

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR EXPANDING ACCESS TO PROMISING
FOREIGN LABOR MARKETS FOR CITIZENS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This study employed a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the supply and demand dynamics of foreign labor markets for citizens of Uzbekistan. The primary objectives included an in-depth analysis of current migration and emigration trends, the assessment of bilateral labor agreements with governments of countries offering high employment potential for Uzbek nationals, and the evaluation of the scope and effectiveness of vocational training programs designed to prepare individuals with secondary education for employment abroad.

Keywords: *Labor migration, Uzbekistan, Canadian labor market, EU labor market, migration policy, vocational training, skilled workers, bilateral agreements, remittances, Foreign Labor Migration Agency, qualification recognition, aging population.*

Introduction

In light of global labor market trends and increasing international migration flows, the number of Uzbek citizens seeking employment abroad has risen significantly, accompanied by growing interest in overseas job opportunities. Notably, while the Russian Federation has recently imposed stricter migration regulations, countries such as Canada and several European Union (EU) member states have emerged as attractive destinations for Uzbek nationals due to their higher income levels and superior quality of life. However, diverging migration policies across these countries and specific labor market requirements—particularly the insufficient level of professional training among migrants—remain significant challenges for prospective Uzbek labor migrants.

In response to the rising demand for labor mobility, especially toward Canada and EU countries, Uzbekistan has undertaken substantial reforms in its labor migration policy. The Foreign Labor Migration Agency, operating under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, plays a pivotal role in overseeing and facilitating migration processes. The agency is responsible for ensuring the legal protection of Uzbek migrant workers and for providing access to essential resources aimed at preventing exploitation and labor rights violations.

Over the past few years, Uzbekistan has concluded several bilateral agreements to regulate migration flows with key destination countries, including Canada and EU members. A notable development was the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding signed with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), which outlines Uzbekistan's commitment to strengthening migration governance and safeguarding the rights of its citizens working abroad (ICMPD, 2022).

To enhance the employability of its citizens in the international labor market, Uzbekistan has also invested in vocational education and professional training initiatives. Prominent among these are the Job-Benefit Mono-Centers and Vocational Training Centers for the Unemployed, which serve as institutional mechanisms to develop job-specific competencies aligned with the labor market needs of destination countries. These centers provide training in high-demand fields such as construction, healthcare, and information technology, and their curricula are designed following international labor standards and the specific requirements of host countries (ICMPD, 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to examine both the opportunities and limitations associated with the integration of Uzbek citizens into foreign labor markets. Specifically, the research focuses on four key areas: (1) identification of in-demand professions in the Canadian and EU labor markets; (2) critical analysis of migration policies in these regions; (3) assessment of the accessibility and effectiveness of domestic vocational training programs; and (4) development of strategic recommendations to enhance the efficient utilization of foreign employment opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan.

Literature review

Labor migration is an important component of the modern global economy, and international labor movements have a significant impact on economic, social, and political processes¹. This literature review explores the expanding opportunities available to citizens of Uzbekistan within the labor markets of Canada and the European Union. The primary aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of international labor migration processes, assess their socio-economic implications, and evaluate the role of vocational training in facilitating successful integration into foreign labor markets.

A thematic analysis approach was employed in conducting the review. Data sources included national online news portals such as Daryo.uz and Kun.uz, as well as scientific databases such as Yashil Iqtisodiyot va Taraqqiyot (Green Economy and Development). Key

¹International Organization for Migration. (2019). Return Migration.
<https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/return-migration-in-ca-uz.pdf>

search terms utilized in the literature search included: “labor migration,” “Canada labor market,” “EU immigration policy,” “vocational training for migrants,” and “international qualifications recognition.” The literature was systematically analyzed across relevant thematic domains, supported by theoretical frameworks to contextualize the findings.

Research on labor migration frequently addresses key issues such as the motivational drivers behind migration decisions, the economic impacts on both sending and receiving countries, and patterns of return migration (Askarov, 2023)². Labor migration from Uzbekistan is predominantly motivated by economic factors, including the search for employment opportunities with higher remuneration and the aspiration for enhanced living standards³. (Yaxyoyeva, 2023). International migration theories—such as the Push-Pull Theory and the Dual Labor Market Theory—provide valuable frameworks for understanding the dynamics of labor migration. These theories help explain the socio-economic and structural factors that drive individuals to migrate in search of better employment prospects. In the context of Canada and the European Union, existing studies primarily emphasize the demand for specific occupations, the skill requirements of host countries, and the structural labor shortages that create opportunities for foreign workers⁴ (Yusupov, 2022) . Although Canadian immigration policy offers favorable conditions for skilled foreign workers, significant challenges persist—particularly in the recognition of foreign qualifications and in securing employment that matches migrants’ skills and experience (Askarov, 2023).

Migration policies within the European Union vary considerably among member states. For instance, Germany and Poland actively implement strategies to attract skilled labor, whereas countries such as Italy and Spain tend to focus more on admitting seasonal workers (Yusupov, 2022). Despite these efforts, bureaucratic challenges—particularly those related to the recognition of foreign qualifications and the integration of migrants into domestic labor markets—remain significant barriers to effective labor migration.

Immigration frameworks in both Canada and the European Union are characterized by regulatory complexity. Canada operates structured systems such as the Express Entry and the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which are specifically designed to address labor shortages by facilitating the entry of skilled workers (International Organization for Migration, 2019). In the European Union, although migration policy is largely governed at the national level, member states adhere to a set of common principles. The EU Blue Card scheme, for example, was established to attract highly qualified professionals from non-EU countries, but its implementation and eligibility criteria vary across member states, often imposing strict conditions (Yaxyoyeva, 2023).

² Askarov, Z. (2023). "International legal framework and institutions for regulating labor migration processes." *Green Economy and Development* , 1(11-12).

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378531001_International_Legal_Fundamentals_and_Institutions_of_Regulating_Labor_Migration_Processes

³ Yakhoyeva, FO (2023). "International Labor Migration and Its Role in Uzbekistan." *Innovative Development in the Global Science* , Boston, USA.

<https://academicsresearch.ru/index.php/idtgs/article/download/2720/3523/1260>

⁴ Yusupov, S. (2022). "Labor migration to the European Union and its socio-economic impact." *Educational Innovation and Integration* , 3(1), 45-52.

<https://cedr.tsue.uz/index.php/journal/article/download/1433/1303/1867>

Vocational education and training (VET) programs play a critical role in equipping migrants with the skills needed for successful labor market integration. While both Canada and the EU provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, access to such programs is often limited due to administrative, linguistic, or financial barriers. As a result, many migrants face difficulties in aligning their qualifications with labor market demands in destination countries⁵ (Imomova, 2024).

The process of recognizing foreign qualifications remains complex, often requiring adherence to localized professional and regulatory standards. While much of the existing literature has focused on identifying the structural barriers within this recognition process, limited scholarly attention has been given to the specific opportunities available to Uzbek citizens and the unique challenges they encounter in accessing such opportunities.

Various theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain labor migration, including the Push-Pull Theory, the Dual Labor Market Theory, and the Social Integration Theory. The Push-Pull Theory posits that migration is driven by economic disparities, employment opportunities, and better living conditions in destination countries (Askarov, 2023). The Dual Labor Market Theory emphasizes structural imbalances in developed economies, where the demand for low-skilled labor often prompts the recruitment of foreign workers (Yaxyoyeva, 2023). Social Integration Theory focuses on the processes by which migrants adapt to and integrate within host societies; however, its application to Uzbek migrant populations remains underexplored in current academic discourse.

A critical review of the literature reveals several important research gaps:

- First, there is a lack of comparative analysis of the specific labor market structures and skill demand profiles in Canada and the European Union.
- Second, limited empirical data exists on the accessibility of vocational training programs for Uzbek citizens, particularly regarding enrollment challenges and structural inequalities.
- Third, although bureaucratic and administrative barriers to the recognition of qualifications are acknowledged in general terms, they have not been thoroughly examined in the specific context of Uzbek labor migrants.

This study aims to address these gaps by contributing both theoretical and empirical insights. Through comparative analysis of Canadian and EU labor markets and a closer examination of vocational training and qualification recognition mechanisms, the study intends to develop practical policy recommendations to enhance the labor migration prospects of Uzbek citizens.

The literature review has covered the key themes of labor migration, employment opportunities in Canadian and EU labor markets, immigration policy frameworks, and the role of vocational training. It has also identified and synthesized the main scientific challenges related to the topic. The following sections of the study will outline the empirical

⁵ Imomova, NA (2023). "THE IMPACT OF LABOR MIGRATION ON THE PROCESSES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN UZBEKISTAN." Monograph, Fergana State University. https://kpfu.ru/portal/docs/F_1926210206/Monografiya_Imomova_Nozima_avazkhonovna_FerGU.pdf

research methodology adopted to further investigate these issues and to validate the theoretical assumptions presented.

Methodology

This study was conducted to investigate the opportunities available to citizens of Uzbekistan in the labor markets of Canada and the European Union. The research adopted a mixed-method approach, with a primary emphasis on secondary data analysis, complemented by a small-scale survey. The methodological process was carried out in three key stages: (1) identification of relevant data sources, (2) data collection, and (3) data analysis.

The study primarily relied on secondary data obtained from a range of credible sources, including reports published by international organizations, peer-reviewed academic articles, official statistics from government agencies, and legislative documents related to migration and labor market policies in Canada and EU member states. These materials were essential for assessing institutional frameworks, labor demand, and migration conditions relevant to Uzbek citizens. The collected data were systematized and analyzed using Microsoft Excel to identify patterns, trends, and potential gaps in labor market access.

In addition to secondary data analysis, a small-scale qualitative survey was conducted with Uzbek labor migrants who had previously worked or were currently employed abroad. The survey aimed to gather firsthand insights into their employment experiences, the challenges they encountered, and their recommendations for improving labor migration outcomes. The questionnaire was developed in alignment with the core research objectives and administered through semi-structured interviews.

The secondary data were primarily retrieved from the official websites of international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), as well as national statistical agencies and migration departments of the respective destination countries.^(ILO⁶, OECD⁷, Eurostat⁸, Statistics Canada⁹) and scientific article databases (Researchgate¹⁰). Due to the small sample size of this study, the results are not generalizable. There are also limitations related to the availability and relevance of secondary data.

In selecting data for this study, particular attention was given to the reliability, relevance, and thematic alignment of each source with the research objectives. All sources

⁶International Organization for Migration. (2023). *Uzbekistan: Migration Situation Report (April-September 2023)*. Retrieved from <https://uzbekistan.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd12566/files/documents/2025-01/ozbekiston-migratsiya-vaziyatiga-oid-hisobot-2023-yil-aprel-sentabr.pdf>

⁷Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2023). *Employment and labor markets*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/employment/>

⁸Eurostat. (2023). *Number of citizens of Uzbekistan holding residence permits in the European Union, 2022*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_statistics

⁹Statistics Canada. (2023). *Labor force characteristics*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/subjects/Labour>

¹⁰Zikriyoev, A. (2020). *Foreign Countries' Economies*. Tashkent State University of Economics. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Aziz-Zikriyoev/publication/340900032_Foreign_Countries_Economies_1-TOM_40_ta_mamlakat_Toshkent_Davlat_Economics_Universiteti/links/6283dd28a5268672baf7dcaa/Foreign-Countries-Economies-1-TOM-40-ta-mamlakat-Toshkent-Davlat-Economics-Universiteti.pdf

were documented with complete bibliographic information and formatted according to APA citation standards.

The qualitative component of the research included a small-scale survey comprising five open-ended questions. Data were gathered through interviews with three respondents—Uzbek citizens who had previously worked in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, and who had close family members currently employed in European Union countries. The survey questions were designed to elicit detailed information on key issues related to labor migration and were structured around the following themes:

1. Identification of countries offering the greatest number of employment opportunities;
2. The role of language proficiency in adapting to foreign labor markets;
3. Challenges commonly faced by migrant workers;
4. Perceptions of the effectiveness of Uzbekistan's foreign labor migration policy;
5. Respondents' recommendations for enhancing access to employment abroad.

Secondary data were processed and organized using Microsoft Excel, and analyzed through methods such as trend analysis, comparative tables, and graphical representations. The analytical focus was directed toward identifying countries with the highest labor demand for Uzbek citizens, examining the migration policies of destination countries, and evaluating the alignment between labor market needs and the qualifications of potential migrants. Survey responses were evaluated using a combination of qualitative content analysis and basic quantitative categorization to extract recurring themes and patterns.

Results and findings

This section presents a quantitative analysis of secondary data aimed at examining labor market trends, migration flows, and skill requirements associated with expanding employment opportunities for Uzbek citizens in Canada and the European Union. The objective is to develop a comprehensive understanding of labor demand, employment structures, and the broader economic impact of migration within key receiving countries and sectors.

The data used for this analysis were obtained from authoritative and reliable sources, including *Statistics Canada*, *EUROSTAT*, *Job Bank Canada*, and the *European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training* (CEDEFOP). Analytical tools in Microsoft Excel were employed to process the data, utilizing advanced techniques such as clustered column charts, stacked bar charts, trend lines, correlation analysis, and simple regression models. These visual and statistical methods supported a comparative analysis of labor demand, migration patterns, and occupational skill shortages across selected regions.

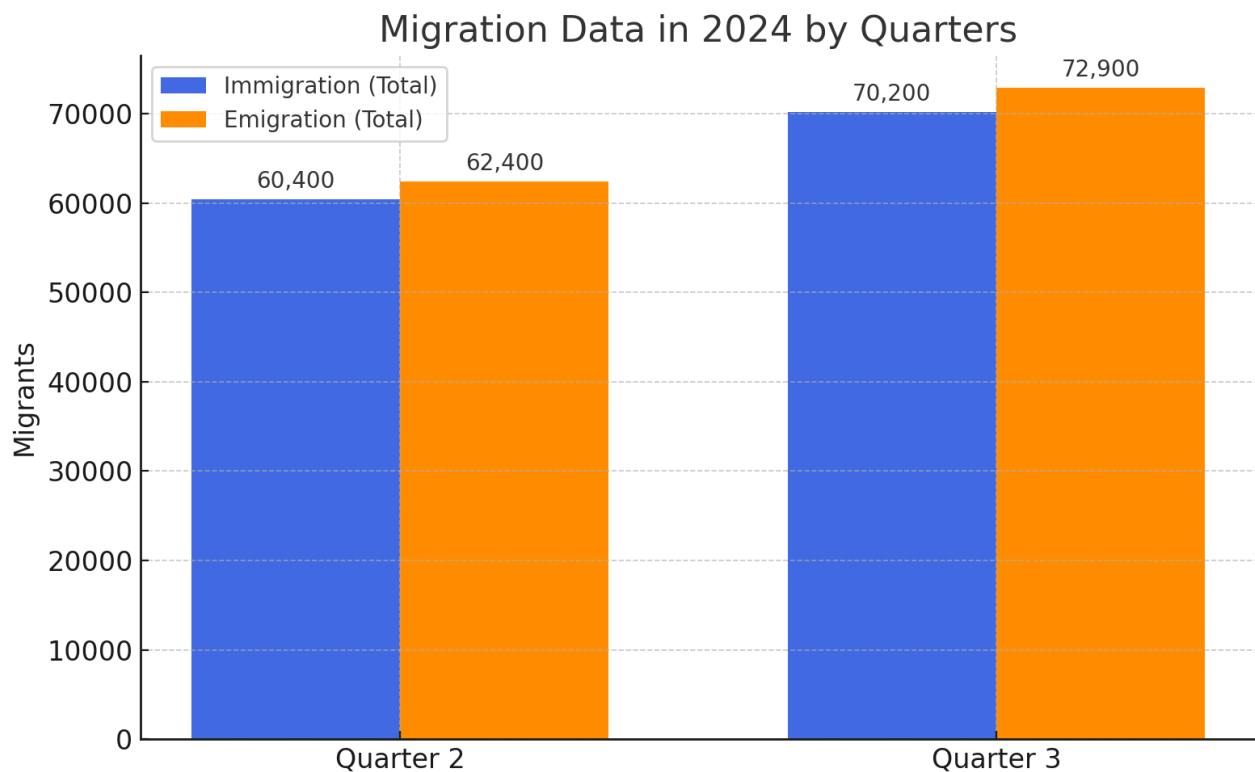
Current Labor Market Dynamics in Uzbekistan

Organized labor migration from Uzbekistan experienced a notable surge in 2024. According to official statistics from the *Agency for External Labor Migration* under the Government of Uzbekistan, the number of citizens employed abroad through formal recruitment programs rose sharply from **38,400 in 2023** to **161,800 in 2024**, marking more than a fourfold increase (Gazeta.uz, 2025). This significant growth reflects the Uzbek

government's intensified efforts to diversify labor destinations beyond traditional markets and to promote legal employment channels in economically advanced countries.

Key Destination Countries for Uzbek Labor Migrants

- **Russian Federation:** Despite a reported **39% decline in remittance flows** from Russia due to the depreciation of the ruble, the number of Uzbek labor migrants working in Russia increased from **29,249 in 2023** to **123,681 in 2024**. This paradox underscores the enduring pull of Russia's geographic proximity and cultural familiarity, even amid economic volatility.
- **Lithuania:** A marked shift toward European labor markets is evident in the case of Lithuania, where Uzbek labor migration rose significantly from **1,800 individuals in early 2023** to nearly **10,000 by March 2024**. This trend suggests a growing preference for EU member states offering legal employment pathways and higher labor standards.
- **South Korea:** The attractiveness of high wages and favorable working conditions in East Asia is reflected in the increase in labor migration to South Korea, where the number of Uzbek workers rose from **4,882 in 2023** to **10,120 in 2024**. This growth is aligned with bilateral labor agreements and employer demand in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.



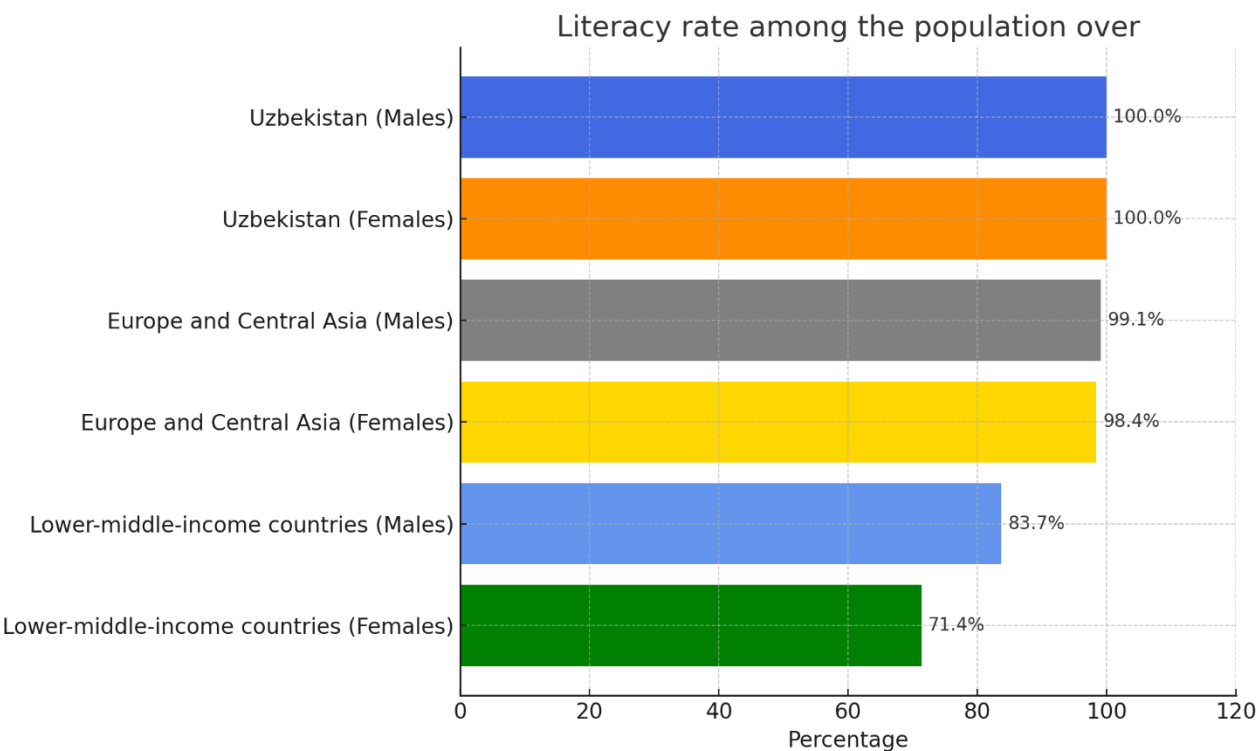
Infographic 1 Migration flow, second and third quarters of 2024

This infographic clearly shows that both migration arrivals and departures increased significantly in each quarter of 2024, which indicates the priority of developing migration for Uzbekistan.

Cooperation with the European Union

Uzbekistan has been actively pursuing bilateral labor agreements with several European Union (EU) member states to establish legal pathways for labor migration. Countries such as Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic have emerged as prominent destinations for Uzbek workers, primarily due to demographic challenges—such as aging populations—and labor shortages in key sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, and care services. These bilateral agreements often contain provisions for the mutual recognition of qualifications, which historically have posed substantial barriers to the labor market integration of migrant workers (The Diplomat, 2024).

The EU labor market continues to demonstrate a consistent demand for both skilled and semi-skilled labor. In 2023, the overall employment rate in the EU stood at 75.3%, although substantial variation existed among member states. For instance, the employment rate reached 83.5% in the Netherlands but fell to 66.3% in Italy (Eurostat, 2024). These inter-country disparities underscore the potential for labor migrants from Uzbekistan to fill critical gaps in countries with lower employment levels, particularly in regions experiencing labor shortages in low- and medium-skilled occupations.



Infographic 2Literacy rate

The data indicate that Uzbekistan has achieved a universal literacy rate of 100% for both men and women—a figure that significantly surpasses the global average and reflects the country’s strong educational foundation. However, despite this high literacy rate, many Uzbek citizens lack the specific vocational skills and foreign language proficiency required

for employment in high-demand occupations abroad, particularly in countries such as Germany.

The infographic presented below illustrates the occupational categories currently experiencing labor shortages in Germany. These include professions in healthcare, engineering, construction, information technology, and skilled trades—areas that typically require not only technical expertise but also a functional command of the German language. This disparity between general education attainment and employability-relevant competencies represents a critical barrier to labor market integration for potential Uzbek migrants.

List of occupations in short supply under Section 18g(1)(2)(1) of the German Residence Act (International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) *taken from the Commission Recommendation of 29 October 2009* ¹¹) (Die Bundesregiuring, 2025)

Occupation group	Code	Category-Specific Professions
Production, Mining, Construction, and Distribution Managers	132	Production Managers, Mining Managers, Construction Managers, Supply & Distribution Managers
ICT Service Managers	133	Information and Communication Technology Services Managers
Professional Services Managers	134	Childcare Services Managers, Health Care Services Managers, Aged Care Services Managers, Social Security Managers, Education Managers, Finance & Insurance Services Managers, Other Professional Services Managers
Science and Engineering Professionals	21	Physicists, Astronomers, Meteorologists, Chemists, Geologists, Geophysicists, Mathematicians, Actuaries, Statisticians
Life Sciences Specialists	213	Biologists, Botanists, Zoologists, Agricultural, Forestry & Fisheries Consultants, Environmental Protection Specialists
Engineering Specialists (excluding electrical engineering)	214	Industrial & Manufacturing Engineers, Civil Engineers, Environmental Engineers, Mechanical Engineers, Chemical Engineers, Mining Engineers, Metallurgists, Other Engineering Professionals

¹¹Die Empfehlung der Kommission vom 29. Oktober 2009 über die Verwendung der internationalen Standardklassifikation der Professions (ISCO-08) finden Sie hier: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009H0824>

Electrical Engineers	215	Electrical Engineers, Electronics Engineers, Telecommunications Engineers
Architects, Directors, Surveyors, and Designers	216	Structural Architects, Landscape Architects, Product & Clothing Designers, Urban & Road Planners, Cartographers & Surveyors, Graphic & Multimedia Designers
Medical Doctors	221	General Practitioners, Specialist Medical Doctors
Nursing and Midwifery Specialists	222	Nursing Specialists, Midwifery Specialists
Veterinarians	225	Veterinarians
Other Health Professionals	226	Dentists, Pharmacists, Environmental & Occupational Health Specialists, Physiotherapists, Dietitians & Nutritionists, Audiologists & Speech Therapists, Ophthalmologists, Other Health Professionals
Teaching Specialists	23	University Teachers, Vocational Education Teachers, Secondary Education Teachers, Primary School Teachers, Early Childhood Educators, Special Needs Teachers, IT Trainers, Music & Art Teachers, Language Teachers
ICT Specialists	25	Systems Analysts, Programmers, Web & Multimedia Programmers, Application Programmers, Database Designers, System Administrators, Network Specialists

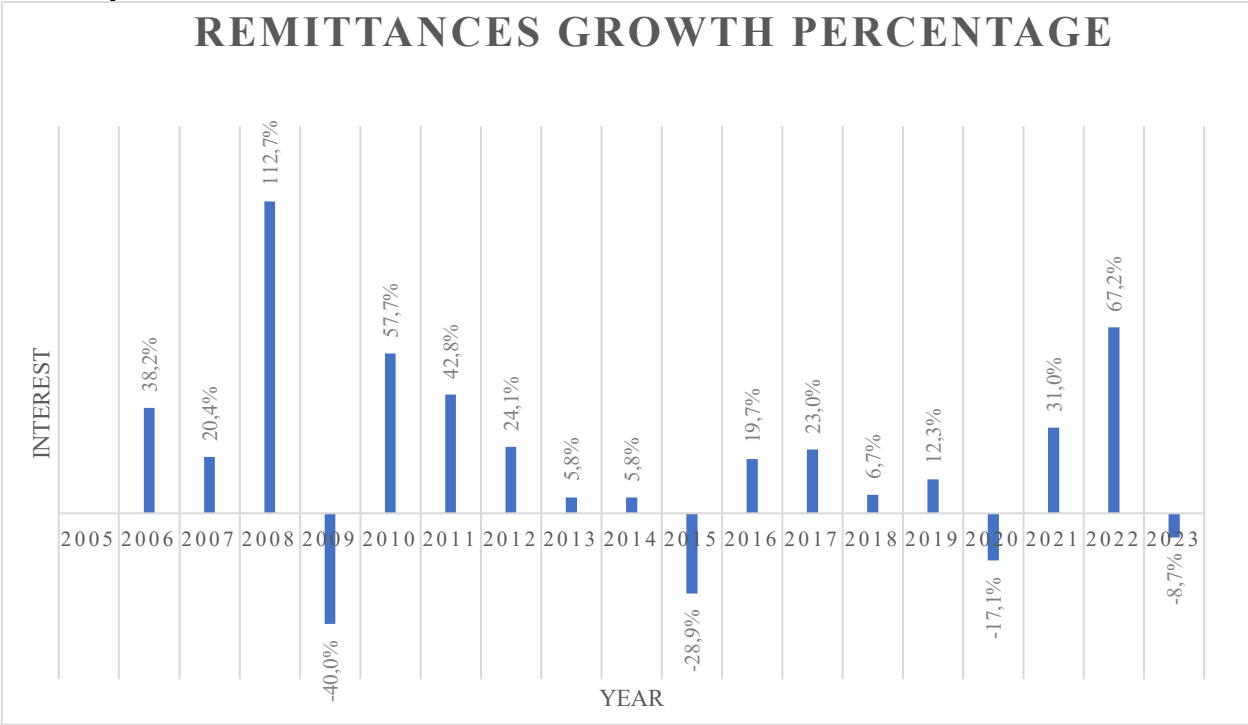
Infographic 3List of professions that are in short supply in the German labor market according to German legislation

The German government has implemented a range of strategic measures to address persistent labor shortages in key sectors. According to data from the official Make it in Germany portal, a total of 157,924 work visas were issued in 2023. In the same year, 113,500 foreign professionals held EU Blue Cards in Germany, and by 2024, the number of foreign medical workers employed in the country reached 270,000, underscoring Germany's reliance on international labor to meet domestic workforce demands.

One of the primary challenges facing Uzbek labor migrants remains the recognition of foreign-acquired qualifications. This issue continues to hinder access to skilled employment in destination countries. In response, Uzbekistan has intensified its cooperation with international organizations and host governments to establish frameworks for the mutual recognition of qualifications. Notably, bilateral agreements with countries such as Germany

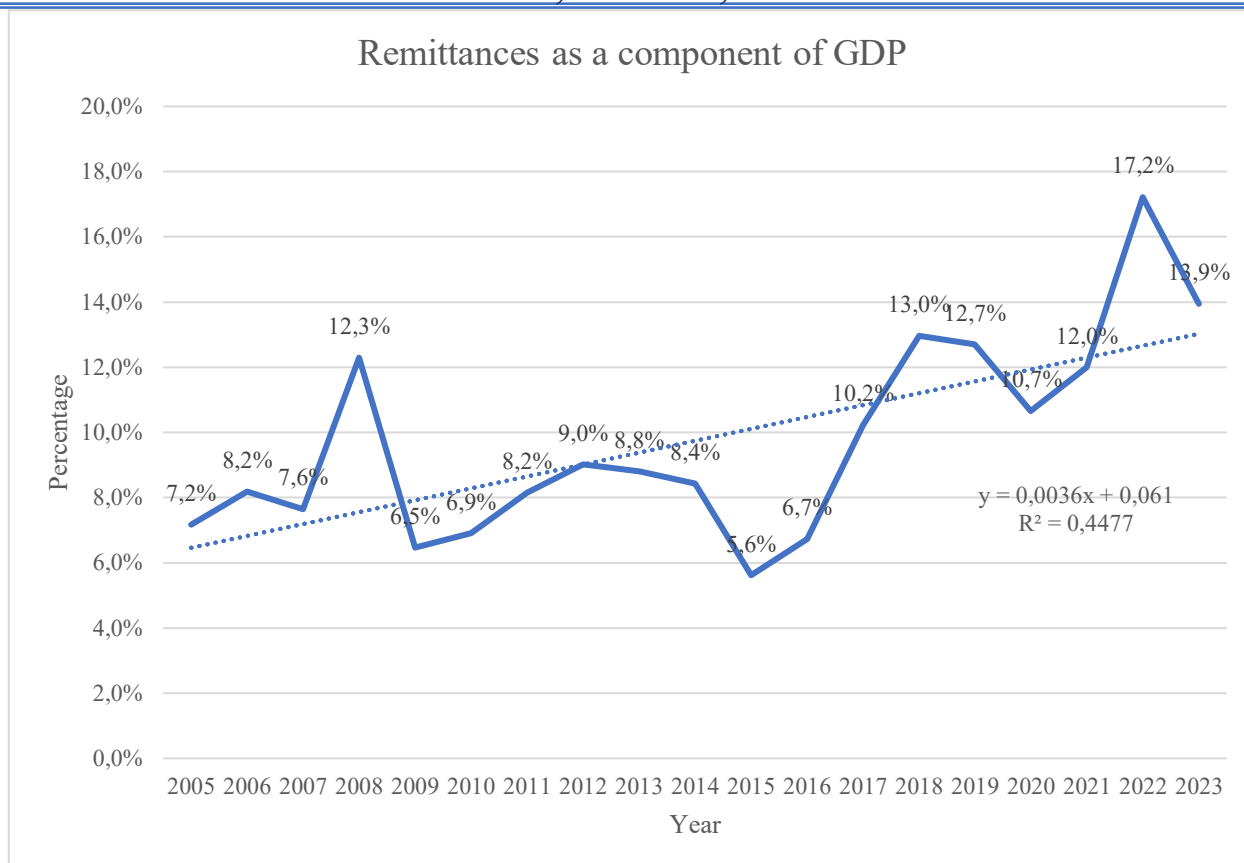
and Poland have included provisions for the certification of professional skills and competencies acquired in Uzbekistan, thereby reducing formal barriers to employment (The Diplomat, 2024).

As of early 2025, an estimated 1.14 million Uzbek citizens were employed abroad, with a significant proportion working in EU member states. The economic contribution of this labor migration is substantial. In the first ten months of 2024 alone, remittances sent by Uzbek migrant workers exceeded US\$12 billion, reflecting a 34% increase compared to the same period in 2023 (Global Voices, 2025). These remittances play a vital role in supporting household incomes, stimulating domestic consumption, and contributing to foreign currency reserves in Uzbekistan.



Infographic 4Source: World Bank, Growth and decline in remittances¹²

¹²World Bank. Personal remittances received License : CC BY-4.0 [url:https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.F.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=UZ](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.F.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=UZ)



Infographic 5 Source: World Bank Remittances as a share of GDP

The graph depicts the share of remittances in GDP from 2005 to 2023. Overall, there is an upward trend, with the share of remittances increasing over the years, albeit with some fluctuations. Notable peaks occurred in 2008, 2019, and especially in 2022, where the share of remittances reached its highest point at 17.2%. The trend line R^2 suggests a gradual increase, supported by the linear equation $y = 0.0036x + 0.061$ and the value of 0.4477.

Job opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan in Canada

Canada has announced an ambitious plan to admit 500,000 immigrants annually by the end of 2025 to address labor shortages exacerbated by an aging population. As part of this national immigration strategy, 5,000 employment positions have been specifically allocated for citizens of Uzbekistan in priority sectors such as construction, technical trades, and services (Daryo.uz, 2024).

The recruitment process is facilitated through formal agreements between the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Canadian employers. These partnerships aim to streamline application procedures and reduce administrative burdens for both employers and prospective workers. Eligibility criteria for Uzbek candidates include being between 18 and 45 years of age, holding relevant vocational training certifications, and demonstrating proficiency in English, French, or Spanish (The Times of Central Asia, 2024).

Wage offerings by Canadian employers range from \$12.50 to \$30.00 per hour, depending on the candidate's qualifications, professional experience, and sector-specific

demands. These competitive wage rates reflect Canada's strategic emphasis on attracting a skilled foreign workforce. In addition, selected candidates receive pre-departure orientation training organized by Uzbekistan's Foreign Labor Migration Agency, which includes modules on workplace rights, cultural adaptation, occupational safety, and legal frameworks governing employment in Canada (Daryo.uz, 2024).

Canada's immigration policy is characterized by its centralized, transparent, and points-based selection framework. The Express Entry system, in particular, facilitates the migration of skilled workers through clearly defined eligibility pathways, making it one of the most efficient labor migration systems globally (Government of Canada, 2025).

However, despite the promising opportunities available, Uzbek labor migrants face notable challenges in accessing employment in Canada. Key barriers include language proficiency requirements, the recognition of foreign qualifications, and the logistical complexities of international migration. Moreover, institutional limitations within Uzbekistan's labor migration infrastructure remain evident. For example, the Foreign Labor Migration Agency did not meet its 2023 target of facilitating the migration of 200,000 workers, reflecting persistent operational constraints (Global Voices, 2025).

Discussion

This study investigates the processes and policy frameworks governing the entry of Uzbek citizens into the labor markets of Canada and the European Union. In the second stage of the research, theoretical aspects of international labor migration were examined, with a focus on migration policy, vocational training infrastructure, and institutional conditions shaping access to foreign employment. The analysis reveals critical trends in migration flows, skills demand, and labor market regulation, highlighting both structural contradictions and emerging opportunities for Uzbek migrants. These findings are discussed in relation to the study's objectives and the broader literature on global labor migration.

Organized labor migration from Uzbekistan has grown significantly in recent years. In 2024, the number of citizens employed abroad through official channels increased from 38,400 in 2023 to 161,800, a more than fourfold rise. Despite a sharp depreciation of the Russian ruble and a 39% decline in remittance inflows, the number of Uzbek workers in Russia remains high. However, migration trends indicate a diversification toward new destinations, particularly EU member states such as Germany and Lithuania, and to a lesser extent, Canada. This shift reflects changing migrant preferences and structural labor shortages in higher-income countries.

These trends are consistent with the Push-Pull Theory of Migration, which explains migration as a response to economic instability and limited opportunities in the origin country (push factors), alongside labor demand and higher wages in destination countries (pull factors) (Askarov, 2023; Yusupov, 2022). The aging populations and ongoing skill shortages in Canada and the EU serve as powerful pull factors, underscoring the need for Uzbekistan to pursue strategic partnerships and enhance legal pathways for migration.

However, a significant gap persists between the skills held by many Uzbek migrants and the qualification requirements of Canadian and European labor markets. For example, Germany faces shortages in technical, engineering, and medical professions, while Uzbekistan continues to export primarily low-skilled laborers with limited foreign language proficiency. Similarly, Canada requires workers in skilled sectors such as construction, healthcare, and technology, yet challenges in the recognition of foreign credentials and language barriers restrict the employability of Uzbek workers.

To address this skills mismatch, Uzbekistan has implemented vocational training programs, most notably through the Ishga Marhamat mono-centers. These centers offer training in high-demand sectors aligned with international labor needs. However, their effectiveness is constrained by limited international accreditation, insufficient language training, and weak alignment with destination country certification systems. These findings support existing research that underscores the importance of specialized vocational training in enhancing migrants' labor market outcomes (Yaxyoyeva, 2023). For these programs to reach their full potential, curricula must be aligned with international standards, including occupation-specific certification and host country labor regulations.

Migration policy plays a decisive role in shaping access to foreign labor markets. Canada has established transparent and well-defined pathways for skilled migration, such as the Express Entry and Provincial Nominee programs. Despite their clarity, many Uzbek applicants face obstacles related to language requirements and the lack of recognized qualifications. In contrast, the EU's Blue Card system aims to attract highly qualified professionals, but its implementation varies by member state and often entails complex and restrictive criteria.

This fragmentation is indicative of broader issues in international labor mobility governance. Bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent recognition of foreign qualifications, and national-level migration discretion within the EU compound the difficulties faced by third-country nationals, including Uzbek migrants (Askarov, 2023; ICMPD, 2022). These challenges call for enhanced diplomatic engagement by Uzbekistan to negotiate bilateral frameworks for the mutual recognition of skills and credentials.

Canada, which plans to admit 500,000 immigrants annually by 2025, has allocated 5,000 employment positions specifically for Uzbek citizens, highlighting the importance of country-specific labor cooperation. Compared to many EU countries, Canada's system is more centralized and predictable. In contrast, EU migration policy is more fragmented, resulting in varied access and regulatory uncertainty for third-country nationals (Yusupov, 2022).

Bilateral agreements between Uzbekistan and host countries such as Germany, Poland, and Canada are essential in regularizing migration flows and safeguarding migrant rights. These agreements should focus not only on qualification recognition but also on minimizing bureaucratic barriers. Collaboration between the Uzbek Ministry of Employment and host country institutions is vital to facilitate recruitment processes and ensure that training aligns with actual labor market needs.

The role of organizations such as the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is increasingly important. ICMPD emphasizes the need for international cooperation to support legal mobility pathways while protecting migrant rights. However, despite ongoing efforts, the study identifies persistent gaps in the availability of language and cultural integration programs, which are critical for the long-term success and well-being of migrants in destination countries.

It is important to acknowledge the study's limitations. The reliance on secondary data and a small survey sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the lack of disaggregated migration data for certain EU countries hinders comparative analysis. To advance this field, larger longitudinal studies are needed to assess the evolving role of migrants within the broader context of welfare systems, labor market transitions, and demographic change.

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