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Bonn-Rhein-Sieg
University of Applied Sciences

Department for Social Policy and Social Security
Research Project Sustainable Labour Migration

-analytical framework brief -

Research Project: Sustainable and Socially Acceptable Labour Migration Management
(short title: Sustainable Labour Migration)

Analytical Framework
- short version -

Source: Pixabay.

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Preface

In December 2018, after 18 months of consultations, negotiations, and public debate, 163 states adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Among others, the GCM aims to present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility. Global Skill Partnerships are included as one innovative and sustainable policy idea in this landmark agreement. Against this backdrop, the Department for Social Policy and Social Security conducts a one-year research project on *sustainable and socially acceptable labour migration management* with country case studies on transnational labour migration partnerships between **Germany and Georgia, Kosovo and Vietnam**.

The project has five key components:

1. A **Desk Review Study** will apply a literature review with focus on stock taking of sustainable labour migration concepts, terminologies, and emerging trends in the international discourse. The study will provide the methodological framework and instruments for the country case studies.
2. The **Country Case Studies** will collect empirical data on key stakeholder perceptions and empirical models and test their potential for improving sustainability, especially the distribution of costs and benefits of managed labour migration schemes addressing medium skill levels amongst individual migrants, societies, and other participating stakeholders now and in future.
3. A **Review and Reflection of Indices** and available dashboards measuring migration governance and impact of migration for sustainable development will identify possible gaps and areas for potential improvement, along with recommendations for further development.
4. An **Analytical Framework for Capacity Development** of stakeholders in line with the findings and recommendations from the research will be proposed, and a curriculum for a training module on fair / ethical recruitment discussed with concerned stakeholders in the partner countries.
5. A hybrid **Symposium on Sustainable Labour Migration** – scheduled for 23 to 24 March 2022 - will gather academics and practitioners in Sankt Augustin at the Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg to engage in knowledge sharing, debate and reflection of the findings and recommendations of the research project.

The research project will be implemented until August 2022. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through a grant provided by the "Programme Migration and Diaspora" of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Introduction

> *"We need a new narrative for labour migration" (Lange, 2020, p. 281)*

Against the backdrop of dynamic social transformation processes in many countries, among them **demographic change** processes, high income countries and international organisations are increasingly emphasising the potentially positive interlinkage of skilled labour migration and development, and in particular the political discourse about creating opportunities to fight root causes of migration in the countries of origin and/or narratives providing different answers to the question: What kind of (labour) migration is desirable?

Our analysis will present a review of existing concepts that propose answers to this question. Based on a critical review we will introduce our approach to the question on what desirable migration is. For this, we will introduce, review and define the term **sustainable labour migration** and translate the subsequent understanding into an analytical framework for applying the concept to empirical research. We will then test and explore our research design with case studies of transnational labour migration schemes between in Germany and Georgia, Kosovo and Vietnam.

Desirable labour migration: established concepts

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants expressly recognize international migration as a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of origin, transit and migration destination countries, that requires coherent and comprehensive answers (UN 2013). But what does 'desirable', some would say 'good migration' mean? Established concepts providing answers to this question are the:

1) **Sustainable Development Goals:** *Orderly, safe and responsible migration*
2) **Global compact for** *safe, orderly and regular migration*
3) **IOM' mission statement:** *Humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all*
4) **ILO's** *rights-based migration approach*
5) *Triple win discourse/programmes*
6) *Fair/ethical migration discourse*

In our analysis we will outline common elements and critically review these concepts as a starting point for a more comprehensive concept. Erdal and colleagues (Erdal et al., 2018, pp. 6–7) single out five underlying perspectives which are attributed to these concepts:

1) the diversity of stakeholder,

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2) the diverse (positive and negative) consequences of migration,
3) the dispersion of migration impacts along the migration trajectory,
4) the idea that with the right management of migration positive migration results could be maximised and negative minimised (we term this the 'if-paradigm' in the migration-development nexus), and finally
5) the principally positive attitude towards migration.

Our understanding of sustainable labour migration will incorporate these perspectives, jointly shared by existing approaches. And, it will go beyond established concepts building on the critique towards established approaches.
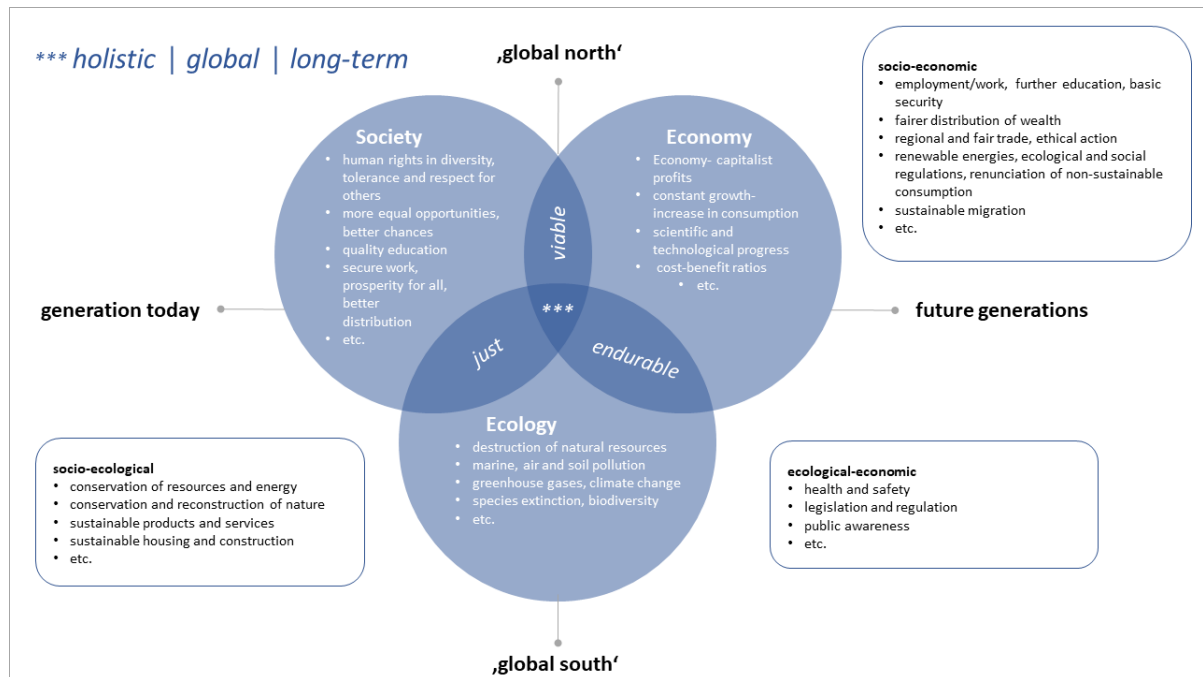
Sustainable Labour Migration – a proposal for definition

Today, a widely perceived understanding of sustainability builds on the **integrated sustainability approach**. This model goes beyond various three-pillar models of sustainability as it does not limit its perspective to three disjunct dimensions standing side by side. Although the three 'circles of sustainability' ecology, economy and social do inhibit an autonomous logic and autonomous goals, the integrated approach points to cross-dimensional discourses, elements and goals and the interaction between the circles.[1] Beyond the cross-dimensional interaction, the integrated approach rests on overall principles: intergenerational justice, quality of life, social cohesion and global responsibility. Questions that can be deduced from these principles are: 'What are the effects of our actions for future generations?', 'What are the effects of our local actions around the globe?', and 'What is the willingness of involved stakeholders to compensate for damages and costs incurred?' (Reich, 2021, 38 & 42).

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[1] In our analysis we will neither explicitly address the dimension of ecology of its own, nor the interlinkages of ecology with the social and/or the economic dimension. We will reflect on this dimension in the final report's outlook.

Figure 1: Integrated Sustainability Approach – Circles of Sustainability

Source: Own graph based on Reich (2021, p. 37), Pufé (2017) and Zimmermann (2016, p. 19).

The literature has so far only sporadically and not systematically referred to the term **sustainable labour migration**. We applied a systematic literature review with various combinations of the search terms "socially desirable", "sustainable", "labour/labor" and "migration". The results stemming from this review tell us, that the terms "socially desirable" are not widely used in the literature. The conceptual pair of sustainability and (labour) migration is applied in the literature, although it does not follow a consistent pattern and is hence not systematically established. The understanding of the pair is very heterogeneous, inconsistent and usually limited to single aspects of the integrative approach presented here. An analytical clarification of sustainability in combination and (labour) migration is scarce. However, recently prominent exceptions have been established with the policy papers titled 'Defining Sustainable Migration' by Erdal and colleagues (2018) and 'Sustainable Migration Framework' by Betts and Collier (2018).

Sustainable labour migration describes those schemes of labour migration that build on a specific distribution of costs and benefits, which is (1) informed by the sound understanding of the mechanisms producing costs and benefits, which (2) reflects the broad needs of diverse stakeholders today and in future, and which is (3) formally or informally accepted by involved stakeholders.

With this definition we want to inform a specific way of thinking, implementing and assessing labour migration schemes. By this, we incorporate a variety of stakeholders and suggest to

better differentiate between involved stakeholders. In particular we think, that the role of employers has not been adequately assessed in many labour migration schemes, which rather highlight the important role of state actors and individual migrants. Labour migration results in positive and negative outcomes over a diversified set of social and economic costs and benefits, that are dispersed over a wide range of stakeholders. Only recently the country of origin (and transit country) perspective on this has gained in importance. Applying the classic idea of sustainability, taken from forestry, namely 'do not cut more wood than grows back', clearly points out the need for better focus on the impact of labour migration on the countries of origin. The (prioritised) consideration of effects in the country of origin responds to the basic question of sustainability, namely: 'What are the effects of our local actions around the globe?' and takes into consideration the transnational character of labour migration. With regard to the important aspect of distribution of costs and benefits, we depart from the definition proposed by Erdal et al. They correctly outline that a universal prescription for the distribution of costs and benefits is impossible and rather a matter for moral and political assessment. However, we suggest that this dilemma might at least partially be circumvented, if the distribution of costs and benefits is agreed upon by all involved partners. This can be achieved in the form of bilateral labour agreements or in the form of memorandums of understanding. An important element of whatever agreement is the principle of good partnership. Such a partnership model could deliberately account for the structural power imbalances of involved stakeholders, develop modalities for balancing these from the very beginning and lay the ground for the sound management of labour migration. In order to operationalise the understanding of sustainable development that rests on our definition, we will now turn to the presentation of our analytical framework. It is informed by the concept of transnationalism (Faist et al., 2013) and deliberately takes an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective in order to enable our research to develop towards a more holistic understanding of labour migration.

Objective of the Sustainable Labour Migration Study

The **main objective** of our study is to apply our analytical term of sustainable labour migration to selected cases studies in order to research the different levels of understanding, relevance, application and effects of key elements of labour migration schemes and to highlight viable ways forward to further develop these policy options. Our research will explore the scope of (potential) benefits and costs emerging from labour migration schemes between Germany and Georgia, Kosovo and Vietnam. The study will identify more precisely which types of costs and benefits accrue and how they are distributed among the actors involved. A stronger understanding of these dynamics will support a better understanding of narratives around what makes certain types of labour migration more desirable or in our wording more sustainable than others. Amongst other objectives, we will discuss existing narratives and

concepts by exploring the cost – benefits structure of selected labour migration schemes, its trade-offs and polarizations, incorporating economic and social costs, short- and long-term effects, intended and unintended effects in migration dimensions along the migration cycle, with a selection of stakeholders in countries of origin and countries of destination.

The analytical model

> *"Migration is, of course, change and it can lead, in turn, to further transformations in sending and receiving societies" (Portes, 2010, p. 1544).*

At the centre of our conceptual framework we link various migration dimensions along the migration cycle and across the spatial dimension of countries of origin and destination with the governance of skills development in order to obtain "(…) a complex understanding of the turf on which migration is discussed" (Raghuram, 2008, p. 92).

We deliberately focus different labour migration schemes incorporating different levels of complexity for managed labour migration in Georgia (seasonal employment), Kosovo (training partnership for apprentices) and Vietnam (Global Skill Partnerships). Our analytical priority is to explore the intended and actual or potential outcomes of such labour migration schemes. In the absence of a general theory of migration (Castles, 2019), we take a middle range perspective in our analytical framework. Our contribution will be initial and highly explorative for the current moment of research. Our interest is on motivations, perceptions and causes, processes and patterns as well as on outcomes in various migration dimensions. By this, we can contribute to the empirical discussions in regard to the desirability and the sustainability of specific labour migration schemes.

Congruent with our understanding of sustainability, we apply a **transnational perspective** in our analytical framework to emphasise and analyse migrant agency, without being "structure-light" (Bailey 2001,p. 421 cited from (Raghuram, 2008, pp. 83–84). We apply a transnational perspective in order to incorporate our perception of skilled labour migration not as an irrevocable process, but rather as repeated pluri-local transactions and practises related to people, state and non-state organizations and resources across state borders (Faist et al., 2013, p. 1). By this, migrants and non-migrants create and sustain social relations across borders (ibid, p. 8). Consequently, settlement and interconnectedness along the country of origin and the country of destination dichotomy need to be focused. The framework of transnationalism allows us to go beyond methodological nationalism, "(…) to capture a sense of how migration is experienced across two countries" (Raghuram, 2008, p. 83) and to focus cross-border interconnections and institutions at various analytical levels, as well as their potential to contribute to sustainable development.
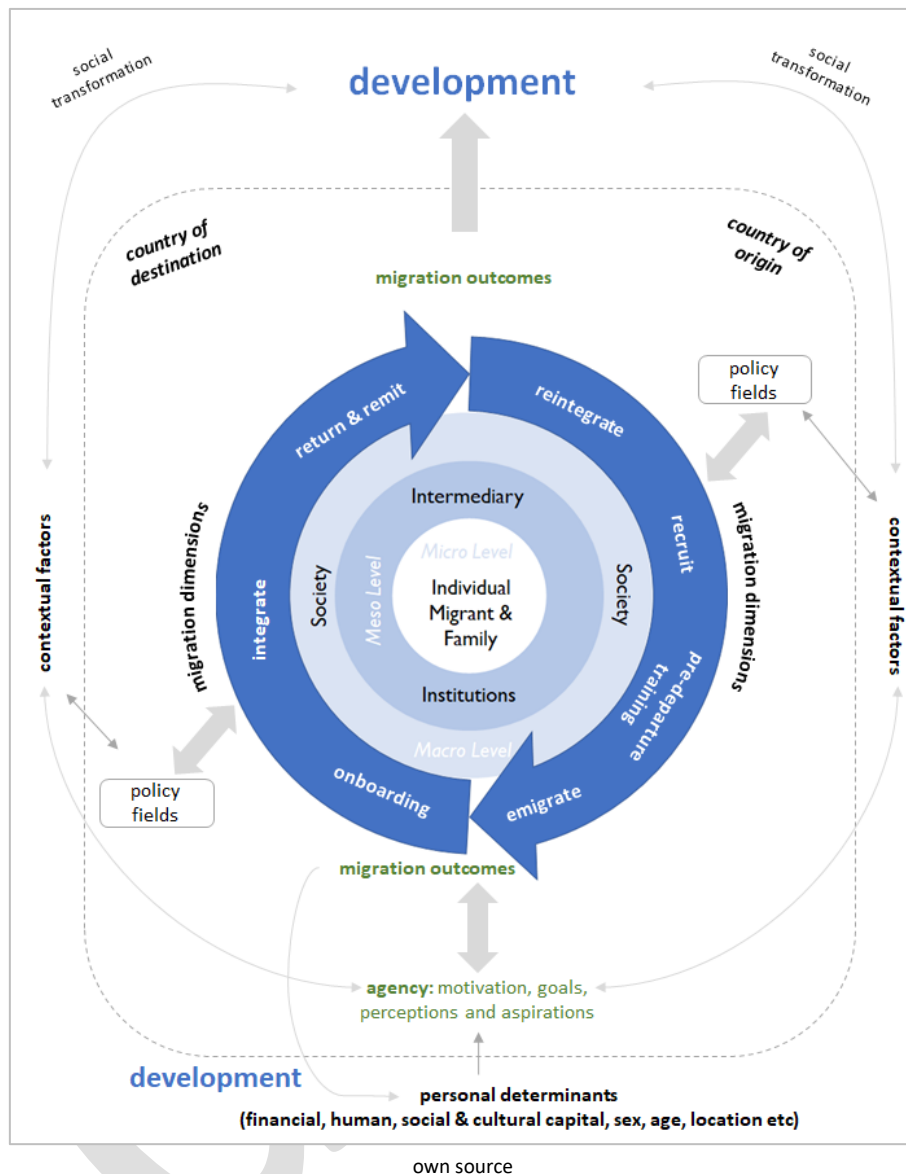
Elements of the analytical model

In their classical study "In Worlds in Motion", Massey et al. (1998) describe four key elements for an interdisciplinary analytical framework for migration studies incorporating macro, meso and micro structures and highlighting the contextuality of migration processes:

> (1) the structural forces that promote emigration from countries of origin and that
> (2) attract immigrants into countries of destination;
> (3) the motivations, goals and aspirations of the people to respond to such structural forces, and
> (4) the structures that arise to interconnect emigration and immigration.

In the basic setup of our analytical framework, we follow Massey et al. and address the person's agency, his/her motivation, goals, perceptions and aspirations that define outcomes in various migration dimensions to be embedded in contextual factors localised both in countries of origin and destination. The specific combination of migration and sectoral polices (e. g. the regulatory framework that connects the area of migration dimensions with the governance of skills production for the case of Global Skill Partnerships) then translates into an impact on individual and collective development in countries of origin and destination.

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Figure 2: Analytical Framework

own source

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors - under which we subsume structural factors, culture and history - need to be emphasised and considered in their potential to shape motivations, goals, perceptions and aspirations at the micro, meso and macro level and hence impact on the migration outcome. Incorporating **contextual factors** is without alternative for our study to comprehend the deep grammar of a specific skilled labour migration scheme. In the country studies we will provide an overview of contextual factors in all countries under observation without putting the casual links between these factors and migrant's agency in the centre of our analysis. By this, we try

to at least sort the "undifferentiated mass" (Portes, 2010, p. 1542) and to encounter and analytically sperate different factors in their enabling and constraining character for migration.

Migrant Agency

Of special interest in this study is the varying degree of agency, the motivation, goals, perceptions and aspirations of (potential) migrants covered by labour migration schemes and their relation with enabling (and constraining) factors underlying labour migration schemes.

Agency is considered as the ability of persons to take independent decisions and make choices within a given environment of contextual forces. Agency is coined by those factors but describes at the same time the individual's ability to shape structural conditions and overcome respective constraints. Persons are thus not interpreted as isolated and submissive individuals, who unidirectionally react to external factors, such as the push and pull model or as neoclassical theory suggests (Castles et al., 2014, p. 31) but rather as reflexive individuals.

Migration – development nexus

> *"Migration needs to work for development and that development needs to work for migration, while not ignoring its potential impacts"* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017, p. 3).

(Skilled) labour migration constitutes as source for gains, economic and non-economic consequences on the countries of origin's and destination' as well as the individual migrant's development in various ways (Kounani & Skanavis, 2019). Widely recognised impact factors refer to labour market effects, human capital effects, income generation effects as well as effects stemming from financial and social remittances. These manifold connections between skilled labour migration and (sustainable) development if manifested in various SDGs (International Organization for Migration, 2018).

Following the genesis of the discourse on the migration-development nexus since the 1960s one would describe a **discursive shift**, a path from optimism to pessimism to optimism again (e. g. (Haas, 2010)), with optimism currently being the "new mantra" (Faist & Fauser, 2011, p. 3).This shift describes the process of seeing the opportunities stemming from migration, rather than related problems and threats. The "sedentary bias" (Bakewell, 2008) has been reinterpreted in the sense that under certain conditions labour migration can result in a triple-win situation that is beneficial for countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants themselves. However, the empirical evidence on the interrelation between migration and development is not as clear cut as suggested by this narrative. One critical position stresses

that benefits from skilled labour migration may be cumulative, rather than balancing gains. Those in a better position are more likely to benefit: Power relations and economic differences between many states are widening (Milanovic, 2012), brain drain and brain waste is well documented for specific migration channels (Alquézar Sabadie et al., 2010, p. 63; Schmitz-Pranghe et al., 2020) and the positive development effect of financial remittances is conditional to specific factors. Optimists refer to brain gain potentials, increased bargaining power of single states in negotiating the terms for skilled migration, and to so far under-utilised and under-exploited potential of social remittances. In a nutshell: the effects stemming from skilled labour migration are not clear cut but rather contested. This resonates in the transformation of debating brain drain along brain gain, the impact of social remittances and the desirability of temporary, circular and return migration. Correlations, which are complex and highly context-dependent, work in both directions and can take opposite forms. Optimists and pessimists take opposite perspectives in evaluating these. However, generalisations should be avoided: "the reality perhaps is that both are right" (Haan & McDowell, 1997, p. 16).

In order to better understand migration outcomes for individuals, organisations and countries, which are embedded in the complex setting of contextual factors and agency, we will identify and determine the consequences in various migration dimensions which span along the migration cycle and across analytical levels: recruitment, pre-departure training, emigration, onboarding (short-term integration), staying and living in the country of destination (mid- and long-term integration), remittances and return migration and reintegration. We will further apply a comprehensive understanding of remittances and return while incorporating social remittances and a differentiated understanding of return that additionally integrates the idea of temporary, short-term and virtual return.

In applying our analytical term of **sustainable labour migration** this calls for a deeper understanding and going beyond the wide-spread and dominant discourse on the (positive) effects of financial remittances, considering the varying and contested consequences on different actors in countries of origin and destination now and in the future.

While analysing the circulation of people, money and ideas, most emphasis has been drawn on financial remittances and recently on skills, and the flow of know-how, ideas, values and norms (Faist & Fauser, 2011, pp. 3–4). The analysis of selected labour migration schemes adds to this, while addressing and incorporating long-term and short-term impact; multiple stakeholder perspectives, the spatial distribution of stakeholders, and a differentiated understanding of costs and benefits.

Multi-Level-Framework

In our understanding migration is perceived as a complex and multi-dimensional and fragmented construction – an interwoven arrangement of personal, organisational and societal aspects – that has to be analysed and interpreted at different levels. The most common approach is a micro – meso – macro model.

The cases: Georgia, Kosovo and Vietnam

We will analyse different skilled labour migration schemes in Georgia, Kosovo and Vietnam. In the Georgian case we will cover the perception, potentials and perspectives of low skilled and temporary labor migration, qualification and return. The Kosovo case covers an initial vocational training partnership scheme through which young Kosovars started a vocational training in construction-related businesses in Bavaria. In Vietnam we will turn to a so-called partnership approach for development-oriented vocational training and labour migration (PAM).

The three cases represent different types of labour migration schemes as outlined by Sauer and Volarević (2021) in their typology of transnational skills and mobility partnerships.

Research questions

Overall research question: How do stakeholders perceive the sustainability of selected mid-level skilled labour migration schemes?

> **Sub question #1 on costs & benefits**: How do stakeholders perceive realised and expected costs and benefits of selected labour migration schemes?

> **Sub question #2 on skills:** How do stakeholders assess the potential of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to make labour migration beneficial for all?

> **Sub question # 3 on partnership:** How do stakeholders assess the partnership underlying the labour migration scheme?

Research design / Methodology

We will use quantitative (online surveys) and qualitative tools (semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews) to collect a substantial body of primary data in the countries under observation. The research design builds on a comprehensive approach, as described in our analytical framework. Our approach incorporates a holistic understanding of costs and benefits and targets multiple actors involved in the selected managed labour migration

schemes. The research design comprises the review of the existing literature as well as field research in Georgia, Kosovo, Vietnam and Germany.

A systematic **literature review** will be applied to take stock of the knowledge in regard to our key analytical term, namely sustainable labour migration. **Quantitative survey methodology** will be applied to gain insights on the demand for labour migration and the perceived costs and benefits linked to the construction sector in Bavaria. Our **qualitative methodology** is based on semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with key stakeholders representing the private sector, public ministries and agencies, civil society and international donor organisations involved in the selected labour migration schemes.

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