



Deutsche Afrika Stiftung e.V.
Fondation Allemande pour l'Afrique
German Africa Foundation

Summary

Reception in Honour of the African Diplomatic Corps

23 April 2024, 18:30hrs,
Haus der Wirtschaft, Breite Str. 29, 10178 Berlin

Background

Germany is suffering from a shortage of skilled labour due to demographic change. It would need around 500,000 new skilled workers every year to maintain the German social system. The immigration of new skilled labour is therefore being called for by politicians and businesses and the focus is increasingly turning to Africa. However, migration from Africa has generally only played a negligible role to date - less than 5% of all migrants to Germany come from the African continent. What role do African migrants therefore play in the migration of skilled labour to Germany?

This year's third reception in honour of the African Diplomatic Corps, hosted by the German Africa Foundation (DAS) together with the Sub-Saharan Africa Initiative of German Business (SAFRI) on 23 April 2024, addressed this topic. After a welcome address by Dr Ilja Nothnagel, Member of the DIHK Executive Board, and Dr Uschi Eid, President of the German Africa Foundation, H.E. Igor César, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda, Christoph Retzlaff, Commissioner for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel at the Federal Foreign Office, Dr Christoph Hoffmann MdB, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development, Edith Otiende-Lawani, co-founder and Chairwoman of Giving Africa a New Face and Claudia Voß, Managing Director of the German-African Business Association, discussed the different demographic situations and how a win-win situation could be created for both sides.

Highlights

- Germany needs an influx of skilled labour, but the skilled labour potential available on the African continent has hardly been utilised to date. The German economy in particular should approach this potential and also invest in their education and training.
- Germany needs a serious welcoming culture, the reduction of bureaucratic processes and the permanent inclusion of the diaspora by politics and business to attract skilled labour.

Welcome

Dr Ilja Nothnagel

Member of the DIHK Executive Board

Dr Uschi Eid

President, German Africa Foundation

Discussion

S.E. Igor César

Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda

Christoph Retzlaff

Director for Sub-Saharan-Africa and the Sahel, Foreign Office

Dr Christoph Hoffmann

Member of the German Bundestag

Edith Otiende-Lawani

Co-founder, Chairperson of Legal, Executive Management for the Region of Bavaria, GAnNF

Claudia Voß

Managing Director, German-African Business Association

Closing remarks

Marcus Schwenke

Head of Department for Trade Policy, Import Promotion and Development Cooperation, BGA

Moderation

Sabine Odhiambo

Secretary General, German Africa Foundation



- The dominant image of Africa in Germany is an obstacle to the recruitment of qualified personnel.
- Skilled labour immigration must not lead to a 'brain drain' in the countries of origin. The desired goal is circular skilled labour migration, which can only be achieved through investment in the countries of origin in the areas of education and the local economy and through knowledge transfer

German bureaucracy and lack of welcome culture as obstacles

The African continent has enormous human capital. Nevertheless, there are various challenges. Not all countries of origin have sufficient infrastructure to provide people with education and suitable qualifications for the labour market. In addition to the language, other hurdles include German bureaucracy. It is often complicated to have qualifications recognised or to obtain a visa in the first place. But it is not only the authorities that lack open doors. The basis for retaining skilled workers in the long term would be a serious culture of welcome in German society, which would give the diaspora the feeling that they are wanted and accepted in the long term. The diaspora already living in Germany is also not being seriously involved by politicians in the development of a strategy for attracting skilled labour. As a result, a lot of valuable experience is lost.

Meanwhile, the German government was called upon to present its interests transparently and to harmonise them with the interests of the African countries. Only an open dialogue that takes both sides equally into account will be successful in the long term. In order to remedy the shortage of skilled labour in Germany, more than just a Skilled Immigration Act is needed. Suitable framework conditions must be created, above all by investing in the basic infrastructure in the countries of origin. The establishment of more language schools or the introduction of English as a second official language could help to increase the attractiveness of Germany as a business location. There was agreement that bureaucracy needs to be reduced in Germany and that a realistic, differentiated image of Africa is lacking in many areas.

Political support

Such an image of Africa could further boost the already increasing interest of the German economy. However, more political support would also be needed here, especially in the area of securing investments by small and medium-sized enterprises. Leaving the problem of the shortage of skilled labour to the private sector alone would not be expedient. Instead of many small initiatives, a comprehensive strategy must be developed. Only if politicians took the lead would companies also dare to make the necessary investments. Consequently, more courage and commitment are needed on both sides in order to counter the shortage of skilled labour in the long term.

However, it should not be forgotten that skilled labour will also be needed locally in the future, even if not all sectors of the economy are currently able to absorb these skilled workers. Therefore, there must be no 'brain drain', i.e. the emigration of skilled labour needed in the countries of origin themselves. Work must continue on the idea of circular migration, which requires the promotion of a level playing field in all countries through knowledge transfer, the strengthening of local economies and the aforementioned investment in the training and education of young professionals. The basis for this is reliable, balanced partnerships at both bilateral and multilateral level.

The 180 participants from politics and business used the reception in honour of the African Diplomatic Corps for precisely this purpose: To strengthen relations through an open dialogue in a friendly atmosphere between the representatives of the respective countries.



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