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Economic and Social Council Issue #4: The question of skilled labor migration.

Skilled labor migration is the migration of highly skilled workers, defined as "the movement of persons who normally possess university education, … extensive experience or a combination of the two" ("High-Skilled Migration").

Skilled labor migration happens largely between developed countries; however, it is a rising phenomenon in less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Highly skilled workers migrate due to a variety of reasons. The main reasons are improved quality of life, secure income, access to improved education for their children and more opportunities in general. These workers may migrate to study and work temporarily; nevertheless, many migrate seeking permanent residence (Oleribe and de la Fuente).

Modern economies often rely on skilled labor migration. Examples of industries heavily reliant on this process may include: health, business, construction, manufacturing, retail trade, hospitality, and transportation ("Which Industries"). "Modern industries and services increasingly rely upon the acquisition, deployment and use of human expertise to add value in their operations. Where this expertise is not available locally, employers frequently search for it abroad." Over the years, the importance of importing skilled workers for specialized jobs in industries has grown, with more economically developed countries (MEDCs) relying increasingly on their education and experience for roles in their industries (Salt).

Brain-drain is a form of skilled labor migration in which skilled workers are taken from developing countries at a rate faster than they can be replaced. This lack of specialized personnel may result in damage to development prospects in LEDCs. Approximately ten percent of

tertiary-educated students have immigrated internationally, however, this number is larger in some countries, leading to true stagnation in development. Roughly forty percent of tertiary-educated adults from Turkey and Morocco, over thirty percent from Ghana, over half from the Caribbean, and over half with a secondary education from Nicaragua and El Salvador have immigrated to OECD countries to search for a better life for themselves ("Select Committee").

Despite having potential to harm LEDCs, skilled labor migration is ultimately a method to fill skill gaps in developed economies. It offers a way to improve skilled migrants' lives and may result in increased development for developing nations in the cases of remittances or return migration. Many Member States including Bangladesh, El Salvador, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Sri Lanka actively encourage foreign employment of their citizens, despite being LEDCs. Its impact on developing countries is, ultimately, determined by the country's capacity to handle the loss of skilled workers ("Select Committee").

This process may also have negative impacts on locals. In the United States, twenty-five percent of computer scientists and electronics engineers are immigrants, while only six percent of those working in law are immigrants. This disparity creates an unfair environment for natives wishing to go into fields with more immigrants present, even if those environments are not necessarily more exclusive. Furthermore, this competitive environment discourages students from pursuing careers in those fields, leaving the labor market susceptible to dramatic changes to immigrant policy (Ma).

Overall, skilled labor migration is essential to many modern industries; nonetheless, it has a range of potential consequences impacting both LEDCs and MEDCs. Policymakers must therefore consider its positive and negative impacts, thus ensuring sustainable outcomes for all Member States.

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