

**¼ of countries see at least one in five of their most highly skilled emigrate**

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report on migration and displacement, released today by UNESCO, calculates the extent of brain drain around the world, showing that a quarter of countries lose at least one in five of their highly skilled people to emigration. For some countries, especially in the Caribbean, skilled emigration rates are even higher, rising to 71% in Grenada and 78% in Guyana.

An example of such brain drain is teacher migration: 8% of teachers in the United States were born abroad. Zimbabwe's education system was seriously affected when 35,000 teachers left Zimbabwe for Botswana, South Africa and the United Kingdom during the crisis years in the 2000s. Such emigration can cause teachers shortages in sending countries, with hard-to-replace mathematics, physics, science and computer science teachers the most prone to move abroad.

Manos Antoninis, Director of the GEM Report, said: *"Richer countries must respect that their recruitment drives of teachers and other skilled professionals can inflict a heavy loss of talent on poorer countries, and carefully consider the ramifications of their policies."*

Contrary to popular wisdom, in most high income receiving countries, as a result of migrants being more talented and driven and countries applying selective immigration policies, immigrants tend to be more educated than natives. However, entitled *Building bridges, not walls*, the Report warns of the need for agreements within countries that recognize qualifications that migrants bring with them, to avoid wasting their potential. Currently, less than one quarter of immigrants globally are covered by an international recognition agreement.

The Report reveals the extent to which this wastes potential: only 30% of those with tertiary degrees gained outside Europe and Northern America work in high-skill occupations. Less than 15% reported their level of education matched their jobs, compared with nearly 75% among natives. Across all OECD countries, over one-third of immigrants with tertiary are overqualified for their jobs, compared with one-quarter of natives.

Foreign-born workers in the United States take 20 years or more to reach parity in earnings with natives in jobs unrelated to science, engineering, technology and mathematics. Forgone earnings of underemployed immigrant college graduates in the country are estimated to represent US\$10.2 billion in lost tax revenues annually.

Antoninis continues: *"Failure to recognize qualifications and skills wastes so much potential; sending countries miss out on remittances and receiving countries miss on tax revenue. Simpler, cheaper and more flexible mechanisms are needed to recognize the qualifications and skills of those on the move. This would also give them more incentives to develop their skills further"*.

But the Report points out that skilled emigration is also increasingly seen as having more positive effects than previously thought. Remittances can benefit sending economies. And the very prospect of skilled emigration to prosperous regions up to a certain degree also spurs education investment in sending countries.

The 2019 GEM Report calls on countries to follow up on Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration commitments regarding mutual qualification recognition, and to conclude negotiations and take up responsibilities under the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications for adoption in 2019.

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Education systems also need to adjust to harness the skills of return migrants. Assessment agencies, licensing bodies and academic institutions should harmonize requirements and procedures at the bilateral, regional and global levels, working with governments and regional and international organizations. Common degree standards, quality assurance mechanisms and academic exchange programmes can support qualification recognition.

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### Notes to editors

*Visit the [#EducationOnTheMove campaign](#) page to see the stories of people on the move around the world in real time, showing their challenges, and successes in accessing an inclusive education.*

*Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials.*

The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report examines the education impact of migration and displacement across all population movements: within and across borders, voluntary and forced, for employment and education. It also reviews progress on education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In view of increasing diversity, the report analyses how education can build inclusive societies and help people move beyond tolerance and learn to live together. Education provided equally builds bridges; unequal provision raises walls between migrants and refugees and their host communities.

Two new global compacts on migrants and refugees recognize education's role and set objectives aligned with the global commitment to leave no one behind. This report is a vital toolkit for these compacts. It covers policy issues that address seasonal migrants, rural school consolidation, intercultural curricula, refugee inclusion in national education systems and elimination of segregation, qualifications recognition, targeting of school funding, more effective humanitarian education aid and teacher preparedness for diverse classrooms in emergency, protracted and "new normal" contexts.

The report calls on countries to see education as a tool to manage migration and displacement and an opportunity for those needing one.