



Euromf
European midfield



Euromf EZA Seminar

REPORT

**The commitment of social partners to tackle social exclusion within
the labour market**

**Focus on tackling problems of migrant workers from within and
outside the EU**

1 and 2 October 2015

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FIRST DAY MEETING: An analysis of European workers' migration: policies and realities

Welcome

Petru Sorin Dandea , vice-president Confederatia Nationala Sindicale Cartel ALFA

Cartel Alfa is a co-operation of Romanian trade unions. They already co-operate for years with Belgian trade unions and Euromf and EZA. This seminar is organised by Euromf, with support from EZA and the EU.

The seminar will be very interesting, not only because of the subject of labour migration, but also because at the moment in Europe we have lots of refugees coming from the Middle East and Africa, looking for both safety and work.

This challenges the solidarity in and between our countries. This seminar can offer answers as to how we have to deal with this high number of migrants.

When talking about labour migration from the new member countries to 'old' Europe, we have to be aware of the fact that a number of corrections of the legislation are necessary to guarantee the right labour conditions. Measures to this end have already been taken on EU level, but trade unions consider them unsatisfactory. Good working conditions should be guaranteed in all member states. Adjusting legislation is a major challenge.

Another big challenge is the considerable inflow of refugees. Solidarity is questioned.

The VISEGRAD countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) state that the limit has been reached. In Eastern Europe it is clear that not many more refugees can be coped with.

It is also clear that Europe will need these people because the European population is aging. Refugees can contribute to progress in Europe. Consequently, it is a mistake to exclude these people from social security. The following decades they will indeed contribute to social security and ensure that our social security will remain affordable.

Welcome

Mon Verrydt, Euromf

It is important to discuss this issue right now, both migration within and migration towards the EU.

The effect on social security, but also the influence on society and the existing systems, will be dealt with during this seminar.

We invited both academics and people working in the field to throw light on the question from their particular point of view.



Migrants in Europe and European policy: an analysis

Dr Helen Hintjens, International Institute for Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam

In the preamble we mentioned the aging of the population. Dr Hintjens proposes a case study about the care economy in the UK. She wonders where all this care for these ageing people will come from. Especially in the UK we notice an outsourcing of this kind of care.

The mess we're in

40 years ago Vietnamese took refuge from their country by boats. We used to call them 'the boatpeople'. Meanwhile they have become part of our society.

If I would be a lawyer I wouldn't say this, but lawyers make a living off the distinction between refugees and migrants. For trade unions the matter is different. They don't make that distinction. They fight for people's protection on several terrains.

A BBC clip about Damascene refugees fleeing with their families through Turkey to Lesbos shows how hard it is for the children. A father had to deceive his children by telling them they were going on a picnic.

Economic refugees (labour migrants) plan and schedule their trip. As a rule refugees don't do that.

In the UK a politician said that English homeless are being replaced by Romanian ones.

There is a paradox in people's movements

When one limits people in their movements by defining borders, the result is not less movement, but less official movement. Not only there will be people who are kept out, but there will also be those who can't leave any more. People will want to migrate without delay and once they're in, they will be obstructed from leaving easily. Then follows the complaint that they don't want to go back.

There is a large range of possible problems for refugees: racism, anti-Semitism, anti-gypsy, anti-Roma, islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, terrorism, nationalism, etc. Trade unions are often confronted with these problems. Consequently, there are many thresholds we have to overcome.

A 2 days old news item from the UK

Police organised a considerable operation to arrest home carers (migrants without documents). Unfortunately inspections don't always lead to better care, but instead to eviction. Those depending on this care were not informed. People who were arrested will definitely be evicted after being in custody for an unspecified period.

In the UK abuse of elderly is an important problem. Elderly people prefer immigrant carers originating from societies that respect senior citizens. The chance of abuse is smaller.

Moreover, there are too few candidates for care for the elderly in the UK.

Unfortunately in the UK there is little respect and no patience for elderly. Furthermore, there is a relatively strong right wing movement and specifically an island mentality. Before WWII Jewish refugees were refused entry.



Consequently a lot of migrants don't want to go to the UK because they don't feel welcome. This causes problems in filling vacancies.

There were however a lot of Polish migrants who were especially interested in going to Scotland because there they were much more welcome.

When they don't feel welcome, migrants move, unless they are held back by closed frontiers.

On the other hand, there is something bizarre going on in Europe. Two messages are being communicated: 'Go away', but also: 'Integrate'. These two attitudes don't go very well together.

In the Netherlands there is yet another type of segregation of people with different backgrounds: on the labour market. The unemployment rate for non-white immigrants is 25%. For a group of whites with the same characteristics unemployment is 6%. Yet we are talking about second and third generation immigrants.

Contrary to popular belief, people don't lose their job to immigrants but to other whites, as a consequence of, among other reasons, nepotism and we-know-us.

Global apartheid

The maps shown in the presentation originate from Le Monde Diplomatique. They can be found online.

These maps show the world's protected borders. Saudi Arabia (with a border that even runs underground), Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Colombia, etc., begin being part of 'the North'. They close their borders and thus restrain migration.

One possible solution

Dr Hintjens postulates a wild and unrealistic statement that, on the other hand, invites to think things over. We notice that in the EU the inner borders are open. This ensures movement of migrants within the EU. But if we close our borders now, those people will also be closed in. I think European leaders haven't given this a moment's thought. The EU has become an open prison. Because of the closed borders, smuggling and illegal trade have become profitable. Consequently, all borders should be opened. Worldwide.

Migrants should be able to continue to work, so they can contribute to society and can secure their own life. Migrants flow through because they are forbidden to work in certain countries, i.e. Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, etc., countries where unemployment is high. European leaders don't keep this in mind enough.

If one wants to change all this, one will have to realise that closed borders have perverse consequences.

Dr Hintjens primarily focused on external migration.

In many countries refugees are not allowed to work, except for Germany. That is the reason why many travel to Germany, so Mrs Merkel is not really to blame.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Jan Knockaert

Q.: You say there is no distinction between migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, refugees leave their country for fear of their lives, and migrants because of economic reasons. There is a contradiction in your presentation: In the UK immigration is dealt with strictly and migrants avoid that country, but Hungary is acting difficult as well and migrants keep flowing in.

A.:

- The distinction is real, but in fact they are all migrants and they should be permitted to work. The difference is that refugees make short term plans and have to move on short notice.
- There is indeed a contradiction, but nevertheless there is a distinction because the UK is an island. The UK really is severe on immigrants, think of the current situation in Calais.
- If you go public with this information that borders will be closed, you will generate a suction effect because it will be now or never. People watch television all day to see what is going on. So they will decide to come to the EU at once for fear they will not get another chance.

Eugene Van Kerckhoven

Q.: I am impressed by your analysis of the global state of affairs. But it also depresses me. Your solution is frightening. It's radical. We will have to arrive at this solution by using stepping stones. Is it possible to outline these intermediate steps?

A.: That's right. However, there are solutions. Think of the organisations, f.i. trade unions, etc., that are being founded all over the world to help people make important decisions in their life. Nevertheless, one never gave a moment's thought to the fact that also the EU itself is a problem. The EU can no longer explain this to its own citizens. Politicians fail in explaining f.i. Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. to its citizens.

Also think of the ships that have been sent to the Mediterranean to attack people smugglers. That doesn't solve the problem and we should be concerned about this.

Last summer there were a lot of changes, f.i. the election of Jeremy Corbyn.

Stanislav Labjak

Q.: Global problems need global solutions. We have to deal with similar problems as those before WWII. These problems need to be solved urgently. We create a lot of unrealistic expectations. As a trade union we have to help to change these into realistic ones, also because politicians don't take their responsibility. During the next weeks we have to find a solution.

A.: We have to avoid fear, but instead call attention to these problems. The emergence of the extreme right is not a new phenomenon. It happens in lots of countries: Spain, Greece, Italy, even the UK. This is not caused by immigration. It is an idiosyncratic problem. So it is ours and of all times.



Meanwhile Australia has become a real fortress. They want to keep refugees out of the country with discouraging campaigns, have closed all borders and move refugees to neighbouring islands. This is not an example for us to follow.

Marian Apostol

Q.: I fear we will not succeed in training people sufficiently. We are being told that we won't be able to handle what is currently coming at the EU. The attitude of the EU towards migrants is rather hypocrite. Opinions divert from each other. The conception of what the EU is, differs from one country to another. Furthermore, there are different worlds: economic, politic, labour, etc. On top of that there are many different kinds of problems. How can we harmonise these different points of view in the EU?

I also notice this within our labour union. We are part of the civil society and we lost this battle because of a number of limiting rules. As a result our capability to protect our people has been restricted. The economic players have won and can now determine policies because they own the capital.

It is true the EU has an ageing problem, but apart from that there is a high rate of youth unemployment. A lot of means are withdrawn to deal with the refugee problem, while part of the population can't make ends meet. A refugee family gets f.i. € 500,00 per month. The EU forgets that there are European citizens who have wages of only € 200,00 per month. Their bills rise, their wages don't. So we face a rather significant number of 'domestic' problems.

If we open the borders, highly skilled employees will enter and the question arises whether there will be jobs for our own citizens. In the West of the EU some highly skilled labourers are welcome. The rest can go to Romania and Hungary. What are those people going to do here? The EU's attitude in this matter is really hypocrite.

A.: We have to determine what the real problem is. Is it the migrants or is it big business? We have to pick our enemy, or else we will have an enemy at both sides.

As a trade union one must choose the side of the migrants and fight big business.

We have to be careful when we say that Western Europe picks the 'good' immigrants and leaves the 'bad ones' to us. Companies don't care about nationalism. They settle where they think it's best. E.g., we see companies move to Mexico from Thailand because labour unions are getting stronger in the latter.

Therefore we must monitor the mobility of capital. Workers themselves are not that mobile, while capital is very easy to move.

You are certainly right in stating that the EU is readily available for capital and not for people. Those millions of migrants are not the problem.

Mahmood Messkoub

Q.: This is a stress situation. The question actually is: 'Why are they coming to the EU at this moment and not before?' The war started a while ago. For years the Turks tried to push back the Kurds. So there certainly is a regional dimension to it. The working population in those regions is rapidly declining. We are talking about a time span of 20 years, which is a very short period. The trade unions also need to address this.

What were the reasons for deciding to intervene in Iraq, Libya and other countries? We must take other causes into account.



A.: There are considerable differences in migration, including distinct economic reasons. There is certainly a difference with war, because that is a stress situation. The world has become free and moving about has become easier. Telling people they can't come, won't help. Labour migration is not a security problem, but usually is seen that way. This issue always ends up on the Home Secretary's desk.

Jozef Goebels

Q.: You didn't only talk about migration, but also said a few things about integration. The current situation differs from the past one. Some people immigrate for a couple of months, others for some years, and still others for the rest of their lives.

Is it possible for them to integrate by means of self-organisation? We ourselves represent social organisations. How can we help? It is very difficult to get them involved in our organisations.

A.: Do Britons integrate in France, or Belgians in Congo? No, they don't. Consequently, it is important to recognise their organisations and to help them.

It is a mistake to impose certain rules in the field of culture, language, etc. Here is, for instance, a question from a Dutch integration test: 'Two women are sitting in a bar. What does a man do? Buy them a drink, or not?'

In the Netherlands everyone is required to learn Dutch, unless one possesses a special visa.

Petru Dandea

Q.: Can you explain why costs diminish due to signing the ILO Convention?

A.: EU member countries find it difficult to sign the ILO Convention. I was not talking about opening the borders, but about making migration easier than it is at the moment.

The problem would concern, among others, the cost of the welfare sector. But that is a myth. People often return to their native country for education and care of the elders. That means a lower cost for our society. By limiting their freedom of movement we hold them back from taking these steps.

For that matter, these people don't cost extra to our society, but contribute to it.

Strategy Europe 2020 – Integration and inclusion on the labour market **Matthiaz Homey (EZA)**

Our seminar is part of the scientific-practical project within the framework of "Strategy Europe 2020 - Integration and inclusion on the labour market" of EZA.

The 2020 Strategy of the European Commission was started up in 2010. It is a plan to introduce new employment measures for a period of 10 years. The document hardly mentions midfield organisations or trade unions. EZA tries to get them into the programme anyway by discussing a number of topics in seminars.

There is also academic contribution to these seminars. The general paper will only be finished when all seminars are behind us.

Strategy 2020 includes several measures that relate to this seminar:

- The minimum employment of several target groups in the EU.
- To lift 20 million people from social exclusion and poverty.



Currently there will be less talk about Strategy 2020 and more about the Juncker Investment Plan. In the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis 2020 has become less viable. Moreover, 'employment' is not very well defined in Strategy 2020. To reach an employment level of 75%, even precarious contracts are included in the census.

Supporting migrants in their search for a job is an important task for labour unions and other midfield organisations.

In many countries there is a debate going on about minimum wages. Perhaps we should also consider maximum wages.

One has to be careful making political statements. The choice of words is of principal importance: think of the connection between refugees and migrants and choosing words like 'problem', 'burden' and 'threat'.

I am against quota for refugees. People don't choose a country exclusively for its social security system, but also because relatives or friends live there, or communities they are acquainted with. These can help in welcoming and integrating the new arrivals.

Labour conditions:

We have already remarked that there is a free movement of goods, but not of people. Production of goods is being exported from the West to the East because in the East labour conditions are less taken into consideration. Because of those poor labour conditions migrants from the East move West to look for better jobs. This is the reason why we have to keep trying to improve labour conditions globally, f.i. the textile industry in Bangladesh.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Jan Kockaert

Q.: We often forget the informal economy and the illegal immigrants that work in this sector. Research often states that people who leave a country didn't work there, but often they have worked in the informal sector. These 'employees' are often missing in research papers.

Helen Hintjens

There are some distinctions between the informal economies in the EU countries. There are several countries with large informal sectors. There are differences between Spain, Italy and the UK.

Migration in Romania: Consequences for workers and the Romanian economy

Christina Chert - Romania - TON co-ordinator, The Open Network for Community Development

In Romania there are many different communities that are affected by migration. There are also many different kinds of migration.



TON is a Romanian umbrella organisation, founded by ADR Flanders, that has co-operated with Flanders for the past 25 years. Many of these Romanian committees have twinned with communities in Flanders. Their president is Jozef Goebels.

There are several kinds of committees, comparable with the partner organisations of beweging.net (also see www.theopennetwork.ro).

TON is now part of RE-INVEST, in which universities and midfield organisations like beweging.net and HIVA are involved.

Within the RE-INVEST framework TON is engaged in a project to diagnose the social consequences of the crisis. Target group: Romanian migrants.

This project primarily deals with trust, investments, re-investment. Its participative method is targeted at focus groups.

Between 1990 and 2015 Romania experienced four migration waves, each with its own dimension.

The most recent wave is a migration of white-collar employees and causes problems because of the considerable expatriation of physicians. At least 20% of the Romanian doctors leave their country. The most important cause for their migration is the fact that the government has reduced their income by 25%.

1 October 2015 is a historical day: the Romanian authorities announced a salary rise of 25% for jobs in the public service, including the physicians.

How do we turn the informal sector into an official economy? How can we call back migrants? How can we realise sustainable development? How can we encourage returning migrants to start enterprises?

There are no rules for stopping the migration problem, nor for calling back migrants to Romania. There are a lot of propositions, but without an underlying methodology. There is also a considerable loss of Romanian identity: migrated Romanians become citizens of their country of destination.

There is a large financial return from abroad to Romania. This is beneficial for the survival of many in Romania.

Due to a decrease of natural growth and migration, the Romanian population is declining. The number of migrants is rising and there are hardly any migrants who return. 11% of registered Romanian citizens live abroad.

Romanians waited for Europe to open its borders.

The number of youths diminishes, the elderly population grows. Ageing is on the rise. A large part of the active population keeps migrating to foreign countries. 2.8 million 'circular' labour migrants go back and forth. Couples take turns in working abroad and looking after each other's children.

What is the opinion of Romanians about Germany adapting its legislation for non-EU citizens that wasn't applicable to Romanians the moment their country became a EU member state? Poverty and social exclusion remain considerable in Romania. There isn't much of social protection. There is a lack of confidence in the authorities. How can we win back the



population's confidence? This calls for an active dialogue between politicians, policy makers, midfield organisations and citizens.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q.: Romanians feel frustrated because almost 40% of their youths are forced into exclusion. We are dealing with a transition from state ownership to private ownership, accompanied by considerable corruption. The bribes came via the big European member states. How else could one buy large enterprises to the disadvantage of Romanians and the advantage of a few individuals? Property shift and corruption has almost become general rule.

Selling public property has currently become an important entrepreneur activity. At the moment corruption is under attack, and this offensive comes from without. Why wasn't this possible in 1990-1992?

Important instalments in Romania are accessed via bribery.

Young people who want to contribute to society are under great pressure. They are not supported by the government. This will only encourage migration. Leaving is, in their eyes, the only solution. But, contrary to Syrians, Romanians are not welcome elsewhere.

Who is going to assist us in realising the reconstruction after this long, dark period? How is it possible that the European Union didn't take this into consideration during its accession negotiations with Romania? How to deal with this now?

We need fuel to develop our economy in a sustainable manner: money. The multinationals contribute little to the local economy, but receive European funding. Where is the future for the Romanian citizen?

Q.: There is a return of finances to Romania, but concurrently Romanians abroad have a hard time. In Belgium too they are exploited. They run away from their debts there and return to Romania.

There are however no statistical data on this. What is the proposition to get the Romanian economy running again?

Asking all these questions is an excellent exercise.

A.: At the moment nobody in Europe has an answer regarding the sustainable development we wish for. The current generation will have to sacrifice itself. The European market can't absorb all these highly educated young people. Perhaps Merkel has an answer?

Q.: I believe the jobs we need can be created by a sustainable development policy. Not by multinationals, nor by our politicians.

Europe is afraid of 1 million migrants, but not of the melting of large glaciers. We need enormous pressure of the midfield organisations to invest in sustainable development and to take part in this process. Politicians have to make this happen.

The support of the entire midfield will be necessary.

The major problem in Europe is the lack of great leaders that dare to take decisions in favour of sustainable development.

A.: The Romans said: 'Homeland is where it is good'. Sustainable development demands investments. Also in education. However, the money resides with the multinationals and they will not give it to midfield organisations.



Q.: This process influences all of us and is comparable to a number of other countries. How will, amongst others, the Benelux countries cope with the next immigration wave? Migration originating from the former communist countries, Muslim migration, etc., with an impact on the whole of humanity. The European decision makers are not always as competent as the American ones.

In addition to this introduction Jozef Goebels talks about the Decentralised Forum that will be organised later this year in Iasi (Romania). Romanian and Belgian midfield organisations and local policy makers (mayors and aldermen), with support of both country's ambassadors, will meet to discuss their common problems and possible solutions. Migration will certainly be a topic. Persons who are interested can obtain an invitation at the reception desk.

Intra EU migration: the case of Latvia

Ilze Trapenciere, Trade Union Association, Latvia

Latvia is similar to Romania as regards the subjects of informal economy and repatriation policy.

The Latvian policy is determined both by Latvia itself and Europe. However, documents on this policy are not yet publicly available.

Latvia has 2 million inhabitants, about the same amount as before WW 2, containing several ethnic groups. This is one of the factors determining the vision on migrants.

The same applies to the Soviet period, characterised by deportations to Siberia, Latvians fleeing abroad and inflow of other ethnic groups.

Many highly educated people left the country during the first part of 1990.

Immigrants came to Latvia because of the shortage of qualified labourers.

And then, in 2008, we had the economic crisis that dealt a hard blow.

The trade unions couldn't keep the people from leaving the country. Since the start of the 21st century, Latvia again lost a large part of its population, a process that is still continuing.

Of all Baltic states Latvia is subject to the most profound change caused by migration.

What is worse? Lose ones identity by migration or being socially excluded?

About the reasons to leave the country: there are pushing as well as pulling factors. Wage differences, social security, labour conditions, opening of borders, ...

What is the roll of migration on a regional level?

Only in the capital and its vicinity there is population growth. The other, rural regions are emptying.

These would be a destination for new immigrants, but there is no labour supply.

Emigration is also considered a big threat. Less than 6% plans to come back. Population ageing, but also the children that stay behind, are major problems. Lack of emotional



support, love and direct communication have a large influence on the behaviour and the personal development of these children. Children need more than distant parents.

How can Latvia attract well trained people? With families? How will the government select asylum seekers?

Latvia has a poor score concerning social environment and social security for immigrants.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q.: We notice there is migration from the former Soviet Union to Latvia. How well integrated are these immigrants in the local community?

Concerning the problem of the left behind children: this is a worldwide phenomenon, it is harmful for humanity and it is caused by the global economy. In Europe we count 500,000 children who have at least 1 parent abroad: the 'Euro-orphans'.

A.: We have to try all that is possible to see to it that children can grow up with their parents. In Latvia the number of extended families that can take care of this is small. The nuclear family is too small to tackle the problem. That is a possible difference from Asian countries. In Latvia young children are left to their fate. This has a considerable impact on their development. Not only do they suffer from material deprivation, but also they undergo individual social and relational poverty (they have difficulties building trust). This is also the case in f.i. Nepal and the Philippines.

During socialism the object was to create a homogenous society in the whole of the Soviet Union. This dominant Russian ideology was rather successful. As a result Latvians are suffering from a kind of identity crisis.

Q.: How can midfield organisations help to solve these children's problems?

A.: This question is hard to answer. Structural funding is not intended for so called personal problems. However, the problem is serious and we have to solve it together, because the emotional aspect is too important not to.

Migration: the case of Italy. Social inclusion of migrants stuck between current migrant flow and Italian policy.

Simona Sordo – Director of the Migrant Sector within ORSO NGO, Italy

Simona works in the field and explains a number of actions: Italian problems and policy, facts and figures, the legislative framework, the asylum system and forced migration and field experience.

In Italy there are about 5.7 million migrants with different statuses, including illegal aliens. Italy has been an emigration country for a long time and wasn't prepared for immigration. This causes problems since the 80ies.



From 1990 onwards several laws were generated that changed the approach of migration. Except for the economic aspect, Italy had no national programmes for a migration policy. It is important to understand the roll of the different institutions.

Municipalities, provinces and regions each have a specific approach and a different task concerning the provisioning of services.

Italy always looked at migrants from the labour market perspective. Since 2011 migrants are exclusively considered as refugees. The number of asylum seekers and forced migrants is constantly rising, while seasonal quota were set up for seasonal workers and student's visas. Since 2011 there is no possibility whatsoever to enter Italy legally, except by requesting asylum. Since 2011 there are two different systems, the national system SPRAR and CAS, the centre for emergency admission, with as a consequence a difference in treatment.

Migrants have to adjust their story to the expectations of the committee. This is a receptive, passive approach of obtaining a visa. It leads to marginality and asylum shopping because there is no uniform, national system to get access to the services. There are even differences between municipalities.

The NGO ORSO wants to take this framework into account and ignore the difference between these categories.

The NGO wants to help clarify the migrant's life project and support it by developing individual capabilities and the social network.

Supported by private institutions, they have since 2011 two ongoing projects with a contribution of no more than € 8,000.00 per person, through recommendation by a social organisation, because ORSO wants to work with the migrant's social network. Through this network connection is made with the country of origin: we are talking about a circular migration project.

A social worker assists in all stages of the implementation of the developing project. A committee acts as a kind of supervisor.

The other project is running since two months, also in co-operation with another organisation.

They occupy empty public buildings in co-operation with other -left wing- organisations and practice self-management. That way there will be a first house by and for migrants who are excluded from social services. This is the first step to integration.

Q.: Where do you find the money for this project and is it also available for illegal immigrants?

A.: It stems from private funds and is not intended for illegal migrants.



Introduction

Catalin Grosu, Head of Foreign Affairs Department of Bucharest City Hall (DELI Coordinator Bucharest)

Presentation: Sustainability of Migrants Integration Project (DELI project Bucharest)

Soriana Constantinescu, Local Platform Coordinator and UK Accredited Mediator

There are less than 1% migrant-entrepreneurs in Bucharest. A project to address this was planned, but nobody understood what it was about. There is no reference to 'entrepreneurs with migration background' in the legal framework.

The migrant-entrepreneur has to deal with local problems, bureaucracy and the political wishes of the Bucharest general council that represents the citizens.

Round table talks, workshops, enquiries, etc. were organised concerning a dialogue with the public authorities through an interface for migrant-entrepreneurs.

Concepts and networks were drawn up for a public awareness campaign targeted at the Bucharest citizens: The Bucharest DELI Platform.

Who are those migrant-entrepreneurs and who do they have to interact with?

There is a demand for practical measures, like a single information location and a single organisation that represents the migrant-entrepreneurs.

At this moment the city council has already opened 2 vacancies.

Several workshops were organised:

A workshop for banks, because they were not aware of the potential of migrant-entrepreneurs. It was also noticed that when granting credit there was fear of, among other things, the extensive and Kafkaesque regulations. There was need for a basic financial education and custom made bank products.

A workshop for private enterprises. IT company Oracle, a pharmaceutical company, an energy plant, etc. Although these companies boast of a diversity policy in their countries of origin, they did not take action on this subject in Romania.

A workshop for successful migrant-entrepreneurs: the bureaucracy is an obstacle, there are sanctions, a lack of information, etc. Some recommendations were already voiced in this workshop: structure on the authority's side, education, a unique point of information, one point of contact.

A workshop for municipalities. They had a good understanding of the needs of migrant-entrepreneurs and acknowledged the importance of language education. There is need of a census of migrants. A questionnaire is required.



All workshop participants were invited to a round table meeting. The proposed challenges: political context, bureaucracy, competent personnel, knowledge of diversity, female entrepreneurs, performance monitoring.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q.: Did you involve the unions, and, if yes, how?

A.: No. It isn't clear whether they are aware of the issue or not.

Q.: Do the different communities cooperate, and do clients come as individuals or as a community?

A.: Sometimes they come to us as a community, sometimes as organisations, and sometimes as individuals.

Q.: What kind of businesses are started? What are the reasons immigrants don't recruit Romanians?

A.: The businesses vary from small to large and in kind. Romanians are employed, but not in important positions.

Q.: Do you involve different religions? What is the policy?

A.: There is no policy concerning this matter. Diversity was not discussed. The most important aspect is respect. We hope a legislative framework will be created. Migrant-entrepreneurs have little power. DELI promotes job creation for immigrants and diversity in the municipal council. An integration centre has been opened. We want to use the experience of DELI.

The worst that can happen is that DELI will be discontinued. We don't want to lose the impetus, whatever politicians do or don't do.

Q.: The discrepancy between migrating Romanians and this project for immigrants is substantial.

A.: These are survivors. The local population lacks this characteristic. Because of the communist regime Romanians lack a management culture. Lebanese, f.i., do have this property. The needs also differ.

The Central European business environment is not exactly friendly and can't be compared to f.i. Germany and Belgium. There are more than 430,000 small businesses of which 99% are owned by Romanians, with a total of 1.5 million employees, being 25% of the work force. A lot of people want a business of their own. Some of those companies are very active and economically healthy. Many of the Lebanese, Syrian and Jordanian business people were students during the communist regime and know the Romanian culture.

The labour unions don't appreciate this, among other things the flexibility of the labour market. At the moment one can start a business in 6 days.

Q.: Remark concerning migrant-entrepreneurs in Belgium/Brussels: There is a lack of training possibilities to become an entrepreneur on the Belgian market. This causes long term problems. Starting up isn't that difficult, on the other hand, successfully continuing is.



Closing debate day 1

In order to start off the debate, a number of guide questions are projected:

- Which question is still open to you?
- Which of today's subjects meant most to you?
- Which subject is of use to your organisation or in your professional life?
- Which subjects ought to be part of a policy letter?
- After today, what will be your opening sentence when you meet your minister of labour?

We remember following issues from the closing debate:

- Why do we have to fund migrants when we already have our own poor in our country? This needs a political and economic answer.
- Migrants are not the cause of poverty in Europe. There are differences between member countries. These should be able to count on European funding. Migrants that enter Europe because of the crisis don't take money from European poor. The issue is not local poverty, but the refugee crisis.
- Do we want concentration camps like Hungary?
- The rhetoric of the leaders determines the reaction of the people. Be careful with what the political leaders say. Look at their hidden agenda. Don't copy everything no questions asked.
- We have to take account of conflict prevention, the genocide, the Arabian spring, our reaction and the consequences.
- It is not a problem of Europeans versus refugees. Romanians know that until 2014 there was no good president. It isn't easy to quickly change the message now. Romania has a history of a mixed population that cohabited peacefully. This is different in Central and Eastern Europe. Solidarity doesn't always work in the same way.
- The most important feat of the European project is peace. We have to remember that. Peace and prosperity. We have to take care of those and share them with those who need it.
- The origin of the migrant stream lies in conflicts. The midfield ought to look for an inclusive solution.
- The European citizen ought to feel safe, wherever he is. This is not a reaction against migration. The EU is not a homogeneous economic power. We should say in all overtness what we find disturbing.
- Some of us have specific problems because they are labour union employees, but the EU should be based on Christian values. In Central and Eastern Europe we have bad experiences with communist dictatorship, in Western Europe with fascism. Now we almost find ourselves in a cultural war and that is dangerous for the EU. We have to rethink things. The rhetoric of the leaders is used to often.
- We ourselves also listen to our leaders, and that might be dangerous. The unions should help to solve these problems.



- What is meant by cultural war? The culture of Islam –if it isn't accepted in Christian and Jewish rhetoric- we don't have positive experiences with it.
- Since when are Jews integrated in Europe?
- There isn't one Islam.
- We should consider both European history and the history of other regions.
- Western European countries didn't open their frontiers for the Eastern European countries, and that was a big mistake.
- The trade unions should be more preoccupied with the refugee issue. I miss the unions in the public debate. We only heard the voice of Unizo (Belgian organisation of independent entrepreneurs). It is the duty of our organisations to feel strongly about solidarity.
- Is there still a Christian majority in Belgium?
- The International Declaration of Human Rights is the most important thing we have. And we should keep guarding it. We can't get lost in an endless discussion about religion that can end in war.
- Unizo and the companies only had a political debate about labour restrictions. And that isn't altogether correct.

Conclusion by president Mon Verrydt with a thank you to the interpreters, participants and speakers.



Friday 2 October 2015

MORNING MEETING: Social consequences of migration in Europe

Start of the second day: **Carien Neven (Euromf vzw and beweging.net Limburg)**

The social policy of the EU in a perspective of migration: what is required.
Mahmood Messkoub, International Institute for Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Brancusi, who lived a 100 years ago, was a Romanian who contributed substantially to French society. He spent 40 years in France, but always remained a Romanian national. In other words, he was a migrant who delivered a lot for French society.

The concept 'migrant' takes a lot of shapes and, paired up with those, also contains several degrees of 'welcome' in the host country.

- Economical (legal or illegal)
- Political
- People without documents
- Family reunion
- Ethnic migrants

Social security should protect people (when ill, out of work, etc.): when you ask protection, you get it. Social policy, a competence of national member states, is more than that. EU directives exist, but are not compulsory. There are no penalties for member countries not meeting these directives. This is in stark contrast with the strict economic policy of the EU, which does have penalties when obligatory directives aren't met with.

Poverty is measured in the EU as relative poverty (less than 60% of the mean income). Risks that lead to poverty are, amongst others, children, halts in careers (especially women's), unemployment. But there are also working poor.

Illustration 1 – The obvious resulting question is: Do immigrants replace 'native' labourers?

Research in several sectors shows that jobs with lower wages are readily taken by migrants. Because of this, competition arises in the sector concerned, but this is of a temporary nature because migrants (who look for other experiences) will also rise on the social ladder.

The benefits of migration for the host country:

- The host country didn't have to invest in and fund the training of the new employee.
- Once the immigrant has been set to work, he contributes to the finances of the host country (taxes, etc.).
- Helps to remedy the increasing greying of the population of the host country.



Illustration 2 - Comparison in the area of employment

Conclusion: Migrants certainly don't lounge about, because despite migration employment is comparable.

Social protection and social security: the principle of discrimination depends on the country's welfare regimen (the lower the welfare regimen, the larger the principle of discrimination). Also, the 'transferability' of rights and duties between countries is of uttermost importance, f.i. when a person payed for their education in Syria, this is no longer necessary in the host country. Likewise, in the fields of labour rights and recruitment policy this should lead to giving equal opportunities.

Can migrants bring along their rights from one country to another? Do bilateral agreements exist or are they multilateral? In this, the EU should take up a harmonising and coordinating role. Often, the transfer of rights is very difficult (f.i. pensions, seasonal work, etc.). Migrants almost always have to 'claim' their rights. There are thresholds to this, e.g. language and pride (only in a real crisis and out of sheer need will migrants demand their rights).

We have to cooperate to build a social Europe. Not all countries can contribute just as much to the migration problem. Germany, f.i., can afford better social facilities than other countries. One should take into account the situation and the welfare regimen in the various countries. Only minimum rights, which should be the same everywhere, should be agreed at European level.

The case of undocumented migrant workers: an analysis

Jan Knockaert, coordinator of OR.C.A.

Social workers noticed that almost all working clandestine immigrants had conflicts with their employers (exploitation, wages not being payed, starvation wages, etc.). This gave rise to ORCA.

Objective of ORCA: to put labour rights of clandestine migrants into practice.

Activities: helpdesk, personal advise in case of problems, issue informational leaflets (in cooperation with the unions), policy work (in which analysis and offering solutions are important).

Undeclared work: no taxes.

Undocumented labourer: occurring problems: migrants are allowed provisional asylum and a work permit. If the asylum doesn't become definite and there is no recognition, the employee doesn't notify his employer. Thus he becomes a clandestine labourer, but still pays taxes. Migrants in this situation often disappear into the clandestine circuit.

Non EU residents in Belgium need an authorisation to be able to work as an employee. An employee always has labour rights, even without a written contract, also in the clandestine



circuit. An entrepreneur doesn't have these rights. For this reason immigrants are often contracted as sole entrepreneurs, so they can only demand their rights by going to court.

Main principle of labour rights: only the employer can be penalised for clandestinely employing someone. The employee cannot be penalised for unreported employment, on condition he doesn't receive social security payments. There is a trap, however. In case of labour inspection the fact that he is a clandestine immigrant is reported to the Federal Public Service of the Ministry of the Interior. As a consequence he is taken to a refugee centre or is ordered to leave the country within 30 days. On top of that he is actually punished twice. First by Foreign Affairs and secondly because the Court of Cassation decreed that a clandestine immigrant that works clandestinely is a danger to our society, which, apparently, is not the case for a Belgian national doing clandestine work.

Labour rights include (among other things):

- Minimum wages (9.12 €/h)
- No random discharge
- Labour accidents insurance policy
- A maximum number of hours per week or recovery
- A right to payed days off (holidays)

Common cases of misuse:

- No minimum wages (5 to 6 € is a common hourly pay for immigrants – sometimes they are not payed at all, but keep on working in the illusion of getting payed).
- Besides, throughout the EU there is a system of payment of employees in case of bankruptcy, also applicable for illegal immigrants.
- Very often an insurance policy for accidents at work is lacking.

The problem of bogus self-employment:

During the transitional period immigrants cannot work as employee. They can work, however, as self-employed person. In this case the rule or condition is that the person concerned should be able to run a business, and therefore should have a certificate or proof of professional competence.

Following exception exists:

The person concerned is made shareholder of the company (1 share suffices). As shareholder one can work in the company as self-employed person. In this case no other criteria are applicable. Many Romanians accordingly have (unknowingly) signed a document. Consequently, they have become bogus self-employed persons, often and unintentionally ignorant of this fact, and should actually pay social security contributions themselves, of which they are also unaware. That way they have accumulated debts to the social security that they often cannot pay. As a result, these people frequently flee back to Romania.

It is often assumed that labour unions should also defend and represent the undocumented, for they should actually do the work of ORCA:

- Employees without papers are employees too,



- Defending the rights of migrants also means defending one's own rights, because by not defending migrant's rights an informal economy will be created
- Migrants should get a legal status, because society needs them, both the higher and the lower qualified.

Solutions:

- Inform clandestine migrants about their rights,
- Labour unions should go into the field and clandestine migrants should be able to obtain membership,
- We need to make everyone respect the rights of migrants,
- Also the use of informal solutions (negotiated solutions) should be possible,
- A legal solution for clandestine migrants is necessary.

Migrants entering Romania

Maria Voica, Project Coordinator, IOM (International Organization for Migration), office in Romania

Starting point of the IOM: to regulate migration is good for the host country, the country of origin and the migrants themselves.

Cornerstones of the IOM:

- Facilitating migration,
- Regulating migration,
- Fighting trafficking of people,
- Researching migration.

Fig. 1:

In 2014 migrants (coming from non-European and 3rd countries) mainly live in Bucharest and other Romanian cities and in the border regions. Their number amounts to 60,000 and is rising slightly.

Fig. 2:

In 2014 migrants originate mainly from Moldova, Turkey, China, Syria and America (in that order). This doesn't seem to change much in 2015.

Fig. 3: Causes of migration:

1. Family reunion,
2. Students,
3. In search of employment (mainly in transit).

Legal framework:



Romania has put a lot of effort in attuning to the EU legislation. As a result, students can work part-time.

There is also a specific law that stipulates that as soon as a migrant gets any kind of protection, he also has the right to work (identical rights on the labour market as the Romanians). Consequently, people who are still going through the asylum procedure, are not allowed to work. It should be noted that only a small part of immigrants enjoy protection and social security. The objective of the government is sound, but people coming to Romania should know what they are entitled to.

For 2015 the government fixed a maximum number of immigrants from non-European countries: 5,500. This quota was established for 2014, but was only filled in for about 50%.

Commentary:

- Gap between supply and demand,
- Students, though receiving a Romanian scholarship, can't stay in Romania (f.i. graduated medicine students are not accepted by the doctor's organisation),
- The labour market for students is limited (certificates of competence are not easily granted),
- Professional education is only possible when having formal diplomas.

Causes of the problems:

- Lack of knowledge of legal basis of employment,
- Lack of Romanian language classes,
- NGO's do organise language classes, but there are few NGO's,
- Labour-contracts are usually drafted in Romanian,
- Other contractual provisions,
- Too many agencies engaged with migration.

As a consequence a network of NGO's was established with the objective to offer basic information services.

What do TCN's (Third Country Nationals) need?

- Basic information for people coming to Romania.
- Migrants do not easily stand up for their rights. The NGO's should do this together with them and inform them.
- Convince immigrants not to be afraid to ask for help.

AFTERNOON MEETING: Organisations of migrant employees: their experiences and answers for migrating employees

Migrant workers in the care sector: testimony from a host country
Regine Van Ackere, advisor to the Flemish Minister of Welfare

During the coming decades the Belgian population will age rapidly. This will raise the demand for care.



By 2052 26.10% of the population will be older than 65. Even within the next seven years the segment of senior citizens will surpass 1/5 of the population. Does this really have to be a problem?

The number of people older than 65, compared to the number of people of working age will rise the coming decades. As a result more people will have to be taken care of by less people.

In Belgium employment in the welfare sectors amounts to 14% of total employment. In EU28 this is 10.50%. We are in sixth place in Europe. This means there are a lot of countries with a smaller proportion. The number of highly trained employees in the welfare sectors amounts to 45% in Belgium and 41% in the global economy. This takes us beyond the European mean. 78% of the employees are women and a large part of them have part-time jobs.

These data were examined further in the province of Limburg and confirmed the conclusion that ageing is rising and there will be a shortage of about 6,000 employees. The solution should have more than one track and the speaker wants to elaborate on this.

The Educational Institution Flanders developed a kind of voluntary code of conduct concerning migrant workers in the welfare sectors.

Its most important characteristics are:

- It is a framework of conditions containing possibilities and limitations.
- The aim is creating optimum service, and this requires a multi-track policy and an ideal match between offer and demand.
- A need for:
 - A successful training policy,
 - An efficient labour market policy,
 - Efforts in the field of permanent education and training,
 - Preservation of the employee group,
 - Regard for the innovation of the labour organisation,
 - Good wage and labour conditions.

International migration:

- Certainly contributes to new developments and improvements in the welfare sector,
- Requires efforts from both the country of origin and the host country,
- Cannot cause disorder in the social profit sector,
- Should not have a negative impact on the welfare of the population, especially in the countries of origin.

Labour mobility should certainly remain an option. There will always be a distinction between free movement of employees within Europe and labour migration from non-European countries.

It is imperative to create a safe legal framework that is unbiased and transparent and offers security. This framework should also guarantee that all legal obligations, f.i. equalisation of diplomas, licences, etc., will be dealt with within a reasonable time period.



Recruitment agencies should provide full and legally accurate information and should not be allowed to draft exclusive contracts with penalties and/or other obstacles to free movement of persons. In this context it is to be expected that also the immigrant will provide accurate and clear information on his training, experience and current contracts.

For the reception of migrant workers, clear guidelines are indispensable. Regard for language, further education and training, housing, etc., are also essential.

Partnerships with several social organisations should be set up to properly guide all this.

Activities in Flanders are being assessed with these general principles in mind. To uncover these problems a survey was organised involving 67 general hospitals, 38 psychiatric clinics, 195 home care services and 936 care centres, day care centres and service flats. 35.80% of these responded, so the sample can be considered as being representative.

Only 18.70% of the institutions employ foreign nurses, mainly general hospitals and senior citizens' homes. A principal reason for not hiring foreign employees is fear that their capabilities (especially language) will be unsatisfactory. Only 1 to 2% reports to worry that patients will refuse a foreign nurse.

40% says this kind of recruitment can be considered in the future in case of a genuine shortage on the domestic labour market, with a preference for Polish, Filipino and Romanian nurses. Respondents expect a general regulation, faster equation of diplomas and adequate language skills.

To this end a dual-track policy has been drawn up in Flanders: on the one hand ensuring clarity concerning the inflow of foreign nurses, and on the other hand running a public awareness campaign to get people on the labour market interested in a job in the welfare sectors. This campaign undoubtedly bore fruit, as can be told by the increase of 73% since 2004 of the number of people starting a training or wanting to transfer to these jobs by way of a retraining. Also the number of candidates for jobs in the welfare sector coming from vulnerable groups has increased. Nevertheless the gap between offer and demand will remain.

Migrant workers in the care sector: testimony from home country Romania **Petru Sorin Dandea, vice-president Cartel Alfa Romania**

In the Romanian care sector mainly local people are employed. I will primarily talk about home workers. This is a very specific and small group of people who find themselves in a very difficult and specific situation. Romanian legislation doesn't cover this kind of employment.

Who are these people?

In Romania we are talking about 1700 people (Philippine women). Data are hard to find, because from time to time these women disappear from the radar because their documents expire.

I will be talking about 2 NGO's that care about the fate of these people and have completed a survey of their situation.



These home workers are staying with their employer or his family. Their net wages amount to € 400.00, which is rather high compared to the Romanian minimum wages which only amount to € 250.00.

The demand for this kind of employment first started 10 years ago. The employers are managers, politicians and senior civil servants, a group that has sufficient money at its disposal.

Why these women?

- They speak English,
- They have the right diploma for this sector, which allows them to get a work permit,
- They are constantly available because they are living in,
- They accept modest salaries.

What is these women's actual situation?

- No contract or their contract is not honoured,
- Have to be constantly available (no fixed working hours),
- Do other work than has been agreed to,
- Are often verbally and physically abused. The employer's children copy their parent's behaviour, which leads to duplicate abuse by these children,
- Hard to escape from their situation as a result of withholding official documents,
- Limiting wages without real justification or without caution.

How is this possible?

- Even after the recent reform of the labour regulations there are no regulations on home work in Romania.
- Labour inspection should get free entrance, without giving advanced notice. Because of privacy regulations, this is not possible in private property.

This means these people get no protection whatsoever from the Romanian authorities.

The procedure to obtain documents for these employees is very complex. The people concerned are unable to do this themselves. Therefore, they depend on recruitment agencies that cooperate with recruitment agencies in the home countries.

The employees don't understand the content of their contract, because it is in Romanian. Even if they would understand it and it would be sound, these employees can't defend themselves: they don't have a chance in court, because, since they live at their employer's, who withholds their documents, they don't have any evidence in their hands. Furthermore, the recruitment agencies can no longer monitor the employees after their mediation. Only in a small number of cases of misuse they act as intermediary.

Because of poor conditions employees organised themselves, in cooperation with the NGO's. This organisation has about 185 members. This facilitates access to the embassy. Due to media pressure the conduct of the employers has improved. They begin to realise that when they don't start doing things better, they will lose their employees because the regulations will be tightened.



The labour unions (Cartel Alfa) also put pressure on the government to regulate this kind of employment. To this end they already presented a legislative proposal. The only way to defend these employees is to include this kind of employment in the labour legislation. Amongst other things, the proposition includes call centres and domestic workers.

Q.: Is it also about home and family care and care for the elderly?

A.: Yes, these are also included. The question as such was mainly applicable to hospitals and not exactly to home care. But nevertheless the full range of caring occupations is included.

Q.: One has to work for 10 years in the care sector. Aren't we creating a problem in Romania, Poland and other countries when we bring nurses over to Belgium? What about the repatriation of these people?

Shouldn't Romania raise the wages, seeing Romanians migrate to other European countries and Romania imports labourers?

A.: There should be an attempt to employ these people in such a way that they preserve their capabilities. They migrate for 5 or 10 years during a specific stage of their lives and subsequently return. We incorporated this as political policy and didn't leave it to the private sector. Nevertheless, we notice that companies are forced to appeal to the private sector to ensure that those people get proper treatment and end up in the right spot. On the other hand we also notice that public companies also have to appeal to the private sector. In Romania they are working on this. To arrest migration, the government wants to raise the wages in the care sector, at first with 20% and in 2018 with 50%. In Western Europe the wages are 5 to 6 times higher.

The downside of globalisation is that Filipino's move to Romania and Romanians to Western Europe. The mid field struggles with this issue too. Nevertheless, it will have to concern itself with this problem.

There are no official data of Romanian women working in Western European households.

The majority works in Northern Italy for elderly people. They have the same working conditions as Philippine women in Romania. Italy has regulations, but these women have under-the-table jobs. Furthermore, they don't build up rights and when they ask for help in Romania there is no hard proof.

Q.: Everything Petru discussed concerning Romanian and Philippine women can be said about Belgium, the difference being that these women work in the hidden economy. I am happy with Regine's project. Nevertheless, something has been left out. In Belgium there are tens of thousands of domestic workers that are being forgotten. Live-in care for the elderly certainly exists in Belgium, but there is hardly a Belgian that wants to do the job. On the other hand, there are young people all over the world that are willing. I think we have to provide an answer to this matter. The Flemish authorities can do that too.

A.: Regine: 'I agree with you, but:

1. Flanders only recently got authorised, so give us some time,
2. There is a number of innovative projects and there are indeed people willing to do these jobs,
3. It would be more appropriate to guide those who are looking for work to these jobs and at the same time set up similar projects in other countries in order to avoid having to organise migration.'



Q.: Mahmood with a twofold question:

Regine, your data on Flanders are applicable throughout Europe. Labour migration still is the only solution to this problem.

Petru, isn't it a good idea to introduce Romanian women who work abroad to Romanian women's organisations to get these organisations to be increasingly involved?

What measures have to be taken to get these people involved in the system? Name and Shame?

A.: Petru: We don't do Name and Shame. There is a case of a politician who contractually employed a woman in poor working conditions. After some commotion he ended the contract. All rights of the employee expired and she got paid only on an informal basis. So she ended up worse than she was before.

Women's organisations? I have no knowledge on that subject, but the two NGO's are working hard on this problem.

We need to understand that it's about working hours, and not really about other rights. In addition there is the conduct of the employer towards these people.

Testimony of a Trade Union: Bordered Service

Aldona Kuczynska-Naskret, ACV-Transfrontier Workers New European Member Countries

I work for ACV and I come from Poland.

In the presentation: circumstances of migrants, what does ACV do for migrants, project for new employees.

ACV talks about 'mobile employees'. The slide shows the characteristics.

The problems of mobile employees are:

- Access to information,
- Lack of knowledge of legislation,
- Lack of language skills,
- Dependent of a mediator (especially in the case of false self-employed entrepreneurs)
- Lack of knowledge of the role of the labour unions,
- Cultural differences.

These problems are elaborated upon in several slides.

I am primarily talking about employees coming from Eastern Europe. Their main problems are:

- Long working days,
- No pay or underpaid,
- Unjust holdback of pay.

These people don't know the difference between a labour contract and regulations for self-employed entrepreneurs with purchase of shares.



There is also a problem concerning trade union membership: only after a membership of 6 months free legal assistance is provided.

It is possible to move employees from a self-employed situation to a labour contract, but often this process comes to a deadlock.

What do we do?

We do a lot.

- Diversity consultants cooperating with trade union activists in the workplace. The people concerned are mainly handicapped and migrants. We take care that attention is given to their specific problems and see to it that they get employed.
- Integration of migrants.
- Services for Frontier Workers.
- Better inclusion of migrants in our organisations.

Services for Frontier Workers

- Service of Dutch and Belgian labour union,
- Secretaries exempted for frontier work,
- Personalised services,
- Training for members.

This Frontier Workers Service originated from our assistance to people working abroad or foreigners working in Belgium. For some time now, this service is also specifically for new European member countries.

Support by a legal and a research department.

There is, for example, a new collective labour agreement for these people that also includes agreements to ensure housing.

We try to be active on these issues in several sectors (construction, transport and meat processing industry). This way we try to prevent social dumping.

ACV cooperates with migrant's organisations, NGO's and foreign labour unions. We also have an international service that deals with big foreign employers.

Frontier Workers Service:

In 2005 the Construction and Industry Trade Union observed that there were a lot of foreign labourers. They made a simple flyer in a few languages (including Polish): 'You have rights too, even if you don't have a contract.' This flyer was distributed on construction yards and in Polish shops.

Due to the considerable response they organised information meetings for often more than 400 interested attendees. Subsequently, Polish language help desks were organised, with volunteer interpreters.

In 2006 the labour market was opened, an important moment to better inform.

Actually, ACV Construction and Industry adopted a government task. People holding a work permit were allowed to start in bottleneck jobs, but this information was not disseminated



and nobody knew how to. Again a simple flyer was distributed to inform both employee and employer. Clients also got training by phone.

After a while it was no longer feasible to do all this on a voluntary basis and people were hired to give counsel to these workers. At the start all contacts were person to person, f.i. late evening meetings with a lot of Polish men in a café. Often they were the only employees in their companies, as a result of which their employers couldn't fire them. Therefore, there came a demand for better labour conditions.

The extension of the target group is behind us now. At this moment the Frontier Workers Service mainly acts in specific situations. Files about general issues are sent to the everyday services of ACV. We still organise information meetings. Our core business is the specific legislation for these target groups.

ACV publishes brochures in 14 languages about posting of labourers, employee status and false self-employment.

We also defend employees in court, and not only in Belgium.

After an international job fair in Poland a cooperation with Polish labour unions was started. We also cooperate with a Polish organisation that defends workers we ourselves can't help any more.

This grew into a network of consultants that spreads all over Europe.

We also have good relations with the Polish consulate in Brussels. We hope to achieve this with other consulates too, but they are not very cooperative.

Our cooperation with the Polish consulate opens doors to several government services in Poland.

Project New and Mobile Employee, sponsored by the ESF in cooperation with ABVV: The intention is to improve the stream of information to the employees concerned. This is brought about via a help desk, with multi-lingual consultants. These points of contact should have very many capabilities.

We are still working out what our personnel needs to help these people in a better way.

The role of community life: receiving messages and giving voice to people
Lode Draelants, Director Internationaal Comité

1 in 5 Belgian residents has a migration background, including France, Holland and more distant countries.

6% has a Muslim background. Most of those are Turkish, but there is a large group of European origin.

The largest migratory movements started in the fifties. We needed manpower. A second wave came in the sixties.



Our former prime minister was an Italian immigrant. This barely conceals the fact that integration hasn't always quite succeeded.

IC is a federation consisting of 300 organisations. However, it is not an international organisation. There are very large differences in language and religion between our member organisations.

Also the members of the board of management have very diverse origins. The member organisations consist of people who want to stay in Belgium.

IC chiefly works on leadership development so people can stand up for their community. We try to help people in being real leaders in their communities.

This can be done for instance by helping them organise parties for their communities. In addition we ask them to pay attention to other problems, so the leaders start finding out what their communities need.

Secondly, we want to build bridges and make connections between these communities and the Belgian population.

Thirdly, we want to give these people a voice. We don't want to take their place in defending their interests, but to enforce them so they can protect their interests themselves. This is important, because more often than not they are in vulnerable positions.

The foundation of integration is work. The importance of this topic is written out in the presentation. Work is also important for the associations, since it is the foundation of their existence. Unfortunately we notice that our members don't find the way to the labour market quite that well.

We are not a trade union or a labourer's organisation in the limited sense of the word, but what can we do?

What we can do:

- Community building,
- Listening to people,
- Improve preconditions,
- Help people learn Dutch,
- Improve social networks, because 1 in 3 jobs is found through acquaintances. IC itself is part of the network of beweging.net,
- Build self-confidence. Their environment has changed completely and as a result people don't always know very well what they are able to do, what they want, etc. They never learned to be self-assured when facing an employer,
- Improve mobility. Not only public transport, driver's licence, learning to ride a bicycle, but also mentally. For instance, it might be a problem to leave the familiar neighbourhood to work in a village some distance away,
- Assist people to take up voluntary service so they acquire capabilities and build a larger network, get to know other people and find a job,



- Learn about the ins and outs of our society, such as learning how to apply for a job or interacting with a (future) employer,
- Give a voice to and stand up for the members of our organisations,
- And finally: actually the government should develop all this, but it can't do it on its own. That is why the midfield organisations have an important role.

Questions and interchange

Stanislav Labjak:

Officially we have 60,000 women working in the care sector in Austria, but in reality we are talking about 200,000 women, including mobile workers.

At the start they can manage, but after a while social problems show up in Slovakia. It is good to be able to discuss this on a European level.

In the future we will have to address similar problems, such as doctors moving from the countryside to cities and abroad.

In Eastern Europe we will also get to know problems caused by an ageing population.

Marian Apostol:

Remark: Today we talked about rights and liberties of labour migrants. Above all people fear to lose their job, and because of this maybe they fear standing up for their rights. They have obligations or debts in their native countries. Because of that situation they are not free employees.

Q.: Paul Krugman wrote that a liberal economy creates problems in society. He said there is a need for intervention mechanisms to avoid that sort of problems. In order to guarantee work, we accepted certain concepts. Consequently we now have to act in a hostile environment to conserve this same environment.

Now we have to listen to the EU leaders who respect certain powers in society. When they no longer know what to do, they introduce flexibility and the like.

What can we do against this?

A.: Jan Knockaert:

The solution certainly is not to impose more regulations, and by no means concerning migration, because those regulations often produce additional abuses or invisible situations.

Q.: Annemie Verhoeven:

People with a migration background, professionally active in the care sector, don't progress to senior positions.

We also notice a recruitment stop in the care sector, not because there is no need, but out of lack of funds. We should bring this to the attention of the minister.

The result of leaving this kind of questions unanswered is more undeclared and hidden work.

A.: Regine:

We should change perception. There really are people with migration background who do progress to senior positions. We need new research to get the right figures.

Recruitment stop: When we no longer involved hospitals, participation stopped. In Flanders there is growth concerning the Flemish institutions and competencies.



Undeclared work: don't forget there is a considerable inflow of migrant employees in the care sector in Antwerp. A lot of work remains to be done to get these people involved.

Q.: Mahmood:

One should not forget there are many different sides to integration related issues. It is, f.i., difficult to integrate in a culture of racism, of rejection. We should be more open to others.

A.: Lode:

Integration is not assimilation. Integration means to me that people get good job opportunities, to make policy and development. Only when that is achieved, we can speak of integration.

Observation:

Jozef: The Dutch embassy in Romania provided pre-migration information to migrants leaving for the Netherlands. This was also the case in Poland.

Headlines of the seminar

Mon Verrydt

It is a bit premature for definite conclusions. I limit myself to the headlines and refer to the website (www.euromf.be).

1. Apart from lists of problems, we should be able to offer solutions and reactions.
2. The discussions make clear that we don't share the liberal views on society that are mainstream at the moment. We have to address this together.
3. We have to be careful with the words of our political leaders. We need a kind of leadership that stands up for people who need this.
4. The problems of migrants and refugees are largely similar.
5. We should insist daily to get the right data on migration and labour migration.
6. We learned we have to listen carefully to migrants and do this with an open mind.
7. The problems not only are connected to job opportunities, employment rights, etc., but also to family and those left behind in the home countries.
8. There always is a positive side, also for the host country.
9. A lot can go wrong with labour migration and misuse of people.
10. We should have a set of proper and applicable regulations for labour migrants, both for migrants from within and from outside the EU. Free migration should be possible.
11. Migration is not new, it will always exist and it will be of all times. It follows that migration laws have to be clear and simple.
12. More regulations cause more problems and more dead.
13. Social security should be the employee's co-traveller.
14. There are large differences concerning social security between the various countries.
15. A huge mountain is coming towards us, but when we reach the top, the future will be beautiful.



16. Receiving migrants is a task of midfield organisations like IC and self-organisations, but also of labour unions. They should be open to all sorts of migrants.
17. Trade unions should use all means to inform migrant employees about their rights.
18. There should also be projects to offer opportunities to people and to give structure to their migration. These projects should be supported structurally.
19. Attracting migrants can't be an end in itself. After their arrival, one has to take good care of them. Also at home, one has to wet people's appetite for these jobs.
20. We should find a common action.
21. Inform, mediate, advocate, improve the bargaining power of employees.
22. Informal networks of migrant employees are very important.

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