

EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network (EU LMPN) In-Person Conference

Beyond Policy: Making EU labour mobility work in practice

13-14 October 2026
Sofitel Brussels Europe Hotel
Pl. Jourdan 1, 1040 Bruxelles

Concept Note

Across the European Union (EU), labour shortages are structural and widespread. The [Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#) highlights persistent gaps across EU Member States (MS) in sectors such as healthcare, ICT, engineering, skilled trades, and services, driven by demographic shifts, rising demand, and ongoing mismatches between skills supply and labour market needs. In response, a number of established and more recent EU initiatives and instruments, including [Talent Partnerships](#), the [EU Talent Pool](#), and the [Skills Portability Initiative](#) aim to facilitate labour mobility to the EU and improve access to international talent for European businesses. Yet, significant challenges remain in translating these policy tools into solutions that are accessible and usable. According to a [2026 Eurobarometer survey](#), nearly half of European SMEs (46%) report difficulties in finding workers with the right skills, rising to 70% among those actively recruiting. Despite these shortages, only around one in seven SMEs has attempted to recruit workers from outside the EU, citing administrative complexity, limited information, and procedural barriers. This points to a persistent disconnect between policy ambition and operational reality.

Over the past five years, the EU labour mobility landscape has evolved considerably, with new frameworks, instruments, and partnerships expanding the toolbox available to policymakers and practitioners. Since its establishment in 2022, the EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network (EU LMPN) has both accompanied and contributed to this evolution, providing a platform for practitioners to exchange experiences, test approaches, and translate emerging policy developments into operational practice. As both the policy framework and the Network have matured, the challenge has increasingly shifted from developing new instruments to ensuring that existing ones can be effectively implemented, scaled, and sustained. Marking the 5th edition of the EU LMPN In-Person Conference, this year's theme, "**Beyond Policy: Making EU labour mobility work in practice**", reflects this transition and places a clear focus on the next phase of the discussion: moving from policy ambition to operational delivery.

Bringing together public authorities, private sector representatives, EU institutions, international organisations, and practitioners, the Conference will focus on the practical realities of designing and implementing labour mobility initiatives. While labour market analysis, demographic trends, and policy developments will provide the foundation for discussion, the emphasis will be on implementation: understanding employer needs, identifying operational bottlenecks, and examining what is required to **make labour mobility work in practice**. Through dedicated practice labs, participants will explore the core building blocks of labour mobility schemes, including the pre-departure phase, matching and selection, and onboarding and retention. Discussions will focus on the challenges, trade-offs, and enabling factors that influence implementation outcomes and determine whether pathways can be successfully delivered and scaled. The conference will also examine priority themes such as skills recognition, sector-specific pathway models, and the longer-term sustainability of labour mobility initiatives. Particular attention will be given to sectors facing acute shortages, such as healthcare, as well as to mechanisms that support sustainable mobility over time, including portability of rights, stronger coordination, and effective governance arrangements.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The event will contribute to the effective design and implementation of the Talent Partnership policy framework by offering an opportunity for EU LMPN members and relevant stakeholders to come together, exchange, learn and ultimately improve implementation of labour migration initiatives to the EU.

Coming together in person will seek to enable them to:

- Identify and share good practices and lessons learned from their experience with labour migration processes to increase efficiency and value for money of labour mobility initiatives;
- Foster cooperation between EU MS and relevant partners in the area of labour migration and thereby contribute to sustainability and scalability of mobility initiatives;
- Form relevant subgroups by shared interest (country, regional, thematic, policy area) to advance and deepen learning, workshop concrete ideas for cooperation or incubate a project, initiative, or partnership;
- Identify areas for MPF support in the future – through grants, research, technical assistance, etc.
- Use available opportunities and spaces for innovation and experimentation with new policies and practices.

Eligible Participants

- EU grant project representatives;
- EU MS staff at operational level (from different Ministries e.g. Ministries of Interior, Migration, Labour, Social, Foreign Affairs or Economics or any of their affiliated agencies that have a mandate linked to labour migration or are interested to design/implement/learn from mobility schemes such as development of employment agencies);
- Relevant international organisation (IO) staff (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Bank) with experience designing and implementing labour and skills mobility schemes;
- Representatives of foundations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks or academic institutions that have conducted research or implemented activities in relation to labour migration (e.g. Centre for Global Development (CGD), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Bertelsmann Foundation, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), ODI, Ashoka, and others);
- Representatives of private sector networks/bodies (such as employers' associations) or service providers active in the field of labour migration in a particular MS or at EU-/international level (Eurochambres, Business Europe, SME United, International Organisation of Employers (IOE), national Chambers of Commerce, associations of recruitment service providers etc.);
- Representatives of trade unions (at EU MS or regional/international level);
- Diaspora organisations and migrants' associations as relevant;
- Staff from EU Institutions and affiliated agencies (EC – Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Training Foundation (ETF), European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), Joint Research Centre (JRC), EP staff.

The European Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network (EU LMPN)

The EU LMPN gathers over 350 members from both EU and national authorities, private sector, International Organisations, NGOs and think tanks/academia that have extensive experience researching, designing, and implementing labour mobility initiatives. The network has been operational since 2022 and organises events in different formats on topics such as private sector engagement, entrepreneurial mobility, candidate selection or financing mechanisms for labour mobility.