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## European Commission proposal for a new EU Talent Pool

**IRU Position on the European Commission proposal for the establishment of a new EU Talent Pool.**

### I. DRAFT IRU POSITION

The growing shortage of professional drivers has become a real threat to the EU's mobility, economy and supply chains. Currently, 600,000 professional drivers are missing across the EU, projected to reach 1 million in 2026 if no significant action is taken. Due to the growing chasm between professionals entering and leaving the profession, less than 5% of drivers are under 25 years old, the ever-increasing shortage of drivers cannot be filled by local talent pools alone.

The [EU Talent Pool](#) proposes a tool to facilitate the matching process between EU employers' vacancies and third-country jobseekers for shortages occupations. IRU makes several recommendations essential for improving the European Commission's (EC's) proposal and meeting these objectives.

IRU specifically calls for the following:

- Select road transport as a priority sector to test the Talent Pool IT platform.
- Define the scope of “participating employers” to ensure compliance and fair market competition within the EU.
- Clarify the way to demonstrate compliance with the “preference for EU citizens” principle.
- Clarify the process for EU employers to register and submit their vacancies on the EU Talent Pool IT platform, based on national best practices.
- Categorise the IT platform by sector to help employers identify necessary jobseekers' skills and certifications.
- Increase the number of social partners' representatives in the Steering Group, particularly for the shortage sectors listed.
- Providing tailored information, additional support, post-selection assistance, and follow-up to registered third-country jobseekers and EU employers.
- Providing targeted, structured and multilingual information to third-country jobseekers.
- Providing clear information to registered EU employers on their rights and obligations, namely on social security, active labour market measures, taxation, work contract issues, pension entitlements and health insurance.
- Clearly listing the National EU Talent Partnership programmes that cover the training of third-country professional drivers required to align with EU standards.
- Developing a harmonised and transparent EU framework for recognising third-country drivers' certifications in line with EU standards.

- Adequately flagging beneficiaries of professional driver training recognised by the EU on the EU Talent Pool IT platform.
- Digitalising and reducing the number of visa application documents to foster transparency and security.
- Providing yearly reports to the Steering Committee on cases brought forward via redress mechanisms or unfair contracting.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

For over a decade, professional driver shortages have become a chronic problem across Europe, with the shortage expected to further increase in the years to come. According to IRU's industry survey, about 500,000 professional driver positions are currently unfilled in the EU, with above 1 million positions expected to be unfilled by 2026. The growing shortage of professional drivers has become a real threat to the EU's mobility, economy and supply chains.

Today, with less than 5% of professional drivers being under the age of 25, while 30% of drivers are retiring every year, the EU's driver talent pool alone is not enough to fill unfilled professional driving position. Ensuring the recognition of third-country professional skills and qualifications and their employment in the EU has therefore become more crucial than ever. The proposal to introduce an EU Talent Pool is an important opportunity to address shortage occupations across the EU.

### **1. Focus on shortage occupations**

IRU warmly supports the inclusion of professional bus and truck drivers, mechanics, and repairers as shortage professions, as proposed by the EC. Given the urgency of driver shortages across the sector and the growing chasm between professionals leaving and entering the sector, the shortage cannot be filled by local talent pools alone. The road transport industry should be selected as a priority sector to test the EU Talent Pool IT Platform to support the creation of an EU harmonised framework for the entry and employment of third-country professional drivers.

#### **IRU calls for:**

- Selecting road transport as a priority sector to test the Talent Pool IT platform.

### **2. Scope of stakeholder participation**

The EU Talent Pool proposal aims to match registered EU employers' shortage vacancies and third-country jobseekers. IRU welcomes the proposed accessibility of the platform to undertakings of all sizes. It should be noted that the commercial road passenger and goods transport industry consists mainly of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), 85%, many of which are even micro enterprises. To ensure a competitive level playing field among EU employers for different sectors, further clarification is needed on the conditions for SMEs, compliance with EU social regulations and the scope of employers participating in the EU Talent Pool.

In addition, while the EC proposal introduces the principle of "preference for EU citizens", it does not specify the requirements to comply with this principle. Further clarification on the compliance conditions is required. EU employers registered on the EU Talent Pool and having successfully IT platform should be able to add, modify and withdraw job offers.

#### **IRU calls for:**

- Defining the scope of "participating employers" to ensure compliance and fair market competition within the EU.
- Clarifying the way to demonstrate compliance with the "preference for EU citizens" principle.

- Ensuring EU employers registered on the IT platform are able to add, modify and withdraw job offers at any time.

### **3. Participation to the EU Talent Pool**

The EC proposal provides the opportunity for select EU employers to join the Talent Pool and submit their vacancies. To ensure higher levels of transparency, further clarifications on this process are needed, including by specifying that help can be sought through the National Contact Points. In addition, the IT platform should be divided by sector to help employers identify jobseekers' skills and qualifications, particularly for professions with mandatory certifications, such as professional drivers in road passenger and goods transport.

To avoid duplicate costs and administrative procedures, technical interoperability between national systems and the EU Talent Pool IT platform is essential.

#### **IRU calls for:**

- Clarifying the process for EU employers to register and submit their vacancies on the EU Talent Pool IT platform, based on national best practice.
- Categorising the IT platform by sector to help employers identify necessary jobseekers' skills and certifications.
- Ensuring interoperability between national systems and the EU Talent Pool IT platform.

### **4. EU Talent Pool Steering Group**

The EC proposal introduces an EU Talent Pool Steering Group for participating Member States to exchange, plan, coordinate and monitor activities. While IRU welcomes the inclusion of social partners in the Steering Group, it is essential to ensure the participation of social partners of different fields, particularly for shortage sectors listed in the Annex.

The number of social partner representatives should be increased to ensure the involvement of relevant social partners in the Steering Group to be able to address good practices and potential shortcomings of the EU Talent Pool.

#### **IRU calls for:**

- Increasing the number of social partners' representatives in the Steering Group, particularly for the shortage sectors listed.

### **5. EU Talent Pool National Contact Points**

The EC introduced a dedicated entity to implement the EU Talent Pool and aid registered EU employers and third-country jobseekers upon request for participating Member States. While IRU welcomes the creation of a dedicated entity, the role and responsibilities of National Contact Point should be clearly defined in the Directive. This is necessary to ensure the homogenous and adequate support of third-country jobseekers and EU employers across participating Member States.

#### **IRU calls for:**

- Defining a clear set of responsibilities and performance indicators for National Contact Points onto which Member States may add on.
- Upon request, National Contact Points should provide personalised assistance to registered EU employers and third-country jobseekers.

### **6. Provision of information**

IRU welcomes the EC proposal for National Contact Points to provide information on national immigration, employment and the recognition of qualifications. However, the value of this information provided to registered third-country jobseekers and EU

employers depends on its tailored nature. Currently, the lack of access to information on qualifications recognition, but also burdensome administrative processes, translation requirements, and lengthy processing times makes it difficult to attract and evaluate third-country talent.

Information provided to third-country job seekers must be targeted, structured and available in different languages. In addition, EU employers should also benefit from tailored and targeted information on their rights and obligations, namely on social security, active labour market measures, taxation, issues relating to work contracts, pension entitlements, and health insurance.

**IRU calls for:**

- Providing tailored information, additional support, post-selection assistance, and follow-up to registered third-country jobseekers and EU employers.
- Providing targeted, structured and multilingual information to third-country jobseekers.
- Providing clear information to registered EU employers on their rights and obligations, namely on social security, active labour market measures, taxation, work contract issues, pension entitlements and health insurance.

**7. Recognition of qualifications and skills**

The EU Talent Pool proposal touches upon the recognition of third-country skills and qualification, by mentioning the possibility for registered third-country jobseekers to benefit from Talent Partnership programmes in participating Member States. Member States Talent Partnership programmes covering the training of third-country drivers' knowledge and skills gaps should be clearly listed in the EU Talent Pool and third-country beneficiaries from these trainings should be adequately flagged. A template should be developed to better identify third-country jobseekers' skills and qualifications obtained in a way that EU employers can easily understand and in line with bilateral agreements between Member States' employment services and third countries.

Whilst the EC highlights existing bilateral procedures, it lacks the foundations to work towards the development of an EU framework to recognise third-country professionals' qualifications, notably for professions requiring mandatory training and certifications. For instance, professional drivers are required to obtain and be issued an EU Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) by an EU Member State to be eligible to work for an EU-based transport company. Skills recognition should take into account aspects specific to both goods and passenger transport. Professional training requirements and recognition frameworks for third-country jobseekers' should be further elaborated in a harmonised way between Member States.

Long-standing initiatives and tools, such as the European Conference of Ministries of Transport (ECMT) Quality Charter as well as industry practices, should be used to support the recognition of third-country skills and qualifications. Ultimately, a harmonised and transparent EU framework to recognise third-country drivers' qualifications and certifications should be developed to ensure the safety and quality of third-country professional drivers.

**IRU calls for:**

- Adequately flagging beneficiaries of professional driver training recognised by the EU on the EU Talent Pool IT platform.
- Clearly listing the National EU Talent Partnership programmes that cover the training of third-country professional drivers required to align with EU standards.
- Developing a template clearly presenting third-country jobseekers' skills and qualifications to EU employers.
- Developing a harmonised and transparent EU framework for recognising third-country drivers' certifications in line with EU standards.

- Using private and public initiatives, such as the ECMT Quality Charter, to help recognise third-country skills and certifications.

## **8. Accelerated immigration procedures**

IRU supports the EC's proposal to introduce accelerated legal immigration procedures for listed shortage occupations. Third-country professionals are currently facing important challenges to obtain EU visas due to different procedures, extensive documentation requirements, and slow processes that can last up to a year.

Therefore, legal migration procedures for shortage occupations should be streamlined and admission conditions and rights for third-country nationals in the EU should be harmonised. The number of visa application documents should be reduced, and visa processes should be digitalised, to foster transparency and security while also reducing costly administrative barriers.

EC-funded pilot projects should be launched with voluntary EU Member States to create a single platform for third-country jobseekers to apply for visa, work residence permits, and for the recognition of their national qualifications.

### **IRU calls for:**

- Streamlining and harmonising EU migration procedures and admission conditions for listed shortage occupations.
- Digitalising and reducing the number of visa application documents to foster transparency and security.
- Supporting the launch of national single platforms for visa applications, work residence permits, and possibly recognising third-country qualifications.

## **9. Redress mechanisms**

IRU welcomes the introduction of redress mechanisms to ensure the adequate protection of third-country jobseekers. To both ensure a harmonised protection of third-country jobseekers and fair competition among EU participating entities, compliance with EU and national structures and regulations should be ensured. Additional conditions for employers' participation in the EU Talent Pool should be in line with national job placement and platforms provisions.

To foster protection of third-country jobseekers, the EC should provide yearly reports to the EU Talent Pool Steering Committee on cases brought forward via redress mechanisms and/or unfair contracting with proposals on how to address such issues.

### **IRU calls for:**

- Ensuring adequate and harmonised protection for third-country jobseekers by following national and EU regulations.
- Ensuring conditions for employers to participate in the EU Talent Pool are in line with provisions of national job placement platforms.
- Providing yearly reports to the Steering Committee on cases brought forward via redress mechanisms or unfair contracting.

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