

Budapest Process

Thematic Meeting on Legal Pathways for Migration

Date: 19-20 June 2025

Location: Islamabad, Pakistan

Summary (draft)

1. Budapest Process Thematic Meeting on Legal Pathways for Migration took place in Islamabad, Pakistan. The two-day meeting was hosted by H.E. Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) and gathered **56 participants** from **16 countries, the European Union (EU), as well as several international organisations.** These include: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uzbekistan; the EU—including representatives of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission (DG HOME), EU Delegation in Pakistan and the European External Action Service (EEAS) Headquarters, and Frontex; ILO, UNHCR; as well as ANOLF Piemonte, BRAC (Bangladesh), GIZ, and ICMPD (as Secretariat of the Budapest Process).

2. Meeting background and objectives:

The Thematic Meeting on Legal Pathways was held in Islamabad at the initiative of Pakistan, as Co-chair of the Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways for Migration and it was **the first Budapest Process Meeting that took place in Pakistan in over ten years.** By building on past discussions and aligning with the strategic priorities of the Budapest Process, the aim of the meeting was **to promote possibilities to replicate the existing successful cooperation models and engagements** focused on skills mobility, innovation, and institutional partnerships. Additionally, meeting **aimed to generate ideas to feed into future activities on legal pathways for migration**, ensuring continued momentum in advancing the 2024 [Ministerial commitments](#) on safe, regular, and well-governed labour migration.

3. Day 1 – 19 June 2025: Field Engagements

Participants had the opportunity to visit two important institutions underpinning Pakistan's migration governance system, providing valuable context for thematic discussions on Day 2. The visit to the **Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE)** offered insight into the structured legal migration processes Pakistan employs to ensure orderly and safe deployment of its workers abroad. This was followed by a visit to the **National University of Technology (NUTECH)**, where participants learned about local skills development, innovation, and industry-aligned vocational training including a tour of their premises. A side event earlier in the day introduced participants to the services of three **Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs)** in Pakistan, showcasing pre-departure orientation, counselling, and referral services offered to migrant workers in Pakistan. The first day concluded with an **official dinner at the invitation of H.E. MOPHRD Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain**, bringing together Budapest Process Thematic Meeting participants and distinguished guests.

4. Day 2 – 20 June 2025: Thematic Discussions

Welcome remarks were delivered by MOPHRD Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as the meeting host. These were followed by **opening remarks** from Dóra Günsberger, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Hungary in Islamabad, on behalf of Hungary as Co-Chair of the Budapest Process, Philipp Gross, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan and Marija Raus, Head of the Budapest Process Secretariat, ICMPD.

The statements highlighted the significance of holding a thematic meeting on legal pathways in one of the Silk Routes countries – ensuring that the dialogue remains focused on the region and grounded in the perspectives and realities of the countries most directly engaged, while demonstrating a shared commitment to inclusive, regionally driven cooperation on migration governance and to strengthening legal pathways within the renewed strategic framework of the Budapest Process Ministerial Declaration and its Call for Action.

5. Sessions throughout the day covered:

- **Session 1:** Advancing Legal Pathways and Safe Migration through the Budapest Process, featuring speakers from the governments of Bangladesh, Italy, the European Commission, ANOLF Piemonte, and ICMPD. The session explored labour-sending and receiving country perspectives. The discussion focused on building enabling environments for skills mobility and mutually beneficial legal migration.
- **Session 2:** Ongoing Bilateral and Regional Legal Pathway Initiatives in Silk Routes countries, which saw presentations from the government of Iraq, ICMPD's Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), GIZ, ILO and MRC Lahore, Pakistan. Highlights included successful cooperation under the EU–Pakistan and EU–Bangladesh Talent Partnerships, the SkillNet initiative, and MPF-funded projects. Participants discussed aligning technical and vocational training efforts, pre-departure preparation, and stakeholder coordination.
- **Session 3:** Roundtable Discussion on Future Cooperation Outlook, as the final session, facilitated reflection on key discussion points from Sessions 1 and 2 and collected further observations on possibilities for further cooperation on legal pathways for migration.

6. Key messages and main conclusions based on the above meeting discussion:

- The meeting reaffirmed the Budapest Process as a trusted, inclusive platform for fostering mutual understanding and advancing practical cooperation on legal migration between countries of origin, transit, and destination.
- Delegates welcomed the renewed strategic direction provided by the 2024 Ministerial Declaration and Call for Action, and reiterated their commitment to translating shared priorities into concrete actions.
- Common challenges identified included:
 - Fragmented or uncoordinated migration governance frameworks;
 - High recruitment costs and lack of transparency in recruitment practices;
 - Limited mutual recognition of skills and qualifications;
 - Insufficient pre-departure preparation and reintegration support for migrant workers.
- Broad consensus emerged on the importance of building skills-based, ethical, and rights-based migration systems that contribute to sustainable development and respond to real labour market needs.

- The strong presence of both Silk Routes and European countries reflected a shared willingness to address challenges collectively and to move forward with practical, forward-looking solutions.
- Existing initiatives — including those involving skills partnerships, talent development programmes, and capacity-building efforts — were seen as promising models that can be replicated or adapted across contexts.
- The value of enhanced coordination among public institutions, diaspora actors, training providers, and employers was emphasised.
- The engagement of the private sector was considered essential to ensure mobility schemes are relevant to actual employment demand and aligned with market realities.
- The meeting reaffirmed that enhancing safe and regular migration channels is central to balanced migration partnerships and remains an area with significant potential for further collaboration.
- Participants expressed appreciation for organising this meeting in the Silk Routes region, recognising the importance of grounding dialogue in local realities and demonstrating regional ownership. In this context, the host country proposed to hold the next Thematic Meeting on Legal Pathways for Migration also in Pakistan.
- The meeting concluded that the discussions held will inspire future cooperation and support the development of responsive, coherent, and development-oriented legal migration frameworks.

7. Recommendations on the way forward are aimed to support implementation of the 2024 Ministerial Declaration — particularly Priority Goal 2 — and have been put forward by the Budapest Process Secretariat. Based on the thematic meeting discussions, they aim to guide follow-up by the Dialogue and its Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways:

- **Enhancing Coordination and Strategic Alignment:** Propose the creation of a light Talent Partnerships and Skills Mobility Initiative under the Thematic Working Group to generate pilots and results aligning with the Ministerial priorities (*Aligned with PG 2.3*).
- **Strengthening Cooperation on Legal Pathways:** Encourage bilateral exchanges between Silk Routes and European countries that maintain a practical focus and tailored technical-level visits, allowing for concrete discussions on cooperation and expert-level assistance to advance cooperation on mobility schemes, mutual recognition of qualifications, training partnerships, and recruitment (*Aligned with PG 2.1. and PG 2.3*).
- **Reinforcing Regional Ownership:** Building on the success of the 2025 meeting and positive feedback from participants, it is recommended to continue convening Thematic Working Group meetings in Silk Routes countries to reinforce regional ownership and maintain local relevance. In this context, the Secretariat proposes to the Chairmanship and the Reference Group to accept Pakistan's generous offer to host the next meeting on Legal Pathways, expected in 2026, once again in Pakistan to ensure continuity and sustained engagement (*Supports the operationalisation of PG2 across the board by fostering regional leadership*).
- **Involving Key Stakeholders:** Private sector actors and training institutions should be invited to participate in upcoming meetings to share their perspectives, help bridge the gap between

skills supply and labour market demand, and contribute to the practical relevance of mobility initiatives (*Aligned with PG 2.1. and PG 2.4.*).

8. The Government of Pakistan thanked participants for their contributions and offered to host a Budapest Process meeting in Islamabad in 2026.