



4th Meeting of the European Migration Forum

Towards a more inclusive labour market for migrants: seizing the potential by addressing the challenges.

Brussels 6-7 March

Over 200 delegates , 125 NGOs

‘Integration is vital and key to our success in Europe ‘

Dimitri Avramopoulos - European Commission for migration,

Failing to meet the challenges of integration will destabilise the economy.

There is no priority of migrants over other vulnerable groups in the labour market .Integration is a priority for Europe . Especially as it relates to ageing population .

Migrants come with their own talents and skills , this must not be wasted.

It is important all stakeholders talk together .

Migrants WANT to work !

We are not where we were 4 years ago, some changes and improvements are slowly being made.

George’s Dassi - President , European economic and social committee.

Why is it a sensitive issue , unfortunately we have a short memory, look to recent Italy elections and the platform they were elected on. (look a Brexit)too many foreigners in Italy. EU’s courageous decision to share fairly the distribution of refugees / migrants but it was not followed as many members wanted to have the benefits of membership but none of the responsibilities .

Best in the world , welcoming , legal obligations (?)

We must deal with the dictators in the world to reduce the flow of migrants and refugees.

Pressure your Gov. So as migrants are not seen as a scourge !

Workshop - Addressing the issue of irregular migrants in the labour market

Testimony:

Maria Lourdes , now living in Germany - from Philippines , very poor and always hungry , parents died of Cancer, without medical help . Worked as a child minder whilst she was 10 years old and still in primary school.

For a fee of 3,000 euros a ‘friend’ found a job for her as a child minder in a rich family in Ireland .

After a week was fired . (she had studied business at uni.) friend helped her , expected to be sent home in handcuffs . No freedom of movement for employment , could only work as a child minder and to change job required the employer to ask for this ?

After two years policies changed and she was able to get retrained and a new job.

Never wants to be poor and hungry again.

Testimony Ramon Shadani:

Was an Iranian Refugee , prof. Footballer and engineer . Escaped through a smuggler .

Ended up in Slovenia . Had fake documents .

Never even heard of Slovenia . Was put into an asylum house , waiting , angry , frustrated .

Was advised to learn the language . He felt free when he could speak without an interpreter .

Language not only problem. He had not finished his education, no relevant skills for a job.

NGO helped with training , learnt to speak English . employed by NGO as a part time translator.

Only temporary jobs , precarious situation , so decided to open his own company, incredibly complicated for a refugee who did not know the system and financing.

Opened his own start up company . Had to jump through many admin. challenges ,

ie. government opposition and banks blocking .

Now is finishing his uni. Study for mechanical engineering .

Great determination to overcome the obstacles , new country , new language, new culture , not knowing how things work etc.

When teaching language , teach not so much grammar but conversation .

Crucial of learning usage of internet and linked in etc.

Migration - Paradise or hell ?

Eugenie Ambrosia - IOM

We do not spend enough time to listen and talk with migrants , too much time spent in policies not enough in listening to them .

Moving with help of smugglers was because there was no other option .

What causes them to make them move ? What causes them to choose smugglers?

The more we keep people at the margins of society the more they become isolated and the more they are perceived as a threat (and at risk of exploitation).

Increase self reliance is the best response to security , better than trying to seal borders that have never been able to be sealed in history .

Irregular Migrants are caught in limbo, most governments are obstructing access to their rights through various paradoxes in legislation.

There is no objection to voluntary return, or even a return based on fairness and dignity . however for those who stay they need pathways into legal stay, not limbo or indefinite or unjust detention.

Workshop 1 National Practices allowing migrants in an irregular situation to exercise their fundamental rights .

Q. Can you provide examples of existing “firewall “ provisions and practices. In particular , measures to enable undocumented residents to access to services, protection and justice)?

Example of firewall in place : What services?

- UK: practice of targeting known homeless sites via data from St. Munro's research .
- UK: it is now punishable / a crime for undocumented migrant to be employed. Potentially seizing income as criminal gains.
- Tension between Victims Directive and Irregular workers being criminalised
- Victims Directive exist to a certain degrees around Europe ie. if irregular migrant suffers a crime against them and reports it to the police , their details are not sent to Immigration authorities . They are protected .
- Spain: No legislative protection , however are protected by Labour Inspectors , whose only interest is Workers Rights , not who is working and where they are from.
- Spain requires all migrants , regular and irregular to be registered in a town, this offers a level of security , the Police cannot get this information. But it is open to interpretation .
- Italy : treatment and access to services for irregular migrants is open to interpretation in different regions , ie Rome/ Milan . One can be open , the other restrictive.
- Belgium Gov. is considering legislation to give police rights to raid private homes in search for irregular migrants . Not some much a need for a firewall but an invasion of civil liberties.
- One of the most effective ways to encourage integration is through the labour market, we must be involved in this, also for social inclusion in general .

What are the main drivers ?

- Public opinion can determine local interpretations , either to be to welcoming or closed .
- Central government / immigration , also can be very pervasive . Or even potentially fair.
- Large influx of refugees , the need to avoid humanitarian crisis can provide focussed attention for services .
- Pretext for inspections should be related to Labour Rights not for Police access to data.

What is learnt to what extent can it be replicated elsewhere?

- Protection of workers through increased labour rights
- UK trade union issued guidelines to some members not to fill in Street Outreach papers section that dealt with immigration details , when dealing with the homeless ,so that they can't be passed on to immigration .
- Police in Amsterdam do not pass on Irregular migrant details to immigration authorities.
- New Data Protection Regulation, May provide its own fire wall

Second day

Said Elouzi member of Forum Beureau

150,000 undocumented migrants in EU , they can work here.

We can accommodate twice as many in the labour market than what we have today.

Civil society wants to welcome migrants but gov. and laws are blocking it.

Workshop - Empowerment

Preventing labour exploitation , ensuring decent working conditions

Empowerment/ Resilience

- Greece - training for victims / migrants on their rights .
- Identify within the group of migrants someone to be. Trained as a para legal who in turn will train or pass on information to other migrants .
- Also introduce these para legal to Labour inspectors to learn about their employment rights
- Exploitation of agricultural workers by farmer Charging exorbitant rent for accommodation, basically clawing back what he has already paid them. Not. Including food, energy leaving little for other needs.
- Learning is focussed on rights as they were completely unaware.

Ireland- Tool kit ‘ how to work with migrants, tools for social change’ (Migrant Rights Centre Ireland)

Spain/Catalonia , training course for migrant workers and irregular migrants about rights, how to find a job , complaint procedures etc. Is certificated and goes towards their Regularisation docs.

‘ Take Root’ Prog. Send workers to the unions, who already have a job , including irregular to get further information and protection. Good cooperation between Unions, employer, Police .

Spain/ Valencia : all people , migrant, irregular are given a Basic Income, as well as training on rights.

Workshop :The floor is yours – M Stannett TSA Europe

Prerequisite to the labour market , such as housing , food , security , health

- Public assistance is to low or non existent
- No systematic approach once asylum is rejected , no follow on accommodation or support .
- Finding affordable accommodation is very difficult
- These are drivers, that push people into exploitative employment and housing situations .
- High risk of trafficking
- PREVENTION of homelessness needs to be part of the package for dealing with migration integration.
- Threat of deportation, threat of family homes being raided , threat of being detained are not solutions to the migrant situation . But creates instability, uncertainty , mental health and anxiety issues and forces people underground and into the black economy .

Next steps

- make legitimate funding available for irregular migrant support / humanitarian help.
- Decriminalise those who help irregular migrants
- Remove detention centres . Make return path fair and humane at both ends
- Make prevention of homeless a serious way of dealing with irregular migrants. As part of normal social policy .
- Make funds specifically to encourage training / info on migrant rights
- More generous subsidiary protection

M. Stannett

EU Affairs Officer

