

GFMD PRIVATE SECTOR MEETING:

Are businesses fit to compete in the global competition for skills?

Strengthening public-private dialogue to rethink labor migration policies and international skills mobility in the framework of the GFMD

Co-hosted by the Turkish GFMD Chairmanship and the Government of Switzerland

15-16 May 2015, Istanbul, Turkey

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The GFMD Business Meeting on the global competition for Skills and the international mobility of skills brought together decision-makers of global businesses as well as high-level migration policy-makers from various governments. It provided a platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities of innovative policy-making on skills matching, recruitment mechanisms and labour migration regulations. The overall goal was to understand the expectations of the private sector vis-a-vis the governments in terms of business-friendly labour migration policy, determine converging and diverging interests and identify areas of (common) action. The conclusions and recommendations covered a wide range of topics, including a potential avenue for regular public-private dialogue on migration policy in the framework of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

Takeaways of the thematic discussion

Public-Private Partnerships and shared responsibility: Governments need to recognise and understand that labour mobility and job mobility is critical for a country economic well-being. The private sector on the other hand should be encouraged to be strong advocates for identifying labour market needs and to make a strong case in favour of migration and its corresponding policy changes, rather than making separate deals with Governments. A close public-private sector interaction on migration policy is key to managing migration. It should take the form of an action-oriented partnership in order to identify joint solutions. Businesses and governments must work together for making labor migration policies more flexible and efficient in order to jointly enhance economic growth, prosperity and global competition. Within this framework, local partnerships (e.g. at city level) are important.

Matching skills to labour market needs: Skills supply and demand matching processes as well as long-term skills development are key within any labour migration policy, while it is essential to ensure their enforcement. Public-private effort is necessary on recognition of skills, qualifications and experience, and enhancing national educational systems to meet the future skills supply. Especially small and medium enterprises lack knowledge on overseas recruitment and tend to rely on traditional recruitment strategies that are unable to supply them with the right skills. They also lack the capacity for company-owned training facilities, which is why SMEs could join forces to collectively invest in recruitment strategies and skills development through associations and joint training facilities. Special focus was made on the access to skills recognition processes for low- and medium-skilled workers, as well as for asylum seekers.

Mobility: The public-private partnership should collaborate to lower barriers to mobility. Mobility goes with skills recognition and transferability between countries and regions. Talent mobility contributes to diversity and diversity delivers results, which, in turn, contributes to global success and outreach. Mobility, both long- and short-term, is key for business competitiveness (flexible mobility). Finally, more efforts need to be made to attract and retain low skilled workers who do not have as many opportunities of mobility as the highly qualified do. Low skilled should therefore also benefit from incentives (such as seasonal multiple entry visas, housing and education).

Fair recruitment, human rights and integration: Fair recruitment is of mutual interest and it demands that public and private sectors work together to decrease abuses and exploitation. The lack of governance and the existence of some or no laws in countries of origin, transit and destination require that businesses, governments, employers and workers jointly deal with recruitment agencies towards a win-win strategy with shared responsibility amongst all social partners (e.g. IOM *International Recruitment Integrity System* (IRIS)). Corporate Social Responsibility can tackle issues of labour exploitation and trafficking. Besides, governments may play a regulatory role (i.e. labour market inspectors) to prevent abuse and exploitation. The role of governments is critical to ensure security, access to health and protection of migrant workers. The overall working condition of workers should be improved as it contributes to growth and productivity.

Integration and social welfare: Governments and businesses should complement each other in ensuring economic and social integration of labour migrants. While governments are responsible to create an enabling regulatory framework, the private sector can offer additional or complementary social benefits. Different types of tools were recommended: awareness-raising programmes, packages to encourage foreign workers to work with local workers, a “migrant social backpack” of social rights and benefits with basic government provisions and additional company benefits , as well as pension fund for migrant remittances provided by financial institutions.

Public discourse, perception and attitude: Businesses and governments need to engage in public discourse with a common understanding on positive aspects of migration, such as attracting the right employees, seeking market opportunities, establishing relevant educational schemes and an understanding and awareness of human rights of migrants. Demonstrating return on investments is an urgent priority, along with dissemination of evidence-based regional and global data indicating benefits from talent flows. Governments need to show a pro-migration attitude and private sector can make a major impact if it were to send a strong message to governments and the public at large, that migration is good for business and thus for overall prosperity. The private-public partnership should increase communication on labour migration to the general public. Managing public perception, using facts and data, is critical.

The way forward – Continuing the public-private sector interaction on business relevant migration policies in the GFMD

The outcomes of the May GFMD Business meeting shall form the basis for the establishment of a regular public-private sector interaction mechanism that ensures continuous dialogue on sound and contemporary migration policy that takes economic interests into account, creates momentum to launch public-private initiatives and develop policy innovations.

A proposal of a regular public-private sector interaction mechanism in the framework of the GFMD was introduced by Switzerland and the initial reactions both by governments and private sector representatives welcomed the attempt towards institutionalizing regular public-private dialogue in the GFMD. The blueprint proposal consists of four main elements:

1. A **GFMD Business Advisory Group** potentially co-chaired by the WEF Global Agenda Council on Migration as well as the International Organization of Employers (IOE).
2. A **GFMD Business Meeting** to explore an issue of global relevance at the interface of the economic sphere and migration policy.
3. A **GFMD Business Roundtable at the GFMD annual** summits to ensure that the outcomes of the GFMD Business Meeting are brought into the formal dialogue of the GFMD.
4. A **GFMD Business Fair** set as an informal space for companies and business associations to interact with policy-makers from governments, international organisations and civil society.