

GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT held in Athens

Greece hosted the 3rd Global Forum on Migration & Development (GFMD), between November 2 and 5, 2009. The annual meeting was organized in two parts: the Civil Society Days (held on November 2 and 3), and the Government Meeting (on November 4 and 5). The overarching theme was “Integrating Migration Policies into Development Strategies for the Benefit of All”.

The GFMD is a voluntary, non-binding and informal consultative process open to all Member-States and Observers of the United Nations. It aims at developing a non-binding policy framework, based on the exchange of ideas, approaches, experiences and good practices. Greece passed on the presidency to Mexico which will host the 2010 meeting.

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OPINION

New government, new immigration policies for Greece?

For years, Greece’s geographical position and administrative ineffectiveness have combined to turn attention to the country’s immigration policies. Especially during the last few months in office of the conservative government of Constantine Karamanlis, policies towards asylum seekers took a harsher turn as political pressure from the extreme right along with the economic crisis seemed to undermine the government’s political future. Respected international and Greek NGOs like Human Rights Watch, the Greek Council for Refugees and the Hellenic League for Human Rights drew attention to the gross deficiencies of a Presidential Decree adopted in July 2009.

This revision of asylum law was itself the previous government’s response to international and Greek pressures for reform: however, it abolished appeal procedures against first instance rejections of asylum petitions. Underlining the incompatibility of this legislation with established international and European norms embodied in Art. 39 of the EU Procedures Directive and Art.13(3) of the European Convention of Human Rights, UNHCR representatives decided to withdraw from any formal role in Greece’s asylum procedures. This was not a compliment for a country with the lowest asylum granting ratio in Europe — ranging from 0,3 to 0,5% of applications.

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Civil Society Days

The Civil Society Days (CSD) meeting was organized by the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. It provided a platform for discussion among representatives of Civil Society, representatives of NGOs, migrant associations, diaspora organizations, academics and the private sector who have an interest in migration. It resulted in a series of concrete conclusions and recommendations regarding the relationship between migration and development; the effects of the economic crisis; circular migration; the need for policy coherence and relevant data; building alliances between civil society actors and the future of the Forum. There was consensus that continuity needs to be ensured by a sort “body or structure” led by civil society. The report was personally presented to the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki Moon by the CSD Chairman, movie director Costa Gavras.



Government GFMD Press Conference (left to right)

Costa Gavras, Chairperson of the CSD, Peter Sutherland, UN Special Representative, Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary-General, and Theodora Tzakri, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Greece

The Government Meeting

The Government Meeting offered a platform for dialogue among 140 high-ranking government representatives (policy-practitioners and policy-makers) and 35 representatives of International Organizations. The proceedings lasted two days, in three parallel roundtables. The chair-in-office Theodora Tzakri, Deputy Minister, noted that the third Global Forum emphasized ways to make migration a positive drive for development: “Our thinking about incorporating migration into development is based on a strong belief that labour migration is likely to be most beneficial for all involved if it is propelled more by choice than by need. We would like to investigate the efficacy, or otherwise, of such a policy hypothesis”.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, who opened the Forum, said the number of international migrants is greater than at any time in history, with **214 million people living outside their country of birth**. He highlighted three global challenges that needed urgent action in managing migration: dealing with the economic crisis, climate change and human trafficking. “Our goal is to harness the power of migration to reduce poverty and inequality,” Ban said. “One of the most beautiful words in the Greek lexicon is *Philoxenia*—friendship towards strangers,” Ban Ki Moon said, “Let us take inspiration and work together to make it a global reality.” On the other hand the Secretary General noted: “I am... aware that the various UN refugee and human rights mechanisms have expressed their concerns about the conditions of migrants detained in Greece”. He urged Greece to protect the rights of migrants in the wake of international condemnation from rights groups.

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According to European Union figures, nearly half of the total number of illegal immigrants that reached the EU borders last year arrived through Greece. **Nearly 20,000 asylum applications were filed in Greece last year, but only 379 people were granted international protection**, the UN Refugee Agency said. Greek officials promised to review bureaucratic procedures for asylum seekers and speed up the application process. The Greek Prime Minister, George Papandreou, said immediate measures would be taken to revise the residence permit system and give second generation migrants access to citizenship.

Greek leftist organisations and migrant and citizens' groups have criticized the event, arguing that governments should be focusing on the treatment of migrants rather than their economic integration. A protest march against the conference was held.



Participants in the People's Global Action Forum on Migration, Development and Human Rights, Athens, 2-5 November 2009

ATHENS 2009 PEOPLE'S FORUM

A migrant-led People's forum was held in parallel with the GFMD government meeting in Athens to challenge the government policies being deliberated. The "4th People's Global Action in Migration, Development and Human Rights" (PGA) was organized by an international coalition of migrants groups in Athens alongside migrant groups from around the world, human rights organizations, trade unions, development NGOs and other civil society collectives. They criticized the GFMD for not heeding the critical conditions migrant face and the exacerbating abuses against them.

Katerina Lygkoni

Related links:

<http://www.gfmdathens2009.org/index.php?id=9&L=0>

<http://www.gfmd2009.org/default.aspx>

<http://www.mfasia.org/peoplesglobalaction/index.html>

OBSERVATORY

Irregular Migration

Greece continues to receive significant flows of irregular migrants, primarily through the Albanian border and the Turkish sea and land borders. However, the provisional police data for 2009 (8 months) indicate that these flows peaked in 2008 and are now expected to be around or just below 2007 levels. The exception lies with arrests on the mainland of migrants without valid documentation, and with unknown arrival date: these are still very high at around 45,000 for 2009. The table below shows the most recent data, excluding inland arrests, and with extrapolation to end-2009. (Since most irregular border crossings occur in the summer, these estimated data may be higher than the final figures.)

Apprehensions at Greek borders, 2006–2009 (000s)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009 (8 mths)	2009 (est)
Albania	33,6	42,9	39,3	24,5	36,7
Turkey-land	15,3	16,8	14,5	5,6	8,5
Turkey-sea	6,9	16,8	30,1	17,1	25,7
other land	4,7	3,9	5,3	2,4	3,6
Crete	2,4	2,2	3,0	2,1	3,2
Total	62,9	82,6	92,0	51,8	77,7

The decline in detected arrivals (presumably, many more arrive legally on tourist visas and overstay) can be attributed either to stronger controls by Turkey, Greece and FRONTEX or – more likely – to poor economic conditions in Greece and the EU. Flows of irregular labour migrants are known to be highly sensitive to labour market changes, with major reductions when receiving countries are in recession. The implication for Greek policy-makers is that probably there is now a much higher proportion of genuine asylum claimants in the mixed flows arriving via Turkey. From Albania, the flows are mainly labour migrants, along with some family members unable to reach Greece legally.

The 2001 Readmission Protocol between Greece and Turkey continues to have very small numbers of accepted returns by both Turkey and Greece. The Greek data indicate that requested returns for the first eight months of 2009 were 12.532 out of which Turkey agreed to accept 690 but in practice only 195 persons were returned. This compares with 26.516 requests in 2008 and 3.020 agreed to by Turkey but only 230 actually returned. Thus, the effective return rate is **under 0,8% for 2008** and **1,5% for 2009**; the rates for 2006 and 2007 (with smaller numbers) are actually higher, at over 5%.

For its part, since 2006 Turkey (as the agreement is reciprocal) has been requesting returns of just over 1,000 migrants per year to Greece, all of which have been refused by Greek authorities. The latter claim that there is no illegal migration to Turkey via Greece.

Clearly, there are very serious problems with the operation of this Protocol, alongside the failure of the EU to negotiate an EU readmission protocol with Turkey. Much of Turkey's reluctance stems from its vulnerable geographical position for irregular migration flows, and pressure from Europe for Turkey to sign the Bellagio Protocol extending Geneva Convention protection to refugees from outside Europe. The obvious implication for Turkey is that it would become, at its own cost, the principal gatekeeper for inflows to the European Union from the East.

Martin Baldwin-Edwards

Related link:

http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=2085&Itemid=429&lang

ASYLUM

Reform of the asylum procedure in Greece is imperative

On November 16th the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) registered an appeal at the Council of State against Presidential Decree (PD) 81/2009 entitled *Amendment to PD 90/2008 "adjustment of the Greek legislation to the provisions of the Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005 on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status"*.

The GCR demands the abolition of the PD 81/2009 and the radical reform of the asylum system so that it complies with the international and European regime on asylum and protects effectively not only the institution of asylum but also the rights of the refugees and asylum seekers.

The new PD 81/2009, which entered into force on July 20, 2009 abolished the second phase of the asylum application examination and decentralized the procedure. The Appeals Board in Athens was axed and the examination of the asylum applications is held by any of the 50 Police Headquarters in the country. For the appeals against first instance negative decisions, the Minister of Public Order is the decisive refugee status authority. PD 81/2009 maintains the competence of the Council of State for judicial review of the appeal. However, the Council of State does not examine the substance of the asylum application but only the legality of the asylum procedure which takes place. This way, the right of the applicants to a substantive appeal is not ensured. Provisions of the decree such as the decisive competence for asylum applications, given to the fifty regional and local police headquarters; the relegation of the Appeals Board into a consultative instrument without decisive competence and the fact that non police instruments or NGOs were deprived of a role in the procedure, caused immediate vigorous reaction of UNHCR and fourteen NGOs. UNHCR declared that it will not participate in the new asylum procedure in Greece, unless structural changes take place. In its press release of July 17th 2009, UNHCR ascertains that *'the institutional changes adopted with the PD 81/2009 do not ensure adequately a fair and efficient procedure for the recognition of refugee status in Greece according to the international and European legislation'*.

PD 81/2009 is indicative of the fact that the Greek state is not focusing its asylum policy on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers: it focuses mostly on the prevention of illegal migration and the reduction of the number of aliens entering the country. Prevention and controlling measures, though, do not contribute to the formation of a complete long-term policy in the field of asylum and refugee protection, and this has been a recurring problem for Greek asylum policy since the late 1970s, when the refugee protection procedure was established.

The new Minister of Civil Protection, under pressure from numerous negative reports on Greek asylum policy, announced a reformation of the refugee-status determination procedure. The Minister stated that the government aims at the creation of an independent *Asylum Agency* with exclusive legal competence for the examination of asylum applications and the concomitant removal of the competence of the police.

In 2001, Greece and Turkey signed a bilateral Protocol on Readmission of citizens of either country or third country nationals who have illegally entered the territory of either Greece or Turkey. The readmission procedure falls under specific rules agreed upon by the two countries. Signing this Protocol, Greece aimed at reducing the influx of undocumented migrants from the East since Turkey is the main transit country. However, the Protocol is not effectively implemented in practice. According to data provided by the Ministry for Citizens' Protection, Turkey accepts less than 3% of the readmission applications. However, international and national NGOs, such as ProAsyl and Human Rights Watch report frequent informal deportations of aliens to Turkish territory. This practice constitutes not only violation of the principle of non-refoulement but also violation of the rights of the persons deported since, according to these reports, among these individuals there are forced migrants who would have asked for asylum, had they been given the opportunity. In addition, the international legal principle of non-

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refoulement applies to direct returns into the hands of persecutors or torturers, but also to indirect returns to countries from which persons are subsequently sent to a state where they face such threats. Individuals returned to Turkey, either illegally or within the scope of the readmission protocol, are at high risk of being repatriated and persecuted.

Illegal deportations to Turkey, though, are not the only practice criticized by international organizations, and international and national NGOs. The low rate of asylum grants, the difficulty of access to the asylum procedure, the detention of asylum seekers, the detention of unaccompanied minors and the inhumane reception/ detention conditions have also drawn criticism. Greece was recently convicted by the European Court of Human Rights of violating the 3rd Article and the 1st and 4th paragraphs of the 5th Article of the European Convention on Human Rights, regarding the case of the 17 year old Afghan Rafiq Tabes. The Court found that the applicant was not provided with the information needed about his right to claim asylum and was detained under unacceptable and inhumane conditions.

Anastasia Papakonstantinou



The second meeting of the European Integration Forum took place in Brussels on November 12-13. First convened by the European Commission in April 2009 in collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Integration Forum is a channel for civil society, including migrant organisations, to provide input on integration issues related to the EU agenda and to act as a consultative body for policy-makers in the field of integration at the European level. Greece was represented by the Hellenic League for Human Rights (Gregoris Tsioukas) and the Greek Migration Forum (Ahmet Moavia).

EU Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot outlined the steps taken by the Commission in mainstreaming immigration policy. Civil society representatives focused on the importance of securing the equality of rights and opportunities of immigrants by prioritizing education and learning the language of the host country. NGOs questioned the use of the European Integration Fund as it is not reclaimed by national governments which in most of the cases do not adopt integration policies. The Forum concluded with recommendations of concrete steps towards formalisation of the Forum, including the election of two civil society representatives to the Forum's Bureau and a Secretariat, comprising of two staff members housed at the EESC. A third meeting is foreseen for spring 2010.

Myrto Varympopiotou

Related links:

<http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/policy/legal.cfm>

<http://www.hlhr.gr>

OPINION**New government, new immigration policies for Greece?**

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NGO pressure continued to mount after the October 4th elections that brought the Socialists to power. Both Human Rights Watch and the Hellenic League for Human Rights urged the new Government to take immediate action to put an end to human rights abuses but also to introduce legislation that will bring about fundamental changes for the granting of asylum, award of citizenship to the immigrant children born in Greece, participation of immigrants in local elections, revision of procedures for the detention and expulsion of minors, respect for the constitutional provision (Article 6) that prohibits administrative detention in view of expulsion without a court order for both Greeks and foreigners, release from detention centers of irregular immigrants whose immediate deportation is not be feasible amongst others. It seems, however, that the new government's intention to revise existing rules and procedures pertaining to immigration and asylum had already been partially developed while PASOK was in opposition, although NGO pressures helped to refine some points and speed up public announcements.

As early as October 15, one week after being appointed Minister for Civil Protection, Michalis Chrysochoidis publicly acknowledged that Greece is experiencing a human rights crisis with more than 5.500 foreigners detained under unacceptable conditions. Soon afterwards, 1.837 long-term detainees were released. In late November, Chrysochoidis announced the fundamentals of a new policy for immigration and asylum. These included an Asylum Agency with a mandate to grant asylum to all those meeting a set of conditions compliant with European standards; a detailed plan for securing the country's frontiers with additional attention placed on exiting the country; measures to improve the living conditions of detained persons; and a new package of rights and obligations for migrants residing in Greece. The Minister, in order to ensure that the new asylum policy met European standards while serving Greek national objectives, set up a Committee of Experts on Asylum which will make recommendations for the revision of current rules and he presided over its first meeting on November 26th. Two days earlier he had convened a meeting of high level officials from the Greek Police, Port Police, and the Greek Information Service at which it was decided that an intra-agency body should be established to coordinate measures against illegal migration. These should take account of Greece's position as allegedly a transit country for migrants from the East (as far away as Pakistan via Turkey) and the West (mainly the Albanian land border) to Western, Central and Eastern Europe. According to the Dublin (II) Convention, other European Union states may send asylum seekers back to the first country of entry once they are apprehended elsewhere in the territory of the EU. Greece is criticized by northern EU Member States for being lax with its borders and 'allowing' these persons to leave without first settling their status.

Finally, officials of the new government expressed satisfaction and took credit for contributing to the new Stockholm Programme establishing a framework for EU policies pertaining to Freedom, Justice and Security. The Deputy Minister for Civil Protection, Spyros Vougiatis, underlined certain provisions of this programme such as the establishment of a regional FRONTEX office; the mutual recognition of decisions granting international protection to asylum seekers; the setting up of an EU mechanism that would authorize conclusion of readmission agreements; imminent negotiations for a readmission agreement between Turkey and EU (there is a bilateral agreement between Greece and Turkey in place since 2001); and, finally, the provisional inclusion of Serbia, Montenegro and fYRoM in Schengen arrangements.

On the occasion of the Global Migration and Development Forum conference in Athens (November 2-4, 2009) the Prime Minister himself, George Papandreou, made a statement that created something of a sensation – that his government was committed to granting citizenship to all immigrant children who have been born in Greece. This is another long-standing and contentious issue: of the estimated 125.000–175.000 children born to immigrant parents, none has permanent residence rights and many end up (for various reasons) without any citizenship at all. Responding to statements made by two of the opposition parties – that Greece is sending the wrong signals to potential immigrants – the Deputy Minister of the Interior responsible for migration, Theodora

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Tzakri, issued a statement clarifying that the government's intent is to grant citizenship to children of *legal immigrants*. But the clarifying statement itself needs clarification: how is a legal immigrant to be defined in a regime wherever people become 'legal' following ad hoc and post hoc procedures which are so complicated, expensive and long winded that more often than not immigrants lapse into illegality before their residence permits are handed to them.

The new Minister of the Interior, Yiannis Ragoussis, also had an important statement to make at the GMDF on November 4. He announced that the government, while committed to strengthening mechanisms for improving border security, is of the opinion that better 'handling' of the thousands of 'sans papiers' and immigrant integration is the truly effective way to deal with the new immigrations. Among the integration measures proposed is the granting to legal immigrants of the right to vote in local elections. (Again, this begs the question of definition of a legal immigrant within the Greek system.) The appointment of the Deputy Ombudsman, Andreas Takis, to a new Special Secretariat for Immigration Policy within the Interior Ministry has been welcomed as a sign of the Minister's serious intent to pursue policy change.

Undoubtedly, these developments are positive not so much for their content as for an expression of the political will of a new government to deal with long standing immigration and asylum issues, despite multiple domestic challenges and a severe economic crisis threatening Greece's status in the Stabilization Pact of the EU. On the other hand, observers of Greek politics have accumulated evidence over the years that good intentions rarely materialize and Greek social, economic and administrative conditions resist even incremental change. One can, therefore, say that even though the new government has made an auspicious start in the realm of immigration, integration and asylum, a wary 'wait and see' stance is the prevailing attitude among the immigrant community, NGOs and migration experts. Problems both old and new – such as the increasing ghettoization of destitute migrants in central Athens neighbourhoods, or local xenophobic reactions against Muslim immigrants – will likely not give much breathing space for long deliberations on policy. Friends and foes alike seem to agree that the new government is navigating in a terrain that resembles an old minefield: No one knows when the next mine will blow up, or whom it will maim.

Xanthi Petrinioti (with research assistance from Michaela Peraki)

Serbia, Montenegro and fYRoM: a step closer to the European Union

The ministers of European Union Member States gave on November 30, the go-ahead to the citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to travel without visas throughout the Schengen area. This change will take effect on December 19, 2009. When this happens, visitors from these three countries will be allowed to stay in the territory of Schengen for up to 90 days within each six-month period. The Schengen area consists of 28 European countries (the UK and Ireland excepted), all EU Member States, as well as non-members Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. This decision does not apply to citizens who do not have biometric passports and to residents of Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in February 2008.

The European Council started the visa liberalisation dialogue in early 2008 with Montenegro, fYRoM, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first three fulfilled all the requirements related to the domains of Justice, Freedom and Security as they are established in community law. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina did not meet visa criteria. As soon as these two countries make better progress on reforms, the Commission will make new proposals for visa-free travel for their citizens, possibly by mid-2010.

Sofia Bautsi

Related link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/news/newsdetail.cfm>

BOOKS/REPORTS

MPI

The Migration Policy Institute (USA) released on November 18 the report *Tied to the Business Cycle: How Immigrants Fare in Good and Bad Economic Times*. The authors, Pia M. Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny, having analysed the employment and unemployment patterns over the past 15 years and two recessions, conclude that economic outcomes for immigrants, in the short run, are more strongly tied to the business cycle than for natives and offer a range of explanations for this finding.

The full text of the report is available at:

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/orrenius-Nov09.pdf>

Policy Network

Policy Network (UK) in its work programme "Managing migration in times of economic turbulence" released a range of reports with its conference in London in July, 2009. Of particular note is a report authored by Janet Dobson, Alan Latham and John Salt which examines migration flows into and out of the UK and Europe over previous recessions. They note that, although immigration tends to fall with rising unemployment, this is short-lived as are outflows of migrants. The result is that total net immigration is likely to remain more stable than most people think over the course of the current economic downturn.

The full report, along with various conference presentations, is available from:

<http://www.policy-network.net/researchprogrammes/events.aspx?id=152>

European University Institute

The Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute published on October 2009, the *Mediterranean Migration Report 2008-2009*, edited by Philippe Fargues. The report is focused on 'circular migration', a particular form of migration which is negotiated between the governments of the SEM States.

The full text of the report is available at:

http://cadmus.eui.eu/dspace/bitstream/1814/11861/3/CARIM%20Migration_Report%202008-2009%20revised%20Oct09.pdf

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

ΒΑΡΟΥΞΗ Χ., Ν. ΣΑΡΡΗΣ, Α. ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ (επ.)

Όψεις Μετανάστευσης και Μεταναστευτικής Πολιτικής στην Ελλάδα Σήμερα. ΕΚΚΕ, Αθήνα 2009

ΕΜΚΕ-ΠΟΥΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, Η.

Η Ζωή των Μεταναστών στην Ελλάδα. Νομικό καθεστώς, γλώσσα, απασχόληση, ασφάλιση. Α' Τόμος. Εκδόσεις Βογιατζή Αθήνα, 2009

ΖΩΧΡΑΦΑΚΗΣ, ΣΤ. Α. ΚΟΝΤΗΣ, Θ. ΜΗΤΡΑΚΟΣ

Τα Βήματα των Μεταναστών στην Ελληνική Οικονομία. Εκδόσεις ΙΜΕΠΟ. Αθήνα, 2009

TASTSOGLU, E. (ed.)

Women, Gender, and Diasporic Lives. Labor, Community, and identity in Greek Migrations. Lexington Books, Lanham etc. 2009

BOOK PRESENTATION

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2009

Overcoming barriers:

Human mobility and development

The *Human Development Report* is published annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). **The 2009 Report introduces the theme of migration**, proposing a core package of reforms with medium to long-term pay-offs. The package consists of six 'pillars' which offer the chance of maximizing the human development impact of migration. These are:

- Liberalizing and simplifying regular channels that allow people to seek work abroad;
- Ensuring basic rights for migrants;
- Reducing transaction costs associated with migration;
- Improving outcomes for migrants and destination communities;
- Enabling benefits from internal mobility; and
- Making mobility an integral part of national development strategies.

The Report's conclusions identify a range of existing 'good practices' consistent with human development objectives. These include the opening of channels for regular migration, regularization of irregular migrants, reducing paperwork and bureaucracy, and recognition of credentials.

Opening up regular channels

Sweden, in 2008, introduced a major labour migration reform. In a period of rapid economic growth and widespread labour shortages, a parliamentary committee was appointed with a mandate to propose changes. Thus a scheme was designed concerning the undercutting of wages and labour standards. One of the scheme's key elements is the provision that employers are the primary judges of needs, with a role for the Swedish Migration Board to ensure consistency with collective agreements and allow for union comment.

Experience with regularization

The vast majority of European countries have operated some form of regularization programme. According to a recent study (REGINE), in Europe over 6 million people have applied to transit from irregular to legal status over the decade to 2007, with an approval rate of 80 per cent. Moreover, such programmes are not limited to the OECD. The pros and cons of regularization have been debated. The benefits are visible both to the destination countries and the individuals. The advantages for the destination country relate to the security and the rule of law, while the individuals and families who are regularized may be better placed to overcome social and economic exclusion. Among the disadvantages are concerns about encouraging future flows, the undermining of formal admissions programmes and fraudulent applications. Finally, surveys have concluded that the socio-economic impacts of regularization have been mixed.



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BOOK PRESENTATION

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Reducing paperwork: a challenge for governments and partners

Moving across borders inevitably involves transaction costs, which creates a need for intermediation and facilitation services. One example of such services is the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration which regulates all aspects of recruitment and works closely with other agencies to ensure the protection of its workers abroad. Furthermore, Indonesia established the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI) in 2006, whose effectiveness is evident.

Development assistance programmes could support administrative improvements for vital records registration with shorter processing times and lower costs. This could allow governments to offer their citizens proper travel documents at affordable prices. Bangladesh has partnered with UNICEF on this front.

Recognition of credentials

A significant number of migrants are well qualified yet unable to use their skills abroad. Accreditation of skills is rarely practised in Europe, even where there are institutional arrangements in place that are supposed to facilitate recognition. Among the strategies available to promote the use of skills and qualifications held by foreigners are the following:

- Mutual recognition agreements. These are most common between countries with similar systems of education and levels of economic development.
- Prior vetting. Both source and destination governments can vet the credentials of potential migrants before they leave.
- Fast-track consideration. Governments can facilitate fast-track consideration of credentials and establish national offices to expedite recognition. Mentors and short courses abroad can help migrants fill any gaps.
- Recognition of on-the-job skills. Many skills are learned on the job and mechanisms for recognizing such informally learned skills may be lacking. Developing the capacity to recognize and certify on-the-job skills could make it easier for workers to have their skills recognized abroad.

Alex Barolo-Freris

EVENTS

Full results presentation of EU-MIDIS Survey at the Fundamental Rights Conference in Stockholm

The full results of the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey ([EU-MIDIS](#)) were presented on December 10–11, 2009 during the Fundamental Rights Conference in Stockholm. The survey aims to improve the support to discrimination and racism victims, through the development of evidence-based and targeted policies against such practices. 23.500 persons from selected immigrant and minority ethnic groups and 5.000 persons from the majority population living in the same areas as minorities in all 27 EU Member States participated in the survey. Therefore, this large scale survey could constitute a reliable information source on experiences of discriminatory treatment and racist crime victimisation available to policy makers and other key stakeholders.

Related link:

http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/eu-midis/index_en.htm

Greek Migration News

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December 18: International Migrants Day

The United Nations invites member-states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to observe the International Migrants Day on December 18 in any appropriate way including information dissemination, discussion and policy action to protect the rights of migrants.

International Migrants Day commemorates the adoption, by the UN General Assembly, of the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (Resolution 45/158) on December 18, 1990.

DEVELOPING NEWS

The Stockholm Programme

On October 16, 2009 the Swedish Presidency of the EU revealed in draft form, a new multi-annual programme (2010–2014) for the area of Freedom, Security and Justice. The Stockholm Programme will follow on the Tampere and Hague programmes and bears on immigration and asylum. The programme was set to be brought to the Summit Council meeting on December 10-11, 2009.

The Stockholm Programme will be discussed in the **next issue** of *Greek Migration News*.