

MAURITIUS SKILLS MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

Carmel Marock
Renee Grawtizky
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Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework

1. Introduction

The main objective of Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework is to contribute to address current and future skill needs in the country. It was endorsed by Government in May 2023, and was followed by two online dialogues with the purpose to identify the best way to operationalise it. Sectoral dialogues took place on the 7th (Construction) and 8th (Renewable Energy) April 2024.

In addition, representatives from Government¹ (including key institutions), labour², business³ as well as education and training providers⁴ gathered in Port Louis, Mauritius on 16 April 2024 to discuss the implementation of key actions.

Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework outlines key agreed areas to manage skills mobility. Identified areas seek to ensure that the country moves toward creating a more effective balance between addressing the need for building an appropriate local skills pipeline with the requirement to recruit foreign labour, where required, to ensure that key sectors can access the requisite skills to grow the economy.

The Skills Mobility Framework of Mauritius was integrated into the National Employment Policy (NEP) adopted by Cabinet on 2nd August 2024 [Highlights of Cabinet Meetings 02 August 2024.pdf \(govmu.org\)](#)

"11. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the National Employment Policy 2024-2028 which would address the expressed needs, expectations and priorities for employment promotion in the following four policy priorities –

(a) stimulate Employment Growth in Emerging and Sunset Sectors;

(b) address Education and Skills Mismatch and Labour Shortage;

(c) strengthen Labour Market Policies and Institutions; and

(d) promote Quality Employment : Decent Work and Social Inclusion"

In addition, the framework will feed into the second generation Decent Work Country Programme currently in development by the Government of Mauritius as well as its National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS 2022-2026).

¹ Government departments represented included the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and Science and Technology and from the Prime Minister's office. Representation also included officials from regulatory bodies such as the Human Resource Development Council, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority and Economic Development Board.

² Representatives from the Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé (CTSP)

³ Representatives from a range of sectors including renewable energy, construction, tourism and IT and emerging technologies.

⁴ Representatives from Mauritius Institute for Training and Development, Polytechnics Mauritius and the University of Mauritius

A gender-responsive Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework

Mauritius' Skills Mobility Framework seeks to promote the following objectives:

- To ensure effective skills mobility governance in the Republic of Mauritius through social dialogue, local skills development capacity building (improved career counselling, vocational education and workplace learning) and efficient labour migration management;
- To enhance employability, labour market responsiveness and entrepreneurship performance through improved skills anticipation (identification of current skills needs and rapid labour shortages' projections), skills transfer programmes and skills recognition mechanisms; and
- To support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through an improved dialogue and exchange of information between vocational and tertiary education (including university) and key employment and labour market actors.

In meeting these objectives, this framework seeks to contribute to the realisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specifically to the following:

Goal **8.8** calls on member states to *“protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”*.

Goal **4.3** calls for *“equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”*.

Goal **4.4** for increasing *“the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”*.

Goal **4.7** promotes education and training for *“sustainable development, (...) a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”*.

Goal **10.7** stresses that *“orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”* should be facilitated to reduce inequality between countries.

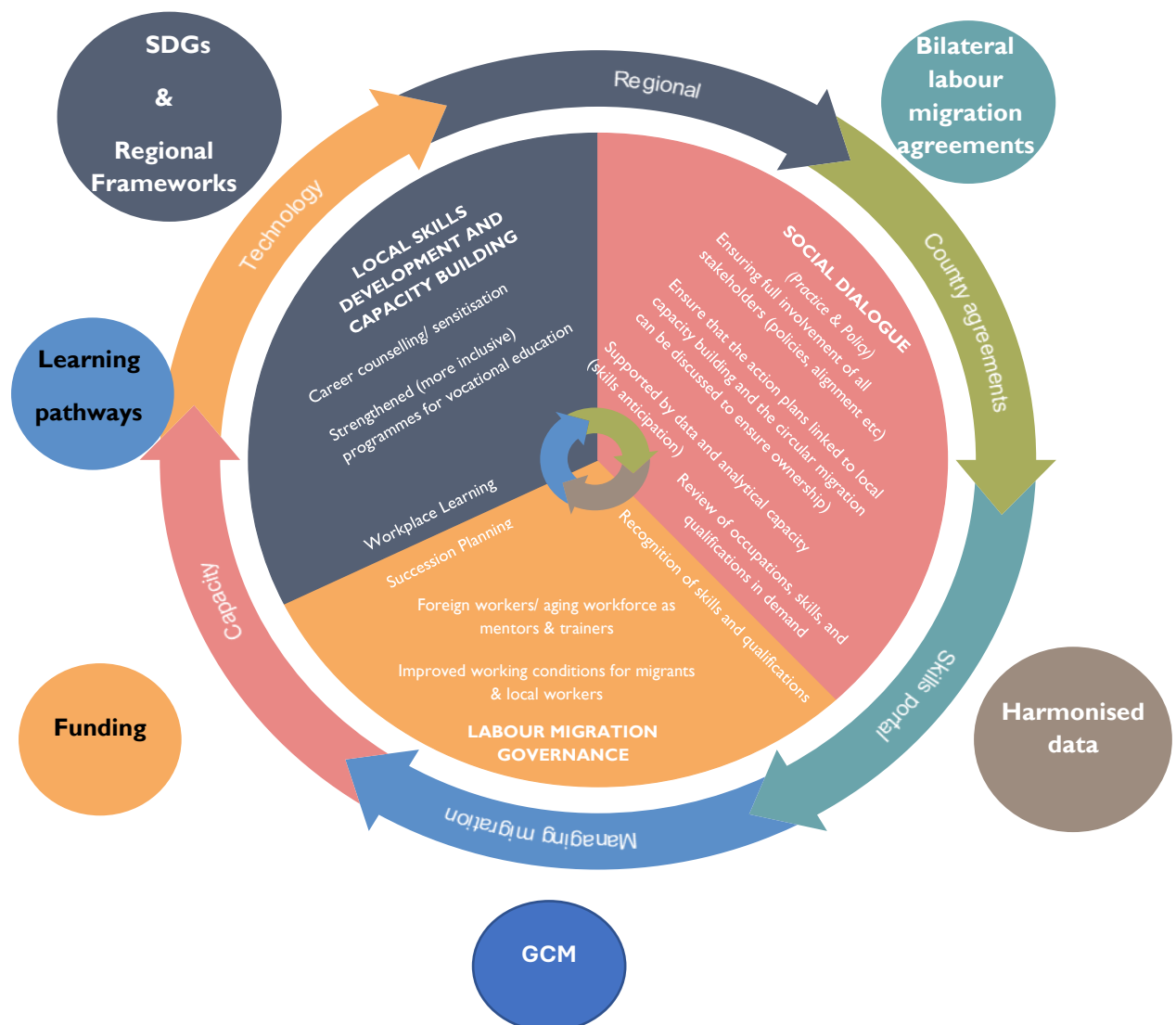
Overall, 10 out of the 17 goals contain targets and indicators that are directly relevant to migration or mobility.

It also contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)'s **Objective 18 “Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.”**ⁱ

Key related frameworks for cooperation on labour migration governance in Africa include the African Union Migration Policy Framework in Africa (2018-2027), Ouagadougou +10 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development in Africa, as well as the African Union-led JLMP. Several SADC policy frameworks also specifically seek to enhance migration management in the region. The

legal framework is elaborated in the Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005) and the Protocol on Employment and Labour (2014), with the former providing for the rights of entry, residence and establishment, and the latter providing for protection of migrant workers' rights.

Taking into account the key assumptions – and associated interventions –the following diagram describes the core elements depicted in Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework that should support planning for dynamic current and medium to long-term skills needs' identification at all skill levels and be gender-sensitive:



The elements of this diagram are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

2. Implementing the Skills Mobility Framework in Mauritius

At a country level, three core areas of interventions were identified by key stakeholders with a number of cross-cutting thematic issues (e.g. gender-responsiveness, etc). The three core interventions include:

- local skills development and capacity building;
- improving labour migration governance (including discussions on circular migration programmes); and,
- ensuring social dialogue on skills mobility.

Social Dialogue on Skills Mobility

The first area of intervention, and this is interwoven throughout the other areas of interventions that have been identified, is **to work with the National Employment Advisory Committee (set up under the NEA 2017) to facilitate regular/periodic social dialogue on skill mobility so as to ensure an exchange of information between the National Employment Department (Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training) , with key employment and labour market actors** (including other ministries, employers and workers organisations' representatives), as well as foreign affairs and home affairs' representatives and relevant civil society representatives. Meetings will have the objective to discuss the actions to be taken and reach a shared understanding of how these can be implemented, the steps and milestones involved, and encourage joint decision-making, as well as defining roles and responsibilities.

Social Dialogue will also ensure that key stakeholders are able to forge a common understanding of how to **enhance the efficient functioning of the labour market to achieve optimum employment, productivity and inclusive growth** through skills mobility. Key interventions to give effect to this framework include:

- **Ensure on-going alignment between labour market supply and demand taking into account a gender-sensitive approach and the imperatives of changing technology** and other transitions related to the future of work (including with reference to the green and blue economy transitions) , by facilitating a process around skills anticipation to support planning for current and medium to long-term skills needs (including **through reskilling and upskilling of the local labour force, skills transfer, efficient skills anticipation, and rapid recognition of labour shortages, as well as the prevention of deskilling and brain waste**). This process should also factor in **a review of occupations and qualifications in demand as well as optimization of training for job seekers, mentoring, career counselling, apprenticeship and internship programmes.**

- **Discuss how to improve skills recognition systems and mechanisms: including the recognition of qualifications attained elsewhere, and the recognition of skills and competencies acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning** through RPL processes for local and foreign labour (including ensuring capacity in place for such assessment processes and for addressing skills gaps).
- Discuss the involvement of World of Work Actors and how to **improve the formulation and implementation of Skills Shortage Listsⁱⁱ, immigration quota systems and the utilization of such tools as labour market/vacancy testsⁱⁱⁱ.**
- **Undertake a review of migrant workers actual wages and working conditions to focus on encouraging Mauritians to stay (or return) and ensure that migrant workers at all skill levels – including low-skilled – receive equal pay for work of equal value.** This review is seen as an important step towards ensuring equality of treatment in terms of wages and working conditions^{iv} and decent work for all (national and migrant labour) especially in priority growth sectors in order to avoid a “social dumping^v” effect or a “race-to-the-bottom^{vi}” approach in national labour markets.
- **Ensure that skills transfer schemes create a space for retiring individuals** (including foreign retired artisans who would be willing to share their experience on a voluntary basis) **to mentor younger people entering the labour market** in order to ensure that experience is not lost to the labour market. It is imperative to taking the necessary measures to ensure that the large number of retired workers can have a positive impact in reducing the numbers of young people (between the ages of 16-25 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and who will be seeking to enter the labour market but who do not have the requisite skills (33%).
- **Consider initiatives to formalise enterprises as well as workers in the informal economy to reach marginalised and vulnerable communities** (including migrant workers) **through contributing to increased regularization^{vii}.**

Social Dialogue should be structured to allow specific economic sectors and industries to engage in relevant issues – as outlined below – through a skills mobility lens. Further, Social Dialogue could evolve as new issues emerge.

Enhancing local skills development and capacity building:

The second area of intervention is through enhancing local skills development capacity building to improve the alignment between Mauritius’ labour market supply and demand of skills at all skill levels. Key activities within this intervention include:

- **Review existing career counselling interventions** with the aim of opening up alternate pathways for young people: this is key given that the research highlights that a key challenge in alignment is that there are insufficient enrolments in programmes where there is demand. The career counselling will be coupled with

efforts to refocus and **sensitise youth about the potential growth sectors and the possibilities for learning and career growth in these areas.**

- Activities to **strengthen programmes for vocational education** – from those that absorb learners who have not completed schooling (those with basic education) to those who enter higher education programmes (such as those offered by in the Polytechnics). These efforts should focus on:
 - **Review and strengthen the existing *National Apprenticeship Programme* to build the skills of young people** who are NEET. These efforts should aim to ensure that society and the education system value vocational training as they value academic education such that vocational and technical education is not just viewed as an option that is only for those who have not succeeded at school. In addition, this work should include a focus on those in the informal economy and should seek to ensure that they are also able to access opportunities in sectors where there is demand.
 - **Support the recognition of skills and qualifications of women and men migrant workers already present in the labour market.** Improving recognition mechanisms will allow for specific labour market gaps to be addressed.
 - **Strengthening of industry to government partnerships to enhance the quality of TVET and ensure that Mauritians are able to transition into different occupations within the labour market.** A central element in this regard is the provision of internships: industry should therefore be encouraged to offer and provide internships that provide quality workplace experience. To ensure that these internships are relevant to the needs of the interns there is a need to provide capacity building for industry so that they are able to mentor the interns.
 - **Implement interventions to support employability (e.g., problem solving, communication and digital skills and the ability to work in teams) to be integrated into these programmes with a particular focus on inclusivity,** e.g., by focusing -among others- on the needs of unemployed/under-employed women who could be trained to take up positions for example, in operator positions.

Linked to the above, there will be a focus on **introducing measures to promote and encourage opportunities for vocational training and professional learning** to enable new entrants to access workplace skills and be work ready and to enhance current employees' employability and career progression as well as to enable succession planning.

Improving Labour Migration Governance through temporary migration programmes, bilateral labour migration agreements, skills recognition, the improvement of labour migration data and other means

As the last and third area of intervention, Mauritius' Skills mobility discussions need to take into consideration a labour migration governance approach including **work on bilateral labour migration agreements, temporary migration programmes** (in particular, circular migration), **the recognition of prior learning and improving labour migration data as well as other means such as the consideration of student, professional and trainee/apprenticeships exchange programmes.**

Firstly, work could focus on the **implementation of country-to-country agreements, what may be termed bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMA).** The motivation for this intervention is that Mauritius faces a brain drain with Mauritians electing to go and work in a range of countries globally (particularly French speaking ones like Canada) and there is a need to reverse the trend to move towards a “brain gain” through:

Globally: create agreements that focus on BLMA commitments from countries that source talent from Mauritius (including Rodrigues Island) to support skills transfer, which links into a number of key interventions proposed in the circular migration component (discussed below).

Regionally: implement BLMA's with targeted countries in SADC where mutually beneficial arrangements can be entered into such as the development of a regional (SADC) skills portal (which tracks skills available against labour market demand and the movement of skills), interventions to enable the recognition of the skills of individuals within the region to allow for this mobility – including enabling the recognition of qualifications of individuals who are seeking to enter Mauritius and facilitating Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to individuals that have acquired necessary qualifications and diplomas. Consideration should also be given to capacity building of stakeholders within the region to ensure the implementation of this skills mobility framework and its objectives.

Secondly, **temporary^{viii} or seasonal^{ix} migration programmes** (in particular recurrent ones called circular migration programmes) **can contribute to ensure the effective functioning of the Mauritian labour market through on the one hand the fair and ethical recruitment of migrant labour to fill immediate skills gaps and on the other hand to ensure that migrant workers contribute to skills transfer programmes and support succession planning.** The circular migration approach needs to ensure that when migrant workers return to their own countries there are Mauritians who are able to productively fulfil those jobs. Circular migration can also focus on ensuring that Mauritians who migrate to other countries return with new skills and experience to the benefit of the Mauritian labour market. In order to ensure that circular migration is not a one-way brain drain consideration should be given to conducting capacity building amongst Mauritian training institutions many of which may not have sufficient expertise in new technologies and in areas of high specialisation.

Thirdly, **temporary or circular migration should take the changing demographic nature of the labour market into account^x** since with an aging population there will soon be large numbers of experienced individuals retiring. It is possible that this, coupled with a failure to adopt interventions to grow and develop local Mauritians as well as

addressing those young people NEET, could put further pressure on the labour market in terms of available skills.

Priority interventions identified to achieve a positive outcome can include:

- Individuals from outside of Mauritius that come in with the specialised skills (not in existence in Mauritius) will be required to mentor and train Mauritians: structured workplace learning could ensure proper succession planning in companies in ways that creates a balance between recruiting migrant workers and exploring opportunities to reskill and upskill existing employees.

Fourthly, the presence of women and men migrant workers in the labour market could be coupled with improved skills recognition and validation mechanisms/processes to ensure that foreign workers have both their skills and qualifications recognised. Improving recognition of prior learning mechanisms and systems ensure an optimum utilisation of the existing labour force.

Fifthly, Mauritius Skills Mobility Framework could consider the optimum utilisation of student, professional and trainee/apprenticeships exchange programmes.

Lastly, overall interventions need to be supported by a strong labour market information system including up to date skills and labour migration sex-disaggregated data. It is noted that the success of Social Dialogue on Skills Mobility rests on access to reliable labour market data. This requires reliable and evidence-based data and a mechanism to harmonise administrative and other type of data that is produced by vocational training and education institutions, as well as various labour market institutions^{xi}.

ⁱ**Objective 18** highlights the need to: a) Develop standards and guidelines for the mutual recognition of foreign qualifications and non-formally acquired skills in different sectors in collaboration with the respective industries with a view to ensuring worldwide compatibility based on existing models and best practices; (b) Promote transparency of certifications and compatibility of national qualifications frameworks by agreeing on standard criteria, indicators and assessment parameters, and by creating and strengthening national skills profiling tools, registries or institutions in order to facilitate effective and efficient mutual recognition procedures at all skills levels; (c) Conclude bilateral, regional or multilateral mutual recognition agreements or include recognition provisions in other agreements, such as labour mobility or trade agreements, in order to provide equivalence or comparability in national systems, such as automatic or managed mutual recognition mechanisms; (d) Use technology and digitalization to evaluate and mutually recognize skills more comprehensively on the basis of formal credentials as well as non-formally acquired competences and professional experience at all skills levels; (e) Build global skills partnerships among countries that strengthen training capacities of national authorities and relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and trade unions, and foster skills development of workers in countries of origin and migrants in countries of destination with a view to preparing trainees for employability in the labour markets of all participating countries; (f) Promote inter-institutional networks and collaborative programmes for partnerships between the private sector and educational institutions in countries of origin and destination to enable mutually beneficial skills development opportunities for migrants, communities and participating partners, including by building on the best practices of the Business Mechanism developed in the context of the Global Forum on Migration and Development; (g) Engage in bilateral partnerships and programmes in cooperation with relevant stakeholders that promote skills development, mobility and circulation, such as student exchange programmes, scholarships, professional exchange programmes and trainee- or apprenticeships that include options for beneficiaries, after successful completion of these programmes, to seek employment and engage in entrepreneurship; (h) Cooperate with the private sector and employers to make available easily accessible and gender-responsive remote or online skills development and matching programmes to migrants at all skills levels, including early and occupation-specific language training, on-the-job training and access to advanced training programmes, to enhance their employability in sectors with demand for labour on the basis of the industry's knowledge of labour market dynamics, especially to promote the

economic empowerment of women; (i) Enhance the ability of migrant workers to transition from one job or employer to another by making available documentation that recognizes skills acquired on the job or through training in order to optimize the benefits of upskilling; (j) Develop and promote innovative ways to mutually recognize and assess formally and informally acquired skills, including through timely and complementary training for job seekers, mentoring, and internship programmes in order to fully recognize existing credentials and provide certificates of proficiency for the validation of newly acquired skills; (k) Establish screening mechanisms for credentials and offer information to migrants on how to have their skills and qualifications assessed and recognized prior to departure, including in recruitment processes or at an early stage after arrival to improve employability; (l) Cooperate to promote documentation and information tools, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, that provide an overview of a worker's credentials, skills and qualifications, recognized in countries of origin, transit and destination, in order to enable employers to evaluate the suitability of migrant workers in job application processes.

ⁱⁱ A **"Skill Shortage Lists"** or **"Critical Skills/Occupations Lists"** consist of a list of skills or occupations for which demand cannot be met locally in countries of destination. Aspiring migrant workers with skills/occupations on these lists are often given preferential treatment during visa or work permit applications to help fill this demand. Labour market information systems, including regular needs assessments, coupled with labour migration statistics and trends, provide the most up-to-date and accurate information on the occupations and skills to be included in such lists. It is important to not only include highly skilled occupations, but to also allow for semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations (e.g. jobs in the agricultural sector, construction, domestic sector, etc.). If these are not included in shortage lists, demand for these jobs could attract migrants in an irregular situation to the informal economy."

ⁱⁱⁱ An **immigration quota** is established by countries of destination for the purposes of limiting the entry of immigrants. It represents a quantitative restriction on the number of migrants to be admitted by the State. Immigration quotas can determine the number of migrant workers to be accepted per economic sector, industry and occupational level per an established period of time.

^{iv} **Working conditions** includes working time, leave entitlements, social security and occupational safety and health protection.

^v A **labour market or vacancy test** takes place to establish that no national worker can be found to fill a job or position available. It involves the procedure of acquiring information about the actual labour market demand and supply situation. Such procedure should confirm the lack of eligible nationals who could be employed in that given job or position. It implies that a foreign worker may be granted a work permit for a specific employer under the condition that among the national unemployed or job seekers there are none who would meet the job requirements or show interest in taking the job. The procedure usually involves the following:

- a) An employer submits a notification of a vacancy to the National Employment Agency or Service (e.g. Public Employment Service, the Private Employment Agency or the Labour Office);
- b) The employer and/or the National Employment Agencies or Services publicly place and announce the vacancy (e.g. public employment networks, national and/or local newspapers) for at least 4 weeks;
- c) The vacancy notice must include the following information: a description of the employment; the name of the employer; the minimum monthly and/or annual remuneration; the location/s of employment; and the hours of work.
- d) The Employment Agencies or Services analyse and compare the vacancy with unemployed and job-seekers' records (qualifications, job experience, etc);
- e) If the analysis reveals an adequate number of persons meeting the requirements arising from the job description, the Employment Agencies or Services, offer the job and organize the recruitment among the unemployed and job-seekers;
- f) The Employment Agencies or Services compare the amount of remuneration proposed by the employer with the remuneration that can be obtained in the same, or similar occupation or for performance of similar type of work;
- g) If no unemployed or job seeker accepts the job offer within a determined fair period of time, the national authority issues a relevant decision;

Once the labour market or vacancy test is completed, the decision issued is passed to the employer who attaches it to an application for a foreign worker work permit.

^{vi} The **"Race to the bottom"** approach refers to a competitive situation where employers, companies, the state or nation attempt to undercut the competition's prices by reducing labour costs, sacrificing quality standards or worker safety (often defying regulation).

^{vii} **Migration Regularisation or Amnesty Programmes** are administrative schemes to allow migrants in an irregular or undocumented situation to apply for legal residence and work permits. They take place for economic and humanitarian reasons and they have the long-term goal of curbing irregular immigration. Arguments against state that such programs reward lawbreakers and encourage further unauthorized immigration; arguments for point to their importance in increasing tax revenues, integrating migrants and reducing their vulnerability to exploitation, formalizing the informal economy, and "wiping the slate clean" for future immigration enforcement. There are usually two categories of regularization programs: *de facto* or "one-shot". *De facto* regularization programs automatically grant permanent residency to migrants after they have lived in a country for a certain number of years and are implemented on a rolling basis. The "one-shot" regularizations target a limited number of migrants who have specific residency and work requirements; such programs also have deadlines for applications.

^{viii} **Temporary international migrants** are defined as international migrants entering the country of labour attachment or country of destination with the intention of stay for a limited period of time which may be less or more than 12 months.

^{ix} **Seasonal migrant workers** are defined as not usual residents of the country of employment, whose work by its character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed during part of the year.

^x The current estimates are that around 260 000 out of a population of 1,26m are on old age pension whilst the demographic trend up until 2040-2057 anticipates a decreasing population size (from its current levels of around 1,26/3m to 990 000) with an increasing proportion of people over 60. This will have a significant impact on the available labour force.

^{xi} **Such institutions include:** Labour Inspection Service; Labour Market Observatory; Social Security Institute; Public Employment Service; Vocational Training Institute; Occupational Safety and Health Service; Working Conditions Service. Anti-discrimination and Labour Market Integration Agencies; and Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining Bodies.