

GFMD 2013-2014 Engagement with the Private Sector

Preliminary Outcomes for Discussion

ILO, Geneva

12 March, 2014



The Hague Process
on Refugees and Migration

THE GFMD

The Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) is a unique, informal, intergovernmental platform for international dialogue on migration and development that is outside the UN system but open to all UN Member States. Preparations for each annual meeting of the GFMD are carried out throughout the year leading up to the event itself, with states gathering in “government teams” on selected themes to share experiences and best practices. The GFMD is therefore a continuous, voluntary process driven by the engagement and activities of the states involved.

Since 2007, the GFMD has made great progress in bringing together stakeholders from states and civil society for open and constructive dialogue and in guiding the migration and development agenda. Nonetheless, unresolved issues remain. Recommendations put forward as part of a 2011-12 assessment of the GFMD process point, among other things, to the need to improve the format for engagement and collaboration with the private sector.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

With the ever-increasing globalisation of human resources, work, and services and its impact on national development goals, the private sector is a necessary negotiating partner within the area of migration and development. The GFMD process offers the unique opportunity for states and businesses to collaboratively address important opportunities and challenges related to the role of the private sector, global mobility, and human development impact – the convergence of which is not currently addressed in any other global or regional process.

Though cursory attempts have been made over the years to reach out to businesses, by and large the only private-sector actors the GFMD process has attracted are recruitment agencies and other firms with services tied directly to the migration process in some way (i.e., money transfer).

States and civil society have expressed an interest in engaging directly with businesses that operate nationally and/or globally and which, as employers of and service providers to migrants, have a stake in maximising the benefits of migration. Thus, it was recommended that the private sector be considered a separate stakeholder group; new methods for engaging with the private sector be explored; and a “dedicated consultative system” be devised to strengthen cooperation.

Issues of Mutual Concern

Within the framework of the GFMD, the dialogue between states and different private sector actors ideally should not be governed by national interests but rather reflect an overarching perspective focused on areas of mutual concern. Of particular interest is how the private sector positions itself in the context of globalization and global competition, population ageing and labour shortages, increased opportunities for mobility, and in relation to states’ interests to ensure that migration takes place in an orderly fashion.

Certainly, the issue of talent mobility, growth, and competitiveness – particularly when discussed in the context of skills shortages – are of chief concern to businesses and governments alike. McKinsey Global Institute predicts a global shortage of 40 million skilled workers (with a university degree or equivalent qualification) by 2020, and Manpower Group’s seventh Talent Shortage Survey indicates that half of U.S. employers in 2012 had a hard time filling mission-critical positions. Similar trends prevail in many other countries.

Sectors such as ICT, mining and extractive, recruitment, healthcare, insurance, and banking (including money transfer organisations) were identified through the 2013 WEF Competitiveness Report, which gathered input from industry representatives, economists and governments in more than 144 economies. Moreover, WEF’s Global Talent Risk report on skills shortages projects serious skills gaps for mid to highly skilled professionals in the mining sector as well as in manufacturing, utilities, construction, trade, hotels, transport, IT and healthcare.

In addition to discussing mobility issues through a lens of migrant employment, it is perhaps also necessary to begin discussing the impact populations on the move may have on growth and development as consumers. With increasing rates of international migration for work, study, family reunification, and asylum, migrants are quickly becoming an important segment of the market for a number of industries such as banking, education, insurance, money transfer, recruitment, and others. Businesses in these industries stand to gain considerably by developing products, services, and outreach targeted specifically to migrant populations.

Other areas of potential convergence between private- and public-sector interests in migration include: Legal migration policy frameworks, global competition for talent, training and skills matching; credentialing, links between education and mobility, recruitment and work contracts, working conditions and rights, integration and identity, and return and reintegration.

Exploring New Modalities

Within the framework of the GFMD 2013-2014, the Swedish Chair has come together with The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (THP), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Council for Global Immigration and other contributing partners to deepen and diversify GFMD engagement with targeted business sectors including construction; mining and extractives; recruitment; insurance; financial services; and others.

To that end, successful thematic Business Roundtable meetings with states and businesses have been held in New York and Brussels, as have one-on-one consultations with executives from a number of multinational enterprises. Furthermore, a “mapping study” consisting of a Delphi process and a two-part survey has been undertaken to ascertain not only current business practices, perspectives, and values with respect to global mobility, but also the private sector’s position on the concept of engagement with governments in migration policy making.

The ultimate goal of the various thematic meetings and the mapping research effort is to continuously discover potential areas of common ground for public-private cooperation in the realm of migration and development while simultaneously building trust and fostering greater engagement with participating industries. Today’s event includes a presentation of some of the preliminary results of the research, a panel discussion featuring high-level business executives, and four additional Business Roundtable sessions.

MAPPING PRIVATE SECTOR INTERESTS

In working to develop new modalities for engaging with businesses on migration and development issues, the GFMD 2013-2014 wanted first and foremost to better understand – to map out – the private sector’s practices, values and perspectives with regard to human mobility and migration policy. In pursuing a course of research along this tack, the researchers opted to utilize two distinct methodologies: A Delphi process and a two-part survey.

The Delphi Process

The question of why businesses might not yet be fully and effectively engaged in the migration debate and whether there is recognized opportunity in better engagement is more aspirational and motivational than descriptive of what already might be happening. Working on the premise that business leaders are crucial subject-matter experts with the potential to lend a great deal of insight if properly engaged, and considering a number of theoretical, empirical and practical advantages, the researchers opted to utilize the dynamic and prospective Delphi method.

The Delphi technique is a consultative process among experts that takes place in a virtual space (in this case, over email) and mimics the results of more traditional focus groups without the logistical hindrances and common pitfalls of group communication dynamics. In Delphi processes, subject-matter experts are iteratively asked to share their own ideas on a specific, usually complex, issue. Progressive rounds of consultation are coordinated by an “oracle” (moderator) whose role

is to first garner individual answers, then collate them and send them back out for commentary and refinement. Finally this moderator asks the group to rate or rank ideas in terms of appropriateness.

Using this process, qualitative and quantitative data on the degree of consensus versus divergence on both barriers and opportunities (in this case for business participation in the migration debate) can be compiled. Also among its chief advantages is that it capitalises on the diversity in a group, e.g., by keeping identities anonymous, and thereby tends to produce solutions to problems that are both innovative and viable.

Participants

Senior level executives representing 15 firms operating in nine sectors that either employ large numbers of migrants and/or provide products and services to migrants participated in the Delphi process. The nine sectors represented in the sample included: legal services (n = 1 firm), information and communication technology (ICT, n = 3), mining/extractives (n = 2), tourism (n = 1), Human Resource Management (HRM, n = 1), banking (n = 1), insurance (n = 2), recruitment (n = 2), and relocation (n = 2). Most firms selected a single individual to respond as subject-matter expert, while one firm chose to respond via a larger committee of experts. Participants' job titles included, for example, Executive Director, Vice President, Chief Executive Officer, Executive HRM, and Director/Coordinator.

Participating firms were headquartered in Africa (Uganda), the Americas (Canada, United States, the Caribbean, Colombia), and Western Europe (The Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Sweden). All except three of the firms were operating in multi-national markets ranging from four to 170 countries in Africa, the Americas, Europe, Oceania, Small Island Developing States, and Asia.

Anonymity was preserved throughout the process, which unfolded over email over the course of several weeks.

Process

The first round of the Delphi focused on generating ideas. In addition to basic questions regarding firm location and regions of operation, the Delphi asked:

•“What in your view is a major barrier that is currently preventing leaders in firms like yours from investing more of their firm’s time and resources in the migration debate with government and international organizations such as The Global Forum for Migration and Development, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization?”

•“What is your expert analysis of ‘why’ your answer is so important for others to understand? This is a chance to clarify your position for others in the group, to show how well your ideas stack up, and to persuade them of the substance and merit in them.”

•“What would be the best way of motivating business leaders to invest more of themselves, and by definition their firm’s time, in the debate?”

•“Could you capture for the group in one paragraph ‘why’ your answer in to the previous question would work, and illustrate in anyway ‘how’ it would do so?”

•“Having answered the above questions as a representative of your particular company, is there anything else you would like to add from your prior experience as an individual who may have worked across multiple different firms?”

The inputs from the first round were then collected, sorted, streamlined, and distributed again to the group in tabular form for the second round of input. This second round sought to clarify the ideas presented in the first round by inviting the group (individually and anonymously) to refine any existing ideas, add new ideas, comment on the feasibility of any ideas, add additional strategies to implement ideas, and so on.

For the third and final round of input, participants' responses in the second round were summarised and redistributed to the group, again individually and anonymously, in the form of a list of suggested and agreed-upon barriers to and opportunities for engagement in the migration debate. This summary of results was accompanied by instructions for ranking the various barriers by significance (with "1" being the most significant) and opportunities by merit (with "1" being the most promising).

Findings

Rounds one and two generated a total of 14 different but interrelated ideas, comprising seven major barriers and seven opportunities. These are summarised (and ranked, as a result of round three) in Table 1, below.

It was clear throughout the process that the issue of migration was perceived as a risky one for, and by, firms. The risks were attributed by participating businesses to overly negative stereotypes about

business practices (e.g., relocating purely to slash personnel costs) and to concerns for business reputation. *Participants were also not aware of, or convinced by, any real benefits of participating in the migration debate, particularly against the costs of doing so.* Executives may have little time or interest to give to policy debates, which are not always perceived as "core business." *Political processes were also judged to move too slowly compared to existing business-planning cycles, and were not necessarily trusted.*

Building the awareness, capacity and motivation to influence and, if necessary, overcome barriers from local legislation was therefore judged to *require greater outreach from governments, coalitions between businesses and other groups, mutual compromise on planning timeframes between politics and business, and, finally, better flow of information and labour.*

Table 1 - Key barriers and opportunities identified by participants with mean rankings in descending order.

Barriers (n=11)		Opportunities (n=12)	
Panel Idea	Mean	Panel Idea	Mean
Issue too risky	2.8	Cost-benefit evaluation	2.6
Business leaders not convinced	3.6	Outreach from governments	3.0
Lack of time/interest	3.6	Form stakeholder coalitions	3.3
Slow political processes	4.1	Align planning timeframes	4.3
Capacity to influence	4.2	Motivate business leadership	4.4
Lack of awareness	4.5	Cultivate continuous messaging	5.1
Local legislation	5.3	Universal work permits	5.4

The current barriers to and future opportunities for enabling greater business participation in migration policy development – as identified by our panel of subject-matter experts – were ranked according to relative significance (for barriers, with "1" for most significant barrier to "7" for least significant) and on relative promise (for opportunities, along the same scale). Table 1 contains the resulting mean ranks.

If there were no systematic agreement between the participants, i.e., no concordance, the raw ranks would be randomly distributed, with the resulting averages being similar to each other.

The mean ranks in Table 1 appear to differ, however, suggesting a degree of concordance among the group. Risk management, for example, tended to receive a relatively high ranking, on average, whereas legislative (including visa) concerns tend to be ranked lower.

To test the statistical significance of the apparent trends in Table 1, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W), which tests the likelihood of obtaining a given set of ranks by chance alone versus because of concordance, was utilised.

This test is especially suited for ordinal (ranked) data and for assessing the degree of agreement between a relatively small set of judges (or participants) with regard to a set of objects or ideas (such as barriers and opportunities).

Kendall's test for concordance regarding barriers was statistically non-significant. Although a trend is apparent across the mean rank order in the table, there is not enough evidence, in this particular relatively small sample of experts, to safely infer that any one of the seven barriers in Table 1 is any more important, or less important, than the others.

With respect to opportunities, however, the test statistic was clearly significant. In other words, the panel of judges tended to agree with one another about an order in which ideas for enabling greater business participation might be advanced. Ideas with the most practical potential include cost-benefit evaluation, outreach from governments, and forming stakeholder coalitions between individual companies, and with other stakeholder groups.

In summary, the panel of experts identified all of the summarised ideas presented in Table 1 as having merit. It may also be inferred with a reasonable degree of confidence that for this sample of experts, economic and political processes took some of the priority over cultural and legal.

Analysis

Identifying the most significant barriers to participation is informative because it may bring to light obstacles to business engagement. The research team saw the barriers of local legislation and lack of time/interest (see Table 1), for example, play out in the participant recruitment phase. One firm declined to participate with the following remark: "The regulatory requirements on us as payment intermediaries are very strict and makes it currently impossible for us to establish a dedicated service for migrants' payments to their countries of origin. Nor can we give priority to invest resources in lobbying efforts in the area" (Anon, 2014).

In a further informative vein, explanations for non-involvement were found to be quite surprising. *That prevalent negative stereotypes about business practices with regard to migrants may actually be self-fulfilling (and perhaps self-defeating), such that businesses do not participate in the debate due in some measure to the very stereotypes that are perpetuated partly due to non-participation, is quite ironic.*

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the business leaders who gave their time to this project would be most clear about the solutions to the issue (i.e., opportunities). Identifying solutions is what business leaders are arguably selected - and expected - to do. In a similar vein, the finding that risk management in general, and cost-benefit evaluation in particular, were central concerns for business leaders makes perfect business sense. *While demonstrating return on investment when it comes to private sector engagement in the migration debate may prove challenging and require innovative thinking, it is clearly an urgent priority.*

A range of ideas for addressing Returns on Investment (ROI) and cost-benefits in general were generated during the Delphi process, including collecting and disseminating evidence-based global and regional data according to which countries, sectors, and firms have benefited from talent flow and accumulating and reporting more empirical evidence on how migration can and has benefited local communities, jobs, and firms. Additionally, *participants expressed an interest in seeing an evidence base to support the notion that engagement in the migration debate was worth the while in terms of costs and benefits.* Thus the findings indicate that research may have a wider role to play in the process of encouraging business to join migration policy forums, specifically by connecting more fully and directly with the debate itself. In the words of one participant, what is perhaps needed is a "top-notch, easy to understand presentation and evidence-based data to support it"

As some of our respondent experts indicated, timeframes are also very important, not only for developing migration policies but also for changing the culture of the debate itself.

Potential interventions might include regular seminars and building a stronger culture of regular messaging over longer timeframes. Time perspectives like these imply longitudinal research, but they also suggest that longer-term goals can and should be considered.

Limitations

A core limitation of this process is that the sample size, even for a Delphi, was minimal. From a statistical point of view, and even though Delphi processes often target relatively small numbers of subject matter experts, a slightly larger sample would have given us more statistical power to detect any patterns in the barriers identified.

The low rate of participation is perhaps just a reflection of the issue itself. In order to secure the sample, an invitation to participate was sent out broadly via the International Organisation for Employers (IOE) to national federations of employers around the world. Those federations, in turn, agreed to distribute the invitation among their membership. The intention in using this type of sampling method was to attract a large sample of diverse firms from all over the world.

The fact that this effort yielded only a few business executives who volunteered to participate is perhaps indicative of some of the barriers to engagement ultimately identified by the executives who did participate (e.g., the lack of awareness, trust, interest, or evidence of ROI). When the research team switched tack and began contacting firms on an individual basis, interest was generated at a much higher rate, no doubt demonstrating the importance of trust building. Of those who agreed to participate through this sort of outreach, however, nearly half did not follow through with full participation once the Delphi process had begun.

Another limitation to the Delphi process was related to timing. Due in large part to the above mentioned difficulties in securing participants, the entire process was confined to about five weeks. Given more time, perhaps a greater degree of consensus and concordance could have been achieved.

Moving Forward

While this process did not find a clear consensus on either the barriers against or the opportunities for greater private sector engagement with the migration policy debate, there was a statistically significant amount of concordance, especially around perceived opportunities for new developments in the relationship between business and policy-making. What such a blend of diversity and convergence demonstrates is the concrete possibility of finding overarching goals behind which not only one sector but also, potentially, multiple sectors can if not unite as one, but at least may find common ground for goal setting and planning.

Two-Part Survey

The survey effort aims to identify the policies, practices and perspectives of the private sector with respect to migration and development. Global migration issues and firms' hiring practices overlap and are interconnected in obvious ways. The surveys are designed to elicit detailed information about firm activities that are relevant to policy makers who grapple with global migration issues. They are intended to reveal valuable insights into firms' rationales behind their policies and practices at greater levels of detail and disaggregation than is currently available.

In addition to surfacing information that can be used to encourage greater participation and engagement among business leaders in the global migration debate, the survey effort in itself – from development to distribution to disseminating the results – is also intended as a means of engaging with businesses.

Survey Design

Two separate but related surveys have been developed in cooperation with a research team experienced in business communications and with close attention to language, question structure, and topics of presumed mutual interest to the private and public sectors. The surveys are intended for business leaders in human resources, marketing, and operations. Areas covered include legal migration policy frameworks; labour shortages and competition for talent;

training and skills matching; links between education and mobility; tailoring products and services for mobile consumers, recruitment and work contracts; working conditions and rights; integration; and return and reintegration.

The questions in both surveys describe concepts and practices that are potentially relevant to business executives while retaining focus on the issues of greatest interest to the GFMD. The questions are organized so that “yes” and “no” responses automatically deliver the respondent to the next appropriate follow-up question. In addition, a few questions ask respondents for some descriptive information about their firm such as the region where their company is based and operates; firm size (by number of employees); and core business sector. Survey I consists of 48 close-ended questions and is designed to take no longer 30 minutes to complete. Survey II has 24 close-ended questions and is designed to take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Survey I: The role of businesses as employers of migrants

The globalization of the world’s economy, the growth and expansion of multinational corporations (MNCs) and shifting demographics have expanded the reliance of firms on migrant workers at all skill levels. These factors point to the importance of having a better understanding of the role of businesses in shaping and responding to the emerging patterns and trends of global migration. Survey I identifies issues of mutual concern to the private and public sectors and seek information on how private sector hiring policies and practices align with states’ interests in ensuring that global migration is appropriately governed. The survey is targeted to five industries: Construction, health care, ICT, mining/extractive, and tourism.

The survey addresses three specific topics:

- Business policies and activities addressing workers’ rights and community outreach related to social integration.
- International recruitment policies and practices of business.

- International and national policies and regulations with greatest impact on business hiring practices—current and future.

One area of mutual interest explored by Survey I is the speed and ease with which labour migrants can become integrated into their new surroundings, be it the workplace, the neighbourhood, or their new community. Migrants that can adapt to their new situation with speed and ease are often considered to be more productive employees. Issues often faced when moving to a new location, such as opening a checking account or enrolling their children in school, could prove problematic.

Based on this idea, Survey I first asks the respondent if they have a community outreach program. Those responding “yes” are presented a set of detailed follow-up questions:

<p>Question 37. Which of these issues do you address? Please select all that apply</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation • Housing • Opening a bank account • Loan application • Child’s enrolment in local schools • Understanding cultural differences between their home country and their new environment’s culture • Other • Don’t know

<p>Question 38. Please select from below all that you do to provide assistance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect migrants with international moving companies • Help them find housing • Having specific agreements with banks to simplify opening accounts • Having specific agreements with financial agencies so that migrants can obtain loans • Children’s enrolment in local schools • Course/seminar on cultural differences between their home country and their new environment’s culture • Other • Don’t know

The responses would ideally provide a detailed picture of what issues firms are addressing and in what areas firms are providing assistance. The information could help to identify potential gaps of services and also areas of mutual interest where public and private efforts could help promote integration.

Those responding “no” are also presented a detailed follow-up question:

Question 39. Why? Please select all that apply:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants in our company have already been living in the country for a long period of time, hence there is no need for such a program • We do not have a significant number of migrant employees and it would be expensive to offer a community outreach program • We have specific actions to help migrants become part of their new community, but they are informal • We have a mentoring program in which each new migrant employee is assigned a mentor who is a colleague that is either a national or a migrant who has been living in the country for a long time • Don't know

For firms that do not have a community outreach program, it might be assumed that they aren't interested in the issue or believe it is a problem to be solved by the public sector. The follow-up survey question probes to attain a better understanding of the perspective of businesses and the rationales supporting their policies.

A second area of shared interest is the impact government policies have on a firm's ability to hire migrants. Recognizing that national and international laws, regulations and policies can all have a profound effect on firms' ability to hire people from abroad, one way to approach the issue is to ask respondents directly.

Question 44. Estimate the impact domestic laws and regulations on immigration have on your firm's ability to conduct international hiring cost effectively:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None at all • Minimal • Significant • Overwhelming • Don't know

Question 45. Estimate the impact laws and regulations on immigration from other countries have on your firm's ability to conduct international hiring cost-effectively:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None at all • Minimal • Significant • Overwhelming • Don't know

Question 46. Estimate the impact international law on immigration has on your firm's ability to conduct international hiring cost-effectively:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None at all • Minimal • Significant • Overwhelming • Don't know

Question 47. Estimate the impact international migration programs and policies have on your firm's ability to conduct international hiring cost-effectively:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None at all • Minimal • Significant • Overwhelming • Don't know

The same issue is also addressed with questions in the survey about specific government policies. One topic addressed is on the ease or difficulty of identifying public records, such as criminal records, of prospective employees. Gaining access to such records can be difficult and time consuming, and may inhibit hiring from certain countries or locales if the information is not available. Following a series of questions on access to criminal records, the survey offers the following question:

Question 32. Would you say it also difficult to identify...? Please select all that apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit score • Legal records • Education records • Driver's license • Driving records • Certifications • Don't know

Knowing which laws, regulations and policies are of greatest importance on hiring provides an important starting point for a dialogue with business leaders on what changes government and industry can make together to improve the governance of global migration. Understanding which public records can be difficult to identify provides a very specific issue area of shared interest that could be addressed collaboratively and improved.

Survey II: On considering migrants as consumers

With global migration expanding for work, study, family reunification, refuge and asylum, migrants are quickly becoming an important segment of the market for a number of industries such as banking, education, insurance, money transfer, recruitment and others. As providers of products and services to migrants and refugees, businesses in these industries have an interest in certain migration policy issues, particularly though not limited to: integration, identity, credentialing, and the provision of rights; migrant values, value changes, and consumer behaviour; opportunity for expanding markets; and, migrant consumer rights.

The potential results of addressing these issues are the benefits that can come from building connections between host and home countries, increasing competitiveness and allowing for the circulation of ideas that could promote development. Additionally, these efforts may increase the value of diaspora voices as well as the companies' brands. If companies are competing for skills and new markets, migrant consumers are fertile ground for building up the workforce later.

One area of mutual interest explored in Survey II is the perceptions of business about migrants' purchasing power and their potential as investors. It might be assumed by businesses that migrants have little disposable income and do not make investments with their savings. If that were the case, it makes sense that firms would not target migrants as potential customers for many business services such as banking, education or money transfers. However, evidence is growing that migrants are an important consumer base for firms both today and in the future. In this way, firms may have a business-interest in trying to sell services to migrants, an effort that in-turn expands the opportunities for migrants to integrate into society.

Based on those ideas, Survey II first asks respondents whether their firm's market research reveals their customers to be from diverse nationalities. Those responding "yes" are presented a set of detailed follow-up questions:

Question 4. How do you tackle this situation? Please select all that apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We offer our services and/or products with instructions and information in foreign languages • We create advertisements in foreign languages • Our customer service support is offered in foreign languages too. • We ally with organizations and NGOs from those communities • We don't conduct any specific actions • Don't know

Question 5. Do you offer services and/or products specifically tailored for migrants?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we have a specific services and/or products for migrants, and we offer it in their native languages • Yes, we have specific services and/or products though we offer them in the local language only • No, we don't have a specific portfolio nor specific services but we do adapt our current service offering to migrants' needs • No, we don't, we only offer one set of services and/or products for everyone but we offer them in other languages • No, we don't • Don't know

Question 6. Please select which of the following statement represents your current situation regarding offering services and/or products tailored for migrants:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have considered creating specific services for migrants and see that as a future phase • We have considered creating specific services for migrants but still don't have enough data as to the benefits from such investment • We have considered it but can't invest on product/service development at the moment • We have assessed it and it isn't a good investment • Don't know

The responses would provide detailed information on the degree to which firms see migrants as an important part of their customer base and the ways in which firms are tailoring their products to migrants. The information can guide policy decisions about what additional actions might help business reach out and engage migrants as customers.

Those responding “no” are also presented a detailed follow-up question:

Question 7. Would you say it is because...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our services and/or products are not meant for migrants • We do not offer services and/or products that migrants can purchase • We don't have that level of detail in our market research • We do not conduct regular market research • Don't know

It might be assumed that firms that do not have diverse customers may not have any interest in migrants as consumers. The responses here will provide insights into the extent to which some firms know about the potential of migrants as important customers—now and in the future.

Initial attempt to distribute reveals issues

The two surveys were distributed via email in the first week of February 2014 by IOE to the organisation's extensive network of national employer federations. The national federations, in turn, distributed the survey among their membership. The goal of this broad dissemination was to garner as many responses as possible, potentially allowing the research team to analyse the results in time for the present GFMD thematic meeting and Business Roundtables. After only nine responses came in that week, the survey was disseminated via the same method twice more. The result after four weeks was much lower than anticipated, with only 18 responses to Survey I and ten responses to Survey II.

Such a low response renders the data culled from this distribution moot. As a result, this initial attempt to distribute the surveys is best considered as a “beta test”: A second level, external pilot-test of a survey. At the beta test stage, the survey has already passed through the first-level, internal pilot-test (alpha test) and glaring defects have been removed. But since the survey may still have some minor problems that could potentially affect its success, it is released to selected participants for testing under normal, everyday conditions of use to spot the remaining flaws.

This beta test revealed low response rates, a high incidence of skipped questions, and numerous “don't know” answers, which collectively could indicate:

- The people who received the survey questions did not have the information available to them to answer the questions;
- The people receiving the survey did not have sufficient knowledge in the subject area to feel qualified to interpret the questions;

- The presentation of the survey via an email did not generate sufficient interest and/or motivation to respond to the questions;
- There was insufficient incentive for the individual and/or the firm to dedicate the time and resources needed to answer the questions; or,
- A combination of some or all of the above.

Moving Forward

Surveys such as the two developed for this effort have the potential to offer invaluable information to policy makers about industry activity, experiences and perspectives that are directly relevant to migrants and their experiences working aboard and, sometimes, returning home. The information could provide a critical foundation for identifying areas of mutual interest that cross-sector collaborations can work on together.

However, surveys sent to firms to complete do face barriers. Largest among them is establishing the view by firms that the expenditure of time and resources it takes to complete the survey is worth it. When firms are committed to completing a survey, many of the issues raised above are addressed internally.

In moving forward with this important survey effort, the input of the business community would be helpful at this time. As we work toward distributing the two surveys in such a way that a large sample can be accessed and data can be fully analyzed using statistical methods, businesses present at today's meeting could help provide recommendations for how to best:

- Identify a partner(s) with established relationships with business that can help distribute the surveys in a more effective way
- Adapt the surveys to address specific industry activities or functions and so that they can be sent separately to different department heads within one firm.

- Establish an industry leadership committee that could promote the surveys and encourage firms to complete them.
- Create incentives for completing the surveys, such as a special publication tailored to business executives and that uses the survey responses to report on aggregate industry trends, practices, and perspectives (made available to all who complete the surveys).