



Constructive contributions to the debate and the development of a social pillar in the EU

Protection gap for migrant workers in the EU

Focus on working and living conditions for migrant workers and their families

Bucharest - 19 and 20 October 2017

Organisation: Euromf vzw
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Content of the seminar

Two years ago, during our seminar of 1 and 2 October 2015, we looked into the migration flows and their consequences for both host countries and countries of origin. Throughout the lectures and discussions it soon turned out we should certainly further expand the specifics of working and living conditions of workers migrating within Europe and the consequences for their households and especially for the children left behind. Therefore we organised this seminar to deepen and broaden our understanding of this subject.

This seminar was composed of two parts. The first dealt with working and living conditions of migrant workers in the host country. To this end we gave the floor to labour unions, academics and midfield organisations. The second part covered the persons who stay behind when parents and/or family work abroad. For this subject we invited specialists in child psychology, sociology and youth work.

Furthermore, this seminar came at the right time, immediately after the announcement of the first results of the Social Pillar for the EU. With this seminar, we hope to offer a constructive contribution to the debate and the further development of this Social Pillar.

In the Annex you will find a full report of the seminar, containing detailed information about the speakers and the content of their discourse.

Proceedings of the seminar

Each of the speakers was given ample time to share his or her insights with all participants. During or after the presentations there was room for interaction and questions. Already at these instants a number of recommendations and reservations surfaced.

Apart from the presentations, work sessions were organised. In these work sessions small groups further explored the information of the introductions. Due to the divers composition of the different workgroups and the extensive interaction, we received a lot of interesting, concrete recommendations.

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Conclusions & Recommendations

A general conclusion that surfaced during the seminar is that only more Europe can improve the situation of labour migrants. There is a strong belief in the power of the European Union.

Working and living conditions of migrant employees (Inter-European mobility)

The recommendations concerning the working and living conditions of labour migrants can be split up into three sections:

- The role of the authorities;
- A need for European social dialogue,
- A need for research and education.

Governmental decisions and European solidarity

It was the opinion of the seminar's participants that authorities in Europe can take a number of extra measures to improve working and living conditions of migrating workers.

A first recommendation to these authorities is a **stricter regulation of subcontracting**. This regulation should ensure a decrease of subcontracting. This in its turn will provide opportunities for a better monitoring of companies that hire employees from other EU countries.

A second recommendation insists on **equal labour regulations** in the whole of the European Union. This labour regulations should be the base of an equal social security for all European Union residents.

Finally, there should also be a **more stringent framework for the recruitment corporations** that organise a large outflow of employees in several countries. The outflow of employees from the domestic labour market causes a need to strengthen this labour market by an inflow of other labour migrants.

European social dialogue

The participants ask a **European regulation concerning the establishment and support of labour unions, ensuring that freedom of association is paramount and cannot be limited by imposing additional standards**. This should enable the uniformly establishing of labour unions all over the European Union. In this respect the focus should be on the possibility to establish labour unions in small companies as well.

The exchange between labour unions all over the European Union should be strengthened, to guarantee a better defence of the interests of employees within the framework of Inter-European mobility. In this context, special attention should go to language issues of employees from other European countries which at this moment hamper the defence of their interests. Employees from other European countries who already joined a labour union can play an important role in this matter. Labour unions deserve special support to organise this exchange and to eliminate the language barrier.

There is a need for a **clear and strong social dialogue** with representatives of employers, employees and government. In this social dialogue **there should be a place for a broad midfield** that often has a very great deal of experience regarding the living and working conditions of workers from other EU countries. All too often this midfield is forgotten in the classical social dialogue.

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Research and education

The participants have great concerns about the available knowledge regarding the Inter-European mobility of employees. The feeling is that labour migrants, authorities and social partners lack knowledge about the reality, the consequences and the underlying systems of Inter-European mobility of employees. This ranges from personal knowledge of labour migrants themselves about the influence on their private lives, to the authorities' knowledge about **the social impact of labour migration**.

The European Union should commit to good education in all countries. Education must offer equal chances on the labour market to all these children.

Also, education in the European Union should be more accessible to all children of labour migrants, whether they are EU or non EU citizens, also to children of refugees and unaccompanied minors. Committing EU resources to this accessibility also is an important measure in the context of the current phenomenon of Euro-Orphans (see below).

A more extensive research into the effect of the brain drain that is caused by labour migration is becoming a necessity. In this context the knowledge about the actual situation in every country is seen as positive.

The demand for a generally accessible database, managed by the midfield, is high. In this database, information should be gathered about labour market legislation, rights and duties of all stakeholders and the social security systems applicable in the European Union.

Proposals regarding left-behind children

The second day of the seminar dealt with those who stay behind. The bulk of the cases concerns children who don't accompany their parents who leave to work elsewhere. We also concluded that children who do travel with their parents are not always properly accommodated in the host country. Especially the lack of places in schools was touched upon.

There is a need for a European solidarity to make sure that both children who accompany their parents and those who stay at home **have sufficient access to education**. Outlining a policy that enables children to accompany their parents should be a priority.

Apart from the emphasis on access to education and the high rate of early school leaving of left-behind children, the **poor access to health care and mental health care** for children that stay behind and those that travel along was stressed. The accessibility of these services leave a great deal to be desired when the parents are not around.

Parents who leave their children behind should have the opportunity to regularly visit them at home. The participants left open whether this opportunity should be created by the authorities or by the employer.

In general it was stressed that a **uniform European policy is needed that should enable labour migrants to bring their families along**. As for the counselling and guidance of these labour migrants and their families, **mixed teams** will have to ensure the best of care.

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