



# Moving Global Talent

Good practice

Member State, Region: South Denmark

## Basic project details

### Main institutions heading the initiative:

The project was initiated by two organisations: *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark* – a not-for-profit membership organisation<sup>1</sup> devoted to increasing the competitiveness of Southern Danish companies – and *Odense Robotics* – Denmark's leading cluster for robotics and drones.

### Organisations involved:

18 private companies, 11 municipalities and two educational providers.<sup>2</sup>

**Project duration (start – end date):** 1.08.2018 – 31.01.2022

**Main sector targeted:** Attraction of talent.

### Goals of the initiative:

The project's principal objective was to help companies in Southern Denmark to attract, settle, onboard, and retain international talent.

### Official website:

<https://work-live-stay.dk/tag-del-i-vores-projekter/moving-global-talent>

## Implementation costs

**Total budget:** DKK 23,9 million – EUR 3,2 million.

**Sources of funding:** Co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Southern Denmark Growth Forum.

### Amounts:

- Southern Denmark Growth Forum<sup>3</sup> (12,2 million DKK – EUR 1,6 million).
- EU Funding (11,7 million DKK – EUR 1,57 million).

**EU funding:** European Social Fund (2014-2020) / European Social Fund + (2021-2027).



## Short summary of the project

**The *Moving Global Talent (MGT)* project was a capacity-building exercise, focused on bolstering the ability of companies to attract, onboard, and retain highly qualified international talent in the region of Southern Denmark.**

Over its lifetime, **the project led to the development of several human resource (HR) tools that increased companies' capacities to engage with and welcome skilled workers from abroad.** These tools remain available and are routinely used by company managers, HR staff, municipal settlement consultants and others in the region. The tools help

with the concrete tasks and challenges of talent attraction and equip companies with greater awareness of the potential staffing opportunities available in the international arena. At the same time, **the project implemented visibility promotions in selected areas that informed prospective workers of the employment opportunities available in Southern Denmark.**

## Regional Context<sup>4</sup>

The region of Southern Denmark (Syddanmark) is one of the five administrative regions in Denmark. It is home to 1.2 million people spread across urban centres (with Odense being the greatest urban conglomerate in the region) and rural communities, and records GDP levels which are 15 percentage points higher than the EU average. **It boasts a varied and dynamic economy**, with centres of international excellency in robotics manufacturing and ship building. The Region of Southern Denmark is characterised by a relatively high number of jobs in social institutions, health care, industry, trade, building/construction, transport, and the hospitality sector. In addition, the companies LEGO, Danfoss, ECCO, Ørsted Wind Power are central to the region's business community. Today, 69 % of those employed in this region are skilled workers or have a higher education.

**The region was classified as a strong innovator by the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023.** Despite enviable performance across most of the indicators contributing to the RIS, the region underperforms in the number of ICT specialists employed – one of the core target groups of the *MGT* initiative. For international talent facing the Danish labour market, core elements contributing to attractiveness are represented by high levels of job mobility, extensive social safety nets, and enviable working conditions which are embodied in the aptly named “flexicurity” model.



# Effectiveness

## Types of activities

The *MGT* initiative pursued a holistic approach to the issue of talent attraction, in the sense that all aspects of the project were conceptualised together, rather than in isolation. These interconnected activities can be summarised as follows:

### Research activities

The Team at *Work-Live-Stay* carried out **desk research and stakeholder engagement** to clarify the following elements of the talent attraction approach: (i) **Clear mapping of the companies' current and future competence needs**, obtained via one-on-one interviews. This collection of knowledge, which was summarised in individual company profiles for each of the participating firms, showed that the most in-demand competence profiles were in the fields of robot technology, software design/programming and industrial production; (ii) The Team carried out a **data-driven exercise to select areas with an excess of the required skills and conditions encouraging relocation** (e.g. high unemployment rates). They thus identified Bucharest (Romania), Norte (Portugal), Madrid (Spain), as well as the Netherlands, Germany, and England, as areas where to target their attraction campaigns. Information about these regions was then shared with participating companies. (iii) A survey called "Expat life", sent out to international workers living in Southern Denmark asked about what keeps them in the area. The results showed that the top reasons people move to Denmark are for a better balance between work and life, high living standards, and good job opportunities.

### Attraction

**Several activities were carried out to create visibility for Southern Danish companies.** These activities included **participation in career fairs** in the regions and countries identified above, **social media campaigns**, and the **promotion of articles and videos to showcase the experiences of international workers in Denmark.** The project also featured a spin-off, embodied in the campaign "We are robot heroes".<sup>5</sup> This campaign centred around testimonials and was meant to promote the attractiveness of the robotics cluster in Odense.

### Internationalisation

**One of the core objectives of the project was to build capacity in participating companies to attract international talent more effectively. To this end, a number of concrete tools were developed for both firms and potential employees:** (i) Tool for employer branding strategy – a tool featuring videos, models and templates for firms to reflect upon their brand, formalise it and promote it amongst prospective employees; (ii) Introduction programme to the Danish language<sup>6</sup> – a tool to equip prospective employees with a basic understanding of Danish; (iii) Digital pre- and on-boarding tools – single-access hubs where firms and prospective employees can find all relevant information related to the reception of international talent; (iv) A maturity model to assess the companies' readiness to onboard international talent. The model includes a questionnaire and self-reflection guide that helps firms identify gaps in their offerings and advises them on tools to enhance their appeal to international talent; (v) a chatbot which provided answers to specific questions about laws and regulations for international labour.

On top of these activities, **several theme-based networks were established to create spaces for discussion amongst the participants.** For example, the "Network for international recruitment", which gathered HR professionals to discuss emerging challenges concerning the attraction of international talent; or the "Settlement lounge", thanks to which municipalities could share their experiences in integrating the incomers – both the workers and their families – in the social life of the territory.<sup>7</sup>



# Important outputs, results & achievements

- **Companies linked to the project have built stronger competences in attracting and receiving highly skilled international employees**, as well as, to a lesser extent, retaining them. In a survey<sup>8</sup> asking participating companies about the effects of the initiative:
  - 76% responded that they are more able to attract highly qualified international employees.
  - 71% stated that they are better equipped to onboard highly qualified international employees.
  - 47% shared that they are more capable to retain highly qualified international employees.
  - 65% plan to recruit more international workers as a result of their participation.
- **Several simple and concrete tools have been developed in collaboration with partner companies.** These tools, which are targeted to business leaders and HR professionals within companies seeking to source talent from abroad, cover areas such as maturity assessment<sup>9</sup>, Employer branding, Pre-boarding, On-boarding, Retention, Off-boarding, and International employees. The vast majority (92%) of the firms that participated in the *MGT* initiative viewed these tools as value-creating. A selected number of these tools have gone on to constitute, to this day, an integral part of the value proposition of *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark*.
- **The project performed rather well with regard to some of the activity and output targets it planned to achieve:**
  - The number of *matches*<sup>10</sup> between international workers and participating test companies was 143, compared to a goal of 141.
  - As a result of the project, a total of 86 highly qualified international talents were attracted to the region and took on stable positions as permanent employees, compared to a goal of 97. Of this number, 32 employees were employed in companies of the robotics cluster.
  - The number of exposures obtained via the visibility campaigns largely exceeded expectations: 208,917 exposures were registered compared to a goal of 80,000.





## Key success factors

Three key success factors emerge from the experience of the *MGT* initiative.

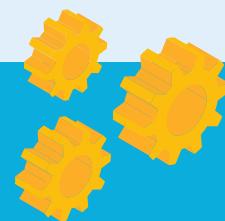
**The first concerns the holistic approach to talent attraction.** *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark* and *Odense Robotics* followed an A-to-Z strategy to determine the skills needed in the local productive system and ensure that, once sourced from abroad, the selected talents would find it easy to settle in the area. Therefore, **setting up a whole range of activities covering research, awareness promotion, outreach, counselling for both firms and prospective employees and capacity building proved to be one of the most successful elements of the initiative.**

---

**The second key success factor that gathered praise was the close collaboration between *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark*, *Odense Robotics*, and the companies** – especially small and medium enterprises – that were assisted in their talent internationalisation strategies. These connections led to important discoveries and directly contributed to key HR tools that are central to the project. For example, regular talks with the companies showed that they were not as appealing to international talent as they might have thought or lacked crucial processes for onboarding. This finding led the project promoters to develop the maturity tool, a survey designed to check how ready a company is to attract talent and what areas need improvement. **In general, maintaining close and direct communication with the participating companies ensured that the tools developed were needs-driven.**

---

**Finally, representatives of *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark* remarked how a precise definition of the competence profiles to be targeted –generated through research and talks with the companies – can go a long way in ensuring the success of attraction strategies.** Having clear ideas on the skills to be sourced from abroad can help target attraction campaigns to the areas where these competences are available, connect with the educational providers in these areas, and promote visibility amongst a receptive audience. The representatives from *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark (WLS-SD)* underscored this point and are using this method in new projects, such as *Skills for a Green Denmark*.



## Key challenges

Two main challenges emerged throughout the *MGT* initiative.

**First, in several instances, the participating companies proved to be immature for internationalisation, despite having manifested an interest in attracting talent from abroad.** This issue was reflected, for example, in the lack of resources devoted to the translation of large numbers of safety procedures from Danish to English. Nevertheless, striving to address this challenge resulted in the development of the maturity tool, which provides firms with an understanding of their position with regard to international talent.

---

**Second, and perhaps most importantly, the project unfolded during the COVID-19 pandemic.** This unfavourable international environment limited the project's effectiveness. On the one hand, international mobility was restricted for public health considerations. On the other hand, volatile economic conditions hindered companies' desires to expand their workforces. One should also note that the pandemic gave momentum to the concept of remote work and remote outsourcing of tasks. This might have suggested other avenues for talent sourcing to Danish companies, especially in the field of software development, a domain that is particularly suited to a remote arrangement.

# Scalability<sup>11</sup> and replicability<sup>12</sup>

## Scalability

Concerning scalability, *Work-Live-Stay* representatives suggested that this initiative could be easily scaled and, for instance, implemented at the national level. Indeed, while there would be administrative and logistical hurdles to consider, a larger set of companies involved would likely lead to more suitable and enduring matches between firms and prospective international employees. A greater number of companies reached by the initiative would imply a larger number of companies that are mature enough to offer the conditions for effective attraction of international talent. It should also be noted that the HR practices and tools developed in the context of the MGT initiative are standardised and freely available, which allows companies to start thinking about internationalisation without the explicit and direct involvement of *WLS-SD*.

## Replicability

Regarding replicability, the initiative could be implemented in different contexts if certain conditions are met. First, other regions seeking to implement this approach should showcase a similar level of economic development as the one enjoyed by the Region of Southern Denmark. Southern Denmark offers a varied and highly productive industrial landscape. The economic dynamism of the area ensures that available opportunities exist for highly skilled professionals, which may not be the reality across the entire Union. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the key retention factors highlighted by the “Expat Life” survey was the availability of good career prospects.

Another important condition is willingness and interest by participating companies. While not all SMEs in Southern Denmark were ready to internationalise their workforce, there was a broad interest to do so. Indeed, companies that were interviewed on the matter explained that access to highly qualified labour is one of the biggest barriers to growth (65% of the companies surveyed expressed difficulties in recruiting qualified employees, and 47% of them complained about difficulties in retaining the qualified employees) – which legitimates the *MGT* initiative. Other regions seeking to replicate this initiative would need to ensure that the same willingness exists. Moreover, as mentioned in the key success factors section, results are likely to be more promising if the targeted groups – namely the specific competence profiles to be sourced – are narrowly and precisely defined. Other institutions that wish to establish a talent attraction initiative would benefit from such a targeted approach.



# Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the capacity of the project to be sustained over the long-term. **While the initiative reached the natural end of its life in September 2021, some of its most promising elements continue to be employed today, which testifies to the lasting impact of the methodology employed.** Indeed, after the project's expiration, a three-months extension to the project was granted (until January 2022) to anchor the knowledge and tools developed via the *MGT* initiative. *Work-Live-Stay Denmark* presented the tools they developed to around 100 companies through presentations, webinars, and events. Thirty of them even received one-to-one counselling on how to best leverage these resources. Furthermore, some of the insight gained through the experience of the *MGT* initiative are being carried on in new projects by *WLS-SD*, such as the *Skills for a green Denmark*, which seeks to secure the competences necessary to carry forward the green transition in the region.

**Several of the networks established during the project also endure to this day**, including the HR Network and the Settlement lounge mentioned in the "Type of activities" Section. All in all, the close collaboration with companies, and the involvement of stakeholders in the area – such as educational providers and municipalities – contributed to a successful reception of the initiative, and thus to its lasting impact. Indeed, as a networking organisation<sup>13</sup>, fostering relationships and cooperation represents the core activity of *WLS-SD* even beyond the limited time horizon of this specific project.

# Innovativeness

## Innovative aspects of the practice:

The most noteworthy aspects of the initiative did not necessarily rely on novel concepts or technologies, but rather on the sound understanding of companies' needs and concerns (which came about thanks to the direct conversations held by *WLS-SD* and the involved companies), to the creation and use of the tools explained in the previous sections, and the networking activities that surrounded these efforts. In this regard, **the innovations that can be ascribed to *MGT* are the HR tools described above. These instruments were not available in the region and now constitute a significant resource for value creation.**

The *MGT* project also provided space for the adoption of innovative digital technologies. One of the clearest examples was the chatbot IRIS, which was launched in the summer of 2019. IRIS could be used by companies to get quick and straightforward answers to doubts they may have regarding rules and regulations pertaining to the attraction of international workers. Unfortunately, the chatbot was discontinued in 2023 due to the high costs of running it.





## Sources

Brief overview of the labour market (EURES). Available: [https://eures.europa.eu/living-and-working/labour-market-information/labour-market-information-denmark\\_da](https://eures.europa.eu/living-and-working/labour-market-information/labour-market-information-denmark_da)

Interview with representative of *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark*, conducted on the 12.03.2024. (Note: The interviewee shared internal documents with the HTP Secretariat in support of their work)

Moving Global Talent – Final evaluation (Pluss & COWI on behalf of Danmarks Erhvervsfremmebestyrelse (Denmark's business promotion board). Available: <https://erhvervsfremmebestyrelsen.dk/moving-global-talent>

Moving Global Talent (*Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark*). Available: <https://work-live-stay.dk/tag-del-i-vores-projekter/moving-global-talent>

Onboarding and retention (*Odense Robotics*). Available: <https://www.odenserobotics.dk/onboarding-your-international-talent/>

Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Regional profile: Denmark (European Commission). Available: [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2023/ec\\_rtd\\_ris-regional-profiles-denmark.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2023/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profiles-denmark.pdf)

Working conditions in Denmark (Workplace Denmark). Available: <https://workplacedenmark.dk/working-conditions/>

Copenhagen Capacity must ensure competences for a green Denmark (Via Ritzau). Available: <https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/13660483/copenhagen-capacity-skal-sikre-kompetencer-til-et-gront-danmark?publisherId=13561117>

---

## Contact

E-mail: [secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu](mailto:secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu)

Website: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en)



# Endnotes

- 1 The partners of *WLS-SD* are: Business Esbjerg, Business Region Midtvest, Business Vordingborg, Copenhagen Capacity, Dansk Industri, Erhverv Aarhus, EUC Lillebælt, EUC Syd, Hansenberg, Næstved Erhverv, Region Syddanmark, Rybners Uddannelser, Trekantområdet Danmark, UdviklingsRåd Sønderjylland, Workindenmark
- 2 Kvist Industries, Skyways Technics A/S, LEGO Group A/S, Sydvestjysk Sygehus, TRESU, Uni Consulting, Bank Data, KVM-Genvex A/S, BuildCode, Robot Nordic, Universal Robots, Kjelkvist A/S, HP Therkelsen, Dinex, LINAX, Maersk Container Industry, Dansk Scanning A/S, Hansen Technologies; Varde, Billund, Esbjerg, Kolding, Fredericia, Haderslev, Middelfart, Odense, Tønder, Aabenraa, Sønderborg; UCL University College (Svendborg, DK), A2B Danish Language School.
- 3 The Regional Growth Forum of Southern Denmark is responsible for setting up the regional strategy for business development, the objective of which is to increase productivity, growth, and jobs in the region. It is appointed by the Regional Council, and it consists of 21 members, recommended by business organisations, educational institutions and municipalities. The regional authority contributes, both operationally and financially, to its activities.
- 4 The regional context encompasses the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.
- 5 The sub-project focused exclusively on professionals in robotics for the *Odense robotics* cluster. See: <https://robotic-careers.com/testimonial/>
- 6 In collaboration with A2B Danish Language School
- 7 Indeed, the well-being of accompanying partners and the availability of opportunities for them has proved to be a key factor for talent retention.
- 8 Moving Global Talent – Final evaluation (Pluss & COWI on behalf of Denmark's business promotion board)
- 9 The maturity assessment tool is available on-demand from *WLS-SD*.
- 10 Matches imply that a connection was established between companies in a recruitment process and prospective employees from abroad. This does not mean that all the connections resulted in a hiring, as jobseekers still had to go through a formal process to assess their suitability for the role.
- 11 Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.
- 12 Replicability entails that a policy approach can be applied to a different setting in a rather straightforward manner.
- 13 *Work-Live-Stay Southern Denmark* operates on a membership model: organisations that subscribe gain access to benefits such as networking opportunities, consultancy for HR processes, and tailored assistance on specific projects. An overview of the current members – which outnumber the ≈ 30 organisations that took part in the Moving Global Talent initiative – is available at <https://work-live-stay.dk/se-fordelene-som-medlem>.