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New EMN-OECD joint inform on drivers and policies to retain global talent

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The latest EMN-OECD joint inform examines how EMN Member and Observer Countries approach the retention of global talent, covering the factors that support or hinder retention and the policies and practices introduced to support longer-term stay.

Overview

Drawing on contributions from 25 EMN National Contact Points, comprising 23 EMN Member Countries, Serbia and Ukraine, the 2026 EMN-OECD inform: 'Staying or moving on? Drivers and policies to retain global talent' provides a comparative overview of policies and strategies used at the national level and identifies common policy approaches, challenges and good practices to retaining global talent. In the inform, 'global talent' refers to skilled third-country nationals whose knowledge, qualifications or entrepreneurial potential contribute to addressing labour market needs and strengthening innovation and competitiveness. This includes international students and graduates, researchers, skilled workers, entrepreneurs and start-up founders.

National approaches to talent retention

Retaining global talent is a key policy objective across EMN Member and Observer Countries. Most countries address talent retention through broader policies on migration, the labour market, education, innovation or economic development.

International students and graduates are among the groups most frequently prioritised (especially STEM, ICT and healthcare professionals), and priority tends to be higher when these groups meet labour shortages or support innovation and competitiveness. Responsibility for talent retention often spans several public authorities, increasing variation in data sources and indicators and often limiting cross-country comparability.

What hinders retention?

Administrative barriers are the most reported obstacle to retention, alongside limited career development opportunities and international competition for talent. Amongst the most impacting factors, EMN Member Countries also list barriers to social integration, family reunification and living conditions (including housing costs).

Policies and practices supporting retention

Employment opportunities, career progression and clear migration pathways are among the main factors supporting retention. Family support, integration measures and quality of life also play an important role in decisions to stay.

Policy measures commonly focus on facilitating transitions from study or research to employment and providing pathways towards longer-term residence. This includes the EU Blue Card pathways, which facilitate the retention of highly qualified third-country nationals by providing greater residence stability, easing access to highly qualified employment and supporting family integration. Measures to support the integration of accompanying family into the host country have been identified to boost retention. Another approach focuses on

entrepreneurship, investment and participation in innovation ecosystems; however, these schemes are also working for attracting talents. The wider innovation ecosystem is also used to support retention through investments incentives, research and innovation fundings, incubation and acceleration programmes that support individual start-ups or business.

For the full comparative analysis and findings, the complete 2026 EMN-OECD inform: Staying or moving on? Drivers and policies to retain global talent is available here [LINK].