



European
University
Institute

ROBERT
SCHUMAN
CENTRE FOR
ADVANCED
STUDIES



MIGRATION
POLICY CENTRE

Labour Market Realism and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees

Martin Ruhs

martin.ruhs@eui.eu





Central question: how to create legal labour migration pathways

- Large share of “irregular migration” from Africa to Europe is motivated, at least in part, by economic reasons
- Irregular migration and illegal employment can have adverse consequences for migrants and others; also political imperatives of “control”
- Hard to incentivise African governments to cooperate without “legal migration offer”



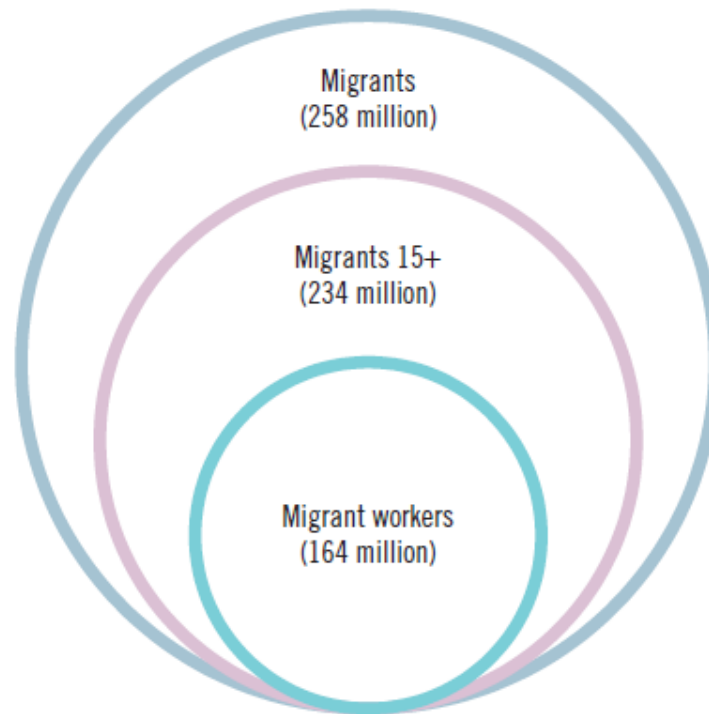
Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees

- new UN agreements made in 2018, to promote more effective int. cooperation on international migration and the protection of refugees
- not legally binding
- lay out goals and policy commitments that governments are urged to embrace





Global estimates of the stock of international migrants and migrant workers, 2017



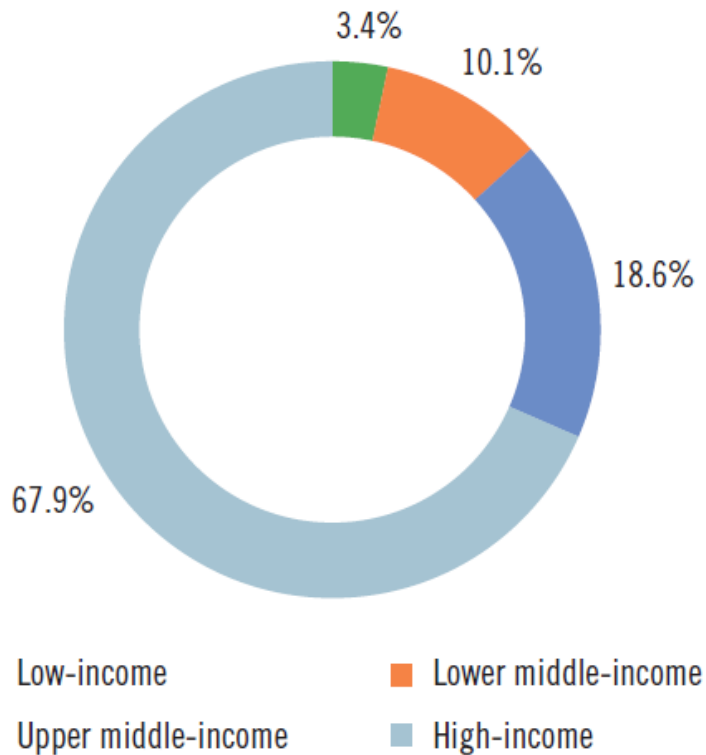
Among migrant workers, 96 million are men and 68 million are women

Source:
ILO 2018





Migrant workers, by income level of countries, 2017



Source:
ILO 2018

Migrant workers are geographically concentrated





GCM Recommendations on labour migration

- GCM #5: develop pathways for regular migration that reflect “demographic and global labour market realities” and implement labour mobility schemes for “temporary, seasonal, circular, and fast-track programmes in areas of labour shortages”; develop model labour mobility agreements by sector, and admitting migrant workers at all skill levels



GCM Recommendations on labour migration

- GCM #5: migrant workers should be able to bring or unify their families abroad (“review” and “revise” current restrictions on family unification e.g. through min. income thresholds); provide “work authorization and access to social security and services” for the members of migrant worker families.





GCM Recommendations on labour migration

- GCM #6: allow migrants to change employers and to change the duration of their stay abroad “with minimal administrative processes”; prohibit recruiters from charging any fees to migrant workers and ensuring “that the roles and responsibilities within the recruitment and employment process are clearly outlined, thereby enhancing supply chain transparency”



GCR Recommendations on labour migration

- GCR: “complementary pathways for admission to third countries” with more “labour mobility opportunities for refugees, including through the identification of refugees with skills that are needed in third countries.”



European University Institute

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES



28/10/2019

MPC - www.migrationpolicycentre.eu



EUI 10



Politicisation of the Global Compacts ...

- 152 countries signed the GCM
 - 5 countries refused to sign: US, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Israel
 - 12 countries abstained: e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, and Romania
 - Some did not vote: e.g. Slovakia, Switzerland
- Almost all countries signed the GCR; United States and Hungary refused to sign



Big gaps between GCM ideals and realities. For example,

- How to determine whether migrants are “needed” in particular sector and/or occupations? Macro arguments vs micro realities
- Right of migrant workers to change employers. What about demand and labour market tests?
- No worker-paid recruitment fees: important questions about employers paying all the costs
- Family reunion and access to welfare and work



Big questions about labour migration pathways for refugeesfor example:

- How to combine humanitarian objectives of protecting refugees with economic objectives of labour immigration policies?
- What about refugee-workers applying for asylum?
- How will “return” be facilitated? Return to where? Who will negotiate on behalf of refugee-workers?
- Family reunion for low-skilled refugees



So ...

- Implementation of GCM needs to begin from labour market realities rather than abstract ideals
- Global governance needs to consider protection priorities, and engage with policy trade-offs
- Incremental and bottom-up approach to improving protections for migrant workers more likely to be effective
- Research can play important role but





Labour Market Realism and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees

Martin Ruhs

martin.ruhs@eui.eu