Institutional Assessment Report
for a Global Skill Partnerships between Italy and Tunisia

*Mobilizing Institutions for Skills Development and Managed
International Labor Mobility*

Report for Italy

January 2026

Table of Contents

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ADI	Assegno di Inclusione (Minimum Income Support)
AICS	Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation)
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (EU)
ANETI	Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant (Tunisia)
APL	Agenzie per il Lavoro (Private Recruitment Agencies)
ART-ER	Attrattività Ricerca Territorio Emilia-Romagna (Regional Agency for Innovation and Research)
ATLANTE	Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni (Atlas of Work and Qualifications)
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany)
BLA	Bilateral Labor Agreement
CIDCI	Coordinamento Italiano delle Diaspore per la Cooperazione Internazionale (Italian National Coordination of Diasporas for International Cooperation)
CIMEA	Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche (Information Center on Academic Mobility and Equivalence)
COL	Critical Occupations List
CPI	Centro per l'Impiego (Public Employment Center)
CPIA	Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti (Provincial Centers for Adult Education)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Australia)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DG	Direzione Generale (General Directorate)
DGPEMOE	Directorate General of Overseas Placement and Foreign Workforce (Tunisia)
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ERP	Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica (Public Residential Housing)
ERS	Edilizia Residenziale Sociale (Social Residential Housing)
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Agency)
GOL	Garanzia di Occupabilità dei Lavoratori (Guaranteeing Workers' Employability)
GSP	Global Skills Partnership

ILO	International Labor Organization
INAPP	Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche (National Institute for Public Policy Analysis)
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IVC	Identification, Validation and Certification (services)
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LMI	Labor Market Intelligence
MAECI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Development
MoLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
NASpI	Nuova Assicurazione Sociale per l'Impiego (Unemployment Benefit)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSCC	National System for Certification of Competences
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OTE	Office for Tunisians Abroad
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
PIF	Piattaforma Ingressi Formati all'Estero (Platform for Foreign-Trained Entries)
PUOI	Protezione Unità a Obiettivo Integrazione (Protection Unit for Integration Objective)
RIDAP	Rete Italiana Istruzione degli Adulti (Italian Network for Adult Education)
SIISL	Sistema Informativo per l'Inclusione Sociale e Lavorativa
SILER	Sistema Informativo Lavoro Emilia Romagna
SISCO	Sistema Informativo Statistico delle Comunicazioni Obbligatorie
SLI	Sviluppo Lavoro Italia
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SUI	Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione (Single Immigration Desk)
THAMM	Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa
TUI	Testo Unico Immigrazione (Italian Consolidated Migration Act)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAE	Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (France)
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

Overview

Labor mobility between Tunisia and Italy is driven by demographic and labor market complementarities: Tunisia has a young, underutilized workforce, while Italy faces an aging population and labor shortages in key sectors. The two countries share geographic proximity, migrant networks, and political ties. In 2025, over 123,000 Tunisians legally reside in Italy, with residence permits issued to Tunisian nationals increasing by 31 percent in 2024. Bilateral agreements, including a Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2023, facilitate the legal entry of Tunisian workers to Italy.

This Institutional Assessment aims to analyze the institutional and operational frameworks supporting legal labor mobility into Italy. It examines labor demand assessment, vacancy matching, training financing, migrant entry approval, skills recognition, and integration services. The objective is to identify bottlenecks and propose actionable recommendations to improve labor mobility pathways, ensuring mutual benefits for origin and destination countries as well as migrant workers.

This analysis is instrumental to understand the ecosystem readiness for implementing Global Skill Partnerships (GSPs). GSPs are innovative cooperation models linking human capital development in origin countries with labor needs in destination countries through formal and legal labor mobility channels. The GSP model operates on a triple-win framework benefiting origin countries by upskilling their workforce and reducing brain drain, migrants by providing better job opportunities and skills, and destination countries by addressing labor shortages. Based on aligned occupational standards, training investments primarily occur in origin countries, both for those who remain and those who migrate.

The Institutional Assessment focuses on the pre-departure training projects channel under Article 23 of the Italian Consolidated Migration Act (TUI). This channel enables labor migrants to enter Italy after completing pre-approved professional and language-civic training in their country of origin. The choice of concentrating the study on this pathway resides in its application of a key aspect of a GSP which is linking skills development to international mobility opportunities. Therefore, the potential exists to further align migration with development goals if fully guided by GSP principles.

The analysis is organized according to the diagnostic framework for labor mobility systems which evaluates how institutions organize, coordinate, and deliver migration-related services across the entire labor mobility cycle. It covers three pillars: **Pillar I - Facilitating Access** examines what enables workers to enter international labor markets through structured, regular pathways, including the identification of demand for labor migrants. **Pillar II - Furthering Access** focuses on the skills, training systems, and certification processes that ensure migrant workers meet the technical, linguistic, and professional requirements of employers abroad. **Pillar III - Fortifying Access** addresses the

protection, welfare, integration and reintegration measures that safeguard migrants throughout the mobility cycle, including support for return and reinsertion.

The report also includes spotlights on regional initiatives, notably Emilia Romagna, to illustrate local practices and challenges, as well as international experiences as useful references of policy options which could be adopted. The methodology includes desk reviews, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, and focus group discussions with Tunisian migrants participating in pre-departure training programs.

Summary of key findings and recommendations

Legal and Institutional Framework in Italy

Italy's legal framework for labor migration is anchored in the Consolidated Migration Act (TUI), which regulates entry through quota and extra-quota systems. The quota system sets planned labor inflow limits, while extra-quota channels include pre-departure training projects (Art. 23), highly skilled workers (EU Blue Card), and specific occupations outside quotas. Recent reforms (Cutro Decree 2023) emphasize legal migration channels, triennial quota planning, and administrative simplifications. The Art. 23 channel allows migrants to enter after completing approved training in their origin country, with 70 projects approved as of November 2025 across 27 countries, predominantly in construction, machinery manufacturing, and transport sectors.

Institutionally, labor migration governance involves multiple actors:

- National ministries: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP), Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI), Ministry of Education and Merit.
- Regional and local governments with delegated competencies in employment services, training, and integration.
- Public agencies like Sviluppo Lavoro Italia (SLI), Prefectures' Sportello Unico Immigrazione (SUI), and Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA).
- Private sector actors including recruitment agencies (APL), industry associations, chambers of commerce, labor unions.
- Civil society organizations, diaspora groups, and international organizations such as IOM and UNHCR.

Facilitating access to labor mobility scheme

Italy possesses rich labor market data systems providing insights on labor demand and skills requirement that inform non-EU workers' inflow planning, but it lacks a Critical Occupations List (COL). Developing a systematic and officially updated COL, through targeted quantitative analysis complemented by regularly stakeholder consultations, would further guide labor mobility planning and align skilled mobility projects with verified sustained demand.

Employer engagement is crucial for successful labor mobility projects. Italian

employers see many advantages on the art. 23 channel over the quota system, but several challenges - such as limited information on foreign candidates, complex and long process to obtain clearance for hiring a non-EU nationals, and extended timelines of the entire recruitment process – often deter their participation. This report suggests two operational measures that could strengthen employer's participation: (i) a single rules-based web portal for both employers and workers centralizing information, applications, and support; and (ii) structured involvement of employer representatives, including industry associations and private recruiters, in program design, delivery, and evaluation.

The *nulla osta* and subsequent visa processes needed for a migrant worker to enter Italy need streamlining. Currently, these processes are slowed by administrative inefficiencies, capacity limitations, fragmented governance among multiple involved authorities and variability in practices across Prefecture's SUI offices. Interoperability between information systems has improved notification flows but manual steps still cause delays, creating uncertainty for migrants and employers. Enhancements should prioritize clearer, shorter, and more predictable procedures through simplified and anticipatory checks, improved inter ministerial interoperability, and harmonized service quality across local migration offices.

Furthering access

The operational guidelines for Article 23 pre-departure training projects have flexibility to define training content and methods for validating learning outcomes in the country of origin. This enables projects to tailor training to specific needs. However, the assessment found that pre-departure training in the origin country often focuses on minimum requirements due to time constraints, usually necessitating additional training upon arrival in Italy. Additionally, there is no formal mechanism for harmonizing qualifications and skills standards between Italy and origin countries prior to departure. A key obstacle is that Italy does not have an agency for national recognition of vocational qualifications from non-EU countries; instead, recognition of vocational education, training, and skills is managed at the regional level and what is recognize in one region is not automatically recognized in another. Standardized options for evaluating and recognizing skills acquired abroad before departure, such as competence-based assessments and tailored modular training, would enhance employment prospects and optimize talent allocation (reduce brain waste).

Fortifying access

Italy has a solid pluriannual national strategy for migrant labor and socioeconomic inclusion based on multi-governance model and a territorial perspective; however, several challenges negatively impact integration outcomes. Delays in residence permits often keep non-EU migrants from accessing basic services. A wide range of support services (socio-economic, educational, and cultural services) exists; but they are fragmented and not always effectively uncoordinated, mainly delivered by civil society, diaspora groups, and local authorities, making long-term support challenging and hard for newcomers to access. A more coordinated system integrating local specifics - like a one-stop-shop with case

management and mediators - is needed for effective integration since arrival. **Non-EU migrants in Italy often struggle with limited language skills, restricted access to adequate housing, and poorer labor market results compared to Italian nationals (higher overqualification, unemployment rates and inactivity rates).** Addressing these issues is critical to stable integration and maximizing migrants' contributions to the economy of Italy in the long-term. The report provides examples of innovative initiatives from around the world and within Italy designed to improve language skill, facilitating access to housing, and strengthening attachment to the Italian labor market.

1. Introduction

1.1. A Global Skills Partnership between Italy and Tunisia

Global Skills Partnerships for international labor mobility: A Triple-Win Opportunity

The Global Skills Partnership (GSP) is an innovative cooperation model that connects human capital development in origin countries with labor needs in destination countries through formal, legal labor mobility channels. As defined by the World Bank in its 2025 report *Global Skill Partnerships for Migration: Preparing Tomorrow's Workers for Home and Abroad*, a GSP "links human capital expansion and training with international mobility in a way that is financially sustainable and mutually beneficial for both the origin and destination countries. Training occurs primarily in the origin country and includes people who will stay home as well as those who plan to immigrate".[1] This dual-track approach allows workers to be trained locally in occupational profiles that are in demand in both countries. Some trainees migrate to the destination country through structured, legal pathways **"away track"**, while others contribute their skills domestically **"home track",** bolstering the country of origin's workforce and economy.

A GSP is based on a skills-building and labor mobility management framework grounded in bilateral or multilateral agreements where firms and government institutions in destination countries finance most of the training programs, which are delivered in origin countries. This structure ensures that labor mobility occurs via regular and predictable legal pathways. Training is aligned with occupational standards, certification systems, and labor market demands in both countries. By supporting both the country of origin's training system and the country of destination's sector-specific labor needs, the model enhances mutual benefits and reduces common risks such as skill mismatches, brain drain, and irregular labor migration.

The GSP model embodies a Triple Win Framework with clear advantages for all actors which make the case for mobilizing public and private resources to build resilient labor mobility systems and investing in skilling the workforce in countries of origin (Figure1). For **countries of origin,** the model supports reskilling and upskilling of its young labor force, improving employability of the workforce and reducing worker shortages among firms, and increases opportunities to generate economic benefits through remittances and entrepreneurship by returning migrants. For **migrants**, it offers new skills, access to better paying and more secure jobs abroad, and the potential to reinvest their experience and earnings into their communities. For **countries of destination**, the GSP provides a reliable, job-ready workforce to address persistent shortages in key sectors, while strengthening

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[1] (World Bank, 2025)

labor mobility systems and reducing entry through irregular labor mobility channels. The strategy focuses on three targets:

1. **Investing in skills and job-matching systems** to support both local and international employment.

2. **Facilitating cross-border worker mobility** through formal, demand-driven, and mutually beneficial agreements.

3. **Mobilizing private capital** to invest in skills employers need.

Figure 1: Global Skill Partnerships - A triple-win model

Triple-Win Framework

Origin country (Tunisia)
Benefits from the reskilling and upskilling process, economic benefits via remittances, entrepreneurship initiatives, reduced unemployment

Migrants
New skills, better jobs, higher wages, remittances, and potential for entrepreneurship on return

Destination country (Italy)
Access to skilled workers in shortage sectors, economic growth, and strengthened migration systems

✓ **Aligns skills** development **with labour needs** in both origin and destination countries.
✓ **Balances migration** to avoid brain-drain while increasing opportunities for high-value employment in both origin and destination countries.
✓ **Offers two pathways:** *home track* (trained individuals contribute locally) and *away track* (overseas job placement).

Labor Mobility Dynamics and Labor Market Complementarity between Tunisia and Italy

Labor mobility between Tunisia and Italy stems from demographic and labor market complementarities. Tunisia has a young workforce, including many highly educated but unemployed youth. In addition to this group, inactive youth and the large group of underqualified individuals (nearly one-third of the workforce), represent considerable underutilized human capital. In comparison, Italy, one of fastest-aging countries in the European Union, now has almost a quarter of its population beyond working age and only 15 percent aged 15-29, and is facing a growing shortage of workers across key sectors.[2] This

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[2] (Nico, 2025)

contrast creates a skills investment and labor mobility opportunity where Tunisian youth can fill labor market gaps in Italy while gaining valuable skills and income.

Italy and Tunisia are connected by geographic proximity, established migrant networks and historical and political ties. Labor mobility flows from Tunisia to Italy are both longstanding and expanding. As of 1 January 2025, there were more than 120,000 Tunisians legally residing in Italy.[3] In 2024, the number of residence permits issued to Tunisian nationals increased by 31 percent compared to the previous year.[4] Recent bilateral agreements have formalized these movements. These dynamics encourage structured cooperation to strategically manage labor mobility as a development and economic opportunity for both countries. A GSP between Tunisia and Italy can align development cooperation with labor mobility to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes. Existing political will and experience with pre-departure training provide a foundation for such a partnership.

But both Tunisia and Italy face important challenges that hinder the efficient and scalable operation of legal labor mobility pathways despite growing recognition of the mutual benefits of cross-border labor mobility, growing demand for foreign labor and an increasing willingness and efforts from both governments to collaborate. Managing migration to maximize the benefits for all is a complex endeavor. Unilateral and bilateral actions and investments must ensure mobility pathways meet economic goals, attract talent, and safeguard workers' rights. This requires optimal governance which aligns incentives of diverse stakeholders, enhanced collaboration between public and private actors, robust institutional capacity, including intelligence, to plan and operate coordinated functions across regulation, service delivery, protection, and others. Gaps in these aspects may result in underutilized labor mobility channels.

It is critical for institutions to adequately support the full migrant journey—from pre-departure preparation to post-arrival integration and return. Migrants often face information gaps, inconsistent support, and limited legal protections, challenges that are exacerbated by weaknesses in institutional arrangements. Employers seeking to recruit workers from abroad also face challenges related to information asymmetries, red tape, and financial barriers. To address these gaps, efforts must aim to design labor mobility processes that **facilitate access** to international markets; **further access** by enabling skills development and harnessing such skills to access opportunities; and **fortify access** by ensuring support and rights protection during travel, while working in destination countries, and upon return. An institutional assessment is thus needed to take stock of the capacities, gaps, and coordination mechanisms within and between entities in Italy and in Tunisia. It must also consider the lived experiences of migrants and their families at every stage of mobility, to inform reforms that are both comprehensive and grounded in the realities of those they aim to serve.

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[3] (Istat, 2025)

[4] (Istat, 2025)

1.2. Scope of the Institutional Assessment

The Institutional Assessment aims to support the application of the Global Skill Partnerships (GSP) model between Italy and other countries of origin, starting with Tunisia, by examining opportunities to enhance institutional and operational processes, including training, involved in key labor mobility pathways. The assessment seeks to generate actionable insights to ensure a balanced, mutually beneficial mobility framework which supports alignment between skills development and labour market needs and protects the worker throughout the migration cycle. The assessment identifies strengths and gaps within current institutional arrangements supporting international labor mobility, and pinpoints bottlenecks, particularly those that can be addressed in the short term, that hinder the efficiency of labour mobility pathways. **Building on these insights, the assessment will propose a practical roadmap to address some of the critical bottlenecks to ensure a productive labour mobility framework between Tunisia and Italy** that aligns with the strategic goals of the GSP model. (Figure2).

Figure 2: Institutional Assessment Objectives

Assess capacity

Are structures, systems, processes, and resources appropriate to effectively deliver labor supply arrangements within a GSP?

Identify bottlenecks

Highlight short-term resolvable issues in labour mobility pathways

Develop a roadmap

Propose solutions for creating streamlined, productive migration frameworks that align with GSP goals
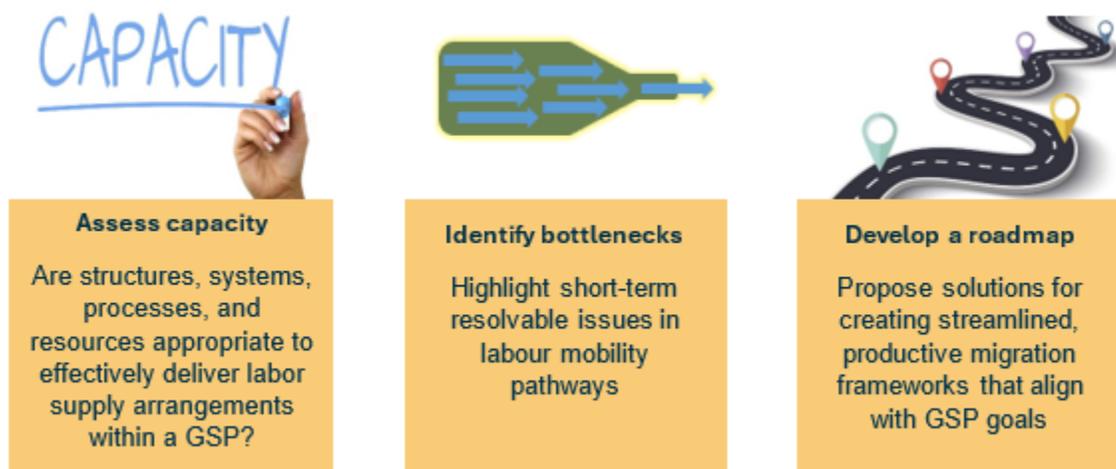
The expected outcomes include a set of recommendations to facilitate: (i) strengthened labor mobility frameworks and institutional capacity; (ii) streamlined labor mobility pathways, including effective job matching; (iii) improved access and integration of third-country workers in the Italian labor market; and (iv) enhanced collaboration and coordination among stakeholders in both countries, including government entities, private sector, social partners, and civil society. To this end, the institutional assessment examines the **authorizing environment**, including laws, regulations, policies, and agreements that

govern, enable, or constrain enhanced labor mobility and skilling of beneficiary workers; **institutional arrangements and governance** by mapping mandates and roles of institutions involved; and **systems and tools** used to manage labor mobility data, integrate processes, and deliver services effectively. The goal is to reveal both systemic gaps and immediate opportunities for strengthening the design and implementation of the GSP, ensuring that the partnership delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders.

The institutional assessment covers a wide range of entities that together form the core of a GSP ecosystem, which spans across three interconnected policy areas: labor mobility systems, labor market systems, and skills development systems. Institutions involved include ministries of labor, ministries of social policy/welfare, ministries of foreign affairs, public employment services, vocational training agencies, social partners, chambers of commerce, civil society organizations, and private sector actors in both Tunisia and Italy. In the case of Italy, the assessment also covers regional level government and public agencies.

The analysis pertaining to the Tunisian institutional assessment is presented in a separate, dedicated report. However, this report draws, where needed, from learning and findings from the Tunisian report and messages across the two reports are built coherently and consistently.

This institutional assessment report was developed in parallel to Labor Market Needs Assessment Reports for both Italy and Tunisia, with the goal of identifying specific occupations where labor and skill shortages exist. Drawing on enterprise surveys, labor force statistics, and demographic projections, the report highlights which sectors are growing, where labor demand is unmet, and which worker profiles have the highest potential for inclusion. This information is essential for deciding which sectors and occupations the GSP should prioritize, and for determining the scale of training and labor mobility programs. Conducting both assessments ensures that labor mobility pathways are not only economically sound in terms of target sectors and skills, but also institutionally feasible and operationally ready.

2. Diagnostic Framework for the Institutional Assessment

2.1. Diagnostic Framework

Diagnostic Framework and Phases of Labor Mobility

The World Bank's diagnostic framework for labor mobility systems offers a comprehensive approach to evaluate how public institutions organize, coordinate, and deliver migration-related services across the entire labor mobility cycle. The framework enables governments to identify strengths, gaps, and potential reforms by systematically assessing the functionality and soundness of their labor mobility systems. It has been applied in multiple contexts, including a detailed diagnostic for Northern Central America, and provides a tested methodology for system-wide institutional analysis.[5]

This report applies an adapted version of the World Bank framework (Figure 3) structured around three interdependent **pillars**:

I.   **Facilitating Access** – helping workers access international labor markets;

II.   **Furthering Access** – harnessing skills to access international labor markets;

III. **Fortifying Access** – strengthening the protection and integration of labor migrants.

These pillars are analyzed across the four phases of the labor mobility cycle:

1. **Pre-Recruitment**

2. **Recruitment and Pre-Departure**

3. **Departure and Integration**

4. **Return Migration**

The assessment covers the full set of processes and institutional responsibilities at each intersection between pillar and phase, as defined by the diagnostic framework. The legal and institutional framework for access is treated as a cross-cutting dimension that permeates all pillars and phases, reflecting that a well-designed legal and governance framework is not simply an auxiliary support to the system—it is a foundational element that actively shapes how institutions interact.[6]

Pillar I - Facilitating Access

Objective: Helping workers access international labor markets

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[5] (World Bank, 2023)
[6] (Bossavie et al., 2024 ; World Bank, 2023)

This pillar focuses on how systems are organized to enable legal access to employment abroad through coordinated intermediation, employer engagement, and regulatory oversight. It spans two early phases of the migration cycle:

> **Pre-Recruitment:** The analysis examines whether there are functioning legal pathways for labor mobility, including bilateral agreements and cooperation frameworks between countries of origin and destination countries. It also explores whether labor market needs assessments are conducted in a systematic and timely manner to inform program planning and worker preparation.
>
> **Recruitment and Pre-Departure:** The focus is on whether job vacancy identification, candidate outreach, profiling, and matching processes work effectively—particularly through public and private intermediation channels. The review includes whether administrative clearance procedures and visa process are streamlined, accessible, and coordinated across responsible agencies.

Pillar II - Furthering Access

Objective: Harnessing skills to access international labor markets

This pillar examines how systems support the development, certification, and recognition of skills needed for international labor markets, as well as for reintegration. It spans all four phases of the labor mobility cycle:

> **Pre-Recruitment:** The review focuses on whether mechanisms are in place to design training curricula aligned with international labor demand, and whether occupational and qualification standards are coordinated with destination country requirements.
>
> **Recruitment and Pre-Departure:** The analysis considers whether training, reskilling, and language or civic education are being effectively delivered to migrants prior to departure. It also examines whether processes for certification of skills and qualifications, where needed, function adequately.
>
> **Departure and Integration:** During the period abroad, the assessment looks at whether systems exist to support professional skill recognition and verification, and whether there are channels for further training based on destination-country standards.
>
> **Return Migration:** The review addresses whether there are functioning processes for recognizing skills acquired abroad and whether returnees can access tools or services that support their reintegration into the labor market.

Pillar III - Fortifying Access

Objective: Strengthening the protection and integration of labor migrants

This pillar analyzes the extent to which systems protect migrant workers at all stages—from initial departure through employment abroad to return and reintegration:

Pre-Recruitment: The diagnostic considers whether enabling legislation is in place to protect migrant rights, and whether bilateral social security agreements and integration policies are being implemented.

Recruitment and Pre-Departure: The review explores whether pre-departure orientation is delivered to inform migrants about their rights, responsibilities, and risks.

Departure and Integration: At this stage, the analysis examines whether migrants have access to reliable support networks, such as consular assistance, diaspora platforms, or employment services. It also reviews whether grievance mechanisms are in place and whether migrants can access welfare and social insurance in host countries.

Return Migration: The review looks at whether systems are functioning to enable the portability of social insurance entitlements and whether reintegration support is available—such as labor reinsertion programs and entrepreneurship support for returnees.

Figure 3: Diagnostics Framework

PHASES OF LABOR MIGRATION	**1** PRE-RECRUITMENT	**2** RECRUITMENT AND PRE-DEPARTURE	**3** DEPARTURE AND INTEGRATION	**4** RETURN MIGRATION
OBJECTIVES OF LABOUR MOBILITY SYSTEM				
FACILITATING ACCESS *Helping workers access international labour markets*	• Enabling legal labour migration paths. • Setting the framework of collaboration • Conducting labour market needs assessment.	• Identifying jobs and potential candidates • Implementing: profiling and matching activities: tailored and adapted employment services • Using public and private intermediation • Facilitating clearance and visa issuance and supporting travel logistics	• Ensuring professional skills recognition, verification and certification • Further training based on applicable occupational standards and skills frameworks	• Recognizing skills acquired abroad
FURTHERING ACCESS Harnessing skills to access international labour markets	• Designing trainings and aligning qualifications	• Delivering training, reskilling or upskilling, language and civic course • Certifying qualifications and skills validation • Tracking labour outcomes	• Activating support services and networks e.g. diaspora • Providing employment and labour support services (continuous mentoring and coaching support) • Establish grievance redress mechanisms • Facilitating access to welfare and social insurance benefits in host countries	• Establishing bilateral social security agreements and ensuring portability of social insurance rights • Recognizing skills acquired abroad • Providing labour market reinsertion programs – entrepreneurship incentives for returnees
FORTIFYING ACCESS Strengthening the protection and integration of labour migrants		• Providing pre-departure orientation		

A Cyclical and Interdependent Process

The diagnostic framework is structured around four discrete phases of labor mobility, but in practice these phases are cyclical and interdependent. Migration is rarely a linear journey. Workers may move through multiple cycles of recruitment, employment, and return, and the performance of one phase often determines the success of the next. For instance, a weak alignment between training and labor market demand in the pre-recruitment phase may reduce employment outcomes abroad, just as inadequate reintegration mechanisms can increase the likelihood of repeated migration under more precarious conditions.[7]

This cyclical perspective reinforces the importance of system-wide coordination, **interoperability of information systems**, and **continuous institutional feedback loops**. Robust labor mobility systems must not only function within individual phases and pillars but also create linkages between them. These linkages allow for knowledge-sharing, adaptive management, and policy learning—ensuring that labor mobility governance evolves in step with shifting labor markets, demographic trends, and worker needs.

An Integrated Systems Perspective for GSPs

The institutional assessment underpinning Global Skill Partnerships (GSPs) encompasses a wide array of actors that collectively operate across three policy areas: labour mobility, labour market and skills development. **Labour mobility policies** provide the legal and administrative frameworks that regulate and facilitate cross-border labour mobility. **Labour market policies** generate the demand-side conditions for employment by defining occupational needs, establishing job-matching processes, and signaling workforce gaps. **Skills development policies** form the supply side of the equation by designing, delivering, and certifying training programs to prepare workers for foreign employment. The diagnostic process investigates the extent to which these three policy areas institutionally aligned, responsive to international labour market needs, and capable of supporting effective and sustainable mobility pathways.[8]

The assessment also examines the configuration of the institutional landscape that links these three systems. A key focus is on whether institutions across the systems collaborate effectively to support the entire GSP cycle—from identifying overseas job opportunities and aligning curricula, to managing workers' mobility and facilitating return and reintegration. Understanding how these institutional relationships operate is essential to designing GSPs that are not only technically sound but also operationally feasible and scalable.[9]

Methodological Rationale for Stakeholder Inclusion

The institutional assessment encompasses a wide and diverse range of actors. These institutions are grouped by category according to their mandate, function, and governance

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[7] (Bossavie et al., 2024)
[8] (Acosta et al., 2025; World Bank, 2023)
[9] (Bossavie et al., 2024 ; World Bank, 2023)

level within the labour mobility, labour market and skills systems. The goal is not only to map formal mandates but also to understand how various institutional actors interact, coordinate, and influence the functioning of labour mobility pathways.

The first group includes line ministries and national agencies, which are responsible for core policy and operational functions across employment, vocational training, migration governance, education, and social protection. In countries with decentralized responsibilities, such as Italy, **regional and local authorities** are also included. These subnational institutions often play critical roles in labour market services, training governance, and employer engagement—functions that must be captured to understand implementation capacity across levels of government.

Also, the assessment includes public implementing agencies, such as employment services and training institutions, which are operationally responsible for profiling candidates, managing mobility programs, and aligning training supply with labour demand. These institutions are essential to evaluating system performance in areas such as job matching, curriculum design, skills certification, and labour market responsiveness.

Among the private and non-state sectors, the mapping incorporates recruitment agencies and overseas placement offices, which directly facilitate access to foreign employment opportunities and interact with both employers and job seekers. **Chambers of commerce and industry** are included due to their role in representing employer interests and shaping demand-driven training. **Social partner organizations**, such as employer associations and trade unions, are critical stakeholders in both governance and implementation, and their inclusion helps assess participatory mechanisms and labour standards. Similarly, **private universities and training providers** are involved in delivering skills relevant to mobility programs and are thus included to assess the diversity and regulation of the training ecosystem.

The assessment also covers civil society organizations (CSOs) and **diaspora associations**, which often provide complementary services including outreach, pre-departure preparation, legal assistance, and reintegration support. Their inclusion ensures the diagnostic captures accountability structures and community-based support networks. Finally, **international cooperation agencies and multilateral organizations** are included due to their influence in shaping policy, providing technical assistance, and facilitating cross-border program implementation.

2.2. Focus of the Institutional Assessment in Italy

This assessment is centered on the pre-departure training projects channel as defined by art. 23 of the Italian Consolidated Migration Act (TUI).[10] The design of this channel

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[10] The whole assessment is based on legal provisions of ART. 23 prior to the last changes issued with the Decree Law n.146/2025 approved on November 2025.

aligns with key principles of the Global Skill Partnership. Specifically, this system connects demand-driven skills investments with labor mobility opportunities, which is a foundational element of a GSP, and involves employers early to ensure recruitment success. A GSP can potentially build on this channel to further align labor migration with employment, development, and cooperation policies, including goals to improve local training capacity and develop a qualified workforce in the country of origin to mitigate brain drain.

The focus on the pre-departure training projects (TUI art. 23) channel responds to a demand from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP), who is piloting a project for legal entry channels into Italy and to institutionalize pre-departure measures and placement of third-country nationals. The MoLSP is working with its in-house agency Sviluppo Lavoro Italia (SLI), and with financial support from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The objective is to identify opportunities to systematize processes and reinforce multi-stakeholder governance to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of this scheme. This systems-based approach aligns with the perspective applied by the World Bank through GSP initiatives, as opposed to project-based approaches. Consequently, the World Bank and the MoLSP have identified an opportunity for synergies, allowing the SLI operation and the Institutional Assessment to mutually inform and enhance each other.

This report focuses on the following policy areas that are crucial for developing a GSP from the perspective of the receiving country:

i)   Assessing labor demand for migrant workers

ii)   Identifying and matching vacancies for migrant workers

iii)   Financing training and mobility

iv)   Enhancing migrant worker entry approval

v)   Assessing standards alignment, delivering relevant training and recognizing skills before departure

vi)   Recognizing qualifications and skills in Italy

vii)   Activating integration services and networks

viii)   Enhancing integration through continuous language learning, labor market inclusion, and housing access

The report not only examines these policy areas at the national level but also features spotlights on the Region of Emilia Romagna given that regions and local jurisdictions in Italy possess either exclusive or shared authority with the national government over matters related to labor markets, skills development and labor migrant attraction and integration. The spotlights serve to illustrate specific initiatives undertaken locally to address some of the identified challenges.

2.3. Research Tools

The institutional assessment uses varied research methods to better understand how labor mobility systems, including potential GSPs, are organized and operate in practice across policy, institutional, and implementation levels:

- **Desk review** of relevant legal and policy documentation included national migration laws, bilateral labor agreements, institutional mandates, national employment and skills strategies, and existing program reports.

- **Semi-structured interviews** designed to understand how institutions function beyond their formal roles and distill insights on operational dynamics, implementation challenges, and system-level constraints. The first round of interviews focused on identifying mandates, activities, and institutional interactions across the ecosystem. Then, a more in-depth second round explored specific institutional processes, coordination practices, and decision-making pathways.

- **International experiences** and lessons from other countries implementing similar labor mobility schemes. This comparative perspective helps to situate the findings within broader policy and operational trends and to identify emerging good practices that may be adapted to the national context.

- **Focus group discussions** (FGDs) with (potential) migrants were conducted to capture user-level insights interacting with the labor mobility systems, lived experiences, expectations, and perceptions. These discussions provided valuable perspectives on the alignment between institutional design and migrant realities, helping to identify areas where expectations and implementation diverge. **Two FGDs were conducted with a total of 17 Tunisians** participating in pre-departure training mobility projects (as defined by the operational guidelines for Art. 23 of Italy's Consolidated Migration Act). The first FGD was conducted virtually with 7 participants who had completed the training and relocated to Italy, while the second was held face-to-face with 10 participants still in training in Tunisia. The FGD participants also completed a survey about general demographic information (see Annex A2.2). The discussions were voluntary, confidential, and conducted with informed consent; all personal data were anonymized.[11] The participants represented in the two focus groups differed in age, education, work experience, and employment status (see Table 1). Despite big efforts, the study failed to represent female migrant workers.[12]

Table 1: Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

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[11] The consent form is included in Annex A2.2.

[12] From FGDs and interviews with Italian and Tunisian stakeholders, it emerged that Tunisian women mainly migrate to Italy through family reunification once a male family member has settled in the destination country.

WORLD BANK GROUP
Social Protection & Labor

Characteristics	FG1 - Italy	FG2 - Tunisia
Gender	100% men	100% men
Age	32 on average 1/3: between 25-30 1/3: between 30-35 1/3: between 35-40	Age: 30 on average 50% between 25-30, 20% between 30-35, 20% between 35-40
Marital status	2/3 single men 1/3 married men	60% are single men, 30% are married with 2 to 3 dependents (wife and children)
Educational level	2/3 have a university degree 1/3 have a vocational degree	100% hold a vocational training degree as forklift drivers 80% of the participants have a secondary level of education.
Languages	100% Italian, Arabic and French 50% English	40% speaks 4 languages (Arabic, French, English and Italian) 60% speaks 3 languages (Arabic, French and Italian)
Years of professional experience	57% have about 5 years of professional experience 28% have more than 10 years of professional experience	60% of participants have between 1 to 3 years of professional experience, 30% have between 5 to 10 years of professional experience and only 1 participant has over 10 years of experience
Current employment status	100% full-time	40% of the participants are unemployed, 40% are employed part-time and 20% are employed full-time.

3. Overview of labor market and immigration in Italy

As of 1 January 2025, residents total 58.9 million, of whom about 5.4 million are foreign citizens (9.2 percent). Net migration has offset population decline: between 2005–2024, registrations from abroad exceeded de-registrations (of Italians leaving the country) by 4.8 million, particularly in working ages -helping stabilize participation and the dependency ratio even as the working-age share shrinks. In stock by January 2024, the largest non-EU resident communities by number of regular residents include Ukrainians (approximately 386 thousand residents), Moroccans (372 thousand), Albanians (359 thousand), Chinese (267 thousand), Bangladeshis, Egyptians, Indians, Filipinos, Pakistanis, and Tunisians (approximately 100,000 residents).[13]

Italy's labor market is facing demographic and structural challenges due to a shrinking and aging workforce. By 2050 the working-age population is projected to decrease by 15 percent, and the replacement ratio has already declined to around 0.5 - meaning that for every two individuals expected to exit the labor market in the coming decade, there is only one potential entrant. This demographic contraction is shaping the labor market: **job creation has outpaced population growth, tightening labor supply and driving unemployment to historic lows, but also exposing persistent shortages across a wide range of occupations.**

Between 2005 and 2024, limited employment growth in Italy was almost entirely sustained by foreign-born workers. Employment increased by seven percent in the full period; one of the lowest rates in the EU. Employment among Italian nationals rose by 153,000, while employment among non-Italian citizens increased by approximately 1.35 million. Without migrant labor, Italy's overall employment trajectory would have been stagnant, underscoring the pivotal role of migration in offsetting demographic decline and sustaining labor market stability.[14]

However, permit flows suggest that regular migration channels are driven less by labor needs than by family reunification and humanitarian protection. In 2023, roughly 331,000 new residence permits were issued: family reasons accounted for around 39 percent, protection for 32 percent, study 8 percent, "other" 9 percent, and work permits were under 12 percent.[15] This composition is atypical for a country with binding labor shortages, implying that labor demand is being met via conversions, renewals, or short-duration contracts rather than new work admissions.

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[13] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-a)
[14] (G. Nico, 2025).
[15] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-a)

Italy's ongoing labor shortages are leading to an increased hiring of workers from abroad. Results from the Excelsior Survey project 1,082,170 contracts for immigrant workers in 2024 in the service and industry sector.[16] This is 25 thousand more than 2023 and represents 19 percent of total expected hires in the country (including nationals and non-nationals). Most of these estimated hires of immigrants are concentrated in the service sector: support services for businesses (29 percent), tourism (21 percent), and then commerce and services for people (10 percent each). The remaining are concentrated in manufacturing (16 percent) and construction (11 percent). By skill level, the country is demanding foreign labor more frequently for low to middle skilled occupations (88 percent of contracts projected in 2024), and less for skilled occupations (12 percent).[17]

Firms, however, encounter difficulties when searching for workers from abroad. In 2024, firms reported higher "hard-to-fill" rates for immigrant hires (55 percent) than for Italians (46 percent). The most problematic sectors were metallurgy (70 percent of expected immigrant hires difficult to find), private health and social care (71 percent), construction (63 percent), and rubber/plastics (60 percent); food processing was also elevated (51 percent). At the occupational level, bottlenecks exceed 70 percent for several skilled trades: electricians in civil construction (81 percent), machine-tool operators (78 percent), tool setters (74 percent), and heavy-truck drivers (70 percent). Hospitality and care roles (cooks, waiters, nursing/rehab) also show persistent mismatches - evidence that both vocational and service skills are in structural short supply.[18]

Consistently, a World Bank assessment of critical occupations in Italy found that labor shortages are concentrated some occupational groups. Among mid-skilled Service and Sales Workers (ISCO 5) experiencing shortages include Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders, Hairdressers, Personal Services Workers, and Health Care Assistants. Shortages are also notable among **high-skilled Professionals and Technicians (ISCO 2 and 3),** such as Telecommunications Engineers, Physiotherapists, Special Needs Teachers, Personnel and Careers Professionals, and Regulatory Government Associate Professionals. Finally, within **the Craft and Related Trades Workers group (ISCO 7),** difficulties finding workers are high among Bricklayers and Related Workers, Structural-Metal Preparers and Erectors, Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Repairers, Building and Related Electricians, and Bakers, Pastry-Cooks and Confectionery Makers.

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[16] The projections correspond to contracts lasting at least 20 working days (generally equal to 1 calendar month) that companies in industry and services plan to stipulate; a single worker may have more than one in a year. The Excelsior Information System does not include agriculture or domestic employers.

[17] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-a)

[18] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-a)

A further challenge of Italy's migration system is to attract more skilled workers and to place them in higher-productivity sectors. Only 12.5 percent of foreign-born residents in Italy hold university degrees, compared to 28 percent in other major euro area countries and 17.5 percent among native Italians. The EU Blue Card scheme, designed to attract highly skilled non-EU nationals, has had minimal uptake in Italy: fewer than 3,900 cards issued since 2014, compared to 384,000 in Germany. **On the other side, migrants in Italy are often overqualified or employed in low-skill sectors, with their skills underutilized.** Evidence from administrative data shows that migrants are disproportionately employed in lower-paying firms and tend to earn less than natives. Migrant workers concentrated in blue-collar occupations (81 percent vs. 49 percent for natives), are more likely to work part-time or on temporary contracts and are less likely to hold permanent positions (64 percent vs. 83 percent for natives). The share of low-paid migrant workers is particularly high: in 2023, 37 percent of migrant workers were low-paid, compared to 21–22 percent of natives.[19]

While the overall fiscal contribution of migrants in Italy is positive, the effects are constrained by occupational segregation and restricted opportunities for advancement. Foreign workers tend to participate in welfare programs at higher rates than natives, at the same time they are estimated to contribute more to local taxes than they receive in public expenditures.[20] Estimates from Italy indicate that at local level the arrival of foreign-born individuals has contributed to increased revenues without significantly affecting expenditures.[21] Non-EU migrants have a positive net fiscal contribution at around the age of 24, contributing of approximately €5,000 per individual and with little increase over time, highlighting restricted occupational mobility among this group. After the age of 65, the net contribution returns to a negative value. Conversely, in other EU countries such as France, Spain, and Portugal, the net contribution becomes positive within the 25-34 age group and continues to rise as age advances - attributable to greater occupational mobility - reaching its highest point in the 45-54 age.[22]

Box 1: Overview of migration trends in Emilia Romagna

Emilia Romagna currently has the highest net migration rate among all regions in Italy. In 2024, foreign citizens living in the region numbered 575,476, representing 12.9 percent of the total regional population. This is above the national average of 9.0 percent. The foreign population increased by 1.2 percent compared to 2023. The average age among foreign residents is 37 years, while the average age for Italians is 48 years. [23] Additionally, 9.9 percent of the foreign population comes from non-EU countries, exceeding the national average of 6.6 percent. **Tunisians constitute 3.6 percent of all foreign citizens in 2024** (20,816 individuals, 40.1 percent of whom are women). The size of this community increased by 5.3 percent since 2022 and by 13.1 percent since 2019.[24]

While net migration is compensating for birth rate deficits more effectively than in other regions, Emilia Romagna continues to mirror the broader Italian demographic trend, experiencing a decline in the available workforce due to a shrinking active population.[25] Interviewees reported that around 50 percent of regional enterprises face workforce shortages; according to the Excelsior Report projections, **between 2025 and 2028 the private sector in Emilia Romagna will require 250,100 workers, including 65,000 foreign nationals (26 percent),** representing one of the highest proportions in Italy.[26]

*FGD insight: Participants **identified economic improvement and enhanced employment opportunities as the primary motivations for joining the labor mobility program.** They emphasized the potential to improve their living conditions and provide financial support to their families. A subset also mentioned aspirations to earn higher incomes and gain new skills through employment abroad. For married individuals, the opportunity to eventually facilitate family reunification was an additional consideration. None of the participants expressed plans to return to Tunisia in the near future.*

Box 2: Overview of migration trends in Emilia Romagna

Emilia Romagna currently has the highest net migration rate among all regions in Italy. In 2024, foreign citizens living in the region numbered 575,476, representing 12.9percent of the total regional population. This is above the national average of 9.0percent. The foreign population increased by 1.2percent compared to 2023. The average age among foreign residents is 37 years, while the average age for Italians is 48 years. [27] Additionally, 9.9percent of the foreign population comes from non-EU countries, exceeding the national average of 6.6percent. **Tunisians constitute 3.6percent of all foreign citizens in 2024** (20,816 individuals, 40.1percent of whom are women). The size of this community increased by 5.3percent since 2022 and by 13.1percent since 2019.[28]

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[19] (Bank of Italy, 2025)

[20] (Basso et al., 2025)

[21] (Mariani et al., 2024).

[22] (ILO, 2023)

[23] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-b)

[24] (Confcooperative Romagna, n.d.; ISTAT, n.d.-b)

[25] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, 2025. Pg. 34-37)

[26] (Unioncamere - Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Sistema Informativo Excelsior, 2025 May. Pg. 52)

[27] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-b)

[28] (Confcooperative Romagna, n.d.; ISTAT, n.d.-b)

[29] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, 2025. Pg. 34-37)

[30] (Unioncamere - Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Sistema Informativo Excelsior, 2025 May. Pg. 52)

4. The ecosystem of international labor mobility in Italy

4.1. Legal framework and authorizing environment in Italy

International Legal Framework

Italy is signatory to various UN international agreements for the protection of workers, migrants and labor migrants. This includes 191 **Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO)**[31] on protecting worker rights overall and in specific job sectors, such as minimum wage, maternity, equal treatment on the workplace, health and security, among others, all of which equally apply to migrant and Italian/EU workers. Specifically on migrant work, Italy has ratified the Convention n. 97 on migrant workers[32], the Convention n. 111 against discrimination in the workplace[33], and the Convention n. 143 on Migration in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers[34]. Furthermore, both the International Organization for Migrants (IOM) and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) are present in Italy (IOM since 1967, UNHCR since 1952) to collaborate with Italian institutions and public administration (including municipalities) to promote migrants', refugees and asylum seekers' rights as well as to monitor that all Italy-signed UN conventions are fully implemented in the country.

In the European Union, both the Union and Member States share responsibility for entry policy; but Member States retain authority on the number of third-country nationals with admitted entrance for work purposes. With regards to legal migration, the EU defines conditions and standards for third-country nationals' entry, long-term visas, and residence permits. Common standards for work permits are set by directives like the single work and residence permit – which ensures equal treatment of non-EU and EU national workers and protects the rights of migrants at work (2024/1233/EU)[35], the seasonal workers visas (2014/36/EU), and admissions of highly qualified immigrants (EU Blue Card). Additionally, in 2024 the **EU approved the Pact on Migration and Asylum**[36] (set to enter into application in June 2026), with strong provisions to deliver a long-term, sustainable solution to build a common EU system for managing migration. It establishes a unified European framework with clear rules to ensure that no Member State is left alone in managing migration, while applying fair, efficient procedures, and managing EU external borders in full respect of fundamental rights.

One of the four pillars of the EU Pact includes the expansion of legal pathways through two main instruments: Talent Partnerships and the EU Talent Pool. The **Talent**

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[31] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-a)

[32] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-b)

[33] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-c)

[34] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-d)

[35] (European Union, 2024). This Directive, recast the 11/98/EU Directive and will apply in 2026.

[36] (European Commission, n.d.-a)

partnerships are the European Union's main framework for combining training, legal mobility, and capacity building with partner countries outside the EU; they aim to match skilled workers with EU labor market needs, supporting mobility for study, work, and training, and building capacity in origin countries. Italy has already supported initiatives with Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.[37] The **EU Talent Pool** will be the first EU-wide digital matching tool to connect non-EU jobseekers living outside the EU with EU employers in shortage sectors. Participation is voluntary for Member States (Italy is a volunteer since its launch), and the platform will integrate the ESCO classification and Europass profiles. A pilot Talent Pool was launched in 2023 to give displaced Ukrainian jobseekers direct access to EU employers and allow Member States to test the system.[38]

Migration policy is also shaped by international cooperation objectives. The current government is focusing on the cooperation dimension of labor migration through the promotion of the *Rome Process*[39], a platform fostering dialogue and cooperation among origin, transit and destination countries, as well as International Organizations (including the World Bank Group) for an holistic approach to address the causes of forced displacement, to advance legal migration while combating irregular migration and human trafficking in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa. The Italian government's Plan Mattei is designed to foster equal partnerships with Africa, aiming for shared growth and benefit. The plan focuses on enhancing strategic infrastructure, reviving local production chains, and making the most of young people's talents. One central goal is to help Africans thrive in their own countries, supporting "the right not to migrate." Economic cooperation under this plan comes with agreements requiring partner nations to tighten controls on irregular migration. The Plan Mattei also works alongside other international projects, with Tunisia as one of its primary focus areas.[40]

National Legal Framework

The Italian legal system regulates the entry of foreign workers into the Italian territory by balancing two needs: i) the control of migration and the prevention of irregular entries; ii) the equal treatment of local and foreign workers and the protection of foreign workers.[41] The Italian national legal framework for international labor mobility is anchored in the Consolidated Migration Act (TUI, **"Testo Unico Immigrazione"**).[42] It operates based on three principles: planning immigration flows, counteracting illegal immigration, and guaranteeing the integration of regular migrants. The TUI establishes the rules for entering and residing in Italy, controls and addresses violations of these rules, and promotes integration. Labor migration is specifically regulated by **Title III of TUI, articles 21-27**[43] which

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[37] (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2024)
[38] (European Commission, n.d.-b)
[39] (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, n.d.-a)
[40] (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, n.d.-b)
[41] (Battisti, 2025)
[42] (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1998)
[43] (Normattiva, 2024)

provides different channels to enter Italy for work.

Over the past 25 years, labor migration regulations have prioritized limiting entry of foreign labor through quotas. Regular access to work for those outside protection regimes was difficulted by an emphasis on strict admission procedures and a clear separation between economic and humanitarian pathways. In 2002, reforms required that migrant workers could enter Italy only within quota limits and with an employer's approved clearance (*nulla osta*) confirming intent to hire and lack of suitable local candidates. Crucially, the triennial programming of labor inflows—the intended backbone of the TUI—was suspended for sixteen years (2007–2023), with quotas issued annually, without a multi-year strategy. Quotas were increasingly restrictive and largely used to stabilize the status of workers already present. This configuration reduced the scope for timely matching employer demand and legally admitted foreign workers.[44]

The most recent amendments to the TUI Title III provisions, introduced in May 2023 by Decree-Law (DL) 20/2023 (the "Cutro Decree" – converted into Law 50/2023),[45] represent a significant evolution in Italy's approach to labor migration. The new framework places greater emphasis on establishing legal migration channels while maintaining measures to address irregular migration. Key changes include the reinstatement of three-year quota planning, reforms of various entry channels, and the simplification of administrative procedures. This shift is further evidenced by the substantial increase in total entry quotas for the 2023-2025 triennium, rising to 452,000 from 183,255 allocated during 2020-2022.[46] In addition, the Flow Decree governing the 2023-2025 quotas sets forth specific management criteria: progressively aligning labor migrant flows with labor market demands, broadening the sectors eligible to employ migrant workers, enhancing cooperation with countries of origin, and strengthening vocational training programs abroad.[47]

As of now, there are two macro systems through which non-EU citizens can enter Italy for work: i) the quota system (TUI Title III art. 22) which defines quotas of migrant workers on the basis of specific criteria, and **ii) the extra quota system (TUI Title III art. 23-27)** which specify several channels allowing the entry of non-EU workforce outside the annual planned quota.

The Quota System

The Quota System is the main channel through which migrants from non-EU countries can enter Italy for work reasons. Every three years the Presidency of the Council of Ministries issues the Law Decree, commonly known as *Decreto Flussi*, which sets the three-

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[44] (Pomponi, 2024)

[45] Other procedural changes (including Nulla Osta and visa requests) were approved by Decree Law 245/2024 (entered into force in December 2024).

[46] (Camera dei Deputati, n.d.)

[47] (Camera dei Deputati, n.d.)

year plan of annual quotas of migrants allowed to enter Italy for work.[48] The Flow Decree for the period 2023-2025 established a total of 452,000 workers (136,000 in 2023; 151,000 in 2024; and 165,000 in 2025). The next set of quotas for the period 2026-2028 foresees a total of 497,550 entries, of which: 230,550 for dependent and autonomous work, 267,000 for seasonal work in the agriculture and tourism sectors.[49]

Quotas are determined based on contract category: seasonal work, autonomous, and dependent work. Within each category, quotas are allocated according to groups of countries cooperating with Italy in migration management: i) countries who promote media campaigns against irregular migration; ii) countries of origin having signed migration agreements, and ii) countries with future cooperation agreements on migration. For seasonal work, specific quotas are allocated to workers from countries signatories of labor migration agreements linked to labor needs in agriculture and tourism. Across categories, quotas are also reserved to refugees and stateless people, and Italians living in Venezuela. Furthermore, quotas for specific occupations within personal and health assistance services have been added recently, and entry related to conversion of residence permit typology.

Tunisia is one of the countries with whom Italy has allocated a specific quota of entry for work in the 2023-2025 Flow Decree, given its agreements to cooperate for counterfeiting irregular migration and human trafficking. On October 20, 2023, Italy and Tunisia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate entry of 12,000 Tunisians workers over a period of three years into Italy for dependent work through simplified visa and work/residence permit procedures.[50] This MoU has been implemented through an Executive Protocol between *Sviluppo Lavoro Italia* (SLI, the Italian in-house agency of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy) and the *Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail* (ANETI), signed in March 2024 to facilitate job placement of Tunisian workers into firms in Italy.

Employers intending to recruit migrant workers must obtain clearance (Nulla Osta) from the Prefecture (Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione, SUI). Required documents must be submitted online and include the worker's personal details, proof from local employment services that no suitable local candidates are available, and the address where the migrant will reside together with the certificate confirming that the accommodation complies with standards. Applications for clearance are submitted via an online platform, available on specific dates throughout the year known as "Click Day," with requests processed on a first-come, first-served basis. This procedure is often described as complex, as employers may face challenges in submitting their requests due to high demand within a limited time frame and the extensive documentation required.[51] Once the Nulla Osta is

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[48] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-b)
[49] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-c)
[50] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-d)
[51] (Ero Straniero, n.d.)

granted, the migrant worker can apply for a work visa at the Italian Embassy in their country of origin.

Despite the increase in the number of quotas, the flow decree and the subsequent quota system seems little suited to the needs of the Italian labor market for several reasons, including bureaucratic complexity, lengthy procedures, underestimation of quotas and, thus, of the necessary workforce.[52] Due to the lengthy procedures, only a portion of foreign workers who enter through the quota channel manages to settle regularly in the country through formal work and residence permit. In 2024, only 7.8 percent of the defined quotas for non-seasonal work led to regular employment agreements (*contratto di soggiorno*); in 2023, this ratio was 13 percent.[53] Additionally, the bureaucratic complexity and fragmentation among various stakeholders—including local public authorities, private companies, and service providers—have resulted in instances where illicit networks create fraudulent documentation for substantial fees to secure authorizations for foreign workers entering Italy. [54] This process severely impacts migrant workers, who may arrive in Italy lacking both formal employment and a valid residence permit.

The Extra- Quota System

The Migration Consolidated Act (TUI) establishes several alternative pathways for migrants to enter Italy for employment purposes, commonly referred to as "extra-quota" channels. These avenues are not subject to quota restrictions and do not impose limitations on the number of entry permits issued. In light of recent amendments to the TUI (DL 20/2023), the government has placed increased emphasis on these channels to better adapt to changing labor market needs and to proactively address issues related to illegal migration. These channels are:

- **Pre-departure training projects** (TUI art. 23) enable labor migrants to enter Italy after completing pre-approved professional and language-civic training in their country of origin. These training programs are proposed and funded by public or private entities, based on identified labor market needs, and are subject to pre-approval from an interministerial commission. They are designed based on the guidelines set by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and are implemented through multi-actor partnerships. As of November 15th, 2025, 70 projects have been approved for implementation across 27 countries of origin (see Box 2).
- **Other categories permitted to enter Italy for employment purposes outside of quota restrictions and without limitation** include investors, EU Blue Card holders qualifying as highly skilled professionals such as researchers, artists, and trainees. Additionally, nationals from countries that have concluded a repatriation agreement with Italy are eligible for both dependent and seasonal positions.
- **Specific occupations:** the last Decree Flow 2026-2028 (approved in September

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[52] (De Blasis & Bonizzoni, 2024)
[53] (Ero Straniero, 2025a)
[54] (De Blasis & Bonizzoni, 2024)

2025) allows the entry of workers in the care sector outside the established quota and through a simplified entry procedure.

- **Conversion of residence permit for study, internship, or training –** these permits allow limited work and can be converted to an employment or self-employment permit if legal requirements are met. Under the Cutro Decree, conversion is now allowed anytime during the year without quota restrictions, provided the permit is valid.

Box 3: Overview of art. 23 pre-departure training projects for labor mobility

The pre-departure training initiative for labor mobility was first piloted in October 2023, with Tunisia serving as the initial partner country of origin. This pilot project supported a cohort of 40 Tunisian workers, who received training in the construction sector through a collaborative effort between ANCE, the construction industry association, and Centro Elis.

Expansion of Projects
Since the initial pilot, the program has expanded significantly. By November 15th 2025, 70 projects have been approved, of which 40 percent are in preparatory phase, 40 percent are in implementation and 20 percent have been already completed. Implementation is taking place across 24 countries of origin. Tunisia remains the leading partner, with 14 projects approved, followed by Ghana with 8, Egypt with 6, and Albania with 4 projects.

Number of approved projects between October 2023 and November 2025
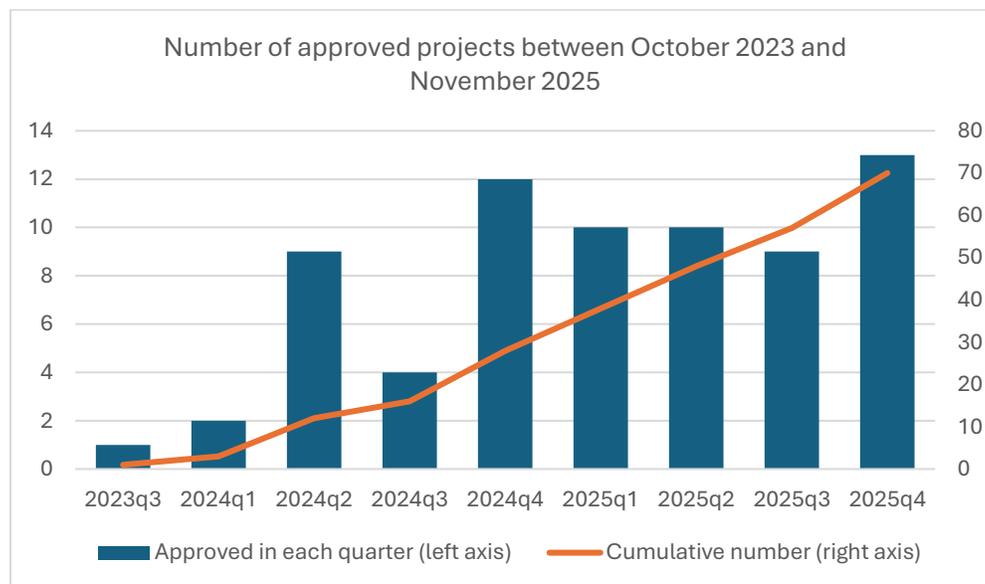
Targets and progress
Collectively, these projects aim to benefit a total of 7,312 workers. Of these, nearly 3,000 individuals have already enrolled as trainees, and over 1,550 have successfully completed their training. However, there is currently no publicly available information on the number of trainees who have been matched to jobs or who have actually entered Italy.

Sectors and Coverage
With respect to the number of projects, pre-departure training has been most actively implemented

in the sectors of Construction (14 projects), Machinery Manufacturing (11 projects), and Transport and Logistics (9 projects). When considering the total number of trainees, construction emerges as the predominant sector, representing 48 percent of the total target group. Machinery Manufacturing accounts for 11 percent, while both shipbuilding and textile sectors each comprise 7 percent of the total trainees.

Project Size and Duration

The scale of individual projects varies considerably, ranging from as few as 5 workers to as many as 2,000, with the largest being the THAMM+ project, which is supported by EU funding. Notably, half of all projects are designed to target no more than 22 workers, and 75 percent of projects have a target of no more than 60 workers. In terms of duration, the median length of a training project (considered for the entire project, not for individual trainees) is eight months. The duration of projects ranges from as short as two months to as long as 48 months.

Source: Authors elaboration with data from (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-e)

4.2. Institutional arrangement and overview of processes

Labor migration covers various policy fields that are governed by both national and decentralized systems. The Italian Constitution, in its articles 116 and 117, determines the legal and administrative competencies of each level of government. The national government has exclusive competence on labor immigration, establishing the legal framework for entry and provisions for migrant integration. Under this national legal and policy umbrella, Regions have autonomy in managing the integration of migrants, while provinces and local municipalities directly provide services in the territory.

In terms of entry policy, the primary national government institutions responsible for proposing, drafting, and managing labor migration policies are the MoLSP and the Ministry of Interior. The MoLSP through its General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policy programs and monitors labor-entry quotas and bilateral cooperation, monitors labor market needs to inform labor migration inflows; coordinates labor insertion of migrants, and integration/anti-discrimination measures; manages migration funds; safeguards unaccompanied minors; and supervises non-EU entry flows, among others.[55] The Ministry of Interior oversees the implementation of legal and administrative procedures that facilitate the entry, residence, and employment of labor migrants within the Italian territory. This is operated through local immigration offices called **Sportello Unico Immigrazione (SUI)** within the **Prefecture[56]** which issue the nulla osta (clearance) for hiring foreign workers, after obtaining the no-objection from the local Police Headquarters (**Questura**) and the Territorial Labor Directorate. The former reports to the Ministry of the

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[55] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-f)

[56] Prefectures are the peripheral offices of the Ministry of the Interior and represent the government in the province or metropolitan city.

Interior, and the latter operates under the supervision of the MoLSP.

Policy and regulation of the labor market is a shared competence between the State and the Regions. The State defines the legal guiding principles and guarantees essential active labor policy services throughout Italy, while Regions have main regulatory and operational responsibility of active labor market policies (ALMPs) and employment services. The State identifies professional figures, their profiles and required qualifications for regulated professions, while unregulated professions are under the responsibility of the Regions (see section 6.2).[57] The State-Regions Conference (*Conferenza Stato-Regione*), composed by thematic commissions supervised by different regions, coordinates the dialogue and the policy-making process between the twenty regions and the national government.

A network for national, local public and private actors operationalizes labor services supporting workers and jobseekers. Sviluppo Lavoro Italia (SLI) is the in-house agency of the MoLSP key in supporting, advising and monitoring the operation of employment services and ALMPs. **Regional Agencies for Labor** are responsible for planning ALMPs and for defining the regional employment strategy. Local **employment service centers (CPI)** are public structures, coordinated by the Regions or Autonomous Provinces and operating at provincial/local level, which facilitate the matching of labor supply and demand and promote ALMP interventions. **Private recruitment agencies (APL),** intermediation agencies and Staffing or Temporary Employment Agencies are all private operators authorized to offer job matching services. The system of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture (**Unioncamere)** is a key player supporting information systems for ALMPs, in particular for the forecasting labor demand needs. The National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies **(INAPP)** is a public entity supervised by MoLSP and responsible, among other things, for the monitoring and evaluation of labor policies and employment services. Industry associations, employer organizations and labor unions are key stakeholders of labor market policy.

Training and skills development policy and services are also a shared competency between State and Regions. The **Ministry of Education and Merit** is responsible for regulating Technical Education, Vocational Education, Higher Technical Education and Adult Education pathways, and for recognition of qualifications obtained abroad. This Ministry is also responsible for overseeing the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA). **CPIA**s are autonomous educational institutions which provide secondary-level education for adult, as well as vocational training, Italian language courses and initiatives to strengthen citizenship skills and therefore the employability of the population. **RIDAP** (the Italian network for adult education) is the system of representation of CPIAs and proposes policies on Adult Education. **Regions** are responsible for vocational education and the **accreditation of training institutions,** including **private vocational training agencies,**

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[57] (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, n.d.-c)

state and independent educational institutions, which operate a vast offer of training courses.

Similarly, in the field of migrants' integration, the State provides regulations and oversight and the subnational level implements. The MoLSP oversees the yearly planning of labor immigration, regulating, monitoring and evaluating the socio-economic integration of migrants. The State also regulates and defines minimum standards for the provision of services which must be guaranteed throughout the country to respond to civil and social rights for citizens and residents, including migrants; importantly, housing, health, education, and labor services. Instead, Regions have autonomy to manage integration strategies, including the provision of social and welfare services, together with the provinces and local municipalities who directly provide services such as health, house, schools, adult learning, and security. Ultimately, the integration of labor migrants in the Italian economy and society importantly relies on local networks comprised by local city councils and municipalities, social and multi-cultural services managed by Regions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), labor unions, volunteering associations, faith-based associations, diaspora associations, and also supported by International Organizations (IOs) like IOM and UNHCR.

Box 4: Regional Strategy on labor mobility in Emilia Romagna Region

The Emilia Romagna region in the past years has been implementing initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining foreign workers and talents. In 2023, the Region formally established its strategy to attract high-skilled workers and address demographic challenges and labor shortages in its territory. The approach offers a replicable model for other regions and can be integrated into central systems in a coordinated manner, while also providing valuable input for pre-departure training programs (Art.23) in Italy.

> ➢ **Ad-hoc regional legal framework**

In 2023, Emilia Romagna enacted the *Regional Law to attract, retain and value talents in the Region* (regional law 2/2023) [58] to respond to critical labor shortages by attracting talents. The law promotes skills intelligence, skills-job matching and access to the welfare system through an integrated system of public and private services and strategic partnerships at regional, national, EU and international levels.[59] The law is implemented through regional and EU structured funds for employability, training and residence.[60]

Additionally, the Region has developed its legal framework for the **socio-economic integration of non-EU citizens** living in the region. Pursuant EU and national laws, regulations and policies, it enacted the regional Law no. 5/2004 "**Rules for the social integration of foreign citizens**" that promotes inter-institutional cooperation with the national government. The three-year

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[58] The English version of the law can be found here: https://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it/talenti/english/emilia-romagnalaw_talentsattraction_2_14_2_2023.pdf/@@download/file.

[59] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-c)

[60] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-d)

program applying the law, fosters a bottom-up approach, involving local authorities and CSOs, to strengthen the inclusion of foreign citizens through reinforcing their skills, universal access to the welfare services and the promotion of community work.[61]

> ➢ **A multi-level and multi-actors authorizing environment**

The **Regional Council** is responsible for regulations, policies, and strategies concerning labor mobility.[62] The Region's in-house agency, **ART-ER**[63]- **supported by universities, research centers, industry associations, local provinces, and municipalities** - is responsible for implementing, among others, initiatives that advance labor mobility, talent attraction and retention, innovation, and local development.

The **Regional Labor Agency** assists in formulating, implementing, and monitoring active and passive labor policies, including training and skills-job matching.[64] The Agency also houses the **Observatory for Labor Market**, which delivers data and analytical insights on regional labor market trends. The management and monitoring of migration is informed by data analysis and report from the **Regional Observatory on Migration**.[65] At operational level, **provinces and municipalities** facilitate the integration of migrant workers into public services by setting eligibility criteria and collaborating with civil society organizations and other associations.

Following the publication of the law, a **Regional Committee** composed of fifty representatives from local authorities, academic institutions, ART-ER, professional training entities, businesses, trade unions, professional and self-employed organizations was established to implement and monitor the actions set out by the law.[66] Several working subgroups, including one on international qualified migration, support the work of the Regional Committee.

Entry process for a foreign worker to Italy through art. 23 pre-departure training channels[67]

A law-defined set of mandatory procedures must be followed to recruit a non-EU citizen through the art. 23 extra quota channel (Figure 4). First, based on the MoLSP guidelines for Art. 23 pre-departure projects, a project lead presents a proposal for a pre-departure training project to the Interministerial Commission led by the MoLSP.[68] The guidelines delimit the typology of actors who can lead and propose projects, and the lead actor can partner with other actors beyond the specified list.[69] Once approved, candidate selection and training take place in the country of origin.

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[61] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, 2023)

[62] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-f)

[63] (ART-ER, n.d.)

[64] (Agenzia regionale per il lavoro Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-b)

[65] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-g)

[66] (Emilia Romagna, n.d.)

[67] (Ministero dell'Interno, n.d.-a)

[68] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2023)

[69] Project leads can be local public entities, training providers, international organizations, civil society organizations, representatives of social partners, industry associations, labor intermediation agencies, universities, CPIAs, among others.

Training completion by the prospective migrant worker is the *sine qua non* condition for the employer to start the *nulla osta* request to the Prefecture/SUI. Proof of local worker unavailability is not required when applying through this channel and the submission of a request does not follow any calendared 'Click Days', as in the quota system. The SUI reviews the requests, coordinates checks with other authorities, and if the *nulla osta* is approved, informs both employer and the Italian embassy of the worker's country of origin. The candidate then applies for a work visa at the Italian Embassy. After visa issuance, the worker can enter Italy and must sign the employment contract within eight days of arrival and submit a request for subordinate work residence permit to the Prefecture/SUI. The entire process may take up to 12 months.

Figure 4: Entry process through ART. 23 Channel
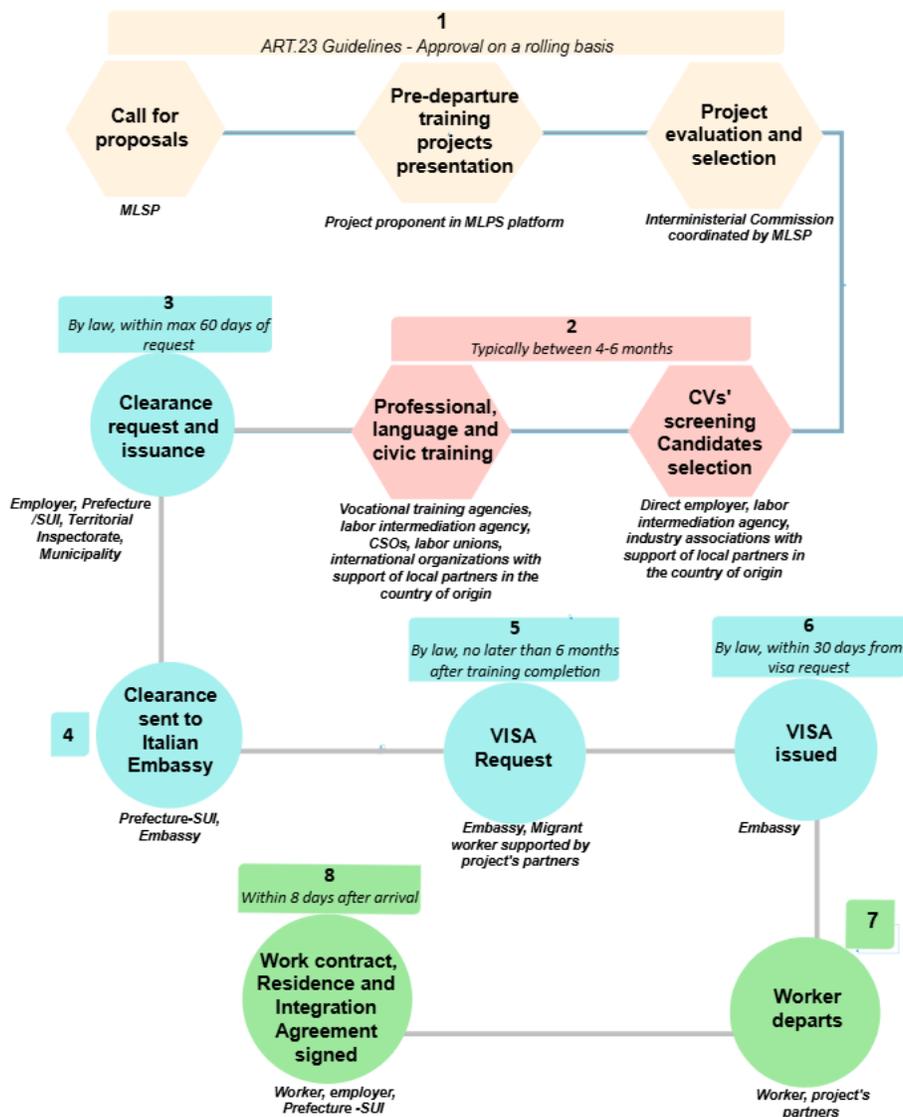
4.3 Public and non-state actors involved in international labor mobility into Italy

Table 2 provides information on the main actors involved in the processes that support non-EU workers access and integrate into Italy's labor market. The table describes the specific roles each actor has in relation to the labor mobility objectives, as defined by the Diagnostic Framework.

Figure 5 depicts the network of main actors involved in the ART. 23 pre-departure training programs, and the connections among them, through the lens of the three pillars of the diagnostic framework used in this report (*see section 2.1).*

- To evidence the interconnectedness between different government levels and non-state actors, the map uses colors to categorize each actor.
    - **Yellow**: Ministries and national public agencies;
    - **Blue**: regional and local public entities;
    - **Green**: private sector, unions and associations;
    - **Pink**: CSOs and IOs.
- Additionally, the map delineates the extent of involvement and the relationships among actors, as represented by various types of arrows:
    - **Blue arrows:** direct responsibility or contribution to the objective of the three pillars;
    - **Black arrows**: entities reporting to those responsible to the objective of the pillars;
    - **Dotted arrows**: entities providing key inputs to those responsible to the objective of the pillars;
    - **Dotted line**: horizontal collaboration between entities.

Table 2. Description of stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in art. 23 pre-departure training programs

Category	Entity	FACILITATING ACCESS *Helping workers access international labor markets*	FURTHERING ACCESS *Harnessing skills to access international labor markets*	FORTIFYING ACCESS *Strengthening the protection and integration of labor migrants*
Ministries and National Public Agencies	**Min. Labor and Social Policies (MoLSP)** *DG Immigration and Integration Policies*	**Enables** legal labor migration paths through planning, managing and monitoring entries of foreign workers, including pre-departure training projects. **Oversees** bilateral cooperation with countries of origin.		**Enables** legislation for protection of migrant workers' rights. **Establishes** bilateral social security agreements. **Develops and coordinates** policies for socio-economic integration of migrant workers.
	Min. of Interior *Central Direction for Migration Policy*	**Enables,** together with MLSP, legal labor migration paths through planning, managing and monitoring entries of foreign workers, including pre-departure training projects. **Oversees** the work of Prefectures (SUI) in facilitating clearance and visa issuance.		**Monitors** foreigners' integration policies.
	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Development (MAECI) *General Directorate for Italians abroad and migration policies.*	**Enables,** together with MLSP, legal labor migration paths. **Responsible** for the cooperation with countries of origin, including BLA signature. **Oversees** Embassies' work on visa issuance.		
	Min. Education and Merit		**Coordinates and oversees** VET policies, including	

			occupational/ qualifications standards alignment.	
	Embassy *Italian Embassy in Tunisia*	**Responsible** for visa issuance.		
	SLI - Agency Sviluppo Lavoro Italia *MLPS' in-house Agency*	**Responsible** for the labor market information system, also used to conduct labor market needs assessment. **Operates** the project "pre-departure measures and placement of third-country nationals" (art. 23)	**Promotes** training based on applicable occupational standards and skills frameworks.	**Promotes** migrant workers' rights. **Coordinates** the national network of employment and labor support services.
	INAPP *National Institute for Public Policy Analysis*		**Coordinates** the reference tool (ATLANTE) to assess occupational/ qualifications standards alignment and to certify qualifications and skills validation.	
	ISTAT *National Institute for Statistics*	**Provides** inputs for labor market needs assessment.		
	Italian Culture Institute		**Certify** Italian language level in the country of origin.	
Regional & local public entities	**State – Region Committee**	Coordinates the Commission for work and vocational training of the State-Region Conference. It promotes the dialogue between the regions and the national State on labor policies and vocation training		
	Regional Government		**Defines** regulations, strategies and policies for vocational training and skills recognition,	**Facilitates** access to welfare and social insurance benefits in the region.

		verification and certification at regional level in line with national and EU regulations.	**Provides** employment and labor support services. **Can activate** support services and networks.
Regional Labor Agency	**Promotes** job matching.		**Manages** employment and labor support services (continuous mentoring and coaching support)
Prefecture *SUI- Sportello unico immihgrazione*	**Responsible** for nulla osta (entry clearance) issuance.		**Responsible** for residence permit issuance, necessary to access welfare and social insurance benefits.
Local Police Headquarter *(Questura)*	**Collaborates** with SUI for clearance issuance.		
Territorial Inspectorate	**Provides** SUI with documentation relative to the employer, which is necessary for clearance issuance.		
Municipality	**Provides** SUI with documentation relative to the employer and necessary for clearance issuance.		
IVC Services		**Provide** professional skills verification and certification at regional/local level (Italy only).	
CPIA *Provincial Centers for adult education*		**Can deliver** language training in the country of origin.	**Provide** free Italian language training for migrants across provinces.
Employment Service *(CPI)*			**Provide** employment and labor support services (continuous mentoring and coaching support).
Local City Councils;			**Provide** and activate support

	Local social services			services and networks. **Facilitate** access to welfare and social insurance benefits.
Private sector, Labor Unions and Industry Associations	**Unioncamere** *Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture*	**Produces** the Excelsior Report on labor market trends and needs in Italy, which is used to inform the need to foreign labor in the country.		
	Industry associations and private sector companies	**Informs** MLSP on labor and skills needs. **Can support** the identification of vacancies and job profiles to be matched to foreign workers.	**Can inform the design of and deliver** training, reskilling or upskilling initiatives	
	Labor Unions	**Informs** MLSP on labor market needs.	**Can deliver** civic courses. **Can support with** pre-departure orientation.	**Can provide** and activate support services and networks. **Can facilitate** access to welfare and social insurance benefits. **Promotes** migrant workers' rights.
	Private Interprofessional Funds	**Can provide** economic funds for training in legal labor migration paths.		
	APL *Private recruitment agencies;* **APL representative associations** *ASSOLAVORO*	**Can identify** vacancies and potential candidates. **Can implement** profiling and matching activities.	**Can design and deliver** training, reskilling or upskilling. **Can provide** further training in the destination country.	**Can provide** employment and labor support services (continuous mentoring and coaching support).
	Private vocational training agencies, accredited by regions.		**Can assess** occupational/ qualifications standards alignment. **Can design and deliver** training, reskilling or upskilling. **Can certify** qualifications and	

			skills. **Can ensure** professional skills recognition. **Can further** training based on applicable occupational standards and skills frameworks.	
International organizations & Civil society	**NGOs, other no profit associations**	**Can support** profiling and matching activities. **Can facilitate** visa process. **Can support** travel logistics.	**Can support** the delivery of training, reskilling or upskilling, language and civic courses. **Can deliver** language and civic courses. **Can provide** pre-departure orientation.	**Can provide** and activate support services and networks. **Can facilitate** access to welfare and social insurance benefits. **Can refer** to grievance redress mechanisms.
	International Organ. *ILO, IOM, UNHCR*	**Can support** partnerships between country of origin and destination **Ca support** profiling and matching activities. **Can facilitate** visa processes. **Can support** travel logistics.	**Can support** the delivery of training, reskilling or upskilling, language and civic courses. **Can provide** pre-departure orientation.	**Can provide** and activate support services and networks. **Can facilitate** access to welfare and social insurance benefits. **Can refer** to grievance redress mechanisms.
	RIDAP *Italian Network for Adult Education*	Promotes the work of CPIAs and educational institutions by representing them before central administration, public and private entities, professional associations, professional and trade union organizations, and other public/private national and local institutions. Proposes policies on Adult Education and enhances the specificity of the system at the national and European levels.		

	Diaspora associations			**Can provide** and activate support services and networks. **Can facilitate** access to welfare and social insurance benefits. **Can refer** to grievance redress mechanisms.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Figure 5: Network map of actors directly or indirectly contributing to skilled labor mobility into Italy, particularly in the framework of art. 23 pre-departure training projects' channel
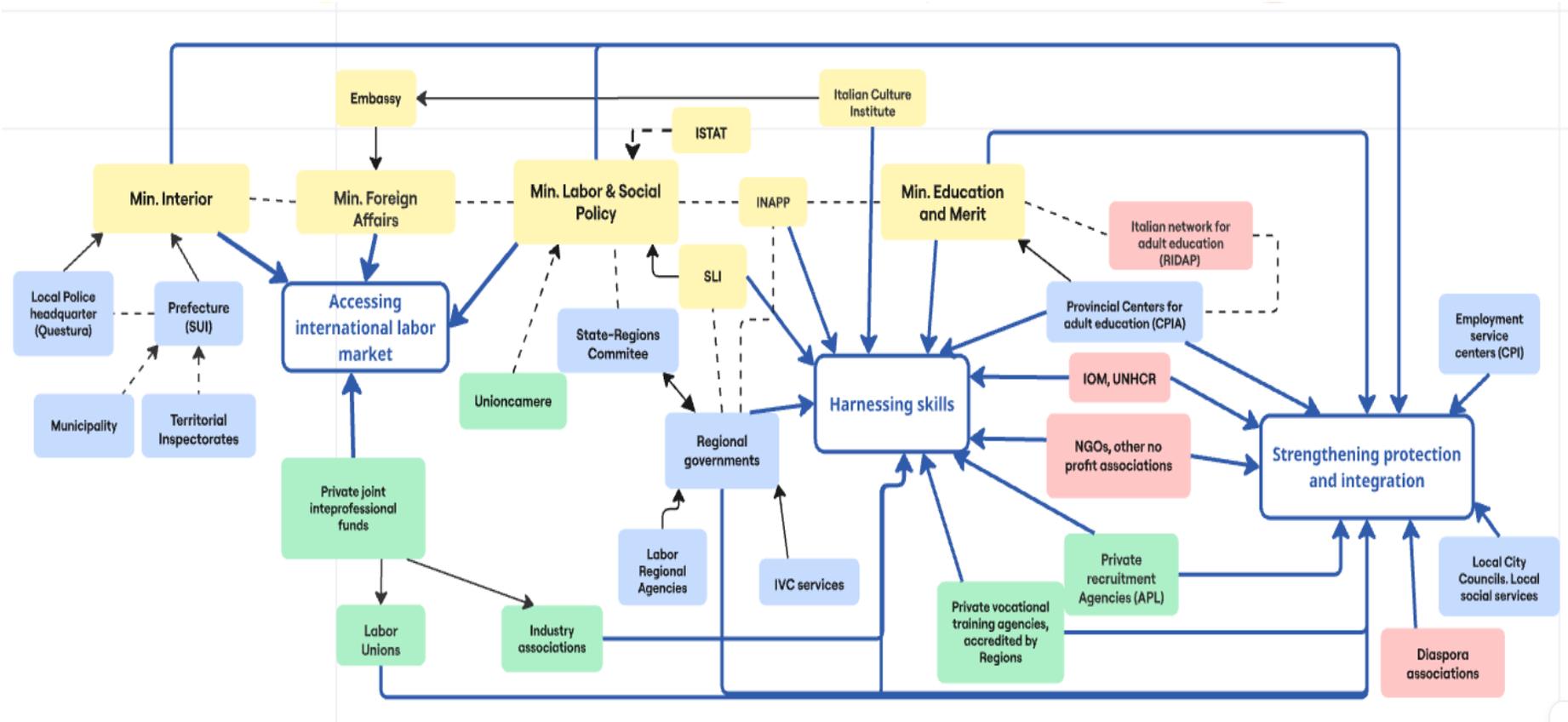
Source: Authors' elaboration.

5. Pillar I - Facilitating Access

5.1. Assessing labor demand for migrant workers

Italy has a rich data base on labor supply, labor demand and skills, which can inform programming of non-EU labor inflows. Six information systems are most relevant: the Unioncamere's Excelsior survey, SLI's Labor Market Intelligence (LMI) dashboard, the SIISL matching platform, the statistical system of mandatory labor communications (SISCO), ISTAT's Labor Force Survey (LFS), and INAPP's *Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni* (Table 3). Together, they provide complementary views on realized, short-term expected, and structural labor demand, and on skills and qualification, with varying granularity and timeliness.

The following provides an overview of what each information source offers and its limitations to is.

- **Excelsior (Unioncamere–MLPS).** Excelsior is a long-running, nationally representative employer survey redesigned in 2017 to a continuous monthly instrument covering a very large enterprise sample. It generates monthly estimations and annual forecasts by province and occupation (CP-ISTAT 2021), including indicators of recruitment difficulty and the **share of vacancies firms expect to fill with immigrant workers**—useful for proxied foreign-labor demand.[70] Bulletins and datasets are public and widely used by policy actors.[71] Indeed, the Excelsior data is extensively used during the round tables with social partners to discuss the quotas for the Decreto Flussi. The data presents two main limitations when estimating effective demand for migrant workers. First, it only reflects intended new hires over a three-month period; since overseas recruitment can take much longer (see section 4.2), a longer timeframe would be necessary to fully account for foreign hires. Second, the data shows intended new contract activations rather than actual headcounts of new hires. Because migrants are often employed on short-term contracts (see section 3), there can be a significant difference between the number of contracts and the number of workers.

- **Labor Market Intelligence (LMI) – SLI.** LMI is an open dashboard that integrates multiple sources—SISCO, ISTAT LFS, Unioncamere Excelsior, INAPP Atlante, and ESCO—to provide insights about labor market trends for over 600 occupations, with territorial disaggregation. An insightful feature is the focus on skill requirements by each profession and an analysis of proximity between occupations which can inform job

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[70] (Unioncamere, n.d.-a)
[71] (Unioncamere, n.d.-b)

mobility opportunities.[72]

- **SIISL (Sistema informativo per l'inclusione sociale e lavorativa).** Launched in 2023 and opened to job seekers and firms in December 2024, SIISL is a national digital platform—managed for MoLPS by the National Institute for welfare - INPS (*Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale*), —that, among other things, supports job search, matching and linkages to training opportunities. SIISL helps job seekers with CV creation, skills assessment, and identifying upskilling or reskilling opportunities. It collects job offers from i) Regional Labor Agencies through integrated information systems with SIISL; ii) private companies, which can also consult candidates' profiles and CVs; iii) municipalities and public local employment centers; iv) entities providing job vocational training. SIISL uses AI and generates an "affinity" index to suggest matches between jobseekers and jobs. While coverage does not reflect the whole vacancy universe, SIISL can supply near-real-time vacancy signals and geographic/occupational patterns for shortage monitoring. The platform also tracks training effectiveness, employment, and skill gaps through analytics; and it is interoperable with other national databases managing labor and social benefits. SIISL is available to Italian citizens and foreigners legally residing in Italy, including people receiving the social minimum income support (ADI), NASpI or Dis-Coll unemployment allowances, and other vulnerable people. However, it requires a good level of digital literacy to navigate it and to access it as the registration can only be done using the so-called "digital identity" (*SPID*). [73]

- **Sistema Informativo Statistico delle Comunicazioni Obbligatorie.** SISCO is the online system through which enterprises submit mandatory communications of instatement, extension, transformation and cessation of employment contracts to MoLSP. The system then repurposes the **administrative flow of the communications** into statistical outputs,[74] which are also used by MoLPS to publish quarterly notes and annual reports tracking hires, typology of contracts, and separations by sector/contract/geography. SISCO offers high-frequency insights into realized demand, though it excludes self-employment and some categories. A caveat is that it counts contracts and not "heads"; as a result, if the same person is hired multiple times by the same company, they are counted for each contract rather than as a single employee.[75]

- **ISTAT Labor Force Survey (LFS).** The LFS is the official household survey of labor supply, producing estimates of employment, unemployment, inactivity and hours worked, with breakdowns by sector, occupation and socio-demographics. It is indispensable to gauge slack or tightness of labor markets and to compare native and foreign-born citizenship

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[72] (Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, n.d.)

[73] (INPS, 2024); (ClicLavoro Veneto, n.d.); (MoLSP, 2024)

[74] (INPS, n.d.)

[75] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-h)

groups, complementing demand-side indicators.[76]

- **Atlante del Lavoro (INAPP).** Atlante is a national classification and information system that maps work organization across 24 economic-professional sectors and links areas of activity (ADA) to skills and to statistical classifications (ATECO/CP-ISTAT). It also embeds the National Qualifications Framework[77] that describes and classifies the national and regional repositories of education, training and vocational qualifications and references them to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for comparison. Atlante can be a bridging tool that translates occupational demand into competence requirements and recognized qualifications, critical for aligning shortage lists with domestic training or recognition pathways.

Table 3. Key information systems and uses

System/source	Owner	What it provides	Periodicity / timeliness	How it informs foreign recruitment
Excelsior	Unioncamere–MLPS	Employer forecasts by occupation/province; recruitment difficulty; expected immigrant hires	Monthly/annual	Flags occupations with high unmet demand and expected immigrant hiring
LMI dashboard	Sviluppo Lavoro Italia	Integrated realized and forecast demand; skills/knowledge per occupation	Continuously updated	One-stop view to prioritize occupations/territories and define skill profiles
SIISL	MLPS/INPS	Vacancies, jobseekers CVs, and training offers, with AI matching	Near real-time	Signals current vacancy pressure; supports employer demand evidence
SISCO	MLPS	Job contract flows: activations, cessations, transformations	Monthly/ quarterly	Confirms sustained realized demand and turnover by sector/territory
ISTAT LFS	ISTAT	Labor supply and slack by group/occupation	Quarterly/monthly indicators	Benchmarks local workforce underutilization; identifies occupations and sectors where foreign labor concentrates
Atlante (INAPP)	INAPP	Tasks and skills mapping; link to National Qualifications	Continuous	Can align labor shortage lists with competencies and recognition/training routes

Source: Author's elaboration.

Although there is a wealth of high-quality data available, the country does not have a

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[76] (ISTAT, n.d.-a)
[77] (INAPP, n.d.-a)

systematic strategy for officially identifying critical occupations or consistently applying this information in migrant labor planning. Interviews indicate that migrant recruitment efforts through the quota system and Art. 23 channels (particularly the large-scale project), often rely heavily on labor needs assessments provided by industry associations. However, the methodologies underlying these assessments remain unclear. Some associations gather estimates directly from employers within the sector, which can be problematic since, as multiple stakeholders note, many Italian firms—especially SMEs—lack adequate human resource planning and forecasting capabilities. Enhancing the use of official occupational and skills monitoring is important for supporting informed decision-making. SLI's Labor Market Intelligence already synthesizes various data sources to support policy formulation aimed at aligning workforce development with employer demand. Nonetheless, there remains a need for targeted analysis that **integrates robust quantitative methodologies with qualitative insights from comprehensive stakeholder engagement.** This enables cross-validation of evidence, consideration of both cyclical pressures and structural imbalances, and underlaying reasons for shortages;[78] therefore, more accurate identification of trends relevant to immigration planning.[79] For instance, countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and Malaysia combine both approaches to produce lists of critical occupations to highlight strategically important occupations experiencing shortages that cannot easily be filled domestically (see Box 5). Emilia Romagna also serves as an example of the value derived from systematically combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (see Box 4).

Box 5: Demand needs assessment in Emilia Romagna: the Skills Intelligence Tool
Skills Intelligence Emilia-Romagna[80] is an initiative of the Emilia-Romagna Region, implemented by ART-ER under Regional Law 2/2023 on the attraction, retention, and development of highly specialized talent. It aims to strengthen the region's permanent system for anticipating highly specialized skills and informs the annual publications of the regional Talent Observatory.

The **Skills-Intelligence Tool** is an interactive platform that provides timely information on the competencies and professional profiles sought by firms operating in the region's Smart Specialization Strategy domains. It is designed primarily for vocational and higher education providers to help align training pathways with emerging labor market needs.

The tool integrates three data areas: **Job Postings**, capturing online vacancies published

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[78] Occupational shortages can stem from several factors: supply-side issues like a lack of qualified workers or skill mismatches; demand-side challenges such as uncompetitive wages; institutional barriers including regulations or slow recognition of qualifications; and perceptual problems where poor conditions deter candidates. Solutions should match the type of friction, such as training for supply issues, wage adjustments for demand constraints, and regulatory reforms for institutional or perceptual obstacles. (Nico, 2025)

[79] (Nico, 2025)

[80] (ART-ER, n.d.-a; Agenzia regionale per il lavoro Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-c)

in the past 12 months; **New Hires**, drawing on administrative records from the Labor Information System of the Region (SILER – *Sistema Informativo Lavoro Emilia Romagna*) in collaboration with the Regional Employment Agency; and **Skill Needs**, based on planned recruitment reported by firms through Unioncamere's Excelsior system.

A dedicated pillar of **consultation groups** complements the quantitative data with qualitative insights. These forums—bringing together Clust-ER members, employment services, headhunters, chambers of commerce, associations, local authorities, and other stakeholders—discuss evolving skill needs and jointly interpret trends.

The initiative is supported by the European Social Fund+ 2021–2027 and developed with the Regional Employment Agency, Unioncamere Emilia-Romagna, Clust-ER associations, the Big Data Association, MUNER, and technical partner Lightcast.

Box 6: Critical Occupations List

The Critical Occupations List (COL) systematically identifies occupations facing persistent and structural hiring difficulties in the labor market of a country. By distinguishing persistent shortages from transitory recruitment frictions, the COL provides a robust, regularly updatable evidence base **to guide workforce planning, domestic training investments, and the prioritization of mobility partnerships.**

In response to increasing labor shortages, Malaysia's government set up a Critical Skills Monitoring Committee in 2014 to track skills imbalances in its labor market. In collaboration with the World Bank, the committee developed the Critical Occupations List to identify those jobs experiencing major labor market shortages that could be addressed through government intervention. **The COL** (introduced in 2015) **lists *skilled, sought-after, and strategic* occupations** - spanning from mathematicians, actuaries, and statisticians to software developers and electrical engineers – which are **critical for the Malaysian economy's growth, yet difficult to fill.** The data and results are used across **several policy domains:** higher education and TVET planning, employment services, and migration instruments, e.g., informing the Returning Expert Program and broader admissions for critical occupations.

The COL tool employs a precise methodology and necessitates regular recalibration to ensure its ongoing relevance. It is updated annually and built with a mixed-methods process: a top-down analysis of objective labor-market indicators (such as employment and wage growth, and vacancy signals) combined with bottom-up evidence from employer surveys and consultations. Over time the method has incorporated new data sources, including online job postings, to strengthen real-time signals about shortages and skills needs. The tool, however, requires ongoing data improvements and stakeholder

engagement to map diverse job titles to standard classifications and reflect subnational labor-market. **Malaysia's experience indicates that good practice involves maintaining an evidence-based and transparent list, updating it regularly, housing it within a competent technical agency, and systematically engaging employers as well as other public and private stakeholders. These measures help ensure that the COL remains credible, policy-relevant, and responsive to changing skills demands.**[81]

The World Bank has built the Italy's COL on a multi-source, indicator-based methodology that triangulates labor demand signals from the Italian Labor Force Survey, mandatory employer notifications on hirings and separations (*Comunicazioni Obbligatorie*), online job vacancy analytics, and vacancy rate data. **Italy's Critical Occupations List** highlights shortages across 130 occupations, with notable clustering in the northern regions of Italy. Employment gaps are mainly identified in **mid-skilled service and sales workers** (e.g., cooks, waiters, hairdressers, healthcare assistants), **technical trades** (e.g., bricklayers, electricians, metalworkers, mechanics), **and high-skilled professionals** (e.g., telecommunications engineers, physiotherapists, special needs teachers). These gaps are more intense in sectors like **agri-food processing, tourism, and healthcare**.[82]

5.2. Identifying and matching vacancies for migrant workers

Early employer engagement and vacancy identification is a success factor of mobility partnerships promoted by Italy's art. 23 channel. Discussions with private sector representatives on Skills Mobility Partnerships, led by OECD, revealed that many initiatives remain fragmented and limited in scope due to inadequate early employer involvement, which in the THAMM project (involving Belgium, France, Germany and North African countries) led to missed job placement targets.[83] In Italy, the art. 23 guidelines require that project proposals "describe the demand expressed by employers potentially interested in hiring foreign workers trained abroad." This motivates strong employer involvement from the outset.

For employers to participate in overseas recruitment through programs like GSPs, gains must outweigh the costs. Qualitative research indicates that employers aim to minimize training and recruitment costs but are prepared to invest more to secure well-qualified candidates, including those with language proficiency.[84] As the economy shifts toward skill-based hiring, finding talent requires assessing specific abilities - including human and social skills - rather than relying solely on educational credentials. In this setting,

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[81] (H. E. Moroz / World Bank, 2019)
[82] For more information about Italy's COL, please refer to Nico (2025)
[83] (OECD, n.d.-a)
[84] (OECD, n.d.-a)

preselection and upskilling, which relies on collaborations with varied partners in the country of origin, make coordinated programs like GSPs highly valuable for employers. However, employer participation depends on factors like price, delays, and obligations – not just the structural need for workers. Foreseeably, only some employers have the capacity to initiate or join GSPs, with differences emerging between small, medium, and large firms. Prior experience with international recruitment, business collaboration, and navigating legal frameworks also may influence participation.[85]

The Article 23 scheme provides advantages compared to alternative recruitment channels; however, employers encounter significant challenges when utilizing this pathway. Feedback from stakeholders indicates that employers initially respond favorably, recognizing benefits versus the quota system, such as greater flexibility in timing, hiring numbers, and opportunities for structured skills development. Nonetheless, they highlight that engaging employers throughout the recruitment process demands sustained effort and is not always successful. Firstly, employers frequently lack comprehensive information about foreign candidates, which hinders their ability to assess the suitability of the opportunity. Secondly, reliance on unfamiliar agencies in origin countries for candidate matching may undermine trust. Thirdly, complex and frequently updated administrative requirements are discouraging, with many interviewees noting that submitting a *nulla osta* independently is rarely feasible and typically necessitates assistance from labor consultants. Additionally, the obligation to secure accommodation for future workers prior to application further complicates the process (the clearance process includes suitability checks on the housing/accommodation identified by the employer for the worker – refer to sections 5.4 and 7.2.3). Finally, the extended recruitment timeline—potentially up to 12 months from initial employer interest to worker arrival in Italy[86]—poses difficulties for organizations seeking to fill immediate staffing needs.

To reduce disengagement, some pre-departure training programs now require interested employers to sign hiring commitment letters. According to key informants, labor mobility projects succeed when companies and workers both make informed decisions and understand the necessary requirements, timelines, and benefits. A lack of employer follow-through can lead to smaller project scopes or leave visa-approved workers in uncertainty, as seen before. To secure vacancies, for example, a few projects have adopted a selective approach: employers are briefed about their legal responsibilities in the framework of the ART.23 channel, and only those who commit to hiring trained workers by signing a letter can proceed to interviews. A number of leading destination countries have implemented web-based platforms to reduce information asymmetries and engage both

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[85] (Poeschel et al, 2025)

[86] Candidate outreach, pre-screening, and selection, if done efficiently, take about two months. Mandatory training under art. 23 needs another 2–6 months. Entry clearance (nulla osta) may legally be approved within 60 days but often takes much longer. Once approved, the worker books a visa appointment at the embassy, which has up to 30 days to decide.

recruiters and migrant workers on a large scale (see Box 6).

Involving private actors who can represent the interests of employers in Italy's pre-departure training programs may help increase outreach and sustain engagement. The participation of organizations representing labor demand is widely recognized as essential for the success of labor mobility initiatives.[87] To November 15th, 2025, 54 percent of pre-departure training projects have been carried out by entities representing labor demand, such as private recruitment firms and industry groups. The remaining 46 percent has been led by training providers, civil society organizations, or international agencies involved in cross-border mobility. Key stakeholders have expressed positive views regarding the contributions of private labor agencies (APLs) and industry associations as project leads. The prevalence of projects led by these groups—40 percent by APLs and 11 percent by industry associations—illustrates the benefits of leveraging entities with established relationships with firms and expertise in addressing employer needs, including human resources. Experience with skills mobility partnerships shows that sectoral and professional organizations are valuable in finding corporate partners and key decision-makers within companies. Engaging private sector representatives in program design, implementation, and evaluation helps keep initiatives demand-driven and sustainable.[88] Italy's example, however, reveals that not all industry associations are equipped to effectively engage, inform, or address the concerns of interested employers; and other intermediaries may be necessary to promote projects and support informed participation.

In Italy, APLs offer several advantages to pre-departure training partnerships. First, their job placement expertise and developed labor market intelligence helps secure employment opportunities for migrant workers. Second, many APLs also act as temporary work agencies (*agenzie di somministrazione*) and can hire workers before placing them with firms, while relying on an available pool of potential employers, not just one. Third, these agencies have solid experience in managing the clearance request process. Fourth, many of them also cover travel costs for the worker. Finally, and most importantly, workers contracted through APLs have the same rights as direct employees. Despite these advantages, APL services are underused due to a limited market, dominated by a few large players. Incentives and appropriate regulation could help expand and improve these services. Balancing commercial viability and worker protection remains fundamental when adjusting regulatory parameters.[89]

Box 6: Web-based portals as core infrastructure for labor mobility policy
Leading labor-immigrant destination countries increasingly use dedicated web platforms to organize labor migration in a transparent, rules-based and user-friendly way. **These portals**

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[87] (Luthria, 2013).
[88] (OECD, n.d.-a)
[89] (Luthria, 2013)

operate as "single windows" for employers and prospective migrant workers, centralizing information on opportunities, rules and processes, and often linking directly to application tools and support services. This box describes three illustrative platforms:

1. "*New to Denmark*"– **Denmark's entry and residence portal**

New to Denmark is the official portal for foreign nationals who wish to visit, live or work in Denmark or Greenland. It is jointly administered by the Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI), both under the Ministry of Immigration and Integration. The portal is used to codify complex work-permit rules into scheme-specific, stepwise guidance, reducing information asymmetry for both employers and migrants, and supporting compliance-based recruitment.

Features that make information and processes more accessible:

For employers

- Dedicated pages on work schemes such as the Fast-Track Scheme explain eligibility, conditions for different "tracks", processing times, fees and steps.
- Linked tools such as lists of certified employers and downloadable power-of-attorney templates help firms check compliance ex ante rather than through trial-and-error.

For workers

- Scheme pages spell out income thresholds, rights (e.g. job-seeking permits, family accompaniment), limits on job changes, and rules on residence lapses, in plain language.
- Step-by-step descriptions of how to get a "quick job start", with timelines and required actions (biometrics, documents, fees), give a clear roadmap and reduce reliance on intermediaries.

2. "*Make it in Germany*"– **Germany's federal skilled-migration portal**

Make it in Germany is the official website for qualified professionals seeking to work in the country. This highly integrated, multi-language portal combines eligibility self-assessment, visa guidance and real job matching, lowering information and search costs for both firms and migrants. It also provides advisory services run by the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).

Features that make information and processes more accessible:

For employers

- An "Information for employers" track explains, regulations for hiring third-country nationals, and options under the Skilled Immigration Act, including fast-track procedures.
- Employers can access advisory services, webinars, events and case studies showing how companies successfully recruit and integrate foreign professionals, effectively turning the site into a behavior-change tool for firms.

For prospective workers

- A prominent "Quick-Check" tool allows users to enter their profile and intended activity to self-assess their options for working and living in Germany.
- The portal integrates:
    o Job listings with thousands of vacancies targeted at international candidates,

- o Up-to-date information on professions in demand, and
- o Data on work visas and EU Blue Cards issued, signaling realistic demand.
- Structured, multi-language content on application steps, recognition pathways, and integration courses helps reduce uncertainty and reliance on informal brokers.
- Comprehensive information on visa and residence (types, procedure, family reunification, and settlement/naturalization); working in Germany: job-search guidance, qualification recognition, working conditions, and entrepreneurship; living in Germany: language, housing, childcare, the school system, social security.

3. Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) portal – Australia's Labour mobility scheme platform

The PALM scheme portal is the central online interface for Australia's long- and short-term labour mobility programme connecting employers with workers from nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste. It is jointly managed by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), with operational and compliance contributions from Home Affairs, Australian Border Force, and the Fair Work Ombudsman.

The portal explains scheme objectives, eligible sectors, employer approval requirements, worker eligibility criteria, recruitment channels, worker welfare safeguards, and compliance obligations. This digital architecture not only facilitates recruitment but also actively supports fair recruitment standards, provides transparent and multilingual guidance, and equips both employers and workers with accessible compliance tools. Its "Resources" section is a model for codifying obligations and protections and reducing reliance on informal intermediaries. It stands out among global migration platforms for integrating worker welfare, employer compliance, and recruitment integrity in one open-access system.

Features that make information and processes more accessible:

For employers

- Clear Eligibility and Apply sections detail who can become an approved employer, what documentation is needed, and what legal obligations must be met (e.g., accommodation standards, minimum hours, health and safety compliance).
- Step-by-step guidance on the approval and recruitment process.
- Lists of current approved employers, external employment services, and scheme metrics help firms benchmark themselves and understand the recruitment landscape.

For workers

- Outlines eligibility requirements (age, fitness, English levels, background checks, intent to return), workplace rights, and the recruitment process.
- It clarifies that recruitment is exclusively through accredited Labour Sending Units (LSUs) to protect workers from unlicensed intermediaries.
- Cost responsibilities and reimbursement rules which helps workers avoid exploitation and understand their entitlements.

The "Resources" section of the PALM portal consolidates official guidance, templates,

compliance tools, multilingual information, and educational materials for both employers and workers. These resources are central to ensuring that PALM operates transparently and that both parties understand their rights and obligations. Resources for employers are designed to standardize employer knowledge nationally. Resources for workers are translated into major Pacific languages and tailored to low-literacy audiences.

Project leads overseeing Article 23 pre-departure projects are responsible for coordinating candidate-to-vacancy matching— a process that often requires collaboration among multiple partners and relies on low-technology solutions. As stipulated in Article 23 guidelines, hiring firms do not directly prepare training and recruitment activities. Rather, responsibility for the selection process rests with the project lead, desirably with active participation from local partners in the country of origin— including public institutions such as Italian or joint Italian-foreign Chambers of Commerce. Further research is needed to better understand the sourcing and pre-selection methods used in origin countries. For instance, within the Tunisia-Italy corridor, several initiatives work alongside ANETI International, which disseminates job vacancies and pre-screens only those candidates who proactively apply. It is not clear if others are leveraging jobseeker registries to broaden the potential talent pool. The project coordinator subsequently forwards selected CVs to prospective employers and facilitates interviews for candidates shortlisted by the firm. This is predominantly a manual process which adversely affects scalability, as it proves ineffective when managing large volumes of applicants and job postings. Additionally, insufficient transparency regarding local partners' procedures can undermine confidence in the quality of candidate pre-selection.

FGD insight: One group of recruited Tunisians reported that they were primarily recruited through direct outreach by ANETI International agents, utilizing regional employment offices and sectoral training centers. These institutions identified eligible candidates from graduate databases, especially those with forklift operation training. Initial contact occurred by phone, followed by online applications and submission of supporting documents at employment offices. Pre-selection notifications were issued approximately two months after application, with interviews scheduled soon after. The interview process, described as well-organized and accessible by the candidates, included practical and technical assessments, with Arabic and French interpretation services provided. Preparatory support, including stress management and presentation skills, was offered by ANETI representatives and former instructors. Of 40 pre-selected candidates, 15 were retained, with results communicated within one month; selected individuals were required to confirm their participation in the program within three days.

The second group reported that they largely learned of the program through informal channels such as social media and personal networks. The application process required documents submission and, in some cases, translation of documents, which was supported by local partners. General information sessions clarified selection and training details. Pre-selected candidates underwent two-stage online interviews with language assistance. Interview preparation was also available. Prior to departure, migrants received detail information on employment conditions, accommodation

arrangements and administrative procedures to be completed in Italy. Notably, Tunisian workers needed to sign pre-employment contracts with Italian recruitment agency, which outlined job roles, duration, and terms.

Box 7: Use of Artificial Intelligence for Profiling and Matching – The France Travail Model

France Travail—the French public employment service—has positioned itself at the forefront of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve the delivery of employment services. Particularly notable is its ethical-by-design approach to developing and implementing AI tools for profiling jobseekers and matching them with job opportunities, while ensuring human oversight, transparency, and alignment with public service values.

AI Tools Supporting Profiling and Matching

France Travail has developed and tested several AI-powered tools and use cases (*cas d'usage*) to enhance service effectiveness and personalization (France Travail, 2025):

- **ChatFT**: A generative conversational assistant used by over **40,000 counsellors** since November 2024. It supports document drafting and synthesizing jobseeker interactions, enhancing the efficiency and quality of counselling services.

- **Neo (ChatFT module)**: Allows employment counsellors to interact with France Travail information system using **natural language queries**. Following successful pilots, Neo is being progressively rolled out in various regions as of mid-2025.

- **MatchFT**: An AI matching system currently in pilot in **87 local agencies** (Pays de la Loire and Centre-Val de Loire). It enables SMS-assisted pre-selection of candidates for employers and will be rolled out nationally by the end of 2025.

- **ChatFT Écoute**: An assistant under test (deployment expected by late 2025) designed to summarise conversations between counsellors and jobseekers in real-time

These tools improve profiling and matching by offering real-time, personalized recommendations. This reflects a broader trend among public employment services globally, where AI is increasingly used to support vacancy recommendation, skill matching, and early profiling of jobseekers to improve service targeting—while always maintaining human oversight over decision-making.[90]

Ethical Governance and Institutional Oversight

France Travail stands out for its institutionalized ethical governance system, which ensures that AI use aligns with legal, societal, and human values. This framework includes:

- The **Charte éthique de l'IA** (AI Ethics Charter), adopted in 2022, defines seven guiding principles: human oversight and support, transparency, fairness, purpose limitation, data protection, explicability, and inclusion.

- A dedicated **Pôle éthique de l'IA** (AI Ethics Unit), which coordinates all AI projects and validates ethical indicators.

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[90] (OECD, 2024; Schnitzer & Betcherman, 2025).

- A **Comité Consultatif Éthique sur l'IA (CCEFT.IA)**, composed of external experts, researchers, legal specialists, and user representatives.

- An **internal AI usage committee** that includes staff representatives and monitors implementation practices.

Each AI use case is subject to a full lifecycle evaluation, including risk mapping, multidisciplinary testing, and user feedback.

Bias Mitigation and User-Centered Design

France Travail applies a rigorous methodology to detect and mitigate algorithmic biases, including use of high-quality and representative training data; integration of feedback loops to retrain and adapt models in production environments; and engagement of multidisciplinary teams—data scientists, field counsellors, and legal experts—in reviewing and validating annotated data to ensure that interpretations and decisions are balanced, context-aware, and free from systematic bias.

5.3. Financing training and mobility

In Italy, ART. 23 pre-departure training initiatives for labor mobility are primarily financed by project proponents and partners through a combination of public and private funding mechanisms. Among the private instruments available, private joint interprofessional funds (*fondi paritetici interprofessionali*) are particularly significant in facilitating these training programs. These funds are managed by associations consisting of trade unions, employers' organizations, and private recruitment agencies. Annually, participating entities contribute to these funds, thereby supporting ongoing professional development activities such as upskilling and reskilling for workers. The principal funds currently utilized for financing pre-departure training projects include:

- **FONDIMPRESA** - created by Confindustria and major labor unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL), allows any private company with at least one employee to join by allocating 0.3 percent of the compulsory contribution to unemployment insurance for their employees.[91] It includes a sub-fund for SME training needs. In 2024, FONDIMPRESA allocated €5 million (available until December 2025) for professional training through the ART. 23 channel.[92]

- **FORMA.TEMP** - Each year, affiliated APLs contribute 4 percent of each temporary worker's gross wages. Since 2024, APLs have used FORMA.TEMP to fund ART. 23 pre-departure training initiatives.[93]

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[91] (FondiImpresa, n.d.)
[92] (FondiImpresa, 2024)
[93] (FormatTemp, n.d.)

Available **public funds** used for ART.23 pre-departure training projects include:

- **The EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**, which allocates funds to EU Member States through National Programs aimed at managing migration, enhancing asylum procedures, and fostering integration. In Italy, the MoLSP's Directorate-General for Immigration and Integration Policies approved using €13 million from the AMIF 2021-2027 program for the project "*Promotion of Legal Channels of Entry into Italy – Pre-departure Measures and Job Placement of Third-Country Citizens,*" implemented by its in-house Agency Sviluppo Lavoro Italia. Funding will be used mostly to select, train and place at least 3,500 non-EU workers from five different countries. This includes €2 million to target 1,000 Tunisian citizens, part of the 2023 MoU and the subsequent Protocol signed between Italy and Tunisia (see section 4.1).[94]

- **EU Migration Partnership Facility** is a European Union–funded initiative designed to strengthen cooperation and dialogue on migration and mobility between EU Member States and key partner countries outside the EU.[95] This is accomplished through grants, technical assistance, dialogue, and knowledge sharing. The facility has supported several labor mobility partnerships, including Italy's SkillNet project, which aims to create the necessary conditions for establishing a labor migration pathway between Pakistan and Italy.[96]

- **The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+),**[97] has an overall budget of €142.7 billion for 2021–2027 and supports the EU's agenda on employment, social affairs, education, and skills, as well as related structural reforms. In Italy, this fund is managed through both national and regional programs, with the latter also providing co-financing for initiatives such as tuition, living, and travel expenses for vulnerable groups, including migrant workers (see Box 8).

While co-funding mechanisms are available, stakeholders indicate that the costs associated with pre-departure training initiatives remain considerably high and challenging to finance (see table 4). These financial barriers negatively impact employer participation rates, especially when the advantages of this recruitment channel are perceived as uncertain due to concerns about candidate quality and the overall effectiveness of the migration process. This highlights the importance of developing cost-sharing arrangements proportionate to the benefits for each stakeholder, as well as considering catalytic funding—such as development aid at the program's outset—to support proof of concept. Germany's Triple Win program illustrates this well (see Box 9). Demonstrating positive outcomes can help to establish trust among enterprises and

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[94] (SLI, n.d.)
[95] (Migration Partnership Facility, n.d.)
[96] (Migration Partnership Facility, n.d.)
[97] (European Commission, n.d.)

facilitate a gradual transfer of financial responsibility to them. [98]

> ### Box 8: Emilia Romagna: enhancing available fund
>
> The Emilia Romagna region leverages the European Social Fund Plus to fund initiatives aimed at attracting skilled workers from abroad (see Box 3). This includes the use of Skills Intelligence tools, developed in collaboration with various regional agencies and associations.[99] In May 2025, as part of the GOL Program (refer to section 7.2.2), the Region approved an upskilling and reskilling package valued at over €13 million, targeting sectors such as agribusiness, mechanics, textiles, construction, tourism, and healthcare.[100] Additionally, the EU Commission has allocated €61.5 million through the European Social Fund Plus to the Region to further support employment, social inclusion, education, and training.[101]

Table 4. Estimated costs for Art. 23 pre-departure training project

Cost Category	Type of activities	Considered costs	Cost/hour in €	Number of hours	Tot costs	Costs per trainee (with 25 people per class)
Labor market intermediation	Candidate pre-selection (profiling and matching) Facilitating firm interviews and placements	Salary for HR expert Eventual travels to origin country	Variable	Variable		
Training	Designing language-civic-professional trainings Facilities and equipment Delivering training	Facilities, equipment, training materials, meals, salary for trainers and other key staff	€ 250.00	170 hours: 100h Italian, 10h civic, 60h technical*	€ 42,500.00	€ 1,700.00
Mobility	Predeparture orientation	Facilities, equipment, training materials, meals, salary for trainers and other key staff	Variable			
	Passport and Visa fee	Official Stamp required by Italian Embassy			€ 160.00	€ 160.00
	Travel costs	Plane, transport from and to the airport			€ 300.00	€ 300.00
Other costs	Small monetary support to participants	Small pocket salary	€ 90.00		€ 90.00	€ 90.00
Total					€ 43,050.00	€ 2,250.00

Source: Authors' elaboration with information from interviews with stakeholders. **The table shows average costs for different components of a pre-departure training project.** The total of 170 hours comprises the Art. 23 minimum required hours for language and civic courses and a ballpark for technical training duration based on stakeholders' interviews.

The Italian Guidelines for ART.23 pre-departure training projects emphasize the importance of engaging local training partners from countries of origin. This approach is consistent with the GSP model, which advocates for the participation of educators and training resources from both origin and destination countries as a means to promote

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[98] Acosta et al., 2025

[99] (ART-ER, n.d.-a; Agenzia regionale per il lavoro Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-c)

[100] (Agenzia regionale per il lavoro Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-e)

[101] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-h)

financial sustainability, capacity transfer and cost efficiency, as demonstrated by the APTC program in Australia (see Box 9).[102]

More research is needed to understand the extent to which cost-sharing involves workers in pre-departure training projects. According to the Art. 23 guidelines, projects should ensure that participants are not responsible for any expenses related to training. This is in line with International Labor Organization standards on fair recruitment practices for migrant workers, which indicate that all recruitment fees or associated costs, whether direct or indirect, should be covered by the employer. Exceptions may be permitted only when such costs are strictly defined and transparently communicated prior to acceptance of employment.[103] According to research and key stakeholders, sharing costs with prospective migrant workers can enhance their motivation and sustain their commitment during the process, while still considering equity.

Box 9: International experiences on Pre Departure Training Programs

Germany's Model for Co-Financing Skilled Mobility: The Triple Win Program

Launched in 2012, Germany's Triple Win Program is the primary government-led initiative for recruiting healthcare professionals—particularly nurses—from abroad. The program is administered by the German Development Agency (GIZ) in collaboration with the International Placement Services of the Federal Employment Agency.

The Triple Win Program operates on a public-private cost-sharing model, which has proven effective in reducing financial burdens and fostering ongoing commitment from enterprises. For instance, under the "Sustainable Recruitment of Nurses" initiative, healthcare professionals are sourced from countries such as Bosnia Herzegovina, the Philippines, and Tunisia. Employers participating in the scheme contribute through a fee of €5,500 paid to GIZ, in addition to assuming responsibility for travel expenses, accommodation, and costs related to skills and qualification recognition.[104]

This fee partially offsets GIZ's expenses for coordination efforts, professional development, language instruction, and integration courses. Remaining costs are covered by GIZ utilizing state budget allocations, official development assistance (ODA), and European Union financial instruments.[105]

The estimated total expenditure for training a skilled worker recruited via the Triple Win Project ranges from €8,000 to €10,000. Over time, increased financial participation from German private companies and their representative associations, as well as the successful placement of trained migrant workers, have strengthened employers' sense of ownership and motivated further investment in these training programs.[106]

The Australia Pacific Training Coalition

The Australia-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) is Australia's leading initiative for technical and vocational education and training in the Pacific region and Timor-Leste. Its goal is to recruit workers for high-demand sectors and address national and regional labor market needs. Launched in 2007, the project has trained

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[102] (Acosta et al., 2025)
[103] (ILO, 2019)
[104] (Dempster et al., 2022)
[105] (Dempster et al., 2022)
[106] (Schneider, 2023)

over 42,000 workers, and since 2019 has placed over 2,600 workers through labor mobility.[107] The program receives funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through Official Development Assistance (ODA): AU$134 million for phase 1, AU$137 million for phase 2, and AU$192 million for phase 3. This support covers general operations, training course design and delivery, and scholarships for eligible students.[108]

Initially, the financial model depended solely on national governments to cover all expenses, including the recruitment of trainers from Australia; however, this proved unsustainable. In subsequent phases, several measures contributed to reducing the cost per graduate from AU$18,282 in 2019 to AU$14,829 in 2022. Specifically, fixed costs were mitigated through increased scale, while the expansion of short courses and micro-credentials further lowered program costs. Additionally, the approach evolved to prioritize collaboration with local training partners, including the development of trainers within Pacific countries. This not only reduced expenditures but also supported development outcomes, enhanced sustainability and scalability, and enabled greater customization to address local requirements—ultimately fostering improved employment opportunities within the region. Furthermore, APTC is increasingly engaging employers in cost-sharing arrangements for training and encouraging students to contribute financially to their education. The expectation is that the program's quality, relevance, flexibility, and assurance of job placement will incentivize enterprises to invest in training foreign workers.[109]

FGD insight: Some Tunisian migrant workers reported costs for visa documents preparation and submission of about 4,000 TND (1,170 EUR) and language training expenses of 2,000 TND (585 EUR) per person. While some found these costs significant, they considered the services more affordable than other options. The role of local partners to handle documentation and logistics was valued by participants to ease administrative tasks. Others received full support from the project organization and ANETI, incurring no participant costs.

5.4. Enhancing migrant worker entry approval

The process for approving entry of migrant workers into Italy under art. 23 comprises two primary stages. First, the employer intending to hire a non-EU citizen must submit an application and secure clearance (*nulla osta*) for employment. Subsequently, the selected candidate is required to apply for and obtain a work visa. These procedures are sequential, as the visa application cannot proceed without prior issuance of the *nulla osta* (Figure 4). Multiple institutions participate in these administrative processes, including the Prefectures—specifically through migration offices (SUI - *Sportello Unico Immigrazione*)— the MoLSP, the Italian Embassy in the applicant's country of origin, Questura (local police headquarters), the Territorial Labor Inspectorate, and the Municipality, among others (further details provided below).

Fig. 5 Clearance and Visa Process

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[107] (APTC, n.d.)
[108] (Dempster et al., 2022)
[109] (Acosta et al., 2025; Dempster et al., 2022)
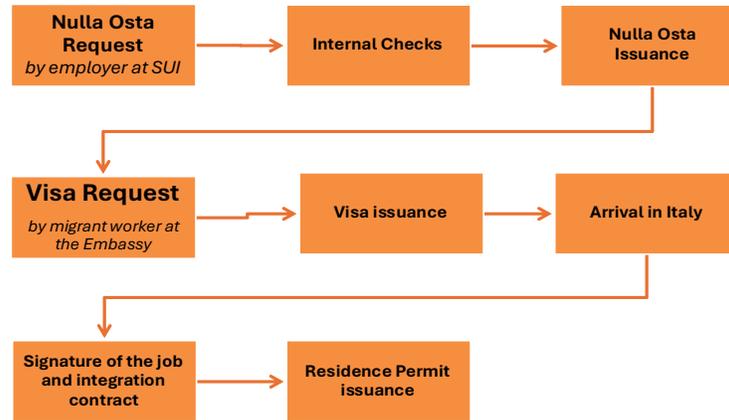
Nulla Osta

The process for obtaining clearance (Nulla Osta) to hire a non-EU worker is managed at the provincial level by the Prefecture's SUI, which coordinates multiple checks.[110] Employers can apply for clearance to the SUI of their province[111] only after the candidate completes the training, as recorded on the MoLSP's *Piattaforma Ingressi Formati all'Estero* (PIF), the online system for workers trained abroad under Article 23. Employers submit the clearance request through the Ministry of Interior's services online portal "Ali Sportello Unico" by providing a self-certificate proving sufficient resources to employ a foreign worker and that they meet all workplace safety and security requirements;[112] and the address of the accommodation arranged for the worker, ensuring it meets housing standards as certified by the Municipality. The application is then reviewed by SUI together with the Territorial Labor Inspectorate, which checks the employer's employment history, tax situation, and overall financial standing,[113] and with the local police headquarters (Questura), which conducts background checks on both the employer and the trained worker to look for any prior unlawful activity or convictions. Once all these authorities confirm compliance, the SUI issues the Nulla Osta.

The SUI is expected to issue or reject clearance within sixty days of receiving a complete application. If documentation is incomplete or requires amendment, the employer has ten days (upon communication from SUI) to provide rectified documents. If procedural deadlines elapse, clearance is deemed granted automatically (*silenzio assenso*)

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[110] Recall that under the Article 23 framework, employers are waived from verifying the unavailability of local workers (a requirement under the quota system).

[111] This can be the Province where the enterprise is registered, the Province of residence of the Employer or the Province where the work will be developed.

[112] Employers affiliated with industry associations that have signed the Protocol for the Simplification of Procedures for the Entry of Non-EU Citizens into Italy for Employment Purposes with the MoLSP may be exempted from self-certifying their resources. This regulation was implemented to streamline and speed up obtaining clearance.

[113] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-i). The Territorial Labor Inspectorate check does not apply for employers benefitting from the self-certificate exemption (see above).

and is transmitted electronically to both the employer and the relevant Italian diplomatic representation for visa issuance to the worker. In this latter case, if subsequent adverse findings arise from *Questura* and/or eventually from Territorial Labor Inspectorate the authorization may be revoked and employment terminated accordingly. It is important to note that the SUI incurs no penalties for failing to respond within the 60-day period.

In practice, the process of obtaining the Nulla Osta is often much longer. Interviews with experts and stakeholders indicate that this could be due to administrative inefficiencies and limited capacity and resources across SUIs. This affects their ability to complete the necessary checks and manage paperwork for many clearance requests, which bundle both 'extra-quota' and 'quota' system requests, without any prioritization.

Delays in approving migrant entry are also linked to inconsistencies between national directives and local implementation. Experts pointed to limited awareness among SUI operators regarding up-to-date entry regulations and the need for clear internal instructions (known as '*circolare'*) before implementing national policies, including simplifications related to the art. 23 scheme. Hesitation is rooted in weak accountability and fragmented responsibilities among the ministries involved in the process (MoLSP, Ministry of Interior, and MAECI). Although SUIs follow national regulations, they are coordinated by Prefectures at provincial level which often leads to varied practices across territories within Regions.

Progress has been achieved in strengthening inter-ministerial coordination, although opportunities for further enhancement remain. Timely notification of step completion along the *nulla osta* and visa procedures has become simpler due to the newly established interoperability between the MLSP's PIF platform and the information systems of both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through this system, the names of candidates who have completed their training are communicated, which then initiates subsequent bureaucratic steps. However, another opportunity to address inefficiencies might be overlooked. Interviews found that the initial aim of registering candidates and their ID in the interoperable PIF within seven days of forming the training group was to share the list with the local police headquarters and begin security checks early. Yet, it is unclear whether this practice is being followed. Interoperability could also be promoted between the Ministry of Interior's ALI system and consular networks. Currently, SUI operators manually notify consulates of *nulla osta* approval via certified email (Posta Elettronica Certificata), which can cause delays instead of automatic notification.

Visa

Once the Nulla Osta is issued, the prospective migrant worker has six months from training completion to request the work visa at the Italian Embassy or Consulate of the origin country. The Embassy performs two levels of verification over the worker. Internally, within the Embassy jurisdiction, and at EU level (the Schengen check) to verify that the person has not any conviction or been evicted by another EU Member State. If verification result is favorable for the visa issuance, the Embassy informs the SUI office. A new step has been

introduced to address instances where employers, after submitting a clearance request, discontinue the administrative process for hiring a worker.[114] Under the updated provisions, once a positive response is received from the Embassy, the SUI is required to contact the employer to confirm continued interest in employing the migrant worker. The employer must respond within seven days; failure to do so will result in the revocation of the Nulla Osta. If the employer affirms their interest, the visa will be issued accordingly. By law, the visa issuance should happen within 30 days from the visa request;[115] however, the time length to obtain the visa is often longer, with some estimations reporting an average time of about 121 days, from nulla osta issuance to visa issuance.[116]

Arrival in Italy

Within eight days of arrival in Italy, the migrant worker must sign the 'residence contract' *(contratto di soggiorno)*, an agreement between the employer and the migrant employee, and approved by the Prefecture, that formalizes the hiring. The signature may be completed at the front office SUI or electronically by the employer. After the signature, the employee is entitled to request the subordinate work residence permit. The timeline to receive this permit, which enables legal employment and residence in Italy, is uncertain in many cases (see section 7.1).

> ***FGD insight:*** *Migrants found the **visa issuance process lengthy**, which created delays and uncertainty. Some migrants had to postpone personal or professional plans while awaiting confirmation. However, they received support with necessary documentation from the project organization. **Despite visa delays and related costs, participants remained committed and saw the program as beneficial for their long-term professional and personal stability.***

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[114] (Ministero dell'Interno, n.d.-b)
[115] (Ministero dell'Interno, n.d.-b)
[116] (Ero Straniero, 2025b).

6. Pillar II- Furthering Access

Cross-border skills development, recognition and certification is integral to a strong labor migration system, to create opportunities for mobility and reduce the risk of brain waste. Delivering essential technical and vocational training can address skill gaps and support job creation and sustainable economic transformation.[117] The Furthering Access pillar is dedicated to leveraging skills for entry into international labor markets. For destination countries, this involves, prior to worker placement and departure, assessing alignment with occupational and qualification standards; designing and delivering training for reskilling or upskilling, as well as providing language and civics courses, and certifying qualifications, and validating skills. Upon arrival and throughout the integration phase, it encompasses the recognition, verification, and certification of professional skills, along with additional training aligned with relevant occupational and skills frameworks.

6.1. Assessing standards alignment, delivering relevant training and recognizing skills before departure

Systems that facilitate the alignment of qualifications and skills standards between countries of origin and destination are essential for broadening legal labor migration pathways. The operational guidelines for the Article 23 mobility channel establish minimum requirements for training and validating learning outcomes in the country of origin, while allowing discretion for projects to determine preferred training methodologies, content, and tools for endorsing skills (Box 10). This approach supports training design that responds to specific needs, but it lacks standards for aligning qualifications and skills between Italy and countries of origin which could eventually support larger scale mobility and broader opportunities for the migrant worker within the Italian labor market.

Box 10: Training content and certification of Art. 23 pre-departure training programs

The ART.23 Guidelines specify the content of the training program as follows:

- Theoretical and practical instruction tailored to the required competencies, aligned with the national reference framework for occupations and qualifications established by ATLANTE;
- Sector-specific components, including terminology relevant to the field;
- Career guidance and enhancement of soft skills;
- Education regarding workers' rights, as well as workplace safety and security;
- A minimum of 100 hours of A1-level language instruction and at least 10 hours of civic education.

Upon completion of the training, achievement of at least an A1 language level is assessed via a standardized examination, in accordance with statutory parameters. Technical competency and knowledge acquired through vocational training are verified by a certificate of completion,

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[117] (Acosta et al., 2025)

which details the specific skills obtained in accordance with ATLANTE standards.

FGD insight: Tunisian workers in Italy underwent one week of practical training in Tunisia, 80 hours of language training, civic and workplace safety and security courses. Tunisian workers in training in Tunisia were following 6 weeks of pre-departure training on Italian language instruction, life skills, health and safety, labor rights, and technical training.

Employer-specific skill requirements and whether a profession needs a recognized qualification determine the need for technical training and alignment with standards. As noted by many stakeholders, Art. 23 scheme is effective for professions without recognized qualification requirements. In fact, pre-departure training projects' leads noted that employers mainly want workers' skills to match firm standards, regardless of formal qualification recognition in Italy. Such competency assessments are typically done through interviews. Some projects provide a certificate from training providers and employer representatives confirming completed training and acquired skills. While not legally binding, certificates from reputable sources can be valuable in the Italian job market. Instead, practicing regulated professions in Italy, such as social health assistants and nurses, requires accredited training and certification. Where qualification recognition is required, pre-departure projects would need to be arranged for this process.

Time limitations also often impact the training structure, with efforts focused on the minimum required to avoid extending mobility timelines. For instance, although A1 language proficiency is generally seen as inadequate — especially for positions that need specialized technical terms — prolonging language courses would delay departure, which can be impractical for employers facing urgent staffing demands. This is complicated by the requirement that training must be completed before workers can apply for entry clearance and work visas. Similarly, interviews revealed that professional training frequently only covers essentials, mainly emphasizing workplace safety and health protocols. Consequently, migrant workers may require supplementary training in Italy, before assuming their positions, resulting in additional costs and potential delays for both employers and migrant employees.

FGD insight: The Tunisian migrant group revealed that after arriving in Italy and starting their jobs, they were required by employers to complete an additional week of Italian language classes and three weeks of technical training. This was because certain individuals were found to lack necessary job skills. For Tunisians still in training in Tunisia,

another week of training is scheduled to be held in Italy.[118]

Italy does not have a formal process to collaborate with countries of origin on harmonizing professional skill standards, but some projects are setting examples through jointly developed curricula that could eventually support labor mobility arrangements. In Italy, there is no agency dedicated to providing national recognition statements for vocational qualifications from non-EU countries.[119] Although CIMEA handles the recognition of upper-secondary and higher education diplomas, it does not cover vocational qualifications required for accessing work. Still, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) has begun building training capacity in North Africa as part of the Mattei Plan, creating models for co-developed curricula. For example, Eni, AICS, Italy's Education Ministries, and Egypt have recently signed an MoU to establish two technical schools in Egypt—Eni will oversee school management and curriculum development, while AICS will upgrade infrastructure and foster inclusivity. [120] In another initiative, *Tunisie Professionnelle*, funded by €6.5 million from Italy and involving AICS, UNIDO, and Tunisia's Ministry of Employment and Technical Vocational Education, aims to modernize curricula, enhance facilities, improve trainer expertise, and better align education with private sector demands for youth employment.[121] However, these projects led by AICS are not specifically designed to promote international labor mobility.

Box 11: Germany's model to skills recognition for non-EU citizens

Recognition of foreign qualifications plays a crucial role in enhancing labor market outcomes for migrants. In Germany, migrants who received full recognition of their qualifications experienced a 20 percent wage increase and an employment rate 24.5 percentage points higher than that of peers without such recognition.[122] This process facilitates access to regulated occupations that may otherwise be unattainable for migrants. However, the procedure can be intricate and costly, contributing to low application rates. To address these challenges, the Federal Recognition Act (Anerkennungsgesetz) was introduced in April 2012 by Germany to simplify qualification recognition for non-EU migrants. Following this legislative reform, there was a 15 percent growth in recognition applications, a 19 percent rise in employment, and a four percent increase in wages within regulated fields. Notable improvements were also observed in unregulated sectors.[123] As part of the Act, the German government developed a portal for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, providing comprehensive information, guidance, and tools for foreign individuals seeking recognition of their qualifications (see Box 6).[124]

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[118] The questionnaires applied to both groups are available in Annex A2.2. Focus group discussion guide.

[119] A vocational qualification is a formal certification of learning from vocational education and/or training, awarded by a recognized authority, indicating knowledge and skills required for a specific job.

[122] (F. Fasani, European Parliament, 2024)

[123] (F. Fasani, European Parliament, 2024)

[124] (German Federal Government, n.d.)

In 2020 **the Skilled Immigration Act** (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz – FEG) entered into force to **further promote labor mobility in Germany of non-EU skilled workers and professionals, with either a recognized university degree or a qualified vocational training with at least two years of training.** The latter can also enter Germany to look for a job or a training place. The Act introduced an accelerated procedure to enter the country and to get the professional qualifications recognized, with the employer allowed to start the skills recognition procedure on behalf of the migrant worker, who can enter Germany within two months after obtained the visa. As for the skills recognition, the Act introduced two new access pathways:

- **The recognition partnership:** the prospective skilled workers do not have to initiate the skills recognition procedure or to obtain a notice of partial recognition prior to entry Germany. The granting of a visa is linked to the obligation for the worker and the employer to apply for the recognition procedure after entry; the existence of the employment contract and of a vocational/academic qualification recognized by the country of training; and to the A2 level of German language proficiency. After entry, the migrant worker will obtain a residence permit valid for one year and extendable up to three years.
- **Skills analysis:** Individuals seeking recognition of their foreign qualifications may be eligible for a residence permit of up to six months in Germany to complete a skills analysis, if deemed necessary by the competent authority. This is contingent upon demonstrating at least an A2 proficiency level in German.[125]

6.2. Recognizing qualifications and skills in Italy

In 2013, Italy implemented the National System for Certification of Competences (NSCC) to formally acknowledge qualifications and skills gained through formal, non-formal, and informal learning experiences.[126] These certified competences provide individuals with nationwide access to the labor market. The Italian Vocational and Qualification Framework serves as the principal mechanism for the promotion, utilization, and portability of these qualifications and competences within the NSCC. Its structure references the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which seeks to establish a common reference point for enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications across Europe. The Italian framework comprises two parallel pathways for acquiring vocational qualifications: i) Academic and vocational education at the upper-secondary level, overseen by the national education system; and ii) Vocational Education and Training (VET), administered by regional authorities. Moreover, Italian law divides professions into two categories:

- **Unregulated professions** can be practiced without a specific educational certificate, and foreign qualifications do not require formal recognition—

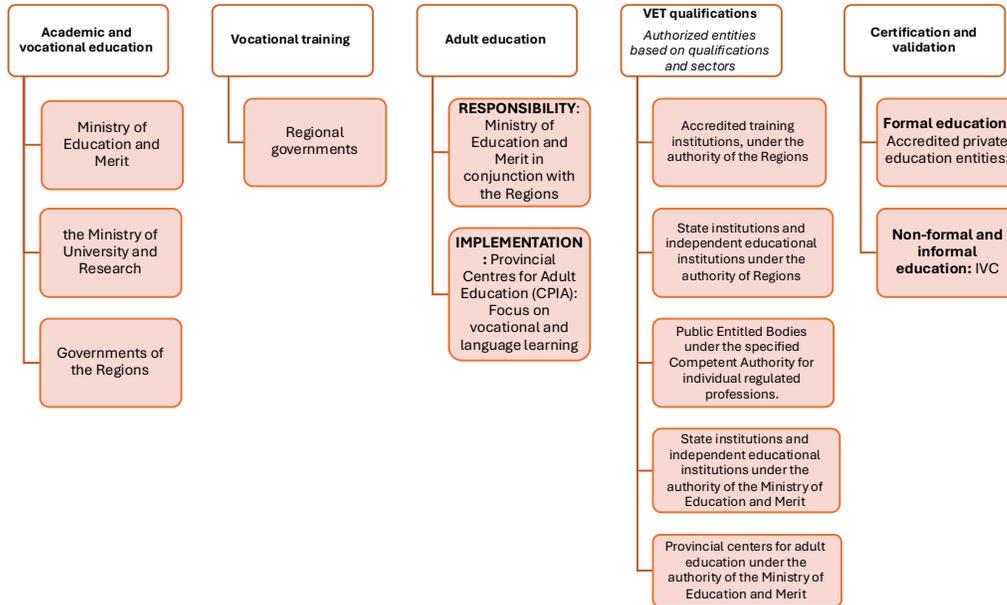[123] (F. Fasani, European Parliament, 2024)
[124] (German Federal Government, n.d.)
[125] (Anerkennung in Deutschland, n.d.)
[126] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-j)

competences are assessed directly by the employer.

- **Regulated professions** require defined qualifications (including VET) and training (like internships or state exams). Licensure is mostly managed by national authorities (ministries or professional bodies), with particular cases managed by Regional Councils. Foreign professional titles must be recognized by the relevant Italian authority.[127]

Figure 6: Institutions and entities for vocational qualifications

Academic and vocational education	Vocational training	Adult education	VET qualifications *Authorized entities based on qualifications and sectors*	Certification and validation
Ministry of Education and Merit	Regional governments	**RESPONSIBILITY**: Ministry of Education and Merit in conjunction with the Regions	Accredited training institutions, under the authority of the Regions	**Formal education:** Accredited private education entities:
the Ministry of University and Research		**IMPLEMENTATION**: Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA): Focus on vocational and language learning	State institutions and independent educational institutions under the authority of Regions	**Non-formal and informal education:** IVC
Governments of the Regions			Public Entitled Bodies under the specified Competent Authority for individual regulated professions.	
			State institutions and independent educational institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Merit	
			Provincial centers for adult education under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Merit	

The decentralized system for Vocational education and training and skills recognition challenges skills portability in Italy. Regions are responsible for planning, managing, and delivering training through regionally accredited private institutions, public, provincial, and municipal training agencies.[128] They fulfill these responsibilities in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the MoLSP, facilitated by the State-Regions Conference. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is also subject to regional variability. Formal learning is recognized and certified by public and accredited private education entities; for example, the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy has streamlined online procedures for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, including for non-EU nationals. Instead, non-formal and informal learning is assessed, recognized and validated at regional level.

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[127] (CIMEA, n.d.)
[128] (INDIRE, n.d.).

Notably, a qualification obtained in one region is not immediately and easily recognized in another region, which restricts labor mobility within Italy. To facilitate the recognition process among Italian regions, the National Institute for Public Policies Analysis (INAPP) has developed the Atlas of Work and Qualifications (*Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni – ATLANTE*)[129], a reference framework designed to compare qualifications issued by different Italian regions and the degree of equivalence. The *ATLANTE* is used as an occupations and skills mapping tool, without any enforcement function.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is conducted via the Identification, Validation and Certification (IVC) services. These are operated by a variety of entities in compliance with regional procedures.[130] The process involves three stages: 1) Identification, when work experiences' evidence is gathered to assess skills; 2) Validation, during which interviews or practical tests verify skills and evidences to issue a validation certificate for CV's boost or reduction of training hours; and 3) Certification, allowing direct admission to the final exam if all required skills are validated.

However, several challenges persist within these services. Service provision remains highly heterogeneous across regions and providers, with some regions like Emilia Romagna and Piedmont outstanding for their good practices (see Box 12). Many services operate without stable funding and lack adequate operational capacity. Additionally, operators are not always specifically trained to address the unique needs of foreign workers.[131] Furthermore, foreign workers are not consistently informed about the availability of these services. As a result, effective access remains limited; only 3 percent of migrant workers have received recognition of their previous work experience. [132]

A number of EU Member States are working to simplify how foreign skills and qualifications are recognized, which can significantly boost migrant integration into the workforce and support economic goals.[133] In the last decade, the EU has aided these efforts by providing tools to Member States, such as the Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals, launched in 2017 and updated in 2020 (see Box 13). More recently, in 2023, the European Commission recommended that EU countries streamline and accelerate the recognition of qualifications for skilled individuals from non-EU countries, aiming to improve access to key job sectors.[134] Building on this, the EU's 2025 Union of Skills strategy introduced the Skills Portability Initiative, which leverages the Europass Digital Credentials and the European Qualifications Framework to support cross-border recognition of qualifications and micro-credentials, including voluntary referencing of third-country frameworks.[135] Country-level initiatives across Europe and abroad signal that this is priority area for socioeconomic objectives (Box 14).

Box 12: Skills recognition and vocational training in Emilia Romagna

The Emilia Romagna region has implemented various initiatives and innovative tools on skills recognition and vocational training, also thanks to the collaboration between public and private entities. Among these:

- In 2020, with funding from the Italian Government administered by the Italian Development Cooperation Agency, the Emilia Romagna Region led the **PEMA project**[136], which aimed to train prospective Albanian workers for the agrifood sector. These initiatives delivered technical assistance to Albania, enhancing vocational education and training (VET) in agriculture through partnerships among private companies seeking skilled labor, vocational training centers, and public entities.

- **Orient-ER**[137] is the tool created to support citizens in identifying skills and qualifications needed for a specific job, the respective training(s) to undertake and the available training services in the region. Managed by the regional administration in collaboration with accredited training bodies, ORIENT-ER guarantees compliance with the regional qualifications' standards and alignment with labor market needs. The database collects initial vocational education, programs for higher technical education, specialization courses, training programs required for access to specific regulated professions financed or authorized by the Region. It also provides updated lists of new courses, expiring opportunities, and authorized programs outside public funding. The tool is a key instrument for upskilling, reskilling and labor attachment in the region.

Box 13: Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals

The Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals[138] has been developed by the European Commission for the **recognition of qualifications of non-EU citizens, such as migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors who are staying in the EU countries.** This multilingual online platform is accessible to national authorities responsible for reception and integration of refugees, reception

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[129] ATLANTE is a comprehensive map that analyzes work activities across 24 economic-professional sectors and identifies the skills necessary to perform them. (INAPP, n.d.-b)

[130] (INAPP, n.d.-c)

[131] For example, assisting a foreign worker might require foreign language skills, multicultural competencies, and familiarity with the legal and procedural frameworks of workers' countries of origin.

[132] (Council of Europe, n.d.-a)

[133] (European Commission, n.d.)

[134] (Cedefop, n.d.-a)

[135] (European Comission, 2024)

[136] (Pemproject, n.d.)

[137] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-i)

[138] (European Commission, n.d.-c)

centers, employment services, education and training advisers, social services and CSOs that provide services to non-EU citizens. A questionnaire **gathers data** related to skills, formal and informal qualifications, and work experience in order to provide **personalized guidance** on diploma recognition, skill validation, further training, or accessing employment support services. The tool has been improved lately, offering several different modules that can be used separately according to the user's needs. However, it has been conceived for professionals who provide support and/or orientation to migrants, therefore it requires expertise and cannot be self-used by the migrant workers themselves.

> ### Box 14: Innovations in Skills recognition initiatives around the world[139]
>
> **France**'s Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) offers a user-friendly pathway for migrants and refugees to convert prior work and volunteer experience into full or partial diplomas and professional certifications. Targeted initiatives—VAE sans frontières and Parcours VAE migrants—extend access to displaced populations, while the 2023 pilot of VAE inversée aims to actively engage candidates and reduce initiation barriers. The centralized France VAE platform (launched July 2023) streamlines navigation through an intuitive digital interface and provides support for non-native speakers, improving accessibility and throughput. These features underpin effective use of micro-credentials and targeted bridging modules by ensuring prior competences are formally recognized.
>
> **Canada** has long pioneered bridging programs for internationally trained professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, engineers), combining competency-based assessments with modular training to meet licensing requirements while enabling work experience. Pilots of alternative credential recognition reduce reliance on traditional document validation, allowing migrants to demonstrate skills directly. Bridging models commonly integrate language upgrading, cultural orientation, and practical placements, with stackable micro-credentials that articulate into formal qualifications. This approach accelerates labour market entry for those with partially recognized foreign credentials and supports progression without full requalification.
>
> **Germany's** recent reforms place employers at the center of recognition, enhancing flexibility and speed. Recognition partnerships under the amended Skilled Immigration Act (effective March 2024) allow qualified migrants to start working immediately while committing to complete formal recognition after entry. Employers, in turn, agree to provide support during the process and allocate time for the migrant to acquire any missing qualifications identified through individual assessments (including through internships). In parallel, companies and trade unions are engaged across the Job Turbo Initiative, reinforcing demand-driven pathways that value practical experience.

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[139] (OECD, 2025)

7. Pillar III - Fortifying Access

Enhancing the protection and integration of labor migrants in destination countries can mitigate the risks of unequal access to information, rights, and protection for migrant workers.[140] Effective migration systems should aim to balance mobility with the protection of individuals, minimizing risks related to participation in international labor markets while ensuring their well-being, social protection and integration in the destination country.[141] The Fortifying Access pillar focuses on processes that support the protection and integration of labor migrants at destination. This includes: i) activating support services and networks; ii) providing employment and labor support services; iii) establishing grievance redress mechanisms; iv) facilitating access to welfare and social insurance benefits.

7.1. Activating integration services and networks

Arrival in Italy

The first step of the integration pathway for first-time non-EU migrant workers is communicating arrival into Italy to the Prefecture/ SUI Office. This step must take place within eight days of arrival and includes signing the "residence contract" (*contratto di soggiorno*) (see section 5.4). Those planning to stay longer than one year, must also sign the "integration agreement" *(accordo di integrazione)*, which is a mandatory integration process requiring adult foreigners (over 16 years of age) to fulfill certain obligations aimed at full integration and to avoid, in the most serious cases, the penalty of expulsion. It works as a point-based system requiring non-EU citizens to earn at least 30 points over two years, with 16 awarded at signing. Learning Italian culture and language, especially achieving A2 spoken level, is essential. The agreement is also signed by the Prefect or a delegate. [142] Upon validation of the contract and integration agreement by SUI, the worker is permitted to initiate the residence permit application process at the post office.

The residence permit is essential for migrants to access public services, as it enables them to receive a permanent *Codice Fiscale_*—the required identifier for taxes, benefits, healthcare registration, banking, and mobile services. While waiting for the permit, migrants get an application receipt and temporary tax code meant to grant basic service access, though inconsistent practices persist; for instance, some banks demand the physical permit to open bank accounts despite regulations. Non-EU migrants without proper documents may become invisible to public services, and risk falling into irregular residency and losing fundamental rights.[143] Delays in issuing permits are common, sometimes occurring close to expiration, as noted by researchers and interviewed training project

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[140] (World Bank, 2023).
[141] (Acosta et al., 2024).
[142] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-n)
[143] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-e)

leads.

FGD insight: *Interviewed trained labor migrants showed permit issuance delays, which in turn prevented them from getting permanent tax IDs.* **Salaries were paid in cash, creating inconvenience for both migrants and employers.** *However, migrants still received formal monthly payslips (busta paga) documenting their social security contributions, which employers directly paid to the tax agency.*

Migrant workers were frustrated by not being able to directly follow up on their residence permit applications, *since the process was tied to the Prefecture at the recruitment agency's legal address, which was in a different region, far from where they actually worked and lived.*

Despite challenges, ***participants reported a positive reception and support upon arriving in Italy.*** *They were assisted by the recruitment agency or employer with administrative procedures, and several described that "everything was perfect."*

Integration services

The Italian model for migrant integration seeks to foster attachment and empowerment within the territory and community of residence.[144] Italian State's commitment to supporting the integration process in coordination with local governments is executed through strategies embedded in the **2021-2027 Multiannual Agenda on Labor Integration and Social Inclusion,** spearheaded by the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policies**. This agenda promotes access to active labor policies, skills training linked to the world of work, and social and occupational inclusion of women and vulnerable categories, while ensuring a territorial perspective by means of multilevel and multi-actor governance for migrant integration actions and services, and stronger institutional capacity.

Migrant workers have access to a variety of socio-economic, educational, and cultural services to help with their integration, but these services vary widely across territories and are often not well-coordinated. These services are primarily delivered by civil society organizations, diaspora groups, local councils, and municipalities (Figure 7). Provision is typically project-based, with eligibility determined at the regional or local level based on national and EU regulations. The 2021-2027 Multiannual Agenda, in fact, emphasizes the need for multi-level governance at vertical (national government, regions and municipalities) and horizontal levels (CSOs, unions, industry associations, diaspora, others). Fragmented institutional frameworks create difficulties for the long-term implementation of a programmatic approach. This also constrains opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience and requires migrants to put in additional effort to become aware of available services. Furthermore, weaknesses in service access and delivery arise from

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[144] (International Labour Organization, n.d.-e)

relatively limited investments in integration policies, especially when compared with other EU Member States. [145]

Figure 7: Stakeholders involved in the integration process of migrant workers in Italy
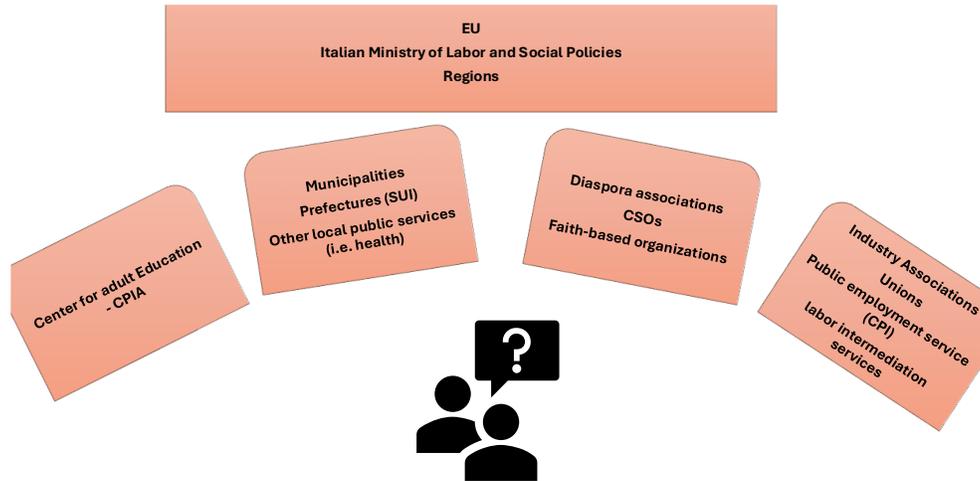
This emphasizes a need for a more structured support system, especially for newly arrived migrants, who often lack the networks and knowledge to access various services. Overall, prolonged administrative delays negatively impact the socioeconomic integration and wellbeing of migrant workers in the short and long run. Coordinated approaches that ensure the integration of migrant workers can positively impact labor market outcomes and the broader economy in the long term.[146] **One-stop-shop** models, where services are co-located or coordinated to address multi-dimensional needs, could be highly effective for this population. This can be enhanced by employing a **case management approach,** which designs personalized support based on the unique challenges and needs of each client (see Box 15). Additionally, **cultural and language mediators**, frequently members of the **diaspora**, can play an essential role in facilitating communication and fostering trust between service providers and migrants. [147]

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[145] (Basso et al., 2025)
[146] (Petrelli et al., 2025)
[147] (Petrelli et al., 2025)

Box 15: Good practices on integrated services

THE CASE MANAGEMENT APPROACH[148]

Case management is a client-focused, goal-oriented process for evaluating needs and arranging access to social services. A social worker or similar professional usually helps clients with personal or family issues through an agreed plan. These processes depend on collaboration among local and national authorities that can support the institutionalization of services and scale up; CSOs that can bridge the gaps for vulnerable groups and offer guidance to navigate the systems; cultural mediation that can ensure accessibility; and multilateral organizations that can contribute by providing early-stage financing. Service integration and case management for migrants can importantly improve overall service delivery effectiveness and migrant integration. The following are two examples of services' delivery using the case-management approach.

COMMUNITY CENTERS AS "ONE-STOP-SHOPS" IN GREECE [149]

Since 2017, Greece's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has established 250 Community Centers across 12 regions to act as "one-stop-shops" for social services and benefits. These centers cater to diverse groups including minimum-income recipients, impoverished households, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and Roma communities. Serving as local reference points, they connect people's needs and requests with available social programs and services. In addition, the centers offer various application support, psychological assistance, and coordination of local services, with mobile units reaching remote areas. (Planiteros, 2023 in World Bank 2024)

COMBINING ONE-STOP-SHOP AND CASE MANAGEMENT: THE EXAMPLE OF SPAZIO COMUNE[150]

Spazio Comune is an initiative by UNHCR developed in 2022 in cooperation with five Italian municipalities (Turin, Milan, Rome, Naples and Bari) aimed at supporting the integration of refugees, vulnerable and economic migrants into the local community through multifunctional hubs. It uses a flexible case management model focused on the individual's needs and promotes coordinated service delivery and management by co-locating different services "under-one-roof" through partnerships between public and non-profit actors at the local level. The programs costs are co-shared by the Municipality and UNHCR, and funding can be complemented by other sources, like national government and/or the EU AMIF.

Spazio Comune features as a network at national level, coordinated by local municipalities and implemented by partners, mainly NGOs. The intake process can be either directly by visiting the center, or indirectly through referral from the municipality. Typical services offered include legal aid, employment support, housing, community matching, language courses and referrals to other public services. Frequent monitoring of service implementation and beneficiaries' outcomes is a standard procedure; longer-term follow-ups are also practiced.

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[148] (Petrelli et al., 2025)

[149] (Marzi et al., 2024)
[150] (Petrelli et al., 2025)

The scale and coverage remain modest. During the second half of 2024, the Municipality of Milan managed 3,700 cases, mainly from Egypt, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Peru. Instead, the Municipality of Bari assisted an average of 120 people per month during 2023, providing services like housing, employment, social inclusion activities.

Diaspora communities contribute to building inclusive, resilient societies beyond sending remittances. They connect institutions in their origin and destination countries and often influence policy through creative campaigns. In Italy, diaspora organizations are nationally represented via the Italian National Coordination of Diasporas for International Cooperation (CIDCI), a third-tier network that links regional groups, provides a formal structure for engagement, and strengthens diaspora involvement in national policy, including the Mattei Plan.[151] Migrants seeking legal work in Italy can benefit from organized diaspora activity. Throughout Italy, migrant associations offer guidance and support on administrative procedures for entry, residence, and employment. Some have created multilingual, user-friendly websites with detailed information on labor mobility pathways for prospective workers.[152]

FGD insight: *Several migrant workers received informal support and guidance from fellow Tunisians who had been living in Italy longer, which helped them navigate everyday matters more easily. Importantly,* **participants reported no experiences of discrimination or racism.**

Long-term protections for migrant workers should include ensuring social security is portable, so all benefits earned across countries are accumulated. Italy has signed several social security portability agreements with many non-EU countries, including Tunisia, countries of the former Yugoslavia, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. Furthermore, grievance mechanisms are essential to provide migrant workers with a permanent, safe and accessible channel to voice concerns, prevent exploitation, and seek remedies for human rights violations. Italy has some mechanisms in place, including labor courts and support from trade unions and civil society organizations and legal frameworks (Law No. 187/2024), but barriers like lack of awareness, language difficulties, and little understanding of labor rights limits utilization.[153] The Australian PALM Scheme can serve as an example for enhancing grievance mechanisms effectively (Box 16).

Box 16: Good Practice Example

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[151] (IOM, 2025)

[152] See for example: https://italiahello.it/articolo/come-prepararti-per-cercare-lavoro/ and https://jobclinic.it/

[153] (Ethical Trade Initiative, n.d.)

Grievance Mechanism under the PALM Scheme

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme enables workers from Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to take up temporary or longer-term employment in Australia, primarily in the agriculture, meat processing, hospitality, and aged care sectors. The scheme is designed to meet Australia's labour shortages while supporting skills development and remittances in participating countries.

Within this mobility framework, PALM has developed a grievance mechanism anchored in the Deed of Agreement (Section 36) and the Approved Employer Guidelines. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) manages the process in close coordination with other agencies such as the Fair Work Ombudsman, Australian Border Force, and state workplace regulators. A key innovation is the option for workers to request support from their sending-country government representative (e.g. labour attaché or country liaison officer), which enhances trust and facilitates smoother communication. The mechanism also provides for anonymous reporting and whistleblower protections, allowing not only workers but also third parties (e.g. co-workers, community representatives, or officials) to raise concerns about exploitation or misconduct without fear of reprisal.

How It Works in Practice

The mechanism is designed to be accessible, confidential, and solution-focused, with clear timelines to ensure accountability:

- **Lodgment**: Workers or third parties can submit grievances by phone, email, or form. Anonymous submissions are accepted.

- **Acknowledgement**: Within three working days, DEWR provides confirmation, explains the process, and outlines expected timelines.

- **Assessment and Triage**: Grievances are prioritized according to urgency. Serious safety or criminal concerns are referred immediately to the relevant authorities, while less severe issues may be redirected for informal resolution with the employer.

- **Resolution and Mediation**: For non-critical cases, DEWR may convene an early resolution meeting within 10 working days, bringing together the worker, employer, DEWR officials, and—if requested—the sending-country representative.

- **Investigation and Remedies**: If mediation fails, DEWR conducts a fact-based investigation, aiming for resolution within 20 working days. Possible remedies include corrective action by the employer, redeployment of the worker to another approved employer, or referral to enforcement bodies.

- **Review**: Workers who remain dissatisfied may seek an internal review or escalate to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

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Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024)

7.2. Enhancing integration through continuous language learning, labor market inclusion, and housing access.

The anticipated length of stay significantly influences the extent to which migrants engage in integration efforts within the destination country. Numerous studies indicate that migrants who determine or anticipate a long-term stay from the outset are more likely to invest in learning the host country's language.[154] In line with this view, Italy uses a 'pact' model to handle integration with foreign nationals. Through the "integration agreement" (see section 7.1), non-EU migrants agree to take steps toward full integration within two years. Meanwhile, the State pledges to uphold fundamental rights and facilitate the integration process in collaboration with local authorities. Indeed, foreign workers with legal regular residence in Italy, along with their families, are entitled to the same rights as Italian citizens, although some services are subject to eligibility requirements. This is an essential element of living and participating in the host society and building cohesive societies.[155] However, a recent change in the law made family reunification in Italy more restrictive: most foreign nationals must now complete two consecutive years of legal residence before applying.[156]

Integrating migration management with tailored labor market and social protection services can lower costs and improve welfare for both migrants and host communities. Effective labor market integration is expected to reduce welfare dependence, raise per capita income and productivity as well as fill labor gaps - especially as Europe's population ages.

Integrating migrants into labor market is challenging due to changing migration patterns and obstacles like language barriers, skill downgrading, and legal obstacles.[157] Proficiency level in the host country language directly influences opportunities in labor market, further education, and social integration and civic participation;[158] access to dignified housing provides stability, security and sense of belonging to the migrant, and deepened labor market inclusion improves job trajectories and contributions to the host community. In Italy, non-EU migrants are at a disadvantage in these three areas. Evidence shows that limited language proficiency significantly penalizes immigrants' labor force participation and employment in the Italian market;[159] migrants are often discriminated in accessing housing and over half of them live in overcrowding places; finally, migrant workers are more often overqualified, unemployed or inactive, with respect to Italian nationals.[160] Access to the labor market remains complex and challenging especially for migrant women

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[154] See Geurts and Lubbers (2016) and Isphording (2015)

[155] (European Commission, 2016)

[156] Law 187/2024 established in December 2024.
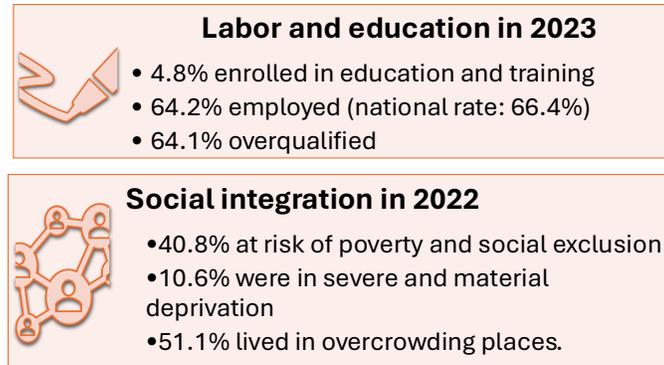
[157] (Fasani, 2024)

[158] (Bossavie et al., 2024)

[159] (Ghio et al., 2023).

[160] (Council of Europe, n.d.-a).

(see Box 17).

Figure 8: Integration statistics of adult non-EU nationals in Italy[161]

Labor and education in 2023
- 4.8% enrolled in education and training
- 64.2% employed (national rate: 66.4%)
- 64.1% overqualified

Social integration in 2022
- 40.8% at risk of poverty and social exclusion
- 10.6% were in severe and material deprivation
- 51.1% lived in overcrowding places.

Source: EUROSTAT

Box 17: Improving labor market integration for migrant women

In Italy, as in much of Europe Union, foreign women face notable disadvantages in the labor market relative to both male counterparts and native women. As of January 2024, the employment rate for non-EU women in Italy stood at 46.5 percent, considerably lower than that of non-EU men, which was 75 percent. The inactivity rate among non-EU women reached 47 percent, exceeding that of EU women (37 percent) and Italian women (42 percent), a disparity likely due to unpaid care responsibilities and family obligations that disproportionately impact migrant populations in the absence of extended family support and robust social infrastructure. Migration patterns further affect these outcomes; women who migrate following their partners are observed to have lower employment rates compared to those arriving beforehand. Additionally, migrant women with higher levels of education and formal qualifications are less likely to secure employment, underscoring persistent challenges related to the recognition of foreign credentials and professional skills.[162]

In Italy, migrant women are predominantly engaged in domestic and care-related occupations, such as cleaning and personal assistance. In 2024, women represented nearly 88 percent of new contracts within this sector, with non-EU nationals comprising 43 percent (164,179) of these new hires. Acknowledging the essential contributions of migrant women, the Italian Government has, for the first time in 2024, allocated migration quotas specifically for women, reserving up to 40 percent of total quotas related to subordinate work and family and social-health care assistance for female workers.[163] Their significant presence in the care economy, however, exacerbates the gender pay gap among migrants, carrying a wage penalty of approximately 6 percent compared to other sectors. Opportunities to access other occupations remain limited. For instance, within the art. 23 pre-departure training channel—which aims to recruit for middle-skilled roles—only 9.5 percent of trainees have been women.[164]

The Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, through its 2021-2027 Multiannual Agenda on Labor Integration and Social Inclusion, has been implementing targeted actions and policies to enhance

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[161] (European Commission, 2023).

[162] (ILO, 2023)

[163] (MoLSP, 2025)

[164] (Integrazionemigranit/ Gov. Italiano, n.d.)

labor market participation and integration of migrant women, as well as their protection and prevention of exploitation and discrimination. Initiatives are planned around seven pillars:

- **Personalized active labor market policies** through individualized socio-labor integration plans, tailored to the specific needs and backgrounds of foreign women, and delivered in collaboration with employment centers, local authorities, and CSOs to ensure proximity and accessibility of services. Comprehensive support including job orientation, legal advice, and mediation are provided by one-stop-shops and local help desks.
- **For vulnerable groups**, such as women victims of trafficking, exploitation, or gender-based violence, the Ministry establishes dedicated pathways offering psychological support, legal assistance, and housing solutions, while integrating gender-sensitive approaches in anti-trafficking and anti-exploitation programs with the involvement of public institutions, CSOs, and businesses.
- In the area of **domestic and care work**, regular employment contracts are promoted, with incentives for employers to formalize work relationships.
- **Language and skills training** are offered on flexible schedules (such as morning classes and online options) to accommodate family responsibilities, alongside digital literacy and labor rights awareness to empower women and prevent exploitation.
- **To support work-life balance**, the Ministry provides childcare services (for example, babysitting during training), housing support, and measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life; as well as support for micro-entrepreneurship and self-employment, particularly in sectors with high female participation.
- **Awareness, anti-discrimination, and empowerment initiatives** are promoted at national and local level, with the support of bilingual and accessible informational materials, to combat stereotypes and enhance the social value of migrant women's work.
- **Monitoring, evaluation, and data collection** are systematically conducted applying gender-lens, including project monitoring and evaluation, and the dissemination of good practices.[165]

International experiences on labor integration of migrant women[166]

OECD countries increasingly recognize that migrant women face distinct challenges, including caregiving responsibilities, limited information access, and greater risks of exploitation or overqualification. Many nations have implemented targeted measures to improve labor market integration for these women.

- **Finland:** The new Integration Act prioritizes employment for migrant women, giving municipalities more responsibility for tailored services and skills development.
- **Germany:** The MYTURN project helps migrant women gain vocational qualifications and secure sustainable jobs; the Job-Turbo Action Plan focuses on quick job placement with continued language and skills training, particularly targeting fields like care and services where women are predominantly employed.
- **Ireland:** Spouses and partners of General Employment Permit and Intra-Corporate Transferee holders can now work without a separate permit, enhancing labor market access for mostly women.
- **South Korea:** Immigration policies allow spouses of skilled workers to take non-professional jobs, such as domestic work and caregiving, if they meet criteria like language proficiency.
- **Luxembourg:** Additional support targets women as a vulnerable group with better employment access, anti-discrimination efforts, and community initiatives focused on gender equality.
- **Mexico:** Campaigns and digital platforms, including "Mexico te emplea" provide job listings, training, and labor rights resources to help empower migrant women and increase their formal employment.

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[165] (Council of Europe, 2025)
[166] (OECD, 2025)

7.2.1. Italian language training

Italian pre-departure training (TUI art. 23) provides migrant workers with A1-level language skills, which are an important first step but insufficient for effective integration. Upon arrival, migrants with work residence permit of one year or more must reach A2 as part of the integration agreement, a requirement for long-term residency and deemed necessary for better access to social and labor services, and for workplace safety. A2 level is lower than the standards set by other major migrant-receiving countries, such as Germany. Although demand for language training in Italy is higher than in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain, participation rates are much lower. This is in part explained in that language courses are not mandatory for migrants in Italy; attendance depends on individual choice. Migrants are motivated to participate mainly when seeking a long-term residence permit, which requires an A2 level certificate.[167]

> *FGD insight: Most interviewed Tunisians who arrived in Italy via ART. 23 felt the A1 level from project courses was inadequate for confident Italian communication. However, they saw no need to enroll in further language classes, believing their skills would improve through work and daily life.*

Box 18: Language-focus integration programs - international experiences

Targeted programs that combine language training with personalized integration plans improve migrants' employment and earnings more than one-size-fits-all approaches. The European Union's Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027[168] recommends targeted language training and sector-specific language skills to meet immediate needs in professional environments.[169]

Evidence demonstrates a positive correlation between host country language skills and labor market success among migrants, underscoring the central role of language proficiency in socio-economic integration.

The reform of **Finland's integration program** in 1998 led to increased participation in immigrant-targeted training, much of which focused on language development more than on traditional active labor policies. This reform resulted in a 47 percent increase in earnings and 13 percent decrease in social benefits over a ten-year period for the migrant group participating in targeted language courses.[170]

Similarly, a **Swedish initiative** offering more intensive language instruction and employment support than the standard integration program doubled employment rates from 15 percent to 30 percent upon program completion. The Sweden's Establishment Programme[1] (which became

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[167](Basso et al., 2025).
[168] (European Commission, 2020).
[169] (Council of Europe, n.d.-a).
[170] (J. Nielsen Arendt et al., 2021)

mandatory in 2018) helps new immigrants age 20–65 learn Swedish, find jobs, civic orientation and become self-sufficient over two years. The program is offered by municipalities and must be accessible within three months of registration as a resident. Courses are free of charge and tailored to individual needs, including literacy training for those lacking basic reading and writing skills. The curriculum emphasizes communicative competence for everyday life, employment, and civic participation, and is often combined with vocational training or work placements, ensuring that language learning is not isolated but embedded in professional contexts. Participants also receive financial support for living expenses, housing, children, and travel related to job opportunities.[171]

In Italy, the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA) serve as principal providers of Italian language instruction for migrants up to the B1 proficiency level. These public institutions provide free language training and operate province-wide, often in network with other educational and vocational training organizations. According to the Art. 23 guidelines for pre-departure training programs, project proponents are encouraged to partner with CPIAs to offer Italian language courses in migrants' countries of origin. This approach aims to promote continuity and progression toward achieving the A2 level through the CPIA network upon arrival in Italy. [172] As of November 2025, out of 70 approved pre-departure training projects, 8 listed CPIA as partners.[173]

Continuous language learning after arrival is often hindered by coordination issues between pre-departure training and the CPIA network, as well as resource limitations. Stakeholders interviewed noted that pre-departure projects rarely inform CPIA of worker arrivals in advance, making it difficult for CPIA to plan enough courses. This challenge stems mostly from unpredictable timing of entry clearance and visa issuance (see section 5.1.4). Furthermore, CPIAs often face funding and staffing shortages during enrollment surges. **CPIA's focus on in-person classes limits flexibility, with little leverage of digital solutions that could expand remote learning and accessibility.** To address this, the MLSP's DG for Migration and Integration Policies has recently provided EU-AMIF funding to strengthen CPIA's role in pre-departure measures, training, and orientation in countries of origin, as well as to improve integration governance and expand training for non-EU migrants in Italy.[174]

7.2.2. Labor activation policies

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[171] (European Commission, n.d.)
[172] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2023)
[173] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-e)
[174] See Avviso Pubblico 10/04/2025 and Avviso Pubblico 23/05/2025

Labor policy regulations generally apply to both Italians and migrants, although there are certain exceptions for migrants. Migrant workers can apply for a residence permit for job-seeking purposes up to sixty days before their current permit expires, as long as they are registered with the local public employment center (*Centri per l'impiego* - CPI) and are actively searching for work. Holding this type of residence permit allows unemployed migrants to receive the same unemployment benefits, job search assistance, and access to passive labor policy services as Italian workers. However, interviews found that there is no systematic process to track migrant workers' employment status, making the timely activation of measures difficult.

Often CPIs encounter several challenges to provide adequate services to migrants. CPIs have limited capabilities in dealing with migrant workers, such as providing easy – to-understand communication and in a language other than Italian. In 2021, only 11 percent of the total 540 CPIs had dedicated personnel and language cultural mediators to support migrant workers. Notably, migrants access more basic services, such as job search guidance, while Italians could benefit more of services for reskilling/upskilling, internships, work placement and employment incentives.[175] To address this, the MoLSP launched a €600 million plan for the period 2020-2026 to strengthen and improve the operation of CPIs in order to ensure quality of services and decrease disparities among regions, including training for CPI's workers.[176] Closing the gap in supporting labor market transitions for migrants is crucial given their higher likelihood of entering the informal economy and being trapped in low-skill jobs.[177]

The MLSP's 2021-2027 Multiannual Agenda on Labor Integration and Social Inclusion outlines priority actions to address informal employment, advance skills, support upskilling and reskilling, and prevent discrimination. Aligned with these objectives, the "Guaranteeing Workers' Employability" program (GOL Program), a €5,4 billion action for 2021-2025, seeks to improve employment services that boost employability and reduce unemployment, especially among vulnerable groups such as NEETs, the working poor, and recipients of unemployment or minimum income support.[178] As of January 31st 2025, 3.2 million unemployed benefitted from the program, of which 15 percent were foreigners.[179] By profiling beneficiaries, the program provides five distinct pathways that combine training, job placement assistance, and opportunities for professional growth.[180]

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[175] (ILO, 2023)

[176] (Italia Domani, n.d.)

[177] (Corbanese and Rosas, 2023)

[178] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.-l; International Labour Organization, 2024)

[179] (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2025)

[180] The five pathways are: labor market reinsertion, upskilling, reskilling, labor and inclusion support, and collective reallocation.

Multi-actor approaches to addressing migrants' labor integration and occupational mobility challenges are also available but with limitations. Established over a decade ago, the Territorial Networks of Services – which include local authorities, employment services, education providers, social partners, businesses, and other organizations - aim to coordinate stakeholders in supporting lifelong learning and worker retention in the labor market. These networks, structured in each region and autonomous province, offer services such as guidance, vocational training, and skills validation based on local needs and regional legal principles (see example Emilia Romagna in Box 19). However, their implementation has been hampered by factors such as limited stakeholder awareness, insufficient strategic leadership, fragmented governance, inadequate data-sharing systems, and resource constraints. Some networks operate primarily on a project basis with ad hoc funding, and struggle to maintain long-term sustainability and coordinated cooperation.[181]

Good practices in integrated labor and social services are available at the EU level (see Box 20)**, but also illustrated by the Italian PUOI program and the FORWORK project that have supported vulnerable migrants.** The PUOI program (*Protezione Unità a Obiettivo Integrazione*) aims to promote labor market integration for refugees, beneficiaries of international protection and special protection in Italy by combining protection with personalized pathways to employment integration. Promoted by the MoLSP using EU AMIF funds, the program's actions include vocational training, job matching, and support services delivered through collaborations across public institutions, CSOs, and private employers.[182] Similarly, FORWORK combined individualized support with placement and training services for labor market and social integration of asylum seekers. Implemented in the Piedmont region by the Regional Labor Agency also through collaborations across public and private no-profit actors, the program focused on prior learning recognition, language – civic – professional training, assessing skills and work experiences. Specific professionals like job mentors, teachers and educators, language and cultural mediators contributed to the delivery of the program by also using the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals (see Box 13 in section 6.2) to map asylum seekers' qualifications, skills and work experiences, and to draft the CV for a more targeted and effective pathway into employment.[183]

Box 19: Labor activation policies in Emilia Romagna: the Active Network for Work
The Emilia Romagna Regional Law n.14/2015[184] mandates the collaboration between social, health, employment, and training services - together with local business sectors - to support vulnerable individuals to overcome unemployment, social or health issues, access jobs and become autonomous. Aided by the Social European Fund Plus, Emilia Romagna Region created and coordinated the "Active Network for Work"[185] (*Rete Attiva per il Lavoro*) composed by public services and accredited private agencies. This program targets unemployed people, including all migrants' categories, from refugees, asylum seekers to economic migrant workers.

> The network provides a six-month program that combines various interventions and services, customized to each worker's needs to help them find employment. Workers can select from options such as counselling, traineeships, certifications, training, and job matching, offered by either CPI or accredited private entities. If someone is still unemployed after six months, they may request a new personalized program or extend their current program for another six months.

> **Box 20: Enhancing migrants' labor market integration in other European countries**[186]
>
> Several European countries have implemented specialized programs and services within their public employment services to foster the integration of migrants into the labor market. These initiatives aim to address both skill development and social inclusion, ensuring that migrants can access employment opportunities effectively.
>
> **Sweden** has introduced a dedicated "fast track" program designed for migrant workers. This pathway includes a comprehensive assessment of educational and occupational competencies, in-company training courses, and personalized job search assistance. The program has demonstrated tangible results, with approximately 48 percent of participants securing employment upon completion.
>
> **Portugal** offers integrated placement services encompassing counseling, vocational guidance, training, and employment subsidies. In addition, the public employment center provides targeted services for migrants and refugees, such as Portuguese language courses (levels A2 and B2), cultural mediation to support daily life and job search activities, and entrepreneurial skills development courses.
>
> **Denmark** applies a "step model" (or transition model) to facilitate gradual labor market integration for migrants and refugees. The process begins with a four- to eight-week phase focused on identifying individual skills while providing Danish language instruction. This is followed by an internship in a company and additional language lessons, culminating in eligibility for employment incentives.

7.2.3. Housing access

Italy's widespread housing issues present significant obstacles for both migrant workers and employers. The housing sector displays substantial regional imbalances and persistent affordability challenges exacerbated by price fluctuations and constrained

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[181] (Cedefop, 2024)

[182] (PON Inclusione/ Min. Lavoro Politiche Sociali, n.d.)

[183] (Regione Piemonte, n.d.)

[184] (Regione Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-a)

[185] (Agenzia regionale per il lavoro Emilia-Romagna, n.d.-a)

[186] (ILO, 2023)

supply in metropolitan centers.[187] Since Italian law mandates employers to provide suitable accommodation for prospective migrant workers by *nulla osta* application (see section 5.4), the difficulty of finding appropriate housing can affect an employer's choice to hire a migrant worker from outside the EU.[188] At the same time, quality housing is essential for a migrant's pathway towards autonomy and integration in the host country, yet this group often faces more restrictive barriers to access.[189]

Extensive research highlights the significant challenges and inequalities that migrants face in accessing the real estate market in Italy. These difficulties are attributable both to high housing costs, which affect Italians and EU citizens as well, and to discrimination from landlords.[190] Studies conducted within the European Union, including Italy, indicate that native populations may sometimes restrict migrants' opportunities in the housing market, limiting their access to residences in non-ethnically segregated areas.[191] Additionally, the proportion of migrants residing in substandard or overcrowded conditions is twice as high compared to Italians.[192]

Ensuring equitable and resilient housing development necessitates coordinated strategies across governance levels. As part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Italian Government is strengthening public housing construction, housing and urban regeneration policies.[193] **Furthermore, various housing solutions have been experimented in Italy by CSOs, social cooperatives, public administrations, and networks of local authorities within projects targeting migrants.** While **temporary and emergency accommodation** provides an immediate response, offering safe shelter and essential services (especially to migrant women and children), it risks turning into a prolonged stay if not accompanied by a holistic intervention towards autonomy. **Traditional and innovative social housing** is based on affordable rental accommodation units managed by public or social private entities, aiming to ensure housing stability and the possibility to build autonomy. However, there is a scarcity of available units, and it is difficult to access them for those with very low incomes or complex administrative situations. **Co-housing and shared living solutions** can reduce isolation and enhance integration, but challenges may arise in conflict management and the need for ongoing social support. Accompaniment pathways and cultural mediation services are transversal to all above mentioned solutions. The effectiveness of these solutions depends on the continuity of support and the ability to tailor interventions to the specificities of territories and beneficiaries.[194]

Box 21: Public Social housing in Emilia Romagna[195]
The Emilia-Romagna Region has implemented measures to safeguard the right to housing. The Region has introduced a €300 million plan focused on redeveloping its public (ERP) and social (ERS) housing assets.

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[195] (Regione Emilia Romagna, 2025)

This initiative aims to renovate currently unoccupied public housing in need of refurbishment, enabling prompt reassignment to individuals within the medium and lower-middle income brackets. As an unprecedented measure among regional governments, it incorporates extensive collaboration with local stakeholders and social partners under the Pact for Work and Climate. Of the total funding, €200 million will be secured through a subsidized loan from the European Investment Bank, with the remaining €100 million provided by regional resources.

Box 22: International innovations to expand migrants' access to adequate housing

Across major migrant-receiving countries government-led innovations expand migrants' access to adequate and affordable housing, complementing traditional social housing or cash assistance, and in collaboration with local authorities. The following illustrates innovations that apply market-shaping instruments, digital tools, and rights-based enforcement.

Athens, Greece — "Curing the Limbo" (Urban Innovative Actions)[196]
The Municipality of Athens piloted a city-backed social rental model that intermediates between refugee households and private owners of vacant flats. The city offered guaranteed tenancy management, basic maintenance, and light incentives to de-risk participation, while integrating housing with language training, employability support, and neighborhood engagement. This combination mobilized underused stock and addressed stigma by demonstrating successful, supported tenancies.

Ireland — "Offer a Home" (local-authority pledge scheme with recognition payment)[197]
Government communications and a dedicated portal invited households to pledge spare rooms or vacant units for beneficiaries of temporary protection. Local authorities, working with civil-society partners, handled activation and case matching, while a tax-free recognition payment rewarded hosts and stabilized placements. The structured workflow—intake, inspection, matching, and monitoring—improved coverage outside major cities and made participation administratively feasible.

Basque Country, Spain — "Bizigune" Empty Homes Program[198]
The regional government, through its public housing company (Alokabide), signs multi-year usufruct/lease agreements with owners of vacant dwellings, guarantees rent and unit upkeep, and sublets at regulated, affordable rents to low-income households, including migrants. By pairing credible public guarantees with professional management and targeted outreach, Bizigune systematically converts idle private stock into social rental supply at scale.

New York City, United States — Proactive fair-housing enforcement[199]

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[188] Accordingly, several art. 23 pre-departure project managers are making efforts to assist employers in identifying appropriate housing prior to initiating the project, as confirmed by interviews.
[189] (Fondazione Compagnia San Paolo, 2021)
[190] (Università di Bologna, n.d.)
[191] (Fasani, 2024)
[192] (International Labour Organization, 2023)
[193] (Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze, n.d.)
[194] (Fondazione Compagnia San Paolo, 2021)
[195] (Regione Emilia Romagna, 2025)
[196] (European Urban Initiative, n.d.)
[197] (Government of Ireland, 2023)
[198] (Alokabide, 2021)
[199] (New York City Commission on Human Rights, n.d.)

Under the NYC Human Rights Law, the Commission on Human Rights deploys paired testing against landlords and brokers, issues penalties and remedies, and conducts targeted outreach. Enforcement explicitly covers discrimination based on national origin and immigration status and is complemented by guidance to industry actors—reducing discriminatory gatekeeping that disproportionately impedes immigrant households' access to rentals.

8. Migrant Journey

8.1. Focus Groups Discussion Main Findings

As part of the assessment of labor mobility systems between Tunisia and Italy, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gather direct insights from individuals participating in pre-departure training mobility projects (see section 2.3).

- **FG1**: This group consists of Tunisian migrants currently residing and working in Italy, all of whom completed both pre-departure and post-arrival procedures as part of the labor mobility program. Their reflections centered on the practical aspects of integration, employment conditions, and the administrative challenges faced in Italy.

- **FG2**: This group consists of Tunisian workers chosen for the labor mobility program who are undergoing pre-departure training and have not migrated yet. Their input focused on their expectations, preparation, and views regarding the recruitment and training process. They provided insights based on what they learned from institutional briefings and training sessions, though these perspectives have not yet been shaped by real-life experiences abroad.

The discussions aimed at capturing migrant experience on recruitment, training, migration, and integration processes. The key insights are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Pre-Recruitment: Motivation/decision & application

Both groups demonstrate a shared emphasis on economic advancement and skill development as key drivers for migration. While these priorities are consistent across the migration cycle, the perspectives differ in depth and immediacy. Trainees (FG2) articulated forward-looking aspirations shaped by institutional messaging and training, whereas migrants (FG1) reflected on their motivations through the lens of lived experience, confirming many of their initial expectations while also acknowledging the challenges encountered. This contrast underscores the importance of aligning program design with both the anticipatory needs of prospective migrants and the practical realities faced by those already integrated into the host country's labor market.

Recruitment

The recruitment process was generally perceived as structured and well-supported by institutional actors in Tunisia and Italy. Both groups underwent multi-stage interviews aligned with their qualifications and perceived recruitment mechanisms as effective in facilitating access to employment opportunities abroad. However, improvements in communication and expectation management could enhance the experience for future participants.

Pre-departure orientation

While training structure was the same across both groups of interviewees (following the Art. 23 Guidelines), differences in implementation led to somewhat different experiences. The relevance or intensity of the Italian course, the provision of financial support for one group and cost-bearing by the other group, and timing of logistical challenges, were key differences in how interviewees from two different pre-departure projects experienced the recruitment and training processes.

Departure, arrival and integration

The experiences reported by migrants upon arrival in Italy reflect the transition from preparation to settlement within the migration cycle. Initial support with administrative procedures, continued job orientation, and access to accommodation contributed to a generally positive reception and facilitated early integration. Informal peer support and the opportunity to improve language skills on the job further eased adaptation.

Upon arrival in Italy, most migrants were required to undergo additional language and technical training that was neither communicated in advance nor clearly described. Throughout this period, participants did not consistently receive any salary or financial compensation; however, accommodation and meals were provided, and a few individuals reported receiving payment for one week of the training.

The unanticipated training requirements, coupled with delays in the residence permit process, generated uncertainty and stress, revealing deficiencies in communication and procedural transparency. These issues emphasize the necessity of seamless coordination between pre-departure orientation and post-arrival support, especially regarding legal documentation and employment readiness.

Despite these issues, migrants expressed satisfaction with their employment and a strong intention to remain and progress in their roles, indicating a successful—though not without complications—entry into the integration phase of the migration cycle. They appreciated the stability, opportunities for skill development, and potential for career advancement that their roles in Italy offered.

8.2. Migrant Journey Maps

A Migrant Journey Map provides a structured visualization of the end-to-end experience of a migrant within a labor mobility program, capturing actions, touchpoints, and support mechanisms at each phase. It is useful for aligning stakeholders around the actual sequence of processes, identifying enablers and gaps, and informing operational improvements. This section shows two Migrant Journey Maps which reflect insights from each of the two FGs. The maps are organized into four migration cycle stages—Pre-recruitment, Recruitment, Pre-departure, and Departure/Arrival/Integration (for FG1)—each detailing the migrant's steps (from online application through technical interviews and training), the institutions involved (e.g., ANETI International), and an experience timeline with sentiment indicators. Side panels present the migrant profile and a synthesis of "Key insights and opportunities."
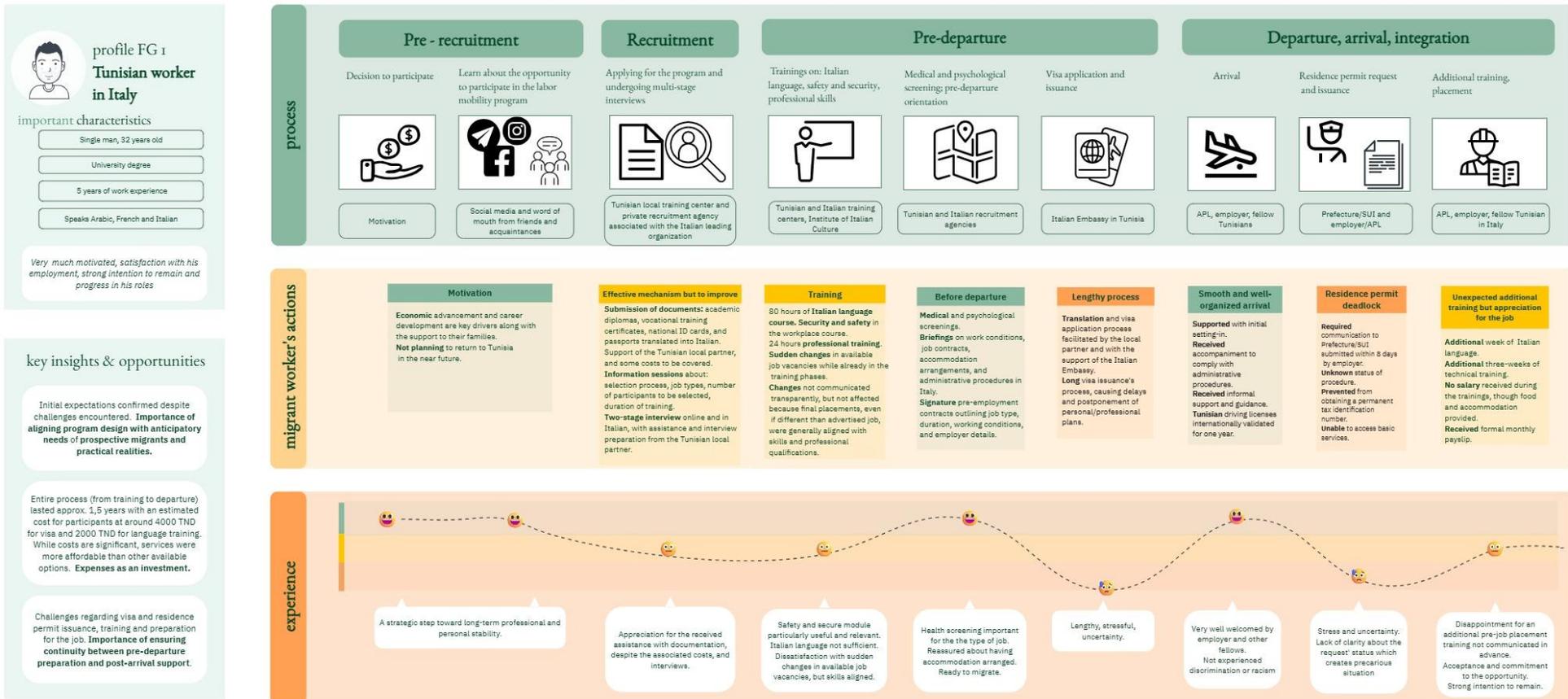
profile FG 2
Tunisian worker in training in Tunisia

important characteristics

- Single man, 30 years old
- Vocational training degree
- 1 to 3 years of work experience
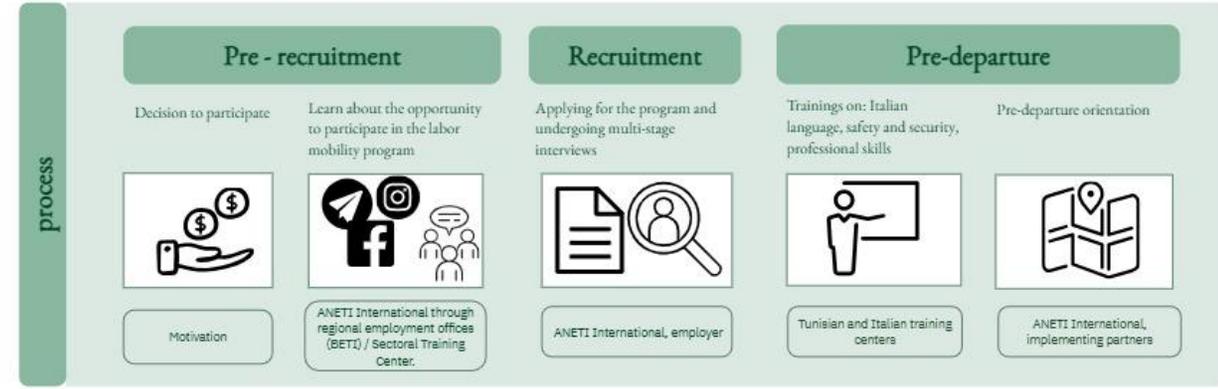- Speaks Arabic, French and Italian

Very motivated by the prospect of improving his living standards, increasing his income, and enhancing his skills through employment opportunities abroad.

key insights & opportunities

Significant and structured support provided by **ANETI International and implementing partners**, ensuring clear communication and guidance throughout each step of the mobility process.

A free **comprehensive training package** — Italian language, life skills development, health and safety at work, labor rights awareness, and technical preparation — considered **highly effective** in enhancing readiness for employment abroad.

Provision of **free services** throughout the recruitment process and a **monthly grant** to help participants covering part of transportation/accommodation costs during the training period, as important **enablers to participate in work mobility pathways.**

process

Pre - recruitment

Decision to participate
Motivation

Learn about the opportunity to participate in the labor mobility program
ANETI International through regional employment offices (BETI) / Sectoral Training Center.

Recruitment

Applying for the program and undergoing multi-stage interviews
ANETI International, employer

Pre-departure

Trainings on: Italian language, safety and security, professional skills
Tunisian and Italian training centers

Pre-departure orientation
ANETI International, implementing partners

migrant worker's actions

Motivation
Economic advancement and career development are key drivers along with the support to their families.
Better employment opportunities and working conditions compared to those offered by the local private sector

Effective mechanism
Online application through ANETI International platform using CV template.
Submission of documents: Curriculum Vitae, academic diplomas, vocational training certificates, national ID cards.
Information sessions about training process (component and duration);
Signing of an engagement letter for fixed-term recruitment contract.
Two-steps technical interview with assistance and interview preparation from ANETI International.

Training
110 hours of **Italian language course at A1 level**, included module focused on professional vocabulary.
Security and safety in the workplace course.
60 hours **technical forklift training.**
A three-day **life skills course.**

Before departure
Sessions on civic education, **cultural and professional adaptation, Italian law.**
Sessions on **labour rights and administrative procedures** to be completed upon arrival in Italy.

experience

A strategic step toward long-term professional and personal stability.

Appreciation for the assistance provided by ANETI International during the application process, as well as for the valuable support and guidance offered throughout the interview stage.

All trainings highly useful and engaging, providing practical knowledge relevant to their future employment.
Financial support to cover part of transportation or accommodation costs during training appreciated.

Orientation sessions crucial in informing and preparing to adapt quickly and effectively to the host country.

9. Spotlight Tunisia

9.1. Overview: labor market and mobility trends in Tunisia

Tunisia's slow growth and demographic transition are resulting in important labor market pressures. By the end of 2024, real GDP was still below its pre-covid level, with a year-to-year growth of 1.4 percent, and unemployment stood at 16 percent, while participation remained at 46 percent.[200] More than 900,000 working-age Tunisians are either unemployed or discouraged inactive.[201] Of the approximately 12 million inhabitants, **60 percent are in working-age** (15–59 years), but this ratio is declining. The share of individuals aged 60 and above rose from 11.6 percent in 2014 to 16.9 percent in 2024, and the **average annual growth of total population was just 0.87 percent over the past decade, reflecting a marked fertility decline.**[202]

Job creation has been strongest in mid-skilled technical roles, but employment continues to be challenged by skills mismatches. Occupations for which employment has recently expanded include plant and machine operators, assemblers, skilled agricultural workers, and craft trades. Sectors with higher potential, such as ICT services and automotive manufacturing, have also expanded significantly, employing 24,000 and 90,000 workers.[203] However, employers consistently identify skills mismatches as a leading challenge. Shortages are evident in technical skills such as equipment handling, quality control, and systems analysis, alongside transversal competencies like customer service, communication, and languages. Soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving, and foreign languages are often lacking among job applicants.[204]

International mobility is a steady source of employment opportunities and remittances for Tunisians. Currently, around 566,000 Tunisian migrants live abroad.[205] Emigrants are mostly working-age adults (25-59), and mostly men (69 percent).[206] **Tunisian migrants are relatively well-qualified:** 39 percent had completed secondary education, 35 percent had higher education, and 7 percent underwent vocational training.[207] **Overall, the leading reason for emigration is job search and economic opportunities** (45 percent) – mostly men-, followed by family reunification (32 percent) – mostly women. **Europe is the main destination,** with France hosting just over half (53 percent) of the total, followed by **Italy (14 percent),** and Germany (8percent). Significant **remittance flows,** representing 7.7percent of national GDP in 2024, underline their vital role in the country's economic and social

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[200] (World Bank, 2025a)

[201] (G. Nico, 2025)

[202] (INS, 2025)

[203] (OECD, 2022b)

[204] (OECD, 2022b)

[205] (INS/ONM 2021)

[206] (MEFP, 2025)

[207] (MEFP, 2025)

stability. [208]

In Italy, there were 98,243 Tunisians legally residing as of January 1st 2023. The distribution of permits held by Tunisians (2022) show family reunification as the primary reason for entry (42.5 percent), followed by protection (21.4 percent), and less frequently for work (12.8 percent) and study (8.5 percent). Tunisians mostly reside in four regions: Emilia Romagna (20 percent), Sicily (19 percent), Lombardy (18 percent), and Lazio (7 percent). **Among the Tunisian community, there is a significant gender imbalance**: women constitute 38.6 percent, while men represent 61.4 percent. The employment rate gap is substantial - 67.5 percent for men versus around 20 percent for women - despite growth observed between 2021 and 2022. Family reunification is the prominent migration push factor among women, whereas men's migration is more linked to employment opportunities. **Tunisian workers in Italy are notable concentrated in primary sector** (23.4 percent), frequently engaged in agriculture and fishing; followed by the industrial sector (approx. 18 percent), transport and business services (15.2 percent).[209]

9.2. Legal framework and institutional arrangements in Tunisia for international labor mobility and skills development

Over the years, Tunisia has progressively built a structured and coherent legal and institutional framework to govern the international mobility of its workforce. In 2021, the National Strategy for Employment Abroad (SNEI) was adopted to strengthen labor migration governance, align training systems with both national and international labor market needs, and promote safe, orderly, and regular migration pathways. It positions labor mobility as not only a means of regulating the domestic labor market, but also as a lever for economic and social development through enhanced skills and international cooperation.[210] **The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MEFP)** is the central authority managing the labor mobility governance framework in Tunisia.

Aligning the training system with national and international labor market needs is a key policy priority, overseen by MEFP and training authorities. In line with labor market needs assessed by MEFP, vocational training curricula are developed by the **National Center for Training of Trainers and Training Development (CENAFFIF)** in collaboration with MEFP and the private sector. Once validated, these curricula are transferred to **the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP)** and relevant TVET providers for delivery. With the expectation to enhance global recognition and portability of Tunisian qualifications and strengthen pathways for professional mobility abroad, MEFP is developing a new competency-based normative framework designed to align Tunisia's vocational training system with international standards, particularly those of the European Union and African

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[208] (MEFP, 2025)
[209] (MoLSP, 2023)
[210] (MEFP, 2025)

regional frameworks. Moreover, CENAFFIF has recently added transversal modules like soft skills, CV writing, workplace integration, and basic language training to equip graduates with both technical and employability skills, preparing them for foreign labor markets and meeting global skill requirements. This policy area is supported by the World Bank Group's NEXUS Skills & Jobs for Youth initiative, which aims to increase economic inclusion for women and youth—particularly in agrifood—through soft-skills and employability training aligned with private sector needs to connect training with actual job opportunities.[211]

In the context of Bilateral Labor Agreements (BLAs), the MEFP's Department of International Cooperation and the Directorate General of Overseas Placement and Foreign Workforce (DGPEMOE) lead the negotiation and legal oversight in close consultation with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration, and Tunisians** Abroad, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and relevant sector-specific ministries. Based on these arrangements, BLAs and cooperation protocols with several European and Gulf countries are growing, including THAMM Plus, EU–Tunisia Mobility Partnership, and long-term agreements with Qatar.

Candidate search, pre-screening, and selection for placement abroad is usually supported by ANETI International, the branch of the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI) supporting the international placement of Tunisian jobseekers. In collaboration with ATFP, ANETI International can also deliver additional technical or language training or pre-departure orientation sessions. However, ANETI International currently lacks automated tools for candidate profiling and matching in overseas job placement. While ANETI national is working with the World Bank to develop such a system for faster, more effective, and tailored employment services,[212] upgrading ANETI International could also help it better support various mobility channels and meet the specific needs of destination countries, enhancing Tunisia's ability to connect talent with global labor markets.

The **private sector** also has an **intermediation role in the placement of Tunisian workers abroad.** Private overseas placement agencies must operate under the supervision of MEFP and comply with licensing, monitoring, and reporting requirements to ensure ethical recruitment and worker protection. A list of accredited agencies is published and maintained by MEFP, while informal operators are tracked and sanctioned to prevent Tunisian citizens from being exposed to fraud or exploitation by unauthorized placement networks.

Once Tunisian workers are deployed abroad, the Office for Tunisians Abroad (OTE), through its *social attachés* in the destination countries and by coordinating with both ATCT and ANETI International, provides support to Tunisian workers abroad, ensuring complaints and claims are addressed promptly. It also facilitates migrant reintegration and facilitate

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[211] (World Bank, n.d.)
[212] (World Bank, 2023)

social protection portability upon return.

10.   Summary of Findings

Findings from the Institutional Assessment are summarized in the institutional assessment scorecard. This is based in the diagnostic framework that maps key processes across three core pillars—**Facilitating Access**, **Furthering Access**, and **Fortifying Access**—and three migration phases: **Pre-recruitment**, **Recruitment and Pre-departure**, and **Departure and Integration**. The scorecard shows four types of information:

- **Institutions involved**: actors who have a role in the process assessed.
- **Indicators**: concrete outputs expected from a well-functioning process (e.g., frameworks, agreements, programs);
- **Level of advancement**: categorized using a four-tier system (*Advanced, Emerging, Nascent, Not Yet Available*);
- **Justification**: a concise explanation drawn from the report's narrative and findings.

The classification on the **level of advancement** reflects how developed and operational each process is, considering the presence of regulatory frameworks, institutional mandates, delivery systems, and coordination mechanisms. The goal is to identify areas that are already functional, those requiring targeted improvement, and those that represent clear institutional gaps. The four categories used in the assessment are defined as follows:

Advanced: The process is fully functional and supported by a coherent institutional and regulatory framework. All necessary components—such as legislation, systems, mandates, and coordination mechanisms—are in place and actively implemented. Institutions carry out their roles effectively, and the process is aligned with GSP objectives.

Emerging: Some foundational elements of the process are in place, such as relevant programs, pilot initiatives, or partial legal frameworks. However, gaps remain in terms of consistency, coverage, coordination, or operational scale. The process is underway but not yet institutionalized or fully aligned with structured labour mobility pathways.

Nascent: Initial awareness or interest exists, and some actions or mandates may be present. However, the process is at an early stage of development, with major components still missing—such as policy frameworks, institutional roles, funding, or delivery mechanisms. Implementation is minimal or fragmented.

Not Yet Available: There is currently no identifiable institutional process, policy, or structure addressing the function. No formal mandate, program, or coordination mechanism is in place.

Pillar & phase	Function/ Process	Key actors Involved	Expected output	Level of Advancement	Assessment
Facilitating Access — Pre-recruitment	**Enabling regular labor mobility paths**	Ministry of Interior; MLSP; MAECI.	National legal framework for labor mobility aligned with EU/GSP standards; Legal provisions which enable market-responsive labor migration; Provisions for migrant rights embedded in legal framework.	**Emerging**	Recent law amendments are supportive of market-driven labor mobility channels, but further coordination is needed across governing ministries to enhance operation and effectiveness of such channels.
	Setting the framework of collaboration	Ministry of Interior; MLSP; MAECI; government authorities of country of origin	Bilateral labour mobility agreements with clear objectives which maximize benefit for all; Joint governance for effective enforcement of the agreement, including pertinent coordination structure, monitoring committee and capabilities, and relevant stakeholder inclusion.	**Nascent**	BLAs set broad mobility goals but lack targeted strategies for greater impact. They could focus on shared skill development, address brain drain, and ensure joint responsibility for migrant protections. There is also a need for formal coordination and monitoring systems.
	Conducting labor market needs assessment	MLSP, SLI, UNIONCAMERE, industry associations, Regions.	Periodic LMNA using integrated sources; coordinated inter-agency labor market intelligence; updated Critical Occupations List (COL) that supports foreign recruitment projects; collaboration with sending countries for inputs on their market needs.	**Emerging**	SLI's LMI integrates various data sources to monitor occupations and skills; but there is no production of COLs to inform market driven labor mobility planning. There is no consideration of country of origin's needs.

Facilitating Access Recruitment and Pre-departure	**Identifying jobs and potential candidates**	Pre-departure training project's partnership; SLI; partners in the country of origin	Systematic approach to engaging employers (directly or indirectly); vacancy information used to inform projects; efficient methods to collect and confirm quality vacancies; cross-border coordinated candidate identification, screening and selection which responds to employers' needs.	**Emerging**	Projects led by private sector intermediaries and representatives, and those sponsored by employers can easily access vacancies, especially when targets are small. However, large-scale projects face severe challenges due to a lack of systematic processes.
	Facilitating clearance and visa issuance	Ministry of Interior; Prefectures' local migration offices (SUI); Local police headquarters; Italy's consular representation.	Accessible hiring clearance with minimal bureaucracy; seamless coordination across authorities and interoperable systems; accessible support for worker visa application; clearance and visa approvals provided with set expectations.	**Nascent**	Procedures are well specified, and recent digitalization supports applications. But rules often change and are not easily accessible to employers. While ministerial systems have some interoperability, it is still limited. Improved coordination and governance between national and local levels are needed to streamline approval timelines.
Furthering Access Pre-recruitment	**Skills and qualifications alignment and recognition to meet training needs for both countries**	Ministry of Education and Merit; Regional governments; MLSP; INAPP; other sector-specific authorities.	Training modules and pathways are tailored for the dual track, with coordinated efforts to align skills and qualifications internationally; flexible approaches to training design are implemented to meet diverse employer needs; recognition and validation protocols of informal and non-formal learning are in place.	**Nascent**	Art. 23-related training adapts to employer needs, with the Atlante framework guiding training design. However, no official framework exists for prior skills recognition or standard alignment in countries of origin, complicated by varying occupational standards across Italian regions.

102

Furthering Access Recruitment and pre-departure	**Deliver adequate technical, language training and pre-departure orientation**	Accredited private and public training providers, including CPIA; Regions; non-profit organizations partnering in pre-departure training projects	Training delivered according to employers' needs; Official or systematic institutional collaboration across countries to potentiate training delivery; accredited or recognized local training centers that meet international standards.	**Nascent**	Pre-departure training is frequently provided to meet minimum requirements, with further training planned upon arrival in Italy. There is no official inter-governmental collaboration with Tunisia to use public or private training centers accredited to Italian standards.
Furthering Access Departure and integration	**Ensuring professional skills recognition, verification and certification**	Regions; public and private accredited providers of skills recognition and certification services (IVC)	Recognition of informal and non-formal learning services available and accessible and supportive of further labor market integration.	**Emerging**	IVC services are expanding, but quality and comprehensiveness differ significantly across regions. Services are not tailored to the needs of migrants.
	Furthering training based on applicable occupational standards and skills frameworks	Regions; CPIA; private training providers.	Clear learning pathways are accessible to migrants to further labor inclusion, job performance, and occupational mobility.	**Emerging**	Employers or intermediation agencies in Italy provide (formal or on-the-job) technical training for workers to fill gaps. The CPIA network offers Italian language courses at the A2 level but has limited capacity. Recent funding may help expand these resources.
Fortifying Access Departure and integration	**Activating support services and networks (including diaspora)**	MoLSP; provinces and municipalities; CSOs; diaspora network.	Budget allocations and programmatic tools to support integration services; formal engagement of diaspora organizations;	**Emerging**	MoLSP provides strategies, programs, and funding to support integration services. However, supply of services is heterogeneous across regions. Structures for diaspora communities exist, but their involvement in supporting pre-departure initiatives and integration is still limited.
	Providing employment and labor support services	MoLSP; Regions; local employment centers (CPI).	Integrated actions to maximize socioeconomic inclusion, including through integrated monitoring system, case management or one-stop-shops.	**Emerging**	Effective models—such as coordinated networks, one-stop shops, and case management – which have mostly target vulnerable migrants in certain areas, need to be expanded for a more consistent municipal approach and extend support to non-vulnerable migrants.

11.   Conclusions and Recommendations

11.1. General Recommendations: all pillars

1. **Labor migration as an opportunity.** Recognize labor migration as a strategic opportunity to address Italy's demographic and labor market challenges by shifting from ad hoc, emergency-driven responses to a systematic, forward-looking approach. The formulation of a comprehensive labor migration strategy that incorporates the legal provisions of the Consolidated Act for Migration (TUI), enhances triennial planning, and aligns with demographic, economic, and social inclusion goals of the country has the potential to promote regular and transparent channels for labor mobility, thereby facilitating their expansion and enhancing overall effectiveness.

2. **Strengthening governance and coordination mechanisms** to enhance information sharing, align service standards, and enable early identification of bottlenecks that cut across mandates (Interior, Labor, Foreign Affairs, Regions). Periodic public notes summarizing volumes, processing timelines, and lessons learned would support transparency and mutual accountability. Setting up a formal monitoring committee for bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) to define goals, monitor progress, and facilitate regular engagement with countries of origin.

3. **Evidence, data flows, and continuous improvement and monitoring report.** Leverage data and strengthen evidence-based decision-making. Connect existing data systems (triennial programming, ALI/Sportello Unico, SIISL, etc.) to monitor labor demand, identify process delays, and track utilization of available support services for migrants in Italy. Regularly publish and update monitoring reports assessing Art. 23 projects and BLAs, highlighting good practices and challenges to inform scaling and improvement of the labor migration channels.

4. **Improve communication mechanisms and user access to information.** Consolidate migration-related relevant websites into a user-friendly digital communication space as a 'single-window' for employers and migrants with tailored navigation for each of them. Ensure clear, accessible information about legal instruments, procedures, available support and resources to participate in Art. 23 pre-departure training projects. This could be based on examples from Denmark, Germany and Australia (see Box 6). Enhanced information and outreach strategies, including the establishment of a communication platform, can enable informed decision-making for both employers and workers, mitigate information asymmetries, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and facilitate access to relevant resources and support services.

11.2. Recommendations for Pillar I – Facilitating Access

Assessing labor demand for migrant workers

1. **Develop and update Critical Occupation Lists (COLs) to inform market driven labor mobility plans by adopting a combined top-down and bottom-up approach.** To systematically identify strategic occupations facing labor shortages, the top-down approach provides evidence on whether an occupation is sought-after and strategic using quantitative data from multiple sources such as labor force surveys and administrative records. The bottom-up approach generates qualitative evidence gathered through employer surveys and consultations with industry associations and other sector experts. Dovetailing the results from the two approaches ensures that both quantitative indicators and stakeholder insights form a comprehensive and regularly updated COL in demand. In other countries, this approach enables policy makers to swiftly ensure that training and international mobility programs remain closely aligned with real labor market needs.The bottom-up approach reveals why certain occupations are in shortage, helping determine if skilled mobility is an effective solution or if issues like low job attractiveness hinder firms from hiring.

2. **The World Bank's report "*A Labor Market Assessment to Support a Global Skills Partnership - Identifying Critical Occupations in Shortage in Italy*"[213] can be used as a base towards developing a recurrent COL for Italy.** The COL methodology can serve as the analytical framework to integrate information from the already rich data environment for assessing labor market needs in Italy. The Excelsior system will remain an important source of information regarding labor demand, employer perceptions, and sector-specific trends. Furthermore, qualitative and expert-backed evidence can be identified through the development of Employer Working Groups (see point 5 of section 11.2) or consultative bodies organized by occupation and territories to inform Art. 23 recruitment, including details about workers' profiles and skills, training design preferences, and validate that job openings are sustained over time.

3. **The COL offers a framework to interpret a variety of statistical indicators such as vacancy duration, employment growth, and wage changes.** To maximize use of the existing data, a practical approach could be to (i) use Excelsior forecasts to flag occupations with persistent recruitment difficulty and a high expected reliance on immigrant hires; (ii) validate with SISCO trends in hires/separations to confirm sustained unmet demand (e.g., rising activations and repeated separations in the same occupations/territories); (iii) use SIISL postings to assess current vacancy pressure and employer search intensity; and (iv) benchmark against LFS indicators of local slack (low unemployment/high employment among residents in the same occupations) to ensure recruitment needs are not due to untapped local supply. Finally, Atlante should be used

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[213] (Nico, 2025)

to codify the competencies/qualifications associated with shortlisted occupations.

4. **Governance and cadence are key to making information available systematically and updating COLs.** An institutionalized system with governance which frequently feeds into policy is needed. A technical group (DG Immigration, DG Active Labor Policies/SLI, ISTAT, INAPP, Regions) could update a shortage occupation list at least annually, with quarterly monitoring, applying transparent thresholds. The COL can be used as a key reference for the triennial quota planning and the assessment of Art. 23 pre-departure training projects.

Identifying and matching vacancies for migrant workers

5. **Establishing Employer Working Groups (EWGs) as a systematic strategy for employers' engagement could support increasing recruitment through Art. 23 channel.** Strong direct or indirect involvement of employers is key to building trust, reducing information asymmetries, and increasing participation rates. This can be done through the establishment of EWGs, which are groups organized by occupation and tailored to specific territories of carefully selected actors who can contribute with insights about labor market trends, occupational profiles and operational needs, and inform key aspects of recruitment and training. The EWGs are tasked with setting occupational standards, task profiles, competency levels, language requirements, and collaborating to decide on preferred assessment tools and training modalities. Notably, EWGs also identify recruitment and training challenges specific to certain occupations or sectors, drawing attention to regulatory issues so that solutions may be developed proactively.

6. **The implementation of EWGs can also be instrumental to increase the pool of available vacancies for prospective migrant workers.** Since EWGs send a strong signal that the program will be responsive to actual needs, companies can feel more motivated and engaged, as their involvement relies on understanding if the benefits of training and hiring outweigh the costs. A cascading approach can be promoted whereby EWG members commit to engage firms within their sector, geographical area, or business networks and campaign to participate in the SLI program. This strategy must be complementary to sharing clear and timely information through a communication platform (see point 4 of section 11.1).

7. **Strategies for employment engagement must also be tailored to the needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).** SMEs might require further support, including assessing their labor and skills needs in the medium to long term, understanding administrative processes for recruitment, and managing integration of migrant workers at the workplace. They might also be outside the outreach of industry associations and labor intermediation agencies, hence other entities should support their engagement, like Chambers of Commerce who maintain registries and communications with all types of firms in the sector.

8. **To effectively engage employers, it's important to provide comprehensive details about workers' profiles from the country of origin within the relevant sector and occupation, along with clear information regarding the candidate pre-screening process.** This will support prospective employers to assess the value of the opportunity of recruiting from abroad and increase engagement. It should include providing information on typical demographic characteristics and educational background of workers within the occupation of interest, as well as current occupational profiles - skills level, job tasks and how they compare to Italian (regional) standards -, and related university degrees and TVET curricula. For enhancement and transparency of candidate pre-selection, a good example lies in the World Bank–funded program *Accessing Overseas Opportunities for Moroccan Youth*, which helped build capacity for international labor market intermediation in Morocco and trust among German firms in the quality of Moroccan candidates. It resulted in increased willingness of German firms to directly finance German language training and recruitment in Morocco.

Financing training and mobility

9. **Italy could adopt a phased, public–private cost-sharing model to finance Global Skills Partnerships, beginning with proof-of-concept pilots that demonstrate value for money and provide a basis for scale-up.** Drawing on lessons from Germany and Australia, employers would contribute a fair share of training and placement costs, while public resources—including national budget, EU instruments, and development assistance—would support program coordination, quality assurance, and integration services. Over time, unit costs should be reduced through partnerships with Italian and partner-country training providers, expansion of modular and short-course delivery, localization of trainer capacity, and gains from scale. To ensure long-term sustainability, pilots should incorporate rigorous cost tracking and outcome monitoring (e.g., completion, credential recognition, job placement, retention), with cost-sharing arrangements adjusted as performance is validated. Engagement with employer associations and calibrated trainee contributions, protected by safeguard mechanisms to ensure equity, can reinforce accountability and demand-responsiveness.

Enhancing migrant worker entry approval

10. **The entry approval process needs to be made clearer, more straightforward, and more predictable for both employers and workers.** Instead of merely posting information, the previously mentioned communication platform (see point 4 of section 11.1) could offer a range of support tools. For both employers and workers, these might include interactive FAQs, webinars, tutorials, regulatory update notifications, and self-assessment resources to help determine suitability for recruiting or be recruited through this channel. For workers, in addition to those features, the platform should provide directories of accredited or vetted services like labor intermediaries, visa assistance, cultural mediation, and civic society organizations that offer further guidance.

11. **To streamline the recruitment process within the Art. 23 channel, certain employment clearance (nulla osta) and work visa procedures could be initiated earlier and further simplified.** Currently, two waivers are available for employers seeking nulla osta under the Art. 23 channel; additional procedural efficiencies could be considered by referencing measures applied to special entry cases governed by art. 27 of TUI. Additionally, the possibility of pre-filling required modules for quota system recruitment prior to *Click day* may also be extended to Art. 23 to facilitate earlier nulla osta verification. Furthermore, as the worker's biographical information is entered into the MoLSP's PIF platform during training enrollment, security screenings could also be advanced, rather than deferred until completion of the training program. Additionally, it may be worth considering whether three separate background checks for the worker are required, or if a single check could suffice with its results shared among institutions (currently, Questura, the Embassy, and the Schengen authority all perform a similar background check).

12. **Improving the consistency of service quality among local migration offices (SUIs) should be prioritized to streamline clearance procedures.** This could involve increasing HR and financial support, automating sections of the documentation review process, and providing training to staff to effectively apply the latest national regulations, as well as enhancing their ability to handle complex applications efficiently. Implementing a national monitoring system—potentially involving inter-ministerial cooperation (refer to point 2 in section 11.1)—could help detect recurrent issues among SUIs or between groups of SUIs and initiate appropriate solutions.

11.3. Recommendations for Pillar II – Furthering Access

Assessing standards alignment, delivering relevant training and recognizing skills before departure

1. **Standardize options for assessing and recognizing skills acquired in the country of origin prior to departure to improve employment prospects and optimize talent allocation.** Skills recognition is essential for aligning workforce competencies with labour market demands, reducing *brain waste,* and ensuring that workers are qualified for more complex and productive roles. The evaluation of vocational qualifications obtained abroad could be integrated into the candidate selection and training process. It could follow a competence-based assessment. Competence gaps identified will then be addressed within the pre-departure training project through tailored modular training (according also to regional occupational standards), with the possibility to lead to certification of competencies. Some good practices could be taken from other countries (see Boxes 11 and 14) that have national statements for comparability of the vocational qualification of non-EU workers with national standards, used to support access to the

labor market for unregulated professions.

2. **Expand language training opportunities in countries of origin to address current proficiency gaps.** Programs can be delivered through organizations such as the Italian Institute for Culture (Embassy), AICS, CPIA, and private sector partners like Italian chambers of commerce in these countries, enabling participants to reach at least the A2 level in Italian. Involving CPIAs, as outlined in the Art. 23 Guidelines, simplifies recognition of attained language levels and helps workers continue learning after arriving in Italy. Additionally, the waiting period between completing training and receiving visas provides an opportunity for prospective migrants to take extra language courses to achieve the A2 level.

Recognizing qualifications and skills in Italy

3. **Strengthen the Identification, Validation and Certification (IVC) services for the recognition of no-formal and informal skills of foreign workers in Italy.** Enabling faster labor market integration without the need for full requalification is key to enhancing workers' contributions to the economy. This can be done by harmonizing IVC services across regions to consistently offer migrants an easy and effective pathway to validating, certifying and furthering their skills. In Piemonte and Emilia Romagna, for example, IVC services lead to training pathways designed to access regional certifications of professional qualifications.

11.4. Recommendations for Pillar III – Fortifying Access

Activating integration services and networks

1. **Promote adoption of one-stop-shop models and case management for migrant support services across territories.** This integrated approach better meets the diverse and multidimensional needs of migrant workers, their families, and the host population more broadly. Building on successful examples from Emilia Romagna, Milan, and Naples (see Box 15), local areas can adopt or enhance these practices. It is essential to use language and cultural mediators and interoperable IT systems for effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and to track the beneficiary across service provision. To reduce information gaps, orientation to access regional and local services could be centralized in a single communication platform.

2. **Enhance the role of diaspora communities in integration support and services.** Diaspora members possess deep knowledge of their home countries' social and political environments, which can make intervention strategies more relevant and effective. These organizations should participate actively in policy discussions and decision-making processes: on the national level, by backing the Italian National Coordination of Diasporas for International Cooperation (CIDCI); and regionally or

locally, through mechanisms like promoting the Council of Cultures ("Consulta delle Culture") in municipal governments, as seen in Rome and Palermo.

Enhancing integration through continuous language learning, labor market inclusion, and housing access.

3. **Facilitate continuous language acquisition for migrant workers in Italy.** Implementing mandatory six-month language courses upon arrival—modeled after the Swedish system—could be linked to the integration contract's point framework to encourage attainment of A2 level proficiency, or B1 if A2 was previously completed abroad (see point 2, section 11.3). CPIAs, which currently offer complimentary instruction and serve as pivotal partners in the MoLSP's integration strategy, could manage post-arrival training. This needs timely planning based on early access to information from pre-departure projects regarding migrants' language skills and arrival details. Improving digital resources would further help CPIAs handle higher demand efficiently.

4. **Provide targeted and holistic support for migrants through public employment services.** The MoLSP is making progress by increasing funding and launching innovative programs to strengthen labor services. Successful national initiatives, such as PUOI and FORWORK (referenced in section 7.2.), could be scaled up and enhanced by drawing on international best practices (see Box 20). Regional labor agencies and local job centers can help migrants enter the workforce by combining personalized guidance, job placement, and training for both work and social participation. To do this effectively, staff should receive job coach training with multicultural competencies. Moreover, timely assistance backed by better infrastructure and resources is crucial to track individuals' progress and prevent them from slipping into informal employment.

5. **Innovate in housing solutions for migrant workers.** Besides traditional social housing and assistance, government-led innovations can foster migrants' access to adequate and affordable housing. The national and local governments in Italy could adapt innovative policies and practices already implemented in other settings (see Box 22). This includes public guarantees and small, predictable incentives to unlock underused private stock; pairing housing with integration services to support tenancy stability; using digital portals to match homeowners with house searchers, and standardized workflows across local authorities to leverage community hosting at scale; and applying data-driven regulation to counter discriminatory barriers.

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Annex 1: Semi-structured interviews and consultations

Public institutions:

Institution	Role/Responsibility
Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (MLPS)	*Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies*: Plans, manages and monitors entry quotas for foreign workers, and oversees bilateral cooperation with countries of origin. Monitors labor and vocational training for entry flows of foreign workers; coordinates policies for socio-economic integration of migrant workers. *Directorate General for Active Employment Policies, Employment Services and Employment Incentives:* Promotes and coordinates: training policies, management of active labor policy policies. Authorizes the activation of inter-professional funds for vocational training; allocates funds for training policies. Implements policies on vocational education and training and higher technical training, in liaison with the Ministry of Education and Merit. Defines the minimum standards in the field of recognition and certification of skills and pathways for transversal skills and guidance and performs the functions of verification and control of compliance with them.
Agency *Sviluppo Lavoro Italia* (SLI)	It is an in-house Agency of the MLPS and MLPS' operating arm. It promotes people's right to work, training and professional growth, coordinates the national network of employment services, and it is responsible for the labor market information system.
National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP)	Public research center supervised by the MLPS. It does studies, researches, monitoring and evaluation of public policies in the areas of labor, education and training, social protection, active and passive labor policies, the third sector/CSOs, social inclusion, and policies that produce effects on the labor market. It also coordinates the Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni. Main teams working on labor migration topic: *Mobility and Integration Policies; Civil Economy and Migration; Labor Market; Atlante del Lavoro e delle Professioni.*
Ministry of Interior	*Directorate Civil Liberties and Immigration - Central Direction for Migration Policy - Asylum Migration and Integration Fund Authority:* Analyzes and plans of migration policies (including Art. 23), monitors foreigners' integration policies. Contributes to the analysis for defining the flow of foreign workers into the country. Supports the work of Prefetture (SUI). Signs MoU with associations, Industry Associations and Unions for

	cooperation on entry and stay of foreign nationals with specific professional profiles.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Development (MAECI)	*General Directorate for Italians abroad and migration policies (Visa and migration offices):* Responsible for VISA issuance, cooperation with countries of origin (including BLA signature) and overseas Embassies' work on Visa and migration.
The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	It is the implementing agency of the Italian cooperation and development system, led by MAECI. *AICS Tunisia Office* plays a key role in promoting inclusive socio-economic development and strengthening bilateral cooperation between Italy and Tunisia. Its activities focus on areas such as vocational training, job creation, labor mobility, rural development, and youth empowerment, often in partnership with Tunisian institutions and civil society organizations. AICS also supports migration-related programs, including initiatives that facilitate legal pathways for labor mobility and projects that promote the reintegration of returnees and the socio-professional inclusion of vulnerable populations. Through its programming, AICS contributes to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and fostering opportunities for dignified work in Tunisia.
Italian Network for Adult Education (RIDAP)	Promotes the work of CPIAs and educational institutions by representing them before central administration, public and private entities, professional associations, professional and trade union organizations, and other public/private national and local institutions. Proposes policies on Adult Education and enhances the specificity of the system at the national and European levels.
Tuscany Region	Coordinates the *Commission for work and vocational training* of the State-Region Conference. It promotes the dialogue between the regions and the central Stat on labor policies and vocation training.
Emillia Romagna Region	*Departments for migration policies, social integration and labor market*: Defines regional regulations, strategies and policies for labor migration in line with national and EU regulations. It coordinates, manages and support the implementation of labor, vocational training and migration policies in the regional territory. It also overseas the Observatory of migration.

Emilia Romagna - Regional Labor Agency	Promotes labor matching, manages the employment services and contributes to the development of the regional labor market. It has legal personality and operational autonomy. It also overseas the Observatory for labor market.
ART-ER	In-house Agency and operating arm of the Emilia-Romagna Region. Its activities aims at strengthening the regional innovation ecosystem and relationships among stakeholders, promoting the internationalization of business and research system to foster sustainable growth, increasing research and innovation capabilities and productivity.

Private sector, employers' and labor organizations, Chamber of commerce, International organizations, Diaspora organization

Institution	Role/Responsibility
Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture - Unioncamere	Service Initiatives and Programs for Integration and International Cooperation: It is the public body that unifies and institutionally represents the Italian chamber system. Implements and manages services and activities of Chambers of Commerce, coordinates the chambers through directives and guidelines. It produces the Excelsior Report on the labor market in Italy, used to manage labor migration.
National Association of Private Intermediation Agencies (ASSOLAVORO)	It is the Association representing the Private Labor Agencies (APL) in Italy. Works to guarantee APLs higher standards of protection and representation, as well as an integrated offer of assistance and information. It regularly intervenes in hearings convened by the government and parliamentary bodies. It is the point of reference for all APLs and organizes meetings, conferences and congresses.
RANDSTAD	Private Intermediation Labor Agency developed worldwide with local branches in Italy as well. It is specialized in matching, supporting career development of workers, and supporting companies with tailored solutions for recruitment. It participates in the ART.23 program by leading several projecs in some African countries.
National Association of Building Contructors - ANCE	Industry Association for construction companies, representing them at national level. It participates in ART.23 programs, including Tunisia.
CGIL	One of the three biggest Italian Labor Unions that promotes workers' rights, ensure safety and security on the work places, represents workers before the central government and the Italian Parliament. Some of its local branches participates in ART.23 program.

AVSI Foundation	Italian NGO-CSO that works on development and cooperation worldwide, mainly focusing on education; livelihood, economic strengthening, vocational training and job creation; migration. It participates in ART.23 program through a project to develop Tunisians skills and competencies in the logistic sector to work in Italy. It has signed an agreement with the Tunisians ANETI and ATFP.
ELIS	A nonprofit organization that works in collaboration with schools and companies in orientation and training activities. It promotes innovation projects with large corporations and startups. It combats educational poverty and marginalization with social projects in Italy and developing countries.
Centro Studi Formzione Istruzione e Lavoro	Italian Associations providing vocational training and labor services. It participates in the ART.23 program through several projects, also involving Tunisia.
Association PONTES	A non-profit organization that supports the social and professional integration of Tunisian migrants, both abroad and upon return. It provides individualized assistance, orientation, and socio-legal support to migrants throughout their mobility journey. Abroad, PONTES facilitates integration by offering services related to housing, employment, language learning, and administrative guidance. Upon return, the organization supports reintegration through counseling, skills recognition, and local economic reinsertion initiatives, helping returnees rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities. PONTES also collaborates with national and international partners to strengthen migrant protection and promote sustainable reintegration frameworks.
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Tunisia	Plays a pivotal role in supporting safe, regular, and rights-based labor mobility through technical assistance, capacity building, and direct implementation of programs. It is a key partner in the THAMM project (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labor Migration Governance and Labor Mobility in North Africa), which strengthens institutional frameworks, promotes ethical recruitment, and develops mobility schemes aligned with labor market needs in Tunisia and partner countries. IOM also implements return and reintegration programs, supporting Tunisian nationals returning from abroad through personalized reintegration plans, skills development, and access to employment or entrepreneurship opportunities—thus contributing to sustainable reintegration and local development.

Annex 2. Data collection and assessment tools

A2.1. In-depth questionnaires

The in-depth questionnaire included in Annex 2 was a structured data collection tool used to guide interviews with key stakeholders involved in labor migration governance. Organized around the main stages of the migration cycle—Framework for Access, Facilitating Access, Furthering Access, and Fortifying Access—it covered legal frameworks, institutional roles, labor intermediation, skills development, and worker protection, among other areas. The questionnaire was designed to be adaptable to different types of entities, including government institutions, training providers, and civil society organizations. This allowed for its use across a range of interviews while maintaining consistency in the information gathered. Its structured format helped ensure that interviews yielded comparable data and addressed the institutional dimensions relevant to labor mobility. By **tailoring the tool to the specific mandate and scope of each institution**, the assessment was able to gather targeted insights that contributed to mapping existing practices, identifying challenges, and informing the broader diagnostic process.

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer (WB staff):

Duration (approximately):

INTRODUCTION

Please provide the following information about your entity:

1. **Entity Name:**
2. **Type** *(Please specify if Ministry, Governmental Agency, NGOs-CSOs, Training Provider, Private Company, Social Partner, other)***:**
3. **Address:**
4. **Contact Person Details:**
   a. 4.1. Name:
   b. 4.2. Position:
   c. 4.3. Email:
   d. 4.4. Phone Number:
5. **Brief Description of the Entity:**
   a. 5.1. Mission and objectives:
   b. 5.2. Main sectors of operation related to migration and labor mobility:

   (Check websites and prefill in advance)

6. **Role in the GSP (relative scope):**

a. 6.1. How does your entity contribute to labor mobility between Tunisia and other countries? / How does your entity contribute to labor mobility of migrants from third countries? (for Italy)

b. 6.2. Describe key programs, initiatives, or services relevant to labor migration (emphasis to programs between Tunisia and Italy that are already in place).

I. FRAMEWORK FOR ACCESS

(Legal frameworks, agreements, and institutional responsibilities governing migration policy and labor mobility.)

A. Legal Frameworks and Policies

7. Does your entity operate under a national law, decree, policy, or strategy governing labor migration? If yes, please specify:
   a. 7.1. Name the law(s) / presidential decree(s) / ministerial decision(s) / regulation(s) / circulars(s) also at <u>regional level</u> (for Italy):
   b. 7.2. Main objectives:
   c. 7.3. Challenges or limitations:
      (multiple replies for more than one legislative act, provide us with the reference to the legislation – Check in the framework of desk review legislation in advance)

8. Are there bilateral or multilateral agreements already in place?
   a. 8.1. List any **Bilateral Labor Agreements (BLAs),** Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), or trade agreements with labor provisions with other countries (Tunis) / third countries (for Italy).
   b. 8.2. Which entities are involved in setting up a BLA? Could you describe the process?
   c. 8.3. How frequently are these agreements reviewed or updated? Through which process?

9. Does the legal framework clearly define responsibilities related to labor migration? If not, what are the gaps? Can you identify strengths and bottlenecks (if any) related to legislative framework?

B. Institutional Architecture

10. Based on the organizational chart can you identify the units of your entity related to labor migration issues?
    (Check web-sites and have the organizational chart in advance)

11. Does your entity have a dedicated unit or team responsible for labor mobility?
12. Does your entity have the necessary human resources and technical capacities to manage migration-related tasks effectively? Could you provide us with an estimation of the number of individuals working on these issues?
13. Are your entity's activities related to labor migration adequately funded?
14. Does your entity coordinate with other stakeholders in implementing labor migration

policies and regulations? If so, what type of stakeholders are involved (public, private, NGOs, INOs) and how do you coordinate (e.g. if there are some mechanism, platforms, etc.)?
15. What are the biggest challenges your entity faces in facilitating legal migration pathways?

C. Labor Market Needs Assessment

16. Which entity is conducting the labor needs assessment for BLAs?
17. What process is followed, including cooperation with other entities, social partners, private sector employers in order to identify the sectors and occupations in need, as well as the number of needed workers?
18. Are there gaps in methodology or data collections that could be improved?

II. FACILITATING ACCESS

(Processes for recruitment, labor intermediation, and pre-departure services.)

D. Recruitment and Labor Market Intermediation

19. How does your entity disseminate information on labor migration opportunities and the programs that are in place (origin: employees, recipient: employers)?
20. Are there specific labor intermediation services provided to match workers with employers? If so which type (public, private, or both). If yes, how are they regulated and monitored?
21. Do Public Employment Services refer unemployed individuals to international labor mobility schemes? (Tunisia)
22. How can employers that face labor shortages report the shortages to the authorities? How are they informed about labor mobility schemes? (Italy)
23. How does your entity ensure that workers are matched with job opportunities that align with their skills and qualifications?
24. What mechanisms exist to ensure transparency in recruitment processes?

E. Pre-Departure Preparation

25. Does your entity conduct or support (in cooperation with other entities, private providers or NGOs) pre-departure training for migrant workers?
    - 25.1. If yes, please specify the topics covered (e.g., language, skills certification, financial literacy).
26. Are there medical or legal clearances required for departing workers? If so, what are the procedures?
27. How is travel to the destination country arranged? Who covers the costs?
28. What support services are available to workers before they migrate?

III. FURTHERING ACCESS

(Developing skills, cross-border certification, and long-term workforce planning.)

F. Skills Development and Recognition

29. Does your entity provide or support (in cooperation with other entities, private providers or NGOs) vocational training aligned with international labor market needs?
30. Are there mutual recognition agreements for skills or qualifications between Tunisia and Italy?
31. What steps are taken to ensure the quality and relevance of training programs for migrant workers?

G. Data and Performance Monitoring

32. Does your entity maintain a database of migrant workers?
33. What indicators are tracked to measure migration success (e.g., employment rates, remittances, job satisfaction)?
34. Are there data-sharing mechanisms between institutions to improve labor migration management?
35. What improvements do you think are necessary to enhance institutional capacity for migration governance?

IV. FORTIFYING ACCESS

(Protection measures and support for migrant workers abroad and upon return.)

H. Migrant Integration, Protection and Welfare

36. What migrant integration policies are in place? (recipient country)
37. Are there any welfare funds, financial assistance, or insurance programs available for migrant workers (both from origin and destination countries)?
   Check eligibility conditions of main benefits in recipient country

38. How does your entity ensure compliance with international and national labor standards and fair treatment of workers abroad (origin country)/migrant workers (recipient)?
39. Does your entity coordinate with destination/origin country institutions to provide worker protection?
40. What are the main risks faced by migrant workers during their stay abroad?
41. Are there mechanisms to report grievances related to working conditions?
42. Are there policies in place to protect migrant workers from abuse, exploitation, or human trafficking?

I. Return and Reintegration

43. Does your entity track the number and conditions of returnee migrants (both countries)?
44. What reintegration services (economic, social, psychological) does your entity provide for returnees (origin)?
45. Are there job placement or skills certification programs for returning workers (origin)?
46. Are there any government programs to help reintegrate returning migrants into the local labor market (origin)?

Final Remarks

47. Could you suggest the addition of important stakeholders to our list? Which institutions or organizations do you believe should be prioritized for review during the assessment?
48. Have there been any previous reviews or reforms in this area that you believe we should take into account to build on past work?
49. What recommendations would you provide to improve institutional coordination for labor migration?
50. Are there additional comments or issues that should be considered in this assessment?

A2.2. Focus group discussion guide

As part of the Institutional Assessment of labor mobility systems between Tunisia and Italy, a tailored Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide was developed to systematically capture the lived experiences of migrants, returnees, and potential migrants. This tool draws upon structured inputs from a range of validated questionnaires and international best practices, adapted to the Tunisian context and to the operational dynamics of bilateral labor migration programs. The guide is designed to support a nuanced understanding of each phase of the migration journey—pre-recruitment, recruitment and training, legal and logistical preparation, departure and integration, and return—through a participatory approach that emphasizes open-ended reflection and inclusive dialogue.

The insights generated from the application of this tool provide direct feedback from migration stakeholders themselves — particularly beneficiaries of labor migration schemes. These findings enrich the institutional diagnostic by highlighting both strengths and challenges faced by individuals navigating legal migration channels. They inform the assessment of how policies, programs, and institutions perform in practice across the migration cycle and help identify critical gaps in coordination, access to services, information dissemination, and worker protection. The tool also allows for disaggregated analysis by migrant status, enabling more responsive policy recommendations that are grounded in evidence from the field.

Introduction & Oral Consent

Hello, my name is [Name], and I work with the World Bank. We are conducting a study to understand the experiences of individuals who have participated or are preparing to participate in legal labor mobility programs from Tunisia to Europe, especially Italy.

The objective is to identify areas of enhancement in the system so that the Governments and their partners from the private and development sectors can work together to make the process easier for other people like you who will go through the labor mobility programs in the future.

The discussion today will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or leave at any time. Everything you share will remain confidential. We are not collecting your name or any personal identifiers, and your responses will only be used for research purposes to help improve labor migration systems.

We would like your permission to audio-record the conversation, so we don't miss any important points. Do we have your consent to proceed?

[Pause and confirm verbally]

Thank you. Let's begin.

Notes to the Facilitator:

A. To Do	B. Do Not
Encourage open conversation: - Invite everyone to speak. - Use prompts like "Does anyone else would like to say something?" or "Who else would like to say something more?"	**Do not ask yes/no questions:** - Unless as a follow-up, they limit depth.
Ask open-ended questions: - Use gentle probes like "Can you tell me more about that?" or "How did that feel?"	**Do not provide examples or suggest answers:** - This might influence participants' responses.
Listen actively: - Use "huh," "yes," or "نعم." - Maintain eye contact and stay present.	**Do not let only a few participants speak:** - Encourage quieter participants.
Guide conversation back gently: - "Let's now move to the next topic." - "I'd like to go back to what we were discussing…"	**Do not use leading or assertive questions:** - These can bias the answer.
Start with introductions: - Introduce yourself. - Let participants introduce themselves however they prefer.	**Do not judge or react strongly:** - Stay neutral, even with surprising answers.
Be neutral and supportive: - Use open, non-judgmental tone and body language.	**Do not over-probe:** - Avoid making it feel like an interrogation.
Use probes respectfully: - Be curious, not forceful. - Let participants guide how much they share.	**Do not interrupt unnecessarily:** - Let participants finish before steering back on topic.

FGD Oral Questions

1. First, we will talk about the **(Pre-Recruitment Phase): (everyone)**

    - How did you first hear about this opportunity to work abroad? And why did you want to join this program? Were you also considering job opportunities inside Tunisia at the time?
    - Can you describe the application process? What form did it take? Was it easy or difficult to complete? Did you get help from someone? Who helped? Were you required to submit hard copies of any documents? If yes, how easy or difficult was that process?
    - If you could change or improve the application process, what would you suggest?

2. Now we will talk about the **(Recruitment and Matching Process) (everyone)**

    - Who has been matched with specific job position?
    - For those who'd been already matched with a job:
      From the moment you submitted your application, how long did it take to hear back or get matched with an employer? Does the job sector align with your background or is it a new career path?
    - For those who have not yet matched with a job:
      What are you expecting from the job matching process? What type of work are you hoping for?

3. Lets now hear a bit about the **Training and Preparation** experience that you had to do **(everyone)**

    - Who has already taken pre-departure training?
    - For those who have undertaken training, what was it like? Was it interesting, useful, and enough to prepare you for the job post? Which parts were most or least useful to you?
    - Did you experience any difficulties in following and completing the training?

4. We are also interested in hearing about your experience in the **Job Interviews and Employer Interaction (everyone)**

    - Can you tell us about your experience with the interviews with foreign employers? How did it go? Was there an interpreter or someone helping you during the interview?
    - How did you prepare for the interview? Did any one support you or provide advice?
    - How were you informed about the selection results? (right after the interview, through which channel)

5. Next, we need your opinion and insights about the **Legal and Logistical Preparation**

    - **(Potential migrants)** Have you already started the visa process? If yes, please share your experience, including any difficulty you have faced, and support given.

- **(Potential migrants)** What information have you been provided about the terms of your work contract? Do you still have questions or information gaps about it?
- **(migrants and returnees)** What was the process of getting your visa like? Did you face any difficulties? How long did it take? Did anyone assist you?
- Do you know how long your visa and work contract are valid for? **(migrants and potential migrants that already have a contract & Visa)**
- **(everyone)** Did you get any support regarding your job contract, housing, or travel? What kind of support was most helpful? And what kind of support did you need, but you did not receive?
- **(everyone)** What information has been shared with you about your rights and responsibilities as a worker in Italy? who provided this information?
- Could you please share any specific worries or concerns which you had/have about the journey you were/are about to start as a worker in Italy? Any specific excitements?

6. The final step we will discuss is the **Departure and Integration (migrants and returnees)**

- Did you receive support in arranging things like a residence permit, opening a bank account, or getting an ID in Italy? Who supported you—was it an organization, the diaspora, or the government? What was most difficult for you to start a life like a resident in Italy? For how long have you experienced difficulties? How did you manage or overcome these challenges?
- At the workplace, what has been more challenging for you? (do not prompt them from the beginning, only if helpful to motivate, ask about cultural differences at the workplace, language skills, technical skills, the job or working conditions were not what they expected, etc)
- Have you received further training when in Italy? If yes: what type of training? And was it your employer or yourself who decided to pursue more training? If not, do you think you would benefit from more training and why haven't you yet engaged in a course?
- Has any of you tried to get your skills recognized, verified or certified in Italy? If yes, could you please describe the process which you followed and your experience?

7. Return and reintegration (returnees only)

- What are the challenges you have faced when coming back to Tunisia? What kind of support, if any, did you receive during this process?
- Did the skills you have acquired in Italy have helped you securing and starting a career in Tunisia? Are you working in the same sector now as you were in Italy? Or did you switch to another type of work and what influenced this change?
- How do you view your migration journey overall? And what advice would you give to others considering migrating to Europe today?

Written Form Questions (potential migrants)

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is part of a study conducted by the **World Bank (WB)** to better understand the experiences and challenges of individuals considering migration. It is **complementary to the oral questions discussed during the focus group session**, and aims to help us better connect your personal background with your views and experiences related to migration.

By completing this form, you will help us build a clearer picture of how different demographic and professional factors influence the migration journey. This information is essential to improving the support and programs available for people in similar situations.

Please be assured that this questionnaire is **completely anonymous**.
We do **not** ask for your name or any identifying information. Your answers will be used **only in an aggregated and confidential way** for research purposes.

We thank you sincerely for your time and for sharing your perspective.

Demographic and Employment profile

1. Age *(please fill in)*:

2. Gender *(please fill in)*:

3. Governorate *(please fill in)*:

4. Marital status *(please select one)*:
    a. Single
    b. Married
    c. Married with children
    d. Other

5. Number of dependents, including kids, parents, husband, wife., etc *(please fill in)*:

6. Education Level *(please select one)*
    a. Secondaire
    b. Formation professionnelle
    c. College

7. Which languages do you speak? *(please fill in)*:

8. Number of years of work experience *(please fill in)*:

9. Current employment status *(please select one)*:

a. Unemployed
b. Part-time employee
c. Full-time employee
d. Self-employed

10. Sector of current job or last job *(please fill in):*

11. Which are the reasons of consider migrating *(please select and order answers by priority, giving 1 to the most important. E.g. you can select three and number them from 1 to 3, giving 1 to the most important reason)*:
    a. To find better employment opportunities
    b. To earn a higher income
    c. Due to lack of local job opportunities
    d. To improve living conditions / access better quality of life
    e. To gain new skills or training abroad
    f. To support my family financially
    g. Other (please specify):

12. For how long would you like to live abroad?
    a. Less than one year
    b. 1-5 years
    c. Over 5 years.

Written Form Questions (migrants in Italy)

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is part of a study conducted by the **World Bank (WB)** to better understand the experiences and challenges of individuals considering migration. It is **complementary to the oral questions discussed during the focus group session**, and aims to help us better connect your personal background with your views and experiences related to migration.

By completing this form, you will help us build a clearer picture of how different demographic and professional factors influence the migration journey. This information is essential to improving the support and programs available for people in similar situations.

Please be assured that this questionnaire is **completely anonymous**.
We do **not** ask for your name or any identifying information. Your answers will be used **only in an aggregated and confidential way** for research purposes.

We thank you sincerely for your time and for sharing your perspective.

1. Age *(please fill in)*:

2. Gender *(please fill in)*:

3. Governorate *(please fill in)*:

4. Marital status *(please select one)*:
    a. Single
    b. Married
    c. Married with children
    d. Other

5. Number of dependents, including kids, parents, husband, wife., etc *(please fill in)*:
6. Education Level *(please select one)*
    a. Secondaire
    b. Formation professionnelle
    c. College

7. Which languages do you speak? *(please fill in)*:

8. Number of years of work experience *(please fill in)*:

9. Current employment status *(please select one)*:
    a. Unemployed
    b. Part-time employee
    c. Full-time employee

    d.   Self-employed

10. Sector of current job or last job *(please fill in):*

11. What were the reasons to migrate to Italy? *(please select and order answers by priority, giving 1 to the most important. E.g. you can select three and number them from 1 to 3, giving 1 to the most important reason)*:
    a.   To find better employment opportunities
    b.   To earn a higher income
    c.   Due to lack of local job opportunities
    d.   To improve living conditions
    e.   To gain new skills or training abroad
    f.   To support my family financially
    g.   Other (please specify):

12. How long have you been living in Italy? *(please fill in):*

13. How many jobs have you had since arriving in Italy? *(please fill in):*

14. How often do you have to renew your work permit? *(please fill in):*

15. How often do you have to renew your VISA? *(please fill in):*

Written Form Questions (returnees in Tunisia from Italy)

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is part of a study conducted by the **World Bank (WB)** to better understand the experiences and challenges of individuals considering migration. It is **complementary to the oral questions discussed during the focus group session**, and aims to help us better connect your personal background with your views and experiences related to migration.

By completing this form, you will help us build a clearer picture of how different demographic and professional factors influence the migration journey. This information is essential to improving the support and programs available for people in similar situations.

Please be assured that this questionnaire is **completely anonymous**.
We do **not** ask for your name or any identifying information. Your answers will be used **only in an aggregated and confidential way** for research purposes.

We thank you sincerely for your time and for sharing your perspective.

1. Age *(please fill in)*:

2. Gender *(please fill in)*:

3. Governorate *(please fill in)*:

4. Marital status *(please select one)*:
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Married with children
   d. Other

5. Number of dependents, including kids, parents, husband, wife., etc *(please fill in)*:
6. Education Level *(please select one)*
   a. Secondaire
   b. Formation professionnelle
   c. College

7. Which languages do you speak? *(please fill in)*:

8. Number of years of work experience *(please fill in)*:

9. Current employment status *(please select one)*:
   a. Unemployed
   b. Part-time employee
   c. Full-time employee

    d.   Self-employed

10. Sector of current job or last job *(please fill in):*

11. What were the reasons to migrate to Italy?
    a.   To find better employment opportunities
    b.   To earn a higher income
    c.   Due to lack of local job opportunities
    d.   To improve living conditions
    e.   To gain new skills or training abroad
    f.   To support my family financially
    g.   Other (please specify):

12. How long have you lived abroad in Italy?

13. How many jobs have you had during your stay in Italy?*(please fill in)*:

14. What are the reasons that led you to return to Tunisia after living in Italy *(please select and order answers by priority, giving 1 to the most important. E.g. you can select three and number them from 1 to 3, giving 1 to the most important reason)*:
    a.   End of work contract or visa expiration
    b.   Could not find stable work abroad
    c.   Family reasons (e.g. health, reunification)
    d.   Chose to invest or start a business in Tunisia
    e.   Personal decision to return home
    f.   Faced legal or administrative issues abroad
    g.   Other (please specify)

Annex 3. Data collection and storage policy

Data Privacy and Ethical Compliance

All interviews and focus group discussions undertaken in the framework of the Institutional Assessment adhered strictly to the World Bank's internal data privacy standards. The process was conducted in direct coordination with the World Bank's Data Privacy Office (DPO), a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) where necessary, as required by institutional protocols for high-sensitivity data collection activities. No personal data were shared with third parties or external vendors, and data were handled exclusively by authorized World Bank staff. All audio recordings and related transcripts were securely stored and encrypted using Microsoft Teams and OneDrive—both tools pre-approved by the Bank's DPO. Informed consent was obtained from all participants using a standardized consent form (written or oral), previously reviewed and validated by the DPO. A sample of the approved consent form is presented below for reference.

Consent Form – Focus Group with Migrants

IDENTIFICATION

    Interviewer Name : ....

    Date   : _____

NOTICE AND SCREENER

The World Bank is conducting a study, the Institutional Assessment, about international labor mobility systems in Italy and Tunisia, which is part of a project called the *Global Skill Partnershipss – GSP* between Italy and Tunisia, a bilateral training and migration agreement where the destination country helps fund training in the origin country for skills needed in both labor markets.

The Institutional Assessment wants to assess capacities, eventual bottleneck and propose solutions to effectively deliver streamlined labor migration frameworks in line with GSP goals. We want to ask some questions about your migration trajectory to Italy (reason to travel, support received before and after departure, settling in Italy, eventual return to Tunisia, etc.) in order to capture your experience and point of view, which will complement the analysis we are doing with public and private institutions in Italy and Tunisia.

Any response that you provide will be kept confidential. No specific information about you will be shared with third parties. We will record audio of the interview for ensuring quality in information recording and processing using Microsoft Teams, which is a tool approved by the World Bank for its alignment with the Bank's Data Privacy policies. We will retain these records for up to 1 year after the study is over.

The World Bank will conduct its analysis based on an anonymized dataset. Please note that any identifying Personal Data will be securely safeguarded by the World Bank, safely stored and encrypted by the Social Protection Global Unit, and will be deleted within 1 year after the study is over.

If you have any questions about this research study or about the processing of your personal data, please contact **vmichelgutierrez@worldbank.org**.

Your participation in the focus group is entirely voluntary. If at any point there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, you can choose not to answer them. You can also choose to stop the interview at any point without penalty.

The focus group will take 60 - 90 minutes at most. May we proceed?

a. Yes
b. No

Do you consent to having audio recorded during the focus group?

a. Yes
b. No

Date and Signature