



## **GLMM Webinar No. 2**

**Monday 27 November 2023**

**2:00pm - 3:30pm CET**

***This Version: 8 November 2023***

### **Title**

The Future of Labour Demand in the Gulf States: What Skills?

### **Subtopics**

Labour market; Labour policy; Economic reform; Migration policy; Skilled labour; Megaprojects; Innovation; Future of migration.

### **Speakers**

- Nejla Ben Mimoune, Research Associate and Programs Manager, Middle East Council for Global Affairs, Doha
- Khalil Bohazza, Manager of Labour Affairs in the Executive Bureau of the Council of Ministers of Labour in the GCC States, Bahrain
- Steffen Hertog, Associate Professor in Comparative Politics in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science
- Magdalena Karolak, Associate Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at Zayed University, Dubai
- Froilan Malit, Visiting Fellow, Department of Political Science, American University Dubai, Ph.D. Politics Candidate, University of Glasgow

### **Moderator**

- Dr. Christian Koch, Director of Research, Gulf Research Center

### **Registration**

Registration form: [https://grc-net.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_6rBoVEUBT4aFKFDbpHGqkQ](https://grc-net.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6rBoVEUBT4aFKFDbpHGqkQ).

### **Questions**

1. How has the labour market evolved since 2010 in Gulf states?
2. What are the new skills on demand, currently and in the future, especially keeping in mind the objectives of the various Vision 2030/2035 plans?
3. What does this mean in terms of demand for migrant workers, now and in the future?

## **Abstract**

In view of the economic reforms enacted recently in the Gulf states, what is the future of skills demand there, and how will it affect the trends and patterns of labour and labour migration to the region? The webinar will review the changes and innovations in the Gulf States' economies over the last decade and assess their impact on the actual structure of the workforce, by nationality (national – non-national) and skill level. The webinar will discuss future trends in the demand for skilled labour, highlight the challenges they pose and measures to address these challenges, and reflect on possible scenarios for the future of migration to the region, concerning the number and characteristics of migrants.

## **Description**

Since the late 2000s, and even more in the past decade, reform measures have sought to diversify GCC states' economies and alleviate their vulnerability to the volatile nature of hydrocarbon revenues. Economic and social reform master plans (e.g., Qatar National Vision 2030, Saudi Vision 2030, New Kuwait Vision 2035) advocate for decarbonizing economies and promoting renewable and alternative energies, for strengthening and expanding productive private sectors, as well as for creating knowledge-based economies through investing in education and fostering innovative, high value-added industries.

However, diversifying economies and putting research, development, and innovation at the heart of internationally competitive, high value-added economies require a highly skilled workforce. Several sectors in the GCC have already changed significantly due to new technologies, including government (through the introduction of e-government), finance (through automation, online banking, and offshoring of back-office tasks), retail (through e-commerce), and transport (through gig economy platforms like Uber and Careem as well as new online delivery services) (Hertog 2019). In the future, the automation of labour and the development of AI may further overhaul the nature of jobs, as well as workers' profiles and, consequently, migration trends and patterns. Even the domestic sector receives new demands in terms of technical and transversal skills from employers, especially around care for children and the elderly (Tayah and Assaf 2018).

Labour statistics published by NSOs in the region confirm, to some extent, an increase in the relative share of skilled migrant workers, a trend reinforced by the progress made in the employment of Gulf citizens. Nonetheless, a hike in the number of workers employed in the lowest category of occupations could be noticed in 2021-2022, for instance in Saudi Arabia, possibly in line with the large inflows of workers recorded in the construction sector, as labour-intensive new cities and other megaprojects such as Neom eventually resumed after the COVID-19 closures. Is the region moving back to the pre-transition recruitment patterns (large numbers of low-skilled, low-pay, and low-rights workers); is this reverse trend transitory, or limited to specific sectors, such as construction?

The aim of the webinar is to reflect on possible scenarios for the future of labour in and labour migration to the region, with regard to the number and characteristics of migrants. After reviewing the changes and innovations in the Gulf States' economies over the last decade and assessing their impact on the actual structure of the workforce by nationality (national – non-national) and skill level, the webinar will discuss future trends in the demand for skilled labour, highlight the challenges they pose (matching of skills and demands, accurate assessments of skills, for instance), assess specific measures to address these challenges (development of skills verification programmes, unification of skills and profession classifications, etc.) and global policies pertaining to labour demand (diversification of countries of origin, an increase of wages, etc.). Some hypotheses on the future of labour migration to the region will be drawn.

## References

- Hertog, S. *The Future of Migrant Work in the GCC: Literature Review and a Research and Policy Agenda*. In: Fifth Abu Dhabi Dialogue Ministerial Consultation, 2019-10-16 – 2019-10-17, Abu Dhabi Dialogue Among the Asian Labor Sending and Receiving Countries, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/102382/>.
- Karolak, M. "UAE as a Center of Innovation: Towards Attracting Global Talent" GLMM Policy Brief No. 5 September 2023, Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population Programme (GLMM) at the Gulf Research Center (GRC), <https://gulfmigration.grc.net/publications/#briefs>.
- aus dem Moore, J. P., V. Chandran, and J. Schubert. 2018. *The Future of Jobs in the Middle East*. World Government Summit, Dubai, 2018. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/middle%20east%20and%20africa/are%20middle%20east%20workers%20ready%20for%20the%20impact%20of%20automation/the-future-of-jobs-in-the-middle-east.pdf>.
- Tayah, M.-J., and H. Assaf. *The Future of Domestic Work in the Countries of the Gulf* Cooperation Council. Abu Dhabi Dialogue, 2018. <http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/sites/default/files/document-library/2018%20ADD%20SOM%20-%20Future%20of%20Domestic%20Work%20Report%20-min.pdf>.

## Organisation

The webinar is organized by the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) programme: <https://gulfmigration.grc.net>.

For the previous GLMM webinar: <https://gulfmigration.grc.net/events/>.

GLMM uses the GRC webinar platform: <https://webinars.grc.net>.

## GLMM Mission

An international independent, non-partisan, non-profit programme hosted and supported by the Gulf Research Center. The programme provides data, analyses, and recommendations contributing to the improvement of understanding and management of Gulf labour migration, population, and labour markets, engaging with, and respecting the viewpoints of all stakeholders.

## GLMM Activities

Gathering, analysing and elaborating data and documents; Researching and analysing key issues; Publishing various types of papers and books; Organizing panels, workshops, and webinars; Disseminating research results to agencies that are working on labour migration and population issues and rights.

## GLMM Publications

GLMM publishes factsheets, policy briefs, explanatory notes, research papers, special issues of journals, and edited volumes - <https://gulfmigration.grc.net/publications/>.

## GLMM Data

GLMM has developed a database that relies, first and foremost, on the national data and documents of the GCC countries. It aims at collecting, to the extent possible, data and documents relevant for the understanding of labour markets, migration, and populations in these countries. It assesses the quality of the data and makes them available to users in a user-friendly format. It

contains more than 1,000 tables published over the past ten plus years:

<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/glmm-database/demographic-and-economic-module/>.

### **Audience**

GCC data producers; GCC policy makers; Experts from regional and international organisations; Researchers from academia and think tanks; Staff of advocacy organisations; and Journalists. Every participant will be able to ask questions by voice and via chat. Access is managed by the organisers.

### **Languages**

Arabic and English

### **Recording**

Webinars are recorded to assure accurate reporting. The recording will not be distributed.

### **Summary**

A short summary of the webinar will be made in English without attributing statements to anyone.