

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Blue Birds

Overview

Blue Birds was designed as a small-scale experiment that would give 160 mid-skill professionals from South Africa and Indonesia the opportunity to work in the Netherlands. It was initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Participants were to be employed in jobs that matched their level of education and experience for a maximum of two years, after which they were to return home. Participants were intended to obtain training and practical experience in the Netherlands that would strengthen their skills and improve development in their home countries.

Why was it started?

The goal of the program was to create triple wins, for migrants, who would increase their skills; for sending countries, which would benefit from brain gain; and for the Netherlands, which would fill temporary labor shortages. The pilot was also intended to explore whether circular migration could be used as a tool for development cooperation.



Country of Destination
NETHERLANDS

Country of Origin
SOUTH AFRICA AND INDONESIA

Skill
**SHIPPING, MANUFACTURING,
FOOD INDUSTRY, AGRIBUSINESS,
LOGISTICS, AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

Skill Level
MID-LEVEL

Timeline
MARCH 2010–SEPTEMBER 2011

Beneficiaries
8

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.

How does it work?

The HIT Foundation, which implemented the scheme, and UWV, the Dutch employee insurance agency, first agreed on the skills to be targeted. Once targeted skills were identified, they contacted national recruiters for the screening and selection of both migrants and companies. The program helped participants with travel arrangements and logistical support during their stay in Netherlands.

What impact has it had?

After 15 months, only 8 migrants were working in the Netherlands, a much smaller number than the planned 160. Loss of confidence in the implementing party led to a lack of trust. In addition, the political context shifted. After consultation with the pilot's governmental steering committee and the HIT Foundation, the decision was made to stop the pilot.

Further readings

Hooper, K. 2019. *Exploring New Legal Migration Pathways: Lessons from Pilot Projects*. Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC. www.migrationpolicy.org/research/exploring-new-legal-migration-pathways-lessons-pilot-projects

Siegel, M., and V. van der Vorst. 2012. *Evaluation of the "Blue Birds" circular migration pilot in the Netherlands*. Study commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht University. www.merit.unu.edu/publications/uploads/1344262652.pdf



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