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A Global Strategy for Skills, Migration, and Development
In the Digital/IT, Construction, and Care Industries

Webinar: Enhanced Informed Decision-Making in EU Migration Policy
Focus: Italy/Bangladesh Migration Corridor

Migration More Important Than Ever

Webinar to reflect on the situation in Bangladesh,
Its relationship with Italy, and insights for EU Migration Policy

Key Takeaways from November 12th Webinar

The session provided a candid look at the current state of the #EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, examining issues such as migrant indebtedness and recruitment abuses while exploring reforms to enhance employer-migrant connections and the need for pre-migration skills development for today's complex migration landscape. View the full recording at YouTube and <https://gs4s.eu/events/> to hear experts from both origin and destination countries discuss the challenges and opportunities in the Bangladesh-Italy migration corridor



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHnxJGPCLZ4>



Webinar

<https://GS4S.eu/events/>

***Enhanced Informed
Decision-Making in
EU Migration Policy***

***Focus: Italy/Bangladesh
Migration Corridor***

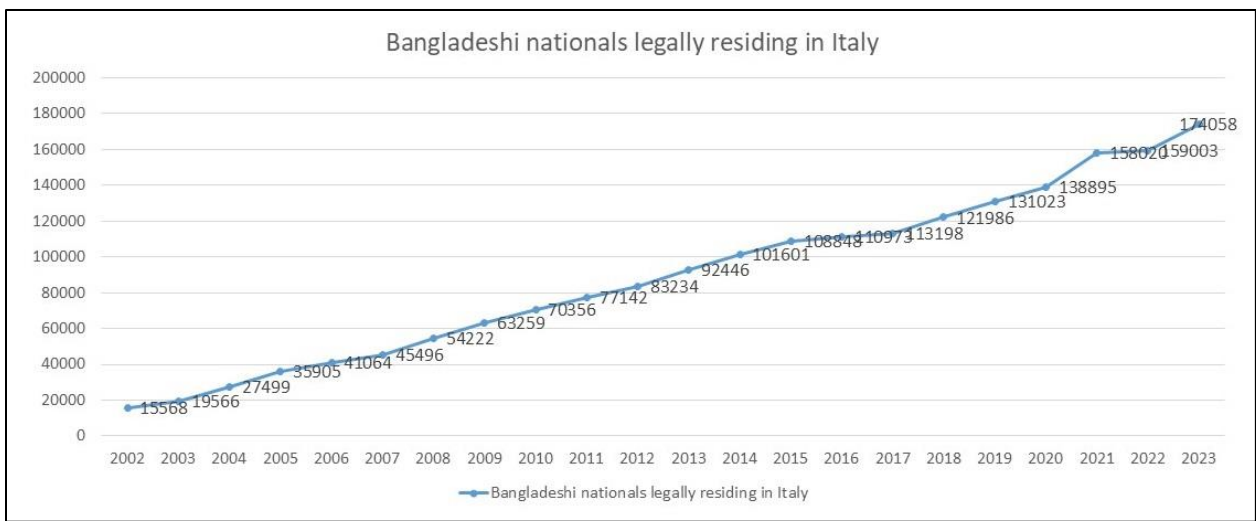


#EUTalentPartnerships

The "Migration More Important Than Ever" webinar brought together experts around a virtual table to examine the evolving dynamics of the Bangladesh-Italy migration corridor and its broader implications for EU migration policy. Moderated by Dr. Jasmijn Sloopjes (MPI Europe), the webinar panel discussion explored trends, governance challenges, and potential solutions, emphasizing cooperation and skill-based pathways for long-term benefits.

Migration Trends and Challenges

Discussant Dr. Ferruccio Pastore (FIERI, Italy) detailed the exponential growth of Bangladeshi migration to Italy, now the second-largest group in Europe.




SOURCE: ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics)

Irregular migration via the Mediterranean has also surged caused by recruitment fraud, exorbitant fees, and intermediaries that undermine the system, leading to frozen visa processes and stalled agreements. Attempts to reform these practices, such as an October 2024 decree restructuring migration admissions and Italy's offshore processing centers in Albania, face legal and logistical challenges, highlighting three critical lessons:

1. Migration strategies often lag behind developments, requiring more adaptive, proactive frameworks;
2. Employer-driven recruitment lacks effective skill-matching, exacerbating inefficiencies - talent pools and job-seeking visas could address this gap;
3. Talent Partnership programs should be part of a broader strategy incorporating skills development and ethical recruitment.


Bangladeshi Perspective

Discussant Shakirul Islam (OKUP, Bangladesh) focused on the socio-economic and environmental pressures driving migration, including high unemployment and climate displacement. While collaborative efforts currently exist, there are no direct activities or local initiatives in Bangladesh specifically linked to the talent partnership project. He stressed the importance of bringing the grassroots perspective and that from migrant organizations into this kind of discourse and discussion. Mr. Islam highlighted why irregular migration has become a common strategy for many Bangladeshi migrant workers by examining its historical trends, current dynamics, and the challenges faced in migration corridors like Bangladesh-Italy. Labor migration contributes significantly to Bangladesh's economy, generating \$100 billion in remittances (2019–2023). However, high migration costs (15,000€ – 20,000€) and unethical recruitment remain unresolved issues; many migrants also receive false job or salary promises from recruiters, non-existent employers, and others, leading to aspirant migrants kept in limbo



Current context and consequences of Recruitment in Italy:

- ➔ 110,000 migrants applied for work visas since 2023 when Italy issued the new law for the recruitment of workers on work visas
- ➔ Italian authority announced the suspension of the validity of work permits for Bangladeshis from October 20, 2024


What would be the consequences of 110,000 aspirant migrants who have already paid € 15,000 - € 20,000 or more?

- What were the faults of the migrants in this case?
- What would happen to those who took huge loans or sold their land and other resources?
- Why will the migrants only pay?

Islam advocated for skill-based migration systems and transparent recruitment processes to ensure safer and more efficient pathways.

Research Insights

Rapporteur Dr. Jessica Hagen-Zanker (ODI, UK) noted the interplay of formal and informal migration. Accessible legal pathways reduce irregular migration, and future research will examine how skill training affects migration preferences in Bangladesh and other countries. Beyond operational effectiveness at the bilateral level, it is crucial to assess whether these pathways are appealing and practical for the intended population. Upcoming GS4S research will delve into this topic through surveys in Bangladesh, Egypt, and Nigeria, exploring how skills training impacts preferences and decisions regarding legal migration.

Panelist Q&A Highlights

Q: *To Dr. Pastore: What is your perspective on the potential for resuming a more constructive and proactive approach to establishing legal migration pathways for Bangladeshi workers to Italy?*

A: The exorbitant fees required of Bangladeshis are not paid to Italian authorities but rather to third parties, including illegal intermediaries, credit providers, and fake employers, to access migration channels. Alarming, this practice occurs openly and without adequate intervention. There is political will on both sides for the system of Bangladeshis legal migration to Italy, as it aligns with the structural interests of both countries, and potentially Europe as a whole. However, improving legal migration requires more than increasing quotas or countering fraud it demands a shift in regulatory mechanisms. The current system, which relies on European employers selecting individual workers, is ineffective for small and medium businesses. A robust matching mechanism is essential for integrating training, certification, and digital solutions. Significant investment is needed to build infrastructure for sustainable legal

migration flows, but this commitment is still lacking. While pilot projects exist, they are far too small to address the broader structural challenges.

Q: To Mr. Islam: Given the widespread issues of misinformation and unethical recruitment practices in Bangladesh, do you think there would be trust and uptake for legal pathways if further opportunities were created?

A: Addressing this issue is complex, and there isn't a simple solution. However, one promising approach is emphasizing market-driven skill demand to reduce fraud in recruitment. If Italian businesses identify specific skill requirements and there is a pool of trained, certified workers, employers could use digital mechanisms to directly select candidates, bypassing intermediaries. While expanding market-driven skill development is challenging, it could streamline recruitment and improve the system. Exploring such solutions requires careful planning and investment to create sustainable pathways for migrant recruitment.

Research Contributions to Informed Policymaking

Discussant Prof. Tesseltje de Lange (Radboud University, The Netherlands / GS4S Principal Investigator) highlighted the relevance of the GS4S project in shaping a global strategy for skills, migration, and development. For instance, the EU Talent Pool, currently under negotiation, holds promise as a digital tool to streamline migration pathways. Similarly, talent partnerships piloted by the EU show potential for fostering cooperation between the EU and countries of origin. The central challenge, however, lies in scaling these initiatives meaningfully while addressing the pitfalls of unethical recruitment, as noted earlier.

Guest speakers Michalis Moschovakos and Barbara Banuskova from the European Commission discussed progress in the EU's Talent Partnerships and Talent Pool initiatives, emphasizing their potential to address labor shortages while fostering ethical migration pathways, highlighting three key areas:

EU Labor Shortages: In 2023, 80% of SMEs reported difficulties finding skilled workers, with over half struggling to recruit from outside the EU. These shortages underscore the urgent need for improved labor migration mechanisms aligned with market demands.

Legal Migration Framework: The EU's migration policies focus on addressing labor shortages while promoting mutually beneficial cooperation with partner countries. Key initiatives include the European Talent Pool, an EU-wide platform under negotiation to connect non-EU talent with EU employers, and Talent Partnerships, which aim to support international labor mobility and skill development while preventing brain drain.

Bangladesh's Role: Bangladesh has been a central partner in these efforts since 2021, focusing on sectors like construction, ICT, and hospitality. A 2023 EU-funded program enhances skills training and mobility schemes, implemented with partners such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

While challenges remain, these initiatives demonstrate progress in creating ethical and accessible legal migration pathways, addressing labor market needs, and fostering sustainable development through equitable global cooperation.

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For more information about the webinar and to access the recording, visit the GS4S.eu website events page, <https://gs4s.eu/events/> or watch the webinar at YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHnxJGPCLZ4>

For media inquiries, please contact us at info@GS4S.eu

About the organizers:

GS4S is one of three sister projects to the Horizon Research and Innovation Action HORIZON-CL2-2023-TRANSFORMATIONS-01, Inclusiveness in times of change Initiative, Grant #101132377. GS4S supports a systematic process towards creating a Global Strategy for Skills, Migration, and Development in three sectors: IT/Digital, Construction and Care Industries. Co-Funded by the European Union