



**PERMITS**  
foundation

# ENABLING DUAL CAREERS IN THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

January 2025

*“More and more governments are responding— over 35 countries now allow recognised partners of internationally mobile employees to have direct access to work.”*



# Permits Foundation

## - Aim

*Support international mobility and dual careers by advocating improvement of work permit regulations for the recognised partners of highly-skilled internationally mobile employees.*

### *Open permission to work*

- Make representations to host governments
- Raise awareness and encourage debate
- Co-ordinate support from local networks, employer organisations, home country governments etc.
- Share information and progress

### *Not-for-profit*

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International employers (private & public) and service providers  
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[Observer](#)



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# Board of Directors meets quarterly, sets strategy

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# Staff

[contact@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:contact@permitsfoundation.com)

**Helen Frew**

Director

[helen.frew@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:helen.frew@permitsfoundation.com)

**Françoise van Roosmalen**

Foundation Coordinator

[francoise.vanroosmalen@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:francoise.vanroosmalen@permitsfoundation.com)

**Kathleen Travaille**

Communications Manager

[kathleen.travaille@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:kathleen.travaille@permitsfoundation.com)

**Jen Vosler**

Legal Researcher

[Jen.Vosler@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:Jen.Vosler@permitsfoundation.com)

# Dual careers - A corporate issue

**International companies and organisations need skilled, mobile staff to support global operations**

- Numbers are small, but essential
- More women in employment
- More dual career couples / dual earners
- Diversity - more nationalities, non-married, same-sex partners



*For 78% of partners, their own employment prospects are an important factor in the decision to relocate*

Affects men and women of all nationalities working in private and public sectors worldwide

# Challenges for mobile partners who want to work

- Look for a new job in unfamiliar location
- Timing dictated by employee's move
- Adapt skills to local employment market
- Learn language, different culture etc.
- Compete with well qualified local staff
- Foreign diplomas recognised?
- Persuade potential employer to apply for work permit and wait until obtained...

*Work permit procedures and uncertainty*

*– a structural hurdle for partner and employer*





# Permits Foundation's evidence base:

Regular surveys on mobility and dual careers

## Most recent

- **International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022**  
Feedback from global mobility professionals and partners of international employees (global).



## Previous surveys:

- HR Managers views on the impact of Brexit (UK) 2018
- Employees/partners on Tier 2 visas (UK) 2015
- Organisations employing 7.5 million employees (global) 2012
- Expat partners private and public sector (global) 2008

# Key messages from surveys:

## *Key messages for **governments***

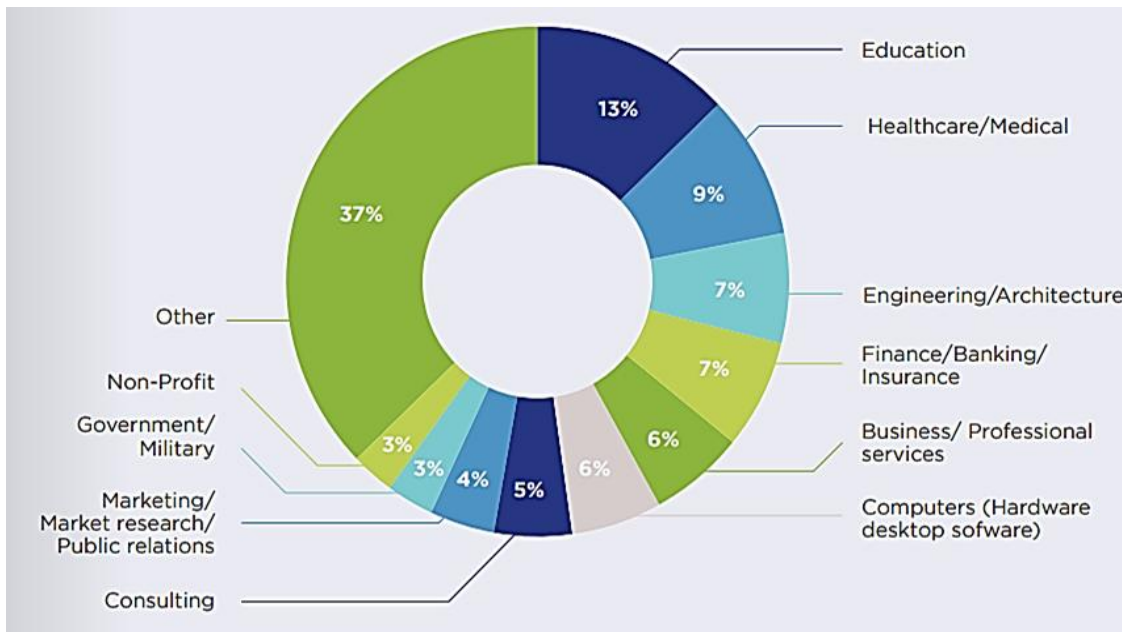
- Work permit restrictions have a negative impact on international business.
- Work permit restrictions for partners seriously impact employees' willingness to transfer.
- Countries that allow partners to work are more attractive destinations for international business and highly skilled staff.
- Allowing partners to work has positive economic and social impacts.

## *Key messages for **employers***

- Lack of partner employment opportunities adversely affects global mobility of highly skilled international employees.
- Dual careers are becoming more important.
- Communicating with the mobile family unit is key.
- Employers want to be more inclusive but should do more to support.

# Accompanying partners – key data 2022

- **76%** of partner respondents - female (85% in 2008).
- **88%** of partner respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher including 53% with a master's degree.



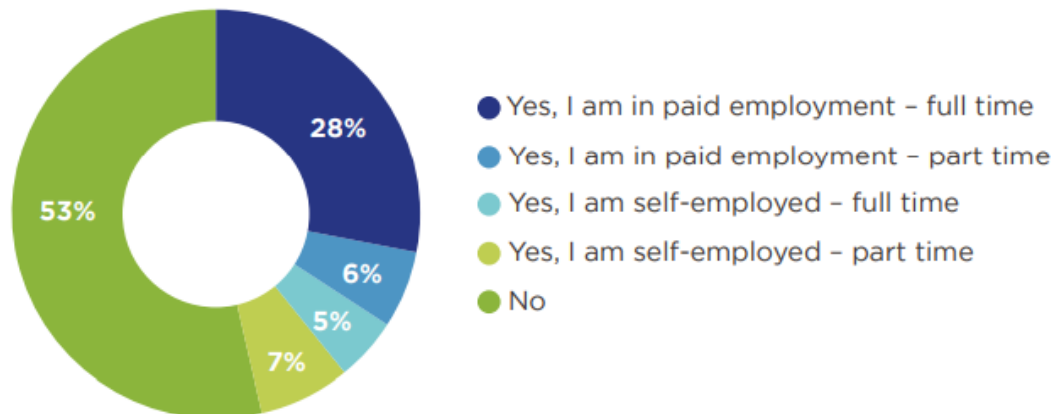
## In which occupational field were you working?

(Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022 – [Part 2](#))

# Partner employment falls in host country

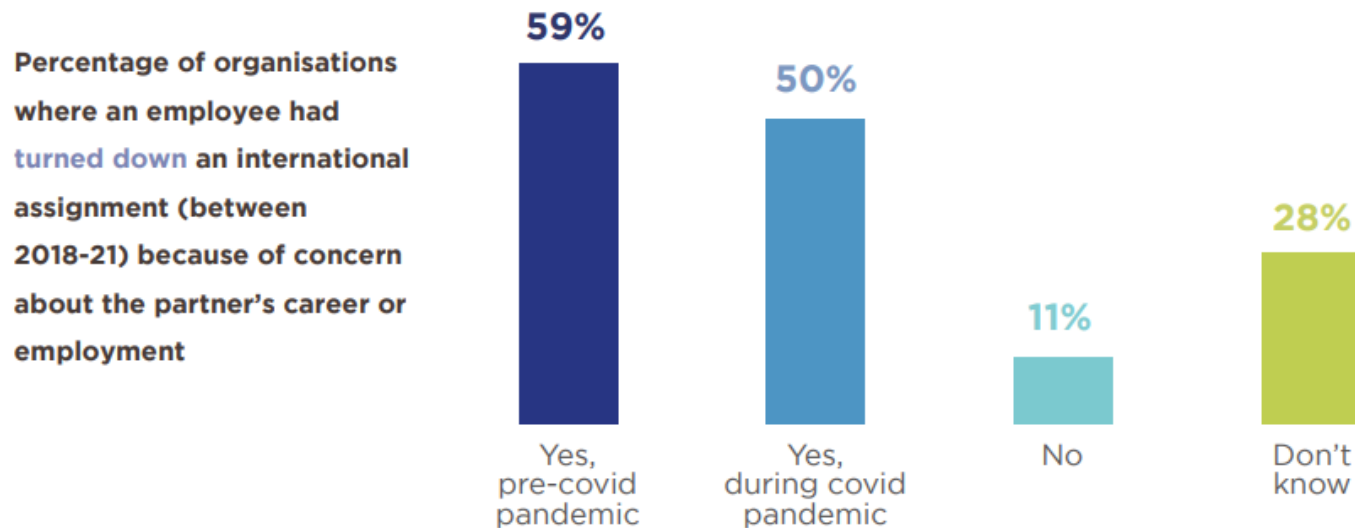
- **90%** of spouses were working before expatriation.
- **53%** were not employed in the host country.
- **84%** of those not working wanted to work.

## Respondents in employment or self-employment in host country:



# Talent attraction and retention

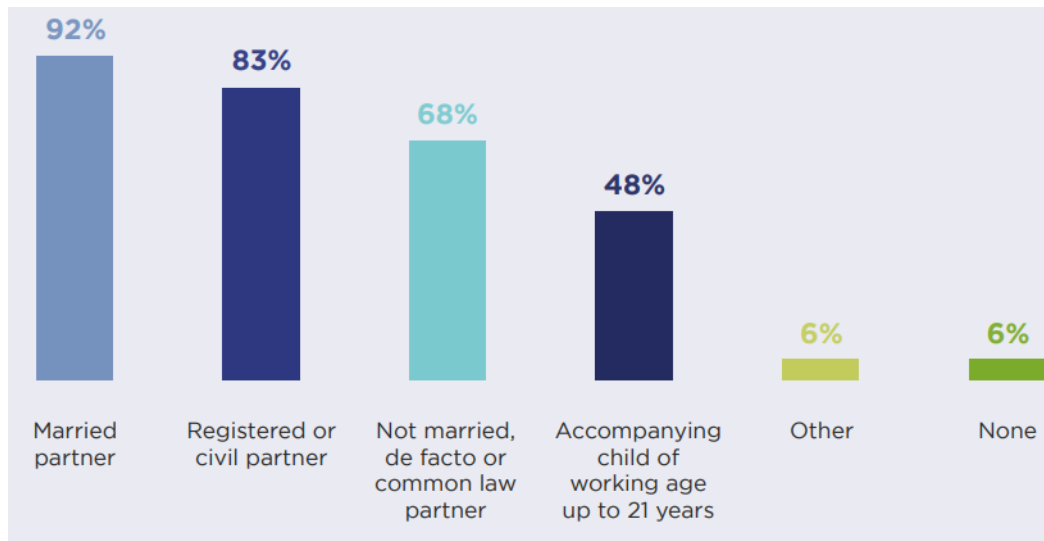
- **26%** of partner respondents were considering leaving the host country due to work access restrictions.
- **In 44% of** organisations, employees had **returned home early** from an international assignment in the past 3 years due to concerns about the partner's employment.
- **In over 50%** of organisations employees had **turned down** an international assignment because of concerns about the partner's employment.



Source: Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- **94%** of global mobility professionals said that family members should be authorised to work in the host country directly upon recognition of their dependant status.
- **78%** of global mobility professionals said that where partners can work, the effectiveness of the organisation's overall diversity, equity and inclusion policy increases.
- **22%** of HR respondents said that the importance of supporting dual careers in the global workplace did not feature at all in their organisation's DE&I materials.



**Which family members of an international employee should be authorised to work in the host country directly upon recognition of their dependant status?**

(Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022 – [Part 1](#))



# Health and Integration

- Partners of international employees who were not working were more likely to report a negative impact on their adjustment to the host country, family relationships, general health or well-being.
- **56%** of partner respondents said that not working had negatively impacted their mental health.
- **67%** of partners cited the need for a dual-income as important or very important.

# Remote/virtual working

- **60%** of global mobility professional respondents had been asked by international employees about the right of their partner to work virtually.
- **30%** of partner respondents said they would like to work remotely for an employer based in another country.

Source: Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022

# Country perspective

## Where host countries allow direct work access for partners of international employees:

- **80%** of employers said that the host country's reputation as a fair, equal opportunity society as well as the country's reputation for doing business, increases as a result.
- **94%** of partners said that where countries allow spouses and partners to work easily, these countries are viewed as attractive or very attractive future relocation destinations.
- **The United States, China and India** topped the list of countries where organisations would like to see legislative change to facilitate partner work access.

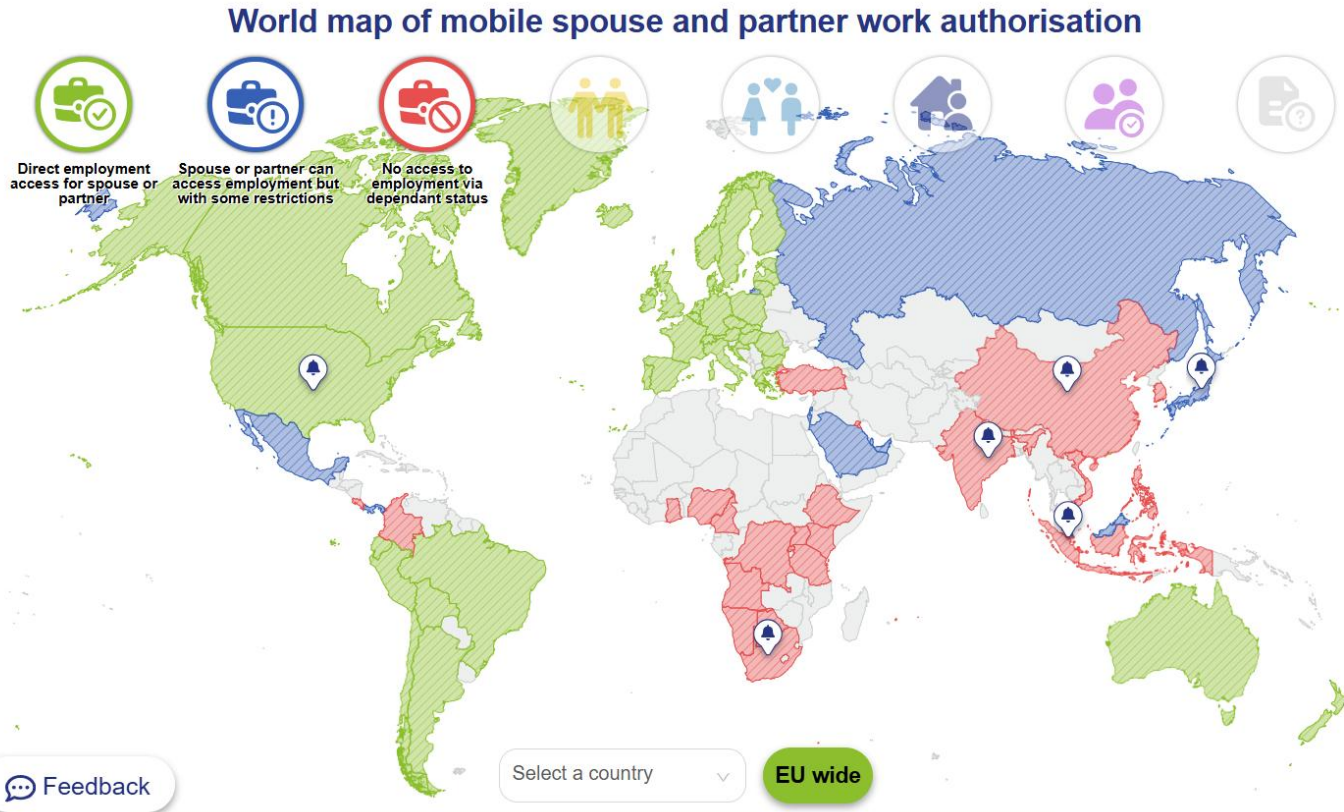
Source: Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022

# The importance of partner support

- **61%** of global mobility professionals said that dual career and partner issues were becoming more important to their organisation.
- Only **20%** of partner respondents had been given an opportunity to communicate their employment and career concerns with their partner's organisation.

Source: Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey Report 2022

# Permits Foundation world map of partner work authorisation: around 40 countries enable direct access to employment



# Green countries on our map

Where the spouse/partner of a highly-skilled international employee can directly access work

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America



**Countries of importance to our network where there is no direct work access (red) or where conditions apply (blue).**

**Conditions apply in:**

Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Qatar, Russia, Singapore, UAE

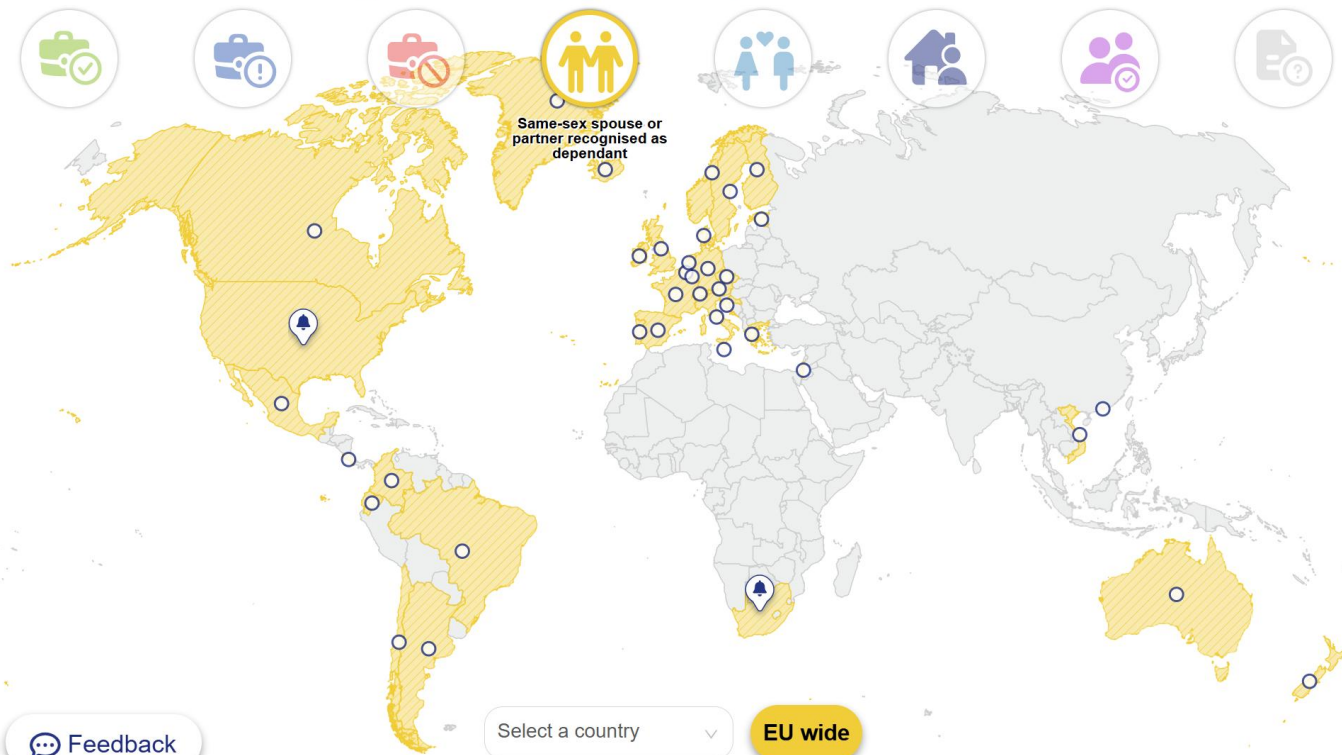
**No work access incident to dependant status:**

Cameroon, China, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines, Republic of Korea, South Africa, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Vietnam

...and many more.

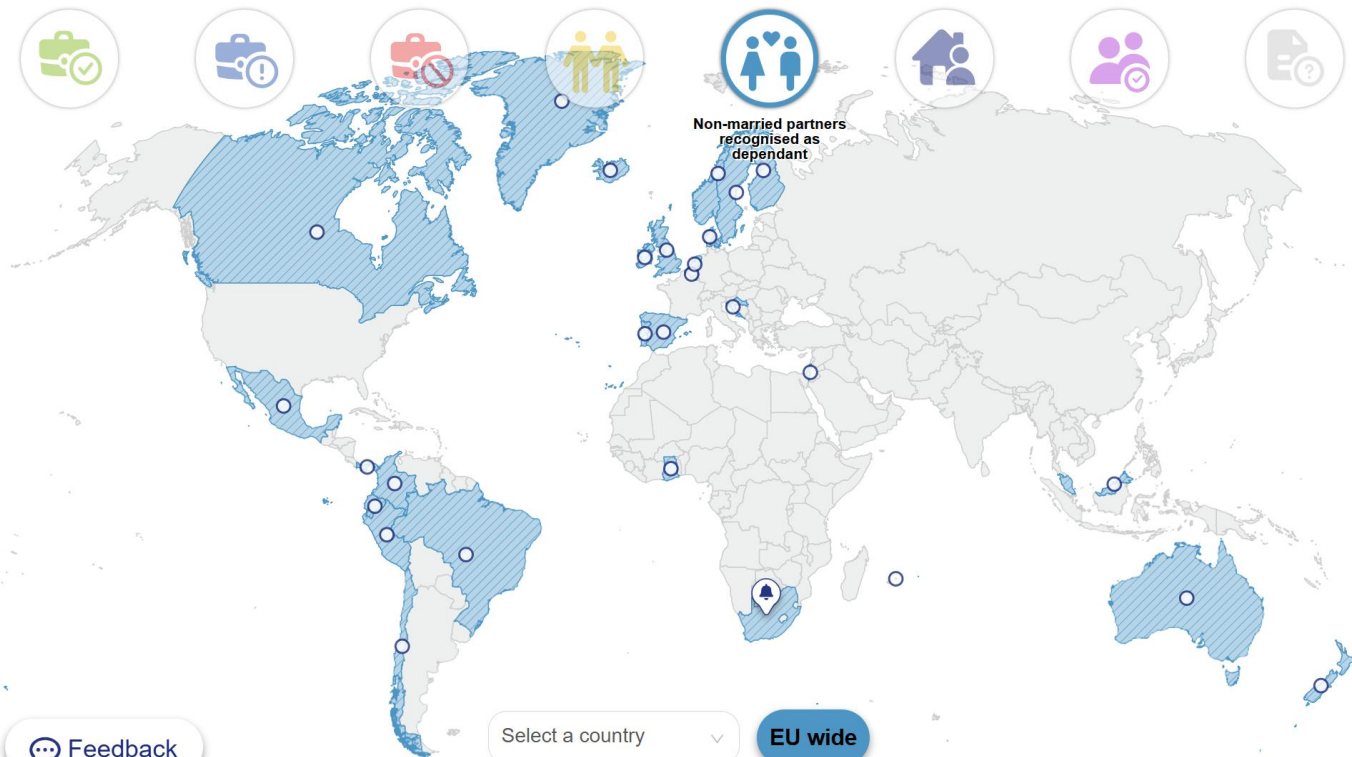
# Same-sex spouse or partner recognised as dependant

World map of mobile spouse and partner work authorisation



# Non-married partners recognised as dependant

World map of mobile spouse and partner work authorisation



# Highlights

## Around 40 countries now allow spouses or partners to work for any employer or be self-employed

### European Union

In EU Member States family members may work freely under EU Blue Card, EU intra-company transfer Directives - and under some national schemes.

- Partner recognition growing. Children of working age allowed to work too.
- Belgium adopted best practice in 2019, Luxembourg in 2023 and Ireland in 2024.

### USA

Spouses of intra-company transferees & treaty traders (L/E visas) authorised work incident to dependant status from Nov 2021. Proposal to rescind H4 EAD withdrawn in January 2021. Court case concludes in favour of H4 EAD in 2023.

- Litigation results in much needed processing improvements through 2023.
- Same-sex marriage recognised; unmarried partners not yet recognised.

### India

Spouses of employees on intra-company transfer can apply locally for E visa. Permits Foundation supported proposal for a specific ICT visa - implemented in 2018. Lobby on-going for ICT spouse direct work authorisation.

### S. America

Government decree in 2016 enables partners of temporary work visa holders to work in Brazil. In subsequent years Peru (2017) and Chile (2022) adopt best practice.

### Canada

From January 2023, (for next 2 years) eligibility to work in Canada extended to spouses, partners and working-age children of workers at all skill levels.

### Singapore

From 2023, One Pass visa allows spouses to work via Letter of Consent route but restrictions remain for other work categories.

# Best practice model: Spouse/partner has 'open' permission to work



## Advantages

- Full access to employment market once resident visa or permit is issued.
- Facilitates temporary project work, self-employment.
- Reduced bureaucracy for the authorities.
- Helps employers fill urgent or temporary vacancies.
- Attractive destination for mobile families.
- Attractive investment climate for employers with highly skilled international staff.

# Permits strategy

- Provide evidence, promote best practice, build on examples of success
- International organisation with impressive sponsor support base and local networks
- Show the global perspective
- Seek opportunity for change e.g. where immigration policy is in review
- Focus on countries that are:
  - important to business/international organisations
  - role models/trend setters in their region



# Country plan development 2025

Organisations highlighted over 50 important business destinations where legislative change would be welcomed to enable (further) dependant work access.

## Top Priorities - Country Level

- India
- USA
- South Africa
- Singapore
- Japan
- China

## We advocate at multilateral level:

- Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
- United Nations Global Compact on Migration and SDGs
- European Union: monitoring ICT Directive, EU Blue Card implementation in practice

## Others:

**Europe** France, Sweden, Switzerland, UK (monitoring)

### Russia

### Americas

Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Panama, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela.

### Asia

Japan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam.

### Middle East

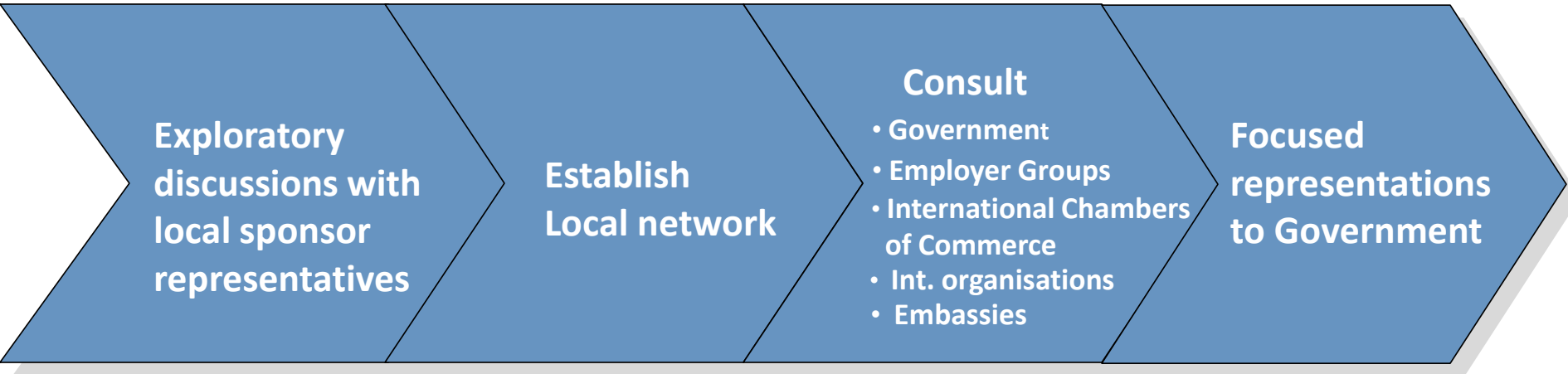
Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE

### Africa

Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia.

# Local networks / steering groups

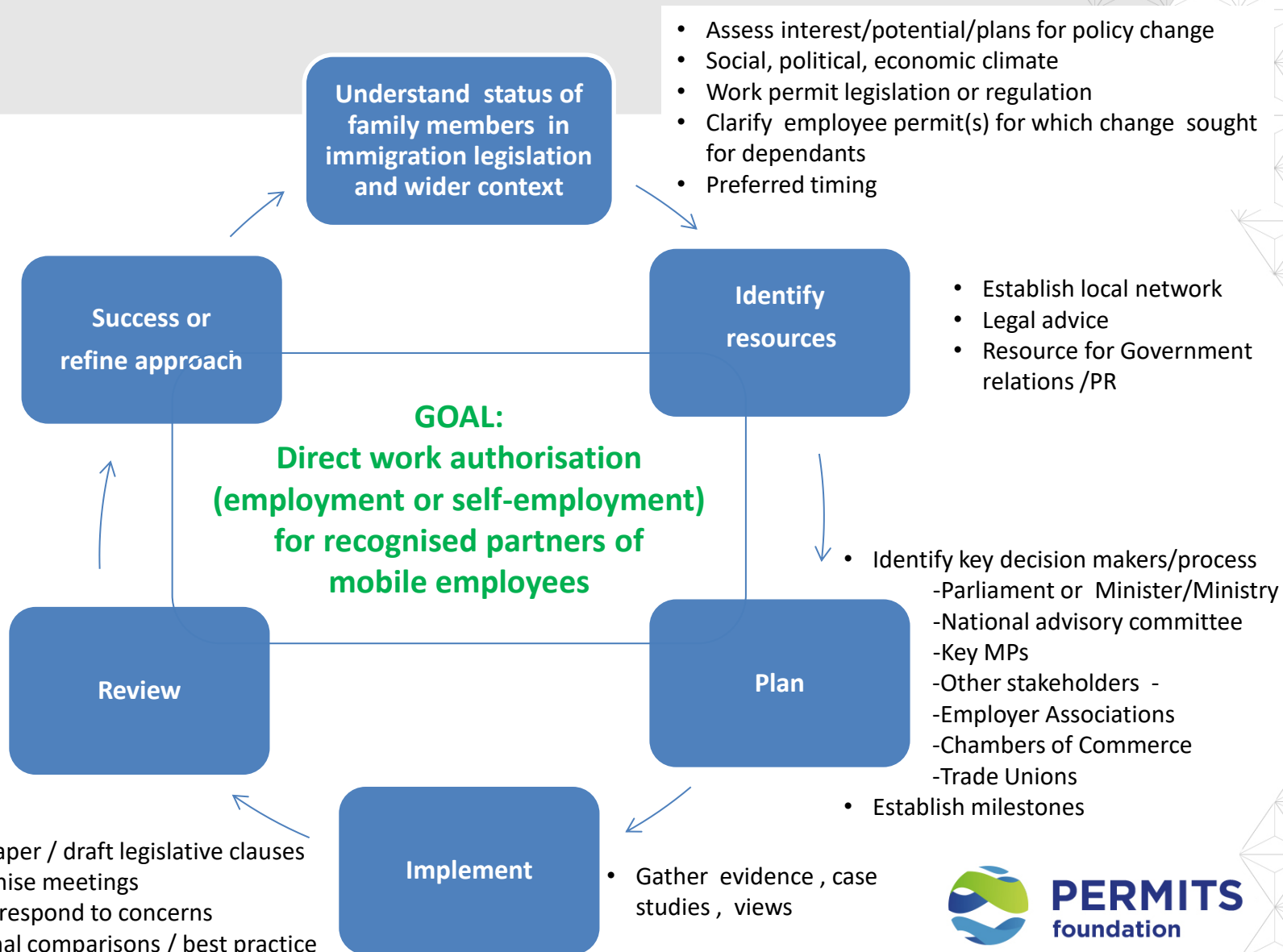
## How we work on the ground



### Visits and support by Permits Foundation

- international perspective, evidence from global surveys
- examples of best practice legislation in other countries
- experience of successful process in other countries
- contribution to network costs

# Key steps in a local campaign



# Why take part?

Return on Investment: what you can expect to get back as a sponsor

- **Build your brand reputation and association with progress**
  - Show your international workforce that you are proactively helping to bring about legislative change that will make their lives better, improve inclusion.
- **Safeguard against the cost of failed assignment (now estimated at more than \$1 million)**
  - In countries where accompanying partners can work directly, the chance of a failed assignment drops significantly.
- **Stay informed about dual careers data and legislative change**
  - Access our newsletters, use our [world map](#) as a resource for colleagues and a “know before you go” tool for employee families, receive (tailored) survey reports.
- **Collaborate in building awareness and training on dual career issues**
  - The team will take the time to talk to you, establish your organisation’s needs and can present about our work/achievements to your colleagues.
- **A platform for visibility and a prestigious network**
  - Receive invites to in-person and online events, where you can share ideas with major international organisations with a shared interest, display your logo on [our site](#).
- **Demonstrate your Environmental, Social and Governmental credentials**
  - as you submit reports to comply with legislative requirements.

# How to take part

Being a sponsor does not take-up a lot of your (financial) resources or time.

## Become sponsor

- Annual recommended donation € 7,700
- Indicate priority countries → Indicate your top countries and key issues
- Nominate 2 focal points → We keep you up to date on progress via our newsletters, country feedback, networking events and conferences

## You can choose your level of activity – note these are optional

- Participate in round tables/events/webinars
- Provide feedback data that contributes to our evidence base
- Submit letter of support/provide quote to back our advocacy message
- Share contacts, local “champions” and opinion leaders
- Help us plan and shape local advocacy
- Take part in local networks in country (your local rep)
- Nominate board member or patron

# The business case for change

## - 'triple win'

### International employers

- Reduce cost of assignment refusal or early return
- Attract / retain mobile talent
- Show "we care" social responsibility and contribute to DE&I
- Enhance HR brand

### Host countries

- Attractive climate for skills, talent
- Supports trade & investment
- Helps integration
- Enhance country brand

### Mobile families

- Partner works - maintains and develops skills
- Easier to return to work in home country
- Enables dual income - increasingly a necessity
- Mobile family, motivated, happy, work/life balance

### Our values support

- International mobility
- Equal opportunity, inclusion and diversity
- People of all nationalities



# Visit [www.permitsfoundation.com](http://www.permitsfoundation.com)

➤ Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @permitslobby and LinkedIn

- Resources for HR staff, families and governments
- Evidence for policy makers
- Country info on work authorisation for spouse/partner/family members
- Links to work permit regulations
- Links to dual career resources
- Latest news
- Discussion groups

## WELCOME TO PERMITS FOUNDATION

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation campaigning globally to improve work permit regulations so that partners of highly-skilled international employees may directly access employment while in the host country.

Since our start-up in 2001, we have been progressively successful in influencing change throughout the European Union, as well as in the UK, USA, Asia (India, Japan, Hong Kong) and Latin America (Brazil and Peru). **Over 35 countries** now allow accompanying spouses or partners to work. We continue to promote best practice and monitor legislative improvements in all these countries, as well as setting up new projects (for example, in South Africa and Singapore) in our global campaign.

Our surveys show that governments that allow partners to work attract highly-skilled employees associated with international business, investment and development; creating a 'triple win' for host countries, employers and families alike.



**HOST COUNTRIES:**  
"Family members should be allowed to work throughout the assignment. This will make the EU more attractive to highly skilled foreign workers and improve equality in our society."  
– Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Member of the European Parliament



**EMPLOYERS:**  
"Convincing governments to relax work permit regulations for partners will help to attract the best international employees. That's good for families, good for business and good for host countries."  
– Peter Voser, Chairman of the Board of Directors, ABB Ltd, and Former CEO Royal Dutch Shell



**FAMILIES:**  
"It's important to have the choice to work. Even if we decided to focus on my spouse's career, it is very important for us not to neglect my own career."  
– Expat partner, Permits Foundation Global Survey

# Contact us

**Helen Frew**, Director

[helen.frew@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:helen.frew@permitsfoundation.com)

**Françoise van Roosmalen**

Foundation Coordinator

[francoise.vanroosmalen@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:francoise.vanroosmalen@permitsfoundation.com)

**Kathleen Travaille**

Communications Manager

[Kathleen.travaille@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:Kathleen.travaille@permitsfoundation.com)

**Jen Vosler**, Legal Researcher

[Jen.vosler@permitsfoundation.com](mailto:Jen.vosler@permitsfoundation.com)

[General email enquiries](#)

X [@Permitslobby](#)

LinkedIn: [Permits Foundation](#)

Carel van Bylandtlaan 16

2501 AN The Hague

The Netherlands

[www.permitsfoundation.com](http://www.permitsfoundation.com)

