

Migration Skill Corridor Brief

Morocco - Germany

Mehdi Lahlou*, Johanna Ullmann** & Helen Schwenken**

* Association International Migration (AMI), Morocco

** Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS), University of Osnabrück

July 2026

Examining the Morocco-Germany skilled migration corridor, this brief shows how the bilateral relationship has evolved into a structured, institutionalised partnership. It argues that the corridor has shifted from informal, network-driven mobility towards a co-governed model linking legal skilled migration with German and European return and readmission objectives. While skilled mobility has increased, Morocco also became Germany's leading African country of origin for deportations in 2025. Despite ambitious cooperation, bottlenecks and brain-drain risks persist. The brief concludes with recommendations for policy, planning, and practice.

This Migration Skill Corridor Brief is part of a Link4Skills compact publication series examining labour mobility and skills mobility pathways between select countries across Europe, Africa, Asia, and North Ame. Based on the project's more extensive Migration Skill Corridor reports, the briefs provide concise analyses of migration dynamics, policy frameworks, good practices, and challenges shaping skills mobility, with the aim of supporting fair, sustainable, and mutually beneficial migration pathways.

<http://link4skills.eu>



The Link4Skills project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101132476

1. Executive summary

Moroccan-German labour migration relations trace back to Germany's post-war 'guest worker' regime (1963–1973). After this time, migration flows persisted, leading to the consolidation of a stable Moroccan community in Germany. Recently, interest in Germany as a destination has increased among young Moroccans seeking employment and training opportunities abroad. The number of skilled migrants has also steadily increased, albeit from a relatively modest base – despite substantial public efforts to establish structured pathways and migration programs.

To tackle systemic domestic labour shortages, the German government has recently invested into structured and legal labour migration channels, particularly in healthcare, hospitality, construction, and skilled trades. In this context, the bilateral governance of skilled labour migration within the Morocco-Germany corridor has intensified. What stands out here is that these political initiatives were clearly linked with European and German return and readmission policy interests. While the Moroccan government promotes legal pathways for skilled migration for its citizens abroad, the German government seeks both to fill skill shortage through labour migration and to strengthen return mechanisms.

Since 2022, Germany has reinforced its deportation enforcement framework, leading to a sharp rise in removals - from approximately 13,000 in 2022 to nearly 22,800 in 2025.¹ Morocco was reported in 2025 as the principal African destination for deportees from Germany, with 785 Moroccan nationals returned. This development marks a transition from a relatively ad hoc recruitment model to a more structured and institutionalised partnership embedded within broader European migration governance frameworks.

The strengthened bilateral relations, recruitment agreements, and skills mobility partnerships initiated in recent years reflect an *experimental, co-developed migration skills corridor*. On both sides, governmental institutions emphasize shared interests and commitments towards a more regulated, sector-/occupation-specific, and institutionally structured migration framework. Programs such as THAMM Plus aim for shared responsibility, skills development, and the safeguarding of the interests of both economies as well as of migrants themselves. Through these initiatives, public stakeholders seek to transform and expand the established corridor from one characterized largely by individual, and network-based channels into a modern, skills-oriented and partnership-based framework featuring structured, regular pathways and mutual benefits.

Key messages

- Both Germany and Morocco encourage managed labour migration in construction, STEM sectors, and other vocational occupations.
- Germany has made such labour migration schemes contingent upon Morocco's cooperation in accepting returned migrants.
- Existing initiatives for migration-skills partnerships that protect migrants' rights, provide legal employment opportunities, and address gaps in the German labour market are remain small in terms of the numbers of workers participating.
- By contrast, many skilled migrants move through private recruitment channels mediated by employment brokers based mainly in Morocco.

¹ <https://mediendienst-integration.de/fluechtlinge/abschiebungen/wie-viele-abschiebungen-und-freiwillige-ausreisen-gibt-es/>

- Skills mobility partnerships initiated within the corridor strive towards more mutual beneficial frameworks and outcomes of skilled mobility, while private channels (often with unethical practices) continue to dominate, and skill flow remains volatile.

2. Migration dynamics

The Moroccan population is highly mobile. In 2024, Moroccan emigrants counted as the largest North African diaspora with approx. 3.6 million Moroccans residing abroad. This led to changing skills profiles of migrants over the last years. Moroccan-German labour migration relations date back to the early 1970s, when Moroccans were recruited primarily to work in the German mining and industry sectors. After state-led recruitment ended, migratory flows did not cease but continued through family reunification and student mobility. These developments enabled the consolidation of a well-organized Moroccan community in Germany.² At present, the corridor is visibly shaped by strong transnational activities of civil or private Moroccan diaspora organizations and associations. In comparison to other newly emerging corridors, the Moroccan diaspora represents an important – but still overlooked – resource for bilateral skills development, capacity building, knowledge transfer, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Current estimates indicate that approximately 103,000 persons with Moroccan citizenship reside in Germany. The number of Moroccans granted asylum in Germany has historically remained limited both in comparison to other asylum nationalities and in comparison to other receiving countries like France, Belgium, the Netherlands, or Spain.

Over the last years, Moroccan migration to Germany steadily increased from 5,068 in 2013 to 12,488 in 2024. Among non-German vocational trainees in Germany, Morocco was with 1,425 trainees (15.8%) the second top nationality after Vietnam (2,650 trainees) in 2023. This is reflected on the ground, where young Moroccans have an increased interest into pursuing vocational training in sectors such as healthcare. These new pathways are perceived as an attractive legal opportunity to reach Europe.

Family reunification continues to play an important role (Family reunification or marriage is cited as a reason for migration by one in five Moroccan migrants (according to the International Migration survey conducted by the HCP in 2018/2019), although a breakdown of this figure by country is not available). In this case, mobility is not based on individual skills. The corridor is also shaped by comparatively high circular mobility where migrants who temporarily resided in Germany for studies/training or work decide to return or establish transnational enterprises or organizations.

3. Policies and agreements

In recent years, Morocco and Germany have strengthened their bilateral cooperation on skilled migration and return by further institutionalising migration frameworks, recruitment agreements, and skill mobility partnerships. Interview data from the Link4Skills project indicate that stakeholders, such as the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC) or the Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPT) in Morocco or the German public employment agency (BA), pursue different objectives, including facilitating legal labour mobility, supporting the integration of skilled migrants in Germany and, by some of the state actors, strengthening cooperation on the return of migrants with non-regular

² The Moroccan community in Germany is particularly visible in the Rhine–Main region and in urban centers such as Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Dortmund or Cologne.

status. At the same time, migration, and particularly return policies, remain a politically sensitive and contested issue in Germany.

A key example of state-led bilateral cooperation is the Permanent Mixed Migration Group (PMMG), established in 2024 by the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, Moroccans Residing Abroad, and the German Federal Foreign Office.³ The PMGG provides a platform for joint coordination on migration, legal mobility, border management, and return. Political dialogue is further supported through the Morocco-Germany Multidimensional Strategic Dialogue, reflecting the strategic importance both governments attach to migration as well as cooperation in security, culture, economics and development.

Bilateral relations were further strengthened through the Migration Cooperation agreement signed in 2024, which aims to facilitate labour migration while addressing non-regular migration.⁴ The agreement includes closer collaboration on identity verification, return procedures, legal pathways for skilled workers, and return policies. Similarly, the 2023 Declaration of Intent on Migration, Security, and Returns between the two ministries of interior focuses on cooperation in migration and border management, disrupting smuggling networks and improving repatriation procedures. The Centers for Migration and Development (ZME) complement these initiatives by linking migration governance with return and reintegration support.

Together, these initiatives illustrate the close linkage – as well as complicated balancing act – between labour migration and return policies in the Morocco-Germany corridor. For the German government, skill mobility partnerships contribute to addressing labour shortages while supporting broader migration management objectives, including forced return, or return or expulsion after apprehension (A phenomenon that has intensified between Germany and Morocco since the end of 2016). For Morocco, they create additional legal mobility opportunities for its citizens. The corridor, thus, represents an example of increasingly institutionalised and jointly governed skilled migration cooperation, despite ongoing political and policy tensions.

THAMM Plus

The THAMM Plus program (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa) further illustrates this approach. Co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) the program supports labour migration governance and mobility between North Africa and Europe (First phase: 2019-2024; Second phase: 2023-2027). The program – with projects in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt – is funded by the EU with \$ 5,375,000.⁵ THAMM Plus recruited 509 participants between February 2019 and January 2025.⁶

Its four pillars comprise: 1) Testing safe and demand-oriented mobility schemes and harmonizing transnational frameworks; 2) Disseminating lessons learnt from pilot projects; 3) Developing analytical tools for migration governance; 4) Strengthening institutional capacities, qualification systems, inter-institutional cooperation, and knowledge exchange. Target groups include labour market institutions and Moroccan professionals and trainees in occupations such as electrical trades, mechatronics, hospitality or metalworking. Activities

³ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2770042-2770042>

⁴ <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/EN/2024/01/marokko.html>

⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-0>

⁶ <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/023/2102396.pdf>

include stakeholder networking, recruitment events, job fairs, skills recognition and matching. Within the program, the subnational partnership between the Tangier-Tétouan-Al Hoceima region (Morocco) and the state of Lower-Saxony (Germany) represents an example for multi-level and multi-stakeholder collaboration on skilled migration.⁷

THAMM Plus promotes sustainable, institutionalised and sector-/occupation-specific recruitment. For the Moroccan government, objectives include generating remittances, reducing labour market and vocational training pressures, and promoting longer-term skills and technology circulation through return. According to official program information, THAMM Plus has delivered more than 15 stakeholder trainings on fair recruitment and supported the development of a national strategy and action plan on international skilled emigration⁸. For the German government, Morocco represents an attractive partner due to its geographical proximity and growing pool of skilled and motivated young people who are increasingly interested in German language training and investing in a German migration journey.

At the same time, the continued emigration of skilled workers can create labour shortages in sectors that are essential for Morocco's development. This is especially important because the country has recruitment partnerships with several European countries and already faces shortages in healthcare, public services, engineering, and STEM fields, including cybersecurity. In this context, THAMM Plus aims to establish a flexible system of recruitment governance through permanent joint working groups. These groups would be able to adapt or temporarily suspend recruitment in specific occupations whenever necessary. This approach recognizes Morocco's dual role as a country of origin, transit, and destination for migrants. It also seeks to balance international labour mobility with national workforce needs by promoting recruitment policies based on sectoral priorities and reliable labour market data.

In addition, formal cooperation has been established between the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education (BIBB), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Moroccan OFPPT and ANAPEC, and the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment, and Skills (MIEPEEC), in Morocco. This collaboration focuses on improving information exchange on skills recognition, facilitating simplified and transparent recognition procedures, institutional capacity building and establishing transnational networks.⁹

4. Good practices

Institutionalised dialogue: Close and regular political and technical collaboration has been established between ministries and agencies of both countries. In contrast to modes of crisis management or case-by-case arrangements, this institutional set-up is a prerequisite for joint, strategic workforce planning with mutual predictability and safeguard mechanisms.

Vocational training reforms and joint skilling initiatives: Public and private collaboration to align Moroccan vocational training with German labour market needs is promising to further

⁷ <https://aljihapost.com/english/tangier-tetouan-al-hoceima-region-lower-saxony-seal-partnership-on-migration-investment/>

⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/THAMM%20Key%20achievement%20-%202019-2023.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.bibb.de/en/218897.php>

facilitate and simplify skilled migration. Moroccan institutions show a strong interest in the German dual vocational training system that combines practical training and theoretical teaching.

Skills recognition reforms and joint negotiations: Close exchange and negotiation on further facilitating and simplifying skills recognition are ongoing. On the Moroccan side, pragmatic solutions are desired that are suitable to scale up and avoid the risk of occupational downgrading, exploitation and exclusion of legal and social rights. On the German side, partial skills recognition procedures and mutual recognition partnerships were initiated; however, these mechanisms come with systemic challenges (see 5.).

Student mobility and ways into employment: Germany has become an increasingly attractive destination for Moroccan students. For those who want to remain in Germany, it is necessary to facilitate a legal transition from study to employment visa. Study and vocational training migration have become a key strategy among Moroccan youth to circumvent complicated, costly, bureaucratic, and intransparent skills recognition procedures with German authorities.

5. Areas for improvement

Expansion of public language training facilities across Morocco: While private language schools have expanded rapidly across Morocco in recent years, access to affordable, high-quality language training remains limited, particularly in rural areas. Language exams are often costly and offered only in person, creating barriers for less affluent or less mobile candidates. Integrating German language programs into regular vocational education and training (VET) curricula or higher education programs would provide valuable opportunities for graduates and students interested in pursuing employment or training opportunities in Germany.

Simplifying recognition procedures and introducing cohort- or cluster-based recognition: The German case-by-case application process is perceived by Moroccan stakeholders as inefficient, burdensome, and unnecessarily time-consuming. Introducing cohort- or cluster-based mechanisms could significantly facilitate the process. Under such an approach, all graduates from the same vocational training institution (study program) or higher education establishment could be evaluated based on agreements between Moroccan educational institutions and German recognition authorities or professional chambers.

Strengthening opportunities for circular mobility: Greater effort could be made to promote pathways that facilitate return, skills transfer, and productive investment in skills and economic development in Morocco. At the same time, the portability of social protection rights needs to be strengthened through enhanced bilateral agreements and administrative cooperation. Circular migration schemes are also shaped in their outcome by broader forms of cultural exchange and institutional collaboration, which should be further encouraged and expanded in order to deepen mutual understanding and sustain long-term mobility partnerships.

Institutionalising skills mobility partnerships and promoting balanced governance: Sustained political and financial commitment is needed to ensure that the achievements of pilot initiatives evolve into permanent mechanisms of bilateral cooperation. Rather than remaining project-based, these partnerships should be integrated into the governance architecture of labour migration corridors through regular institutional dialogue between Morocco and partner countries, including Germany. Such a dialogue should address labour market forecasting, sector-specific recruitment needs, recognition of qualifications, vocational education and training, migrant protection, social integration, and the assessment of migration's impact on both labour markets. It should also support joint initiatives in skills development, technology transfer, and

broader economic cooperation. Embedding these mechanisms within long-term bilateral frameworks would help ensure that labour mobility responds to changing economic needs while safeguarding Morocco's human capital and supporting its national development priorities, thereby generating more balanced and mutually beneficial outcomes for both countries.

Strengthening pre-departure information and migrant protection mechanisms: Many Moroccan workers do not have sufficient information regarding recruitment procedures, employment conditions, qualification requirements, and social rights. Comprehensive pre-departure orientation programs could better prepare migrants for the realities of living and working abroad. Such programs should include information on labour rights, social security, housing, cultural adaptation, and mechanisms for reporting abuse or exploitation. Enhanced monitoring of recruitment practices is necessary for more ethical and transparent labour migration processes.

Data and References

This corridor brief is based upon interviews conducted between February and August 2025. For the migration skill corridor Morocco–Germany, 34 expert interviews were conducted by the Link4Skills Morocco-Germany team, including 15 corridor-specific interviews. These included at the policy level decision-makers, politicians, executives or employees of administrations, ministries, institutions or agencies at various governmental levels and practitioners and stakeholders at the implementation level, including public or private employment/recruitment agencies, language or professional training centres, implementing institutions and organizations, professional chambers, trade unions, welfare and civil society organizations, migrant communities and returnee associations, and employers/companies. This data has been complemented with documents, statistics and studies.

BAMF, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2026). *Migrationsbericht der Bundesregierung 2024*.

https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2024.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16

Council of the European Union. (2013). Joint declaration establishing a Mobility Partnership between the Kingdom of Morocco and the European Union and its Member States. Brussels, 3 June, 2013. [eu-council-eu-morocco-mobility-partnership-6139-add1-rev3-13.pdf](#)

Deutscher Bundestag. (2026). Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Clara Büniger und der Fraktion Die Linke. Drucksache 21/3625, 11.02.2026. <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/041/2104103.pdf>

ETF, European Training Foundation. (2021). Skills and migration country. Fiche Morocco. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-05/ETF%20Skills%20and%20Migration%20Country%20Fiche%20MOROCCO_2021_EN%20Final.pdf

High Commission for Planning, Morocco. (2020). Results of the National Survey on International Migration 2018-2019’.

United Nations. (2024). International migrant stock 2024: Bilateral migration matrix. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

Statista. (2026). Anzahl der Ausländer aus Marokko in Deutschland von 2011 bis 2024, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/558677/umfrage/in-deutschland-lebende-marokkaner/> (04.06.2026)

About the Link4Skills project

Link4Skills is an EU-funded research and project addressing the global challenge of skill shortages and mismatches through innovative, sustainable solutions that foster fair skill utilization and exchange across continents.

Focusing on Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, the project seeks to bridge the gap between skill supply and demand by facilitating re/up-skilling, promoting automation, and encouraging migration as policy options.

Link4Skills is creating an inclusive, participatory policy decision-making environment by integrating a diverse range of stakeholders, including EU decision-makers, inter-governmental institutions, national and subnational decision-makers, employers organizations, employees organizations, and civic society co-development institutions.

Project Coordinator: Professor Izabela Grabowski

The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the authors. The European Union is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

This document is available for download at <http://link4skills.eu>

July 2026



The Link4Skills project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101132476