

Report of the Final Conference

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The project work reached its climax through an international conference held on the 27th May in Mol, Belgium, which conference discussions and presentations were delivered over the span of a whole day, with various issues being taken up by the presenters and the audience.

The main issues that dealt with the integration of migrants in the host country focus around the five sociological pillars entitled PREFE: politics, religion, education, family and economics. Without initiative and commitment from all the entities falling within the remits of these pillars, the integration process risks becoming unraveled and untenable.

The main points emanating from the conference were structured as follows: the presentation of the project and its findings along with the individual country reports. This was followed by a series of papers and case scenario presentations which was finally followed by a debate.

Each of the sections is outlined below with the main points elicited for each:

- **Migration aspects – country reports**

The project findings show that there are both diversities and other issues dealing with non-diversity that effect integration, which findings point most countries are facing similar situations in dealing with integration, whilst others have their particular issues to confront. On the other hand, the issues encountered by the immigrants relate to the specific context within which they find themselves in at the host country, due to such issues as cultural, social and phenomenological situations structured through the PREFE pillars. The presentations were delivered by Julie Van Elst Werk, Els Van Den Buys, Dr. Sandra Scicluna, Dr. Davide Pero, Dr. Elisabetta Zontini, Floriana Vita and Maria Arettines.

- The Diversities and NOT across the countries discussed ranged from:
 - Source of Flight from home country: corruption, strife, drought...
 - Barriers and discrimination
 - Asylum procedures
 - Access to Housing
 - Marginalisation
 - Gender issues
 - Access to the job market
 - Wide range of source countries with the resultant culture differences – random social-engineering without the engineers
 - Problems with migrant's courses and exams

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- Employment issues of TCNs' children
- Super-diversity and Multiculturalism
- Migrants' inability to keep up with changes in legislation
- Third-party inputs to aid migrants – inclusive of unionisation
- Need for networking

The discussion emanating from the country reports posit some very interesting aspects for review, which all countries could tackle, whilst some may have already initiated the process aimed at tackling such aspects. The Need factors include:

- Need for Policy and Decision Makers to face the realities that migrants face
- Need to understand new forms of Poverty and Deprivation
- Need for 'champions/sponsors' - role models
- Need for subsidisation review
- Need for media uptake
- Need for gender mainstreaming
- Need for participation in the socio-cultural and socio-political fields
- Need to highlight differences between TCNs and illegal migrants
- Need to understand social and spatial insularity
- Adherence to EU regulations

The presentation of papers covered diverse topics related to research and activities in the field.

- Fernando Pauwels discussed the Civic integration trajectory, which was based on a triangulation research focused on an analysis of the ability of migrants to manage oneself and show active participation in society. The study found that non-starters are less often working but when they do work, they get higher wages! The Qualitative part of the study found that the main issue faced by migrants focused on language limitations. The final point stated that people learn one way or the other however they do not learn about legal matters.
- Socio-Cultural Integration was the topic discussed by Maarten Van Craen, who ran quantitative analysis with three different groups, as based on language, social capital issues and identity. He identified that there was group success from one group (Turkish) who were more successful on social capital, whilst the efforts of the Moroccan minority group go unrecognised. In addition, Moroccans more involved in criminal activity.
- Dr. David Zammit delivered a presentation on the Work Experience and Legal Consciousness of former Boat People in Malta. His discussion identified the main issues impinging on integration being primarily effected by legal and policy issues, subsidiary status and impacts – refugees vs illegal immigrants, state intervention aimed at aggregating migrants in concentrated area and employment and racism. He also brought in the realities of social construct

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such as cultural contextualisation and the 'ginger' effect! The main focus was on the difficulties faced by the individual states when dealing with immigration and discussed the Maltese vs EU Legislation differences which led to various subjectivity issues being highlighted by the migrants.

Five Case Scenarios were discussed next, each focusing on specific target migrant groups, their functions and the difficulties and positive aspects encountered in the integrative process.

- A presentation on the Integration Centres' Social basis was delivered by Leen Cleuren, who discussed the issue that impinge on social cohesion. These include the importance of language which is though not necessarily seen as a priority for migrants, especially concerning the dialect issue. Other aspects covered were the importance of extra-curricular activities, a realistic accessibility to services, the lack of self-help organisations and the portrayal issues that plague visualization and stereotyping in the migrant debate. The author emphasized the need to understand the abyss between poverty and deprivation and how migrants travel between both.
- The second case scenario discussed the activities of the Turkish Union in Belgium as delivered by Semra Coban. She stated that the main issue that impinges on integration is that of empowerment. She also brought forward the question on how the Belgian people perceive the new and previous migrants. The final topic discussed focused on how migrants feel misunderstood but strive to bring up these issues to empower their actions.
- Lode Draelandots discussed the role of the Belgian International Committee and stressed the effects that Self-Help Groups have on society, whilst also stating that the reality shows that there is both a clash of cultures and cooperation across migrant groups (giving an example of a Sudanese case who was laid-back (inxalla vs fast-paced modernism) and thought he could deliver in a fast-paced world.
- Asylum was discussed by Bob Pleysier who stated that the issue of migration centers on Duality as Integration is a dual-direction process. The migrant wants to become integrated whilst society wants to enable integration. He stated that engagement is the pivot with confidence expressed that one is not a threat to the other. He also discussed the fear that migrants threaten the local populace, the comparative approaches across the EU states as related to the local population, the very low end to the asylum process where few acquire refugee status and also covered the regularisation issue.
- Integration was covered by Dave Van Oosterwyck, who gave an overview of the regions and the Communities and delved in an account of the historical migration to Belgium to work in the mines, covering Italian to Spanish to Turkish to Moroccan immigrants. His statement that "Migrants came, Migrants stayed and societies now have inter-generational structures" is a

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reality across all states. He discussed civic integration (migrant-centered) versus inclusive integration (society-centered) and how integration requires the take-up of both Rights and Obligations as the respective roles for integrative success.

The Debate at the final part of the conference brought together the speakers and the audience with the main aspects highlighted in two streams: i) migration and the future and ii) migration as an opportunity:

Migration and the Future

- The panel members stated that the focus towards integration policy is a must however it is not an easy concept for both policy and decision makers to take up. Bringing in the PREFE structures within the discussion highlights, one can state that:
- Despite the focus on integration policy, there is poor PREFE (labour and education) mobility;
- Many good initiatives exist but integration must happen at the local level
- Need to make PREFE attractive for migrants – a success story would be that the services offered in the school for migrants, could be delivered also for the Belgian population thus effectively becoming a school for Belgians as it helps them to aid integration...;
- Employment – exclusion of minorities through language tests rather than technical aspect;
- There is a need to move away from EU as the teacher – need to focus on the cohesive aspect rather than the migrant group structure even in regeneration (social cohesion vs the individual).

Migration as an Opportunity

- From a situation of visualizing migration as a problem to actually coming face-to-face with reality, from a Weaknesses-Threats reaction, one needs to move to a Strengths-Opportunities approach, The debate focused on the issues that would serve as a launching-pad, on which main items were highlighted as follows:
- Migration is not only a problem but also a solution due to demographic ageing;
- Need for employees due to 16-65 year old cohort shrinkage;
- Need to think about vocational training;
- Need for a dual approach where rules and obligations are met – society failed on the duties;
- Policy makers are afraid to being labeled conservative if the focus on the obligations that the migrants have to adhere to;
- Important to sensitise the older generations to the fact that their children need to be brought up in the new society in accordance to the obligations as well as their rights.

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The final conference presentation focused on a presentation on the main points elicited during the conference, with a session on PREFE Revisited and how VIBES (values, interests, beliefs, ethics and slants) would help in the integration of migrants through a socially contextual shift change.