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SUMMARY REPORT

EMN Sweden National Conference "A Common European Approach to Labour Shortages and Talent Attraction"

In person, 3 December 2025, 09:00 16:30 (CET)

”Downtown Camper” hotel

1. KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CONFERENCE

- There is a need for greater **harmonisation of labour migration policies within the EU** and **bilateral agreements with third countries** to ensure a more competitive and efficient system for attracting talent.
- **European mobility for third-country nationals** is growing in importance with using key tools such as the EU Blue Card, Talent Partnerships and the creation of a unified EU Talent Pool to better linking supply with demand in shortage occupations.
- EU initiatives such as the **Union of Skills, the EU Talent Pool, and the EU Startup and Scale-up Strategy**, which aim at addressing labour and skills shortages and making Europe more competitive. The National Coordination Office for EURES (European Employment Services) focuses to facilitate labour market mobility in Europe.
- **Migration** continues to be part of the broader solution to address growing demographic challenges in an era of digital and green transition.
- **National policies** need to align with the needs of businesses and workers and efforts should be made to simplify the hiring process for third-country nationals.
- **Local governments** play a crucial role in attracting talent, but require more support and coordination from national authorities.
- Further efforts in **communication, data and information sharing, and country attractiveness** are essential for successful integration of international talent.
- **Regional and national cooperation** is key to overcoming barriers to cross-border labour mobility within the EU. Examples from the Greater Copenhagen region.
- Intergovernmental initiatives like **“Work in Sweden”** exist in other EMN countries. In Sweden, it is important to take actions on how to scale it up in relation to the EU Blue Card and EU Talent Pool.
- The overarching goal for **Sweden** is to become a top destination for talent and entrepreneurship. Access to the right skills is essential for Sweden’s economic growth and competitiveness, enabling companies to expand and accelerate competitiveness.
- In **Sweden**, there is a need for a stronger collaboration among government authorities, businesses, universities, municipalities, and regions to create an appealing and comprehensive package for international talents. A collaborative approach is needed with other EU countries to attract and retain global talent.

LABOUR MIGRATION AND TALENT ATTRACTION ON EMN'S AGENDA IN 2025 AND 2026

- Almost all EMN countries reported on implemented significant changes to their labour migration systems;
- Most EMN Member Countries have primarily a demand driven approach;
- Salary thresholds remain a key policy instrument in 14 EMN Member Countries;
- Targeted measures for specific sectors to facilitate labour migration in 13 EMN Member Countries.
- Agreements with countries of origin in 14 EMN Member Countries and Serbia.
- Forthcoming EMN Inform in 2026 – "Staying or moving on? Drivers and policies to retain global talent", EMN Austria lead.

ATTRACTING TALENT AND FACILITATING LABOUR MIGRATION: EXAMPLES FROM EMN MEMBER COUNTRIES

- **AUSTRIA** has a national key tool for skilled immigration – the Red-White-Red Card (RWR Card). It has partnerships agreements with India, Ghana, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya and one with Brazil is just about to be finalised.
- **FINLAND**' s programme "Work in Finland" highlights the country approach to talent attraction and labour migration collaboration. Among the partner countries are Brazil, India, Vietnam and the Philippines and the EU/EAA region in relations to third-country nationals (TCNs). Highly skilled specialists are targeted in areas such as quantum technology, microelectronics, AI, photonics, health technologies.
- **LITHUANIA**'s "Work in Lithuania" constitutes the country's approach to talent attraction with a clear transition from ICT sector to engineering due to a generation shift among skilled workers. In 2024, the piloted new markets were Albania, Turkey, United Kingdom, the Philippines, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, and Romania, Spain and Portugal in relations to TCNs.
- **GERMANY** has identified 13 focus countries for partnership agreements in Asia (India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Uzbekistan), Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana), the MENA-region (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia) and Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador). Furthermore, the country has a strong focus on providing advisory services to companies to hire international talents.
- **SWEDEN** is prioritising highly skilled workers through its intergovernmental initiative "Work in Sweden". Lately, amendments in legal paths to facilitate work permits for highly skilled persons and/or people in sectors with higher labour shortages have been adopted.

SOME NUMBERS AT GLANCE

- EU-OECD countries are hosting 22% of highly skilled migrants, while labour shortages cost over $1,3 trillion annually.
- The EU is projected to lose 5 million workers by 2030 and already faces a deficit of 2 million workers in the healthcare sector.
- A fully integrated labour market within the Greater Copenhagen region would result in an estimated annual profit of €910 million.
- More than half of the applications for the revised EU Blue Card are submitted by employees, already working in Sweden.

- According to TechSverige's data from 2024, Sweden needs approximately 18 000 new talents each year to meet the demand in technical industries.
- Sweden has currently around 6000 PhD students with an estimated education cost of 5 million Swedish krona per student.
- One in five small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have recruited qualified international staff in the past two years, whereas the proportion is higher among knowledge-intensive enterprises - one in four have hired international talents.
- Foreign-born workers are a key labour force in healthcare sector: doctors (specialists)-37%, care assistants-52%, assistant nurses-35%.
- In 2023 in Sweden 67 438 people of working age who immigrated to Sweden with a post-secondary healthcare education; 55 % came as refugees, persons in need of protection, or family members of refugees; 13 % came as labour immigrants or students; 32 % came as family members of labour immigrants or students.

2. SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE

The EMN Sweden National Conference **"A Common European Approach to Labour Shortages and Talent Attraction"** was held on 3 December 2025 in Stockholm. The conference brought together policymakers, researchers, social partners and representatives from government agencies, private sector, foreign embassies and international organisations to exchange knowledge and explore policies, initiatives and innovative practices addressing labour shortages and strengthening the EU's global competitiveness for talent. European mobility for third-country nationals is growing in importance by using key tools such as the EU Blue Card, Talent Partnerships and bilateral engagement with third countries. Intergovernmental initiatives like "Work in Sweden" exist in other EMN countries.

Labour shortages and international talent attraction are growing challenges across Europe. In **Sweden**, attracting and recruiting international talents is high on the agenda, with labour shortages posing a major obstacle to business growth and competitiveness. Two recent comparative EMN-OECD publications[1] were presented. The reports outline findings on innovative ways to attract foreign talent and to tackle labour shortages.

A welcome address was delivered by Mr **Anders Hall**, State Secretary to the Minister for Migration Johan Forsell. The opening was followed by two sessions, focused on initiatives at the European level to attract talent and retain skills. The first panel featured speakers from the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, the **Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe**, **Uppsala University**, the **Swedish Public Employment Service**. The second panel has hosted experts from **EMN Member Countries Austria**, **Lithuania**, **Finland** and **Germany**, sharing national examples on how to attract talent and facilitate labour migration. In the afternoon, participants have taken part in three break-out

[1] European Commission, 'EMN-OECD joint inform 2024: New and innovative ways to attract foreign talents in the EU', 2025, EMN inform: New and innovative ways to attract foreign talents in the EU, last accessed on 14 January 2026 and European Commission, 'EMN-OECD joint study 2024: Labour migration in times of labour shortages', 2025, EMN-OECD joint study 2024: Labour migration in times of labour shortages - Migration and Home Affairs, last accessed on 14 January 2026

sessions where they had the opportunity to share national experiences and foster a peer discussion on how successful approaches can be adapted to different contexts.

Conference concluding remarks have been delivered by **Hanna Geurtsen**, Deputy Head of the Special Focus Area on the Work Permit Process, the Swedish Migration Agency and **Mats Wessman**, Project Manager for the government assignment "Work in Sweden", the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. These are two of the several authorities jointly tasked with the intergovernmental assignment "Work in Sweden". **Anna Lindblad**, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Director-General at the Swedish Migration Agency wrapped up the day with a few key takeaways and insights from the conference.

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. ANDERS HALL, STATE SECRETARY TO THE SWEDISH MINISTER FOR MIGRATION JOHAN FORSSELL

Anders Hall, has welcomed the participants and made an overview of Sweden's migration policy development and highlighted the shift from primarily asylum-related migration towards labour migration, with a growing recent focus on attracting highly qualified professionals. The overarching goal for Sweden is to become a top destination for talent and entrepreneurship.

The State Secretary emphasised that access to the right skills is essential for Sweden's economic growth and competitiveness, enabling companies to expand and accelerate competitiveness. While Sweden performs relatively well in attracting international students and researchers, it struggles to retain them after their studies. To address this challenge, some measures have been proposed, such as a smoother process and a new track system for skilled workers. The Swedish Institute plays an important role to attract and retain international talents, not least within the intergovernmental assignment "Work in Sweden".

Anders Hall also noted some of Sweden's strong advantages, including high standards of living, good work-life balance, clean air, and proximity to nature. He underscored the importance of keeping on promoting Sweden's image internationally. He stressed the need for further and stronger collaboration among government authorities, businesses, universities, municipalities, and regions to create an appealing and comprehensive package for international talents. Last, but not least, he encouraged participants to share best practices, exchange experiences and bring home valuable insights from the discussions at the conference.

SESSION 1: INITIATIVES ON A EUROPEAN LEVEL TO ATTRACT TALENT AND RETAIN SKILLS

Panel:

- **Jasmijn Slootjes**, Deputy Director, Migration Policy Institute Europe
- **Micheline van Riemsdijk**, Professor in Human Geography at Uppsala University
- **Lisa Andersson**, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- **Shawn Mendes**, Director of International Affairs, Swedish Public Employment Service

Moderated by: **Bernd Parusel**, Senior Researcher in Political Science, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS)

Bernd Parusel opened the session by outlining Europe's demographic challenges, including a declining birth rate and widespread labour shortages. He noted that migration continues to be part of the broader solution to these demographic challenges.

Jasmijn Slootjes presented a comprehensive overview of various policies addressing skills shortages and labour mobility at the EU level. She brought up different migration policy approaches and how to address the gap between legislation and implementation and put them into practice. Key points included the need to improve access to visa appointments, and better link labour mobility policies to actual skills needs – for example, through Talent Partnerships and the creation of a unified EU Talent Pool to better linking supply with demand in shortage occupations. She also noted the tension between shrinking political space for migration and the growing demand for talents, highlighting the importance of coherent EU and national approaches to avoid fragmentation and ensure effective implementation of migration policies.

Micheline van Riemsdijk focused on the EU Blue Card scheme for highly skilled workers. She provided a brief history of the development and the review of the EU Blue Card from the Lisbon Strategy (2000) to its latest reforms and discussed its recent adoption in Sweden (It took effect on 1 January 2025). While the Blue Card offers several advantages, relatively few such permits were issued in Sweden in 2025. Reasons include limited promotion of the revised EU Blue Card, lack of awareness its benefits, and possible misinformation. Germany has the highest amount of EU Blue Card applications due to the reasons that the country does not have any national scheme and implemented the EU Blue Card Directive directly. She also noted that small enterprises need more assistance, intermediaries are involved in over 90% of applications for permits for highly skilled individuals, and that more than half of the applications for the revised EU Blue Card are submitted by employees who are already working in Sweden.

Lisa Andersson presented OECD data on talent attraction. She noted that while the share of highly educated migrants in the OECD has grown, Europe is lagging behind. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of tertiary-educated migrants in OECD countries rose to 28 million, where EU-OECD countries are hosting 22% of highly skilled migrants, compared to 44% in the U.S. and 34% in other OECD countries. Overqualification remains a key issue among educated immigrants. OECD has listed indicators for country's talent attractiveness, which include quality of life, opportunities, income and tax, future prospects, skills, inclusiveness, and family environment. Sweden ranks in second place among the top 10 OECD countries for attracting highly educated workers, but further efforts are needed to advance in the ranking to attract international students. She mentioned a growing trend where many EU countries see windows of opportunities to attract researchers from the USA to Europe. Lisa Andersson also mentioned recent EU initiatives such as the Union of Skills, the EU Talent Pool, and the EU Startup and Scale-up Strategy, which aim at addressing labour and skills shortages and making Europe more competitive.

Shawn Mendes outlined the Swedish Public Employment Service's mandate to create the conditions for a well-functioning labour market and described its work on European mobility, labour market issues, and the recruitment of European nationals. He put the perspective of Sweden's high employment rate among 20-64 years olds (second ranking among EU Member States according to 2024 Eurostat data), pointing out the reasons for high unemployment and measures to address this challenge. Such measures include gradually increased retirement age, rewarding pension system with lower income taxes for people, who work longer, stem, reduced employer costs for hiring older employees, parental insurance and well-developed childcare for both women and men, and promoting skilled labour immigration for EU nationals and residents. Furthermore, he highlighted the work of the National Coordination Office for EURES (European Employment Services). The largest member in Sweden's network is the Swedish Public Employment Service' operational EURES unit with 35 experts working to

facilitate labour market mobility in Europe. He also highlighted common EU and Swedish challenges such as extensive matching challenges and skill shortages, especially in the northern Sweden and in certain sectors. The European Network of Public Employment Services (the PES Network) calls for a more proactive role to qualification recognition, retaining international students and providing services to employers to recruit third-country nationals (TCNs). The EU is projected to lose 5 million workers by 2030 and already faces a deficit of 2 million workers in the healthcare sector. The overall growing demand for skills requires the EU to focus on developing strategic immigration policies to remain competitive in global talent attraction.

SESSION 2: ATTRACTING TALENT AND FACILITATING LABOUR MIGRATION – EXAMPLES FROM EMN MEMBER AND OBSERVER COUNTRIES

Panel:

- **Leila Hadj Abdou**, Deputy Head, Policy Research and Migration Law Unit, International Organization for Migration (IOM) / EMN Austria
- **Vydūnas Trapinskas**, Director of Global Talent Attraction Department, "Work in Lithuania" Programme, Invest Lithuania
- **Santeri Ojala**, Manager, International Operations, Business Finland, "Work in Finland"
- **Silvia Rager**, Senior Expert, Department for International Relations, German Federal Employment Agency Headquarters

Moderated by: **Jonas Hols**, expert, EMN Sweden

Jonas Hols introduced the session by outlining its national perspective focusing on the policy measures that some EU Member States have to mitigate labour shortages, for example by specific legislation, schemes, prioritised sectors /occupations, and bilateral relations with third countries. Additionally, he noted that national policy measures with a view to promote and position their country as an attractive destination, particularly for skilled and highly skilled migrants, appear to be of growing importance across Europe. Finally, he mentioned two EMN publications, related to labour migration. The publications give a comparable overview of how EMN Member and Observer countries are tackling the challenges related to attracting foreign talents in the EU in times of labour shortages, providing good examples and innovative approaches.

- **EMN-OECD joint inform 2024 "New and innovative ways to attract foreign talents in the EU"**. Accessible on the European Commission website.
- **EMN-OECD joint study 2024 "Labour migration in times of labour shortages"**. Accessible on the European Commission website.

Leila Hadj Abdou put the broader topic of labour migration in times of labour shortages into an EU wide context, highlighting Austrian trends, challenges and opportunities. She presented an overview of labour migration in the context of demographic aging, where deaths exceed births, plus transformation of labour markets (climate change, digitalisation, geopolitical change), particularly in countries like Austria and Italy. She emphasised the growing need for talents across a range of professions to meet economic needs and labour demands with 15 EMN Member countries reporting shortages across all sectors and skills levels. The cost of labour shortages to the EU was estimated at $1.3 trillion annually. Labour migration is one of the components among others (reskilling, training, activation of inactive workforces) to address these shortages, taking into consideration to mitigate the risks of exploitation of foreign workers. She stressed the importance of balancing positive narratives about

migration with the need for effective, nuanced policies that protect workers' rights. According to public opinion in Austria, 42% considered that the country needs to increase its attractiveness for skilled labour from abroad.

In Austria, focus remains on (high) skilled workers with having a key tool in place – the Red-White-Card (RWR Card) – introduced for skilled immigration in 2011 and revised several times. In addition, Austria has Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements with India and Ghana and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya and one with Brazil is just about to be finalised.

Leila Hadj Abdou has outlined insights from the EMN Member Countries:

- Almost all EMN countries reported on implemented significant changes to their labour migration systems.
- Most EMN Member Countries have primarily demand driven approach.
- Salary thresholds remain a key policy instrument in 14 EMN Member Countries.
- Targeted measures for specific sectors to facilitate labour migration in 13 EMN Member Countries.
- Agreements with countries of origin in 14 EMN Member Countries and Serbia.

Vydūnas Trapinskas presented the foreign talent attraction programme "Work in Lithuania", providing insights into Lithuania's approach. He mentioned a transition from piloting in the ICT sector to the engineering sector due to a generation shift among skilled workers. He presented Lithuania's efforts to address current challenges and unlock possibilities to enter new markets internationally. In 2024, the piloted markets were Albania, Turkey, United Kingdom, the Philippines, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, and Romania, Spain and Portugal in relations to TCNs. In addition, he emphasized the importance of targeting markets, understanding business needs, and working closely with government agencies to ensure that immigration policies align with the needs of both employers and workers. Vydūnas Trapinskas stressed the importance for smaller countries to put themselves on the map and attract foreign talents and shared challenges in attracting talents from high-application countries. For "Work in Lithuania", the next steps focus on companies and expert insights using tools such as international recruitment strategies, relocation packages, entering and piloting new markets, while emphasising the importance of simplifying migration processes to improve the country's attractiveness.

Santeri Ojala presented the programme "Work in Finland", highlighting Finland´s approach to talent attraction and labour migration collaboration. He highlighted the governmental Talent Boost programme, launched in 2017, which aims at attracting and retaining international talents, developing swift immigration processes and promoting Finland as a destination for international startup founders. Among the partner countries are Brazil, India, Vietnam, the Philippines and the EU/EAA region in relation to TCNs. The aims of the partnership model are to create networks and offer advisory services and support Finnish companies in partnership countries through B2B matchmaking approach, to lower the threshold for employers to recruit from partner countries, to strengthen and smoothen the ethics of employment, to promote cooperation with partner countries in labour migration and to prevent exploitation and abuse. Finland's approach to labour migration is collaborative, with government support tailored to the needs of both companies and migrants. Finland has recently launched a campaign to attract highly skilled specialists with targeted expertise areas such as quantum technology, microelectronics, AI, photonics, health technologies. Santeri Ojala emphasised the importance of understanding companies' recruitment needs to

ensure successful integration of international talent. Building successful operational models for labour migration facilitation is challenging. Therefore, collaboration and sharing good practices with other EU Member States is highly valuable.

Silvia Rager presented different approaches of recruiting skilled workers from non-EU countries. However, she underlined that the German Federal Employment Agency's mandate like its Swedish counterpart focuses on EU nationals and residents in the country. Germany's strategies and legal pathways for recruiting skilled workers from non-EU countries include the EU Blue Card and the Skilled Immigration Act, built on three pillars: 1) skilled workers; 2) experience; 3) potential. She outlined several German recruitment strategies highlighting advisory services for interested skilled workers and trainees from all over the world and targeted recruitment of skilled workers and trainees in shortage occupations. Further focus on targeting countries with high unemployment and a large number of educated youths was presented. Germany has identified 13 focus countries in Asia (India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Uzbekistan), Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana), the MENA-region (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia) and Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador). Like other speakers, Silvia Rager stressed the importance of aligning immigration policies with the needs of businesses and promoting clear communication to both employers and potential migrant workers.

The discussion in this session explored the complexities of labour migration and the importance of creating legal pathways for TCNs. **Silvia Rager** emphasized the need for win-win partnerships with third countries highlighting Germany's strong focus on advisory services to companies to hire international talents, while **Leila Hadj Abdou** stressed the significance of aligning educational systems and workforce needs between sending and receiving countries. **Several speakers** discussed the administrative challenges and burdens, faced by companies in hiring international workers. **Vydūnas Trapinskas** and **Jonas Hols** summed up the session, noting that simplifying the process and changing employer attitudes are crucial to improving recruitment outcomes.

BREAK-OUT SESSION 1: READY TO EMPLOY? CHALLENGES AND NEEDS IN EMPLOYING LABOUR MIGRANTS

Presenters:

- **Paula Kossack**, Lead Analyst for the Government Assignment "Work in Sweden" at Statistics Sweden
- **Anders Barane**, Senior Advisor, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

Moderated by: **Hanna Geurtsen,** Deputy Head of the Special Focus Area on the Work Permit Process, the Swedish Migration Agency

According to a recent survey, conducted by Statistics Sweden, **one in five small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have recruited qualified international staff** in the past two years, whereas the proportion is higher among knowledge-intensive enterprises - one in four have hired international talents. The report "Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Experiences of International Recruitment"[2] is published in Swedish and was conducted

[2] Statistics Sweden, 'Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Experiences of International Recruitment', 2025, Erfarenheter av internationell rekrytering bland små och medelstora företag, last accessed on 12 January 2026

between May and August 2025. A total of 82 000 companies were included in the survey, whereas a sample of 5 000 knowledge-intensive enterprises were invited to participate, and 31% of them responded. The report used statistical methods to process the data and avoid possible biases, however SCB are aware and transparent about uncertainty in the data.

Some major outcomes from the report:

- Access to the necessary skills is the main benefit, although it is clear that recruiting international talents is the option when all other possibilities are eliminated nationally.
- Difficulties in recruiting which hinder the companies' development do not seem to drive enterprises to recruit international staff.
- Many of the respondents cannot answer why they have not recruited internationally.
- Access to qualified labour in Sweden and strict requirements for Swedish language skills are among the most important reasons for not recruiting internationally.
- Difficulty in finding suitable candidates and administrative workload regarding work permit applications are the main obstacles to recruiting even more people internationally.
- International recruitment is valuable, even in addition to providing access to the skills needed.

Anders Barane presented the employers' perspective on migration in the Swedish public sector. Sweden's public sector faces a challenge as a demand for services is growing. To mitigate these challenges, international recruitment can be seen as part of the solution. however, the system makes it unnecessarily difficult.

Sweden's demographic challenge in the forthcoming decade posing a massive recruitment gap. The data shows that for example foreign-born workers are a key labour force in the health sector with doctors (specialists) - 37%, care assistants - 52%, assistant nurses - 35%.

Figures from Statistics Sweden in 2023 show:

- **67 438** people of working age who immigrated to Sweden with a post-secondary healthcare education.
- **55 %** came as refugees, persons in need of protection, or family members of refugees.
- **13 %** came as labour immigrants or students.
- **32 %** came as family members of labour immigrants or students.

The immigration levels are historically low at the moment after the peak in 2015. The question on how to best utilise migrants' competence remains.

Key takeaways:

- Skills shortages is a challenge for local authorities and regions.
- Untapped potential: immigrants already here, plus international recruitment.
- Regulatory framework is complex and in flux – clarity is needed. Some legal amendments have been adopted lately.
- Third-country recruitment requires collaboration and persistence.
- Learning Swedish seems to become a must.

BREAK-OUT SESSION 2: EU-INTERNAL MOVEMENT OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS – MOVING TO A NEW EMPLOYER

Presenters:

- **Eva Englund**, Senior Advisor, Greater Copenhagen
- **Helena Renström**, Head of Society Expo 2026, Skellefteå municipality, Sweden

Moderated by: **Elin Jansson**, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Justice, Sweden

Elin Jansson introduced the topic by addressing the need for a more harmonised legal system within the EU, where the readiness and eagerness among EU Member States vary significantly, posing greater challenges in some sectors. The European Commission conveys a clear message to Member States to foster the overall EU competitiveness on labour migration and increase attractiveness in relation to other countries, for example Canada.

Eva Englund and **Helena Renström** discussed the regional challenges of attracting talents and ways of addressing cross-border labour migration within the EU. They highlighted that the challenges arise from parallel migration systems, including differing national regulations and border obstacles, which hinder talent mobility. They emphasised the need for a harmonised approach to labour migration within the EU and referred to the OECD's assessment for strengthening cross-border labour mobility TCNs.

SKELLEFTEÅ' S EXPERIENCE WITH NORTHVOLT AND TALENT ATTRACTION

Helena Renström shared the experience of Skellefteå municipality, which faced challenges after the Northvolt battery factory filed for bankruptcy went into administration. Measures and new strategies were put in place to adapt to the new situation, highlighting that Skellefteå community started working on its attractiveness and promoting the whole region of Västerbotten. Skellefteå Municipality, the Swedish Public Employment Service and Northvolt began an early collaboration around four major recruitment events. Among the main lessons learned were that the system lacked a single point of information for international talent retention, TCNs faced extreme time pressure and psychological stress, and that that lack of lSwedish proficiency is an obstacle.

Skellefteå's efforts to attract talent and match redundant workers with new employers had a great effect. However, these efforts to attract talents were coupled with infrastructure challenges, access to housing and public services. **Helena Renström** emphasised the importance of access to information and continuous communication, a clearer structure and systematic approach between different stakeholders, as well as the coordination on both EU and national level to address these challenges.

GREATER COPENHAGEN: CROSS-BORDER LABOUR MOBILITY

Eva Englund discussed the situation in Greater Copenhagen, where cross-border commuting between Denmark and Sweden creates both opportunities and challenges. She highlighted the potential of the region's integrated labour market but pointed out that TCNs face additional barriers due to complex regulations, where physical, cultural and mental obstacles are equally important. She noted that achieving a fully integrated labour market within the Greater Copenhagen region would result in an estimated annual profit of 910 million euros. In conclusion, Eva Englund called for clearer strategies and improved administrative processes to facilitate talent mobility across the region. To sum up the break-out room discussion, local versus national approaches have been addressed.

There were **reflections** that the approaches to talent attraction between local governments, national authorities, and the private sector differ. Skellefteå's experience with Northvolt was cited as an example of the challenges faced when local efforts are not adequately supported by national policies. Participants discussed the need for data, transparency, and coordinated efforts between all stakeholders, including businesses, municipalities and government agencies.

BREAK-OUT SESSION 3: STUDENT AND RESEARCHERS – HOW CAN THE TRANSITION FROM TALENTED STUDENT TO VALUABLE EMPLOYEE BE FACILITATED?

Presenters:

- **Anna Broeders**, Talent & Community Manager, Switch to Sweden
- **Therese Lindkvist**, Project Manager, EURAXESS Sweden

Moderated by: **Erik Litborn**, National Contact Point (NCP) Horizon Europe (HEU), Sweden's Innovation Agency (Vinnova)

Erik Litborn introduced the session by presenting the role of Vinnova as a contact point for the Horizon Europe funding programme, especially in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (Vinnova & Research Council) and in the intergovernmental assignment "Work in Sweden". Large industrial establishments in Sweden require a lot of skilled talents, but there is an increasing competition in the race to attract these talents.

Anna Broeders from Linköping Science Park introduced the *Switch to Sweden* project — an AI-powered matchmaking tool designed to increase the number of qualified matches between international talents residing in Sweden and Swedish companies. The primary focus is on master's students and researchers within tech and other in-demand fields. Anna Broeders noted that according to TechSverige's data from 2024, Sweden needs approximately 18 000 new talents each year to meet the demand in technical industries. She also pointed out that around 70% of jobs in Sweden are filled through personal connections. In addition, she presented the results of the matching initiative so far, which has led to 308 successful matches between talents and companies. Furthermore, Anna Broeders shared some insights, key learnings and recommendations and showed the latest handbook "The Insider's Guide to Moving and Living in Sweden"[3].

Therese Lindkvist presented *EURAXESS Sweden*, an initiative supporting researchers and promoting stronger links between academia and industry to retain international academic talents. She highlighted that Sweden currently has around 6 000 PhD students with an estimated education cost of SEK 5 million per student. She addressed the key challenges in retaining doctoral students and proposed possible measures to facilitate their transition into the industrial sector.

The following discussion focused on aligning projects with the needs of the labour market and the differences in demand between natural and social sciences, the role of industrial PhDs to bridge an existing gap, and the cultural bias towards academic careers over industry pathways. Participants noted that structural barriers make it difficult for researchers in the EU to transition into industry and return later to academia. In contrast, this career transition is well facilitated in the USA. The discussion concluded that fostering mobility between academia and industry — and valuing such cross-sector experience — is essential for retaining international talent in Sweden.

[3] Linköping Science Park, 'The Insider's Guide to Moving and Living in Sweden', 2025, An insiders guide to moving to Sweden - Sharing Sweden, last accessed on 14 January 2026

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS

The final remarks of the conference were made by **Hanna Geurtsen**, Deputy Head of the Special Focus Area on the Work Permit Process, the Swedish Migration Agency) and **Mats Wessman**, Project Manager for the government assignment "Work in Sweden", the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. They summarised the day together with the moderators from the break-out sessions. **The key takeaways and some numbers at glance are highlighted in the first chapter of this report.**

The concluding thoughts were delivered by **Anna Lindblad**, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Director-General, Swedish Migration Agency. She highlighted the increasing unmet demand for labour within the EU, as well as the challenges posed by an ageing population and evolving labour markets. She drew attention to the positive experiences shared by several EMN Member Countries, including the introduction of special schemes for prioritised shortage occupations, the establishment of talent partnerships with third countries, and enhanced efforts to attract international talent aimed at positioning their countries as attractive destinations for labour migrants.

Anna Lindblad noted that the inspiration for the conference stemmed from the two EMN-OECD publications on labour migration. She also emphasised the European Migration Network's objective to providing up-to-date, objective, reliable, and comparable information on migration and asylum to EU institutions and EU Member States' authorities. She summed up the day with the news that labour migration will continue to be a theme in the EMN with a forthcoming EMN Inform on retaining talent ("EMN Inform on Staying or moving on? Drivers and policies to retain global talent", EMN Austria lead).

Figure 1. Cover image of the conference.

Disclaimer: This summary report does not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the participant organisations and their representatives, nor are they bound by its conclusions. Similarly, EMN Sweden, the European Commission, the EMN Service Provider and the EMN NCPs are in no way responsible for any use made of the information provided.