



Factsheet

# IRIS: Engaging with Governments on Ethical Recruitment

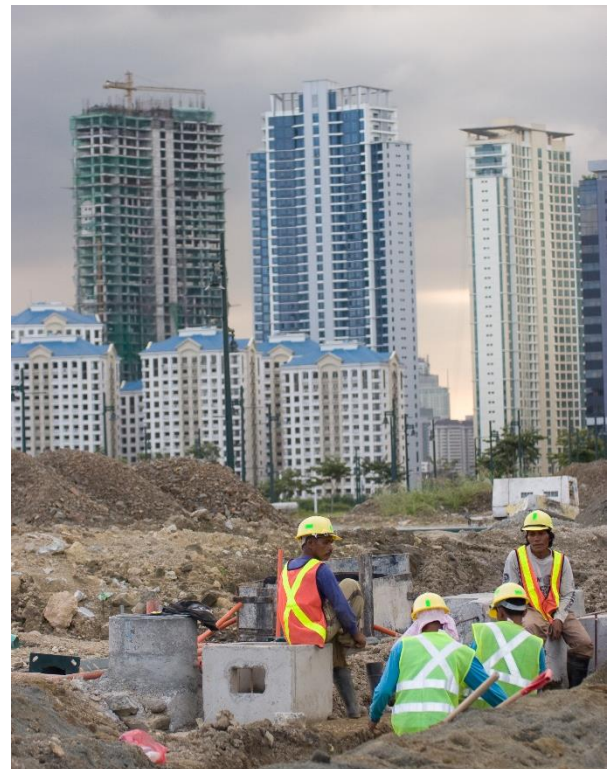
Migrant workers make valuable contributions to society. They support the development of their countries through remittances, and they help facilitate the transfer of skills and creation of business and trade networks. In countries of destination, migrant workers fill critical labour shortages, especially within the context of ageing populations and changing labour market trends and demographics.

Cross-border recruitment of workers is a vital part of facilitating international labour mobility. When it is done in a fair and transparent way, recruitment contributes to safe, orderly labour migration which benefits countries of origin and destination, employers and migrants. While many migrant workers have positive migration and employment experiences, they can be vulnerable to discrimination, abuse and exploitation throughout the migration process.

Unethical recruitment is a wide-spread phenomenon. It is found across economic sectors and is commonly associated with the recruitment of workers in lower skills categories where prevailing practices are based on a “worker pays” business model. Under this arrangement, migrant workers pay the fees and costs related to recruitment and migration, often leaving them heavily indebted and vulnerable to exploitation. When combined with other forms of abuses such as false promises about the terms and conditions of employment, limitations on freedom of movement, coercion or lack of access to remedy, this can lead to exploitation and conditions of forced labour.

In many migration corridors, the vulnerability experienced by migrant workers is exacerbated by weaknesses in regulation and enforcement. Inconsistencies across jurisdictions, coupled with uneven enforcement capacity, can lead to gaps in migrant protection. To address this, IOM supports Member States through IRIS, a global multi-stakeholder initiative designed to promote ethical

recruitment and support the transformation of the international recruitment industry. Ethical recruitment contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.7 which calls for safe, orderly, responsible, and regular migration, and reinforces efforts to achieve SDG 8.7 on productive employment and decent work for all, including the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking and protection of human and labour rights. IRIS is referred to under Objective 6 of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) and other inter-governmental frameworks.



## Fair and safe together



## GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

As an intergovernmental organization, IOM works with governments on a wide range of activities related to labour migration and migrant worker protection. These include:

- Strengthening labour migration policies and bilateral cooperation to promote regular migration and strengthen migrant protection.
- Supporting governments in design and implementation of national frameworks to improve migration management and promote ethical recruitment, including National Action Plans.
- Strengthening regulation, the licensing of labour recruiters, labour inspection services, law enforcement, and the role played by labour attachés and consular officials responsible for migrant worker protection.

## The Global Policy Network on Recruitment

IOM takes a “whole of government” approach to promoting ethical recruitment. This means facilitating dialogue within and between governments, between national and sub-national authorities and between governments and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. To create a space for governments to discuss and address the challenges they encounter in regulating recruitment and protecting migrant workers, IOM launched the Global Policy Network on Recruitment. The Policy Network is a Member State-driven collaboration that brings together policy makers, regulators and practitioners to:

- Discuss key challenges related to cross-border recruitment;
- Identify and co-develop solution to recruitment-related challenges; and
- Highlight promising practices in the field of policy, regulation, enforcement and protection.

The Policy Network engages representatives from the full range of public authorities responsible for or involved in recruitment regulation and migrant worker protection. This encompasses foreign affairs, immigration, justice, interior, labour, and development cooperation portfolios, among others. Through targeted thematic working groups,

Members learn from peers and counterparts around the world, share perspectives, and co-develop strategies and solutions that can be tested in home jurisdictions.

### The Montréal Recommendations on Recruitment

The foundation for the Policy Network was laid with the success of the 2019 Global Conference on the Regulation of International Recruitment, held in Montréal, Canada. The Conference brought together 100 policy makers from over 30 countries around the world and resulted in [The Montréal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation](#), a set of global guidance articulating good practice in recruitment regulation and protection of migrant workers. The guidance addresses a range of policy issues, including recruitment fees and costs; registration and licensing of recruitment agencies; the role of inspectorates, consular officials, migrant welfare officers and labour attachés; strategies to incentivize legal compliance; migrant welfare and assistance; enhancing access to grievance mechanisms, dispute resolution and remedy; and bilateral, regional and multi-lateral engagement.

## Capacity Building and Training

To support the work of Network members, the IRIS Secretariat has developed a global, modular training programme and [Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection](#) to support governments in their regulatory and operational efforts to create regulatory environments that enable ethical recruitment worldwide. Building on the Montréal Recommendations on Recruitment, they provide measures for consideration and profile relevant concrete actions that governments around the world have taken. The tools are aligned with the priorities and objectives of the Global Policy Network on Recruitment and its thematic working groups.

For more information on IOM’s work on IRIS and ethical recruitment, please visit [iris.iom.int](https://iris.iom.int).

**55+** Policy Network members

**70** countries with IRIS footprint

**1000+** authorities trained