Coordination Meeting on Labour Migration to Europe: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward

On 27 July 2026, the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), under the MiRiDeW Phase II Project "Enhancing Migration Services to Nepali Migrant Workers in Countries of Destination through Strengthening Institutional Capacity of NRNA", organized a Coordination Meeting on Labour Migration to Europe: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward at the NRNA Secretariat Hall, Baluwatar, Kathmandu.

The meeting brought together 50 participants representing a wide range of government institutions, migration experts, civil society organizations, and development partners to discuss the emerging labour migration landscape in Europe and identify practical measures to strengthen safe, orderly, and rights-based labour migration for Nepali workers.

The meeting served as a platform to review current migration trends to Europe, examine opportunities and emerging risks, strengthen institutional coordination among key stakeholders, and formulate recommendations for improving migration governance and protection mechanisms for Nepali migrant workers.

Opening Session

The programme commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Gyanendra Regmi, Vice President, NRNA, who welcomed all participants and emphasized the importance of expanding safe and regular labour migration opportunities to Europe. He highlighted NRNA's continued commitment, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), to strengthening institutional capacity, promoting migrants' rights, and fostering evidence-based policy dialogue on emerging migration destinations.

This was followed by remarks from Ms. Rojina Pradhan, Vice President, NRNA, who underscored the growing interest of Nepali migrant workers in Europe and the need for stronger coordination among government agencies, development partners, civil society organizations, and the Nepali diaspora to ensure safe, orderly, and rights-based labour migration. She encouraged participants to actively contribute their experiences and recommendations during the discussion.

Following the opening remarks, participants viewed a short video presentation featuring reflections from NRNA representatives based in Spain, Croatia and Portugal. The video provided firsthand insights into the evolving labour migration landscape in Europe and highlighted both the opportunities and challenges experienced by Nepali migrant workers in these destination countries. The presentation served as an important context-setting exercise and concluded by emphasizing the need for strengthened institutional support, improved access to reliable migration information and expanded legal migration pathways.

Technical Presentation by the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau (AHTB), Nepal Police

Presenter

Mr. Basanta Pathak
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Key Highlights of the Presentation

The presentation focused on the emerging trends of labour migration to Europe, the increasing risks of human trafficking, and the importance of strengthening preventive mechanisms and institutional coordination.

Major points presented included:

1. Current Trends

- Increasing attraction of Europe as a destination for Nepali migrant workers.
- Growing misuse of Schengen visas and visit visas for irregular migration.
- Increasing cases of deceptive recruitment through seasonal employment offers, seminars, cultural programmes and sports events.
- False promises regarding attractive salaries and easy access to Temporary Residence (TR) and Permanent Residence (PR).

2. Human Trafficking Situation

The presentation highlighted that:

- Human trafficking is becoming more organized and sophisticated.
- Both men and women are increasingly becoming victims.
- Labour exploitation has become one of the major forms of trafficking.

Recent statistics shared included:

- Human trafficking cases registered related to Europe.
- Number of identified victims and accused persons.
- Rescue cases from Italy and Spain.
- Deportation cases from Finland and Serbia.

3. Major Challenges

Key challenges identified were:

- Misuse of visit visas.
- Labour exploitation under individual labour permits.
- Weak legal protection for victims.
- Limited access to Nepali diplomatic missions.
- Lack of dedicated rescue and reintegration mechanisms.
- Fake companies established in Europe to recruit migrant workers.
- Weak coordination among concerned stakeholders.

4. Recommendations

The presenter recommended:

- Strengthening Government-to-Government (G2G) labour agreements.
- Limiting individual labour migration to highly skilled workers.
- Strengthening awareness programmes before departure.
- Allocating dedicated budgets for rescue and victim support.
- Expanding modern investigation techniques.
- Strengthening institutional coordination among all stakeholders.

5. Expected Role of NRNA

The presentation emphasized that NRNA can play an important role by:

- Identifying Nepali migrant workers in distress.
- Coordinating rescue efforts with relevant authorities.
- Appointing Anti-Human Trafficking Focal Persons in destination countries.
- Raising awareness on safe migration and trafficking risks.
- Supporting victims in accessing justice.
- Coordinating with the Government of Nepal, Nepali Missions, security agencies, and international organizations.

Discussion

Participants appreciated the practical insights shared by the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau and emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between NRNA National Coordination Councils (NCCs), Nepali diplomatic missions, Nepal Police, and relevant government agencies to prevent trafficking and provide timely assistance to Nepali migrant workers in Europe.

Several participants also highlighted the importance of enhancing awareness campaigns, improving information sharing, and strengthening referral mechanisms for vulnerable migrant workers.

Labour Migration Trends to Europe

Participants discussed the rapidly changing labour migration dynamics in Europe. While demand for migrant workers continues to increase across several European countries, migration pathways are also becoming more complex due to changing immigration policies, labour market requirements, and stricter border management systems.

It was highlighted that Poland has increasingly become a gateway country for Nepali migrant workers entering Europe. However, many migrants still lack adequate information regarding legal migration pathways and are often influenced by misinformation related to tourist visas, visit visas, Temporary Residence (TR), and Permanent Residence (PR) opportunities.

Risks of Irregular Migration

The discussion emphasized that irregular migration continues to expose migrant workers to exploitation, labour abuse, human trafficking, document fraud, and smuggling networks. Participants stressed the importance of distinguishing between regular and irregular migration channels and strengthening awareness among prospective migrant workers.

The role of Nepal Police and the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau in investigating trafficking networks and coordinating rescue efforts was highlighted.

Labour Market Opportunities

Participants noted that Europe continues to experience labour shortages in several sectors, creating opportunities for Nepali workers, particularly in construction, manufacturing, hospitality, agriculture, caregiving health services and technical occupations.

However, participants emphasized that these opportunities should be accessed through safe, ethical, and government-recognized recruitment mechanisms.

Policy and Institutional Coordination

The discussion underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral labour agreements and expanding Government-to-Government (G2G) cooperation with European countries. Participants also highlighted the need for stronger labour diplomacy through Nepali diplomatic missions and closer coordination among relevant government agencies.

Civil society organizations, NRNA, diplomatic missions, development partners, and the private sector were recognized as important catalysts for improving migrant protection and policy advocacy.

Migration Diversification

Participants discussed the importance of diversifying labour migration destinations beyond traditional Gulf countries and Malaysia. Europe was identified as a potential destination for skilled Nepali workers, provided that migration is managed through transparent and regulated systems.

Skills Development

Participants emphasized that future migration should increasingly focus on skilled employment. Priority areas for skill development include electrical work, metal fabrication, construction trades, caregiving, technical and vocational occupations.

The meeting recognized that investing in skills development would improve employability, increase income opportunities, and enhance the protection of migrant workers.

Role of the Nepali Diaspora

Participants highlighted the significant contribution of the Nepali diaspora in facilitating labour market access, supporting newly arrived migrant workers, sharing information, advocating for workers' rights, and strengthening collaboration between destination countries and Nepal.

Way Forward

The meeting concluded that strengthening safe migration governance requires coordinated efforts among the Government of Nepal, NRNA, Nepali diplomatic missions, development partners, civil society organizations, and destination-country stakeholders. Priority actions include promoting legal migration pathways, expanding skills development, enhancing labour diplomacy, combating trafficking and irregular migration, and improving access to protection and support services for Nepali migrant workers in Europe.

Photos





