Working paper

Migration Skill Corridor Report

India-Austria

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Abstract

This working paper analyses the development of the India-Austria migration skill corridor (MSC), focusing on the legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, actors and processes that shape skilled mobility between both countries.

Based on 21 semi-structured interviews carried out in India and in Austria, the working paper investigates key dimensions of corridor development, including recruitment and matching, skills development, qualification recognition, migration and mobility procedures, and integration and retention.

The paper shows how the India-Austria migration skill corridor, which goes back to the migration of healthcare workers in the 1970s, has been re-emerging in recent years, driven by public and private recruitment initiatives that not only attract Indian professionals and students but also support their mobility process, facilitate skilling, qualification recognition, mobility as well as integration in an attempt to overcome structural gaps. The 2023 Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement - although it does not create new pathways - has created momentum for expanding cooperation in education and skills. A planned "pre-check register" will further facilitate the recognition of vocational qualifications obtained through pre-assessed training programmes.

This shows that the migration skill corridor, which was originally driven by public and private recruitment initiatives, is increasingly moving towards a more structured, and institutionalized system.

1 Introduction

The India-Austria corridor represents a re-emerging migration corridor, underpinned by a strong alignment between Austria's demand for skilled workers and India's supply of talent, and increasingly facilitated by public and private recruitment initiatives aimed to attract Indian professionals and students. While Austria has a strong demand for skilled labour, particularly in healthcare and STEM,[1] India represents one of the largest global reservoirs of young workers, which translates into substantial skill stocks across these sectors.[2] Yet, it is worth noting that what may appear as a national surplus of skilled workers masks significant regional disparities that shape labour market realities across the country.

Accordingly, skilled migration from India has been on the rise in recent years, with Indian nationals holding valid Red-White-Red (RWR) Cards - Austria's residence and work permit

[1] According to a survey carried out in April 2024 among 2.793 companies, the shortage of labour and skilled workers in Austria affected 82% of Austrian businesses. See: Dornmayr, H. and M. Riepl (2024). Unternehmensbefragung zum Arbeits- und Fachkräftebedarf/-mangel. Arbeitskräfteradar 2024. Nr. 220. ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET, Vienna, https://www.wko.at/oe/fachkraeftesicherung/fachkraefteradar.pdf

[2] In healthcare, India has around 2.47 million registered nurses and midwives and about 1.3 million doctors (MoHFW, 2023). In science and technology, approximately 9.85 million students are enrolled in STEM programmes, of which 4.13 million are in engineering and technology (MHRD, 2019). The construction sector employs nearly 13 percent of the national workforce, mostly as casual labour (World Bank, 2019).

for skilled professionals from non-EU countries - increasing nearly eightfold from 108 in 2015 to 822 in 2025.[3] The EU Blue Card is also relevant to the corridor, with Indians representing the largest group of Blue Card holders in Austria, despite their relatively small number (273).[4] The number of Indian students in Austria has also grown substantially, rising from 441 in the 2014/15 winter semester to 1,471 in 2024/25.[5]

This working paper examines the India-Austria migration skill corridor (MSC) as one of 14 migration skill corridors analysed under the Horizon Europe Link4Skills project, [6] looking into the legal, political and institutional frameworks, recruiting and matching mechanisms, skilling, recognition of qualifications, migration and mobility, integration and retention, the role of technologies, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

The paper draws on desk research as well as 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with public actors, private sector representatives, educational institutions, experts, and intermediaries by research partners in India and Austria in German, Hindi, and Malayalam language. This research tandem approach enabled the analysis of actors, practices, and governance arrangements across the corridor while accounting for their respective national contexts. Data collection was carried out between February 2025 and August 2025. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using Mayring's combined summarizing and structuring qualitative content analysis approach.[7]

The paper first introduces the legal, political, and institutional frameworks shaping the corridor, followed by an analysis of recruitment and matching approaches, skills development, qualification recognition, migration and mobility processes, and approaches to supporting integration and retention, as well as the role of technologies. The paper concludes with a reflection on the implementation of the corridor to date, and opportunities for strengthening future cooperation.

As this working paper and its companion papers, "Migration Skill Corridor Report Indonesia-Austria" and "Migration Skill Corridor Report India-Germany" address the same topic and both include Austria and India respectively, in their analysis, certain passages are shared between these papers.

[3] Bundesministerium für Inneres. (2024). Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsstatistik. [Settlement and residence statistics].
[4] Ibid.
[5] Statistics Austria. (2026). STATcube – Statistical Database of STATISTICS AUSTRIA, retrieved on 23.4.2026. https://www.statistik.at/datenbanken/statcube-statistische-datenbank
[6] The concept of the MSC was developed within the project as an analytical lens for examining skilled migration, whereas MSCs are understood as bi-directional, multi-level systems that connect countries of origin and destination through interconnected actors, institutions, rules, infrastructures, and expectations. - See Triandafyllidou, A., Shirazi, H., & Engbersen, G. (2024). Migration skill corridors: Concept paper on Migration Skill Corridors (Working paper 2/2024). Link4Skills Horizon Europe.
[7] Mayring, P. (2022), Qualitative Content Analysis: Basic Principles and Techniques. Weinheim: Beltz

2 Legal, political and institutional frameworks

2.1 The Austrian perspective

Similar to many European countries, Austria is grappling with a significant shortage of skilled labour, which affected 82% of Austrian businesses in 2024,[8] and 81 professions listed on the shortage occupation list.[9] Particularly affected are the STEM sector with a current shortfall of 40,000 STEM talents, which is going to increase to 100,000, according to projections of the Austrian Federation of Industries[10], as well as the healthcare sector, with an expected shortfall in nursing and care personnel from 2023 to 2030 is 51,000 full-time positions.[11] These shortages are caused by general demographic developments, along with sector-specific and regional factors.

To attract talent from non-EU countries, the Red-White-Red (RWR) Card was introduced in 2011 and has since undergone several reforms (see box 1). While it is widely regarded as a key instrument for facilitating the immigration of qualified workers from third countries, experts and practitioners have also pointed to challenges, such as complex approval criteria[12] and the card´s linkage to one specific employer, which can leave card holders vulnerable in case of workplace conflict.[13] Conversely, the fact that family members of skilled professionals are granted access to the labour market, is seen as a good practice.[14]

The EU Blue Card also plays a role in this corridor, although on a relatively small scale. The recast EU Blue Card Directive (EU) 2021/1883, transposed in Austria through amendments to the Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz and Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz effective October 2022, lowered the minimum contract duration to six months, reduced salary thresholds for shortage occupations, allowed professional experience to substitute for qualifications in listed ICT occupations, and expanded intra-EU mobility after 12 months.

In recent years, Austria has adopted a more proactive approach to international talent attraction.[15] Key measures include the establishment of 'Work in Austria' under the Austria Business Agency in 2019; the skilled labour initiative of the Austrian Federal Chamber of

[8] Dornmayr, H. and M. Riepl (2024). Unternehmensbefragung zum Arbeits- und Fachkräftebedarf/-mangel. Arbeitskräfteradar [Company Survey on Labour and Skilled Worker Needs and Shortages. Labour Market Radar] 2024. Nr. 220. ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET, Vienna, https://www.wko.at/oe/fachkraeftesicherung/fachkraefteradar.pdf

[9] Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Wirtschaft (BMAW). (2025). BGBl. II Nr. 421/2024, Fachkräfteverordnung 2025. [Federal Law Gazette II No. 421/2024, Skilled Workers Ordinance 2025] https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2024_II_421/BGBLA_2024_II_421.pdf

[10] Industriellenvereinigung. (n.d.). MINT: Schaffen wir die Nachwuchssicherung in Zukunftsberufen? [MINT: Can We Secure the Next Generation of Workers in Future-Oriented Professions?]. Retrieved July 16, 2025, from https://www.iv.at/-Dokumente-/iv-positionen/iv-positionen-April-2024/MINT--Schaffen-wir-die-Nachwuchssicherung-in-Zukunft.de.html

[11] Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz. (n.d.). Pflegepersonal. [Nursing Staff]. Retrieved July 16, 2025, from https://www.sozialministerium.gv.at/Themen/Pflege/Pflegepersonal.html

[12] L4S AT prac 09, p.11 & p. 17; 03; L4S AT prac 03, p. 1, Line 3 ff; Austrian Court of Audit. (2024). Rot–Weiß–Rot–Karte und Blaue Karte EU: Bericht des Rechnungshofes: Vol. Reihe BUND 2024/11. Rechnungshof Österreich. [Red-White-Red Card and EU Blue Card: Report of the Austrian Court of Audit: Vol. Series BUND 2024/11. Austrian Court of Audit]., https://www.rechnungshof.gv.at/rh/home/home/2024_11_RWR_Karte.pdf

[13] L4S AT expert 11, p. 4, Line 47 ff.

[14] Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024). EMN Study: Labour Migration in Times of Labour Shortages in Austria. In International Organization for Migration (IOM). https://www.emn.at/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/labour-migration-in-times-of-labour-shortages-en-april2025.pdf, p.12

[15] Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024). p.8

Commerce (WKÖ); the 2022 reform of the RWR Card to simplify access for qualified professionals;[16] bilateral agreements and MoUs with sending countries[17]; provincial talent attraction initiatives; the formation of an interministerial Strategy Committee for international skilled workers; and the Skills Mobility Partnership EAGLE with Egypt, set to begin in late 2025.

And indeed, the overall use of Red-White-Red (RWR) Cards and the EU Blue Card has grown since their introduction in 2011: By 2024, there were 12,138 valid RWR Cards, 129,029 valid RWR Plus Cards as well as 2,035 valid EU Blue cards.[18]

The current government programme 2025 - 2029 puts emphasis on skilled labour for the next five years, and it foresees the strategic development of labour migration to Austria, including the evaluation and further development of the Red-White-Red Card system and the digitalisation and acceleration of the application and processing procedure.[19]

Box 1: Austria's Red-White-Red and EU-Blue Card System Explained

The Red-White-Red Card serves as a combined residence and work permit, valid for 2 years and typically tied to a specific employer, unless the applicant is self-employed.[20] Family members may apply for the Red-White-Red Card Plus, which grants unrestricted access to the Austrian labour market.[21]

Non-EU graduates of Austrian universities can extend their residence permit for up to 12 months to seek employment or start a business. If these graduates receive a job offer matching their qualifications and meeting the minimum salary for local graduates, they can apply for a Red-White-Red Card.

The Red-White-Red Card in the following categories applies a points-based system, in which criteria such as qualifications, professional experience and language skills are assessed:

- Very Highly Qualified Workers;
- Skilled Workers in Shortage Occupations;
- Other Key Workers; and
- Start-up Founders.

The Red-White-Red Card in the following categories is not criteria-based:

- Graduates of Austrian universities who receive a job offer that corresponds to their level of education within twelve months after graduation

[16] Austria Business Agency. (n.d.) Gesetzesreform zur Rot-Weiß-Rot - Karte, https://www.workinaustria.com/ueber-uns/blog/gesetzesreform-zur-rot-weiss-rot-karte-co, accessed on 8.4.2024
[17] E.g. the Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement between India and Austria (2023), MoUs on the recruitment of skilled workers with the Philippines (2023) and Indonesia (2024), an MoU on migration and mobility between Kenya and Austria
[18] Republik Österreich. Bundesministerium für Inneres. (2024).
[19] Republik Österreich. (2025). Regierungsprogramm 2025-2029. https://www.bmb.gv.at/dam/jcr:95e2299d-dd9d-472b-8224-e16230058bea/regierungsprogramm_2025.pdf
[20] Austria Business Agency (n.d.).; Oesterreich.gv.at. "Rot-Weiß-Rot - Karte". [Red-White-Red Card]. https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/de/themen/menschen_aus_anderen_staaten/aufenthalt/3/2/2, accessed on 2.9.2025
[21] Ibid.
Ibid.

- Core workers - regular seasonal workers in tourism, agriculture and forestry, and
- Self-employed key workers with a high expected impact in terms of investment or job creation

For "other key workers," the Public Employment Service conducts a labour market test to ensure no suitable job-seekers in Austria are available for the role.

Non-EU graduates who completed their diploma, bachelor's, master's, or PhD in Austria can stay for 12 months to find employment. Once they received a job offer matching their qualifications and minimum salary, they can apply for the Red-White-Red Card for university graduates. [22]

After a minimum of two years, holders of the Red-White-Red Card become eligible to apply for the Red-White-Red Card Plus - provided they have been employed in Austria for at least 21 of the previous 24 months, have adequate accommodation, and can demonstrate sufficient means of support. The Red-White-Red Card Plus grants unrestricted access to the Austrian labour market. Permanent residence can be pursued after five years of continuous legal residence.[23]

The Red-White-Red Card Plus grants third-country nationals temporary residence and unrestricted access to the Austrian labour market, allowing both employed and self-employed work without being tied to a specific employer.[24]

Eligibility extends to:

- holders of a Red-White-Red Card, as well as holders of an EU Blue Card who have been employed in Austria for at least 21 of the previous 24 months in accordance with the conditions of their permit, and
- family members of Red-White-Red Card holders, EU Blue Card holders, residence permit holders, and certain holders of a Red-White-Red Card Plus.[25]

The EU Blue Card is a residence permit for highly skilled third-country nationals, offering access to the Austrian labour market under specific legal conditions. It may also be issued to individuals who have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection status in Austria.[26]

In addition to the RWR Card and EU Blue Card, which was introduced in the same year, Austria offers the Settlement Permit - "Researcher" for third-country nationals conducting research at certified institutions. For corporate mobility, the Intra-Corporate Transferees permit allows third-country nationals to work in Austria for over 90 days as managers, specialists, or trainees within a company group.[27]

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] BMSGPK, BM.I, BMEIA (n.d.). Leben und Arbeiten in Österreich. [Living and Working in Austria]. Retrieved July 21, 2025, from https://www.migration.gv.at; Austrian Court of Audit. (2024).

2.2 The Indian Perspective

While Austria seeks to strengthen its appeal to international talent, India is working to establish a labour emigration framework that reflects the evolving realities of emerging skills-based migration corridors with new destination regions, particularly Europe. India's international migration was historically governed by the Emigration Act of 1983 and heavily focused on navigating the migration of low-skilled or unskilled labour along the India-Gulf corridor. However, with a new emigration bill in works, India is shifting focus to include the new corridors the country has formed with key destination countries in North Americas and Europe. In October 2025, the Ministry of External Affairs published the draft Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2025 for public consultation, which is intended to replace the Emigration Act of 1983. Some of the important measures observed in the bill includes an Overseas Mobility and Welfare Council chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs to improve coordination between ministries, the accreditation of overseas placement agencies, Mobility Resource Centres offering information and pre-departure training, an integrated information system on overseas mobility, and a mechanism to oversee the implementation of international agreements on migration and mobility. Further, given the federal nature of governance in India, international migration is of importance not only to the center but the various state governments as well. There are numerous talent agreements and mobility partnerships signed by the state governments as well as the central government. Simultaneously in the governance structure, matters of migration and skilling in India at the central level are dealt with by several ministries, playing distinct but complementary roles and sometimes even overlapping (see section 2.3).

2.3 Relevant actors and their competencies

Table 1 below provides an overview of the institutional framework in Austria

Table 1 – Institutional framework in Austria		
Actor	**Type of actor**	**Description of competencies**
Public sector		
Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)	*Government body*	The BMWET chairs the interministerial Strategy Committee for international skilled workers that brings together relevant state departments and institutions, the provinces as well as social partners with the aim to, inter alia, implement a nation-wide strategy for the immigration of skilled professionals and coordinate recruitment activities abroad. It was put in place at the end of 2023.[28] An umbrella brand "Your Future Made in Austria" has been developed jointly by the BMWET, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, and the Austrian Business Agency, to position Austria as an attractive place to work and facilitate the attraction of international talent Department III/7 "Berufsausbildung, Fachkräfte" is, among other topics, in charge of international cooperation in the Field of Vocational Education and Training.
Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMASGPK)	*Government body*	The Ministry sets the strategic direction for labour market policy and plays a key role in defining labour market needs, reviewing the shortage occupations list, and adjusting criteria such as minimum wage and recognition standards. It is a member of the interministerial Strategy Committee for international skilled workers.
Federal Chancellery	*Government body*	The Austrian Federal Chancellery plays a cross-cutting and strategic role. It is responsible for overarching coordination of integration policy, including the pre-integration of migrants abroad and international cooperation on migration and integration. It is a member of the interministerial Strategy Committee for international skilled workers.
Federal Ministry of Education	*Government body*	The Ministry is a member of the interministerial Strategy Committee for international skilled workers. Department III/8 cooperates on bilateral agreements in the field of vocational education and training, such as the 2023 Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership with India or the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding on dual apprenticeship training with Indonesia.
The competent settlement authority ('Niederlassungsbehörden')	*Government body*	As the competent settlement authorities, the District Administration Offices/ City Administration Offices ('Bezirkshauptmannschaften' / 'Magistratsbehörden') play a central role in the practical implementation of residence and settlement law in Austria, including RWR Card procedures. They are the first point of contact for applicants and handle the administrative processing of the procedures. It forwards the

[28] Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft (2023). Bundesregierung schafft Strategieausschuss für internationale Fachkräfte. [Federal Government Establishes Strategic Committee for International Skilled Workers]. https://www.bmwet.gv.at/Presse/Archiv/Archiv-Pressemeldungen-BMAW/BMAW-Pressemeldungen-2023/Dezember-2023/Bundesregierung-schafft-Strategieausschuss-f%C3%BCr-internationale-Fachkr%C3%A4fte.html

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		applications to the Public Employment Service for an assessment of the special admission requirements of the RWR Card and labour market assessment.
Public Employment Service ('Arbeitsmarktservice – AMS')	*Government body*	The AMS is involved in the preparation of the annual shortage occupation list, which defines the professions for which third-country nationals are granted facilitated access to the Austrian labour market under the Red-White-Red Card. In the context of the Red-White-Red card procedure, it examines the special admission requirements and labour market assessment and communicates the results of its review to the competent settlement authority.
Austria Business Agency - ABA	*Government body*	The Austria Business Agency is a subsidiary of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism. Its primary mission is to attract international companies, skilled workers, and film productions to Austria through its divisions 'Invest in Austria', 'Work in Austria', and 'Film in Austria'. `Work in Austria` provides counselling on the official procedures and the recruitment of international skilled workers, provides information on the topic of living and working in Austria, and offers customise consultations. It offers a talent hub and matching events that aim to bring together employers and professionals looking for a job in Austria. Together with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber it has developed a guide that aims to facilitate first arrival and onboarding of newly recruited workers.
Austrian Integration Funds (ÖIF)	Government-affiliated foundation	The ÖIF integration service for skilled professionals supports foreign professionals with information, German language courses, and financial subsidies for the recognition of their qualifications (e.g., reimbursement of study-related costs up to €2,500). The ÖIF has also been organising an Expert Forum for the Integration of Qualified Immigrants and Key Workers since autumn 2023.
Austria's Agency for education and internationalisation (OEAD)	Public entity	The OEAD promotes the internationalisation of science and research, formal, non-formal and informal education.
Business representation and private sector		
The Federal Chamber of Commerce (Wirtschaftskammer – WKÖ)	Business representation body	The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich - WKO*) is the national representative body of Austria's businesses. It represents the interests of its members at national and international levels, provides advisory services, and supports businesses through training, legal consultation, and economic development programs. As a self-governing body under public law, the WKO plays a central role in Austria's social partnership model, collaborating with government and labour unions to shape economic and labour policies. Since 2022 it runs the **Skilled Workers Initiative** (*Internationale Fachkräfteoffensive*), with the aim to facilitate recruitment from the focus countries focus Albania, Brazil, Indonesia, Kosovo, Philippines, with a focus on 11 focus shortage occupations.
Recruitment agencies	Private sector	Since 2022, a range of recruitment agencies has become active in non-EU countries.
Private companies	Private sector	A range of private companies have initiated their own international recruitment initiatives

Academia, NGOs, private sector		
Universities	academia	To address under-enrolment, several universities have intensified efforts to attract students from non-EU countries, such as the University of Mining, Metallurgy and Materials Leoben.
Contact Points for Persons with Qualifications acquired abroad - AST	NGO	AST in the nine Austrian provinces offers counselling on the recognition and the assessment of qualifications acquired abroad.
Association for the Promotion of International Exchange for Apprentices, Young Professionals, and Trainers	NGO	The International Young Workers Exchange supports apprentices and training companies in organizing training-related internships abroad, particularly through the European Erasmus+ programme.
Provincial stakeholders		
Provincial bodies and initiatives supporting international recruitment (non-exhaustive list)	Public entities	- **In Upper Austria**, the OÖ Pflege- und BetreuungsManagement GmbH (Care and Support Management Ltd. of the Province of Upper Austria)[29] was founded in May 2025 with the aim to serve as a service unit for 15 social welfare associations in charge of the provision of care home placements and personal assistance services (e.g. mobile support services). It will, inter alia, support the international recruitment of care workers.[30] - **Come2Upper Austria**, run by the regional business agency Business Upper Austria, is a centralized service point to coordinate the recruitment and support of foreign professionals.[31] **In Carinthia**, the Fachkräfteagentur Kärnten (Skilled Workers Agency) was established as a dedicated regional body to support international recruitment, working in partnership with the private agency Trenkwalder. – for more information see: MPF (2024). Cultivating talent: Exploring effective talent attraction and retention practices in and beyond the EU. Brussels: ICMPD, https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/knowledge/resources/12-policy-briefs/198-study-cultivating-talent-exploring-effective-talent-attraction-and-retention-practices-in-and-beyond-the-eu , p. 29 ff
Provincial hospitals and healthcare networks	Public entities	- In some provinces, provincial hospitals are forming partnerships with countries of origin to attract healthcare personnel. For example, provincial hospitals in Vorarlberg are currently establishing collaborations with countries such as Tunisia, Colombia, and

[29] Pflege- und BetreuungsManagement GmbH des Landes Oberösterreich [Care and Nursing Management GmbH of the Province of Upper Austria]

[30] Amt der Oö. Landesregierung. (2025). Achtung Korrektur! LR Dörfel: Pflege- und BetreuungsManagement GmbH offiziell gegründet – Geschäftsführung nimmt Arbeit mit Mitte Februar auf. Amt der Oö. Landesregierung. [Correction: Provincial Councillor Dörfel: Care and Nursing Management GmbH Officially Established – Management to Begin Work in Mid-February. Office of the Upper Austrian Provincial Government]. https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTM_20250130_OTM0033/achtung-korrektur-lr-doerfel-pflege-und-betreuungsmanagement-gmbh-offiziell-gegruendet-geschaeftsfuehrung-nimmt-arbeit-mit-mitte-februar-auf

[31] Come2Upper Austria: your guide for Upper Austria; Till, I. (2024). Land OÖ hilft Fachkräfte finden und binden. [Upper Austria Helps Attract and Retain Skilled Workers]. Mein Bezirk. https://www.meinbezirk.at/oberoesterreich/c-wirtschaft/land-ooe-hilft-fachkraefte-finden-und-binden_a6678444,

		India.[32] The Vienna Healthcare Group is recruiting nurses from Jordan, Indonesia and other countries in the context of the initiative #Nurses4Vienna.
Counselling and support services for international professionals run by the provinces	Public entities	- Carinthia: Carinthian International Centre and welcome2villach - Lower Austria: Welcome to Lower Austria - Salzburg: Work In Salzburg, Welcome Centre - Styria: Club International – CINT - Tyrol: Welcome Service Tirol - Upper Austria: Come 2 Upper Austria - Vienna: Vienna Business Agency, Expat Centre - Vorarlberg: Expat V
International Organisations		
International Organisation for Migration - IOM	IO	IOM, with the support of ERSTE Foundation, the Federation of Austrian Industries and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, carried out a Feasibility Study on Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMP) in Austria. It organised the Dialogue Forum on Skills Mobility Partnerships, bringing together representatives of Austrian public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations. Resulting from this process, the launch of a SMP project EAGLE between Austria and Egypt in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Chancellery is planned for 2025. [33] The EAGLE project will be funded by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF). It features both a "home track" and an "away track" focused on skills development in metalworking for the transport sector. Participants in the "away track" will also receive language training as part of their preparation as well as integration and onboarding support.[34]
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	IO	ICMPD supports governments and institutions in formulating, refining, and implementing migration policies. It manages, inter alia, the EU-funded Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), which facilitates Talent Partnerships and labour mobility schemes between EU member states and partner countries. ICMPD, together with ILO and ICM is implementing the India-EU Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility (see section 1.3). ICMPD´s research unit advances knowledge on migration-related issues, including labour migration and talent attraction.
Source: "Rot-Weiß-Rot – Karte" für besonders Hochqualifizierte – Antrag		

[32] Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung. (2024). LR Rüscher: „Land unterstützt Fachkräftegewinnung im Sozial- und Pflegebereich“. [Provincial Councillor Rüscher: “The Province Supports the Recruitment of Skilled Workers in the Social and Care Sectors”] https://presse.vorarlberg.at/land/public/LR-R-scher-Land-unterst-tzt-Fachkr-ftegewinnung-im-Sozial-und-Pflegebereich

[33] Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024).

[34] 3rd Skills Mobility Partnership Dialogue Forum, organised by IOM Austria, Industriellenvereinigung, WKÖ, 23rd May 2025; Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024).

Table 2 below provides an overview of the Indian institutional framework

Category	Body	Description of Competencies
Government Body	MEA – OE & PGE Division	Regulates emigration of Indian workers under the Emigration Act, 1983; oversees emigration clearance and protection of emigrants. Sets the legal/process backbone for Indians taking up jobs in Austria (and other countries).
	Protector General of Emigrants (PGE)	Administers the Emigration Act and is assisted by POE field offices. PGE is the central authority for compliant overseas recruitment to Austria.
	Directorate General of Training (MSDE)	Apex national body for vocational training (ITIs, apprenticeship, standards, instructor training). Functions as the source pipeline for skilled workers; aligns training to overseas demand including German-speaking markets.
	DGT – Apprenticeship Training	Monitors Apprentices Act; outlines CAC, RDATs, state roles and builds work-readiness/experience for candidates heading to Austria.
	NSDC – Skill India International (IISC)	International centres (SIIC/IISC) link Indian talent with overseas employers; skilling + placement for global jobs. Can serve as a potential programmatic channel to mobilise talent for Austrian employers.
	National Medical Commission (NMC)	Regulates medical education/profession; maintains registers; ensures availability of high-quality professionals. Governance for doctors seeking recognition/mobility overseas.
	Indian Nursing Council (INC)	Credential baseline for nurses recruited to Austria. National regulator to establish uniform standards of training in nursing sector; NRTS works as a live register.
Business representation & private sector . (Austria-specific)	Licensed Recruiting Agents (India)	Recruiters must be registered under the Emigration Act; listings and compliance operate via eMigrate/PGE. Ensures you use authorised recruiters for Austria.
Academia / NGOs / private enablers	Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan (India)	Language provider- Official German cultural institute in India; German language courses/exams. Acts as a language pipeline (German) for Austrian employers (esp. healthcare/engineering).
State Specific stakeholders (India)	NORKA Roots – Kerala (incl. NIFL)	Kerala's NRI agency; authorised overseas recruiter; State-level talent prep & compliant placement NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages offers German/OET- Occupational English Test/IELTS - International English Language Testing System and mobility support.
	ODEPC – Kerala (state PSU recruiter)	India's first public-sector recruitment agency (1977); licensed by MEA; runs nursing & other overseas programs, plus German/Dutch training. Government recruiter with long European placement track record.

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	OMCL – Tamil Nadu (state PSU recruiter)	Government-owned overseas manpower corporation; recruiting agent for employment abroad. Additional state channel to source workers for Austria.
	PGRKAM – Punjab	State mission for employment/self-employment; runs job fairs/placement services. Punjab focus for talent outreach and mobilisation.
International organisations (in/for India)	IOM India (UN Migration)	IOM country office for migration management, protection and regular pathways. Support on ethical recruitment/pre-departure orientation etc.
	Austrian Embassy – New Delhi	Embassy information, consular hours/contacts; links to Austrian Cultural Forum.Diplomatic & consular touchpoint for visas, culture, education.
	Austrian Cultural Forum (ACF) – New Delhi	Cultural arm covering India & neighbours; events/scholarship info and Austria culture pages. People-to-people, education and culture links supporting the corridor.

2.4 Relevant cooperation frameworks between the EU and India

Cooperation between the European Union (EU) and India spans trade, investment, technology, and strategic areas, with the goal of strengthening bilateral ties and tackling global challenges. Bilateral cooperation agreements include the EU-India Framework Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation (1994), EU - India Strategic Partnership (2004) and its joint action plan, the EU - India Connectivity Partnership (2021), as well as negotiations on trade and investment agreements. The EU - India Trade and Technology Council (TTC), established in 2023, provides a broader framework linking technology cooperation with skills development and talent mobility. The ministerial meeting in early 2026 identified bridging the digital skills gap and promoting exchanges on digital talent as areas of cooperation[35]. Through the Global Gateway strategy, the EU and India are expanding cooperation across priority sectors such as urban development, green energy, digitalisation, and trade. The EU Talent Pool launched in June 2026 will match non-EU jobseekers with employers, and the European Legal Gateway Office pilot in India, launched in February 2026, will facilitate mobility of Indian ICT talent to the EU for work, education, and research, with an initial focus on ICT sector.[36]

In the area of migration and mobility, the European Commission and the Government of India signed the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM) in 2016. In support of its joint objectives, the India-EU Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility project was carried out (phase I: 2017-2022, phase II: 2023 – 2025), implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the India Centre for Migration (ICM)[37]. The project aimed to put into practice the goals of the EU-India Common Agenda for Migration by supporting better mobility and legal migration, addressing irregular migration, and strengthening the positive development impact of migration for both host countries and communities of origin. As part of the project, inter alia, a EU Blue Card checklist was developed, serving as a tool for highly qualified workers from India to work in a European Union Member State under the EU Blue Card scheme.

2.5 Relevant cooperation frameworks between Austria and India

This section examines relevant formal cooperation frameworks between India and Austria, leading up to the 2023 Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA) between both countries.

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[35] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2026, July 15). Joint statement on the third meeting of the India-EU Trade and Technology Council. https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents?dtl/41465

[36] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2025, November 12). 9th India-EU High Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility, New Delhi [Press release]. Retrieved January 23, 2026, from https://www.mea.gov.in/pressreleases.htm?dtl/40296/9th+IndiaEU+High+Level+Dialogue+for+Migration+and+Mobility+New+Delhi+November+12+2025

[37] International Centre for Migration Policy Development (n.d.) India-EU Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility. India-EU Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Project., https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/projects/india-eu-cooperation-and-dialogue-on-migration-and-mobility-phase-ii-india-eu-cdmm-phase-ii



Cooperation between India and Austria dates back to the 1950 foundational agreements, [38] which marked the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.[39]

In recent years, Austria´s high interest in tapping into the Indian growth market and India´s interest in Austrian technology manifest in a range of agreements and MoUs, including the 2005 MoU for Infrastructure Cooperation in the Health Sector, the 2007 Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the 2011 MoU on Road Infrastructure, the 2012 MoUs on Technology Cooperation in Shipping and Ports, and the 2020 MoU on Technology Cooperation in Road Infrastructure. In 2013, a Social Security Agreement was signed between Austria and India that allows for the mutual crediting of pension insurance contributions.

In 2023, a Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA) between India and Austria has been signed with the aim to deepen migration-related cooperation between both countries through a Comprehensive Partnership on Migration and Mobility. The primary focus of the MMPA is on improving the exchange of information about legal migration opportunities for skilled workers, students, researchers, their family members, and school pupils. Both Parties commit to promoting the safe, orderly, and regular mobility of qualified workers between the two countries, in line with their respective laws governing the entry, residence, and employment of foreign nationals. They also aim to support fair international mobility of qualified intra-corporate transferees - such as executives, specialists, and trainees - within the framework of applicable national and European Union legislation. The Parties also commit to exploring the provision of pre-integration services to facilitate family reunification, e.g. by expanding the range of German language courses offered in the Republic of India by entities like the Goethe Institute.

Another key area is cooperation in vocational education and training, especially through the exchange of information on national systems, regular political and technical consultations, joint

[39] A full list of cooperation agreements is available here: Embassy of India to Austria, M. and the H. p. (2025). India-Austria Bilateral Brief. https://eoivienna.gov.in/pages/ODQ%2C

projects in India focusing on dual training and future-oriented technologies, and the organization of conferences and study visits.

Both countries agreed to establish a reciprocal Working Holiday Programme, which is also reflected in a 2023 MoU on Joint Declaration on a Working Holiday Programme.[40]

To implement the agreement and establish an ongoing dialogue, a joint working group on migration and return issues has been set up that has convened for the first time in December 2023 in Vienna.[41]

Some Austrian practitioners, however, reported that the MMPA had so far limited impact on their recruitment efforts in India, [42] reflecting the fact that the agreement does not establish new migration pathways or facilitate the access to the Austrian labour market beyond the existing legal framework. [43] However, it gave momentum to cooperation frameworks and talent attraction initiatives, such as the cooperation framework agreement signed by TU Austria[44] and partner universities in India[45] in 2024, which subsequently also received funding from the Austrian Ministry of Science.[46]

[40] Embassy of India to Austria, M. and the H. p. (2025). India-Austria Bilateral Brief. https://eoivienna.gov.in/pages/ODQ%2C

[41] Bundesministerium für Europäische und Internationale Angelegenheiten (BMEIA). (2024). Parlamentarische Anfragebeantwortung 118148/AB vom 29.07.2024 zu 18744/J (XXVII. GP) zum Abkommen zwischen der österreichischen Bundesregierung und der Regierung der Republik Indien über eine Umfassende Partnerschaft für Migration und Mobilität. [Parliamentary Inquiry Response 118148/AB of 29 July 2024 concerning 18744/J (XXVII. GP) on the Agreement between the Austrian Federal Government and the Government of the Republic of India on a Comprehensive Partnership for Migration and Mobility]. https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVII/AB/13992

[42] L4S AT prac 13; L4S AT prac 09, p.32, Line 14 ff

[43] BMEIA (2022). Vortrag an den Ministerrat: Abkommen zwischen der Österreichischen Bundesregierung und der Regierung der Republik Indien über eine umfassende Partnerschaft für Migration und Mobilität: 42/14 [BMEIA: 2022-0.901.346]. [Submission to the Council of Ministers: Agreement between the Austrian Federal Government and the Government of the Republic of India on a Comprehensive Partnership for Migration and Mobility: 42/14 [BMEIA: 2022-0.901.346]. http://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:8c2e10aa-f89b-4b93-aa08-a4c99d82b340/42_14_mrv.pdf

[44] TU Austria is a university forum that brings together the three technical universities University of Mining, Metallurgy and Materials Leoben, the Technical University Vienna, and the Technical University Graz, to join forces in research, teaching, and higher education policy

[45] E.g. the IIT Bombay, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, and COEP Technological University

[46] L4S AT prac 16, p.8, Line 20 ff

2 Recruitment and matching practices

This section explores approaches to talent attraction, including public and private recruitment initiatives and efforts to attract students from India. It also examines unethical recruitment practices along the migration corridor and measures to promote responsible recruitment and strengthen the protection for migrant workers.

On the Austrian side of the corridor, the international talent attraction and recruitment landscape involves a diverse set of actors working across different levels. These include public bodies, private companies, hospitals, recruitment agencies, and provincial governments, many of which have set up their own recruitment structures, forged international partnerships, and even established dedicated regional bodies to recruit qualified professionals from abroad.[47] Austrian recruitment agencies are relatively new actors in the India-Austria corridor, as until 2022, they could operate in non-EU countries only with special approval from the Public Employment Service.[48] The Austria Business Agency "Work in Austria" supports international recruitment through its talent hub - a free online platform that connects international skilled workers and graduates with Austrian employers.[49] It provides counselling and support both to international skilled workers coming to Austria and to Austrian employers who wish to hire them.[50] Overall these private and public recruitment initiatives remain largely uncoordinated.[51]

In the context of private and provincial recruitment initiatives in the healthcare sector, Austrian recruiters often collaborate with Indian partners who are selected based on networks and / or historic ties. These partners often support the selection and recruitment of candidates and organise pre-departure language courses in India.[52] An initiative of the province of Burgenland, for example, builds on a partnership between the Dioceses of Eisenstadt and Kanjirapally that dates back to the early 1980s,[53] while an initiative of a private care home operator builds on a cooperation set up by a retired Indian nurse who had previously worked with the company.[54]

In addition to initiatives recruiting fully qualified professionals, universities are increasingly focusing on attracting high school graduates to address declining enrolment, as pointed out by a recruitment agency:

> *"And of course, demographics don't stop at the universities either. […] There will simply be fewer young people in Austria. And that naturally also has an impact on*

[47] Examples are the such as the Care and Support Management Ltd. of the Province of Upper Austria or the Skilled Workers Agency in Carinthia – see list of actors
[48] relevant clause in the Labour Market Promotion Act (former Art. 4 para. 8) was removed in 2022. Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024).
[49] Austria Business Agency, Work in Austria, https://www.workinaustria.com/unsere-services/services-fuer-fachkraefte/
[50] L4S pract AT 1, p.2, line 24 ff.
[51] L4S AT exp 04, p. 5, Line 18 ff.; L4S AT exp 11, p. 6, Line 37 ff.
[52] L4S AT prac 15, p. 4; L4S AT prac 05, Line 20 ff.
[53] L4S AT prac 15, p. 1; L4S AT exp 11, p. 7, Line 23 ff.; Katholische Kirche Österreich (14.3.2024) Burgenland: Abkommen über Pflegekräfte aus Indien unterzeichnet. [Burgenland: Agreement on Recruiting Nursing Staff from India Signed]. https://www.katholisch.at/aktuelles/147616/burgenland-abkommen-ueber-pflegekraefte-aus-indien-unterzeichnet
[54] L4S AT prac 05, Line 20 ff.

student enrollment numbers. We can already feel this in our conversations with universities." [55]

In the healthcare sector, for example, the University of Applied Sciences Carinthia (FH Kärnten) has launched a pilot project, where the FH Carinthia is filling free spaces in the nursing programmes with candidates from India.[56] 18 Indian high school graduates who have already acquired B2 German language proficiency level are scheduled to arrive in September to begin their studies to become qualified health and nursing professionals, which also involves practical training through internships. [57] For the duration of their studies, the students receive a scholarship:

"*It is a low-threshold yet focused entry point into the subject in Austria, where companies now have the opportunity to play a role in training future qualified professionals. On the other hand, it is of course exciting for the students, because alongside the more traditional theoretical education, they also gradually grow into the professional side of things."* [58]

For the attraction of Indian students, the University of Applied Sciences Carinthia cooperates with an Austrian recruitment agency, organizing pre-arrival language training in India and supporting candidates with travel arrangements and visa applications.[59]

In the STEM sector, the University of Mining, Metallurgy and Materials Leoben has launched a strategic partnership with India, which eventually evolved into a broader partnership between TU Austria - a university alliance comprising the three main Technical Universities in Austria - and up to 15 Indian Partner Universities, with the aim to further student recruitment from India and academic cooperation. The partnership, supported by funding from the Austrian Ministry of Science, aims to enhance academic cooperation and facilitate student recruitment from India. It allows for a targeted, structured approach to the recruitment of Indian students, based on clearly defined quotas per study programme, which is implemented in cooperation with the international service provider VFS Global.[60]

Many Indian graduates from Austrian universities eventually enter the Austrian labour market as skilled professionals, and they tend to stay in the country long-term[61]. Once they graduated, they are particularly sought after by Austrian employers - especially the more than 160 companies that operate in India - because of their facilitated access to the Red-White-Red Card,[62] their familiarity with the language and culture, [63] and their capability to serve as cultural bridges, as illustrated in the following quote:

[55] L4S AT prac 17, p. 8, line 33 ff.
[56] L4S AT prac 08, S. 7 line 31 ff.
[57] L4S AT prac 17, p. 8, line 33 ff.
[58] L4S AT prac 17, p. 9, line 5 ff.
[59] L4S AT prac 17, p. 10, line 24 ff.
[60] L4S AT prac 16, p.8, line 20 ff
[61] L4S AT prac 16, p.3, line 35 ff
[62] L4S AT prac 16, p.4, line 12 ff
[63] L4S AT prac 16, S.4, line 12 ff; L4S AT prac 8

> *"And then, of course, we realized […] that over 160 Austrian companies are already active in India, and they rely on us to produce graduates who can serve as the bridge between India and Austria in the business sector. Not only in engineering and language skills, but also with a cultural understanding of what's happening there. People who can translate these invisible nuances."* [64] [translation from German]

Such recruitment of university students from India is particularly attractive for Indian youth looking for multiple pathways to migrate abroad, as a degree obtained in Austria is directly recognised on the Austrian labour market. At the same time, it spares graduates two challenges that they would otherwise face, the recognition of qualifications acquired in India and the gap, frequently noted by Indian practitioners, between the skills of many graduates of Indian institutions and the industry standards expected in international recruitment (see section 3.2).

On the Indian side, a wide range of recruitment agencies is active. While many operate with integrity, some engage in unethical practices, largely due to the lack of regulatory oversight in the recruitment sector.[65] The challenges in regulating unethical recruitment practices by private players were noted by state recruitment agents. Private recruitment agencies in India have surged amid high unemployment, often unregulated, and posing severe risks to migrant laborers and students seeking overseas opportunities. In early 2025, Kerala police raided agencies in Thiruvananthapuram, exposing fake job contracts, tampered visas, and exorbitant fees for nonexistent positions, leaving victims in debt bondage[66]. Similarly, late 2024 saw Punjab and Haryana busts of networks sending villagers via perilous "kabootarbaazi" routes to the U.S., with over 20 agents arrested for human smuggling disguised as recruitment[67]. Workers face exploitation, deportation, or deadly journeys, while students encounter bogus visa schemes promising residency but delivering trafficking. These unregulated pathways thrive on desperation of migrants. India's overseas private recruitment is formally governed by the Emigration Act, 1983, the Emigration Rules, and the eMigrate system, which require recruiting agents to be registered, provide bank guarantees, follow documentation norms, and avoid sub-agents. In principle, these frameworks empower the state to regulate recruitment and penalise violations. In practice, however, government oversight is weak and uneven. The law applies narrowly to registered recruiting agents and ECR-category workers, while most migration is facilitated through informal, village-level intermediaries who operate outside regulation. Enforcement by Protectors of Emigrants is limited, with rare inspections or prosecutions, allowing unregistered agents to function with impunity and reducing the Act to a largely symbolic instrument. Moreover, the 1983 framework is outdated and poorly equipped to regulate digital recruitment, education-linked migration, and complex intermediary chains. Recent legal and policy developments seek to address these gaps. Most notably, the draft Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2025 would replace the registration of recruiting agents under the 1983 Act with an accreditation regime for overseas placement

[64] L4S AT prac 16, p.3, line 35 ff
[65] L4S AT prac 17, p. 1, line 7 ff.
[66] The Times of India. (2025). Crackdown on illegal recruitment agencies uncovers widespread fraud. The Times of India. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/crackdown-on-illegal-recruitment-agencies-uncovers-widespread-fraud/articleshow/119270217.cms
[67] New Lines Magazine. (2024). A network of agents in India is driving job scams and illegal migration. New Lines Magazine. https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/a-network-of-agents-in-india-is-driving-job-scams-and-illegal-migration/

agencies backed by higher financial penalties, and it contains a dedicated chapter on countering irregular emigration and human trafficking.

However, currently the increase in private recruitment and the projected ease of opting for private versus government agents has led to serious cases of misdirection, leading to extremely unpleasant migration outcomes. This was stressed by an officer at NORKA when talking of German nurse migration:

> *"They (Private recruiters) are giving a lot of negative publicity (to government-led programs). They are saying that it is lengthy. On the other hand, private people can provide quicker channels of travel to Germany. They are saying that they can take you in 3 months. But in reality, they can't. If they do, after reaching Germany, most of these nurses fall into some kind of trouble and even have to come back*."[68]

At the policy level, several measures have been taken to curb such practices. The Ministry of External Affairs publishes a list of unregistered recruiting agents on the eMigrate portal, which had grown to more than 3,000 entries by mid-2024, and forwards complaints against illegal agents to the state police for investigation and prosecution.[69] It also promotes regular migration channels through its awareness campaign "Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen" (Go Safe, Go Trained), launched in 2018, and through Pre-Departure Orientation Training. At the state level, the Government of Kerala launched Operation Shubhayatra in 2022, a joint initiative of NORKA Roots, the Kerala Police and the Protectors of Emigrants of the Ministry of External Affairs, which offers a helpline for complaints about illegal recruitment and visa fraud and set up units against human trafficking in all police districts.[70] In 2024, a dedicated task force was formed under the initiative to review investigations on a monthly basis, and the state's Law Department was asked to explore a legal framework for regulating agencies involved in student migration.[71]

On the Austrian side of the corridor, the recruitment initiatives that have been interviewed for this study have referenced self-defined ethical principles such as full transparency of employment terms, zero recruitment fees for candidates, and avoiding recruitment from countries listed under the WHO Global Code of Practice.[72] However, in the absence of generally valid standards, these self-defined principles may create a comparative disadvantage towards competitors with lower ethical standards, as described by an interview partner:

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[68] L4S IND prac 4

[69] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2024). https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2980278/1/AU2993_IFmRLL.pdf;

[70] HR Katha. (2022, July 20). Strict surveillance in Kerala to prevent illegal recruitment. HR Katha. https://www.hrkatha.com/news/strict-surveillance-in-kerala-to-prevent-illegal-recruitment/; Press Trust of India. (2024, July 9).

[71] Deccan Herald. (2024, October). Kerala government forms task force to combat illegal recruitment and visa fraud. Deccan Herald. https://www.deccanherald.com/india/kerala/kerala-government-forms-task-force-to-combat-illegal-recruitment-and-visa-fraud-3238440

[72] 09_L4S_transcript_AT prac 09, p.27, line 10 ff.; L4S_AT prac 05; Kärnten Standortmarketing. Fachkräfteagentur des Landes Kärnten - Internationale Mitarbeiter:innen suchen und finden. [Skilled Workers Agency of the Province of Carinthia – Finding and Recruiting International Employees] https://carinthia.com/de/fachkraefte/#pflegeberufe

> *"There needs to be a certification system requiring agencies to prove that the entire recruitment process was conducted ethically. And that funding programmes or tenders - which exist in some federal states - should be tied to such a certification. Only certified agencies should be allowed to participate in public tenders. […] Because what often happens in tenders? It often comes down to price. And when price becomes the main factor… what happens? They underbid. And where do they make up the money? From the candidates. And that's especially dangerous in this sector."* [73]

Discussions on the introduction of a certification system based on IRIS standards - the International Recruitment Integrity System developed by IOM - are currently underway in Austria, based on which recruiters and recruitment agencies can or cannot be recommended.[74] Furthermore, the Austrian system provides a range of safeguards against exploitation that apply to third country nationals as well as Austrians. For example, Austrian employment law standards - including collective agreements - apply to all employees in Austria, regardless of their nationality. As part of the Red-White-Red Card procedure, the Public Employment Service conducts background checks on companies for prior irregularities, providing an additional layer of protection.[75] However, the fact that the Red-White-Red Card is tied to one specific employer may create a certain level of dependency and present an obstacle to workers trying to claim their rights.[76]

This shows that on both sides of the corridor, there are efforts to promote ethical recruitment and tackle unethical recruitment practices, where they exist. Overall, India has become increasingly attractive for employers and recruiters as an origin country for both skilled professionals and students, which is reflected by a range of recruitment initiatives in the healthcare and STEM sectors.

3 Approaches to Skills Development

Skills development and the compatibility of qualifications acquired in India with the requirements of the Austrian labour market are examined with particular attention to the healthcare sector and medium-skilled occupations requiring vocational training. The analysis considers the extent to which the Indian education and training systems - particularly in the healthcare sector and in medium-skilled professions requiring vocational training - seek to align training standards with the competencies required in the context of international recruitment of talent, while also looking into skilling approaches of employer-led recruitment initiatives.

3.1 Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) plays an increasing role in the India-Austria migration corridor. So far, vocational qualifications, which in Austria are typically obtained through dual apprenticeship training, have not been easily comparable to Austrian standards.[77] This is due to the uniqueness of the Austrian dual vocational training system, which integrates school-based education with substantial, structured workplace-based training, making direct comparisons

[73] L4S AT prac 17, p. 5, line 33 ff.
[74] L4S AT prac 02, p. 12, Line 15 ff
[75] Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024).
[76] 11 L4S transcript AT expert 11, p. 4, Line 47 ff.; Hadj Abdou, L., & Ebner, P. (2024)
[77] L4S AT prac 2, p. 2, Z.12-27

with qualifications from more school-based systems difficult. At the same time, Indian vocational training courses have been designed primarily for domestic needs and therefore need to be revamped to fit international standards.[78]

The Indian education system, through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, is working to improve vocational training in India. [79] The NEP seeks to integrate vocational education into mainstream school and higher education, with the goal that at least half of all learners are exposed to vocational education by 2025, and it promotes the internationalisation of higher education.[80] Since 2018, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) has acted as the overarching regulator for vocational qualifications and awarding bodies, and in 2023 the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) was harmonised with the new National Credit Framework, which allows credits to be accumulated and transferred between vocational and academic education.[81] By 2025, more than 8,500 qualifications had been aligned with the NSQF.[82] At the international level, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and its subsidiary NSDC International seek to link Indian training with demand abroad, including through Skill India International Centres that are meant to deliver training in line with international standards and to support candidates with visa procedures and after placement.[83] However, a formal comparison of the NSQF with the European Qualifications Framework, which was already envisaged when the framework was introduced, has not been completed to date.

Some Austrian companies with branch offices in India had established dual apprenticeship training centers aligned with Austrian training standards in India. While these training centres are primarily designed to prepare candidates for the Indian labour market, they also equip them with the skills needed to meet Austrian occupational standards, enabling their migration to Austria. One example is the Austrian company ALPLA, a leading developer and producer of plastic packaging solutions, which has established an apprenticeship training center for CNC technicians and mechatronics technicians in Hyderabad, which follows Austrian training standards.[84] Currently, there are more than 150 branches of Austrian companies in India,[85] with a significant number active in the manufacturing sector.

Also the MMPA foresees cooperation on vocational education and training (VET), which could contribute to aligning training standards, and it provides for the exchange of information on

[78] L4S IND prac 5
[79] L4S IND prac 2
[80] Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
[81] Government of India. (2023). National Credit Framework (NCrF) [Gazette notification]. https://nielit.gov.in/sites/default/files/headquarter/pdf/20230606_NCrF_Gazette_Notification.pdf
[82] IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute. (2026). National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), 2013: Standardising skills for a future-ready workforce, citing the minutes of the 43rd meeting of the National Skills Qualification Committee (NCVET, 2025). https://www.impriindia.com/insights/policy-update/national-skills-qualifications-framework-nsqf-2013-standardising-skills-for-a-future-ready-workforce/
[83] Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. (2023). Reply to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1191. https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2971325/1/AU1191.pdf
[84] The Hans India. (2020). Dual education facility for diploma students. https://www.thehansindia.com/news/cities/hyderabad/hyderabad-dual-education-facility-for-diploma-students-643227; The Hindu Business Line. (2022). Austria's ALPLA group expands India operations; invests ₹70 cr in mould shop, dual education centre. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/austrias-alpla-group-expands-india-operations-invests-70-cr-in-mould-shop-dual-education-centre/article65627263.ece
[85] Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, P. D. (2025). Austria and India Reaffirm Partnership Based on Shared Interests and Values. https://cms.bmeia.gv.at/en/ministerium/presse/aktuelles/alle/2025/04/austria-and-india-reaffirm-partnership-based-on-shared-interests-and-values

national VET systems, joint projects in India focusing on dual training and future-oriented technologies, as well as the organisation of conferences and study visits.[86]

3.2 Skilling in the healthcare and STEM

Also in the healthcare sector, alignment between educational standards in India and Austria is an issue, as highlighted by an Indian practitioner:

> "*[…[this is part of a bigger challenge, ensuring alignment. Especially in India, we can see that there are numerous educational institutions and rising graduates, but they are not necessarily equipped to deal with the high industry standards required in international recruitment of talent*. "[87]

In Austria, the diploma programme for general nursing (DGKP) is offered at the tertiary level through universities of applied sciences. It typically lasts three years and combines theoretical education with extensive practical training. Graduates earn a Bachelor of Science in Health Studies and must register with the national health professions register to begin professional practice.[88]

In India, nursing education is offered through a diploma in General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), which takes three years, and a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Nursing, which takes four years, with curricula and minimum standards set by the Indian Nursing Council (INC). Graduates must register with the nursing council of their state before they can practise.[89] According to the INC, 4.6 million nursing personnel were registered in India at the end of 2025, a ratio of 2.6 per 1,000 population and thus still below the WHO benchmark of 3 per 1,000.[90] The regulatory framework is currently in transition: the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Act, 2023 provides for a National Nursing and Midwifery Commission that is to replace the INC and raise standards of nursing education and practice.[91]

National averages, however, conceal considerable regional disparities, which are particularly pronounced in nursing. Kerala, the state of origin of many of the Indian nurses recruited to Austria, including through the Burgenland initiative, recorded about 379,000 registered nurses and midwives in 2025 for a projected population of 36.2 million, a ratio several times higher

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[86] Seidler, V.; Schmid, K. (2025). International cooperation in dual education by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, 2013 - 2023. https://www.nau.ch/politik/international/osterreich-und-indonesien-vertiefen-wirtschaftliche-zusammenarbeit-66335524, p. 25; 7

[87] L4S IND prac 2

[88] Fachhochschule Gesundheitsberufe OÖ https://www.fh-gesundheitsberufe.at/bachelor-studiengang/gesundheits-und-krankenpflege, Zugriff 20.10.2025; Arbeiterkammer Oberösterreich https://ooe.arbeiterkammer.at/beratung/bildung/gesundheitsundsozialberufe/gesundheitsberufe/Diplomierte_Gesundheits-_und_Krankenpflege.html, Zugriff 20.10.2025

[89] Indian Nursing Council. (n.d.). Indian Nursing Council. https://www.indiannursingcouncil.org

[90] Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. (2026). Reply to Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 30, answered on 21 July 2026, as reported in The South First. (2026, July 24). South India leads India's nursing workforce as national ratio remains below WHO benchmark. The South First. https://thesouthfirst.com/health/south-india-leads-indias-nursing-workforce-as-national-ratio-remains-below-who-benchmark/

[91] PRS Legislative Research. (2023). The National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023. https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-national-nursing-and-midwifery-commission-bill-2023; Bar & Bench. (2026, August). Delhi High Court tells Centre to decide plea to set up National Nursing and Midwifery Commission. Bar & Bench. https://www.barandbench.com/news/delhi-high-court-tells-centre-to-decide-plea-to-set-up-national-nursing-and-midwifery-commission

than the national average, while much of northern and eastern India remains far below the WHO benchmark.

Nursing education in Kerala has developed in close connection with international migration. Since the onset of Gulf migration in the 1970s, nursing has been regarded as a pathway abroad, and a large, predominantly private training sector has emerged. Kerala's training system has consequently become oriented towards external labour markets as well as domestic demand. This is reflected in migration data: according to the Kerala Migration Survey 2023, about half of all women emigrants from Kerala work in nursing.[92] The state has also built a dedicated public infrastructure to support this migration. NORKA Roots and ODEPC act as licensed public recruitment agencies, and the NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages offers German, IELTS and OET training as well as pre-departure orientation programmes.[93] Together with the German Federal Employment Agency and GIZ, NORKA Roots runs the Triple Win programme for nurses, which now also includes a trainee track that allows school leavers from Kerala to complete their nursing training in Germany.[94]

In addition to these national and sub-national efforts to address differences in educational standards between the two countries on the Indian side of the corridor, several public and private recruitment initiatives incorporate skilling components that help bridge these gaps and facilitate the recognition of qualifications in Austria, at least for participants in these programmes. Some recruitment initiatives, for example, collaborate with Austrian universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen, FHs) to offer study programmes that are designed to support the recognition of qualifications of cohorts of recruits.[95] While this example illustrates how specific initiatives can help align candidates' skill levels with Austrian standards and prepare them for the full recognition of their qualifications, others intervene at an earlier stage by ensuring that students are educated in line with Austrian standards. One recruitment initiative, for example, collaborated with a nursing school in India, which follows a curriculum that is aligned with Austrian standards.[96]

Another approach is for Austrian training institutions to offer Indian high school graduates with German-language skills places in their diploma programmes, many of whom become available to the Austrian labour market upon graduation. The University of Applied Sciences Carinthia, for example, provides such opportunities in its nursing programmes,[97] while TU Austria actively seeks to attract STEM students from India.

3.2 Language training

Besides professional training, language training is also an important part of preparing Indian professionals for work and life in Austria, and pre-arrival language training is a key component in all recruitment initiatives targeting healthcare professionals that were studied. In doing so, different recruitment initiatives used different approaches, ranging from German language training delivered online or in person by Austrian language instructors, to pre-departure

[92] Rajan, S. I. (2024). Kerala Migration Survey 2023. International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD) and Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation. https://iimad.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/KMS-2023-Report.pdf
[93] NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages (NIFL). (n.d.). NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages. https://nifl.norkaroots.org/home/
[94] NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages (NIFL). (2026). NORKA Roots Triple Win trainee program 3rd edition: 20 nursing trainee vacancies in Germany. https://nifl.norkaroots.org/norka-roots-triple-win-trainee-program-3rd-edition-20-nursing-trainee-vacancies-in-germany/
[95] L4S AT pract 08; L4S AT pract 17
[96] L4S AT pract 15, p. 4
[97] L4S AT prac 17, p. 8, line 33 ff.

language training offered in collaboration with partners in India.[98] In all the investigated initiatives, the costs were covered by the employers.[99] In some cases, the candidates also receive a scholarship if they quit their jobs to fully focus on language learning. [100]

3.3 Synthesis

This section shows that while substantial differences in skilling and training standards remain between India and Austria, efforts are underway at both the national and sub-national levels to bridge these gaps. These include India´s efforts to align its education and training standards with international benchmarks, as well as efforts of several recruitment initiatives between India and Austria, through which prospective employers attempt to address differences in educational standards for their recruits through a range of different approaches. Also the MMPA foresees increased cooperation on vocational training and education.

4 Recognition of qualifications

A persistent challenge in the India - Austria skills corridor, like many of India's European corridors, is the recognition of vocational and technical qualifications. While the 2023 MMPA established a legal framework for cooperation on the movement of students and professionals, mutual recognition of skills remains largely unresolved. As an Indian officer observed, the MMPA "helps both countries manage migration in an organised way," yet its implementation now depends on formalising the involvement of private actors facilitating such movements, including those who can bridge education standards between the two systems. From the Indian side, NSDC International identified recognition as one of the most significant bottlenecks in expanding skilled mobility to Europe.

> "*One major issue is the lack of recognition of skills in these countries. If there is a smoother way of skill recognition, the potential of circular migration in Europe can be very attractive for Indian youth*."[101]

And indeed, the process to recognize qualifications acquired in non-EU countries in Austria can be lengthy, intransparent and cumbersome without institutional support, due to the requirement of detailed subject-to-subject comparisons and the division of responsibilities across Austria's federal system.

In Austria, the recognition of foreign qualifications for third-country nationals is required for regulated professions - for example for the health and social care professions.[102] There is neither a central law nor a central authority responsible for the recognition of qualifications. While the Recognition and Evaluation Act (*Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz – AuBG*) establishes fundamental procedures and minimum standards for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, the specific responsibilities and procedures are defined in profession-specific legislation or in the education laws of the federal provinces. In practice, this means that for training that was completed in a non-EU country, universities of applied sciences

[98] L4S AT pract 15, p. 4; L4S AT pract 15, p. 4
[99] L4S AT pract 08, p. 21, line 9 ff.; L4S AT pract 17
[100] L4S AT pract 17, p.13, line 30 ff.; L4S AT pract 09, p.27 Line 26 ff.
[101] L4S IND prac 5
[102] Leben und Arbeiten in Österreich. Living and Working in Austria. https://www.migration.gv.at/

(Fachhochschulen – FHs) in the relevant provinces are responsible for recognizing the qualifications of graduate nurses (DGKP). In the case of school-based training programmes, such as those for nursing assistants, the responsibility lies with the nine federal provinces.[103]

The competent authority conducts the recognition procedure and issues a formal decision, which may include compensatory / supplementary measures (*Ergänzungsmaßnahmen*).[104] For qualifications obtained in EU countries, only substantial differences need to be compensated for, whereas qualifications from third countries are subject to a detailed subject-by-subject comparison.[105] Due to the complexity of this detailed qualification recognition process, it can take anywhere from one to three years for individuals to have qualifications officially recognized, according to an expert.[106]

As one expert pointed out, the extent of required compensation measures continues to vary significantly in a system in which each case is reviewed individually, making the system inefficient and untransparent[107]:

> *"In Austria, universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) are responsible for the recognition of qualifications in nursing for individuals who obtained their diploma in a third country. These individuals must submit a recognition application directly to a university of applied sciences. The university prepares an expert assessment, conducts the recognition procedure, and issues a decision that may include compensatory measures. However, this also means that the same person with the same qualification could, in theory, receive a different decision depending on the university. Only one application is allowed, and the process is highly non-transparent - it's unclear where the chances are better or how the outcome will turn out."* [translated from German]. [108]

This variation between recognition practices in the respective provinces[109] is described as follows:

> "*There are federal provinces where actual recognition courses are offered. There are provinces where people are allowed to participate in regular classes. And there are provinces where everything is self-study, and you only show up for the exam. So, even that is handled differently everywhere. The costs also vary greatly, and the available funding varies just as much*." [translated from German][110]

This was confirmed by another practitioner who highlighted the need for standardisation in this field, since:

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] L4S AT prac 05, p. 16, line 37 ff.
[106] L4S AT prac 05, S. 6, Line 8
[107] L4S AT prac 05, p. 5, line 22 ff.
[108] L4S AT prac 05, S. 5, Line 6
[109] L4S AT prac 05, p. 4, Zeite 26 ff.; Austrian Federal Chancellery, & Austrian Integration Fund. (n.d.). Berufsanerkennung in Österreich. [Professional Qualification Recognition in Austria]. Retrieved July 29, 2025, from https://www.berufsanerkennung.at/de/; Bundesministerium für Frauen, Wissenschaft und Forschung (n.d.). Internationales Anerkennungswesen. [International Recognition of Professional Qualifications]. Retrieved July 29, 2025, from https://www.bmfwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/anerkennung/int_anerkennung.html
[110] L4S AT prac 05, S. 6, line 8

„*We could have standardized this a long time ago. If I know they're coming from the same school, in the same year, then the curriculum is identical and it would be possible to work with one template […] and yet in Austria, a hundred people end up working on the same thing.*" [translated from German] [111]

Furthermore, high costs can occur in the context of the recognition procedure, since all documents, including diplomas, diploma supplements, and in some cases entire curricula, must be translated and certified by a court-certified interpreter, while the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) reimburses costs of up to EUR 2,500, actual expenses often exceed this amount significantly.[112]

Due to the complexity of the qualification recognition process, it can take anywhere from one to three years for individuals to have qualifications officially recognized.[113]

To reduce the duration, different recruitment initiatives have implemented different measures to support the recognition of recruits' qualifications. In recent years, there has been a shift toward more organised recruitment efforts, in which recruiters cooperate with Austrian Universities of Applied Science to organise tailored supplementary courses (*Ergänzungskurse*) courses for the recognition of qualifications of groups of candidates from the same origin country. These courses are in some cases offered online and in some cases in person[114]. As a result, these organized cohorts are often able to complete the recognition process much quicker than individuals undergoing the process independently[115] and greatly facilitate the process, as one practitioner explained:

"If no cohort - meaning a study or program group - is organized, individuals are required to repeatedly travel to the university of applied sciences for just two hours of lectures, often from distant locations, before returning home and going to work. Logistically, this is simply not feasible for them." [translated from German] [116]

Although this approach of organising tailored supplementary courses for cohorts of recruits can significantly ease the recognition process, these initiatives remain uncoordinated, and while they do ease the recognition process for programme participants, they do not solve the underlying structural issue.

In the area of the recognition of vocational qualifications, the uniqueness of the DACH countries' dual vocational training systems poses challenges for international comparability of the concerned professions. This affects not only employers' ability to assess applicants' skills but also the evaluation of vocational qualifications within the Red-White-Red Card procedure, leading to an unpredictability of outcomes[117], as pointed out by a practitioner:

"*Well, I think the biggest challenge is: how can you even begin to compare an*

[111] L4S AT prac 08, S. 9 line 30 ff.
[112] L4S AT prac 05, p. 8, line 10 ff.
[113] L4S AT pract 05, S. 6, Line 8
[114] L4S AT pract 8; L4S AT pract 17, p. 17 Line 23 ff.
[115] L4S AT pract 05, S. 6, Line 8
[116] 08 L4S_transcript_AT pract 08, S. 9 Zeile 3 ff.
[117] L4S AT prac 09, p.12 line 15 ff; L4S AT prac 09, p.17, line 27 ff; L4S AT prac 09, p.11, line 8 ff, L4S AT prac 06, p.4, line 7 ff; 3rd Skills Mobility Partnership Dialogue Forum, organised by IOM Austria, Industriellenvereinigung, WKÖ, 23rd May 2025

apprenticeship, as we have it here in Austria, to anything abroad, right? That's just… difficult." [translated from German] [118]

In professions that do not require formal qualification recognition, standardized competency checks can help make individuals' skills visible and verifiable - assisting companies in assessing applicants' competencies while also supporting candidates in their self-assessment. The WKÖ is currently developing digital tests for competence assessments, focusing on the theoretical part of apprenticeship professions. Tests are currently available for wood, metal, electrical professions, as well as for retail and tourism-related occupations. Additional tests are under development.[119] The competency checks allow to test how a candidates´ competency level compares to the Austrian final apprenticeship examination at the theoretical level. Participants receive both their test results and a description of the areas where further training is needed. Tests are available in English.

Furthermore, building on the MMPA, a 2026 Letter of Intent on dual vocational training, skills development, and the recognition of vocational qualifications reflects the two countries´ intention to further strengthen and translate bilateral cooperation in these areas into practice. Among other measures, it envisages the establishment of a pre-check register to facilitate the recognition of vocational qualifications obtained through pre-assessed training programmes, pointing to the further development of the migration skill corridor.

5 Migration/Mobility

Since the MMPA does not create new pathways for migration between India and Austria, the Austrian Red-White-Red Card and the EU Blue Card are the main residence and work permits for non-EU nationals coming to work in Austria. Applications for a Red-White-Red Card or an EU Blue Card are submitted to the residence authority, which is responsible for reviewing public safety and security requirements. Applications can be filed either by the employer or by the professionals. Individuals residing abroad must submit the application in person through the embassies, while employers can submit the applications electronically or in person in Austria.[120] The application is then forwarded by the residence authority to the Public Employment Service (AMS), for an assessment of the labour market criteria.[121] The AMS determines whether the applicant possesses the necessary qualifications[122] and whether these qualifications are comparable to Austrian qualifications standards, in case of applications for Red-White-Red Cards for shortage occupations. It also verifies the authenticity and relevance of certificates, the correctness of salary classification, and whether there is a justifiable need for the worker from the employer's perspective.[123] In non-regulated professions - such as technical or skilled trades - the AMS's assessment of qualification comparability is sufficient for the Red-White-Red Card procedure. However, in regulated professions - such as medicine or nursing - the formal recognition of qualifications is required.[124] Once the evaluation is complete, the AMS issues an expert opinion ("Gutachten"), which is forwarded to the residence and

[118] L4S AT prac 09, p.12 line 15 ff
[119] 3rd SMP Dialogue Forum, 23.05.2025, online
[120] L4S AT pract 06, p.4, Line 14 ff
[121] L4S AT pract 06, p.2, Line 22 ff ; Austrian Court of Audit. (2024).
[122] L4S AT pract 06, p.2, Line 42 ff; Austrian Court of Audit. (2024).
[123] L4S AT pract 06, p.3, Line 13 ff
[124] L4S AT pract 05, p. 12, line 43 ff.

settlement authority. This authority then issues the Red-White-Red Card, provided all conditions are met and the necessary fees have been paid. Finally, the applicant may apply for a visa at the respective Austrian embassy in order to enter the country and collect the Red-White-Red Card in person.[125]

Under the Settlement and Residence Act, RWR and EU Blue Card decisions must be made within eight weeks. Although the Interior Ministry lacked full data, a 2022 Court of Audit analysis found that over half of cases met this deadline, while it was likely exceeded in more than 40%.[126]

Since this process can be rather complex, internationally recruited professionals are usually supported in the application process for the Red-White-Red Card and visa by their employers or by intermediary recruitment agencies.[127] An Austrian recruitment agency, for example, reported that it provides intensive support to international professionals during the Red-White-Red Card application process for shortage occupations. This includes preparing detailed competency comparisons, such as matching the exact number of hours completed in an Austrian apprenticeship with those completed in the applicant's country of origin.[128] The agency also consults legal experts when preparing communications with the authorities.[129]

Beyond these support measures in the framework of concrete initiatives, also the Austria Business Agency - Work in Austria offers free counselling and support in the procedure for obtaining a Red-White-Red Card or an EU Blue Card.[130]

6 Integration and retention

Austria provides a range of integration services to skilled professionals from non-EU countries, including language courses, counselling services as well as training programmes provided through the integration service for skilled professionals of the Austrian Integration Funds, as well as counselling and information on living and working in Austria, provided by the Austria Business Agency. In collaboration with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the ABA has developed a guide designed to facilitate the initial arrival and onboarding of newly recruited workers, as well as to improve their retention.[131]

Besides these services provided to all non-EU professionals coming to work in Austria, the interviewed recruitment initiatives have also provided services that facilitate the arrival and the integration of their recruits, including the social integration, housing, and practical support with everyday needs.[132] In some cases, the support provided was highly comprehensive, ranging

[125] L4S AT pract 06, p.4, Line 14 ff
[126] Austrian Court of Audit. (2024).
[127] L4S AT pract 08, p.4, Line 23 ff; L4S AT pract 15, p. 4; L4S AT pract 09; L4S AT prac 17, p.15, line 19ff.
[128] L4S AT pract 09, p.13, Line 12 ff
[129] L4S AT pract 09, p.12, Line 26 ff
[130] Austria Business Agency, Work in Austria, https://www.workinaustria.com/unsere-services/services-fuer-fachkraefte/
[131] Ibid.
[132] L4S AT pract 15, p. 4; L4S AT pract 08, p. 19, Line 34 ff.; L4S AT prac 17, p.4, line 4 ff.

from online workshops prior to arrival, to a welcome package and mentorship program upon arrival, and even integration workshops two years later. [133]

These measures were complemented by intercultural sensitization activities for existing teams.[134] According to one practitioner in the healthcare sector, hardly any tensions have been reported between the established staff and the new arrivals, which may be explained by the recognition of staff that new arrivals help reduce workloads in a sector already affected by labour shortages.[135]

On the Indian side, pre-departure orientation is offered by both the central government and the states. Since 2017, the Ministry of External Affairs has offered Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT), which informs prospective migrants about living and working conditions in destination countries, emigration rules and welfare schemes, and which was delivered at 32 centres across the country by 2022. The programme is, however, mainly geared towards workers bound for the Gulf region and South East Asia. For European destinations, orientation is largely provided by state agencies and by the recruitment programmes themselves: the NORKA Institute of Foreign Languages in Kerala combines language training with pre-departure orientation programmes.

This shows that a range of public and private initiatives are in place to support the integration and retention of non-EU professionals in Austria. While public institutions provide broader support frameworks, employers recruiting cohorts of Indian professionals provide workplace-based measures and integration initiatives.

7 Conclusion

Although the 2023 India-Austria Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA) has not created new pathways in the India-Austria migration skill corridor, it has created institutional momentum and political legitimacy for expanding cooperation in education and skills. It catalysed deeper engagement between universities, private intermediaries, and government agencies. Concrete partnerships, such as the student attraction initiative of TU Austria in cooperation with Indian universities and VFS Global have gained momentum through the MMPA and support its practical implementation.

Yet, the corridor remains strongly shaped by diverse public and private recruitment initiatives, which support their recruits in areas such as skilling, qualification recognition, applications for visa and permits, as well as integration. However, these initiatives remain largely uncoordinated, leaving significant potential for greater synergies and collaboration.

Simultaneously, the growing presence of unregulated private intermediaries in India has created risks of fraud and misinformation, prompting the emergence of public - private models to restore transparency through digital verification and standardised processes.

[133] L4S AT pract 08, Line 28 ff.
[134] L4S AT pract 08, Line 28 ff.
[135] L4S AT pract 08, p. 23 Line 29 ff.; L4S AT pract 15, p. 5

Despite these developments, Austria faces regional competition from destinations such as Germany, which offer larger labour markets, clearer pathways (G2G programs), and stronger global visibility. Structural challenges such as qualification mismatches, language requirements and limited awareness further constrain Austria's outreach to Indian talent. Nevertheless, the corridor is gradually transforming migration governance, moving from fragmented, agent-led recruitment to a more structured, digitised, and institutionally managed system.