



## NOTE

### **BusinessEurope input to the European Commission's consultation on an EU Talent Pool**

29 June 2023

#### **Introduction**

This note outlines BusinessEurope's views on the development of the full version of an EU Talent Pool, covering the main areas of discussion. It provides input to the European Commission in advance of the dedicated social partners consultation and so may be further complemented in due course.

BusinessEurope considers that there is untapped potential in the role of economic migration in helping to alleviate ongoing problems of labour and skills shortages, which are being felt across a wide range of sectors. The full version of the EU Talent Pool can play an important role in helping to match skilled third country nationals with unfilled vacancies across the EU.

**A relevant starting point for the launch of the full version of the Pool would be to have a targeted approach to matching on the basis of shortage occupation lists, or their equivalents, at the national/regional level. An important caveat in this respect is that Member States need to regularly update their lists, taking into account information from employers.** The scope of the Pool could follow a gradual approach – ultimately being open to all occupations to reduce bureaucracy and simplify the process. In parallel, it is important to continue to utilise the European Qualifications Framework as a means to facilitate a better understanding of third country qualifications and how they relate to qualifications issued by EU Member States. The upcoming Commission communication on the recognition of third country qualification is also an important element that can feed into the conceptual work of the Talent Pool and something that will need to be reflected on in due course,

#### **1) Approaches to international recruitment and challenges that the Talent Pool could help to address.**

The nature and extent of the challenges that employers face vary from country to country, depending on the provisions that are already in place nationally. Among the challenges that employers face regarding international recruitment are slow and complex recognition procedures and uncertainty about the comparability of skills and qualifications; bureaucratic administrative procedures that can be slow and which are often not digitalized; long waiting times for visa appointments; and language issues. These factors can make it difficult for employers to plan a recruitment strategy around the employment of third country nationals.

Noting that the Talent Pool will largely be a matching tool, it could help to bring greater certainty to employers when it comes to identifying potential recruits; the timeframe towards recruitment of a third country national and steps that need to be followed.

The Talent Pool can also offer a broader vetting system of third country nationals aligned with sectoral and regional demand. In particular, the Pool could help smaller companies who wish to recruit internationally, but who perhaps lack the resources and know-how on how to approach this. Therefore it is crucial that the National Contact Points (NCPs) are both support services for employers and third country nationals as well as able to access the applicant data with the aim of placement in employment.

## 2) Scope of application and admission criteria

BusinessEurope's view is that participation of Member States in the Pool should be on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, the Talent Pool platform should be interoperable with existing national systems and platforms, including those run by the Public Employment Services as well as private providers, such as LinkedIn.

As concerns **who the Pool is targeted to**, we consider that the initial focus should be on sectors and occupations where there are identified shortages and that shortage occupation lists, which are defined nationally, typically with the input of employers and PES, should provide a basis for this approach. This approach would help to address specific shortages while helping to gain political acceptance for the Talent Pool approach. Beyond this, it would be relevant to explore a more general roll-out of the Pool on a gradual basis.

As concerns the **definition of the admission criteria**, this should be left to the relevant national actors within the member states with involvement of the social partners who would be best placed to determine which candidates that are in the EU Pool are considered for employment. This can involve employers' organisations at national and sectoral level as well as chambers of commerce.

As concerns a **screening process**, we tentatively envisage an initial basic pre-screening of candidates at the point when they create a profile to enter the Pool that is automated, i.e. proof of existing documents/qualifications. In this respect the Pool would only be open to pre-screened candidates. A subsequent step – based on prospects for integration – would be the actual validation and verification of the qualifications of people once a match has been / at the point when an employer is ready to make a job offer.

## 3) Matching platform and additional components

The matching potential of the Talent Pool is one of the key advantages that BusinessEurope sees in establishing such an initiative and should be at the centre of it through a dedicated, **automatic matching tool**, using information input into the profile of applicants. This includes information coming from CVs that are uploaded. While matching could be done automatically, there should also be the option for manual searches and filtering by employers, PES and job seekers. The Pool should give the possibility to proactively contact the candidates via e-mail in line with the GDPR.

As part of the matching process and outreach of the Talent Pool, it would be relevant to take inspiration from the European Job Days initiative by **organising online job matching days**, which would be a way to connect third country nationals in the pool with employers.

**Support services and provision of information** is also something that is important for employers and third country nationals applying to the Pool, especially after the matching process. Access to national support services should be in line with access opportunities for the migration and labour authorities to link their services and contact candidates. For example, this could cover guidance and information on the next steps towards a work visa, linking up to relevant national contact points. It would be important that information is clearly available to third country nationals entering the pool, as well as employers recruiting from the pool, about EU and national migration schemes and pathways.

There could also be a role for the European Labour Authority (ELA) as part of its information provision work. In this regard, BusinessEurope is calling on ELA to establish an on-demand help desk function that would provide information to employers and workers. Synergies could also be achieved with support services offered by EURES. Further reflection would be needed

on whether such a helpdesk, if created, could also play a role in this regard as concerns third country nationals.

As part of the European Year of Skills, there is set to be an initiative aiming to foster the **recognition of third country qualifications**. This planned initiative should be assimilated with the ongoing conceptual work to develop a proposal for the full version of the EU Talent Pool. The ability to recognise third country qualifications, particularly those that are not professional qualifications, would be an important element for the successful functioning of the Pool in so far as it would help to facilitate the matching process and give employers greater confidence about the candidate profile that they are reviewing.

In this respect, it can be noted that there are some ongoing sectoral level initiatives when it comes to the recognition of third country qualifications in relation to the establishment of Talent Partnerships between certain Member States and third countries. For example, this includes potential partnerships between Bangladesh and Italy and Germany with a focus on the construction and transport sectors. It is still early days in this process, but this work on the recognition of qualification in certain sectors should be fed into the Talent Pool development.

In parallel, emphasis should be put on the direct referencing of third country qualifications, to the European Qualifications Framework - EQF - using a learning outcomes-based approach - and focusing in particular on third countries that are the main countries of origin of third country migrants to the EU.

#### **4) Governance**

As noted above, the Talent Pool should be developed in a way that is **voluntary for Member States**. Likewise, interoperability with other existing platforms would be important. This includes taking *inspiration from* or tapping into synergies with EURES' IT solutions, potentially enabling the transfer of national job offers from the PES to the Talent Pool, while avoiding the scenario whereby third country nationals who do not currently have the possibility to work in the EU apply for jobs via EURES. It would also be relevant to look at how to link up with other private job matching initiatives.

**We see a particular relevance in the involvement of European cross-industry employers in the overarching governance of the Talent Pool. Key actors in the governance of the Talent Pool would also be PES, migration authorities as well as other competent authorities (e.g. national chambers).** There should also be a **sectoral level** approach with the representative organisations at EU level providing input on the skills needed by employers in the various sectors – where applicable complementing the input and work of the PES. This would enable sectors that have particular and structural shortages of skilled workers to become involved in the Talent Pool in order to help address their needs.

A sectoral level approach could also be relevant in terms of a credible assessment of the existing skills and work experience of applicants to the Talent Pool and in identifying any further training that may be needed to enable migrants to achieve a sufficient skill level that is on a par with member state nationals. Synergies could be made with the Sector Skills Blueprints and Pact for Skills initiatives in this regard.

Given the strong sectoral dimension, **BusinessEurope recommends that a dedicated subgroup or workshop is organised with sectoral social partners within the framework of the recently created Labour Migration Platform.**

To further inform the debate on what sort of coordinating structure is necessary it would be relevant to evaluate the extent to which existing tools and structures, such as the EURES portal and CEDEFOP's Skills OVATE initiative could support the matching process, as well as

the possible role of the ELA in providing information. This could include an assessment of the extent to which a dual structure of European and national coordination offices could be utilised in a similar way to that which is in place for EURES. In the EURES context there is a European coordination office composed of representatives from the countries taking part in EURES, i.e. the EU-27 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland as well as the European social partners. The role of the national coordination offices is then typically played by the PES who coordinate with relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level.

**While the Talent Pool should be legally distinct from EURES, in terms of the different scope of operation (EURES for intra-EU mobile workers and the Talent Pool for third country nationals), it would be important to develop synergies, as appropriate, between EURES and the Talent Pool, including as concerns the governance model, which could provide an appropriate inter-face/structure for the management of the full version of the EU Talent Pool.**

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