

GMC Thematic 6

Panel 3 Summary Note

Recognition of skills and qualifications and relevant measures

Friday 13 October, 10:00 - 13:00

Recent demographic changes have resulted in shrinking domestic labour pools in many developed countries, meaning that many industries are struggling to find the workers that they need. Many developing countries, on the other hand, are struggling to create enough jobs for a growing and more dynamic workforce. The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will have a far reaching impact on working people everywhere, and a lot will hinge on the recognition of skill, competencies and qualifications of migrant workers.

The importance of the recognition of skills and qualifications

The recognition of skills, qualifications and also the validation of competencies is essential for a well-managed migration system and can deliver positive impacts. It can help to improve labour mobility, ensure safe and regular paths for migration. It can support effective economic and social integration and promote just and fair labour programmes, equal treatment and equal pay, both for local workers and to migrants and their families.

Failure to recognize and validate skills, qualification and competencies can have detrimental impacts on countries of origin, countries of destination and migrants themselves. De-skilling compounds brain drain in countries of origin and brain waste in countries of destination. Migrants find themselves stuck in low-skilled, under qualified roles; they are underpaid; and in some extreme circumstances they are killed or injured on the job as a result of inadequate health and safety training. Women and girls, who make up 50% of migrants around the world, can be disproportionately affected. They struggle to find qualified roles; they can also be vulnerable to exploitation. Children, more broadly, also face barriers to accessing education. This requires complementarity and coordination of skills and qualification recognition measures with education and health services and, more broadly, with policies and public services in general for migrant workers.

The challenges and barriers that exist

A number of barriers and challenges exist in regards to the recognition and validation of skills qualifications and competencies. The assessment of skills and qualifications is a complex issue and we must avoid the tension between migrants workers wanting his/her skills recognized versus differences in the recognition process between countries of origin and countries of destination. The discrimination of migrant workers and their families can limit their ability to access opportunities to improve their skills and qualifications, to labour and to social integration.

Existing models and best practices

Despite these challenges and barriers, there are abundant models and best practices that were cited during the panel discussion. These ranged from existing codes of practice both at global and national levels (e.g. WHO code of practice for health workers, ILO guidelines and principles for fair recruitment); measures to cooperate bilaterally between States on skill recognition (e.g. mutual recognition agreements); and specific initiatives and projects (e.g. the global skill partnership, skill passports, IOM's International Recruitment Integrity System, the business mechanism under the Global Forum On Migration and Development). It was emphasized that this processes should be transparent, based on rights and start even before leaving the country of origin.

The opportunity for the GCM

There was consensus that the GCM needs to build on what we have and not roll back on the progress that has already been made. It should improve the system and anticipate labour markets needs and transformation and the future of work. The lessons of these best practices and existing models should be reflected in the Compact, and suggestions on how they might be replicated and advanced at the regional level should be made.

There was a call for greater international cooperation, with mutual recognition and mutual responsibility at the heart of this. Countries of origin and destination will need to cooperate on issues of skill identification and validation to ensure better skill matching. Here, the role of technology was specifically emphasized as a tool that could be used to assist with enhanced skill matching and skills upgrading. There could also be greater efforts to harmonize skills and qualification certification processes, and the GCM could usefully provide examples and guidelines for States to consider.

Greater cooperation will require a whole of society approach. The GCM must consider the role of trade unions, employers' associations, the private sector and civil society. The private sector in particular brings a unique perspective, with practical knowledge and a real time understanding of skills needs. Specific initiatives could be considered for small and medium enterprises to help them better understand the skills and qualifications that migrant workers can bring to their business.

In addition to building on existing best practices and models, alternative measures that recognize skills and qualifications could be considered in the implementation of the GCM. Some examples highlighted during the panel discussion included mentoring programmes, internship and apprenticeships. Ensuring that migrants have access to pre-migration training, including language training should also be a pre-requisite. Policies and programmes will need to be gender sensitive. There will also be a need for better forecasting so that we know the potential jobs and skills gaps arising in the future and can plan effectively to respond these.

In general, improving the conditions for regular migration should open avenues for improvement in the future for irregular migrants.