



## REPORT OF THE JOINT CONFERENCE ON IMPROVING LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF YOUNG MIGRANTS

3 MAY, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

### MEETING NOTES

#### INTRODUCTION BY HEATHER ROY, EURODIACONIA

Heather Roy, General Secretary of Eurodiaconia, welcomed speakers and guests and gave a quick introduction on the importance and difficulty of labour market integration of young migrants. She highlighted the complex needs of these young people and the importance of recognizing, validating and using their skills. At the same time, she acknowledged the particular disadvantage they are currently facing, given the high levels of unemployment among young persons. She stressed that labour market access constitutes the core element of an integration process and therefore needs to be given particular attention. In order to improve support for migrants she encouraged NGOs, public employment services, trade unions and other actors to cooperate more closely.

#### PART I: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### A. INCLUSION OF YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- **General Overview by Stephan Burger, Eurodiaconia**

Stephan Burger, Policy Officer at Eurodiaconia, presented four key ways to improve labour market access for young refugees and asylum seekers. Firstly, he argued that mainstream labour market policies, including those focusing particularly on youth unemployment, are generally not sufficient when it comes to young refugees and asylum seekers. As they generally require more personal guidance and a broader spectrum of support options, more targeted outreach and tailor-made services are needed in the context of mainstream labour market access policies and in the context of the EU Youth Guarantee. Secondly, he argued that quick access to the labour market needs to be supported for asylum seekers as early as possible. This applies also to other relevant services such as language support or civic education, which are often either unavailable or not mandatory for asylum seekers and whose funding is often more precarious than in the case of refugees. Thirdly, he called for increased involvement of civil society in overarching dialogue platforms such as the European Integration Network and the Partnership under the Urban Agenda for the EU, as NGOs play a key role in facilitating labour market access through vocational training, job counselling and other support pathways. Finally, given that young refugees and asylum seekers often combine complex needs with limited work experience, he emphasised the need to develop effective entry pathways into the labour market, featuring peer mentoring and a holistic support.

- **Project Presentation by Ulrike Reindl, Qualify for Hope (AT)**

Qualify for Hope is an Austrian project preparing young refugee women between 15 and 21 to enter the Austrian education system and labour market. The project started in September 2016 and offers these young women a training programme of 30 hours per week for a period of 6 to 24 months, including modules in basic



education (e.g. German, English and Maths), personal development, vocational training and job advice as well as individual coaching and counselling.

The 70 participants are recognized refugees originating from 15 different countries. One important task of the project is to explain the Austrian political system, but also the education and labour market to these young refugee women. Further obstacles encountered are related to traditional life conceptions, important influence by the families but also a lack of life goals. In this context, the women need not only to learn the language, but also to find their way in a new “world”.

In order to respond to this variety of needs and challenges the project is run by a multi-cultural, female team and uses a holistic approach. There is intensive supervision, assistance, counselling and coaching taking place, which allows to take into consideration the individual needs of the participants. Day-care is offered for young children, so that the young mothers can attend the training and cooperation with the Austrian Employment Service allows to cover living expenses.

## **B. INCLUSION OF YOUNG UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS**

- **General overview by Michele LeVoy, PICUM**

Michele LeVoy, Director of PICUM, stressed in her introduction that contrarily to what many people believe, many undocumented migrants arrive legally to the EU. They live legally inside the EU and become undocumented because their residence permit expires and is not renewed. The situation of undocumented teenagers turning 18 is particularly difficult. As long as they are minors, they are protected, but as soon as they turn 18 they lose their right to stay and thus face multiple difficulties, including in completing their education. As undocumented migrants generally don't have access to university or vocational training, many of them turn to the informal labour-market.

PICUM is therefore recommending to make education and training accessible to all, regardless of their legal status, and to provide more possibilities to undocumented migrants to regularize their status. To conclude she called on the Commission to include undocumented migrants in EU policies and funding.

- **Project presentation by Simona Ghezzi, CESVI (IT)**

Simona Ghezzi presented the situation of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy. A vast majority of them are around 17 when they arrive in Italy and enjoy protection because they are minors. However, once they turn 18, most of them lose their right to stay. Thus, the available time for integration is very short. In order to regularize their stay they have two possibilities: under certain conditions, they can ask for a work permit, or they can ask for a temporary residence permit while looking for a job. However, many of them face obstacles in fully regularizing their stay, as they often still require further training as they don't have sufficient skills to enter the job market, but most training options are only possible for people who have completed school and accessible only to people who have been in Italy for at least 12 months. Internships are therefore often the only opportunity to access the job market.

The project of CESVI is therefore promoting a “chain” of actors that are cooperating in supporting these young adults in their regularization and integration process. The support is offered as a package and participants are asked to commit to participate to it entirely. Next to measures aiming at labour market integration, the package includes language courses, possibilities to obtain a driving licence, housing support as well as psycho-social support. Furthermore, they have set up an online platform to match needs and supply of work in the area of tourism, agriculture gardening and restaurants, where young migrants are most



likely to find a job opening. The social sector is also getting increasingly interesting, offering good opportunities and participants are encouraged to work as cultural mediators or social workers. However, for integration to be possible, there is a need for more public investment for instance in creating conditions for availability of child care.

## PART II: RESPONSES

- **Antoine Savary, DG HOME**

Antoine Savary, Deputy Head of Unit on Integration, stressed that the legal framework on integration of migrants limits the actions at EU level. Legislative measures are not possible and the Commission can only support Member States through the funding of projects. Differences in national legislations are furthermore still very important, in Sweden for example asylums seekers are allowed to access the labour market immediately after requesting asylum, while in France this is only possible nine months after filing the asylum request. The Commission's new legislative proposals aim at further harmonizing these practices.

With regards to facilitating labour market integration, the importance of NGOs was also underlined, as well as the Commission's wish to foster cooperation between stakeholders at different levels. For this reason the Commission organises an event on labour market integration with businesses that will take place on 24 May. Antoine Savary emphasised that, because of the existing legal framework, the Commission can only support legal migrants except for the FEAD, which allows to "bypass" the legal framework and reach out to everyone.

- **Anita Vella, DG EMPL**

Anita Vella, Deputy Head of Unit in the Directorate General on Employment focused her intervention on the different Commission initiatives touching young people and migrants.

On the Youth Guarantee, she stressed the difficulty of having Member States implementing it. According to her, more outreach to young people, especially the needy, is necessary as well as better activation and cooperation with youth centres. Another project targeting youth in particular is the European Solidarity Corps, which, according to Mrs Vella, will facilitate the engagement of young people with migrants and refugees.

Concerning the Skills Agenda, she announced the skills profiling tool, which is to be launched in June and aims at supporting national migration services in assessing migrant skills. Further it was mentioned that the Public Employment Services Network is putting a lot of efforts into the question of migrant integration.

- **Klaus Heeger, CESI**

Klaus Heeger, Secretary General of the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, presented the trade unions' perspective on labour market integration of migrants and explained that trade unions had been reluctant to the topic at the beginning. However, SMEs were very much welcoming enhanced labour market integration of migrants, recognising their potential contribution to the workforce. Although the trade unions in countries with small numbers of asylum seekers are less active in this field, there is a general increase of interest. CESI is now trying to convey the message that it would be a missed opportunity if trade unions and governments didn't invest in education and integration of migrants into the labour market. Finally, Klaus Heeger insisted on the need for national level involvement of trade unions, and the need to support and encourage them to get on board in actively participating to a better integration of migrants into the labour market.



## PART III: DISCUSSION

During the discussion with the audience, the success of one-stop-shop approaches in Finland (city of Helsinki) was mentioned. This approach consists in the cooperation of different actors, which are not only covering labour market counselling, but also all other social needs. It brings together the public, private and civil society sector and allows very well to support migrants in the preparatory phase for labour market integration through a contact point bringing together information and support on a various range of topics such as health care, housing and education.

The importance of quality job offers has also been stressed, especially with regards to the Youth Guarantee. Anita Vella commented that steps were going to be taken to increase the quality of job offers for young people, including migrants.

## CONCLUSIONS BY HEATHER ROY, EURODIACONIA

Michele Levoy and Heather Roy summarised key insights from the event, referring to the following concepts:

- **Framing** of the issues is crucial, at different levels of actors need to be concerned on how to make a case for undocumented migrants.
- **Frameworks**, meaning policy and funding initiatives addressing undocumented migrants, are needed at the EU level. The loopholes in the Youth Guarantee and FEAD that allow also for targeting undocumented migrants are not a lasting solution.
- **Potential** – the case of undocumented migrants should not be seen as a problem, but needs to be turned into a potential asset. Numbers will increase following the high numbers of arrival and Member States might need guidance on how to allow for regularisation.
- **Multi-disciplinary** response, which allows for the provision of different services which complement each other to facilitate effective support.
- **The role of Member States** in the integration of undocumented migrants is important and advocacy needs to be strong at that level.
- **Partnership** and better cooperation of actors are needed, instead of having many different and separate projects.