



## Pool Approach: Tackling skilled labour shortages in Germany's construction industry

**Innovation and Learning Practice**

**Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) Project**

**Submitted by BAUVERBÄNDE NRW e. V., Germany**

The Pool Approach addresses the dual issues of Germany's skilled labour shortage and high unemployment in the Global South. By using newly established migration pathways, it matches young people from non-EU countries with German construction companies to develop their skills through apprenticeships in construction.

*Start date:* March 2020

*Type of implementing institution:* Private sector

*Implementing partners:* Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Skills, Goethe Institute (PASCH-Initiative) in Mozambique

*Target group:* Construction companies (small and medium-size enterprises) and graduates from sub-Saharan Africa



**BAUVERBÄNDE.NRW**

## **BAUVERBÄNDE NRW e. V.**

BAUVERBÄNDE NRW e. V. is an association representing 5,000 small- and medium-sized construction companies in Germany. It supports on legal, economic, socio-political and technical matters and provides training on issues such as sustainability, digitalization and securing a skilled workforce.

## **Description of activities**

The Pool Approach connects German construction companies with candidates from non-EU countries for apprenticeships in Germany. The initiative – aligned with the 2020 **Skilled Workers Immigration Act** – helps migrant workers acquire recognized credentials through dual vocational education and training. It enables companies affected by Germany's skilled-labour shortage to recruit qualified candidates and equips young people struggling to find work with skills for a career in Germany or back in their home country.

## **Relevance**

### **What issues is the Pool Approach designed to address?**

The shortage of skilled labour is a challenge for Germany's economy. A widening skills gap affects **21 per cent of businesses**, including those in the construction sector. This is compounded by dwindling interest among young people in pursuing careers in skilled trades and has led to a **4.7 per cent decline in apprenticeship uptake in 2024**, the third consecutive yearly decline. In 2023, approximately **18 per cent of registered vocational training positions were unfilled**.

### **What strategies have been employed to address these challenges?**

The initiative has established a structured migration pathway to recruit motivated apprentices from non-EU countries for construction companies in the North Rhine-Westphalia region of Germany and beyond.

Through collaboration with in-country partners, it identifies candidates to participate in informational workshops and intensive German language training.

These practical, in-country courses provide companies with pre-screened, well-prepared and committed candidates who are already integrated into the TVET system ahead of arrival in Germany.

The initial financial burden for employers is also kept to a minimum as candidates cover the costs of language courses, visas and travel, which are later reimbursed to them.

### **Is this part of a wider initiative or goal?**

The Pool Approach is aligned to the Government's recruitment strategy for skilled labour from non-EU countries via its **Skilled Workers Immigration Act**. The Act establishes the legal framework needed to attract foreign workers, facilitate their access to TVET and bring them into the German labour market.

Through ongoing support and established networks, the Pool Approach is also shaping TVET structures, programmes and curricula to enhance training opportunities in partner countries.

## **Added value**

### **What is new about the Pool Approach and how does it differ from similar initiatives in Germany?**

The initiative is private-sector driven and does not require government funding. It develops networks and mechanisms that enable efficient and pragmatic labour mobility, while mitigating the 'brain drain' – the impact of emigration of trained or skilled workers from a particular country – through reliable and mutually beneficial partnerships.

### **What stage of implementation is the initiative at?**

Since 2022, the Pool Approach has matched cohorts of apprentices from Ethiopia and Mozambique with German construction companies. In 2023, 17 apprentices were placed with German companies, rising to 30 in 2024. All have continued their training and apprentices, companies, schools and training centres report high levels of satisfaction with the results.

### **What positive social outcomes has the Pool Approach achieved since inception?**

The initiative helps to secure skilled labour for the German economy by supporting labour mobility through multi-national skills exchange. This can ease pressures on overburdened labour markets in the Global South, including sub-Saharan Africa where in 2024, **12.4 per cent of youth were unemployed**.

## Transferability

### What advice would you offer to those wishing to replicate this initiative?

The Pool Approach provides opportunities for all TVET stakeholders – including those beyond the construction sector – to recruit skilled workers. If replicated across other countries and sectors, local circumstances need consideration, particularly the establishment of migration pathways that allow the absorption of new talent into labour markets. Bureaucratic hurdles and visa procedures vary by country, so communication and networking must be prioritized along with transparent structures and mutually beneficial procedures. Preventing ‘brain drain’ is also essential.

### Has the Pool Approach been promoted in any national or international contexts?

The initiative has been showcased on national platforms, in the media, across working groups and at conferences on international TVET cooperation and labour migration. Various institutions, such as **BIBB**, **IoM**, **Das Deutsch-Afrikanische-Wirtschaftsforum** and **Bertelsmann Foundation**, have documented the success of the approach.

The Pool Approach is one of the BILT project’s Innovation and Learning Practices that addresses systemic challenges within the five work streams of the project.

Specifically, this initiative addresses migration and TVET.



### Migration and TVET

*Accelerating the integration of migrants into their host communities, and allowing them to become productive members of the workforce.*

Additional Innovation and Learning Practices cover the following areas:



**New qualifications and competencies in TVET**



**Digitalization**



**Entrepreneurship in TVET**



**Greening TVET**

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#### More information about this practice

Pool Approach website:

<https://www.bauverbaende.nrw/internationale-projekte/partnerafrika-projekt-1-1>

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Cover photo: Apprentices from Mosambique at the company Weber (2024) © BAUVERBÄNDE NRW e. V.

## About the BILT Project

UNESCO-UNEVOC's Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project is a reference point for innovation and learning in TVET. It fosters global policy dialogue and peer learning among TVET stakeholders while promoting innovation and inclusive excellence in TVET. BILT complements developments at the national level in supporting innovative, market-oriented and attractive modes of learning and cooperation in TVET.

The BILT project explores the process of identifying, integrating and implementing new qualifications and competencies in TVET. This is known as the 'three I's process'.

In addition to the broad focus on new qualifications and competencies, BILT addresses four complementary themes: Digitalization in TVET, Greening TVET, Entrepreneurship in TVET, and Migration and TVET.

For more information, please visit  
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## New qualifications and competencies in TVET

- **Identifying** new qualifications and competencies in a timely manner;
- **Integrating** them into appealing and flexible curricula and training regulations; and
- **Implementing** them in innovative training approaches

## Entrepreneurship in TVET

Unlocking the potential of innovative entrepreneurial activities and fostering entrepreneurial culture

## Greening TVET

Responding to new development paradigms for sustainability and reduced environmental impact

## Digitalization in TVET

Providing response to new skills demands, as technology has permeated the world of work and is changing the profile of jobs

## Migration and TVET

Accelerating the integration of migrants into their host communities, and allowing them to become productive members of the workforce

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