

## “Circular” migration partnerships: neocolonial or working towards mutual well- being?

**Tesseltje de Lange** & Colleen Boland, Centre for Migration  
Law, Radboud University (HEU GS4S) *Correspondence:*  
*Tesseltje.delange@ru.nl*

**Dina Abdel Fattah**, American University Cairo (HEU GS4S)  
Anita Böcker Sociology of Law, Radboud University  
(Instituut Gak)



# Today's presentation

01

## The project background

- Horizon Europe
- the EU faces a shortage of relevant skills.
- global challenges, requiring global strategies.
- Digital, Care & Construction
- Talent Partnerships (gov2gov, bus2bus, other) EU / bilateral
- Country of Origin/Destination/Onward
- (non)migrants/trainees
- 2024-2027; [www.gs4s.eu](http://www.gs4s.eu)

02

## The Paper

- Intro
- Egypt – Germany
- Indonesia – Netherlands
- Discussion



**GS4S**

Global strategy for skills  
migration and development

## 2. The Paper



# Paper Objectives

1. Re-assesses the notion of circular migration through a **neocolonial or well-being (SDGs) lens**
2. Test Ashiagbor's argument (2021) trade agreements and bilateral agreements are a continuation of predatory capitalism and neocolonialism
3. Develop new knowledge on the legal scope as well as the **migrant worker and partner country perspective** on care sector mobility.





## “Circular Migration” a typology of mobility schemes and partnerships

- Regular migration offering a triple win, providing gains to countries of both origin and destination, as well as to the migrants themselves
- EU definition: moving into the EU from non-EU country of origin and back multiple times for a certain period
- Or just a fancy term for temporariness of migration under “partnerships” that are a carrot in the field of the European Unions’ external migration policy
- In countries of origin it can provide unemployment relief and both financial and human capital (in terms of remittances and skills and resources brought back to the country),

# 3. Egypt - Germany



# Circular Migration in the Egypt-Germany Partnership

- Circular migration is a component of the current migration initiatives that is not explicitly highlighted nor leveraged for its developmental potential
- More explicit integration of circular migration as a policy objective in bilateral agreements to ensure that both migrant workers and the Economies of Egypt and Germany can fully benefit from these arrangements.

1. THAMM and “Go Ahead Germany” initiative include elements that implicitly promote circular migration
  1. THAMM funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) focusing on fostering “safe and fair” migration pathways from Egypt to Germany, particularly for sectors facing labor shortages such as the care sector
2. Circular migration is implied through provisions that support temporary labor mobility. After the term of employment, the workers have the opportunity to return to Egypt with enhanced skills and experience
3. Explicit reference as a strategic objective are less common, indicating a potential gap in the policy narrative that could be addressed to emphasize circular elements more clearly



# Circular Migration in the Egypt-Germany Partnership

- These initiatives focus on vocational training and certification processes that are recognized both in Egypt and abroad
- While the initiatives prepare workers for both local and international demands, the primary emphasis appears to be on meeting the immediate needs of the German labor market.

1. **THAMM and the Egyptian-German Center for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration** aim to upskill Egyptian workers aligning their qualification with the demands of both the local and international labor markets
  1. **The goal is to create a pool of skilled workers who are employable in both domestic and international contexts providing flexibility in labor mobility**
2. The program has a dual purpose:
  1. **First, to enhance the employability of Egyptian workers locally by providing them with internationally recognized certifications,**
  2. **Second, to ensure that these workers are ready to fill immediate gaps in the German labor market, particularly in the care sector.**
3. Training programs under these initiatives often include components on language proficiency (e.g., German), cultural orientation, and specialized caregiving skills required by German employers.





## Circular Migration in the Egypt-Germany Partnership

- Circular migration offers a potentially safer and more culturally acceptable pathway for **female migrants** from Egypt, particularly in the care sector.

1. In the Egyptian context, where cultural norms and traditional gender roles often restrict women's long term migration, circular migration provides a compromise
2. It allows women to work abroad temporarily, gaining valuable skills and experience, while also ensuring that they will return home, which can be more acceptable to families concerned about the safety and cultural appropriateness of female migration
3. THAMM and the Egyptian-German center support this by offering structured migration pathways with clear timelines and reintegration plans
4. These initiatives could include specific provisions for female care workers, such as guaranteed return tickets, reintegration support, and partnerships with local organizations to assist in their re-entry into the domestic labor market. These measures could mitigate some of the cultural and safety concerns that families have about female migration.



# Circular Migration in the Egypt-Germany Partnership

- The developmental impact of circular migration on both Egypt and Germany is not always explicitly highlighted in the formal agreements and initiatives

1. Implicit benefits align with broader developmental goals
  1. **For Egypt: circular migration facilitates the return of workers with enhanced skills and international experience, potentially leading to improvements in local healthcare practices, increased remittances and better integration of international standards into the domestic market**
  2. **For Germany: circular migration helps address labor shortages in critical sectors, such as healthcare, while also maintaining a flexible labor force that does not contribute to long-term demographic challenges.**
2. The emphasis on skill development and temporary migration helps mitigate some concerns over permanent immigration while meeting immediate labor market needs



# Circular Migration in the Egypt-Germany Partnership

- There is a significant potential to further emphasize the role of circular migration in both the bilateral agreements between Egypt and Germany and in the broader international migration narrative

1. Explicitly integrating circular migration as a central component of these initiatives, policymakers could better align with the objectives of sustainable development, labor market flexibility and mutual benefit
2. Circular migration could be framed not only as a way to address labor shortages in Germany but also as a tool for economic development in Egypt
3. This could involve more explicit commitments to supporting the reintegration of returnees, promoting local job creation, and ensuring that the skills and experiences gained abroad are effectively utilized upon return.
4. Enhancing the visibility of these elements in official agreements and public communications could help strengthen the perception of circular migration as a "win-win" strategy.

# 4. Indonesia - Netherlands



# Indonesia - NL

- Gov2Gov MoU (historical ties)
- Private Actors
  - **Recruiter / onboarder**
  - **Educational Institution**
  - **Care Facility**
- Qualified in Indonesia
- EU Students & Researchers Directive
  - **No labour market test**
  - **Trainees - re-integration**
- 4 years of re-training 1 day a week
- 16 hours working/16 hours training
- Pro's and Con's
  - **Search period after graduation**
  - **No guarantees on**
  - **Gender perspective**



# Discussion

01

Simplistically framing the case of these workers against a backdrop of North-South exploitation would lack nuance and full consideration of migrant agency.

02

Critique of binary approach of brain drain, brain gain; also need to consider brain waste; opportunity structures, remittances, family ties and culture. Migration for Development approach

03

Well-being (circularity is a choice, or would it be different with different opportunities?)

04

EU policy implications:

- back-off or legislate?
- Transparency
- Governance structures with CoO and worker representation / gender perspective /re-intergation
- Must to address care shortages
- Without Conditionalities

# Thanks for your attention

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