

Conference of the National Contact Point Austria in the European Migration Network

„Labour Migration and its Challenges in the EU – Perspectives in the EU Member States“

On October 21 2010 a conference on “Labour Migration and its Challenges in the EU – Perspectives in the EU Member States” was organised by the National Contact Point Austria; over 130 participants and prestigious experts were taking part in it. The results of the current study of the European Migration Network on labour migration were discussed by academic, political and economic experts and stakeholders from a national and a European point of view. The EMN study analyses the developments at the labour markets in the EU member states since 2004 and evaluates, to which extend a demand-oriented migration policy is able to cover a demand of qualified work force.

In the **welcoming speeches** the function and task of the EMN was elaborated and the topicality of the conference’s thematic focus was stressed: “The need of migrant work force in order to maintain our economic and social system is recognized by researchers since years” said Andreas Halbach, chief of mission of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) in Vienna. Task and function of the EMN is to provide up to date, objective, reliable and comparable data and information concerning migration and asylum related issues to European and national institutions and agencies as well as to the general public with the aim to support policy makers and decision making processes in the European Union. This task and significance was stressed by Jürgen Gmelch, Deputy Head of the Public Relations Unit of the Representation of the European Commission in Austria. The EMN contributes significantly to an unprejudiced approach to the topic of migration, explained also Peter Webinger Branch Director of the Unit Residence and Citizenship Affairs as well as Asylum and Care of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior. Fiona Kinsman, Policy Officer in the Directorate General for the Interior at the European Commission in Brussels, confirmed an “explicit interest” in the studies of the EMN by the Commission. According to her, the topic labour migration is of special interest because the European Commission will publish a Directive to combat labour shortages in the near future.

In the first two **key note speeches**, Petra van Nierop, Director of GHK-COWI (service provider to the European Commission) introduced the first preliminary findings of the synthesis report, a summary of the national studies. Mrs. Gudrun Biffl, Head of the Centre for Migration, Integration and Security at the Danube University Krems elaborated in the second key note speech how the recent situation of labour migration is shaped. In her presentation she illustrated data, numbers and facts concerning labour demand and development of migration in Austria, which can be looked up in the EMN study that was written by her.

National perspectives were introduced in the following presentations. The background of the current situation concerning labour migration to Germany was presented by Jan Schneider, Researcher at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). He especially focused on the question how a demand of (migrant) work force could be detected. In the following Özge Bilgili, a research fellow at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands, focused on the perceptions of Turkish authorities regarding temporary and circular migration to Europe. A change was detected by the speaker: from (return) migrations deriving from developmental reasons to migrations, which are shaped by personal decisions. This could – according to her thesis – be attributed to the fact that Turkey sees itself as an integral part of the capitalist world and not (any more) as dependent on “remittances”. Which political expediencies there are in order to compensate demand of skilled labour in Finland was elaborated by Pia Björbacka, Advisor for Trade and Industrial Policy at the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions. The main part of the demand concerns low-

qualified work force, only a small part of migrants is highly-qualified.

András Zsigmond, Head of the Migration and Monitoring Department at the Office of Health Authorisation and Administrative Procedures in Budapest gave a concluding speech about Hungarian migrants in the health sector. The speaker introduced the administrative processing regarding the emigration of work force, the recognition of qualifications in Austria as well as a monitoring system in the health sector.

The conclusion of the conference was a **panel discussion** with Sarah Galehr from the Public Employment Service, Andreas Gruber from the Federation of Austrian Industries, Dietmar Hudsky from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Ingrid Nowotny from the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Johannes Peyrl from the Austrian Chamber of Labour and Nilgöl Raeke from the Vienna Business Agency. Topic of the discussion was the Austrian labour market and the role of migrants within it. Beside economical aspects of labour migration and the current and future demand of work force particular attention was paid to social impacts of labour migration. This point was mainly stressed by Ingrid Nowotny as well as Johannes Peyrl. They stressed that wage and social dumping will have to be combated effectively. Qualifications of immigrants will have to be recognized unbureaucratically and the recruitment has to be conducted under consideration of social aspects like family reunification. These points were supported by Sarah Galehr. Nigöl Raeke added that for a third of the migrants living in Vienna the self-employment is the only way out of unemployment. Possible future perspectives of Austria were also vividly discussed in the panel discussion, e.g. the forthcoming red-white-red-card. Dietmar Hudsky of the Federal Ministry of the Interior stressed the seminal significance for the Austrian migration policy. Andreas Gruber agreed upon this and added that the developments were completely in the interests of the companies with high demand of qualified work force. Ingrid Nowotny and Johannes Peyrl however criticised the unsatisfying situation in terms of workers' rights and the social situation of the large group of low-qualified immigrants, who have already settled in Austria or are staying in the country only for a short time for seasonal work.

The presentations held during the conference are retrievable on the website of the National Contact Point Austria within the EMN (www.emn.at). After the publication of the national study it will be also available on the website as a download. The European Synthesis Report will be available though on the European EMN Website (<http://emn.sarenet.es>).