

Report on the feasibility study and comprehensive mapping process

Skilled Driver Mobility for the European Union (SDM4EU I) project

Funded by
the European Union



Implemented by



About

This publication presents a report on the feasibility study and comprehensive mapping process conducted under the Skilled Driver Mobility for the European Union (SDM4EU) project, funded by the European Union through the Migration Partnership Facility.

The first phase of the SDM4EU project was implemented by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) from June 2024 to April 2025.

The Migration Partnership Facility (MPF) is an EU-funded initiative supporting the external dimension of EU migration policy. It aims to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on migration and mobility between EU Member States and partner countries outside the EU. The MPF is implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

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Authored by the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

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Introduction

Europe, like many other regions of the world, is facing an acute and growing shortage of professional drivers. According to the latest estimates by the International Road Transport Union (IRU), around 250,000 professional driver positions were unfilled in surveyed European countries in 2023.

This trend is forecast to continue in the coming years, as IRU research foresees a widening global shortage of over 6.5 million truck driver jobs unfilled by 2028. This phenomenon affects the European road transport industry at a time when its services face steady, ever-increasing demand.

The roots of the driver shortage in Europe are manifold. In the EU, road transport professions are affected by an unfavourable, often inaccurate, image, particularly regarding working conditions and career prospects. Initiatives to improve the profession's attractiveness can support local recruitment, but they will not fully address these challenges. Legal migration, or skills mobility, can provide an additional way to help address the gap by drawing on qualified workers from partner countries.

In some African and Asian countries, the working-age population is younger than in EU countries. In Europe, not enough young people are entering the road transport industry as drivers, and local efforts to address the problem have had limited success. At the time of the research, no initiative had been implemented to identify and test, in practical terms, the potential of qualified and motivated foreign nationals in partner countries with a surplus of relevant skilled workers.

In recent years, steps have been taken to recruit truck and bus drivers from third countries, but these have often been limited to research and analysis. There is a clear need for practical interventions to encourage uptake and lay the foundations for third-country driver mobility, which is a priority of the Skilled Driver Mobility for the European Union (SDM4EU I) project.

A core objective of SDM4EU I is to assess the potential for truck and bus driver mobility between targeted EU Member States and third countries. To do so, it is necessary to investigate regulatory frameworks and employment conditions in third countries, focusing on factors that hinder or facilitate efficient driver migration into the EU.

At the time of drafting, the project planned to deliver a labour mobility programme in early 2025, involving language and skills training in the origin countries for selected professional drivers, based on their experience, willingness and attitude. The training would meet EU standards and help third-country drivers prepare for migration to selected transport companies, with support from the relevant Member State. The programme was expected to offer economic opportunities, financial support and wellbeing support.

Before the programme could begin, it was necessary to understand the constraints and opportunities for migration and to assess the feasibility of practical interventions. The first phase therefore focused on stakeholder interviews, data analysis and country mapping.

Most EU professional truck and bus drivers must undergo mandatory training to work on public roads. This training can take weeks to complete, depending on the status of the licence, and is a major obstacle for many third-country drivers because it is often directly linked to the driving licence. Without completing the required training, a driver may not be able to obtain the licence needed to work.

Costs related to recruiting third-country drivers also limit opportunities within the EU. In Spain, for example, permits, visas, licences and training for a third-country driver can cost up to €18,000.

This combination of delays and costs can make migration to the EU for professional driving work unattractive.

To address these points, the project team undertook an initial research phase. Following completion of that process, we drew some early conclusions:

- Bilateral agreements are an advantage, but they are not essential. A third-country driver can work in an EU country where no bilateral agreement exists.
- EU work permits are often issued once an employment contract has been provided as evidence. In some cases, however, the contract may be put in place only after a third-country driver has completed mandatory EU training and exchanged their driving licence for a local one.
- Costs differ considerably between EU Member States and can influence the attractiveness of recruitment to particular countries. In some cases, employers cover recruitment and training costs, while in others the driver must pay for permits, visas, training and licence fees.
- The willingness of an EU Member State to participate is influenced by labour market priorities, political priorities and, to some extent, public sentiment.
- There can be inconsistencies between stakeholders in the same country; therefore, the data must be verified through a 'deep dive' into selected origin and destination countries.
- Stakeholder interviews were ongoing at the time of drafting; the data therefore required further assessment to identify the best possible matches between origin and destination countries.

The findings in this report, together with the results of the country analysis and feasibility assessments, were intended to contribute to a new, bespoke skilled driver mobility scheme to be tested in the next phase of the project.

This report has been reviewed and approved by the SDM4EU I project team and the project manager.

Project scope and methodology

The project team, comprising migration experts and road transport specialists based in origin and destination countries, developed a set of criteria to assess the situation for workers in those countries. The objective was to produce comparable results and identify synergies and gaps between countries.

The focus was to gather information from 5 origin countries and 11 destination countries (EU Member States) from a list provided by MPF and ICMPD:

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------|----------|
| • Pakistan | • Poland | • Spain | • France |
| • Bangladesh | • Portugal | • Germany | • Greece |
| • Egypt | • Romania | • Netherlands | • Sweden |
| • Tunisia | • Italy | • Belgium | |
| • Morocco | | | |

Our objective was to identify the best possible match based on our criteria.

From an early stage, we identified and approached key stakeholders who could provide the necessary information. We created a preliminary list of organisations, including government departments, transport federations and associations, trade union representatives, and driving and vocational training centres.

During this phase, we identified additional stakeholders and continued contacting organisations that could contribute to the project. As of 9 September 2024, we had emailed, called or interviewed stakeholders in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. We had also emailed or called stakeholders in Romania, Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Greece.

We arranged interviews with stakeholders who were willing to share information. These interviews took place in August and September 2024.

By the time of drafting, we had completed interviews with stakeholders from all 5 origin countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. However, some data remained unavailable, and the team continued to seek the missing information.

When the initial analysis was produced, 5 of the 11 EU Member States (Poland, Portugal, Greece, Romania and Italy) had taken part in an interview. By the time this report was finalised, interviews had also taken place with representatives in Belgium, Germany, Spain and Sweden. At the time of the research, the political situation in the Netherlands meant that third-country driver immigration was not considered a viable option.

During data collection, it was difficult to obtain all the necessary information through interviews alone. This was partly due to the summer holiday period. To make effective use of the time available, we therefore undertook desk research to source and validate information where possible.

Our priority was to gather information that would allow us to score or benchmark countries, identify compatibility and determine the best options for matching origin and destination countries. We assessed existing legal and administrative frameworks in origin countries to identify barriers and opportunities affecting mobility for professional truck and bus drivers. Key criteria, including adherence to international agreements, standards for initial and ongoing driver training, and existing migration agreements, provided a basis for benchmarking and assessing the potential to improve driver migration pathways into the EU.

EU legislation mandating driver training is a significant hurdle. EU Directive 2022/2561 requires most professional truck and bus drivers to undergo initial and/or periodic training to maintain their professional qualification, and the amount of training depends on how long a driver has been working. There is no system to recognise training delivered in third countries, so non-EU workers must complete at least 35 hours of training before they start work.

Other factors, such as the recording and disclosure of convictions, licence acquisition and limits on driving hours, were also in scope. Where possible, we included topics or references based on EU legislation. For example, we used topics listed in Directive 2022/2561 for some multiple-choice responses, allowing us to identify similarities in vocational education.

A fundamental part of driver mobility is the recruitment process. Where possible, we identified basic systems for managing and monitoring skilled labour. Further development of these systems in both origin and destination

countries could support the development and deployment of workers across industries and facilitate the later integration of EU standards in origin countries.

For the destination countries, we took a slightly different approach. Our focus was to understand the processes for migrant workers, including background checks and the issuing of work and residence permits. This helped us assess what was possible under existing policies and procedures.

We also examined initiatives to attract and retain migrant workers, as these could indicate a willingness to participate further in the project and may offer additional options or simpler administrative arrangements for third-country drivers.

Crucially, we needed to understand what happens when migrant workers arrive in a destination country, particularly the administrative process, worker safety and welfare, and the costs involved in recruitment and deployment.

Scoring and benchmarking

Using the information available, we could work towards identifying the best possible matches between origin and destination countries. This required a scoring process.

The scoring would be weighted according to the importance of each criterion. For example, ongoing vocational training in an origin country is important and should be weighted more heavily than licensing because it directly affects road safety risk and often indicates a higher standard of driving.

Once the appropriate scoring model had been established, countries could be benchmarked to identify potential matches. The results would then be subject to the 'deep dive' analysis to verify the information and identify any unforeseen issues.

Country analysis

Following the initial round of interviews, we evaluated the results to identify barriers and opportunities between origin and destination countries. The interview results and desk research highlighted common features that could affect mobility opportunities.

Industry-specific criteria, namely the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic 1968 (which relates to the recognition and exchange of driving licences) and the AETR agreement (which relates to driving and rest times), were important for the origin-country analysis because they indicate how quickly a third-country driver could start work in an EU Member State.

It was also important to review international agreements and regulations. Migration agreements between countries can indicate a willingness to collaborate and provide case-study evidence to support a driver mobility initiative.

Language is often seen as a barrier to driver migration because communication is important in the role. We therefore looked at whether third-country drivers are taught and use an additional language alongside their native language.

Vocational training over a 5-year period is mandatory for EU drivers; therefore, we needed to understand whether third-country drivers receive ongoing training. This is an important aspect of road safety and operational efficiency and can indicate the skill level of truck and bus drivers.

Reviewing the processes for recording and disclosing criminal records helped assess the availability of background information on prospective migrant drivers. We also considered whether recognised ethical standards or codes of conduct were in place in origin countries as an indicator of professional standards.

The following table presents the interview results, based on information provided by stakeholders. A simple traffic-light system shows where these areas align with EU legislation or general working practices.

Figure 1: Country of origin criteria mapping

Country of origin	Bangladesh	Egypt	Pakistan	Tunisia	Morocco
International Agreements and Regulations					
Vienna Convention					
AETR Agreement					
Migration partnership agreement with EU					
Regulation/legislation to export labour					
Recruitment					
Recruitment through government agency					
Recruitment through private sector agency					
Language and Training					
English taught and used as an additional language					
French taught and used as an additional language					
Other language taught and used (please specify)					

Country of origin	Bangladesh	Egypt	Pakistan	Tunisia	Morocco
Legal and Administrative Requirements					
Criminal background check in place					
Competent, approved training centres in place					
EU regulations understood in training centres					
Programme for continuous driver training / development					
Vehicle compatibility with EU standards					
Integration and Support					
Embassy of 11 EU Countries					
Cultural integration programmes for 11 EU countries					
Recognised standards of ethics and conduct for truck and bus drivers					
High level of bureaucracy					

Match
 Partial Match
 No Match

The following information presents the data collected. Interpretation is provided in the summary section towards the end of the report.



Bangladesh

A significant barrier for Bangladeshi drivers is that Bangladesh is not a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic 1968. This means a local driving licence cannot be exchanged after arriving in an EU Member State, and a driver must complete initial and periodic training to obtain a licence (without which they cannot drive). In essence, a driver may have to wait several months in order to start working commercially.

Consulates and embassies

Bangladesh has an Embassy in Dhaka for Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland. There are consulates for Romania and Greece. Portugal does not have an embassy in Bangladesh, but Portuguese citizens can seek assistance from the Embassy of Portugal in New Delhi, India, which is responsible for diplomatic matters in Bangladesh.

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968)

Bangladesh is not a member of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968), nor is it in the process of accession.

Partnership agreements with 11 EU Member States

Bangladesh has a bilateral agreement with Italy to supply skilled workers to the agriculture, tourism, and technology sectors. There is cooperation with Germany, Greece, and Spain, but no official agreement. The scope of these agreements will be further investigated as part of a 'deep dive' exercise.

Criminal records

It's possible to obtain a criminal record certificate, which can be translated into English and apostilled or authenticated, depending on the destination country's requirements.

- **Publication**

The publication or availability of a criminal record following a conviction is generally not immediate and can depend on several factors. A criminal record is not usually published on a public database, but it can be accessed through formal requests by authorised agencies or individuals, such as potential employers or government authorities, with the consent of the individual concerned.

- **Translation**

Criminal records can be translated into English by a certified translator or translation service recognised by the receiving country. The translation may also need to be certified or notarised, depending on the destination country's requirements.

Labour migration regulations and policies

Bangladesh has specific regulations and policies governing labour migration, primarily focused on protecting the rights and welfare of migrant workers and managing the migration process.

Employment agencies

Bangladesh does not have a dedicated employment agency, but it has various institutions and programmes aimed at addressing unemployment and supporting job seekers.

Education diplomas and certification

Educational diplomas encompass both academic and vocational categories, providing pathways for further academic pursuits or entry into various trades and professions. These diplomas are issued by a range of educational institutions, including schools, colleges, technical institutes, and vocational training centres.

Language

English is the most widely spoken language after the local language, Bengali.

Driving schools, centres and training

Driving schools and training centres can be private and state-owned.

Obtaining a truck or bus driving licence

The minimum age required to obtain a truck or bus driving licence is 21 years. Applicants must pass a medical fitness examination to ensure they are physically capable of operating a truck or bus safely, complete a recognised driving training programme and pass both written and practical driving tests/exams.

The process typically takes 3 to 5 months and includes both theoretical and practical training.

The cost of obtaining a driving licence includes several components; training school fees range from €155 to €390, depending on the institution and the training package. Driving licence fees range from €39 to €77.

Theory training is 35 – 70 hours depending on scope, while practical training is also 35 – 70 hours. The average time it takes to become a truck or bus driver is 3 to 5 months.

Curriculum

The driving school and training centre curriculum is generally guided by standards set by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), but there is no fully harmonised national curriculum or framework across all driving schools and training centres.

The BRTA provides regulations and guidelines for driving schools and training centres, including minimum standards for training, vehicle safety, and testing procedures. While the BRTA sets the overarching standards, individual driving schools can develop their own curricula based on these guidelines. This results in some variation in the training programmes.

Training delivery

Training for driving licenses uses a combination of methods and standards regulated by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

Theory training includes lessons on traffic laws, road signs and safe driving practices. It typically involves lectures, discussions, and educational materials such as manuals and videos.

Some driving schools use driving simulators to provide a virtual experience of operating a vehicle, which helps the understanding of vehicle control and road conditions.

Practical driving lessons are conducted on public roads. These lessons cover various driving skills, including manoeuvring, parking, lane changes and handling different traffic situations. Bangladeshi drivers drive on the left side of the road.

Training instructors

Instructors are generally required to have knowledge of certain aspects related to driver training to ensure effective and comprehensive instruction.

Professional certification

There is no mandatory professional qualification (beyond the commercial driver's licence) for operating as a commercial driver in Bangladesh, although specialised training and medical certification are required.

International transport regulations

Knowledge of international transport regulations among drivers is generally limited. However, drivers engaged in international transport or cross-border operations may have some familiarity with these regulations, though the level of knowledge is not known.



Pakistan

Consulates and embassies

Pakistan has an Embassy for all 11 EU Member States. There is also a Consulate or Honorary Consulate for Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Romania and Greece.

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968)

Pakistan is a member of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968), joining on March 19, 1986.

Partnership agreements with 11 EU Member States

Pakistan has no agreement with the 11 EU Member States in scope.

Criminal records

In Pakistan, it is possible to obtain a criminal record certificate, which is maintained by the respective police station and can be produced upon request and verification. It can be apostilled or authenticated, depending on the destination country's requirements.

- **Publication**

It normally takes more than 15 days to publish a criminal record.

- **Translation**

Criminal records can be translated into English by a certified translator or translation service recognised by the receiving country. The translation may also need to be certified or notarised, depending on the destination country's requirements.

Labour migration regulations and policies

Pakistan has a regulatory framework for labour migration.

The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) is a Pakistani government bureau that regulates the overseas employment of Pakistani citizens.

Employment agencies

In Pakistan, there are approximately 4000 agencies known as Overseas Employment Promoters (OEP) who facilitate the overseas employment of Pakistani workers.

Education diplomas and certification

Educational diplomas encompass both academic and vocational categories. The National Vocational Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) regulates technical and vocational training, while Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) regulate formal education.

Language

English is the most widely spoken language after the local language, Urdu.

Driving schools, centres and training

Driving schools and training centres can be private and state-owned.

Obtaining a truck or bus driving licence

The minimum age required to obtain a truck or bus driving licence is 24 years. They must have held a valid LTV (light transport vehicle) licence for at least 3 years.

Applicants must pass a medical fitness examination to ensure they are physically capable of operating a truck or bus safely and complete a recognised driving training programme focusing on road signs and traffic rules. Applicants must pass both written and practical driving tests/exams.

A candidate is not required to learn to drive at a designated training institute. An individual can learn on their own or from anyone else.

Curriculum

The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission sets a national curriculum, but it is not designed specifically for heavy vehicles. A curriculum known as HTV sets out the requirements for Jeep drivers on tourist work.

Training delivery

Training for driving licenses is delivered using a combination of methods and standards regulated by the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC).

Training from a driving school is not mandatory for the licence. However, driving schools are provided by the NLC, City Traffic Police, and some private training companies, where any citizen can learn to drive.

Both theoretical and practical (in open ground and on the road) methods are used. Depending on the licence, a suitable vehicle will be provided. For truck or bus driver training, the vehicle will be fitted with a manual gearbox and ABS. Pakistani drivers drive on the left side of the road.

Training instructors

Driving instructors are expected to know driving rules, driving times, and resting periods.

Professional certification

There is no mandatory professional qualification beyond a commercial driver's licence to operate as a commercial driver in Pakistan. Training is not mandatory to become a commercial driver, although some companies train drivers through a driving school.

International transport regulations

As in Bangladesh, drivers generally have limited knowledge of international transport regulations. However, those engaged in international transport or cross-border operations should have some familiarity with these regulations, though the level of knowledge is unknown.



Egypt

Consulates and embassies

Egypt has an Embassy for all 11 EU Member States. There are also Consulate services for France, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Greece.

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968)

Egypt is not a member of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968). Egypt has not signed or ratified the Vienna Convention, which means that its driving licenses are not automatically recognised by EU countries under this convention.

Partnership agreements with 11 EU Member States

There are agreements with 5 of the 11 EU Member States: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. The scope of these agreements will be further investigated as part of a 'deep dive' exercise.

For Belgium, Sweden, Romania and Greece there are various forms of bilateral cooperation, although the specifics of migration agreements can be less detailed.

Criminal records

Egypt is not a party to the Hague Apostille Convention; therefore, criminal records cannot be apostilled.

- **Publication**

While a criminal record is created soon after a conviction, it is not typically published or made publicly available. Access to criminal records is controlled and usually requires formal requests to relevant authorities for specific purposes such as background checks.

- **Translation**

Criminal records can be translated into English. This translation must typically be done by a certified translator or a translation service recognised by the authorities in the receiving country.

Labour migration regulations and policies

Egypt has a regulatory framework for labour migration. There is a set of laws and regulations governing labour migration, which include provisions for both Egyptian workers seeking employment abroad and the management of labour migration processes.

Employment agencies

Egypt has employment agencies and institutions that handle employment and unemployment services.

The Ministry of Manpower and Immigration is the government department responsible for labour market regulation and employment services.

Education diplomas and certification

Educational diplomas encompass both academic and vocational categories. Vocational education in Egypt leads to diplomas for technical and specialised training in various trades and professions. These include diplomas for engineering technology, healthcare, information technology and other skilled trades.

Language

English is the most widely spoken language after the local language, Arabic. However, according to the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, French is also spoken by just over 3 million people.

Driving schools, centres and training

Driving schools and training centres can be private and state-owned.

Obtaining a truck or bus driving licence

The minimum age required to obtain a truck or bus driving licence is 21 years.

The process begins with meeting the eligibility requirements, including having a valid standard driving licence (for light vehicles) and undergoing medical examinations.

Applicants must complete a training course at an accredited driving school or training centre, which includes both theoretical and practical training specific to truck driving.

Applicants must pass a written test covering road safety, regulations, and vehicle operation, and must also pass a driving test to demonstrate proficiency in operating a truck, including manoeuvring and safety skills.

Curriculum

A harmonised curriculum and framework for driving schools and training centres ensure standardised, consistent driver education and training across the country.

The curriculum and framework for driving schools and training centres in Egypt are regulated by the General Traffic Department under the Ministry of Interior.

Training delivery

Driving licence training is delivered using a combination of methods and standards designed to ensure comprehensive driver education and practical skills. It involves classroom instruction, lectures and presentations on traffic laws, road signs, vehicle operation and safety practices. It is typically delivered by trained instructors in a classroom setting.

Sometimes, simulation software and multimedia tools are used to enhance understanding of driving scenarios and road safety.

A written test or computerised exam is conducted to assess theoretical knowledge. Egyptian drivers drive on the right side of the road.

Training instructors

Driving instructors are expected to have knowledge of traffic laws and regulations, vehicle operation and maintenance, driving technique and skills, pedagogical and instructional methods, safety and emergency procedures, legal and ethical responsibilities and cultural and behavioural awareness.

Professional certification

Truck and bus drivers in Egypt typically undergo a professional qualification beyond obtaining a driving licence to operate as commercial drivers. Drivers who wish to work in a commercial capacity often need to complete additional training and certifications.

International transport regulations

Drivers who operate in international transport often undergo specialised training that covers the relevant international regulations. This training may include topics such as the CMR Convention (Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road), ADR regulations for the transport of dangerous goods, and customs procedures.



Consulates and embassies

Tunisia has an Embassy for all 11 EU Member States.

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968)

Tunisia is a member of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968).

Partnership agreements with 11 EU Member States

There are agreements with 5 of the 11 EU Member States: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. The scope of these agreements will be further investigated as part of a 'deep dive' exercise.

France and Tunisia have a bilateral agreement on labour migration. This includes arrangements for employing Tunisian workers in France and facilitates mobility in various sectors. France is a significant partner in terms of migration and has established agreements to manage the flow of Tunisian workers.

Criminal records

In Tunisia, criminal records can be apostilled. Tunisia is a member of the Hague Apostille Convention.

- **Publication**

The criminal record itself is not published in the public domain. Instead, it is maintained within the legal and administrative systems, such as the Ministry of Justice or the police departments.

- **Translation**

Criminal records can be translated into English. The translation is usually done by authorised or certified translators.

Labour migration regulations and policies

Tunisia has a regulatory framework for labour migration. Tunisia has established regulations and frameworks for managing the migration of its labour force. These regulations govern the conditions under which Tunisian workers can seek employment abroad and also address the recruitment of foreign workers into Tunisia.

Employment agencies

Tunisia has employment agencies and employment services that assist with job placement and unemployment support.

The National Employment Agency (Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant - ANETI) is the main public institution responsible for employment services, including unemployment support and job placement.

Education diplomas and certification

Both vocational and academic education diplomas are issued.

Vocational education in Tunisia provides practical skills and training for specific trades or professions. These diplomas are awarded by technical and vocational schools and institutions.

Language

In Tunisia, apart from Arabic (the official local language), the most widely spoken language is French.

Driving schools, centres and training

Driving schools and training centres can be private and state-owned.

Obtaining a truck or bus driving licence

The minimum age required to obtain a truck or bus driving licence is 21 years.

Obtaining a truck driving licence typically involves a process that includes theoretical and practical training, tests and administrative procedures. The duration and cost can vary based on several factors, such as the driving school, the individual's prior experience, and the specific type of truck licence.

Curriculum

A harmonised curriculum and framework for driving schools and training centres ensure standardised, consistent driver education and training across the country.

The Ministry of Transport oversees the regulations and standards for driving schools and training centres.

Training delivery

Driving licence training is delivered through a combination of methods and standards designed to ensure comprehensive driver education and practical skills, in line with national regulations.

Classroom instruction focuses on traffic laws, road signs, driving rules, vehicle operation, and road safety.

Online courses provide theoretical knowledge through e-learning platforms, especially for review and additional study and are useful for supplementary learning or for students who cannot attend in-person classes.

Hands-on training in the vehicle involves basic manoeuvres, parking, lane changes and driving in different conditions, conducted under the supervision of qualified instructors in dual-control vehicles. Tunisian drivers drive on the right side of the road.

Training instructors

Instructors must be well-versed in traffic laws, road signs, and general driving rules. This knowledge is essential to effectively teach students about safe driving practices, legal requirements, and road safety.

Professional certification

Truck and bus drivers in Tunisia typically undergo a professional qualification beyond obtaining a driving licence to operate as commercial drivers.

Drivers who want to work commercially often need additional training and certifications. In some cases, drivers may also need certifications for specific types of cargo (e.g., hazardous materials) or for operating vehicles under particular conditions (e.g., long-haul trucking).

International transport regulations

Drivers receive specialised training as part of their professional qualification programmes. These programmes cover various international transport regulations, including CMR Convention (governing the international carriage of goods by road), ADR Regulations (concerning the transport of dangerous goods by road) and EU Regulations (for drivers operating within the EU, knowledge of EU-specific regulations is essential).



Morocco

Consulates and embassies

Morocco has an Embassy for 10 of the 11 EU Member States. Only Greece is not represented.

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968)

Morocco is a member of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (1968).

Partnership agreements with 11 EU Member States

Agreements exist with 10 of the 11 EU Member States; however, there are no agreements between Greece and Morocco. The scope of these agreements will be further investigated as part of a 'deep dive' exercise.

Criminal records

In Morocco, criminal records can be apostilled. Morocco is a member of the Hague Apostille Convention.

- **Publication**

Criminal records are not publicly accessible but can be obtained by individuals or entities with a legitimate interest, such as employers or government agencies, through official channels. To obtain a criminal record certificate, you typically need to apply to the local police station or the relevant judicial authority, providing identification and other required documentation.

- **Translation**

Criminal records can be translated into English. The translation is usually done by authorised or certified translators.

Labour migration regulations and policies

Morocco has a regulatory framework for labour migration.

This framework governs the emigration of its labour force, which includes regulations related to work abroad, recruitment, and the rights of Moroccans working internationally.

The Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation oversees Moroccans' migration abroad, including issues related to labour migration.

Employment agencies

The Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC) is the primary public institution responsible for promoting employment and enhancing skills in Morocco. It operates under the Ministry of Labour and Professional Integration.

ANAPEC offers various services including job placement, career counselling, vocational training, and support for job seekers. It connects unemployed individuals with job opportunities and provides training to improve employability.

Education diplomas and certification

Both vocational and academic education diplomas are issued, reflecting the country's diverse educational system.

Vocational diplomas are awarded for programmes focused on practical skills and technical training in various trades and professions. These programs are designed to prepare students for specific careers and often involve hands-on training.

Language

In Morocco, apart from Arabic (the official local language), the most widely spoken language is French.

Driving schools, centres and training

Driving schools and training centres can be private and state-owned.

Obtaining a truck or bus driving licence

The minimum age required to obtain a truck or bus driving licence is 21 years.

Obtaining a truck driving licence typically involves a process that includes theoretical and practical training, tests and administrative procedures. The duration and cost can vary based on several factors, such as the driving school, the individual's prior experience, and the specific type of truck licence.

The process generally takes 3 - 5 months. This includes time to complete training courses, pass theoretical and practical tests, and process paperwork.

Curriculum

There is a harmonised curriculum and framework for driving schools and training centres in Morocco.

The Moroccan government, through the Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water, has established standardised guidelines and a curriculum that all driving schools must follow.

Training delivery

Training for driving licenses uses a combination of methods and standards designed to ensure drivers are well prepared and meet safety and regulatory requirements.

Driving schools provide classroom-based theoretical lessons covering road safety, traffic laws, vehicle mechanics, and specific regulations for different vehicle types (e.g., trucks, buses). This theoretical instruction is essential for understanding the rules of the road and preparing for the written exam.

Some schools use interactive tools, such as simulations and visual aids, to help students understand complex topics, such as accident prevention and vehicle handling.

Students receive hands-on driving experience on the road, where they practice essential driving skills such as steering, braking, parking, and manoeuvring through traffic. For trucks and buses, additional practice includes handling larger vehicles and navigating challenging routes. Moroccan drivers drive on the right side of the road.

Training instructors

Instructors are required to be well-versed in traffic laws, road signs, and general driving rules. This knowledge is essential to effectively teach students about safe driving practices, legal requirements, and road safety.

Professional certification

As with Tunisia, truck and bus drivers in Morocco typically undergo a professional qualification beyond obtaining a driving licence to operate as commercial drivers.

Drivers who wish to work commercially often need to complete additional training and certifications. In some cases, drivers might also need to obtain certifications for specific types of cargo (e.g., hazardous materials) or for operating vehicles under particular conditions (e.g., long-haul trucking).

International transport regulations

Drivers receive specialised training as part of their professional qualification programmes. These programmes cover various international transport regulations, including CMR Convention (governs the international carriage of goods by road), ADR Regulations (concern the transport of dangerous goods by road) and EU Regulations (for drivers operating within the EU, knowledge of EU-specific regulations is essential).

Figure 2: Country of destination criteria mapping

Country of Destination	Romania	Italy	Portugal	Poland	Greece
International Agreements and Regulations					
Recognised companies already hiring third country drivers					
Driving licence recognition for third country drivers					
Automated process for exchange of driving licence					
Process for exchange of driving licence after exam					
Migration partnership agreement with 5 third countries					
Online application for work permit					
In-person application for work permit					
Online application for residence permit					
In-person application for residence permit					

Country of Destination	Romania	Italy	Portugal	Poland	Greece
Physical Obligation of Residence					
Training and Certification					
National training framework for third country drivers					
Corporate training programmes for third country drivers					
Initial training for third country drivers					
Initial and periodic training for third country drivers					
Exam required for third country drivers					
Attend classes for 3rd country drivers on CPC/CPC					
Initial and periodic training in the local language					
Initial and periodic training in a foreign language					
Guidance for training providers with third country drivers					
Cultural integration programmes					
Permitted to drive in EEA and Switzerland					
Health and Safety					
Mandatory for a named family doctor					
Mandatory medical examination					
Mandatory psychological examination					
Employment Conditions					
EU Jobs board available to third country drivers					
Remuneration for drivers during the hiring process					
Job protection and fair pay processes					

Country of Destination	Romania	Italy	Portugal	Poland	Greece
Corporate induction process with language training	No Match	Partial Match	No Match	No Match	No Match
Permitted to change profession without attestation issues	Match	Match	Match	No Match	Partial Match
Integration and Support					
Childcare support in place	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match
Family migration support in place	No Match	Partial Match	No Match	No Match	No Match
Health insurance support in place	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match
Anti-discrimination policies in place	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match
Exploitation or slavery support in place	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match
Training before starting work	Match	Match	Match	Match	Match
Tax benefits for employers of third country truck / bus drivers	Match	Match	Match	Match	Match
Total costs for third country drivers (recruitment to working)	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match	Partial Match

Match
 Partial Match
 No Match



Consulates and embassies

Greece has a Consulate or Embassy in all origin countries except for Bangladesh, where there is no Embassy.

Driving licence and permits

In Greece, third-country drivers must exchange their licence on arrival. However, drivers arriving from Albania, Serbia, USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea and former Soviet Countries are not required to exchange their licence.

- **Minimum age**

The minimum age for licence acquisition is 18 for categories B and C, and 21 for categories D and E. Code 95 is used on Greek driving licences to indicate completion of the mandatory periodic training.

- **Working permit**

A working permit can be applied for online, although documents supplied must be in original format. Evidence of any criminal record must also be provided in original format. CVs are not required as part of the evidence. To complete the process, the worker must go in person to the Greek consulate.

- **Criminal record**

The criminal record of a third-country worker will be recorded, but its expiry depends on the bilateral agreement with the country of origin. It is possible to apostille and translate the record into English.

- **Timeframe**

It takes more than 90 days to issue a work permit. The process means the worker must obtain a temporary residence permit first. Once obtained and approved, they will receive a work permit. For permanent residence permits, the worker must attend the consulate office in Greece for an interview, where he or she must submit evidence of a clean criminal record, a photo, a medical certificate, and insurance. A permanent residence permit takes between 60-90 days to be issued.

It is normally up to the worker to arrange and maintain a residence. Employers are not required to oversee a worker's welfare, although Greece proactively monitors and prevents exploitation.

Professional certification

Third-country drivers can obtain the initial and continuous CPC qualification in Greece. However, they must be at least 18 for a category C licence (truck) and 21 for a category D licence (bus). However, if they are from a country other than those listed earlier, then they must exchange their licence before the training can start.

Recruiting third country drivers

For recruitment, no method is used to attract third-country drivers. Employment agencies are active, but only inside Greece.

Migration agreements are in place with Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, but they tend to be for the agricultural sector. However, there is a will to extend this to other sectors, including road transport.

Social protection

Childcare is available to third-country workers, as long as they have social security protection.

Greek authorities do not encourage the migration of family members, nor is there a mandatory obligation for employers to pay for return trips (although it is up to the employer to decide).

In cases of exploitation, help is available to third-country workers. In the worst-case scenario, they can seek help from their Embassy; otherwise, they have a right to appeal against cases of bad treatment by an employer.



Poland

Consulates and embassies

Poland has an Embassy in all origin countries except for Bangladesh. However, there are no specific Consulates, though there may be a consular office within the relevant Embassy.

Driving licence and permits

In Poland, a third-country driver must exchange their licence within 6 months of arriving in the country. However, there is no system to monitor this.

- **Minimum age**

The minimum age for licence acquisition is 18 for categories B and C, and 21 for categories D and E. Code 95 is used on Polish driving licences to indicate completion of the mandatory periodic training.

- **Working permit**

The employer must apply for a work permit online through the local Voivodeship (province or administrative division) office. Drivers from Georgia, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus do not need a working permit. Evidence of a criminal record is not required to employ a third-country worker, nor is a CV.

- **Criminal record**

The criminal record of a third country worker is not recorded.

- **Timeframe**

It takes between 30-60 days for a work permit to be issued. A permanent residence permit takes between 90 and 9 months to be issued (sometimes as long as 9 months).

It is normally up to the worker to arrange and maintain residence, but no party is obligated. There is no system to oversee the welfare of any third country worker, and Poland does not proactively monitor and prevent cases of exploitation.

Professional certification

Third-country drivers can obtain the initial and continuous CPC qualification in Poland. However, they must be at least 18 for a category C licence (truck) and 21 for a category D licence (bus) and meet the criteria defined in EU Directive 2022/2561.

Training is done in the classroom and in practice for the initial qualification and online or in the classroom for the continuous/periodic qualification. The driver does not need to exchange their driving licence before starting the training. Poland is proactively protecting its transport market by facilitating access to the profession for more drivers from abroad.

Recruiting third country drivers

For recruitment, there is no method used for attracting third-country drivers. It is unregulated. However, according to the Polish Association ZMPD, the number of Indian and Pakistani drivers grew in recent years, with around 1500 working in the country. Indian and Bangladeshi nationals, because their countries are outside the Vienna Convention, must pass a theoretical exam that costs €20.

No agreements are in place, and any transport company can hire a third-country driver already in Poland or based abroad. This is happening due to the fact that Polish authorities recognise the truck and bus driver shortage, and nationally, it is categorised as an at-risk sector when it comes to the labour market. Drivers from Belarus and Ukraine are considered a more attractive proposition than from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh due to closer geography and similar cultural affinities.

Social protection

Childcare is available to third-country workers, as long as the child of the third-country worker attends a Polish School in Poland. Polish authorities do not encourage family members to migrate.

Despite not monitoring the general situation across the country, cases of exploitation are considered a crime, and there is protection for third-country workers.



Portugal

Consulates and embassies

Portugal has an Embassy in Egypt and Morocco. However, there are no Consulates (though there may be a consular office within the Embassy).

Driving licence and permits

In Portugal, it's possible to drive with a third-country driver licence for a period of 185 days after entering Portugal and before establishing residence. However, this applies to those driving for leisure rather than commercially. For drivers of heavy vehicles and/or international transport, a Portuguese driver licence is required from the start.

- **Minimum age**

The minimum age for licence acquisition is 18 for categories B and C, and 21 for categories D and E. Code 95 is used on Portuguese driving licences to indicate completion of the mandatory periodic training.

- **Working permit**

The employee must apply for a work permit in person and obtain it from the Consulate.

- **Criminal record**

A criminal record certificate that was issued by the competent authority of the applicant's country of nationality or the country in which he or she has resided for more than one year is required.

- **Timeframe**

It can take up to 5 months for a work permit to be issued, and a permanent residence permit can also take several months.

It is normally up to the worker to arrange and maintain residence, but no party is obligated. The employer is normally responsible for overseeing the welfare of any third country worker, and Portugal has a system to proactively monitor and prevent cases of exploitation.

Professional certification

Third-country drivers can obtain the initial and continuous CPC qualification in Portugal. However, they must be at least 18 for a category C licence (truck) and 21 for a category D licence (bus) and meet the criteria defined in EU Directive 2022/2561.

The minimum age is 21 if the driver already has the category C licence. Drivers can continue to obtain the CPC, except for category C+E, where drivers aged 67 and over are limited to vehicles with a gross weight of 20,000 kg or less.

For initial CPC, the driver must attend an online and classroom training course before the exam. The driver can take the training using their foreign driving licence, but to take the exam they must also have a Portuguese driving licence.

The training is available only in Portuguese. It takes between 30 and 60 days to acquire the initial qualification and typically more than 20 days to acquire the continuous/periodic qualification. It costs between €500 and €700 for the initial training and between €149 and €160 for the continuous/periodic training.

The conditions for being issued with a driver attestation require evidence of a valid Portuguese driver's license, a residence permit and an employment contract with a Portuguese company.

Recruiting third country drivers

For recruitment, there is no method used for attracting third-country drivers. Recruiters are free to choose how they do it.

There are no migration agreements in place, and any transport company can hire a third-country driver.

Social protection

Childcare is available to third-country workers. Unlike many other countries, Portuguese authorities do encourage the migration of family members.

In cases of exploitation, third-country workers are protected.

The employer covers driver insurance for health (occupational disease and medical conditions) and accidents. The insurance costs vary depending on what is included.

Consulates and embassies

Italy has an Embassy and a Consulate in every origin country.

Driving licence and permits

In Italy, it is possible to drive in the country for up to a year using a foreign driving licence. After that time, the driver must convert the licence to an Italian licence, which costs approximately €40.

However, only driving licences issued by countries with which Italy has signed bilateral agreements can be exchanged. This includes Morocco and Tunisia, but not Egypt, Pakistan or Bangladesh.

- **Minimum age**

The minimum age for licence acquisition is 18 for C1/C1E and 21 for C/CE. There is no maximum age limit to drive large commercial vehicles up to 20,000kg MAM, but for vehicles exceeding 20,000kg MAM the age limit is 68.

- **Working permit**

A working permit can be applied for online. The law requires the employer to submit a request to obtain a “certificate of no impediment” for the worker through the Immigration Single Window (Sportello Unico Immigrazione).

- **Criminal record**

A third-country worker is not required to submit evidence of a criminal record or a CV as part of the application for a work permit.

- **Timeframe**

It takes up to 50 days to obtain the work permit certificate and up to 60 days for a residence permit.

It is normally up to the worker to arrange and maintain residence, but no party is obligated. The employer is normally responsible for overseeing the welfare of any third country worker, and Italy has a system to proactively monitor and prevent cases of exploitation.

Professional certification

Third-country drivers can obtain the initial and continuous CPC qualification in Italy. However, they must be at least 18 for a category C licence (truck).

If the training is completed within 1 year of arriving in the country, the third-country driver can obtain the CPC even if they have not converted their foreign licence.

The training is available in Italian only. It takes more than 60 days to acquire the initial and continuous/periodic qualification. If the driver is aged 18 to 21, then they must complete 280 hours of training. If they are older than 21, it is 140 hours of training. Continuous/periodic training can be done in 10–20 days if the mandatory 35 hours have been completed.

For the initial training and certification, it usually costs €2500-3000. For continuous/periodic training, the cost is around €400-600. There is no legal obligation as to who bears the cost of the training, but it is usually the employer.

The conditions for being issued with a driver attestation are being over the age of 18 and having passed the theory test.

Recruiting third country drivers

For recruitment, there is no method used for attracting third country drivers. Recruiters are free to choose how it is done.

There are migration agreements in place with all origin countries.

There are no special requirements for transport operators when hiring third country workers. The requirements are the same for all and are set out by the Migration Flows Law ("Decreto flussi").

Social protection

Childcare is available to third country workers, although Italian authorities do not encourage the migration of family members.

In cases of exploitation there is protection for third country workers. They can file a report to the trade union and / or directly to the National Labour Inspectorate.



Consulates and embassies

Romania has an Embassy and a Consulate in every origin country, but there is no Consulate in Bangladesh.

Driving licence and permits

In Romania, non-EU professional drivers must exchange their driving licence. This step takes place once the residence permit has been issued.

- **Minimum age**

The minimum age for licence acquisition is 18 for C1/C1E and 21 for C/CE (truck). Romanian law introduced derogations allowing the driving licence for vehicle categories C and CE (truck) to be obtained from age 18, and the driving licence for vehicle categories D and DE (bus) from age 21, but only under certain conditions.

- **Working permit**

A working permit can be applied for online. To obtain a work permit, a third-country worker must have an employing company. The company obtains the work permit on behalf of the applicant from the immigration service. There are multiple conditions to be fulfilled by the company and the applicant.

- **Criminal record**

The working permit application also requires submission of any criminal record, which must be the original document, presented to a translator and a notary to be translated and legalised respectively.

- **Timeframe**

The target for issuing a working permit is 90 days, but in practice it's more than 90 days. A residence permit takes between 30 and 90 days, but sometimes as little as 15 days.

It is normally up to the employer to find and maintain a residence. The employer is also responsible for overseeing the welfare of any third country worker, and Romania has a system to proactively monitor and prevent cases of slavery.

Professional certification

Third-country drivers can obtain their continuous CPC qualification only in Romania. The initial CPC is not possible because it is not offered in any language other than Romanian. Continuous/periodic CPC is available in English and Spanish.

To obtain the CPC, the third-country driver must have a heavy vehicle category driving licence (for goods) obtained before September 2009.

For the initial CPC, the training includes a theoretical and practical exam (in Romanian only), while for the continuous CPC it includes courses and practical classes as well as the exam (in Romanian, English, or Spanish).

The third-country driver must exchange their driving licence before taking an exam or training course.

It takes 30 days to acquire the initial qualification, and 7 days to acquire the continuous/periodic qualification. If the driver is aged 18 to 21, then they must complete 280 hours of training. If they are older than 21, they must complete 140 hours of training. The continuous/periodic training can be done in 10 – 20 days if the mandatory 35 hours have been completed.

Recruiting third country drivers

For recruitment, no method is used to attract third-country drivers. Recruiters are free to choose how they do it.

For countries that are part of the Vienna Convention, it is possible to exchange the driving license into a Romanian one.

Transport operators have special requirements when hiring third-country workers. They must prove that they tried to hire truck/bus drivers from the RO/EU Market. Each employer needs to publish (on the Unemployment Agency pages) an advert and to prove that there were no candidates applying for the position.

Social protection

Childcare is available to third country workers, although Romanian authorities do not encourage the migration of family members.

In cases of exploitation, third-country workers are protected.

Dissemination activities

We raised awareness of our project by attending key events this year.

The OECD event in Paris on 19 June, titled 'Future-Proofing Labour Markets: The Role of Skills Mobility Partnerships', gave us a chance to showcase the project and emphasise the need for global cooperation to address the driver shortage, while the EU LMPN online event held on 10 July titled 'EU- Bangladesh Talent Partnership-Avenues for Further Labour Mobility Cooperation' provided us with insight into the opportunities and challenges presented by Bangladesh in respect of our objectives.

Assessment of barriers and opportunities for skilled driver mobility

This section assesses available data by examining specific criteria that indicate potential barriers and favourable conditions for skilled driver mobility, focusing on the 5 origin countries and 11 destination countries. By assessing factors such as the presence of embassies and consulates, migration policies, permits and driving licences, training standards, and associated costs, we aim to identify challenges and opportunities that influence the successful migration and integration of third-country drivers into the European road transport sector, through a bespoke mobility scheme like the one foreseen under the second phase of the SDM4EU project.

Embassies and consulates

Embassies and consulates play a vital role in supporting migrant workers in both their countries of origin and destination.

Representations of destination countries in third countries facilitate the visa application process, provide documentation services, and offer legal guidance to ensure that prospective migrant workers meet all requirements before departure. This support helps prevent issues related to fraudulent recruitment and ensures a smoother transition.

Conversely, representations of origin countries in destination countries protect migrant rights by offering legal and consular assistance, addressing issues like exploitation and mistreatment, and providing emergency support in crises. They also handle documentation requirements such as passport renewals and permit extensions, which are essential for maintaining legal status.

Without such representation, migrant workers could face delays in permit renewals, increased vulnerability to exploitation, and a lack of support in emergencies, potentially leading to early exits from the host country. It could also cause a significant delay in starting and continuing work, particularly if a visa or permit needs to be renewed.

Based on the evidence from origin countries, **Pakistan, Tunisia** and **Egypt** offer a good level of support for citizens wishing to work and reside abroad. All 11 EU Member States have an embassy in each of the 3 origin countries.

Migration and immigration policy and practice

Migration requires compliance with international law. The obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of individuals is paramount and applies to all individuals, regardless of nationality or migration status, and without discrimination, to preserve their safety, physical integrity, well-being, and dignity. Protecting individuals' rights includes combating xenophobia, racism, and discrimination; ensuring adherence to the principles of equality and non-discrimination; and ensuring access to protection.

Effective migration policy often relies on a whole-of-government approach, involving all ministries with responsibilities related to the movement of people. This helps ensure that migration and mobility policy supports a state's broader interests.

Migration and mobility involve multiple actors, including neighbouring states, subnational authorities, local communities, migrants and their families, diasporas, employers and trade unions. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations also have mandates related to migration and humanitarian action.

The importance of bilateral agreements in migration should not be underestimated. Such agreements can cover a wide range of areas and, in the context of labour mobility, can bring benefits to both parties. Migrant drivers may secure better-paid jobs and gain additional skills, while destination countries benefit from an increased labour supply. Origin countries may also benefit if returning drivers bring back enhanced skills.

The road transport sector is distinctive because employment as a truck or bus driver depends on holding the appropriate category of driving licence as well as the necessary permits.

Unlike many other industries, licensing and training rules directly affect a driver's ability to take up employment in the EU and can limit the benefits of a bilateral labour mobility agreement.

Understanding what was possible under existing legislation and training requirements was important for third-country driver mobility. Reducing unnecessary administrative barriers that delay a migrant worker's start in a new job could further strengthen existing agreements.

Harmonisation is an important factor in skills development in the road transport sector, as licensing, vocational training and on-road standards are often set through legislation. Drivers from non-EU countries with a similar approach to harmonisation may be better prepared to meet Europe's technical standards. Egypt stood out among the third countries assessed in this regard.

The situation of Bangladeshi drivers is particularly interesting. Most of the 11 EU Member States did not have a bilateral agreement with Bangladesh at the time of the research, with Italy being the exception, yet Bangladeshi workers had been working in many of those countries for several years, predominantly in the agricultural sector.

Based on the evidence collected at this stage, Morocco appeared to offer the strongest potential as a test case for driver mobility from a policy and practice perspective. Many standards were already aligned with EU requirements, and existing bilateral agreements and long-standing cooperation with Member States could provide a basis for further work.

Permits and driving licenses

Most EU Member States require a foreign driving licence to be exchanged for a local one within a certain timeframe. Many also require the licence to be exchanged before initial and periodic training can be completed, which is usually mandatory for third-country drivers.

Allowing third-country drivers to continue using their existing licence for as long as permitted could reduce delays associated with exchanging the licence.

Italy allows drivers to use a foreign licence for up to a year, but only for countries with a bilateral agreement in place.

At the time of the research, Italy appeared to offer the most attractive conditions for third-country drivers regarding permits and driving licences.

Under the bilateral agreements in place at the time, this would have been limited to Moroccan and Tunisian drivers, but the flexibility and relatively moderate permit costs made Italy an attractive option.

Training standards

Regarding training standards, there is a clear difference between the North African countries and the Asian countries.

Bangladesh has no fully harmonised national curriculum or framework across all driving schools and training centres, and its system is not harmonised with EU standards. This may make alignment with EU requirements more challenging.

Similarly, Pakistan does not have a fully harmonised national curriculum or framework across all driving schools and training centres. While a curriculum exists for certain occupations, the closest profile to a truck or bus driver is a jeep driver working in tourism. There is also no requirement to attend a driving school to complete the training needed to obtain a licence. As a result, drivers are not trained to a single agreed standard, and the practical application of driving skills can vary.

Egypt appears to have an established, harmonised national curriculum for drivers. The Ministry of Interior oversees the system, and training centres are expected to meet set standards. Many subjects overlap with those identified in EU Directive 2022/2561 (Driver CPC), suggesting a well-developed driver-training system.

Tunisia has a national curriculum, but its subjects may not fully overlap with those in EU Directive 2022/2561. This may result in differences from EU training standards, and questions remain about how consistently the curriculum is applied. Nevertheless, drivers are trained to use a tachograph, a device that records the working hours and activity of a professional driver, which is an important part of an EU driver's role.

Morocco has a well-established national curriculum, with clearly defined subjects and methodology. The system is overseen by the Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water and, as in Tunisia, tachograph training is provided.

A major issue across all 5 origin countries is the lack of mandatory national ongoing training equivalent to periodic CPC training. This means drivers may not receive the same level of ongoing skills development as EU drivers. The gap can be addressed, but it remains an important consideration.

The willingness demonstrated by representatives of both origin and destination countries also had to be considered. At the time of the research, the Netherlands did not consider the recruitment of third-country drivers a viable option under the political administration then in place, although this position could change.

At the time of the research, political factors also presented challenges in Bangladesh.

Based on training standards, infrastructure and overall approach, Morocco appeared to offer the strongest potential as a test case. The evidence suggested that a Morocco-Italy pairing could be feasible, subject to further investigation.

Costs

As part of the research phase, it was important to estimate the costs associated with the migration of third-country workers to the EU.

For budgeting purposes, it is necessary to understand the financial burden on workers and prospective employers. Affordability is an important consideration. The following information was provided by the interviewees:

Figure 3. Third country driver costs in EU Member States

France	4,000.00 €									55.00 €		1,747.00 €	0.00 €
Spain	4,000.00 €	400.00 €	300.00 €	0.00 €	94.00 €	1,950.00 €	250.00 €	220.00 €	17.80 €	35.00 €	12	1,260.00 €	22,136.80 €
Poland	3,250.00 €	0.00 €	25.00 €	100.00 €	20.00 €	1,000.00 €	100.00 €	250.00 €	25.00 €	35.00 €	2	1,000.00 €	6,705.00 €
Portugal	3,500.00 €	100.00 €	200.00 €	300.00 €	100.00 €	700.00 €	200.00 €	450.00 €	100.00 €	35.00 €	9	820.00 €	12,865.00 €
Germany	4,000.00 €	75.00 €	100.00 €	110.00 €	50.00 €	2,750.00 €	450.00 €	700.00 €	100.00 €	50.00 €		2,080.00 €	7,935.00 €
Romania	2,750.00 €	100.00 €	100.00 €	300.00 €	10.00 €	800.00 €	80.00 €	100.00 €	10.00 €	50.00 €	6	750.00 €	8,720.00 €
Greece	3,250.00 €	300.00 €	150.00 €	300.00 €	180.00 €	1,000.00 €	70.00 €	500.00 €	15.00 €	35.00 €	6	700.00 €	9,930.00 €
Sweden	4,000.00 €	150.00 €	150.00 €	150.00 €	180.00 €	2,500.00 €	1,100.00 €	900.00 €	150.00 €	40.00 €			8,220.00 €

Italy	4,500.00 €	0.00 €	160.00 €	70.00 €	170.00 €	2,500.00 €	500.00 €	800.00 €	20.00 €	45.00 €	6	1,800.00 €	19,065.00 €
Netherlands	4,000.00 €									40.00 €		1,995.00 €	4,040.00 €
Belgium	4,000.00 €	100.00 €	180.00 €	25.00 €	40.00 €	2,200.00 €	750.00 €	400.00 €	0.00 €	35.00 €		1,995.00 €	6,980.00 €

Challenges

Several challenges were identified.

The laws and regulations of destination countries largely determine the options available to third-country drivers. Although EU legislation provides a common framework, national implementation and additional requirements can create delays.

A new legal pathway could help remove barriers to driver employment in the EU and increase the prospects for a sustainable skilled driver mobility programme. For example, licensing is directly linked to qualifications or certification obtained through training, which can make it difficult for a third-country driver to start working immediately. The SDM4EU labour mobility project could identify steps to reduce this burden without compromising road safety or environmental efficiency.

The average time for a work permit to be issued in an EU Member State, based on the 11 countries in scope, was more than 90 days. Temporary or permanent residence procedures could take longer. In theory, a destination country could seek to expedite the visa process for skilled drivers from a third country where it has no embassy or consulate, with the process handled through a consulate in a neighbouring country.

Government policy and migration agreements are significant barriers because, without a basic labour-migration framework, third-country drivers may struggle to use available mobility pathways.

Financial constraints could also be a barrier if a third-country driver cannot cover migration-related costs. Permits, training and housing can be expensive, and financial support may therefore be necessary. While many employers in destination countries cover employment-related costs, drivers may need to cover other costs themselves.

Maintaining road safety requires high driving standards. Driving performance is influenced by experience and behaviour and can be strengthened through ongoing professional development, as required for EU drivers. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, for example, drivers are not required to undertake ongoing skills development after obtaining their licence. Their skills therefore develop mainly through on-road experience rather than periodic formal training. This creates greater variation in training and skills standards and may increase road-safety risks.

Successes

We identified policies and practices that could support mobility opportunities for some third-country drivers. The North African countries assessed have driver-training frameworks that, in many cases, show similarities to those used in the EU.

In addition, Egypt and Morocco refer to EU standards in parts of their training curricula, and drivers use tachographs, which are rarely used outside Europe.

Licence and permit requirements can delay the start of work for a third-country driver, but Italy allows up to a year before a foreign licence must be exchanged for an Italian one. This means the mandatory training can be completed within that year rather than immediately on arrival. This could allow third-country drivers to earn income while completing the required training.

Next steps

At the time of drafting, the data collected still required further validation.

The next planned step was to examine the legislative and practical issues underlying the data, identify the strongest country pairings through weighted scoring and benchmarking, and then conduct a 'deep dive' into selected countries.

At the time of drafting, the project considered it unlikely that it could proceed with Bangladesh. The reasons identified were political uncertainty, the absence of bilateral agreements, the lack of recognition of Bangladeshi driving licences, and the absence of ongoing driver training beyond the initial qualification. In addition, drivers in Bangladesh, as in Pakistan, drive on the left. Additional training would therefore be needed to familiarise drivers with different road systems, vehicle and route height and width restrictions, and other road-safety requirements.

The Netherlands was also considered not viable at the time of drafting because the political support for recruiting third-country drivers was not in place and the country was planning to develop domestic talent for the road transport industry.

At that stage, all other origin and destination countries remained in scope for the scoring process and subsequent deep dive.



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