Experts Speaking: Economic Integration of Migrants in Spotlight

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and specifically the Working Group “Social & Labour Policies and Social Dialogue” operating in its framework, focuses on labour migration from EaP countries to the EU Trade union representatives and experts who participate in the Working Group point to both positive and negative effects of labour migration on the region’s economy. Although there is no demand from the side of civil society organizations to restrict labour migration, they often insist that policies should be in place to make it a win-win scenario for both sending and receiving countries. The list of issues we need to work on includes proper defense of human and labour rights of migrants, including the right to equal pay, decent working and living conditions; fighting “Dutch disease” and other negative effects of migration in sending countries: further regulation of social security issues on bilateral level.”

The growing immigrant population in the EU as well as in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) states intensifies the need to develop more comprehensive and effective policy measures in the sphere of economic integration of migrants. Currently, there are around 10 million third country nationals in the EU – or 4% of the total EU population. Seventy-five per cent of them are in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, while in countries such as Poland, Romania or Slovakia third country nationals make up less than 0.5% of the population.

The evolution of migration trends is gradually transforming EaP states from origin countries to receiving countries, which brings new challenges. Access to national labour markets in the hosting states plays a vital role for ensuring the well-being of migrants and could be beneficial for the national economies and hosting societies in general.

The Article 30 of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, adopted in 2016, reinforced the commitment of the United Nations Member States to combat xenophobia, racism and discrimination against refugees and migrants. The signatory states committed to take measures to improve integration and inclusion, with particular reference to access to education, health care, justice and language trainings.

“The economic trend in 2016, which turned out to be blandly positive, brought certain improvements for immigrants: their employment rate rose to 59.5% (2.2 percentage points higher than the Italian national). number of businesses run by people born abroad has increased and now stands at 217,600. Current figures confirm the added value for the Italian economy represented by migrant workers, thanks to their positive contribution to public budget and especially to social security sector. Given the young age of immigrants, Italy will be able to count on this advantage for many years to come. But as Italians say: “not all that glitters is gold”. In fact, such problems as the use of illegal work and the trafficking of foreign workers are widespread.”

“Participation in the labour market is crucial for the social integration of people and the most powerful means to combat exclusion. Integration may take many years, but the failure of new immigrants to enter the labour market early and secure appropriate jobs may have detrimental effects over a lifetime. Conversely, investments to support timely labour-market entry and decent work hold the promise of long-term benefits.”

“The economic integration of migrants, based on organized and safe movements, equal status in the labour market, non-discrimination and respect for labour rights, is in the best interests of both migrants themselves (as it provides them with adequate guarantees) and of destination and origin countries that may use migration potential for their development. In this regard, economic integration can and should be the subject of mutual attention and cooperation. Collaboration with the host countries, ensuring legal employment of Ukrainians abroad, their coverage by social insurance and the possibility of transferring social rights to their homeland are important for Ukraine, which is a prominent labour supplier to the EU labour market.”

“The Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration and Asylum is happy to present you the first issue of the “Experts Speaking” rubric. It is dedicated to the topic of the Panel’s most recent event held in Warsaw.

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