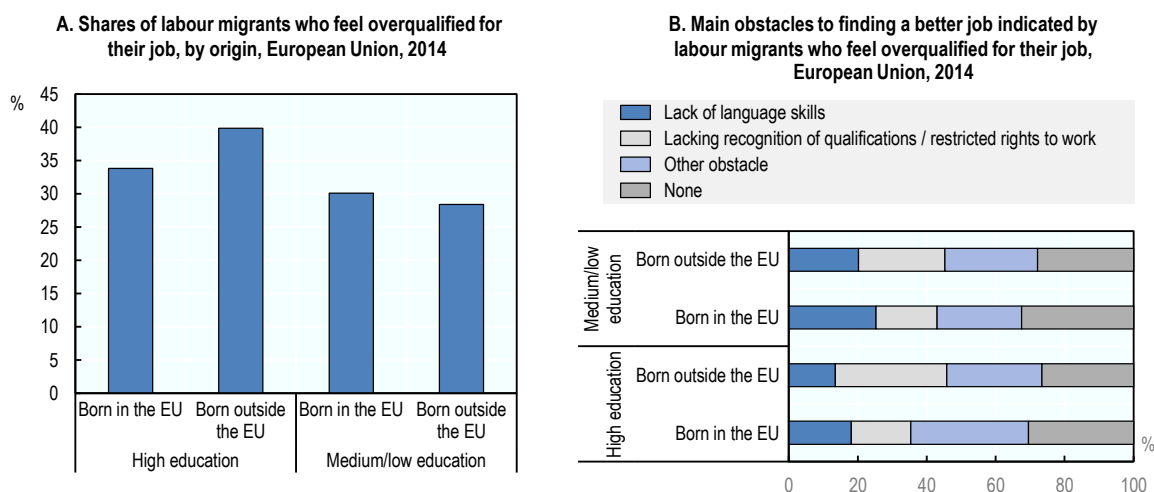
One way to measure how well labour migrants are matched to jobs is offered by overqualification rates. Panel A of Figure 1.11 shows survey data on subjectively perceived overqualification among labour migrants. Highly-educated labour migrants from outside the EU report feeling overqualified significantly more often than highly-educated labour migrants from within the EU, which is likely linked to higher frictions for non-EU migrants. By contrast, labour migrants with low or medium education levels indicate roughly the same incidence of overqualification, below the levels for highly-educated labour migrants. This indicates that overqualification would become less frequent if transferring a tertiary education from outside the EU became easier. Panel B of Figure 1.11 shows that labour migrants from outside the EU are often held back from finding a job that corresponds to their qualifications due to lack of recognition of foreign qualifications or restricted rights to work. More generally, Panel B shows that a large majority of overqualified labour migrants are affected by frictions that complicate finding a better job and thereby maintain the incidence of overqualification.

Since reducing frictions such as restricted work authorisations enable labour migrants to change jobs more easily, this would allow for greater mobility across employers, occupations and regions. In the EU, the same logic extends to mobility across EU countries (Poeschel, 2016_[40]). Labour migrants who are more mobile find it easier to take up opportunities elsewhere and might therefore experience faster career progression (Ruhs, 2017_[41]). In addition, mobile labour migrants are in a better position to avoid unemployment. Therefore, lower frictions can support

labour market adjustment and sustain employment among labour migrants (Kahanec and Guzi, 2017_[42]).

Figure 1.11. Links between frictions and overqualification of labour migrants, European Union, 2014

Labour migrants of working age (15-64)



Note: Labour migrants are identified by employment being their main (self-declared) reason for migration. Overqualification is self-declared and limited to employed persons. Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are not included due to data availability.

Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules.

Conclusions

Across OECD countries, securing a job offer from abroad is a key prerequisite, or preferential criterion, for skilled labour migration. However, various information barriers and costs – stemming from the geographical distance between prospective employers and migration candidates, limited familiarity with labour markets, education and training systems and professional networks on both ends, and from the complexity of labour migration regulations – make international job matching challenging and largely explain employers' reluctance to hire from abroad, even in the presence of severe skills shortages.

Employers who recruit internationally – most often large firms or firms with international operations, and companies led by immigrants – have often recourse to private intermediation tools to overcome practical barriers. Migration candidates may also use such tools to improve their chances of appropriate matching and successful migration. Private intermediation tools may be formal, as in the case of information, matching and placement services provided by private recruitment agencies, immigration lawyers and counsellors, or informal, as personal and professional networks which are a widespread information and matching channel in both local and foreign recruitment. At the intersection

between private networks and more formal channels, web-based employment matching platforms have also sprung up over the past five years. Yet, their use in support of international employment matching remains currently limited to the highest and lowest ends of the skills spectrum and technical occupations.

Moreover, private intermediation channels for international recruitment, and particularly those offering the more comprehensive packages, may be costly, and hence not affordable for all employers. Support available through personal and diaspora networks, while generally free of charge, may sometimes lead to skewed selection and suboptimal matching. At times, in sectors which employ low-skilled migrants, the risk of abuse and unfair treatment by unscrupulous private intermediaries cannot be excluded. Finally, information bottlenecks and costs stemming from complex – or restrictive – migration and employment regulations, or from opaque and cumbersome qualifications recognition systems cannot be resolved by private intermediaries alone.

Publicly-led initiatives aimed at reducing information barriers in foreign recruitment, and enhancing international job matching, also exist, and often consist of information and/or job-matching platforms, advisers or packages which may function similar to private tools.

Publicly-led information and matching tools have a unique advantage over private ones when they link to or are integrated within the labour migration management system and with policies that tackle regulatory hurdles to labour mobility. This is notably the case when public authorities pre-screen candidates for minimum immigration requirements, language level and qualifications equivalency, and make them available to employers in banks or pools. This reduces uncertainty about the these candidates' likelihood to swiftly complete the administrative steps necessary to be admitted in the country, once sponsored, as well as to successfully integrate. For example, this would be achieved by an Expression of Interest system that pre-selects job seekers and vacancies based on their eligibility under labour migration laws. The way such systems function in Australia, Canada and New Zealand is examined in the following chapter. Similarly, when lists of vacancies and suitable candidates are established in the context of bilateral labour agreements or effective pre-departure support packages linked with actual migration opportunities at destination, the value added of publicly-led intermediation tools is clear.

Size effects are crucial to the cost-effective functioning of international job-matching marketplaces and intermediation tools. In theory, public involvement may offer added value also in this respect as publicly-led intermediation initiatives may be accessible to broader groups of employers and migration candidates as compared to private tools, and cover a broader portion of the skills spectrum. Yet, in practice, a number of public initiatives to facilitate international job-matching have failed to attract interest from employers. In general, the financial and governance efforts required for the implementation of public tools and initiatives in support of international recruitment are better justified when these tools and initiatives get sufficient attention from end-users. This is better achieved when

these initiatives are complementary to existing private instruments – rather than a mere duplication – and offer equal or more guarantees in terms of fairness, trustworthiness, and/or are more comprehensive.

Complementarity stems from the exclusive prerogative of public authorities over labour migration management rules (i.e. admission and residence conditions), and labour market access regulations (e.g. labour market testing and shortage lists, rules for recognition of foreign qualifications and access to professional practice by foreign-qualified workers). Hence, public intervention in support of international recruitment can make a real difference when compared with private support if it tackles bottlenecks in migration and employment regulations. For instance, by making labour market testing and qualifications recognition more efficient or facilitating status change for certain categories of migrants. More targeted tools such as bilateral agreements may also offer value in international recruitment, provided that they are genuinely shaped and implemented with the primary goal of serving more efficient international employment matching and professional mobility.

Fairness and **trustworthiness** of publicly-led international job matching mechanisms are a result of them being provided free of charge and by actors who do not pursue private interests (which may occasionally conflict with the best interest of employers and migrants) and are committed to ensure compliance of all involved stakeholders. This levels the playing ground between the large and/or international firms who can afford targeted private intermediation support and the large number of SMEs for which this is not a viable option.

Comprehensiveness of public support tools for international job matching may only stem from the **active involvement of all key stakeholders – and primarily employers** – in the design and implementation of such tools. Setting up and managing matching platforms, pools or targeted assisted recruitment programmes is costly for the public purse. Pools and programmes which go undersubscribed because, for instance, employers do not advertise vacancies or look for candidates through these tools, or because of low interest among migration candidates themselves are a waste of public resources. Internally, employers may lose trust on the capacity of public authorities to cater effectively to their international recruitment needs and, more broadly, the public opinion may lose its already very limited appetite for public intervention in support of labour migration. Internationally, undersubscribed and failed tools and agreements may send a negative signal on the country's genuine attractiveness for international talent and may durably affect the country's branding in this respect, or even harm diplomatic relations (in the case of bilateral agreements failing to meet the expected labour migration targets). Similar considerations would apply for any public intervention in international matching which would eventually be EU-wide rather than at the national level.

Public initiatives bear the promise to play a unique role in support of international job-matching by fully unlocking the potential of well-managed skilled migration to contribute to economic growth and competitiveness. However, for this to

realize, **securing active buy-in from all key stakeholders is crucial**. At the national and EU level, public authorities committed in putting forward the international talent agenda have a compelling interest in effectively engaging with employers, social partners, migrants, private recruitment agencies as well as public employment services, as a stepping stone for any international matching and recruitment initiative capable of advancing the talent agenda.

Notes

¹ While the outcomes of migrants who arrive with employment already secured are better than those of other migrant groups, the integration outcomes are not the subject of this paper. The question of balancing job offers with human capital and long-term adaptability is addressed in more detail in (OECD, 2017_[29]) and (OECD, 2014_[25])

² See (OECD, 2017_[29]).

³ EU citizens enjoy labour mobility rights in the Internal Market, which exempt them from general labour migration requirements in all EU Member States.

⁴ During the last 20 years, regularisation programmes in Europe have covered more than 3.2 million persons, two-thirds of which were in Italy and Spain; while case-by-case regularisations 280 000 persons, mainly in France and Germany (Brick, 2011_[44]).

⁵ The labour force surveys capture labour migrants who are or were irregular migrants at a given point in time. In some OECD countries, such as Southern European countries, a significant proportion of regular labour migrants entered the country illegally and benefitted from ex-post regularisation. The surveys may capture, to a greater or lesser extent, this group.

⁶ The European Commission proposed certain parameters for the LMT in the 2001 “Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self-employed economic activities” (COM/2001/0386), which stated (Art. 6(2)): “If employers have published a job vacancy via the employment services of several Member States, e.g. by means of the European Employment Services Network (EURES), for at least four weeks and if they have not received an acceptable application from within the EU labour market [...], they will be allowed to recruit from abroad [...]. In order to prevent fraud, the published job vacancies must contain realistic, reasonable and proportionate requirements for the offered post and competent authorities shall check this”.

⁷ For more information, see <http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en>.

⁸ For more information, see www.recognition-in-germany.de.

⁹ Work in Estonia, <https://www.workinestonia.com/>.

¹⁰ New Zealand Now, <https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/>.

¹¹ Sweden, <https://sweden.se/collection/working-in-sweden/>.

¹² For more information, see <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/employers/roadmap/index.asp>

¹³ For more information, see <http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/>

¹⁴ For more information, see <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41533.html>

¹⁵ For more information, see <https://www.planningforcanada.ca/program/about/>.

¹⁶ GIZ, Sustainable recruitment of nurses (Triple Win), <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41533.html>

¹⁷ NHS England, Recruitment schemes, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gp/fv/workforce/building-the-general-practice-workforce/international-gp-recruitment/recruitment-schemes/>

¹⁸ Italian Ministry of Labour, international job matching platform, www.cliclavoro.gov.it/Aziende/LavorareItalia/Pagine/Domanda-italiana-e-offerta-straniera.aspx .

¹⁹ With Senegal in 2006, with Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Benin in 2007, with Tunisia, Cape-Vert, Burkina Faso and Cameroon in 2009; with Mauritius, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia (and under discussion with Lebanon); with Russia in 2009.

²⁰ It was to address this shortcoming that the initially decisive point premium for a qualifying job offer under the Canadian Expression of Interest system was drastically reduced one year into implementation.

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Chapter 2. Building blocks of a migration management tool

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the EoI systems as implemented in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. It first defines the general elements of the EoI system. It then describes the policy context and stated objectives for the introduction of the EoI in the three countries, and presents the specific features of the system in each country. The chapter examines how the EoI attracts candidates to the pool, and how it vets and selects them. Whether the EoI systems have so far met their objectives is discussed. The chapter draws lessons from experience on how this immigration tool could be useful in different contexts.

2.1. Introduction

Labour migration policy is in continuous evolution as it attempts to address multiple and occasionally competing objectives. Economic migration is used in OECD countries to meet short, medium and long-term labour demand and skill needs, to support industrial policy, to achieve demographic objectives, and many other specific goals. As part of this evolution, new models of managing applications and selection have emerged. One important and interesting refinement of case management and selection is the Expression of Interest (EoI) system, a two-step process for creating a pool of eligible candidates and then selecting from this pool.

This innovation in migration management was first introduced in 2004 in New Zealand and later adopted in Australia (2012) and Canada (2015) to respond to two common objectives: improving oversupply management and enhancing job matching. EoI is not a specific programme but a model which has been interpreted in multiple ways in different countries of application. This chapter examines the EoI model, to provide an overview and a clearer concept of why it is used, how it is structured and what has been changed in the system since its introduction.

The first section of the chapter defines an EoI in its general form. The second section describes the policy context of the introduction of the EoI in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. This is followed by a section presenting how each country has set the EoI in different ways and how the EoI works in attracting candidates to the pool, vetting and selecting them. Finally, a preliminary assessment of the EoI in meeting their objectives is presented.

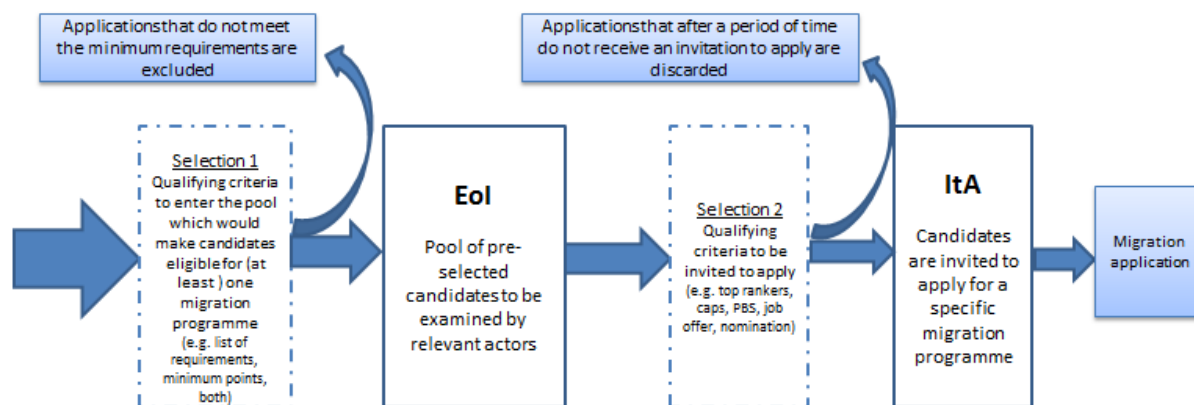
What is an EoI: Definition and objectives

An EoI system is a two-step application process, whereby potential migrants express an interest in migrating to the specific country of destination and are admitted into a pool if they meet certain criteria. From the pool, they may be selected and receive an invitation to apply. The system thus comprises two steps: selection for the pool and selection to apply. The submitted expressions of interest amount to a pre-selected pool of candidates which migration actors can tap into. Candidates exit from the pool either because they receive an invitation to apply to a specific migration programme, or because they have not been selected after a period of time. Criteria to enter the pool and to be invited to apply vary. In economic migration management, the aim is to maximise the economic contribution of migrants (Figure 2.1).

EoI is not a migration programme itself, but rather a tool for migration management in support of specific migration programmes. It aims to improve the efficiency of the selection process as well as make the selection itself more effective. By gathering pre-screened candidates, EoI creates the conditions to prioritise selection among eligible candidates, and possibly to improve job matching. Among the pre-selected candidates, only the ‘best’ ones are invited to apply, but who the ‘best’ ones are depends on the characteristics of candidates in

the pool. It is a method to reduce backlogs in processing applications, as the administration has no obligation to draw from the pool and the time candidates may remain in the pool is limited. This makes the selection process selective and flexible at the same time. In an EoI system, there is no guarantee that anyone in the pool will be invited to apply. Further, there is no commitment by the candidate to accept an invitation to apply in the second stage selection.

Figure 2.1. Basic EoI model



Source: OECD Secretariat.

Why EoI systems have been introduced: rationales and development in New Zealand, Australia, Canada

The EoI has become a major economic migration policy element in three settlement countries. New Zealand was the first country to introduce it in 2004, followed by Australia in 2012 and by Canada in 2015. These three countries share a common active and long-term management approach towards economic migration, using it to address not only temporary but also protracted labour shortages and to achieve demographic targets. They also have a longstanding tradition of collaboration in designing their respective skilled migration policies and took explicit inspiration from each other in implementing their respective EoIs (Senate of Canada, 2013^[1]).

New Zealand, Canada and Australia's labour migration policy includes both temporary and permanent programmes. In these countries, EoI systems have been used mainly to support skilled migration programmes that grant immediate access to permanent residence and have numerical limitations. These two considerations, i.e. the importance of long-term impact of permanent migrants and the limited places available, explain why selecting the most promising migrants was particularly important for these skilled migration programmes.

EoIs are open to migrants who are both abroad as well as those already in the territory with a temporary residence permit. In practice, most invitations to apply¹ are for migrants already in the country on temporary permits.

EoIs do not cover all permanent economic migration admission in these countries, as other programmes continue to offer channels for permanent migration. In New Zealand, most of the permanent economic residents must pass through the two-step selection (87%), compared to half (55%) in Australia and a minority (24%) in Canada. Including programmes for which the EoI *may* be used (see Table 2.1), 24 in 2015 all permanent migration to Australia and the majority (65%) to Canada could potentially pass through EoI. In practice, the use of EoI is lower. EoI is used only for permanent visas in New Zealand and Canada, while Australia also includes two temporary visas in its programme.

Table 2.1 reports the immigration programmes which make use, or may make use, of the EoI, whether they grant permanent or temporary residence and the share of economic migration inflow they cover.

The three countries introduced the EoI system at different periods over more than a decade and in all of them, the introduction of the EoI coincided with a policy shift from a heavily human capital-centred model to a hybrid model balancing human capital with employer demands.

However, the main motivation was caseload prioritisation and management. In fact, before the introduction of the EoI, applications were assessed on a ‘first come, first served’ basis, leading to queues (backlogs or inventories), which were ill-suited to meet employers’ hiring needs and short-term economic demands. Moreover, the migration cap in the three countries was quickly reached by applications submitted early in the filing period and obtaining the pass-mark, while higher-scoring applications submitted later entered the queue. With the EoI system, these countries moved from a policy of “passive acceptance of residence applications”, to a more “active selection of skilled migrants” (Merwood, 2008^[2]).

Although the EoI systems in New Zealand, Australia and Canada have the same core structure (described in Section 1), some elements have been fine-tuned or added to address specific national needs. The following section describes the country-specific policy circumstances that led to the introduction of the EoIs and the specific needs to which they responded.

New Zealand

New Zealand pioneered the first EoI system in 2003, in the context of a wider review of its supply-driven model to permanent migration, introduced in the previous decade. The two-step process, along with revised selection criteria, aimed at ensuring that the received applications were better managed and that their selection better reflected skill demands. At that time, New Zealand had been in a conjuncture of sustained economic growth, marked by the lowest employment rate in the previous 15 years and by skill shortages registered across many sectors (OECD, 2014^[3]). The need to hire foreign workers had intensified; however, the number of applications to be processed had increased as well. In these circumstances, the traditional processing mechanism (i.e. processing all applications as they were submitted and granting a positive outcome to all those reaching the pass-mark on the point-based system) revealed its inefficiencies:

migrants, and possibly employers, had to wait a long time (up to two years) before receiving a decision, and the applications selected within the cap limit did not necessarily represent the most urgently needed skills (NZ Parliamentary Library, 2003^[4]). A new selection system could have enabled the administration to manage a wider pool of candidates and to prioritise applicants with a job offer for instance.

To address these shortcomings, in 2003, the government introduced two elements of novelty: a new migration category called Skilled Migrant Category (replacing the General Skills Category in force since 1991), and the EoI system. The new Skilled Migrant Category was still based on a point-assessment, but having employment or an employment offer provided more points than previously (although it was not required). The EoI system was introduced by a bill submitted to the Parliament as a matter of urgency (New Zealand Parliament, 2013^[5]), to ensure that the applications by candidates with a job offer were quickly processed, and that, after a certain period, the unpicked applications were automatically discarded, without causing a backlog.

Presently, New Zealand uses the EoI also to select migrants for its Skilled Migrant Category, the Investors 2 category and, outside the economic stream, its Parent category. In the context of economic migration, the EoI is most important for the Skilled Migrant Category, which accounts for 87% of total economic permanent migration (and which will be discussed below). The Investor 2 category is much smaller in number as the category is capped at 400 per year. Investors need to have a minimum of 3 million NZD in available funds or assets and only the top-rankers against a PBS are invited to apply. In 2012, New Zealand extended the EoI also to a specific category of the Family Stream, the Parent Category, subject to a numerical limitation. Parents of New Zealand citizens or residents for at least three years with a certain level of income (owned by parents or children) could be sponsored to become permanent residents. Similarly to the economic stream, the EoI served the purpose to gather expressions of interests of parents meeting certain requirements (income, language, health), to sort them and to prioritise applications, on the basis of their income. This allowed managing the backlog of applications, which was the consequence of a low cap and a high demand for this visa category. The category is currently being reviewed and new EoI applications closed as of October 2016. In the section which follows, only the Skilled Migrant Category will be discussed.

Australia

The Australian version of the EoI is called SkillSelect. It was introduced in 2012 to make sure that successful candidates could make a contribution to the Australian economy and to better align the migration programme to labour market needs (Australian Government, 2011^[6]). Like in New Zealand, an oversupply of qualified candidates led to long processing time, which was up to three years for independent migrants (Hawthorne, 2011^[7]; Australian Government, 2011^[6]). At the same time, the cap for skilled migrants was quickly reached by the first applicants to meet the pass mark. This weakened the effectiveness of the selection mechanism. Like in New Zealand, SkillSelect was introduced in the context of a

general review of the Australian permanent skilled migration programme, initiated by the government in 2008-09 and which led also to the expansion of employer-sponsored programmes. However, the economic context in which this reform took place in Australia was different, as it was marked by the global financial crisis and slower economic growth.

Unlike New Zealand, where there is only one skilled migration category, subject to a strongly hybrid selection mechanism, the Australian skilled migration programme features a variety of both supply-centred and hybrid schemes. The visa subclasses that do not require an employer sponsorship (Skilled Independent, Nominated and Regional Visas)² are selected through SkillSelect, while those that require an employer sponsorship may use SkillSelect for its matching platform function. Employers may find workers in SkillSelect and recruit them using the permanent Employer Nomination Visa and the temporary Regional Sponsored Scheme,³ but also using Australia's large temporary skilled visa.⁴ As a consequence, compared to the New Zealand version, the Australian version of the EoI is more complex and more dynamic to support different temporary and permanent migration programmes and to serve different policy objectives. For the supply-centred centrally-managed Skilled Independent Visa, SkillSelect serves the purpose to reduce backlogs and prioritise comparatively the better candidates. For decentralised and more demand-centred programmes (Skilled Nominated and Skill Regional visa), SkillSelect is also used to support migration demands by employers, states and territories, as it provides a database of pre-selected potential migrants (Australian Government, 2011_[6]). For employer-sponsored programmes, SkillSelect works as a matching platform, where candidates can market themselves to employers, and employers can find potential employees. Candidates are allowed to stay in the pool for up to two years, during which they can seek sponsorship or nomination by employers, state or territory governments and update their profiles.

In Australia, SkillSelect is also used to select entrepreneurs and investors (Business Innovation and Investment visa),⁵ who would need to be nominated by a state or territory or, in the case of the Business Talent visa, by the Australian government. In the following section, only the Skilled Stream will be discussed.

Canada

Canada introduced its version of EoI, called Express Entry, in 2015. It was intended to improve application management and, in particular, to tackle the long-standing and particularly serious issue of backlogs that affected the Federal Skilled Workers Program. To deal with backlogs, in 2008, Canada introduced a maximum number of applications that Citizenship and Immigration Canada could process yearly (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2010_[8]). The quota had a limited number of qualifying occupations, requirements of arranged employment or previous experience in Canada, as well as processing priorities. These changes reduced processing time, from up to six years down to one year. However, they did not prove a long-term solution; the number of applications soon rose again and processing time became longer. In 2009, the 'inventory' of

applications in queue stood at 640 000. To reduce the inventory, in 2012, the immigration minister decided to stop processing and return all applications submitted prior to the 2008 changes. This decision spurred a class action by potential migrants who had lodged their application before 2008. Although a 2013 ruling established that IRCC acted within the boundaries of its competence, the lawsuit increased pressure to find a method to eliminate the backlog. Therefore, the aim of the Canadian government, when introducing Express Entry, was to reduce the processing time to 6 months (Senate of Canada, 2013^[1]).

The backlog in the Federal Skilled Workers Program was not only an administrative problem with associated legal consequences but also meant that the system was responding poorly to short-term labour market needs. To improve this situation, another strategy adopted by the Canadian government was to open up alternative migration channels to the Federal Skilled Workers Program. Since 2008, candidates with previous Canadian work experience have been able to apply to a Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and since 2013, candidates with a job offer in a trade have been able to apply for a Federal Skilled Trades Programme (FSTP). Programmes requiring sponsorship by province or employer were also expanded. Express Entry supports several separate programmes, i.e. the Federal Skilled Worker Program, Federal Trade Worker Program, and Canadian Experience Class. These programmes comprise approximately one third of permanent economic migration. Candidates who qualify for at least one of these programmes can enter into the pool. While in the Australian EoI candidates may enter into the pool if they pass the same qualifying threshold and are then selected based upon different visa-specific criteria; in Canada, the opposite happens, candidates can enter the pool if they meet the specific requirements of the programme of interest and are then selected by picking top-rankers against uniform criteria. In this respect, with Express Entry, the Canadian government tried to harmonise the final selection criteria, while preserving the specificity of each programme.

Express Entry also aimed at strengthening the role of provinces and territories in immigrant selection. Candidates for the Provincial Nominee Program could opt to use Express Entry to market themselves to provinces or territories of interest. In turn, the sub-federal administration could turn to the Express Entry pool to pluck candidates who meet the requirements for at least one federal programme. Moreover, by choosing candidates through Express Entry rather than through other channels, provinces and territories could be ensured that candidates had already undergone a pre-screening stage and would consequently be more likely to be selected, especially since the points provided by a provincial nomination amount to 50% of the total.

Table 2.1. Main reasons and year of introduction and selection channels in EoI systems in New Zealand, Australia and Canada

Country – EoI name	Year	Main reason for introduction	Main selection channels from pool, P (permanent) or T (temporary)	Share of total inflow covered by EoI (2015; 2016 for Canada)
NZL – Expression of Interest	2004	Reduce backlogs Prioritise the comparatively ‘highest potential’ candidates and those with a job offer	Skilled Migrant Category (P)	40% of all (permanent and temporary) economic migration; ⁶ 87% of permanent economic migration
			Investment 2 Category (P)	50% of the Business and Investment categories ⁷
			Parent category (P)	27% of the Family Stream ⁸
AUS - SkillSelect	2012	Reduce backlogs Prioritise the comparatively ‘highest potential’ candidates Support labour migration demand (from state and territory governments as well as employers) by providing a pre-selected pool of candidates	<u>General Skilled Migration</u> Skilled Independent Visa (visa 189) (P) Skilled Nominated Visa (visa 190) (P) Skilled Regional Visa (visa 489) (T)	SkillSelect schemes make 53% of permanent economic migration (while the remainder <i>may</i> use EoI), and 35% of all (temporary and permanent) migration. ⁹
			<u>Sponsor-based, may use SkillSelect</u> Temporary Skilled Visa (visa 457) (T) Employer Nomination Visa (visa 186) (P) Regional Sponsored Scheme (visa 189) (P)	
			<u>Business Innovation and Investment</u> Business Talent (visa 132) (P) Business Innovation and Investment (visa 188) (P)	100% of the direct access business and investment schemes
CAN – Express Entry	2015	Reduce backlogs Prioritise the comparatively ‘highest potential’ candidates Support labour migration demand (provincial governments) by providing a pre-selected pool of candidates Harmonise selection criteria across different programmes	Federal Skilled Workers Program (P) Canadian Experience Class (P) Federal Skilled Trade Program (P)	Express Entry programmes (including EE Provincial Nominee) ¹⁰ comprise 21% of the permanent economic immigration category; and 17% of all (temporary and permanent) migration.
			<u>May use Express Entry</u> Provincial Nominee Program (P)	

Source: OECD Secretarial calculation based on New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) (2016_[9]), Migration Trends 2015/16; Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Borders Protection (DIBP) (2016_[10]), 2015-16 Migration Programme Report; Citizenship and Immigration Canada (IRCC) (2016_[11]), Report to OECD Expert group on International Migration (SOPEMI): Canada’s immigration policies, programs and trends (2017_[12]).

EoI elements in New Zealand, Australia and Canada

In order to function, EoI systems need:

- a certain number of candidates who are willing to express their interest in migrating to the specific country
- vetting procedures to pre-select the candidates who would make up the pool

- mechanisms to manage the pool so that some candidates are invited to apply and a certain turnover is guaranteed.

New Zealand, Australia and Canada implement EoI in different ways at these three stages. The following sections describe how they choose to attract candidates, to vet them and to manage the pool.¹¹

Attracting candidates to the pool

Attracting migrants to the EoI pool is not a challenge for New Zealand, Australia and Canada. These countries are popular and long-established migration destinations that can rely on an already available migration supply for their programmes, as they often had backlogs of qualified candidates prior to the introduction of EoI. Evidence from the Gallup World Survey (OECD, 2016_[13]) confirms that New Zealand, Australia and Canada are attractive migration destinations: the estimated number of potentially permanent migrants is as high as their total population, while in the US and in the EU potentially permanent migrants are estimated to be respectively 40% and 25% of the total population. The percentages are even higher for New Zealand, Australia and Canada if only high skilled potential migrants (i.e. those who would leave in the next 12 months) are taken into account. Moreover, a higher percentage of potentially permanent migrants to Canada, Australia and New Zealand compared to the average of potentially permanent migrants (45% vis-à-vis 36%) has taken concrete actions to migrate, suggesting either that the three countries are considered more feasible destinations, or that they attract more determined migrants.

Since there is already interest in migrating to these countries, the challenge is to ensure that interested potential migrants express their interest through the EoI system. One way to attract migrants to express their interest in migrating is to provide simple and clear information on migration-related procedures. In all three countries, it is in fact possible to apply to the EoI online directly from government migration information websites. Detailed information on how the EoI systems work and which migration programmes they support is also extensively available. Prior to submitting their expression of interest, potential migrants can also check their eligibility and success chances online, by filling in a questionnaire.

Involving potential migrants more directly is also an attraction strategy. The Canadian Express Entry has an email alert service to keep (potential) migrants updated with any changes that may occur in the system. In New Zealand, an entire website, *NewZealandNow*, is dedicated to promoting New Zealand as a destination country, and interested migrants can sign up to receive general information on migration opportunities and periodic job vacancies. These vacancies are collected from employers who wish to recruit migrants and register their vacancies into a vacancies database, called SkillFinder. SkillFinder matches the profiles of candidates and the vacancies description and sends email alerts to potential migrants who signed up. In 2017, *NewZealandNow* counted more than 800 000 registered candidates.¹² This number represents a massive pool, more than 16 times the total migration inflows into New Zealand in 2015 (54 000).

Canada, Australia and New Zealand also participate in, or organise, overseas recruitment fairs. Fairs allow potential candidates to learn about migration opportunities, life and work in the selected country, and to contact potential employers and regions of destination, some of which may also send representatives to the events.

The EoI targets not only potential migrants abroad, but also migrants who are already residing in the country on temporary visas. Those already in the country have better access to information on job opportunities and lifestyle than those residing abroad; therefore, less outreach is necessary to promote EoI in this group. Whether because they have more information, or because they meet criteria more easily, most of the new visas issued from EoI programmes go to temporary residents rather than people abroad.

Vetting candidates

Pre-selecting candidates: list of requirements and point-based systems

As described above, one of the main purposes of EoI is to create a pool of pre-selected candidates. Admission to the pool can be decided based on meeting a list of prerequisites, and/or on passing a certain threshold using a point-based assessment. Since the EoI can support more than one migration programme, there may be one pre-selection method for different programmes, or more pre-selection methods depending on the migration scheme the candidate is interested in. In New Zealand, candidates have to meet certain requirements (occupational profile, age, language skills) and pass a point-based assessment that combines supply and demand-side factors. Similarly, in Australia, candidates for sponsor-free visas have to meet certain requirements (occupational profile, age, language skills) and pass a point-based assessment, which, in the Australian case, focuses on human capital factors only. Candidates for sponsor-based visas, on the contrary, only need to meet certain requirements to enter into the pool, and are exempt from the point-based assessment. In Canada, candidates for the Canadian Experience Class and the Federal Skilled Workers Program are vetted by using a list of programme-specific requirements, while candidates for the Federal Skilled Workers Program undergo also a point-based assessment, combining supply and demand-side factors.

New Zealand, Australia and Canada use the EoI mainly for their skilled immigration programmes. The definition of ‘skilled migrant’ is based on the occupation(s) that the migrants are capable of doing that they nominate in their expression of interest. New Zealand and Australia (for sponsor-free visas) draft lists of skilled occupations¹³ that feature both professional and technical occupations (e.g. plumbers, carpenters, cooks). Similarly, in Canada, only managerial, professional and technical professions as categorised in the National Occupation Classification (NOC) are eligible, as well as a subset of trade occupations (e.g. butchers and bakers). In Australia, the occupations that can be sponsored by employers are extended to the occupations listed in the Consolidated Sponsored Occupations List (CSOL),¹⁴ which additionally includes some lower-

skilled occupations. While applicants for nominated visas have to choose a skilled profession, states and territories may use their own occupation lists drafted within the State Migration Plan, which can be broader than the skilled list. In Australia, the capacity to perform skilled employment is assessed by checking qualifications and work experience by the occupation-specific assessing authorities. The assessment certificate is a compulsory requirement to complete an expression of interest.

Screening method: self-declaration or supporting documents

The screening method can be based either on prospective migrants' self-declarations, which selected migrants have to substantiate with documents at a later stage (New Zealand), or on documentation that candidates are requested to provide when expressing their interest (Australia, Canada). This latter method increases the confidence of the selectors in the quality of the pool and minimises risks of failure related to authenticity or qualifications' recognition problems. This is particularly important when private employers are involved in the selection, as is the case in Australia, where employers have direct access to the pool, and in Canada, where employers have access to the candidates indirectly, through the job matching platform called Job Bank. However, it requires candidates to invest in certification and recognition with no guarantee of selection.

Table 2.2. Pre-pool selection and screening method by country

Country	Migration scheme	Selection method to enter the pool	Screening method
NZL	Skilled Migrant Category	List of requirements (occupational profile, age, language skills) + Combination of demand-side and supply-side factors assessed through a PBS with a minimum threshold to meet	Language test and self-declaration for qualifications, unless assessment needed
AUS	Skilled Independent visa; Skilled Nominated visa; Skill Regional visa	List of requirements (occupational profile, age, language skills) + Combination of supply-side factors only assessed through a PBS with a minimum threshold to meet	Qualifications to be uploaded in the Eol: language test and skill assessment (qualifications and experience)
	Temporary skilled visa; Employer Nomination visa; Regional Sponsored Scheme	List of requirements (occupational profile, age, language skills)	
CAN	Federal Skilled Workers Program	List of requirements (occupational profile, language skills, work experience) + Combination of demand-side and supply-side factors assessed through a PBS a minimum threshold	Qualifications to be uploaded in the Eol: language test and Educational Credential Assessment (ECA)
	Canadian Experience Class	List of requirements (occupational profile, language skills, Canadian work experience)	
	Federal Skilled Trades Program	List of requirements (job offer, occupational profile, language skills, work experience)	
	Provincial Nominee Program	Any of the above	

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis of national legislation, 2017.

Setting the pre-selection threshold right

In a one-step selection process, selection criteria are intended to ensure that the selected persons are those with the highest potential to contribute to the country's economy, and that their number is in line with the pre-defined migration target. With a two-step selection process, there is no obligation to process or pick the candidates who enter into the pool, so the first-step selection criteria only determine the potential ceiling and the identity of the persons that might be selected from the pool in the second stage. At the pre-entry stage, policy makers face a trade-off in setting the pre-selection criteria: on the one hand, criteria aim to ensure that enough candidates enter the pool, meaning it should not be too restrictive or too rigid; on the other hand, the pool of candidates needs to have an added value compared to candidates outside the pool, so the pre-selection criteria should not be trivial.

Setting appropriate pre-selection criteria appears challenging. In the first years of existence of the EoI system, New Zealand tweaked the point threshold for qualification for the pool. Originally set at a very high level (195 points), the threshold was lowered several times until it reached the actual level (100 points) in 2005 (Bedford and Spoonley, 2014_[14]). While the allocation of points remained unchanged during the first year, it changed in 2006 and the total available points increased (OECD, 2014_[3]). This means that the qualifying threshold has been *de facto* further decreased. By lowering the qualifying threshold, the number of migrants with a job offer decreased. The current threshold is a trade-off between ensuring that enough candidates are admitted into the pool while, at the same time, ensuring that they all have sufficiently high settlement potential if invited to apply. Between 2009-13 New Zealand registered a decrease in the number of expressions of interest submitted due to the economic recession. In response to this, the government decided to maintain its invitation to apply threshold, but to accept a smaller intake (OECD, 2014_[3]).

In Australia, the qualifying point threshold has been roughly stable since SkillSelect's introduction, and registered only one small change (by 5/60 points). It is currently set at 65 points. In Canada, the Express-Entry pool admission requirements, including the point allocation to enter into the pool for the Federal Skilled Workers Program, have not changed since the introduction of the system. However, the relative importance of different profile characteristics for obtaining an invitation to apply for immigration has significantly evolved over time (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. EoI and point-based system (PBS)

The PBS as a selection mechanism was first designed by Canada in 1967, and was later introduced in Australia (1979) and New Zealand (1991). Although the PBS is not a necessary element of the EoI, at present, all three EoI systems use the PBS to filter candidates into the pool, and/or to rank them once in the pool. The only case in which EoI does not rely on a PBS is in the

Australian employer-sponsored programmes, which may use SkillSelect as a matching tool but otherwise do not pass through SkillSelect.

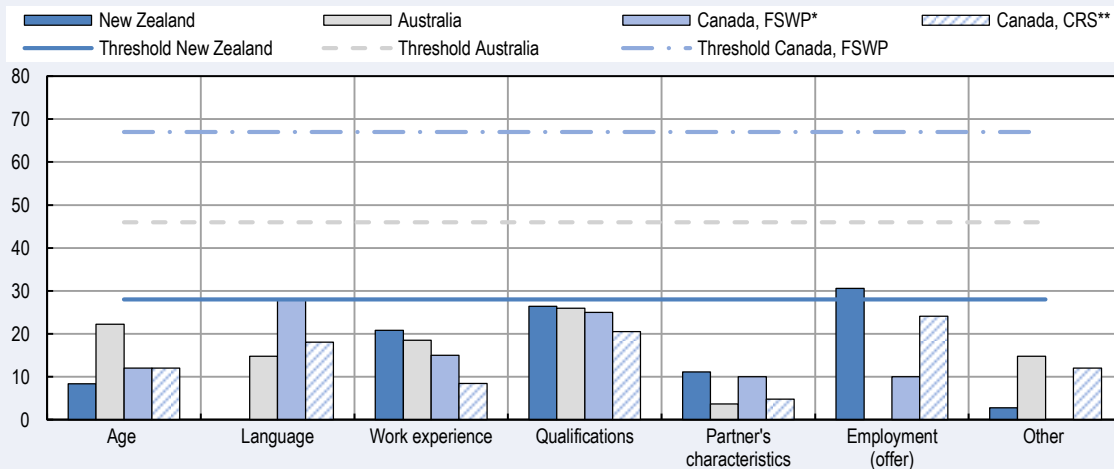
The fact that all EoI systems use a PBS does not mean that they assign similar weights to different characteristics. The weights given to each factor and the way human capital and demand factors are combined vary. For instance, in New Zealand, an employment offer provides sufficient points to enter the pool, while in Australia an employment offer is of no weight to enter the pool. Among the three countries, Australia uses the PBS mainly to assess human capital characteristics. This is the consequence of the Australian government's choice to keep supply-focused and employer-sponsored programmes separated. Within human capital factors, Australia values youth more than New Zealand and Canada do. In New Zealand, work experience accounts for more than half of the pass-mark, while it is much less important in the point-assessment for the Canadian Federal Skilled Worker Program (where some work experience is however necessary). In all PBSs, human capital factors provide most of the points and they alone potentially provide enough points to enter the pool. Additional points may be allocated for partner's characteristics (e.g. language proficiency, in-country experience) and family ties within the country.

Setting a low threshold to enter into the pool may have adverse effects when candidates who barely meet the threshold are likely to be selected. In Australia, between 2012-14, most visas were granted to applicants who just met the threshold or scored slightly above it. The point distribution was therefore strongly skewed towards the threshold. Not enough evidence is available to explain this phenomenon; however, it is possible that some candidates may have been able to qualify for additional points, but decided not to undertake the costly and complex recognition procedures or paperwork necessary to attest their qualifications, since a minimum point threshold had already been obtained and was likely to result in an invitation to apply. If this is widespread, it means that the EoI system cannot properly rank and sort candidates, since not all information is included in their application.

The challenge with any PBS, whether used for EoI or not, is to calibrate the allocation of points to each factor on the basis of the desired selection effects. Canada uses a PBS to dynamically rank candidates in the pool against each other (Comprehensive Ranking System, CRS) Until November 2016, having a qualifying job offer gave 50% of all available points in the CRS. This created a wide point gap between candidates with and without a job offer, so that the system became largely demand-driven for the former, and turned supply-driven for the latter, only once applications with a job offer were exhausted (OECD, 2016^[13]). Due to this point allocation, it became more difficult to be selected from the pool without a job offer, meaning also that very highly-skilled candidates lacking a job offer struggled to get an invitation to apply and, hence, possibly jeopardizing Canadian broad migration policy goal of improving the educational composition of the

population. At the same time, employers found the labour market impact assessment (LMIA) – necessary for the job offer to count for points - too costly and burdensome (Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2016_[15]). In November 2016 the Canadian government lowered the points allocated for a job offer from 50 to 4-17% of the total available points in the CRS, bringing the system back to a more balanced hybrid model. Several exemptions to the LMIA were also introduced, thus making it easier for pool candidates already on LMIA-exempt temporary employment in Canada to demonstrate a qualifying job offer. Other changes introduced in November 2016 include a point premium for pool candidates with Canadian post-secondary education credentials – aimed at facilitating permanent settlement of international students. Further changes in 2017 included an additional point premium for French language skills and for siblings in Canada.

Figure 2.2. Maximum point allocation for each factor and qualifying threshold (when exists) to enter into the pool, in percentage of the total available points



*For the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), 40 points are available for adaptability factors (which include previous experience in Canada, relatives in Canada, partner's characteristics). Since only up to 10 points can be claimed on this factor, only 10 points available for partner's characteristics have been selected. **The CRS considered above is for an applicant with a partner and not applying for the Provincial Nominee Program (a nomination would give 50% of available points).

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis of national legislation, 2017.

The point allocation does not always reflect candidates' economic prospects. In CRS, a substantial point gap persists at the benefit of applications for the Provincial Nominee Program, which receive 50% of total available points if applicants secure a provincial nomination. Given that Express Entry is not compulsory for the Provincial Nomination Program, the point differential can be explained as an incentive to use Express Entry rather than as an economic integration predictor. Point allocation may reflect broader policy objectives than optimal labour market integration. Thus, the June 2017 reform of CRS introduced additional points for French language proficiency, with a goal to

contributing to expand the francophone community outside Quebec. At the same time, a point premium was also introduced for candidates having siblings in Canada, as a way of facilitating family reunification.

The traditional PBSs assign points to each factor taken individually. Each factor can then be supplemented by bonus points, i.e. points on top of points already assigned for a factor (e.g. education) if some conditions are met (e.g. education in the country of destination or in certain subjects). Recently, the Canadian CRS has introduced an element of novelty, providing up to 100/1200 points for the interaction of different factors. While a similar result can be achieved by assigning bonus points, the conceptualisation of interacting requirements as a separate factor is a novelty. Moreover, unlike bonus points, interaction factors are not conceptually related to each other. In the CRS, the interaction factors are grouped and named ‘Skill Transferability Factors’. Under this line, it is possible to score points for the combination of education with language skills or work experience; foreign work experience with Canadian work experience or language skills; and language skills with trade qualifications. This is intended to favour candidates that score high on different factors, vis-à-vis candidates that score high on one factor only, as it has been shown that the earning prospects are higher when two factors, for instance education and language proficiency, are combined (Bonikowska, Hou and Picot, 2015_[16]) rather than when only one of the two is present. Moreover, it is also meant to discount some undesired effects of the point allocation. For instance, older candidates who may lose out points on the age factor have the possibility to gain some points if they are more experienced and proficient in one of the national languages. This tries to account for the fact that, while younger candidates have higher expected earnings than older candidates, the earning gap narrows when controlling for other factors, like language proficiency and experience (Bonikowska, Hou and Picot, 2015_[16]).

Pool management

Static and dynamic pools

The pool can be managed in a static or dynamic way. Once in the pool, candidates can either wait for the migration decision to be taken (“static” candidate), or can continue to upgrade their profiles, or seek sponsorship or nomination, and hence boost their selection chances (“dynamic” candidate). New Zealand EoI uses a static pool, where candidates are not expected to upgrade their profile and remain in the pool for six months only.¹⁵ Canada and Australia are examples of dynamic pools: candidates can market themselves to potential sponsors and can upgrade their profiles, while being allowed to stay in the pool for respectively up to one and two years. It may only make sense to allow candidates to stay in the pool for an extended period if they can upgrade their profiles and thus increase their success chances; otherwise, assuming a certain consistency over time across the

point distribution in the pool, candidates have the same success chances at each selection round, unless the frequency and size of draws increases significantly.¹⁶

Employers and sub-federal entities' access to the pool

The pool is managed by the central administration, but some models allow other actors to consult candidate profiles and make job or sponsorship offers which affect the selection process. In Canada and Australia, sub-federal entities and employers' involvement in selection is not only allowed but encouraged. While the EoI in itself is not a matching tool, it also works as, or in combination with, job matching tools.

In New Zealand, the EoI is not used as a job matching tool and employers do not have access to the pool of candidates. While nothing prevents applicants from seeking a job offer while in the pool and hence editing their profiles, being in the pool does not affect their chances to find employment in any way. Not directly linked to EoI, however, New Zealand has put in place a separate tool to facilitate matching between local labour demand and foreign supply, called SkillFinder. SkillFinder is a free database accessible to skilled potential migrants and employers. Potential migrants wishing to relocate to New Zealand file their profile on the web portal 'NewZealandNow', where they can log in information about their profession, years of experience and education. Employers register their vacancies in SkillFinder, specifying the occupation, the level of academic qualifications, preferences on geographical area of origin and years of experience of the candidates they are looking for. The system automatically displays the number of potential candidates matching the requested profile and candidates with the relevant profiles are then notified of new vacancies. The system is fairly light in terms of administration, as it leaves it to the candidates and the employers the task to register their profiles and to apply. The matching is automatic, and the only step undertaken by administrators is to review the vacancy.¹⁷ New Kiwis, a free of charge initiative by the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and Immigration New Zealand, is also a portal which connects (potential) migrants with employers. Skillfinder and New Kiwis list vacancies and collect profiles; however they do not provide general labour market information that could orient migrants' choices. Candidates may find more general information about labour market, working environment and employment rights on the website 'NewZealandNow'. To access SkillFinder, employers are not requested to undertake any accreditation process (unless employers want to get an accreditation requested for repeated hiring), and, although they are recommended to look for a New Zealand resident first, there is no established procedure that they have to follow.

The Canadian Express Entry is also not a job matching tool itself, and only IRCC authorities can access the pool of candidates. However, unlike the New Zealand EoI, Express Entry is directly linked to a job matching tool, managed by the Public Employment Service, called Job Bank. Candidates that enter the pool without a job offer are encouraged register their profiles in the Job Bank.¹⁸ Candidates who get an employment offer while in the pool see their success chances increase by 4-17%. Job Bank is open to employers, Canadian and

overseas job seekers and lists vacancies as well as provides labour market information (for instance, the wage distribution of a profession in a specific area). Candidates are divided into two categories: nationals and permanent residents (marked by a maple leaf), or Express Entry candidates. An integrated tool, called Job Match, automatically matches employers and job seekers. Job Match first matches vacancies with nationals and permanent residents, and after 30 days, the match is extended to Express Entry candidates. Candidates may subscribe to an email alert service if they wish to be notified when new relevant opportunities are posted.

The Australian SkillSelect is the only EoI to work as a (one-way) job-matching tool itself. While getting an employment offer does not affect the invitation chances for the supply-driven visas, pool candidates who do get an offer are automatically invited to apply for a sponsored visa. Employers can access the pool, see candidate profiles and contact them. SkillSelect however neither collects vacancies for potential migrants to consult, nor provides labour market information that could be useful to migrants in orienting themselves into the Australian labour market. Employers are not requested to meet any specific requirements to access SkillSelect. Candidates' personal details are protected, until candidates themselves decide to disclose them to the employers who contacted them.

Table 2.3. EoIs and characteristics of job matching tools

	NZL	CAN	AUS
Job matching tool	Skill finder	Job Bank	Skill Select
Link to EoI	None	Candidates in the EoI without a job offer have to register their profiles in the Job Bank	SkillSelect is the EoI
Collection of vacancies	yes	yes	no
Collection of profiles	yes	yes	yes
Labour market information	no	yes	no
Equal access to nationals	no	yes	no
Employers' registration	no	no	no
Maximum permanence in the pool	6 months	1 year	2 years
Possibility to update the profile	no	yes	yes
Credentials pre-screening	no	yes	yes

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis of national legislation, 2017.

Selection methods: Automatic ranking and desired characteristics

Several selection methods can be applied at the second EoI stage that lead to an invitation to apply: candidates in the pool can all undergo the same selection method (as in Canada) or different methods (as in Australia), depending on the programme for which they have expressed an interest.

Candidates may be automatically ranked by using a PBS and selected on the basis of their scores in descending order, as it is the case in New Zealand, Canada and Australia (for the Skilled Independent Programme). The second-stage PBS can be the same as the PBS used to enter the pool, as in New Zealand and Australia (for the sponsor-free visas), or a different one, as in Canada. In the first case, the second-step selection is a more competitive version of the first-step selection. In the other case, the second-step selection is a different type of selection. Canada applies a new ranking method (CRS) that classifies candidates on the basis of their scores against factors that reflect the overall determinants of migrants' integration success as well as broader policy considerations. Factors are divided into two main groups: CRS core factors including age, education, official language proficiency, work experience, and a combination of these (skill transferability factors), awarding a maximum of 600 points, and factors granting additional points, including Canadian post-secondary education, arranged employment, French language proficiency, siblings in Canada, and provincial nomination.¹⁹ The CRS applies to the same extent to all candidates, regardless of the programme they intend to apply for. The idea behind having two different selection methods in the first and in the second step is that, while candidates may be eligible to enter into the pool for different combinations of skills, their integration success chances are predicted by the same determinants.

When the second-stage selection is based on automatic ranking, the pass mark is set in consideration of the number of expressions of interest received and of the immigration target. In Canada, ministerial instructions published before each selection round²⁰ set the number of candidates and the eligible score to be invited to apply. This method gives the government strict control of the number and profiles of persons to be invited at each round.²¹ In Australia, there is no pass mark and the maximum number of candidates invited to apply at each round is published on the government website²² prior to each invitation round. There are occupational ceilings, which are set every year and which determine the number of candidates to be accepted for specific professions. In New Zealand, there is no quota (neither general nor occupational), and the pass mark is set by the government for the entire financial year. Currently the pass mark is 160 points. Compared to the Canadian method, the Australian and New Zealand methods leave a certain margin of uncertainty on the number and profiles of candidates invited to apply.

The top-ranking candidates are invited to apply on a regular basis. Draws or invitation rounds are performed every two to three weeks in all three countries. The number of people to be invited to apply at each round can be based on the number of persons whose application has met the previously set pass-mark (as it is the case in New Zealand), or it can be decided at each round, depending on the state of the economy and processing availability (as in Canada and Australia).

An alternative selection method is picking from the pool only the candidates with a desired characteristic, for instance, a job offer. This applies in the Australian sponsored programmes, where candidates to whom employers wish to offer a position may exit the pool and apply for a visa. In this case, there is no need of

regular invitation rounds. Another alternative selection method is used by states and territories which invite candidates throughout the month, following the application of their own selection criteria and an individual assessment.

A mixed method can also be applied by combining both the PBS ranking and selection based on the desired characteristic(s). This was implemented in New Zealand up until October 2016, where candidates scoring at least 140 points on the PBS were automatically selected, while, among those scoring between 100 and 140 points, only persons with a job or job offer were invited to apply.

Table 2.4. Selection criteria by migration scheme

Country	Migration scheme	Selection criteria
NZL	Skilled Migrant Category	Automatic selection of top-rankers against a PBS Selection of mid-level rankers + job offer (until end 2016); invitation rounds
AUS	Skilled Independent visa	Automatic selection of top-rankers against a PBS within occupational ceilings; invitation rounds
	Skilled Nominated visa	State-specific criteria; no invitation rounds
	Skill Regional visa	Automatic selection of top-rankers against a PBS within occupational ceilings + nomination; invitation rounds
	Temporary skilled visa Employer Nomination visa Regional Sponsored Scheme	Automatic possibility to apply for a visa (outside SkillSelect) following a job offer
CAN	Federal Skilled Workers Program	Automatic selection of top-rankers against a PBS within limits imposed at each round; invitation rounds
	Canadian Experience Class	As above
	Federal Skilled Trades Program	As above
	Provincial Nominee Program	As above

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis of national legislation, 2017.

Box 2.2. Setting targets and ceilings in the EoI

Migration targets are a common feature of immigration policy in New Zealand, Australian and Canadian. Targets are set periodically, to proactively manage the skills composition as well as the number of migrants coming into the country. They do not represent strict quotas, but rather a range within which the number of incoming migrants is considered desirable. Targets are not a necessary element of the EoI, but the EoI has turned out to be particularly useful when there are numerical limitations.

In New Zealand, the target for the Residence Programme is set biannually and is divided into three streams: Skilled/Business, Family, and International/Humanitarian migration. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment proposes an immigration target based on emigration forecasts and expected number of applications, as well as economic projections. There is no specific threshold for the Skilled Migrant category, but the expected number of successful applicants, given a certain pass mark is taken into account when setting the target for the Skilled / Business Stream.

In Canada, the Immigration Levels Plan is set annually by the government in consultation with provinces and territories, taking into account policy priorities and operational capacities. In the past, each economic programme was subject to an individual cap, but, as of January 2017, the targets for federal economic programmes using Express Entry, i.e. Federal Skilled Worker Program, Federal Skilled Trades Program, Canadian Experience Class, have been merged into one common target. This is because the CRS is supposed to determine the number of successful applicants for each migration programme based on the comparative assessment of expressions of interest. A separate target is set for the Provincial Nominees programme, on the basis of provinces' forecast economic needs.

In Australia, the Migration Programme is set annually, in consultation with communities and on the basis of economic forecasts. Within the planning levels, occupational ceilings are also set. Annual occupational ceilings on skilled occupations are set by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, based on inputs from the Department of Education and the Department of Employment. As a general rule, the annual occupational ceiling is 4% of the national employment in each occupation, and, as of 2013/14, no smaller than 1 000. Occupational ceilings have the same selection effects as general caps, but on specific occupations: a quantitative effect, whereby the highest-ranked candidates for that occupation are invited to apply only until the ceiling has been reached; a qualitative effect, whereby if the number of expressions of interest for capped occupations or the quality of applicants is very high, the imposition of a ceiling pushes up the effective pass-mark for that occupation for that round.

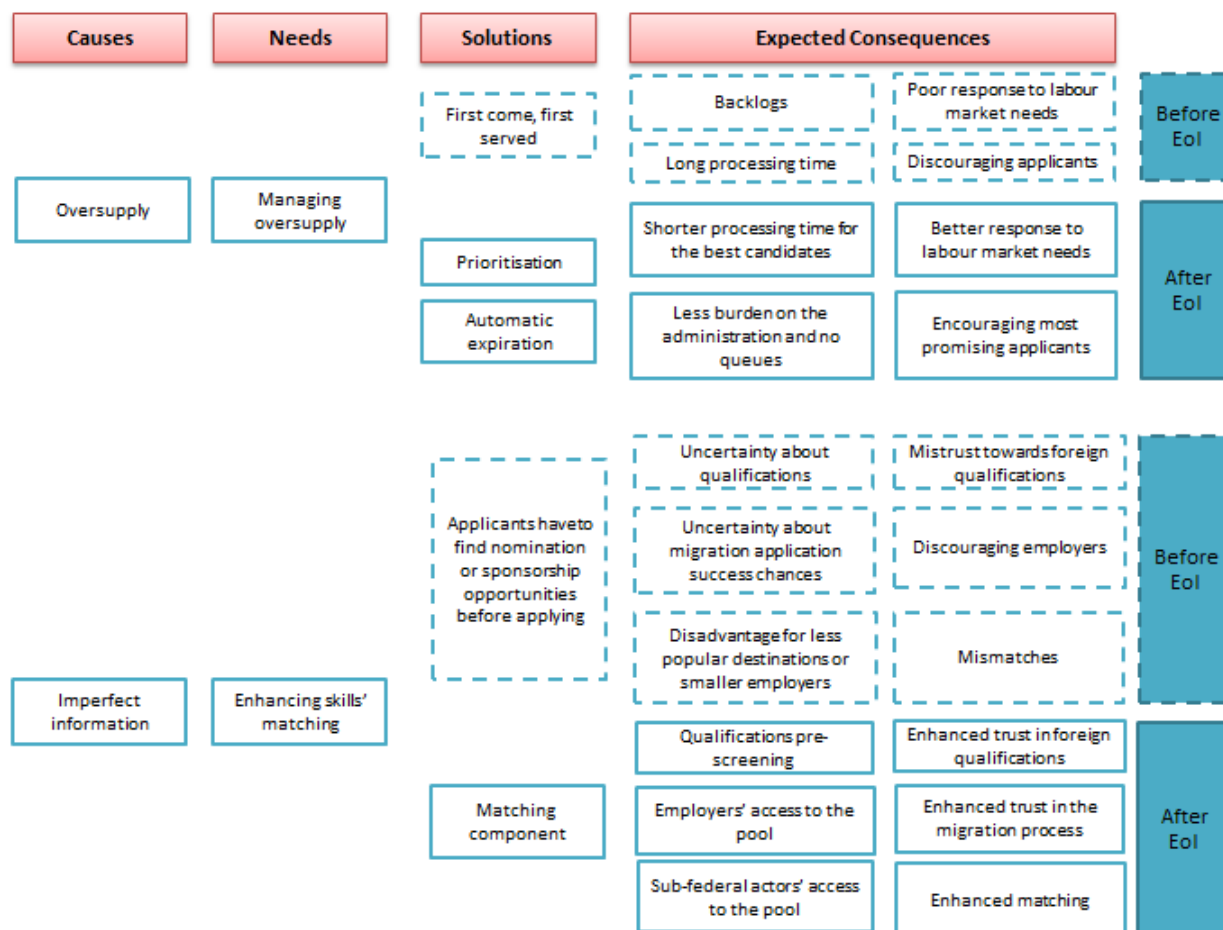
In the three countries, all applications that must pass through the EoI are capped. In this respect, the EoI has a clear added value in dealing with oversupply, as with limited places availability, it ensures that the selected migrants are comparatively most needed. In absence of caps, EoI would have an effect only on prioritisation. The only categories not subject to a cap are the Australian employer-sponsored visas, which may go through SkillSelect. In this case, however, the EoI serves only the purpose to provide a pool of pre-screened candidates from where employers might pick migrants to sponsor, and does not have any effect on selection or prioritisation.

Needs, solutions and consequences of the EoI model

With the country-specific differences described above, the EoI systems respond to two different needs (Figure 2.3): improving the efficiency of managing candidate selection and enhancing skills matching. The first need was particularly pressing in New Zealand, Canada and Australia due to an oversupply of applications. The selection rule in place before the EoI, 'first come, first served', led to long processing time which was discouraging for applicants and ineffective to respond to immediate labour market needs. To improve this, EoI introduces two elements: prioritisation and automatic expiration of expressions of interest. Prioritising

certain applications shortens the application processing time for the most needed migrants, and, as a consequence, leads to a better response to economic shortages and encourages applicants with the highest success chances to apply. The administration does not have to actively process all applications; thus saving the time otherwise spent rejecting applications. Expressions of interest are automatically discarded if they have not been selected after a certain period of time and this prevents the formation of queues.

Figure 2.3. Needs the EoI responds to, solution provided and consequences



Source: OECD Secretariat analysis.

The second need, enhancing skills' matching, is a more general issue, which is the consequence of labour market actors' imperfect information. This is particularly the case for migrant workers. On the one hand, foreign workers are less informed than residents about employment opportunities, especially if these are in less popular or less visible areas. On the other hand, employers wishing to recruit from outside of the local labour market, and in particular from abroad, experience more difficulties in finding potential candidates and in understanding their qualifications. Similarly, less popular or visible areas struggle to find candidates

willing to relocate there. Estimating the outcomes of the application process could also be difficult if employers are not familiar with migration rules, increasing the degree of uncertainty in recruiting migrants (Chen, Ward and Coulon, 2013^[17]). To enhance skills matching, the EoI introduces a matching component: it opens the pool of candidates to labour demand (employers or sub-national entities). Compared to candidates outside the pool, candidates in the pool have local-equivalent qualifications and certified language skills. Moreover, by being visible as candidates, they can market themselves to potential sponsors.

Success factors and shortcomings

The three EoI systems are constantly monitored by the government administration and have built-in mechanisms to ensure that they meet policy objectives on the numbers and profiles of migrants invited to apply. As shown in the section above, since their introduction, EoI systems have been tweaked with changing economic circumstances, policy priorities, and on the basis of their selection outcomes. However, comprehensive evaluations of EoI systems themselves have not been carried out yet. Further, although part of the objective of EoI is to improve long-term outcomes, evaluation of outcomes over time is not yet possible in countries that have introduced the system recently.

The following sections present the available evidence to assess to what extent the EoI systems have met the objectives for which they were introduced.

Expanding the pool of candidates

No evidence is available to show that the EoI has widened the pool of potential migrants; however, it is clear that, thanks to the EoI, it is possible to gather and manage an increasingly high number of up-to-date profiles of potential applicants.

In New Zealand, neither data on the number of expressions of interest received,²³ nor data on the applications lodged for the skilled migration programme prior to the introduction of EoI are publicly available. The Fortnightly Selection Statistics of the New Zealand Residence Programme²⁴ show that the number of candidates available in the pool at each round is at least twice as high as the number of persons invited to apply, and thus, from a quantitative point of view, there are enough candidates among whom the authorities can choose. A decline in expressions of interest submitted has been registered in the period 2009-2012 (OECD, 2014^[3]). This was due to worsening economic circumstances (Bedford and Spoonley, 2014^[14]), as no major policy changes occurred in this period. When economic circumstances improved, expressions of interest increased again.

In Australia, the number of EoI on hand has steadily increased since 2013. This may be the result of gradual transmigration towards the new system or of a genuine increased interest in migrating to Australia. In May 2015, the number of candidates in the pool (comprising those who lodged their expression of interest for the first time and those already in the pool) reached 50 000. This means that 50 000 candidates already meeting some minimum requirements were eligible to be invited to apply in the approximately fortnightly invitation round. Similarly in

Canada, in January 2016, 60 042 pre-screened and valid profiles were active in Express Entry, eligible to be possibly invited to apply. As of January 2018 the number of active candidates had increased to 71 087.

Reducing processing time (at the same cost)

When data are available, it confirms that the EoI contributed to reducing visa processing time (at no additional cost for the administration). To assess the impact of the EoI on reducing processing time, data before and after the introduction of the EoI, or within and outside the EoI should be compared. The EoI introduced an additional step in the application process, i.e. the time spent in the pool before receiving an invitation to apply. This time should also be taken into account, as, even if it does not represent a lag for the administration, it is part of the time invested by migrants (and possibly employers) in their applications.

In New Zealand and Australia, it is not possible to compare processing time before and after the introduction of the EoI for the same types of visas, as comparable data are missing. In New Zealand, most visa applications for the Skilled Migrant Category are currently processed within six months.²⁵ This is a relatively long time compared with temporary visas for work purposes (23/25 days), but an average processing time when compared with other permanent visas in the Skilled/Business Category (Investor Visas – 10 months, Residence from Work visas – 3 months, others – 6 months).²⁶ Data on the average permanence in the pool are not available. Candidates in the pool have high selection chances, and in fact 86% of expressions of interest entered the pool in the second half of 2012 received an invitation to apply (OECD calculations on data in OECD (2014_[3])). It can therefore be concluded that, from the moment in which they express their interest, applicants wait for less than one year to be issued a visa. This is shorter than the two-year wait prior to the introduction of EoI.

In Australia, the average number of days from the invitation to apply to the visa grant has decreased over time. While in 2013 granting a visa took approximately four to five months depending on the category, the latest available data²⁷ show that, on average, applications through SkillSelect are processed within three months. This is shorter than the time taken to process applications outside SkillSelect, which lies between six and 12 months, depending on the visa category. This is the case even if the processing order favours the non-SkillSelect visas.²⁸ Applicants who receive an invitation to apply have already, on average, spent between one and three months in the pool, depending on the category, on the quality and quantity of overall expressions of interest. Therefore, overall, applicants wait on average between four and six months from the moment they compile their expression of interest to the moment they are granted a visa. This is a much shorter waiting time than the three year period an independent migrant might have waited before the introduction of SkillSelect (Hawthorne, 2011_[7]; Australian Government, 2011_[6]).

In Canada, Express Entry has significantly reduced processing time, with 80% of candidates who had received an invitation to apply granted a visa within six months. This represents a reduction by 50% compared to processing time before the immediate introduction of Express Entry and a much larger improvement compared to processing time for applications outside Express Entry (applications to Provincial Nomination outside Express Entry are currently processed in 16 months and to Federal Skilled Worker Program lodged before 2015 in 24 months).²⁹

Available data suggest that EoI systems have reduced the processing costs for the administration, while not imposing substantial additional costs on migrants and employers.

When ranking is automatic, the only additional costs are technical platform-management costs. No information is available on their amount. When semiautomatic ranking is applied, as in New Zealand until October 2016, it is fair to assume that the administrative costs are still lower than those involved if all applications received were processed outside the EoI, as only a share of expressions of interests is in fact reviewed.

Moreover, all the EoI systems have in place an automatic procedure to discard unsuccessful expressions of interests after a certain period of time. This makes application management more efficient as it prevents the formation of backlog and saves time on communicating rejections. For instance, in Australia, the time spent by the administration to send rejection letters to unsuccessful applicants was reportedly three times higher than the time to grant visas. In Canada, the EoI can take into account staff availability (for instance, in holiday periods), in setting the number of invitations to apply to be issued at each round, reducing therefore the possibility of backlogs.

In some cases, the EoI has introduced additional costs on applicants. There may be a fee to pay to enter the EoI itself. Only New Zealand has introduced such a fee, which amounts to NZD 530 and is part of a cost-recovery system. In all three countries, candidates are requested to sit a language exam to be admitted into the pool, and in Canada and Australia educational credentials are also assessed. The cost for assessing educational credentials is not fixed and depends on the body in charge for the specific qualification. In Australia, most accrediting bodies charge a fee of approximately AUD 800. Fees for the language test depend on the country where the test is administered. Prior to the EoI, costs related to language skills and qualifications assessment were paid by migrants in order to lodge a visa application. With the EoI, the difference is that the costs are requested to be paid at the pre-selection stage. The extent to which this upfront cost is discouraging probably depends on applicants' success chances. No evidence points at the fact that pre-selection costs have a deterrent effect on applications.

When employers have access to the pool, generally they do not bear any additional costs. In Australia, employers' access to SkillSelect is free and happens through AUSKey, which is a free login used to identify users when

communicating with the government. Similarly, in Canada, employers can access the Job Bank for free.

Improving candidate quality

By definition, with the EoI, only the sub-set of the best out of all candidates in the pool is invited to apply, where “best” is defined by the selection mechanism. It is not possible to say whether the EoI has improved candidates’ quality, as selection criteria have changed over time. However, the chances to receive an invitation to apply can be considered as a proxy to assess whether the second selection improves candidate quality. If all expressions of interest were to receive an invitation to apply, the EoI would have no added value in the selection of the best candidate subset. While in Australia and in New Zealand those who express an interest in migrating have high chances to receive an invitation to apply, in Canada the selection through Express Entry is more competitive.

In New Zealand, no comparable data on the quality of skilled candidates before the introduction of the EoI exists because the allocation of points changed. One of the main concerns of the New Zealand government when introducing the EoI was the prioritisation of candidates with employment or employment offers. In the programme year 2015-16, 92% of the Skilled Migrant Category applicants claimed points for current employment or employment offers. Hence, it can be said that the government’s objective to prioritise candidates with a job offer has been met. On the chances to receive an invitation to apply, during the period 2004-13, 95% of the expressions of interest submitted were considered eligible (OECD, 2014_[3]), and 83% of them received an invitation to apply. Entering into the pool and being invited to apply does not appear to be very competitive. This may be due to the fact that candidates select themselves on the basis of their success chances, given the pass-mark, or that the pass mark set by the government depends on the expected number of expressions of interest. The fact that the average point score of candidates in the pool has not decreased over time, while the pass-mark has decreased, seems to provide evidence for the first option (OECD, 2014_[3]).

In Australia, before the introduction of SkillSelect, all applications for the Skill Independent visa scoring above 60 points were accepted. With SkillSelect only the top-rankers are picked, which suggests that the average point score has been pushed up. Like in New Zealand, the success chances for candidates in the pool are relatively high, as during the period July 2012-October 2014 between 70% and 90% of them received an invitation to apply and between 40-50% of the expressions of interests claimed more than 60 points. Although it is not possible to compare this figure with the actual point distribution before SkillSelect, it can be said that the EoI has likely pushed the passing mark up.

In Canada, the CRS ranks candidates across programmes on the basis of their economic success chances, resulting in only the top candidates being selected. Entering the Express Entry pool is comparatively more selective than in Australia and New Zealand. Only 54% of profiles submitted before January 2016 were

considered eligible to enter into Express Entry, and only 30% of these received an invitation to apply, the cut-off floating between 450 and 500 points of the total 1 200 available points (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2016^[18]).

Express Entry and the use of CRS also led to the harmonisation of selection criteria across programmes. The composition of visas issued in 2015³⁰ did not change substantially compared to the previous year; however comparisons can be done only to a limited extent as the programmes requirements have changed over time.

Employer involvement

No data are available to assess the extent to which EoI systems, thanks to their job matching component, have increased employer involvement in migrant selection.

In New Zealand, employers cannot access the pool, so the EoI is not expected to have any effect on employer involvement. In Australia, employers can access SkillSelect and choose candidates and sponsor them; however no data are available on how many employers actively look for SkillSelect candidates or how many candidates receive an employment offer while being in the pool. These data are not available either for Express Entry candidates in Canada. In Australia, the vast majority of the expressions of interests do not concern employer sponsored visas, but rather Skill Independent or state/territory nominated visas. Employer consultations in Australia revealed that employers are not very familiar with SkillSelect as a tool to find candidates and that they rely rather on networks already in place. In Canada, there is a mismatch between the number of vacancies for which migrants are eligible (in 2015: 11%) and the number of migrant profiles (in 2015: 71%) in Job Bank. In 2016, Express Entry candidates continued to be the majority in Job Bank (53%), while the top three job postings were for positions for which they were not eligible. This suggests that employers are not using Job Bank to find foreign candidates as much as they could.

Involvement of sub-national actors

In Australia, state/territory nominated visas are one of the two visa categories that receive the vast majority of expressions of interest (along with Skilled Independent visa). SkillSelect is the only way through which states and territories can nominate migrants; therefore, they actively encourage applicants to use SkillSelect. However, it is not clear whether states use the pool to look for and select among potential candidates who meet the state requirements, or rather if they direct candidates that have been chosen outside SkillSelect to the pool. In general, it is not clear whether the pool of candidates, selected according to the relevant selection criteria, has an actual added value for states and territories.

In Canada, provinces may decide to use Express Entry to nominate migrants, and if they opt for doing so, they have the almost certain guarantee that their nominees would be invited to apply. However, in 2015 only about 1 in 20 provincial nominations passed through Express Entry (1 738 invitations to apply through Express Entry and 34 564 outside).³¹ In 2016, applications through Express Entry

still remained a minority, but increased by 375% compared to 2015. Provinces still prefer applications outside Express Entry, but the trend may be slowly changing. At the moment, data on the invitations to apply to which an application fail to follow are not available. Therefore, it is not possible to check the extent to which the low number of Express Entry provincial nominees is the result of low interest by provinces to resort to Express Entry, or also of the scarce interest of Express Entry candidates to possibly accept provincial nominations, which are associated with mobility restrictions.

Conclusions

New Zealand, Canada and Australia use EoI systems as a migration management tool to support some of their migration programmes. These are programmes for permanent migration, which is subject to numerical limitations; although in Australia the EoI may also support temporary and uncapped migration schemes. Most of the applications that pass through the EoI are by migrants who are already residing in the state on a temporary permit.

With some country-specificities, in general the EoI system addresses the need to make the candidate selection process more efficient and to enhance skills matching. The first need is a consequence of oversupply, the second of imperfect labour market actor information. EoI systems in Canada, New Zealand and Australia differ in the way they pre-select candidates to enter the pool and the way invitations to apply are issued. Moreover, they present different degrees of complexity and involvement of sub-federal actors and employers. In the three countries, the EoI has been successful in improving the efficiency of oversupply management, as the processing time (summed with the time candidates spend in the pool) has been shortened. At this stage, when evidence is available, it seems to suggest that EoI performance could be improved with regard to skill matching, employers and sub-federal actors' involvement.

EoI is a selection tool that is compatible with several selection methods and categories. There are a number of key design choices that can be drawn from the three countries' experience with EoI.

First of all, it has to be decided to which types of migration programmes the EoI provides support. In most cases, the EoI is used to select economic migration; however, New Zealand has used the EoI to select family migrants, notably parents, on the basis of sponsor characteristics. Among economic migrants, the EoI may include several programmes; for instance, it can be extended to business and investors categories. EoIs are currently used to support skilled migration programmes. However, there is nothing in the mechanics that prevents them to be extended to non-skilled workers.

Moreover, if the same pool serves multiple programmes, it has to be decided how to coordinate the selection methods, as candidates for different programmes can be channelled into different selection paths.

Candidates in the pool must be pre-screened. Pre-screening implies some costs for the administration and for candidates themselves, so another design decision concerns the degree to which candidates are requested to prove that they meet the requirements for the specific programme, as a pre-condition to enter the pool.

Entry to the pool should not be too easy. If there are too many candidates in the pool relative to the number who are drawn, potential migrants may see no added value in participating, and active selection based on specific profiles may become too daunting to undertake. Similarly, entry to the pool should not be too difficult, or it will not provide a sufficient number of candidates. Another question is how long candidates are allowed to stay in the pool, and whether they are able to update their profiles while they are in the pool.

If a PBS is used to select migrants – as is generally the case - a design decision must be made about which factors are the most relevant to enter the pool and to be subsequently invited to apply, and in particular the extent to which having a job offer is a determinant for selection.

The choice to link the pool to job-matching platforms, whereby candidates can market themselves and employers can access the pool and pick the candidates to sponsor, carries its own challenges. When sub-national programmes require a nomination, the pool can work as a matching database that sub-national administration can customise following sub-national selection criteria. In any case, it has to be ascertained that the pool represents an added value for sponsors, rather than an extra administrative step, and it has to be decided which employers are allowed to access the pool.

Notes

¹ In 2015, in New Zealand, 85% of the visa applications for the *Skilled Migrant Category* (11 113) were *approved onshore* (New Zealand Ministry of Business, 2016_[9]); in Australia 58% of the visas for the Skill Stream were granted onshore (Australian Government, 2017_[19]); in Canada 78% of the candidates invited to apply were already residing in the country (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2016_[11]).

² Skilled Independent visa, subclass 189; Skilled Nominated visa, subclass 190; Skilled Regional visa, subclass 498.

³ Employer Nomination visa, subclass 186; Regional Sponsored Scheme visa, subclass 187. These visas are currently being reformed. The reform process will end in March 2018.

⁴ In March 2018 the Temporary Skilled visa, subclass 457, was replaced by the new Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) Visa, subclass 482.

⁵ Business Innovation and Investment visa includes five streams: the Business Innovation stream, the Investor stream, the Significant Investor stream, the Premium Investor Stream and the Entrepreneur Stream, each with different requirements.

⁶ 25 756 persons were admitted for the Skilled Migrant Category, and 311 for the Investor 2 programme. 29 719 persons were admitted in the Skilled/Business Stream (which includes business and residence from work visas). As for temporary work, only work-to-residence and essential skills visas are included in the calculation (34 938 visas in 2015).

⁷ In 2015, 629 applications were approved for Investor 1 and 2 and for entrepreneurs.

⁸ In 2015, 4 942 persons were approved to residence in the Parent Category.

⁹ In 2015, the permanent schemes where SkillSelect was mandatory (Skill Independent, Province/Territory Nominated) comprised 55% (i.e. 68 644) of total permanent migration. When temporary migration, in particular the Skilled Regional and temporary skilled worker schemes, is included, SkillSelect was mandatory for 35% of inflows and optional for 65%.

¹⁰ For foreign temporary workers, only the Temporary Foreign Workers Programme has been considered (in 2016, 20 535). The number of permits issued within the permanent economic migration programmes through Express Entry amounted to 18 776, while the total number of permits was 89 451.

¹¹ For comparative reasons, the remainder of the paper will focus only on skilled migration programmes, so that the Parent Category in New Zealand and the Business and Innovation subclass and the Business Talent subclass in Australia will not be discussed.

¹² Source: email exchange with Immigration New Zealand - Marketing Division.

¹³ New Zealand and Australia's lists of skilled occupations (SOL) are available at http://onlineservices.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/35165.htm?_ga=1.94541148.1711277781.1484932783; and <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Work/Work/Skills-assessment-and-assessing-authorities/skilled-occupations-lists/SOL>. The Australian SOL has been replaced as of April 2017 by the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL), available at <http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Work/Work/Skills-assessment-and-assessing-authorities/skilled-occupations-lists/mltssl>

¹⁴ Australia's lists of consolidated sponsored occupations is available (CSOL) at <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Work/Work/Skills-assessment-and-assessing-authorities/skilled-occupations-lists/CSOL>. Australian CSOL has been replaced as of April 2017 by the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL), available at <http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Work/Work/Skills->

[assessment-and-assessing-authorities/skilled-occupations-lists/combined-stsol-mltssl...](#) As of April 2017, the CSOL has been replaced by the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL).

¹⁵ Candidates can amend their profiles, providing justifications to the New Zealand Immigration Service; however, it is not possible for them to upgrade their profiles by simply staying in the pool.

¹⁶ During 2018, IRCC has increased both the frequency and the size of draws from the EoI pool with the explicit goal of going deeper in the pool and allowing an admission chance for candidates with low CRS scores but still significant human capital potential who had been for long time in the pool. [s-entry-2018-mid-year-report-building-toward-larger-draws-0610848.html#gs.=Yjne08](#)

¹⁷ Skill Finder staff reviews the vacancy to ensure that enough information is provided, that there are not spelling mistakes, that the vacancy is for a skilled position (ANZSCO skill level 1-3) and, if a recruiter posts a vacancy, that the vacancy is real and that it has not been posted only to build a personal pool. Source: email exchange with Immigration New Zealand - Marketing Division.

¹⁸ Originally, registration in Canada Job Bank was compulsory for Express Entry candidates lacking a job offer. Failure to register within 30 days from pool admission would result in EoI profile expiration. However, acknowledging the multiplicity of tools that candidates have available for employment matching purposes and with the aim of reducing administrative requirements for EoI candidates who already undergo a complex selection mechanism, in 2017 IRCC made Job Bank registration optional.

¹⁹ After the November 2016 review of CRS scores and substantial decrease of points allocated for arranged employment (50 to 200 points maximum), Provincial nomination is the factors which grants the highest points premium (600 points) and the only possibility for a candidate to reach the maximum 1 200 points. 15 to 30 additional points can be allotted for French language proficiency, 15 points if the candidate or the candidate's spouse or common-law partner has a sibling who is Canadian citizen or permanent resident and who lives in Canada, is older than eighteen, and have one parent in common.

²⁰ Canada, Ministerial Instructions, Express Entry, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/mi/index.asp?expand=mi-pr-express#mi-pr-express>

²¹ To further enhance alignment between Express Entry ITAs and IRCC's multi-year immigration levels plans the 2017 amendments to Express Entry introduced a new tie-breaking rule, which was first implemented in November 2017. When there is a tie between candidates at the targeted ITA cut-off score, all tied candidates are ranked again based on the date and time of their profile submission, so that only the top-ranked candidates based on the planned number of invitations issued were invited

²² Australian Government (Australian Government, 2017_[19]).

²³ Only data on EoI invited to apply and EoI remaining in the pool are available. Because candidates may stay in the pool for up to six months, or receive an invitation to apply at the first round, it is not possible to deduce the number of expressions of interest submitted from the available data.

²⁴ New Zealand Residence Programme - SMC fortnightly selection; <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/smc-fortnightly-selection>

²⁵ New Zealand Immigration (New Zealand Immigration, 2017_[20]).

²⁶ The Skilled Migrant Category covers the vast majority of permanent residence applications (87% in 2015), so that the requested administrative effort for this visa is considerably higher.

²⁷ Australian Government, DIBP (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), 2016_[10]).

²⁸ Australia DIBP (2017b). The processing order is the following: Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (subclass 187), Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186), Temporary Skilled visa (subclass 457), Skilled Nominated and Skilled Regional visa (subclass 190 and 489), SkillSelect Independent and Family Sponsored visa (subclass 189 and 489).

²⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Check application processing times, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/information/times/index.asp#>, visited on 13.02.2017

³⁰ Canada residence by category, available at http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/2fbb56bd-eae7-4582-af7d-a197d185fc93?_ga=1.192075817.2015673401.1484910870

³¹ Source: IRCC_overview_0001_E.xls, https://www.google.fr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjB-MT_4ZbSAhVISR0KHQtiC88QFggcMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cic.gc.ca%2Fopendata-donneesouvertes%2Fdata%2FIRCC_overview_0001_E.xls&usg=AFQjCNFW-PQ57peB3URsKKtBBv10N3QMGg&sig2=esTuDmhYnduhiwaNX_kivw

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Annex 2.A. Supplementary table on EOI systems

Annex Table 2.A.1. Comparative overview of labour migration schemes using Expression of Interest

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
Eoi Compulsory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Selection criteria to enter the pool: ³									
Selection method	Requirements + PB assessment with a fixed pass mark (100/250)	Requirements + PB assessment with a fixed pass mark (60/120)	Requirements + PB assessment with a fixed pass mark (60/125)	Requirements + PB assessment with a fixed pass mark (60/130)	Requirements	Requirements + PB assessment with a fixed pass mark (67/100)	Requirements	Requirements	Qualify for at least for one federal programme
Age	- Max 55 - Up to 30% of the pass mark in the PBS	- Max 50 - Up to 50% of the pass mark in the PBS	- Max 50 - Up to 50% of the pass mark in the PBS	- Max 50 - Up to 50% of the pass mark in the PBS	Max 50 unless exempt (187, 186)	Up to 18% of the pass mark in PBS [CRS: up to 8% points]			If candidates are in EE, the CRS point allocation applies; otherwise provincial

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
Professional profile	Skilled workers: the employment should belong to the list of skilled occupations	Skilled workers: the nominated occupation should be in the SOL (Skilled Occupation List) ⁴	Skilled workers: the nominated occupation should be in the SOL (Skilled Occupation list) or in the CSOL (Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List)	Skilled workers; the nominated occupation should be in the SOL (Skilled Occupation list) or in the CSOL (Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List) ⁵	The occupation (job offer) should be in the CSOL (Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List) ⁵	Skilled workers: the employment should be skilled (type 0, A, B in the NOC)	Skilled workers: the employment should be skilled (type 0, A, B in the NOC)	Skilled trade occupations (specific codes in the NOC)	
Work experience	Up to 30% of the pass mark in the PBS, plus up to 15% if in NZL, plus up to 15% if in a shortage area and 15% if in a future growth area	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + up to 8% if in AUS	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + up to 8% if in AUS	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + up to 8% if in AUS	3 years of relevant working experience, with exceptions (186)	Compulsory: at least 1 year skilled and full time working experience - Up to 22% of the pass mark in the PBS, plus 15% if in CAN	Compulsory: at least 12 month of full time skilled work experience in Canada in the three years before applying	Compulsory: at least 2 years of full time skilled work experience in a skilled trade within the previous five years	
						[CRS: 6% if in CAN; foreign work experience considered only in interaction (see others)]			
Qualifications	Up to 60% of the pass mark in the PBS, plus up to 35% if qualifications obtained in NZ	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + 8% if in AUS	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + 8% if in AUS	Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS + 8% if in AUS	Depending on the employment, evidence of possessing the required skills	- Compulsory: a recognised credential (if not Canadian) as of high school; - up to 37% of the pass mark; plus 7.5% if in CAN			
						[CRS: up to 12%]			

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
Partner's characteristics	Up to 20% if employment offer and 20% for qualifications, some language skills compulsory (see below)	Up to 8% for partner's qualifications	Up to 8% for partner's qualifications	Up to 8% for partner's qualifications		In adaptability: 7.5% of the pass mark for language level, 7.5% study in Canada, 7.5% past work in Canada			
						<i>[CRS: education, language, Canadian work experience, up to 3%]</i>			
Language	At least IELTS 6.5 for the principal applicants and 5 for non-principal applicants when invited to apply	- At least IELTS 6.5; - Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS	- At least IELTS 6.5; - Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS	- At least IELTS 6.5; - Up to 33% of the pass mark in the PBS	At least IELTS 5 (457), 4-4.5 (186, 187), with exceptions	At least CLB 7, up to 42% of the pass mark	Depending on the type of employment [CLB 7 (NOC 0 and A) or CLB 5 (NOC B)]	At least CLB 5 in speaking and listening and 4 in reading and writing	
						<i>[CRS: 3% for first and second languages, plus points for interaction]</i>			
Employment offer	50-60% of the pass mark for current employment or offer, plus 10% each if employment in a future growth area or absolute skills shortage, plus 30% if outside Auckland	Up to 33% of the pass mark for being already employed in AUS (or up to 27% if overseas)	Up to 33% of the pass mark for being already employed in AUS (or up to 27% if overseas)	Up to 33% of the pass mark for being already employed in AUS (or up to 27% if overseas)	Yes	Up to 6.7% of the pass mark if the applicant has a full time, permanent offer which passed through the LMIA, unless exempt		At least one year full time job offer (unless the certificate of qualification in that skilled trade was issued by Canadian provincial or territorial authority).	

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
						[CRS: 17% for senior managerial positions, 4% for the others]			
Other	Up to 10% of the pass mark for close family in NZL	Up to 8% of the pass mark for community language	-Up to 8% of the pass mark for community language; -Nomination by state or territory compulsory and worth 8%	-Up to 8% of the pass mark in the PBS for community language; -Nomination by state or territory compulsory and worth 16%	Employer having standard business sponsorship status (457, 186, 187) and labour market test (unless exempt) (457)	Funds required if no job offer; 7% of the pass mark if relative(s) in Canada		Meeting the job requirements for the skilled trade	Nomination compulsory and worth 50% of the tot points
Selection criteria to be invited to apply:									
Selection Mechanism	At the moment of the invitation round, top rankers (i.e. those scoring more than a set threshold) receive an ItA, based on the cap set. Those with a job offer are prioritised	At the moment of the invitation round, top rankers are automatically invited within the limit of occupational ceilings	At the moment of the invitation round, top rankers are automatically invited within the limit of occupational ceilings and after the places for Skilled Independent are allocated	State and territory authorities have their own criteria. Each state or territory government agency have different processes for nominating expressions of interests	Candidates receive an ItA when get a job offer	Ranking through the CSR (see above for the point allocation), and best candidates are invited to apply within the limit of available invitations at each round			
Procedures:									
Draw frequency	2 weeks	2 weeks approx.	Depends on states / regions	2 weeks approx.		2/3 weeks			
Permanence in the pool	6 months	Max 2 years (applications can be updated at any time)				Max 1 year (applications can be updated at any time)			
Deadline to apply after ItA	4 months	60 days				60 days			
Paper/ online	Paper and online	Online				Online			
Eligibility of	Yes	Yes				Yes			

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
residents									
Actors who have access to the pool	Central administration	Administration (at central, state and regional level) and employers				Government and provinces and territories administration; employers indirectly via Job Bank			
Actors entitled to invite	Government administration, centralised	Administration (at central, state and regional level) and employers, who must have a standard business sponsorship status				Administration at central and provincial level			
Length of the residence obtained	Permanent or job search visa for 9 months if no job offer	Permanent	Permanent	Provisional	Provisional and permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent
Other elements									
PBS	Yes, the same point scale to regulate the access to the pool and to rank candidates	Yes, the same points scale to regulate the access to the pool and to rank candidates			No	A PBS to enter into the pool and a different PBS to rank candidates once entered in the pool	Only a PBS to rank candidates once entered in the pool		
Job matching element	Not linked to the pool, candidates may access to SkillFinder, and be matched with vacancies	Employers can access to the pool and contact candidates				Subscription to Job Bank encouraged if no job offer			
Pre-screening	Valid language test before entering the pool	Language and skill assessment (qualifications and experience) before entering the pool				Valid language certificate and qualifications recognised before entering the pool			

Criteria	NZL	AUS				CAN			
	Skilled Migrant Category Visa	Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	Skill Regional visa (subclass 489)	Temporary Skilled visa (457), ¹ Employer Nomination visa (186), Regional Sponsored Scheme (187) ²	FSWP – Federal Skilled Workers Program	Canadian Experience Class; CEC	Federal Skilled Trades Program; FSTP	Provincial Nominee Program; PN
Cap	Yes, general cap for permanent economic migration	Yes, by occupation and general cap for the permanent economic migration			General cap for the permanent economic migration stream (except 457, uncapped)	Yes, by round (not by visa)			
Labour market test	No	No	No	No	The procedure to become sponsors foresees genuineness assessment showing recruitment efforts	Yes (except exempt)	Yes (except exempt)	Yes (except exempt)	Yes (except exempt)

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis of national legislation, 2017.

Annex Notes

¹ The 457 visa was replaced by the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa in March 2018.

² Both the Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) and the Migration Scheme (subclass 187) were reformed in March 2018.

³ The points allocation in the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) used to select candidates to be invited to apply in Canada is reported in italics in this section.

⁴ The SOL was replaced by the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL) in April 2017.

⁵ As of April 2017 occupations should be listed in the combined list of eligible skilled occupations, which features the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL) and the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL).

⁶ As of April 2017, the CSOL has been replaced by the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL).

Chapter 3. Scenarios for the adaptation of the EOI System to the EU context

This chapter proposes possible scenarios for the adaptation of the EoI model – or elements of it – in the European context. The chapter identifies three main scenarios for the implementation of an EU-wide EOI-type of system. The legislative and administrative changes required for each scenario are examined, as well as the extent to which they reproduce two-step migration management from the original EoI model. The scenarios range from a pooling and matching mechanism for existing labour migration schemes, with no legislative change, to a new or modified EU-wide scheme served by two-step selection. The chapter discusses a feature common to all scenarios, an EU-wide infrastructure for pre-screening migration candidates and pooling their profiles, vetting employers. The potential role of public employment agencies in accessing the pool and managing the matching mechanism is discussed.

Introduction

Building upon the description of the original EoI model as implemented in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, on the one hand, and on the understanding of the specific unaddressed needs of the European labour migration system on the other, this chapter proposes possible scenarios for the adaptation of the EoI model – or elements of it – in the European context.

The chapter presents three scenarios, and variants, in terms of the main features and building blocks, the feasibility of creation, and the added value of each scenario relative to the current EU skilled labour migration system.

The chapter then examines the different design choices in the EoI adaptation, applicable to the different options.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential implications of the different scenarios.

Overview of the scenarios

This section presents a number of scenarios for adapting the Expression of Interest model and its components to the European context, based on the analysis of EoI systems in OECD (2017^[1]).

The Expression of Interest model, as adopted in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, cannot be directly applied intact to the EU context, due to constitutional differences. A direct copy of the EoI model would see the EU itself creating an EU pool of candidates from which it would select individuals for issuance of EU-wide permits or requiring issuance of permits with EU-wide validity by Member States. This is not possible: issuance of permits is a decision which is the competence of Member States. Further, a faithful transposition of the EoI model as used outside the EU would also mean that the permits issued would be permanent, i.e., long-term resident permits, free of occupation restrictions and granting full mobility. Immediate permanent residence is almost unknown in national legislation, and not contemplated in the EU legal migration framework.

In light of this constraint, the scenarios presented indicate the different ways in which EoI elements can support the EU legal migration framework for labour migration.

Three main scenarios are proposed, with variants:

1. A basic pool option. This scenario foresees the creation of an EU-wide pool of highly-skilled migration candidates admitted to the pool based on basic credentials and migration requirements, which would serve existing schemes (EU and/or national) for skilled labour migration.
2. A sector-specific option. This creates one or more separate EU-wide pools of skilled migration candidates in target sectors where credentials are accepted throughout the EU. Enhanced pre-screening, prior validation of qualifications, matching and, possibly, intra-EU mobility features are

possible under this scenario. Two possible sectors of application are discussed - regulated professions in the health sector, and the IT sector – although this scenario could also serve other sectors with pressing labour needs.

This option also allows for pooling demand, in light of uniform criteria. In the case of pooled demand (i.e., a fixed number of vacancies to fill), candidates in the pool may be ranked and selected according to an optional points-based selection.

As part of this sector option, it is possible to foresee a skills development component. In this sub-scenario, a specific sector is identified and candidates are trained *from* or *for* the pool. An investment is made to develop the skills required for selection from the pool. This scenario builds on the concept of skills mobility partnerships.

In the variant where demand is fixed or capped, this option also allows for creation of a specific pool for less selective labour migration channels, such as non-qualified work. Here, too, points-based criteria can be used for selection.

3. A scheme-specific option. This EU-wide EoI system is connected to the EU labour migration framework (existing or revised) through a pool. Admission to the pool represents a form of pre-approval for a specific legal migration channel, on the condition that a qualifying job offer is made. Under this scenario, access to the legal migration channel may also only be possible through the EoI process. Admission to the pool would require meeting the eligibility criteria for recognition of foreign qualifications, where applicable, and pre-certification of other eligibility criteria.

A variant on this option is the possibility to include an EU supply-driven permit for a fixed number of top-ranked candidates, as authorised annually by Member States. Candidates would be automatically selected from the pool according to agreed criteria of excellence. This variant would not be meant to satisfy labour demand – the number would be insufficient, and the criteria restrictive – but to stimulate interest in the pool itself.

These scenarios and variants differ in terms of the grounds for admission to the pool; how qualifications are assessed; how selection occurs; the link, if any, with the legal migration channel; and whether the scenario is possible under current EU legislation (Table 3.1)

In none of these options is a job offer prerequisite for entry to the pool. In none of them except the variant of the last option, the creation of a specific supply-driven scheme is required. Yet, a job-search permit or visa served by the EoI-type pre-screening and pooling mechanism would be a key tool to overcome bottlenecks in international employment matching by allowing in-person contact between the migration candidate and the prospective employer.

Table 3.1. Alternate scenarios for adopting an EoI system at the EU level

Components of the different scenarios.

1. Scenario	2. Admission to the pool is based on...	3. Qualifications assessment	4. Selection from the pool occurs through...	5. Link to legal migration channel	6. Possible without changes to EU legal migration framework
Basic option	Pool admission based on eligibility for legal channels (plus other criteria)	Credential assessment for pool or later	Direct or mediated employer selection, Member State harvesting and proposing to employers	People identified in the pool need to apply for legal channel separately	Yes
Sector option	As above	Certification under standard criteria	As above, with additional possibility of ranking for fixed demand (i.e., to meet pre-verified demand)	Entry to pool could be integrated into migration procedure	Yes, in most cases
Sector option V1, Skills Development	As above	Certification under standard criteria Included in skills development (training) component	As above	As above	Yes, in most cases
Sector option V2, lower skilled	As above	Custom assessment	As above	As above	Yes, in most cases
Legal Migration Channel	As above	Credential assessment or (option) RFQ for pool, RFQ upon selection	Direct or mediated employer selection, Member State harvesting and proposing to employers	Entry to pool is integrated into migration procedure. Pool may be mandatory for use of a specific channel, provides pre-qualification	No
Legal Migration Channel V1, supply-driven	As above	As above	Selection Criteria (e.g., PBS)	Requires creation of new legal migration channel	No, not possible under TFEU

Source: OECD Secretariat Analysis.

As part of these scenarios, other policy measures of direct relevance are discussed, including the recognition of language ability, assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications, and matching platforms used for bringing employers and jobseekers together.

Basic option: Creating an EU-wide pool of pre-screened candidates for highly-skilled migration

The basic model of the EoI would primarily address matching between employers and potential recruits, and would not be directly linked to any specific legal migration channel. However, admission criteria to the pool would reflect the criteria applied under one or more specific schemes, so that candidates would be eligible for existing legal migration channels in the presence of a qualifying job offer. Relevant schemes could be limited to the channels under the EU legal migration framework (the EU Blue Card) or national schemes.

This scenario requires a single publicly-managed platform with a mechanism to pre-screen and pool interested candidates who meet key admission criteria for existing labour migration programmes.

To restrict the EoI pools, it is necessary to impose selection criteria which provide added value. In this option, there is a skills threshold for admission to the pool. The threshold of skills for an EU-wide pool of candidates could be based on EU schemes; at present, this would be the EU Blue Card in its current form, since it establishes standard eligibility criteria. Admission to the pool would therefore be based on the basic criteria for the EU Blue Card: education.

In addition to education, the pool would require a minimum level of language proficiency in any official language of the EU. This consideration is included to filter out applicants with limited adaptability and transferability of skills in the EU labour market.¹

Criteria for admission to the pool could potentially be expanded to encompass less restrictive criteria – such as non-tertiary education and less experience – to reflect legal migration channels for skilled workers established at the national level. The EU Blue Card option of counting five years' experience as an alternative to higher education qualifications could also be considered.²

The pool would be independent of the legal migration channel. When a match is made, and a contract proposed by the employer, the parties would apply for a permit using the existing channels, choosing the most favourable channel according to the circumstances. Presence in the pool would have no legal bearing on the administrative procedures.

The appeal of such a platform would be to broaden and deepen the pool of candidates available to employers, on the one hand, and the range of employers available to candidates, on the other. Third country nationals resident abroad are not currently able to utilise European public platforms for job matching.³ Private platforms are in place, and do not impose restrictions on their use by job-seekers, but do not screen according to eligibility for legal labour migration channels.

This option is an enhanced matching tool, aligned with eligibility criteria for legal labour migration channels, but without a link.

Pool entry under the Basic Option

Pool entry criteria under this option would be shaped by the basic EU Blue Card education requirements, along with sufficient mastery of an EU language.

The level of higher education certified should correspond at least to the minimum Blue Card threshold, set at level 6 of ISCED 2011 (bachelor's or equivalent level). Under the EU Blue Card, higher education qualifications are proven by any evidence of formal qualifications issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a post-secondary higher education programme, with a minimum duration of three years (Directive 2009/50/EC, Article 2 h).⁴

Candidates' admission to the pool would therefore be conditional on providing proof of education level and proof of relevant language knowledge.

The proof of education in this option would be the simplest possible, consisting in an Educational Credential Assessment, issued by an accredited body and valid in all EU Member States as a proof of local-equivalent higher education qualifications (see section on Educational Credential Assessment).

The ECA may be a first step towards formal recognition, when this is required.⁵ More importantly, it has two signalling functions. First, it indicates that the candidate is capable of undergoing a formal procedure – producing an official document, communicating with an authority, etc. In that sense, it serves as a filter for the soft skills required to go through such a procedure.

Second, it signals to prospective employers the presumed value of credentials acquired in a different educational system. This can be particularly helpful when candidates have credentials from little-known institutions in developing countries, for instance.

However, an ECA is not recognition, but an indication of equivalency. For ECAs to be valuable to prospective employers, professional regulators as well as labour migration candidates, they need to be issued by bodies which are well-established and trusted in the receiving-country labour market. To effectively serve an EU-wide system, ECAs should be equally recognised and accepted across all Member States. This would be based on the ENIC-NARIC contact points (see section on educational credential assessment). Before filing an expression of interest candidates would have to obtain an ECA from the ENIC-NARIC contact point of any EU (or participating) country. This may be a country they wish to indicate as their first or only preference.

Since ECA is meant to translate foreign degrees into the corresponding European degree, for reference by employers, ECA would not be necessary for international students with qualifications obtained in a Member State. Similarly, candidates (abroad or residing in an EU Member State) with recognised qualifications would be exempted from providing an ECA, and could provide proof of recognition.

The second requirement for entry to the pool is language knowledge. This could take the form of a valid language certificate listed as an accredited language certification in an inventory specifically set for pool admission purposes (see section on certification of language skills). Pool entry would be conditional on attesting of a level of language knowledge equivalent.

Settling the language threshold is not immediately apparent. However, if the pool is meant to identify individuals with adaptability in the European labour market, the lowest language level to expect would be B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This is the level commonly used for admission to higher education institutions and, in many Member States, for concession of permanent residence. Depending on the evolution of the pool and interest by employers, this level could be raised or lowered.

The pool is open to all third-country nationals who are able to fulfil the education and language criteria, regardless of whether they reside in a third-country or are already residing in an EU Member State. For the latter group filing and EoI and participating in the pool could enhance opportunities for in-country job or status change, as well as intra-EU mobility.

The matching mechanism: selection from the pool.

Once candidates are admitted into the pool, they can participate in matching with employers.

There are several possibilities for matching with job vacancies:

- the EoI pool could be a reserve for authorised employers and other actors to consult directly for recruitment. Candidates would not see vacancies;
- the pool could be linked with one or more existing vacancy databases, with direct or filtered access. Candidates would be able to consult vacancies; or
- the pool could be linked with a specific vacancy database populated with listings either expressly posted or imported from another vacancy database by authorised actors. Candidates would be able to consult vacancies.

This design feature is discussed in more detail below (see section on matching in the pool).

Exit from the Pool and migration procedure

Under this option, once a job offer is secured, the candidate is able to lodge an application for a permit under the qualifying legal migration scheme.

Feasibility

The implementation of this basic adaptation of the EoI system would not require legislative changes nor the complex political negotiation process that these involve at the EU level. Nonetheless, this “light” option would still hinge upon substantial investments to establish, coordinate and monitor the administrative infrastructure needed for the pre-screening, accreditation and matching features of the system to function. Even assuming that in most cases existing agencies could be entrusted with the additional responsibilities and tasks identified, expanding their functions would still require significant resources, and, presumably, a few years.

The basic infrastructure would include:

- An EoI website, providing information on the platform and eligibility, and a guide to using the platform for different user groups.
- A platform allowing candidates to submit and manage profiles, and other actors to access these profiles.

- A possible link to existing vacancy databases or a new vacancy database (see section on matching in the pool, on the form such a vacancy database would take).
- A system for accrediting employers and potentially other recruiters to access the pool (see sections access of employers to the EoI platform and involvement of private employment agencies on the involvement of employers and private recruitment agencies).

The platform would have to be available in all EU official languages. Other languages would be optional. It could be built onto the existing EU Immigration Portal during future upgrade or expansion of the Portal, or developed independently of the Portal.

In countries where the EoI system is in place, it is under the management of the Ministry responsible for migration. While the institutional arrangement could not be directly transferred due to fundamental differences between the national and federal systems in New Zealand, Australia and Canada on the one hand, and the European Union on the other, a central body appears necessary. An EU-wide EoI platform would require an institutional host, which could be a dedicated body within existing EU-level services or a new service.

Oversight and direction at the Commission level could be under a single directorate, but would need to involve a governance body bringing together directorates with areas of competence relevant to the EoI platform, including home affairs and employment, as well as national administrations and agencies with these competences. The proposed European Labour Authority would also need to be involved.⁶ The need for a governance body has not emerged in other EoI systems, although working co-ordination between employment and immigration services is in place.

Settings for the platform (e.g., eligibility criteria, certification bodies, conditions of access to the pool) are decided through executive decision or legislation in existing EoI systems. In an EU system, such decisions could also be fixed through legislation, but would be better left to adjustment based on evidence, allowing the system to evolve reactively. This constraint in EU measures – which have a long policy feedback cycle (OECD/EU, 2016_[2]) – would have to be addressed. One means to do so would be to charge the governance body with adjusting parameters, based on different forms of majority decision or even unanimity.

To provide evaluation and monitoring, the platform could be accompanied by a secretariat, with a mandate to report to the governing body on the functioning and outcomes of the platform, propose changes, and model the potential impact of these changes. The secretariat could potentially conduct consultations with social partners and other actors.

The development and management of the technical elements of the platform – the website and EoI platform – could be contracted to an external IT service provider, or established within the Commission.

The platform would have to be supported with a promotion campaign, targeting employers and other labour market actors in Europe, and qualified third-country nationals in Europe and abroad.

It should be clear that establishing an EoI pool would require substantial investment and, if even moderately successful, would be costly to run. Countries employing EoI models impose user fees in the migration system which have helped to subsidise the cost of developing the platforms. Further, the platforms were designed to help manage a case load more effectively, freeing up resources which were previously dedicated to screening applications. As there is no current pool in the EU, introduction of one would represent a new cost. As the argument for the pool is to favour international recruitment, there is a strong argument against imposing fees. This means that the platform would require initial and ongoing funding.

The basic EU-wide EoI system would also require the commitment of political capital from EU institutions and interested Member States' governments not only to obtain the necessary resources but also to ensure the requisite participation of employment bodies.

Added value

The EU-wide EoI system in this section would perform two key functions for improving skilled labour migration management across the EU:

- pre-screen migration candidate and recruiter credentials;
- facilitate and enhance the quality of international employment matching.

Neither function is directly related to legal migration, but improve the effectiveness of labour migration in meeting skill needs by reducing the information barriers which hamper international recruitment.

Pooling candidates and vacancies (or potential employers) at the EU level would broaden the candidate pool and increase the likelihood for candidates and employers to find a match. No current platform allows third-country nationals outside the EU to match with EU employers at no cost and with an element of verification that criteria are met for existing labour migration channels.

Under this option, the main beneficiaries relative to the current situation are those employers who have been struggling or reluctant to fill skills shortages through migration – notably SMEs and firms operating in Member States which have traditionally been less attractive for international talent. Similarly, the system could be particularly beneficial to migration candidates with limited resources and thin networks. Overall, as a result of the enhanced quality and scope of international employment matching opportunities, and of a spillover of such additional opportunities across Member States, the system could bring added value to the EU labour markets and economies.

In order for these returns to materialise, certain conditions would have to be in place. First, the key parties to international employment matching – i.e. the

migration candidates and the potential recruiters – would have to be aware of the system and trust its ability to provide better quality and opportunities of international recruitment than existing tools. Second, related to this, the system would have to be populated with a sufficient number of candidate profiles and attract vacancies.

An important note of caution must be made here, based on consultations with employers, policy positions and survey results. Employers, employer representatives and intermediation agents have indeed expressed interest in a model with pre-screening, pooling and matching components. In the views of employers, an EU-wide public mechanism encompassing these three components could provide a positive input in their efforts to fill unmet vacancies through labour migration by reducing the uncertainties – and related costs – of foreign recruitment. The fact this could be done without changing current migration legislation makes this option attractive.

Notwithstanding the general enthusiasm, there is a contradiction in the position of employers. Employers would like a system which provides job-ready candidates, at no or little cost. At the same time, there is mistrust that a public EU-wide body could assess and validate the qualifications and skills of candidates. In other words, the obstacle represented by mistrust of foreign qualifications is not likely to be easily allayed by a new certification body, especially a body far from employers.

In fact, while employer representatives have generally expressed enthusiasm for EU action to develop an EU-wide adaptation of the pool element of the EoI system, many are unconvinced that, in practice, their members would consider migration candidates holding qualifications certified as equivalent to those of a different Member State, rather than the local equivalent. This reluctance applies even if local jobs do not require formal recognition of foreign qualifications. Further, speaking another EU language rather than the local language is not seen as holding value for potential employers.

Some EU countries are more flexible than others in insisting on national language skills and recognised training, and acute shortages can force employers to be less rigid. Other are not. One example is Germany, where SMEs, even when faced with hard-to-fill shortages in skilled trades and crafts, have been reluctant to give up on requiring dual vocational system-equivalent qualifications and full German language mastery. Obviously, employer mistrust of EU-wide pre-screening and validation of candidate qualifications and language credentials would undercut any pool.

Firms recruiting with EU-wide adaptability and placement in mind – such as multinationals and large firms – would be more willing to consider candidates without mastery of the local language (especially if the firm and candidate working language were English). These firms already are able to draw on international recruitment and have well-established channels for recruitment. A large and high quality EoI pool, and the involvement of intermediaries serving

large and multinational enterprises, would make the pool of added value for this group.

For qualified candidates, the added value of the pool would be access to a range of employment opportunities and the possibility to signal employers that they have the credentials to qualify for a legal migration channel. The effort required to certify and attest qualifications needs to be measured against the returns to joining the pool.

Candidates already residing in an EU Member State on a EU Blue Card, long-term residence, or student permit would not have to make much effort to qualify for the pool, making the pool more attractive.⁷ The documentation necessary to obtain a prior EU Blue Card could be used again, as could the higher education degree issued in the EU. EU Blue Card holders already enjoy facilitated intra-EU mobility; under the EU-wide EoI system, they would be able to market the fact that compared to new hires from abroad they face less paperwork and shorter procedures if hired in another EU country. For international students, the more favourable treatment under most permit regimes, and the fact they will hold an EU degree, makes it easier for them to participate in the pool and more attractive for hires.

A well-functioning and sufficiently populated basic EU-wide EoI system as described in this section would significantly help improve Europe's branding and standing in the global competition for talent. The reverse is also true, however, as committing resources to the design and implementation of a new and complex system may backfire if migration candidates and prospective recruiters do not see its added value and do not populate and use the system.

The sector option

The sector option takes the basic option further, to create EU-wide pools in sectors where validation of EoI admission credentials could be more easily accepted throughout the EU.

The added value of the EU-wide matching system under the basic EoI scenario largely depends on the value to employers of pre-screened credentials and ECAs, in many cases ECAs from authorities in another Member State regarding foreign qualifications. Employers may be reluctant to accept ECAs made in a different EU Member State, and the crucial endeavour to build mutual trust on credential pre-screening across the EU is likely to take a long time, whether within or outside an EoI system.

This option therefore focuses on targeted pooling and matching systems in sectors where the EU-wide acceptance of EoI admission credentials could be more straightforward. In these sectors, the harmonisation or greater homogeneity of credential requirements across the EU could allow for an enhanced and more credible EU-wide EoI candidate pre-screening mechanism.

Similarly, a sector approach allows for vacancies to be pooled, or bundled, and brought to the pool for matching. When a bloc of hires in a single occupation must

be achieved, it is even possible to introduce ranking to the selection from the pool, where candidates meeting basic criteria (education and language) can be ranked according to other characteristics and the top-ranking candidates submitted to employers.

Example: A regulated occupation under the EU PQD

A pool could be designed to work within a sector – or occupation – which is regulated and where portability of recognition could be facilitated. The health sector is the most apparent example where an EU-wide sector-specific EoI system could take advantage of portability of qualifications within the EU. Across the EU the implementation of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive (EU PQD) provides for the formal professional qualifications acquired in any Member State by EU citizens in six regulated health professions – i.e. medical doctors (generalists as well as some specialists), midwives, nurses, dentists, veterinary surgeons and pharmacists – to be automatically recognised in each other Member State.⁸ This has been made possible by a 30-year process of EU-wide harmonisation of minimum training conditions for these professions.⁹ Moreover, according to the EU PQD, host country language mastery cannot be a condition for the recognition of professional qualifications – although it can be required to access professional practice.

Portability of qualifications is, under the Directive, a right related to the individual rather than the degree. The EU PQD was introduced to abolish stubborn obstacle to the free movement of persons and the free provisions of services in the EU Internal Market and, thus, it applies to EU nationals. Third-country nationals do not have the same right of automatic recognition even when their training is from an EU Member State institution. Furthermore, for EU nationals qualifications acquired in third countries and recognised in an EU Member State can only be considered as formal qualifications under the EU PQD in another EU member state if the EU national holding these qualifications has practiced the profession in the member state awarding recognition for a minimum of three years. In this case, recognition in another member state can be granted under the EU PQD “general system”, allowing for compensatory measures.¹⁰

In order for the EoI in the health sector to work, Member States and the competent regulatory bodies in each of them would have to agree on the immediate portability of the qualifications recognition decisions issued to third country nationals in any other Member State by the competent authority in the six health professions covered by the EU PQD automatic system. As things stand now, this is not even the case for EU nationals holding third-country qualifications.¹¹ Thus, EU-wide recognition of foreign qualifications for third-country nationals would require agreement of Member States, building on the model of mutual recognition agreements. (Desiderio, 2015_[3]). However, so far, the EU has only begun negotiation of MRAs with individual third countries (e.g. the MRAs being negotiated between the EU and Canada – through the competent professional bodies - under the CETA).

Box 3.1. The lack of an EU-wide mechanism for the recognition of foreign qualifications held by Third-country nationals: a key obstacle to international talent mobility in the Internal Market

In the EU, the formal recognition of foreign qualifications held by non-EU citizens (i.e. Third Country Nationals, TCNs) has at best national validity.¹² A foreign qualified TCN professional willing to practice a regulated profession in multiple member states currently has to seek qualifications recognition in each member state. This is despite the fact that, across EU member states, academic qualifications are widely harmonised, and, under the EU PQD, mutual and automatic recognition of professional qualifications issued by a given member state in another member state is rather the rule than the exception for European Economic Area (EEA) citizens.¹³

Thus, unsurprisingly, EU-wide skilled migration instruments like the EU Blue Card have seen their potential to cater to the whole Internal Market – and attract international talent therein – significantly reduced by the requirement that TCNs seek formal recognition for their professional qualifications as needed to practice regulated occupations in each member state (OECD, 2016_[4]).

Against this background, even the best EU-wide migration management system and international employment matching tool is bound to failure if the issue of the transferability of qualifications recognition decisions across the EU is not addressed. International talent is often sought after for working in occupations which require formal recognition of professional qualifications – i.e. regulated professions. Obtaining recognition of foreign qualifications and access to professional practice in such professions can be far more burdensome for a TCN than the migration procedure itself. Hence, undergoing the professional qualifications recognition procedure several times to practice in different EU member states might not even be considered as an option by sought-after TCNs who might have the opportunity to work in large national markets (like the US or Canada) instead.

Yet, there are currently no prospects for an agreement among EU member states and, crucially, member states' professional bodies, on the mutual recognition of qualifications recognition decisions across the EU. Mistrust on other member states' recognition processes, genuine fear of lowering the quality of domestic professional standards, and reluctance to delegate the prerogative of granting access to professional practice may explain professional bodies' resistance to progress in this area. Professional bodies and national authorities may also be put off by fears of “qualifications recognition shopping”.¹⁴

Since national authorities do not control all the levers of qualifications recognition and access to professional practice, there are limits to the extent to which national governments can make big leaps forward in this area – unless they are very convinced of the case and determined to invest political capital on it. In Canada, where professional regulation is largely a prerogative of professional bodies at the

provincial level, it is only with the 2007 amendment of the Agreement on Internal Trade that the automatic recognition of qualifications recognition decisions across Provinces and Territories was achieved for both Canadian nationals and foreign nationals. Undoubtedly, the political and policy efforts required to reach a similar agreement among the various professional bodies of each EU member state would be even greater.

If automatic mutual recognition of qualifications recognition decisions across the EU for TCNs holding non-EU qualifications cannot be envisaged in the short-medium term, then EU-wide acceptance of assessments of equivalency of third-country educational credentials with domestic credentials (ECAs) issued in each member state should be pursued in the first place, as a minimum requirement for any EU-wide migration management tool to be effective. On the one hand, educational credentials are widely harmonised across the EU. On the other, mutual acceptance of ECAs would not prevent professional authorities in each country to impose specific additional requirements for formal recognition into professional practice. Yet, mutual acceptance of ECAs would still contribute to build familiarity and trust among competent bodies in member states, and pave the way for further progress in this area.

Pool entry under the sector option: regulated professions

Relative to the basic option, criteria would be more specific and include:

- proof of the formal recognition of the foreign qualifications required for the practice of a relevant health profession by the competent professional body of any EU Member State. Formal recognition by the competent authorities of each Member State would be automatically accepted across the EU.
- proof of relevant language knowledge at the entry-level required for practicing the profession. This should take the form of a valid language certificate listed in a list – either the general list (certification of language skills section) or one created for the purpose of admission in the sectoral pool (i.e., language certification for the health profession).

The occupation would necessarily match the proof of formally recognised qualifications. The health professions tertiary degree, required under the Basic Option, could also be applied here, especially if the pool is to meet the minimum requirements of the EU Blue Card.

Besides this, the optional requirements for profile information would be the same as in the Basic scenario.

Since the pool focuses on a limited number of occupations, profiles within each profession could be ranked. Ranking is not unique to the sector option: it is also possible under the Basic Option, within professions according to the criteria expressed by the employer consulting the pool. Ranking under the sector option,

however, refers to a pool of candidates who have already obtained recognition of credentials necessary for employment.

Accreditation for employers and PEAs for health sector occupations would be similar to that for the Basic Option (section on access of employers to the EoI platform and section on involvement of private employment agencies), but could incorporate commitments to respect ethical standards in the recruitment of health professionals (the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, see Box 3.4) This may exclude firms which are new to the international recruitment of health professionals from the EoI system. EU-wide enforcement of ethical recruitment requirement might also pose problems.

The matching mechanism

The matching mechanism would be similar to the Basic Option, with one major difference. Employers in the health sector are often large enterprises recruiting many workers at once or over a short period of time. This is true for public health systems or large hospitals, for example, in their hiring of nurses. Vacancies with identical requisites can be bundled. The sector pool allows the generation of a roster of candidates, potentially with ranking according to employer requisites.

Exit from the Pool

As under the Basic option, once a job offer is secured, the candidate is able to lodge an application for a permit under the qualifying legal migration scheme. In some Member States, specific channels are in place for qualified health personnel.

Example: an unregulated occupation

The first sector example focused on health occupations, which are regulated and have a developed mutual recognition framework in the EU. Most occupations, however, are not regulated – or not regulated under an EU-wide framework.

One example is the IT (information technology) sector, where there is substantial demand in the EU and where access to practice is not subject to formal recognition, nor supervision by a regulatory body. Qualifications are assessed directly by the prospective employers in reference to global standards set by the IT industry itself.¹⁵ For example, a computer programmer or a software developer would typically be required to be proficient in certain programming languages. Technical proficiency in the English language knowledge is the other worldwide standard for the practice of IT professions. Global professional standards and requirements make it easier to implement a pooling and matching system which can effectively and smoothly be used all across the EU.

Pool entry under the sector option for unregulated professions

Criteria for EoI pool admission for IT professions would include:

- Evidence of internationally recognised IT competences based on relevant certificates. A list of accepted certificates will be compiled and made

available in the EoI website. When filing their expression of interest candidates will be requested to upload the electronic copies of such certificates;

- Proof of *English* language knowledge at B2 level or higher in the form of a valid language certificate, as in the basic scenario.

The requirement of a tertiary degree, foreseen under the Basic Scenario, could also be applied here, especially if the pool is to meet the minimum requirements of the EU Blue Card.

The matching mechanism

The platform for the implementation of this EU-wide EoI system for the IT sector would be similar to that in the Basic Scenario. If the EoI were only oriented towards IT occupations, it may be possible to limit the language to English language only. The list of accepted certificates could be developed in coordination with industry representatives.

Exit from the Pool

As under the Basic option, once a job offer is secured, the candidate is able to lodge an application for a permit under the qualifying legal migration scheme. Many IT workers will qualify for the EU Blue Card under national criteria. In some Member States, specific channels are in place for IT personnel who do not meet EU Blue Card criteria due to lower salary.

Recruitment for less skilled occupations

The expression of interest system can be used to manage recruitment of workers for lesser skilled occupations, as long as there are features which distinguish among workers and allow for ranking and selection by preference.

This model is well-consolidated in the two step “roster and recruitment” guestworker programmes for low-skilled and non-professional occupations. One example is the Korean Employment Permit System, which imposes an initial filter for admission to the roster, comprising a language test, a physical test and age limits. The pool is successful because it is the only and required means for recruitment under an oversubscribed, capped temporary labour migration programme. Selection is performed in two steps, with the programme administrator – an agency of the Ministry of Labour – identifying three candidates from the roster for every vacancy, and employers choose among candidates based on their characteristics.

The roster-recruitment model is appropriate when there are fixed-entry labour migration programmes for which, in principle, supply exceeds demand and a means for matching within the programme is required. It is applicable where bilateral agreements commit to facilitating legal labour migration, as it allows the pool to be promoted in a specific origin country and to admit a certain number of candidates (or allow selection of a fixed number of candidates).

In the European context, at present there are few channels where a roster-recruitment model could apply. Seasonal work, where conditions are regulated by the Seasonal Worker Directive, is one area where the skills requirements remain below secondary education level but where some skills are valued, particularly agricultural experience. More broadly, commitments to open legal labour migration channels with origin countries may require roster management. An EU-wide EoI system would have the advantage of being able to stock the pool with candidates from multiple participating third countries of origin, and to select from the pool for programmes in multiple Member States.

Pool entry under the sector option for less skilled occupations

Criteria for EoI pool admission for less skilled professions would be based on nationality and on specific skills relevant to the channel, and include:

- Basic language skills, as attested by certificates
- Nationality of a participating partner country
- Other professionally relevant characteristics as attested by an implementing partner or by the country of origin.

The matching mechanism

The platform for the implementation of an EU-wide EoI system for less skilled employment would be similar to that in the Basic Scenario.

Exit from the Pool

As under the Basic option, once a job offer is secured, the candidate is able to lodge an application for a permit under qualifying legal migration scheme where applicable. Opportunities for migration may be limited to seasonal employment in some Member States.

Skills development under the sector option

The above variants present pools where admission is based on qualifications obtained by candidates. A further variant of the sector scenario is one in which skills are not selected but developed as part of the legal labour migration channel, through partnerships. Skills partnerships add a component to the EoI model: upskilling participants, either before they are admitted to the pool or while they are in the pool.

In this case, the migrant and the home country are not the only actors responsible for funding the development of skills needed in European destination countries.

Skills development is compatible with the above variants. For example, nurse recruitment as cited above requires that nursing degrees be recognised. This is an opportunity to integrate skills development into the EoI process. Nurses, or nursing students, in origin countries do not meet the criteria for admission to the pool. They could be admitted to a training pool based on their academic

achievements. Additional training would be provided to this select group of nurses, and those who pass an exam or are otherwise chosen are admitted to the sector pool, from which they could be recruited through the regular channels, using an existing legal migration pathway. The costs for training for the destination country qualification are borne by the potential employer or by the public sector of the country in which they will be employed.

Under the variant of non-regulated occupations, workers could be trained up to IT standards in the origin country, with the certificate of their skills issued by training institutes which are supported by European institutions and apply industry standards. Following certification, they could join the pool.

Under the non-professional variant, skills relevant to a specific occupation where demand is strong (e.g., the hospitality sector, transport, certain industrial trades) may lend themselves to skills mobility partnerships.

Combining skills development partnerships and the EoI model means creating a distinct approach relative to traditional bilateral recruitment channels, since it does not commit to recruitment in a specific Member State, but opens recruitment possibilities in all Member States, provided that the qualifications of training are accepted throughout the EU. Participants in training are not assured of being hired, but are trained to a standard which should allow them to qualify for the pool and be of interest to employers.

There are a number of models of mobility partnerships around the world which could be adapted to the EoI model (OECD, 2018^[5]). Outside the EU, examples include the training and recruitment of seafarers, for example. A number of EU member states have experience at a bilateral level with third countries which can be used as reference models.

Feasibility

The scenarios presented work within the framework of existing legal migration channels. However, for the health sector EoI to work properly, the framework for portability of recognition of third-country qualifications, and the possibility for third-country nationals to see their EU qualifications automatically recognised, would have to be addressed. This would entail changes to the relevant legal framework.

Professional bodies regulating the health sector have opposed accepting and implementing the principle of mutual recognition of qualifications recognition decisions for third-country nationals. In regulated professions, governments do not control all the levers of access to professional practice. In most cases, regulatory bodies act as autonomous gatekeepers. Any agreement among EU Member States on the mutual recognition and portability of qualifications recognition decisions requires support from all the regulatory bodies of the professions concerned. Such support is not obvious (Box 3.1).

The range of language requirements for the practice of health professions across Europe represents a further obstacle to the actual implementation, population, and

success, of an EU-wide EoI sectoral system for health professions. Migrants' access to professional practice in a country different from the one where they first obtained recognition of formal qualifications and language credentials would not be automatic as professional authorities and employers would be entitled to require proof of adequate mastery of the local language.

The infrastructure required for managing sector-oriented EoI systems is the same, or simpler, as in the basic option, with the exception of a skills-development approach, which requires investment in training in the origin country, and the less-skilled approach, which requires origin-country counterparts to develop the criteria for admission to the pool. Skills development would require coherence with development assistance, while less-skilled recruitment would require working within multilateral agreements on labour channels.

Added value

The added value of the EoI system in the health sector as compared to existing matching tools as well as to the basic scenario stems from the upfront formal recognition of qualifications of candidates in regulated professions, which would represent a greater guarantee for prospective employers with respect to the candidate's job readiness as compared to the mere ECA, and would encourage them to use the pool and matching mechanisms. Prospective recruiters would prefer to recruit migrants having obtained recognition from the professional body of the country where the firm operates, rather than await a long and uncertain process of formal recognition of qualifications in regulated professions. The presence of recruiters could encourage candidates to seek formal recognition of foreign qualifications before applying, although this would also depend on the trade-offs between the efforts required by the recognition procedure and the expected returns in terms of hiring and migration prospects.¹⁶

For this greater added value to be achieved, the formal recognition of health professional qualifications acquired by a third-country national in any Member State would have to be automatically recognised in each other Member State, and employers would have to trust the value of third-country qualifications recognised as equivalent to those of another Member State. For the time being this is not even the case for EU nationals holding third country qualifications, let alone for third country nationals holding such qualifications. Yet, only under these two conditions would the targeted adaptation of the EoI system create a real EU-wide pool of qualified health professionals coupled with a smooth matching mechanism, and effectively facilitate international recruitment in this sector. However, these two preconditions would be extremely difficult to achieve. Language barriers would also remain an obstacle to the meaningful implementation of a targeted EU-wide EoI system in the health sector. All these caveats question added value of creation of a targeted EU-wide EoI pool in the health sector.

Regarding unregulated occupations, greater added value can be expected. Taking the IT example, uniform basic competence and language requirements for the

practice of the IT profession throughout Europe means that the EoI system as described in this section would offer the opportunity for qualified third-country nationals to market their skills to employers across the EU. Similarly, employers in all Member States, regardless of the firm size and resources (and of the specific attractiveness of the country their firm operates in for IT professionals), would have access to a larger, and reliable, recruitment basin and matching tool at virtually no or little cost. The overall expected returns for the EU economy in terms of greater attractiveness for IT professionals, reduced sectoral shortages, and, hence, increased competitiveness should offer sufficient arguments to justify Member States' and EU institutions' investments required to implement this scenario, even in the absence of legislative changes.

Moreover, and to ensure that the system offers unique added value as compared to private international platforms and agencies for the recruitment of IT professionals,¹⁷ EU Member States could possibly consider supporting changes in the EU legal migration legislation which would allow for fast-track admission (for instance on Blue Card application) as well as more favourable intra-EU mobility rights for migrants sponsored through the EoI system.

The added value of using the EoI sector pool for less skilled occupations lies in the case management offer, where only those applications where a job offer has been made require attention. The EoI platform would also be a means for EU commitments to open potential legal channels which can create contact between partner origin countries and all EU Member States, without requiring changes in the legal labour migration framework at EU or national level.

The skills mobility approach offers a solution to the recognition issue identified in the health sector. Skills development in the origin country can be oriented towards language and qualifications required for employment in different Member States, and while it is not possible to train for all languages, it is possible for employers and Member States to participate in training in origin country so that candidates have recognised and accepted qualifications once they enter the pool. The skills mobility approach is even more relevant for non-regulated occupations where skills requirements are standardised.

Linking the two-step selection to specific EU legal instruments

This option links the EoI pool directly to a legal labour migration channel. Either entry to pool is the first step in the labour migration channel, or labour migration under the relevant channel cannot occur without use of the pool.

The administrative infrastructure for the pool and matching would be largely similar to the previous option.

However, this option would require legislative change, either to create a new labour migration channel in the EU legal migration framework, or to integrate the EoI selection into existing EU channels. The reference channel is the existing EU Blue Card scheme. A future revision of the scheme could make the EoI part of the EU Blue Card issuance process.

Pool entry

Candidates must qualify for the minimum education requirements for the EU Blue Card, as above, and basic mastery of one official EU language. As in the other options, a job offer would not be required to enter the pool.

While ECA is the minimum requirement for attesting qualifications, this option could also require recognition of foreign qualifications (RFQ), in order to accelerate later recruitment, although RFQ is under national competence and may have to be repeated if the job offer arrives from an employer in a member state other than the one which issued the initial RFQ decision. Intra-EU reciprocity of RFQ decisions, currently not possible, would facilitate this requirement.

Other legislative changes could include automatic enrolment of candidates who meet the criteria for the Blue Card and have already demonstrated they hold proof of qualifications. This would include graduating international students and current EU Blue Card holders. Enrolment could be automatic for international graduates, and for EU Blue Card holders in the event they lose the employment for which the Member State of residence first issued their permit. This would greatly expand the pool without undermining the quality of candidates, since they all qualify.

The matching mechanism

The platform for the implementation of an EU-wide EoI system would be similar to that in the Basic Scenario.

Exit from the Pool

When a qualifying job offer is confirmed, the candidate's application for a work permit under the EU Blue Card is processed. Statutory processing times, already capped under the EU Blue Card Directive, could be further shortened.

A supply-driven variant of the option

Existing EoI systems include a supply-driven variant in which some candidates are selected through a ranking system even in the absence of an employment offer or employer sponsor. The options presented above are all employer and sponsor driven and do not contemplate admission to the EU without a job offer. A variant of the second option would include a supply-driven component. Under this variant, a fixed number of top ranked candidates in the pool would be invited at regular intervals to apply for a visa or permit valid in all EU countries allowing unrestricted movement within the EU to seek a job, and the ability to take up qualifying employment in any Member State without returning to the home country. Invitations to Apply (ITAs) would come in the form of a certificate issued by the central body at the EU level in charge of managing the pool system and which would provide grounds for the issuance of a permit or a visa along the categories suggested below.

Unlike the previous options, this variant would closely resemble EoI systems in ranking (points or other criteria), regular draws, and fixed quotas, caps or targets for admission.

In order to implement this variant, some form of visa or permit would have to be available allowing the holder to move freely within the EU and take up employment in the member state where an employment offer is secured. There is currently no EU-level body which can issue visas or permits, both of which are exclusively issued by individual Member States.

The variant would require Member States to jointly agree on the different parameters for invitations to apply: the cap or quota at the EU level; the frequency and size of draws; the points and characteristics for ranking; the minimum threshold for qualification. It would also require decisions on the pool, such as the length of time expressions of interest remain valid.

There are a number of forms the supply driven scheme could take:

- A mechanism which would mirror existing EoI schemes, but which is impossible under the Treaty, would see Member States granting an EU authority the right to issue a fixed number of *permits*. This EU authority would issue an EU-wide permit, valid in the entire EU for residence and employment. As Member States have exclusive competence for issuing residence permits, and for setting volumes of admission, this solution is not currently feasible.
- A *Job-Search Permit* issued by national authorities in Member States, This new permit would grant holders intra-EU mobility rights from day one, allowing the holder to take up qualifying employment in any EU country. Recipients who find employment in a Member State different from the one which issued the permit would receive a new permit from the Member State of employment. Such a permit does not currently exist and would require an addition to the legislative framework, specifying the grounds for issuance (invitation to apply from the pool) and for taking up employment (qualification for EU or national schemes). While this would be close in spirit to the supply-driven component of existing EoI schemes, it would also require consensus among Member States and a long legislative process. Prospects for such a measure are limited (OECD/EU, 2016^[2]). Under this mechanism, acquisition of permits in each Member State would remain subject to existing national decisions on volumes of admission, as well as all other national criteria for issuance (security checks, etc.).
- Instead of a permit, a “job-search” *visa* could be issued to selected candidates, allowing recipients to seek work in any Member State. Visa issuance would be by individual Member States, to any applicant who has received an Invitation to Apply following selection from the pool under the EoI platform. The Visa could be a Short Stay or Long Stay visa, with different implications. Short Stay visas limit each stay in the Schengen area

to 90 days, although this may be enough for a job search. Neither currently guarantee the possibility for recipients of a visa in one Member State to apply for a permit in another Member State without returning to the home country; this would have to be introduced as a requirement for those Invited to Apply.¹⁸ As in the case of the permit under this variant, the number of Invitations to Apply, visas to issue, and the frequency at which candidates are drawn from the pool would be determined by Member States. For this instrument to be attractive, visa holders who find work must be able to obtain a residence permit without returning to their home country or to the country which issued the visa. Permits to which the job-search visa leads could be limited to the EU Blue Card or opened to national schemes.

Under this variant, the total number of permits or visas to be issued annually at the European level would be decided by Member States. Holders who find employment would be able to start work without returning to their home country or the Member State which issued the permit or visa. Qualifying employment could be limited to the EU Blue Card scheme or extended to include national categories, although the pool-admission criteria would still be based on the EU Blue Card scheme. There are a number of additional measures which could be considered to further reduce the time between finding a job and being authorised to start employment. An exemption from labour market tests could be included. In the case of the permit variant, the ability to start qualifying employment immediately could be contemplated.

If the maximum number of invitations to apply were set at a low level, it would still be of relevance. In such a case, the purpose of the supply-driven scheme would not be so much to bring in labour as to make the pool itself attractive, by offering a possibility to obtain a permit granting favourable conditions. The number of permits could be set very low – for example, in the hundreds – since the system would continue to serve demand-driven migration as previously.

Feasibility

As noted, this option requires legislative change. In the main scenario, it would require changes to the EU legal migration framework to modify the EU Blue Card Directive to include an EoI mechanism and to mandate use of the pool. Under the supply-driven variant, leaving permit issuance to national authorities would be possible under the current framework. On the other hand, this variant would require more changes to the Directive to allow the EU to issue permits, since this competence is not granted to the EU under the TFEU. No “EU permit” currently exists and establishing such a permit would require changes to the TFEU and would thus not be for the short or even medium term.

Introducing a central Invitation to Apply would require a body or committee with representation from Member States to achieve consensus on the number of invitations to offer, the frequency of draws, the ranking criteria, and the minimum threshold. Member States would have to agree on the quota. The pool

infrastructure would be similar to that proposed in the previous options, although information sharing with migration authorities would have to be incorporated into the EoI platform, or the EoI platform would have to be managed by migration authorities, since it would become part of the migration process.

A permit issued by a single Member State with EU-wide validity for employment is not impossible, although each Member State would retain the ability to cap or close access to employment.

Job-search visas would be simpler to implement, since they require holders to acquire a national permit to take up employment.

Added value

As in other options, the added value of incorporating an EoI pool into the legal labour migration framework depends on the ability to supply a broader and deeper pool of candidates. Automatic enrolment and the strong incentive of a small – even token – supply-driven component should allow the pool to expand. The creation of a pool as the upfront access to the legal labour migration channel would also reinforce the skilled migration attractiveness of the European Union as a whole by making the favourable channel more visible.

This variant could be of particular interest for third-country nationals holding student permits and graduating from EU institutions. Under Directive 2016/801, students may receive a permit allowing job-search for at least nine months following graduation. This permit is valid only in the Member State of issuance and if a job is found in another Member State, the holder may be required to return to the home country for issuance of a permit by the second Member State. The pool could be attractive for students as facilitating post-graduation intra-European mobility.

Mainstreaming the supply-driven element in the three scenarios: added value

While the introduction of a job-search visa or permit would be naturally suited to serve the third scenario of EoI adaptation, in theory nothing would prevent from using a supply-driven migration channel also in combination with the first and second scenario. In these cases, Member States would have to agree upfront on a rule based on which the job-search permit or visa could be granted by national authorities to certain pool candidates. For instance, provided a ranking mechanism, which would be possible under scenario two, a job-search permit or visa could be granted to top-rankers in the pool. International students and Blue Card holders qualifying for pool admission would also be a key target group for this scheme.

The use of a supply-driven channel – be this a national or an EU-wide scheme - in combination with the pre-screening and pooling features of the EoI tool promises to further enhance the matching potential of the system for Europe, by allowing in-person contact between pre-selected migration candidates and prospective

employers. This would help to move a step further in attracting international talent in the Internal Market and facilitating optimal skills' use.

The extent of political consensus and legislative changes required to link a supply-driven migration channel to the EoI pool would be a function of the scenario it would link to and whether this would be a national or an EU-wide scheme.

Design features of the EoI

Information on the candidate to include in the EoI

The basic information on each candidate in the pool must comprise name, contact details, and the details of how the individual meets the criteria for admission (education level, language, skills, etc., according to the option).

In addition, a more comprehensive profile could be provided. This would include any additional skills and employment-relevant elements beyond those required for basic eligibility, their personal characteristics, and their preferences. Such a profile could mimic the Europass format developed by the European Commission and CEDEFOP. The recently developed EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals, or an enhanced version of it, could also be used to build the EoI profile.¹⁹ This tool, which is web-based and free of charge, is currently meant for use by organisations working with migrants – including employment services – as an instrument to standardise assessment of skills and other employment and integration-relevant elements during the interview phase.

Candidates must accept that their EoI profile be stored and shared with employers, recruitment agencies and administrations in the EU, according to the matching model employed under the option.

Candidate information would be anonymous up to the point in which a potential match is made and an employer or employer representative requests to access the contact details of the candidate. Access could be granted automatically or candidates could have the option of approving each request for their contact information.

Additional information to include in the profile should allow prospective recruiters to get a more precise understanding of the suitability of the candidate for a vacancy, and of the likelihood that the job opening is attractive to them. The information provided could also be used for automatically filtering candidates through a matching algorithm. Additional information could include:

- candidate's **age**;
- detailed proof of **work experience**, including type and size of firm(s) of employment;
- certified proof of knowledge of **additional language(s)** spoken in the EU;
- certified proof of **additional education/training** (e.g. ongoing education at a level higher than the ECA threshold; informal learning; other additional training);

- **occupational preferences;**
- **list of EU Member State(s)** with which the candidate has concrete links (e.g. previous or ongoing study or work experience in one or more MS; certified contacts with local employers; family members residing in one or more MS)
- **preferences** for one or more EU MS;
- current **permit held** in one EU MS and any past permit history.

With the exception of the candidate's age, all the other above-listed elements are optional (*i.e.* the candidate might or might not know additional languages or have work experience, ties with a Member State etc. and/or want to disclose these). However, the candidate who would not have or would not want to disclose information on these elements would still have to complete the profile in full (and fill “none” in the relevant field in case this would not be applicable to them). The more complete the profile the greatest the chances to find a suitable employment match.

Profile updates will be possible for candidates in the pool, for instance to add information on graduation to a higher level of education, additional training completed, or language certificate acquired while in the pool.

To allow for fast track processing of actual immigration application in the case the candidate get sponsored by an employer under a given national or EU immigration scheme, **candidates would be encouraged to attach pdf copies of certificates attesting profile elements at the moment of filing an EoI or updating their profile.**

Following the model of the European Skills Passport, candidates should be able to build an electronic portfolio within the pool to collect relevant certificates. Indicating that supporting documentation is already available can be more compelling for employers and accelerate immigration procedures. In Canada, when supporting documentation was required only after selection from the pool, there were avoidable delays and even expiration of the offer (Desiderio and Hooper, 2016^[6]).

The platform could potentially be made capable of recognising genuine certificates and, thus, automatically pre-screen documents for formal legitimacy.

Educational Credential Assessment

An ECA is a certification of equivalence between the foreign education credentials and the corresponding domestic qualifications. It is not formal recognition of foreign qualifications acquired by the migration candidate abroad, but rather a “translation” of these qualifications in the domestic system. Candidates who receive a job offer for a regulated occupation would still have to undergo the formal recognition procedure for the given profession in the given host country to be admitted under the EU Blue Card scheme, and to be able to practice professionally.

There is no single European ECA body, but there are elements of such a body, the ENIC-NARIC contact points (Box 3.2). ENIC-NARIC contact points already deliver certificates of equivalency of foreign higher education credentials with corresponding domestic qualifications. These contact points would be the natural candidates for pre-screening migrants' educational credentials for the purpose of admission to the EoI pool.

Box 3.2. ENIC European Network of Information Centres and NARIC National Academic Recognition Information Centre

The European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility (ENIC) was established jointly by the Council of Europe and UNESCO to implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention. In 1984 the European Commission launched the network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) tasked with improving academic recognition of diplomas and facilitating international student mobility. The NARIC network is made of contact points established by the Ministry of Education of each EU and EEA Member State and Turkey. In these countries most often a same contact point is established for both the ENIC and the NARIC networks.

Centres issue individual non-binding “recommendations” for foreign university diplomas, under the condition that a similar university course or diploma is offered by a university. They may maintain a database of foreign diploma and exchange information with other Centres.

Information on the network: www.enic-naric.net. Information on equivalency certificates: www.ciep.fr/enic-naric-page/reconnaissance-diplome-etranger-documents-delivres

While ECA through ENIC-NARIC seems straightforward, a few issues would need to be addressed for it to work optimally for the purpose of EoI qualifications pre-screening. First, since some ENIC-NARIC contact points face an ECA backlog and long waits, additional resources (human and financial) would be necessary to ensure swift issuance of ECAs to EoI pool candidates. An alternative or complementary solution would be to allow certain accredited higher education institutions across the EU to deliver ECAs. Second, coverage equivalency of tertiary vocational education and professional bachelor diplomas (ISCED level 6 diplomas, which qualify for EoI pool admission in some of the scenarios identified) is underdeveloped. ENIC-NARIC contact points still focus on comparison of foreign and local university diplomas for the purpose of enrolment in further education. ENIC-NARIC activities in this area would need to be expanded and funded.²⁰ Third, employers are seldom aware of ENIC-NARIC certificates and may not see them as indicating job-relevant credentials. To address employer scepticism, information campaigns would be useful, alongside with the establishment of co-operation protocols between ENIC-NARIC contact points and relevant employer representatives, chambers of commerce and industry.

The portability of ECAs issued by ENIC-NARIC contact points or accredited higher education institutions in a given Member State is not, in practice, ensured. ECAs are not equally recognised by employers across the entire EU. While university diplomas benefit from harmonisation of academic qualifications and levels across the EU, foreign qualifications which have been judged equivalent to the qualifications of a Member State are not. In practice employers may still be reluctant to hire a migrant whose ECA refers to an equivalent degree in another Member State. Particularly stubborn obstacles exist for vocational qualifications. Employer consultations carried out for the purpose of this study have confirmed the strong reluctance of employers in trades and vocational occupations to hire migrants lacking local or local-equivalent qualifications.²¹

Language is a further issue in portability of ECAs, which are issued in the language of the national authority assessing the foreign degree. No EU-wide recognised authority issues an official translation of the ECA. In principle, greater portability of an ECA – at least in terms of intelligibility and credibility for employers – could be achieved through a multilingual equivalency template similar to the European Diploma Supplement, which is issued in a widely-spoken language. Reference in ECAs to the National Qualification Frameworks of EU Member States and of selected third countries to the European Qualification Framework (EQF)²² could also help transparency and the ease of translation into different languages. It is unlikely, however, that all obstacles to the mutual understanding and recognition of foreign credentials across the EU will be removed in the short term.

Since ECAs are not official recognition of foreign diploma and credentials, but rather a “translation” into levels comparable to national qualifications, they are no substitute for recognition within regulated occupations. For the latter, formal recognition from the relevant national professional body is required to practice the profession in a given Member State. Employers seeking to fill positions in regulated occupations may require formal recognition before hiring a candidate or even considering this candidate for a job interview.

EoI candidates in regulated occupations would nonetheless be able to use an ECA for entry to the pool, in the absence of formal recognition. The platform should indicate, for those with an ECA, clear information on further credentialing requirements for practicing the desired occupation in all or in preferred Member States. ENIC-NARIC contact points already provide information on the path and relevant authorities for obtaining formal recognition. This information could be provided systematically by the EoI platform.

Certification of language skills

There are many different forms of certification of language knowledge for the 24 official languages of the European Union. Where required for admission to the pool, or upon selection, a recognised certificate is necessary. This means the creation of an official list of recognised language certifications.

To allow for the smooth pre-screening of candidates' language qualifications, a comprehensive inventory of qualifying language certifications (at level B2 and higher) for all the 24 official languages of the European Union should be made available on-line. The responsibility of compiling and updating this list (and the definition of the language levels) could be attributed to existing bodies with experience in this field. Potential bodies include the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), or the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission (EACEA)²³, or the Council of Europe European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)²⁴.

This reference list would be published on the EoI website to allow interested candidates to verify their ability to meet the language pre-screening requirement before filing an expression of interest for admission in the pool. The EoI pre-screening platform could be linked to the list of qualifying certifications in each of the EU languages, so that the pre-screening of candidates' language qualifications would be partly automated. Using the same electronic portfolio approach as the European Skills Passport, candidates would be requested to upload copies of the highest level certificates corresponding to the language credentials indicated.

Depending on the option, validity of individual certificates could be assessed by the same body tasked with establishing and updating the list of recognised language certifications, or left to users (e.g., employers) to verify on a case-by-case basis when the profile is deemed of interest. In the latter option, there is no safeguard against fraudulent claims of language knowledge based on bogus, blank or invalid documents uploaded to meet requirements.

Matching in the pool

For all three scenarios, the question arises how the actual matching process unfolds. Practical experience suggests that this has a strong influence on how well such matching markets function. In general, the matching process can be decentralised, so that candidates, employers or recruitment agencies individually engage in search and initiate contacts. Alternatively, the process can be centralised, so that some algorithm or a single match-maker assigns candidates to vacancies. The appropriate design of the matching market needs to be adapted to the specific objectives and the institutional environment. Such a tailor-made design can then be implemented using the technological possibilities of online-based matching platforms.

A decentralised matching process can be envisaged for any of the three scenarios. Its technical implementation can determine for various groups of the platform's users which information may be accessed and who may be contacted. These settings can reflect the requirements of laws and regulation on labour migration. For example, Express Entry candidates in Canada's *JobMatch* can only see a filtered set of vacancies from the nation-wide vacancy database – those that have been posted for at least 30 days and meet the criteria of migration programmes. Australia's *SkillSelect* and the *Skill Finder* in New Zealand can be regarded as platforms where candidates do not have access to any information on vacancies;

by contrast, authorised employers and recruitment agencies can see candidates' profiles and contact them. Candidates' inability to see vacancies and contact employers severely limits their role in the matching process, but employers may be unwilling to participate in the platform if this leads to them being inundated with applications. Employers may also be hesitant to disclose wage information to all but a few targeted candidates.

Several technological features can further shape decentralised matching processes. A built-in messaging system can substantially reduce the barriers for initial contacts but may also lead to more messages than employers can handle. A well-designed search function can be a key asset of an online platform but may necessitate standardisation of the information entered to make it searchable, notably information and expected qualifications regarding occupation, education, work experience and level of language proficiency. Indicators such as percentages shown alongside a particular vacancy or candidate profile can capture to what extent the profile corresponds to the user's search criteria, to what extent one's own profile corresponds to the criteria of the user behind the profile, or a combination of the two. Such indicators allow filtering out the most promising profiles, and this is used in the *JobMatch* and EURES platforms.²⁵ Email alerts based on such indicators serve to elicit regular visits to the online platform and help spread information on new profiles quickly.

The matching platform could build upon the existing infrastructure of the EURES platform, which is jointly managed by the European Commission and Member States' public employment services (PES). At present, EURES does not serve third-country nationals abroad. Admitting these users would require a change in mandate. A possibility would be to duplicate EURES in parallel, for the purposes of the EoI, with certain vacancies transferred through a protocol from the EURES platform to the EoI platform, through a protocol. Any involvement of EURES would also require agreement with national PES, most of which do not address third-country nationals abroad.

A centralised matching process pairs a particular candidate with a particular vacancy. It only leaves candidates and employers the choice to reject or accept the proposed match. Rejection of (several) proposed matches can lead to extended waiting periods or failure to obtain any match at all. This kind of matching process has been employed to match new doctors to hospitals in a public health system, organ donors to patients, and high school graduates to study programmes in oversubscribed subjects. In these narrowly defined contexts, it matters most that a match is obtained at all, so that the match proposed by the centralised procedure is likely to be accepted.

Such procedures could therefore be suitable for the sector-specific and scheme-specific options, provided they are also sufficiently narrowly defined, e.g. along the lines of occupations: candidates in regulated professions such as doctors, nurses, care workers, and teachers, as well as seasonal workers, could be assigned to vacancies through a centralised matching process. Compared with a decentralised matching process, this could be considerably faster, involve very

limited costs, and largely avoid that some candidates as well as some employers ultimately do not obtain a match. The implementation requires an algorithm that is programmed to meet a number of conditions: stated preferences of candidates and employers should be taken into account (e.g. in terms of destination regions), participants should not be able to influence outcomes in their favour by stating false preferences, and large-scale corrections ex post through decentralised processes should be avoided.

Access of employers to the EoI platform

There is a risk of fraudulent or unscrupulous employers accessing the pool with bogus or misrepresented job offers, either to exploit foreign workers or to take rents on sponsoring a real or unfounded permit application. To prevent this from happening, some accreditation or filter must be applied to employers and other actors from accessing the pool. Only legitimate employers with genuine vacancies for which they are able to offer contracts meeting prevailing requirements have access to the pool. At the same time, accreditation for employers should be simple enough not to exclude those employers (SMEs and occasional recruiters) who have traditionally been least likely to use international recruit.

Various options exist for the **employer accreditation process**:

- **official proof of business existence.** This least burdensome option requires the business representative to demonstrate the existence of the company by providing a national business number or proof of registration with tax or social security authorities (depending on the country). In Australia's *SkillSelect*, all employers who have a valid Australian Business Number may register to use Australian government online business services, including the possibility to search pool profiles, contact candidates and sponsor them for immigration through other migration channels. Registered employers receive an AUSKey, a login through which they can access all government online services for businesses. Merely requiring a business number offers no guarantees that the business operates, making the system vulnerable to abuse by firms established as visa mills. EURES uses EURES helpdesk, an external contractor, to make vetting checks (legal registration, VAT number) for any employer which registers on the EURES Portal. National EURES contact points are also in charge of further checks in doubtful cases.
- **official proof that the business has existed for a minimum length of time.** In this case, employer accreditation is conditional on proving that the business has officially existed and has been operational for a minimum length of time – usually demonstrated through tax records. This can help screen out visa mills, but excludes genuine newly-established businesses;
- **vetting both the business and the job offer.** In this resource-intensive case-by-case approach, applications are reviewed individually, either for compliance or as part of the labour market test process. Canada's *Express Entry* provides for an example of this. JobMatch services are only

accessible to Canadian employers with a valid Social Insurance Number. Moreover, in many cases, a job offer in Express Entry is only valid if it is supported by a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). This stringent labour market test verifies the genuineness of the job offer, labour market factors and employer compliance reviews. More broadly, in a number of OECD labour migration systems, recruitment of foreign workers requires vacancies to be previously advertised through the PES. Mandatory publication does not in itself prevent visa mills without review of the vacancy. Risk triage can be developed so that review focuses only on cases such as new businesses, atypical sectors or occupations, non-compliant businesses, or other risk factors.

The trade-off in the employer accreditation process is between keeping the barriers as low as possible to participation by the most employers and vacancies, while ensuring that sufficient diligence is in place to prevent visa mills and exploitation. Under the Basic Option (see section on basic option) employers would be able to access the pool by filing a profile indicating a valid business registration reference for the country where the business is established, and the length of establishment of the company. Under the basic option, further verification may occur when a permit request is made to the national immigration authority. At that point, proof of length of establishment and of labour market test performance or exemption may be required, depending on national legislation governing the EU Blue Card or other legal migration channel, but as this option does not affect permit application the EoI does not affect the procedure.

The system would require a list of accepted business establishment credentials for the purpose of employer accreditation. The list could be drawn up by the relevant Directorate General of the European Commission – for instance, DG Growth – an EU-wide private business association, such as Business Europe, or a newly established EU-wide representative body. Valid business registration reference numbers could allow for automatic accreditation of enterprises with valid credentials to the pool and matching mechanism. Otherwise, national authorities in charge of issuing business registration numbers, would check their countries' employers' profiles for the purpose of EoI accreditation.

Information provided by business representatives for the purpose of accreditation to the EoI pool and matching mechanism would be stored in the EoI platform so as to be promptly available to the relevant immigration authorities in case the matching process leads to an actual immigration application.

The commitment of substantial resources – i.e. financial, human and political capital – by the European Union and its Member States to the establishment and operation of this “basic” EU-wide EoI model would have to be justified on the expected added value brought by the new system for the effective management of skilled labour migration in Europe.

Involvement of private employment agencies (PEAs)

In addition to employers, private employment agencies (PEAs) may also play a role as intermediaries or labour providers. In fact, private intermediation agents often conduct matching, so cutting them out of the EoI system would significantly limit the depth of the pool, by reducing the market share as well as the attractiveness of vacancies available for candidates. Their buy-in is important. However, deciding the criteria under which PEAs can access the pool is not simple.

Employment placement agencies and temporary work agencies are the two main types of PEAs. There is currently no EU-wide definition of PEAs and the regulatory framework for the accreditation and operation of private employment placement agencies and temporary work agencies is extremely diversified across the EU (Box 3.3). In some cases it may vary even within each country, depending on the sector or type of activity performed. However, agencies may perform both intermediation and recruitment outsourcing. Moreover, agencies may provide additional services (such as payroll management and training). Countries may regulate these practices differently. Moreover, accreditation and operation processes for PEAs in sensitive sectors such as health, or construction, may derogate from national rules.

Box 3.3. Accreditation and operation regulations for PEAs across the EU: a heterogeneous picture

As part of the EU acquis, Directive 2008/104/EC addresses working conditions of temporary agency workers – with the aim of ensuring equal treatment with other workers – and supports the job brokerage role of temporary agencies by encouraging Member States to adopt a flexible framework for their operation. However, it does not cover private employment agencies more broadly, nor it provides for the harmonisation of registration, licensing, certification, financial guarantees or monitoring requirements of temporary work agencies, which rest under the exclusive competence of Member States. Similarly, at the global level, Convention 181 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Private Employment Agencies only sets general principles for the regulatory framework, while leaving the determination of PEA’s legal status and operation to national law and practice. Moreover, to date only 13 EU Member States have ratified the Convention.

A wide range of approaches to PEAs regulation exist across the EU, from the more liberal and market driven, where PEAs operation is not conditional on licensing, professional qualifications or initial capital, and monitoring of compliance with quality or ethical standards is based on self-regulation – as in the United Kingdom to the more rigid and legislation driven, where a license and proof of holding relevant professional qualifications by the PEA manager are required for registration, and operation is strictly monitored by the government – as in Belgium. In Germany, proof of professional qualifications is not required but registration is conditional on getting a license from the Federal Employment

Agency, which also monitors PEA activities. In the Netherlands and the Nordic Countries the regulatory framework for PEAs is largely reliant on collective agreements, while in Southern Europe PEAs are highly monitored by the government and their registration is conditional on proof of initial capital.

Moreover, in number of countries, PEAs operating in sensitive sectors are subject to more stringent regulations. Thus, in the United Kingdom, an exception to the market driven approach exists for PEAs operating in the health sector, where formal registration with the relevant authorities is required. Similarly, in Denmark PEA activity is generally not conditional on holding a license, but exceptions apply for PEAs in the health and transportation sector.

Self-regulation typically takes place by making membership of relevant federations or trade associations conditional on signing codes of professional practice. However, failure to abide to such codes and expulsion from a given association does not result in PEA deregistration or regulatory prohibition to operate.

Granting access to PEAs to the EoI pool could be structured in two different ways:

1. require PEAs to conform to the national registration requirements of the country where they are established, and to have been lawfully operating for a minimum number of years. The advantage of this option is that it encompasses the patchwork of PEA regulations across the EU. The unavoidable downside, however, is that accreditation bodies competent to determine PEA access to the EoI pool would be heterogeneous.
2. allow only PEAs which have signed up to internationally recognised PEA codes of conduct (see Box 3.4) to access the pool and its matching feature. Self-regulation means a less onerous process. However, it is still difficult to identify codes of conducts which qualify. A list of accrediting codes of conduct which would include the leading international standards as well as a plethora of national certifications and affiliations would have to be developed.

Regardless of the choice made regarding the criteria for private employment agencies to access the pool, some verification and registration process would be necessary. Since national regulations in this area are heterogeneous within and across EU Member States, initial verification and follow-up (i.e., striking agencies which fail to meet criteria or violate conditions of admission) would be resource intensive. Collaboration with industry representatives (the World Employment Confederation Europe would be a natural candidate) may help establish a framework.

Box 3.4. Codes of Conduct of Private Employment Agencies for ethical recruitment

Over the past fifteen years, a number of codes of conduct and rules for ethical recruitment have been promoted, often by PEAs themselves concerned that the abusive behaviour of rogue employment intermediation agencies would discredit the whole sector.

In 2006, the members of the World Employment Confederation Europe committed to a code of conduct upholding the principles of ethical and lawful recruitment, transparency of operation, refraining from charging jobseekers for service provision, respect for workers' rights, health and safety, respect for diversity, confidentiality, fair competition and service quality. Leading multinational employment intermediation companies (e.g., Adecco, Hays, Randstad) also adopted quality standards of practice on which they regularly report publicly as part of their corporate social responsibility strategies.

In the area of international recruitment, international organisations have promoted codes of conducts and quality standards. The World Health Organisation (WHO) drafted the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. More recently, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), together with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and a coalition of stakeholders committed to ethical recruitment launched a comprehensive social compliance scheme for employment agencies with the aim of promoting ethical recruitment. The International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) includes an international standard and code of conduct, which builds upon pre-existing leading international and industry standards, a voluntary certification scheme for recruiters, and a compliance and monitoring mechanism.

With the exception of the WHO Code, widely implemented by international health sector intermediation agencies, labelling and certification based on other ethical recruitment initiatives is uneven. This makes it difficult to identify a limited number of certifications or affiliations which would feed into a pre-screening list for the purpose of granting PEAs access to the EoI pool and matching mechanism. The situation might change in the future if the IRIS scheme becomes widespread.

Self-regulation based on the observance of codes of conduct would be extremely difficult to implement at the EU-wide level, as there is no single European-level association with the resources to monitor and enforce observance of its code of conduct by each PEA.

Conclusion

The three main scenarios for the implementation of an EU-wide EOI-type of system laid down in this chapter differ with respect to the legislative and administrative changes required for the system to function, and - related to these changes - the extent to which they actually mimic the two-step migration

management features of the original EoI model. From zero legislative changes and a mere pooling and matching mechanism for existing labour migration schemes in the first scenario, to a new or newly-formulated EU-wide scheme served by an actual two-step selection process in the third scenario.

All three scenarios hinge upon the establishment of an EU-wide infrastructure for pre-screening migration candidates and pooling their profiles, vetting employers and, possibly, public employment agencies interested in accessing the pool, as well as for managing the matching mechanism. Existing or newly-created EU-wide bodies would have to be entrusted with performing the various tasks linked with these actions, while an overarching authority and a secretariat would have to be established with the respective responsibility of designing and overseeing the functioning of the system. The second and third scenario would also require the design and implementation of a pool ranking mechanism along a PBS model. In the third scenario the EU central authority in charge of system design would also be entrusted with the prerogative of issuing Invitations to Apply.

If slightly lighter and non-contingent on member states' agreement on legislative changes, the infrastructure required to establish the first scenario would still hinge upon substantial efforts and political consensus among member states and other interested stakeholders on design choices and resource allocation for the pre-screening, pooling and matching mechanism. For instance, for the educational credentials pre-screening element to function effectively, competent authorities in each member state would have to agree on the mutual acceptance of ECAs issued to foreign-qualified third-country nationals in each other member state. Moreover, if ENIC-NARIC centres were to take up the ECA-issuing function for the purpose of EoI pool admission, this would possibly require agreement on additional resources to be devoted to the existing centres for this endeavour. Hence, even the efforts required for the establishment of the "basic" infrastructure cannot be given for granted. An additional – and key – challenge would be ensuring that, once established, the system gets appropriately populated with migration candidates and employers so as to justify the political capital and financial resources invested in the exercise, and pave the way for further advancements.

Notes

¹ The EU Blue Card does not impose language knowledge requirements. It is possible to obtain an EU Blue Card without speaking a single European language. The same is true of many national work permits, including those covering highly qualified employment.

² When transposing the Blue Card Directive into national legislation, only twelve Member States have opted to apply the experience criterion – yet, also in these Member States, this option has rarely been used. If agreed upon by the Member States, the June 2016 Commission proposal for the recast of the EU Blue Card Directive would make it mandatory for Member States to accept proof of three years of relevant work experience as an alternative to educational credentials. However, so far Member States have demonstrated little appetite for this change, not least due to the difficulty of finding an agreement as to how to assess relevant professional experience as evidence of higher professional qualifications.

³ While vacancies published on the EURES website are visible to anyone, only EU nationals can benefit from EURES job-matching services and can fill a jobseekers profile or post their CV. Moreover, third country nationals resident abroad might not be aware of the EURES website and the possibility to search for job offers and employers' contacts therein. On the other end, the employers might have a preference for hiring EU nationals.

⁴ The Directive allows levels 5a and 6 of ISCED 1997 to be used to evaluate whether the third-country national possesses the higher education qualifications for the purposes of Blue Card issuance. Under the 2016 proposal for the recast of the Directive, higher education qualifications are defined as the completion of a post-secondary higher education or equivalent tertiary education programme corresponding at least to level 6 of ISCED 2011 (equivalent to the level 5a and 6 of ISCED 1997) or to level 6 of the European Qualification Framework. [COM (2016) 378 final, Article 2].

⁵ Formal recognition of foreign qualifications is mandatory for the practice of regulated professions. For unregulated profession this is optional and the decision whether to ask proof of formal recognition or other forms of evidence of the equivalency of foreign-acquired qualifications with local qualifications rests with the employer.

⁶ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Labour Authority [COM(2018)131 final], 13 March 2018. Under the proposed regulation, the European Labour Authority would be established as an independent European body tasked with contributing to ensure fair labour mobility in the Internal Market, with a remit over both EU citizens and third-country nationals who are legally resident in the Union.

⁷ For this group, the system would provide better and broader prospects for intra-EU mobility by enhancing matching opportunities.

⁸ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications; OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22. European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Regulation, 28 December 2013, EUR-Lex, OJ L 354/132, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-867_fr.htm In addition to the six medical professions, architects also enjoy the right to automatic recognition under the EU PQD. Besides these so called sectoral professions, the directive provides rules for the mutual recognition of other regulated professions across the EU (general system). See also (Rannveig Mendoza et al., 2017^[7]).

⁹ Holders of qualifications in the seven so-called sectoral professions, obtained in the EU still have to apply for recognition each time they move to another EU country, but recognition is

automatic unless the qualifications are non-compliant with the harmonised minimum training requirements under the Directive.

¹⁰ Under the “general system” system the recognition is not automatic. The host Member State can compare the training programme of the migrant with its national requirements and in case of substantial differences in training, impose compensation measures such as a test or a supervised training up to three years before the qualifications can be recognised.

¹¹ The current system of recognition of qualifications in the EU is built on mutual trust between the Member States, on harmonised minimum requirements that Member States are bound to respect in their national curricula and on exchange of information through secure electronic systems established between the Member States to confirm authenticity as well as compliance of certain diplomas with the Directive. Establishing the same level of trust with regard to third country qualifications would obviously be challenging. Moreover, any solution whereby a third country qualification recognised in one Member State would be automatically recognised in any other without the requirement to work in the first MS for a certain time period, should be carefully designed to minimise the risks of “recognition shopping”.

¹² In countries with high levels of administrative decentralisation, like Germany qualifications requirements for the practice of certain professions are set at the sub-national level (regions/Länder).

¹³ The scope of the EU PQD is much larger than the seven regulated professions (architects, dentist, doctors, midwives, nurses, pharmacists, and veterinary surgeons) where automatic recognition applies, and covers all regulated professions. For these professions a “general system” applies which allows case-by-case assessment of foreign qualifications acquired by an EU citizen in another EU member state. However, there is evidence that four out of five EEA nationals who were approved to work in regulated professions under the “general system” in a member state different from their country of origin and qualification, were granted automatic recognition (Sumption, Papademetriou and Flamm, 2013^[8]).

¹⁴ In the EU PQD, the three-year experience rule for EU nationals holding recognised third-country qualifications is intended to protect public safety as well as to avoid qualifications recognition shopping. However, the implementation of such a rule in a wider system for the recognition of TCN’s foreign qualifications across the EU would be extremely cumbersome and ultimately would make the system meaningless.

¹⁵ For the European Economic Area, a common European competence Framework for ICT professionals in all industry sectors - the e-CF – exists, which functions as a European standard. <http://www.ecompetences.eu/>

¹⁶ Completing the full recognition process from outside the country might not be possible in some countries. The system may be more advantageous for migrants already residing in the EU who might already have obtained the formal recognition of their qualifications in their country of residence.

¹⁷ Some added value would already stem from the EU-wide pooling and matching system to be accessible at no or very little cost (i.e. the cost required for filing the accreditation information) on an equal basis to all prospective migrants and employers, regardless of their resources.

¹⁸ The Schengen acquis distinguishes between two visa types: Short Stay and Long Stay. The first is valid for up to 90 days in the Schengen area every 180 days and may be valid for multiple entries and for up to five years. Long Stay visas can be issued for stays up to 12 months. Under the current EU Blue Card Directive, Member States *must* allow in-country application for Long Stay visa holders – from that Member State only – while they *may* allow in-country application for Short Stay visa holders. However, Member States are not required to allow in-country application from visa holders (Long or Short) whose visa was issued by a different Member State. For this

“job search” visa to be attractive, it must allow in-country application in any Member State, regardless of which Member State issued the visa. A further question is that of right of employment during the “job-search” period. While not relevant to the Short Stay job-search visa, it may be an issue for the 12-month Long Stay job-search visa. A solution could be to ensure rapid approval of an EU Blue Card application to job-search visa holders.

¹⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1412&langId=en>.

²⁰ In its draft recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad [COM(2018)270 final] the European Council proposes to explore an extension of the NARIC contact points to encompass other sectors of education and training.

²¹ Employer consultations carried out by the Authors between October 2017 and January 2018. In light of the specificities and high quality standards of the German dual vocational education and training system, unsurprisingly German businesses (and SMEs in particular) were particularly reluctant to accept qualifications not aligned with the domestic system.

²² The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a tool to facilitate mutual understanding and comparison among qualifications systems in Europe, by identifying eight common European reference levels in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences. On this basis, equivalencies can be established across national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in Europe. The EQF was launched by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in 2008 and involves, in addition to EU and EEA Member States, a number of other European countries.

²³ EACEA (eacea.ec.europa.eu) previously managed the [LINGUA programme](#), supporting linguistic diversity across the EU and EU language learning)

²⁴ <https://www.ecml.at/>

²⁵ As discussed, in Job Match, Express Entry candidates are matched to job offers after these have been posted for 30 days, as a way of giving priority to local jobseekers, integrating the labour market test into the platform. For a thorough description of the percentage matching system implemented in the EURES platform, see the document on Matching Mechanisms.

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Chapter 4. Conclusion: rethinking the EoI for European challenges

This chapter presents the conclusions of the analysis over prospects for adaptation of the EoI system to manage migration in the European Union.

In New Zealand, Australia and Canada, the main reasons for adopting an EoI were to manage caseloads and improve responsiveness of skilled migration systems in a context of backlog and delay. These are not the main reasons for considering adoption of an EoI in the European context. For Europe, an EoI would be meant to improve the quality of matching and ensure access to skills by the full range of European actors, attracting more talent and leveraging the scale and depth of the European labour market.

The overview of scenarios and the design choices necessary to implement an EoI-type system at the European level indicate the enormous complexity of creating such a system and the many individual components, from recognition of qualifications to regulation of employment agencies, which need to be taken into account. Moreover, where EoI systems are in place, they have built upon existing migration and employment management systems, in much simpler and coherent legislative and institutional contexts than what is found in today's European Union.

The basic option laid down in the first scenario amounts to the creation of an EU-wide pooling and matching mechanism for highly-skilled migration candidates. This clearly has the flexibility and capacity to serve different existing labour migration streams, both EU and national, at the same time or separately, without requiring legislative changes. The pre-screening, pooling and matching mechanism of the first scenario promises to help reducing the stubborn information barriers and costs which currently hamper international recruitment in Europe, and thus level the playing ground for international hiring.

The second scenario is an enhanced version of the first option, which creates a pooling and matching mechanism for international recruitment in a given target sector, thus allowing for upfront pre-screening of candidates' actual professional qualifications, and for the implementation of a comprehensive ranking system on the model of the Canadian CRS. The establishment of rosters of candidates would also be possible under this scenario. This scenario bears the potential to facilitate employment mobility for pool candidates in the Internal Market, provided that foreign professional qualifications recognized in one member state would be considered valid in each other member state. A skills development component could also be added to this scenario, which could effectively serve skills mobility partnerships.

The third scenario allows mechanisms to leverage existing skilled migration to the EU and to increase the potential of mobility provisions. It moves towards a full-fledged two-step migration management mechanism with a central authority entrusted with the issuance of invitations to apply for immigration, as in the original EoI model. For this to happen, the EoI would have to become mandatory for admission under an EU-wide labour migration scheme, be this the EU Blue Card, a new supply-driven permit which would have to be agreed upon by member states, or a visa which would allow for intra-EU mobility and for smooth permit issuance to those holders who would be able to secure a job offer in any member state.

Overall, the scenarios add an enhanced mechanism to reduce information barriers and facilitate employment matching in international recruitment, where there is currently a gap. In the absence of a supply-driven migration scheme this function is performed by the pooling and matching elements of the EoI, if with different degrees of complexity. Coupling a supply-driven scheme with pre-screening and pooling features of the EoI system would afford an additional step to overcome labour market information barriers, by also allowing for in-person contact between the migration candidate and the prospective employer. This solution naturally suits the third scenario. However, the first and second scenario could also be implemented in combination with a supply-driven scheme, provided member states' agreement on the conditions for issuing the job-search permit or visa to certain pool candidates.

Given the complexity of the EU legal migration competence framework and the current reluctance of Member States to make big leaps forward in this area, the first and second scenarios seem the most realistically actionable in the medium term as they do not involve major policy and legislative changes. However, for the second scenario to function beyond unregulated sectors or sectors where professional regulation is industry-led internationally, member states – and, crucially, competent regulatory bodies in each of them – would have to agree on the portability of qualifications recognition decisions for third-country nationals throughout the EU. Prospects for such an agreement are scarce.

While more actionable, the first scenario still adds an administrative step for interested migration candidates and involves substantial efforts, and political capital at the EU level to build and manage the necessary infrastructure for the EoI-type of system to function effectively. Hence, the pre-screening, pooling and matching mechanisms would have to be designed and implemented in a way as to bring added value to the users, compared to existing tools.

The implementation of the basic scenario, with the matching platform at its core, would also allow experimentation of settings and infrastructure necessary for integrating the platform into a migration management system. This experimentation and evaluation is necessary in order to create an effective policy feedback loop.

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Building an EU Talent Pool

A NEW APPROACH TO MIGRATION MANAGEMENT FOR EUROPE

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