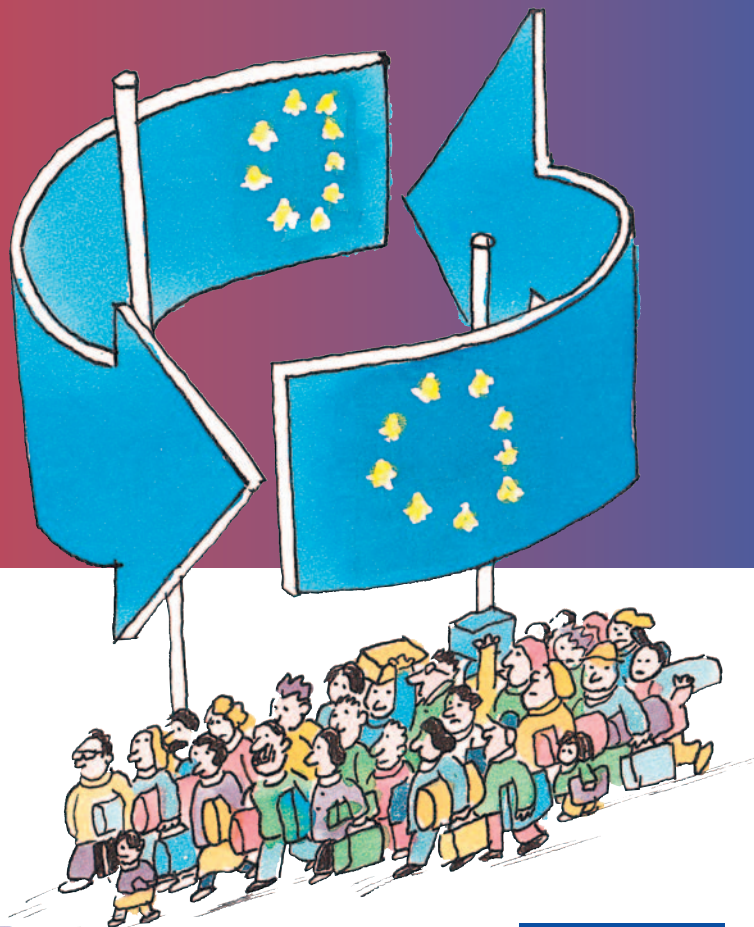


Mobility and migration: co-ordination of social security – an element of stabilization for life and work in Europe





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Foreword

Dear Readers and Friends,

The political configuration and social promotion of mobility and migration is one of the key objectives of the new European Commission.

In its 2014 education and training year, the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) co-ordinated projects on the topic of "Mobility and migration: co-ordination of social security – a stabilising element for life and work in Europe". The five education and training events in Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Slovenia picked up on the results of previous seminars on this issue.

The focus of the co-ordinated projects was on clarifying the following questions that are of perennial importance to workers and essential to successful mobility and migration: Will the professional qualifications acquired in the country of origin be recognised in the host country? How can contact between employers in the host country and workers in the country of origin be improved? What is the social security situation (mainly health insurance and pensions) if a worker takes a job temporarily or for good in another country? How can workers employed in another country be informed when new job prospects arise in their country of origin? How can co-operation between workers' organisations in the countries of origin and host countries be improved?

My special thanks go to György Lajtai, who was the project co-ordinator giving input on content and methods, evaluating the results and drawing up this final report. In addition, I wish to thank the member organisations involved for the good, result-oriented co-operation. The European

Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion supported our activities with substance and funding.

Our aim with the results and recommendations for action produced in the seminars and summarised in this brochure is to enhance the content of discussion in future seminars on the issues and to contribute to the European debate on mobility and migration from the viewpoint of workers' organisations that address the issues both in their education and training work and in their daily activities. We would very much welcome suggestions and comments on these issues that are so important to every workers' organization in Europe. You can find our contact details on the back of this brochure.

Sigrid Schraml
EZA Secretary General

The summary report consists of two parts. The first part gives an overview of the key topics and the main conclusions of the seminars. In the second part, a detailed report is provided on each of the seminars, including dates, location, speakers, participants, the content of the presentations and the discussions.

PART I: OVERVIEW AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The EZA member centres deciding to hold seminars on the topic of migration/mobility in Europe met at an initial working group meeting during the EZA kick-off seminar for 2014 in **Wieliczka, Poland, 28/11/2013**. At this meeting, the participants exchanged information on the **focal issues** of the planned national seminars, on the **dates** and were able to express **the request to be invited** to the events.

The following seminars were organized:

- H+D (Fundación Humanismo y Democracia): The labour market and migration in the EU: How to curb social exclusion of migrants and the role of trade unions and migrant organizations in processes of integration
- HIVA – Onderzoeksinstituut voor Arbeid en Samenleving: Mobility of workers and pensioners and co-ordination of social protection
- MOSZ (Munkástanácsok Országos Szövetsége): Cross-border work mobility in Europe, tasks for the trade unions, the employers and the governments

- UNAIE (Unione Nazionale delle Associazioni degli Immigrati ed Emigrati): Changing country to seek/create jobs
- ZD NSi (Združenje delavcev Nove Slovenije): Combining the freedom of movement and services in the EU Single Market with adequate protection of workers and social progress

Each of the five seminars was implemented according to a commonly decided schedule, all of them in countries where mobility and migration coexist, with increasing numbers and important social consequences.

In terms of migration, the seminars' conclusion was that the most urgent and unresolved issue is the flow of refugees from the southern developing countries to Italy. At present, the country is left to its own devices in tackling the life-threatening conditions of migration routes and this situation cannot be continued in the future. Europe should find a common, co-ordinated solution to manage immigration via the Mediterranean Sea. From the seminar presentations, we were able to see **the major role of civil society and workers' organizations** in supporting the inclusion of migrants. In Poland the recent migration wave from Ukraine has brought a sizable group of immigrants to the country; in Slovenia migrants from the Balkan region are receiving day-to-day support from the Catholic church. Such support ranges from finding jobs for migrants to making their life more endurable in refugee settlements. A very special case is the Spanish city of Melilla in the North African continent, where an isolated city council is making a daily effort to manage mass immigration, considering the humanitarian obligation of the community towards needy people.

The other focus of the seminars was the free movement of workers in Europe. The question to answer is the following: How to realize the positive expectations connected to mobility?

Here are **some of the answers concluded** from the discussions:

- A right balance is needed **between push and pull factors** of mobility.
- Perspectives of upward mobility must be available not only across the borders, but also **inside the** countries as a result of:
 - More investments in the social infrastructure (education, lifelong learning, public health, mass transport)
 - More investments to create jobs in industries with a higher added value.
- Transnational mobility should be more transparent; **direct contacts** between employers looking for workers and workers seeking jobs should be supported in order to reduce the role of unnecessary intermediary agencies.
- The implementation of the **European Qualification Framework** should be accelerated; difficulties in recognizing qualifications obtained in another country are significant barriers to getting better jobs.
- **Circular mobility is better** than a one-way street: migrant workers should be informed of new opportunities at home and obtain support should they return.
- Last but not least **better co-operation is needed between workers' organizations** in the countries of origin and in the host countries to inform and protect migrant workers. Several EZA

member centres have already created cross-border advisory structures for migrant workers and others intend to do so.

PART II: DETAILED REPORT ON THE SEMINARS

1 Cross-border work mobility in Europe, tasks for the trade unions, the employers and the governments

15-16 May 2014, Budapest, organized by MOSZ

The concept of the seminar was prepared based on the following guidelines:

- Focus on Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean owing to the increasing proportion of these regions in the number of workers migrating within the European Union
- Highlight the main drivers motivating people from these regions to work abroad
- Present the different forms of employment abroad (standard labour contract, posting, temporary agency work, self-employment) and the related advantages and risks experienced by the individual worker
- Introduce best practices of trade union and civil society organization activities in supporting migrant workers both in the host countries and in their countries of origin

One of the main conclusions of the working group meeting was that although internal cross-border work mobility (within the EU) is at present affecting only a relatively small percentage of the population, **the trend is definitely increasing**. In some regions of the European Union (mainly in Eastern Europe), migration has already reached a considerable extent (Romania over 10% compared to the total population, Bulgaria over 6%). For the future, the drivers of mobility could be further exacerbated owing to the **increasing economic and income inequalities between the different regions of the European Union and because of the demographic challenges**, increasing competition for younger and skilled workers.

The second conclusion of the meeting was that the more vulnerable migrant workers are, the more their motivation of migration is driven by a weak economic (unemployment) and financial (low income, poverty) situation. The original idea of the free movement of workers in the EU was to facilitate the optimum distribution of employment and to support the career development of citizens. The initial regulations adopted to govern the free movement of workers were designed on the basis of this assumption. The recent **mass migration and mobility** trends may make it necessary to review the original legal framework regulating work mobility. Until this debate is concluded, the trade **unions have an increasing and indispensable role to play in protecting migrant workers** who face many deficits when working abroad (lack of language skills, lack of knowledge of the legal, tax and social security system in the host country, weak bargaining power vis-à-vis the employers, temporary or agency work). The examples of the initiatives taken by Podkrepa/Bulgaria and ÖGB Burgenland/Austria were very convincing for the audience. There are also good practices of civil society organizations supporting the integration and career development of migrant workers in the host countries as demonstrated at the working group meeting by UNAIE/Italy and H+D/Spain.

There was a strong consensus among the participants about the need for greater efforts and more resources **to make mobility more visible and more traceable**. This is also needed to clarify the validity of some recent (and spreading) public opinions criticizing the increasing importance of ‘welfare tourism’ among the motives of cross-border mobility. The first results of the research done by HIVA question the above accusations.

2 Mobility of workers and pensioners and co-ordination of social protection

13-14 October 2014, Leuven, Belgium, organized by HIVA

Claude Rolin, former Chairman of the Belgian Christian Democratic trade union, CSC, Member of the European Parliament since 2015, strongly advocated better social protection for migrant workers in his speech. This goal cannot be achieved, he stressed, without regulating the European labour market more strictly and more thoughtfully, especially in the area of mobility.

Laurent Ajean, employment analyst at the EU Commission’s DG Employment, presented the latest statistics on labour migration and mobility in Europe. In 2013, the number of mobile workers living in another member state was some 8 million, which is 3.3% of the working population. This percentage is not high in relative terms, but the dynamic of mobility is remarkable. Since 2004, the number of intra-EU migrant workers has grown by 50%. The number of intra-EU migrant workers is, however, still below that of the working non-EU nationals; their number was 10.6 million, or 4.3% of the total working population in Europe.

There have been some changes in the pattern of mobility in recent years. The dominant position of Eastern Europe among the countries of origin is

decreasing and the proportion of migrants from the Southern EU countries is increasing. With regard to the host countries, Germany is attracting more and more migrant workers, whereas Spain's and Ireland's proportion is decreasing strongly.

The labour market position of migrants is two-fold. On the one hand, they are more likely to be employed than local nationals, but on the other they are also more likely to be unemployed because they are more vulnerable to losing their job and have less chance of finding a new one. There is an increasing number of migrant workers with a higher education degree, especially among the Southern European migrants, but there is also a high rate of over-qualification compared to the job requirements, especially among the Eastern European workers. There is a significant difference between the unemployment rate of the Southern and the Northern countries of the Eurozone, and this difference has been observed for several years. The lasting discrepancy demonstrates the difficulties of bridging the gaps in unemployment with the help of labour mobility. There is probably a mismatch between the professions in demand and in supply, and this cannot be eliminated quickly and easily.

The latest statistics confirm that there is no significant correlation between access to the welfare systems in the host countries and the migration flows. The direction of migration is influenced more by the employment opportunities, by the family and social networks, and by language skills. The figures clearly indicate that the level of benefits received is lower among migrant workers than among local nationals.

Johan Wets and **Sarah Van den Broucke** (HIVA) provided best practices on how to use the existing administrative data to monitor migration and the labour market. Taking the example of the Belgian region of Flanders, the presentation demonstrated how to use the information available from the

various authorities and organizations (such as the National Statistical Office, Eurostat, National Social Security Office, International Organization of Migration, European Migration Network, National Public Service of Employment etc.) to trace the evolution of migration, the trend in social integration and the characteristics of return migration. The analysis concluded that **the profiles of sub-populations among EU migrant workers are increasingly divergent**, the EU member states are moving towards extremely diverse societies. It is a big challenge to address the specific labour, social and educational needs of these diverse profiles, especially in the case of the more vulnerable migrant groups.

The presentation by **Jozef Pacolet** and **Frederic De Wispelaere** (HIVA) introduced an extremely rich EU-level database concerning the mobility of workers and pensioners that is currently under construction. The compilation of the database will support EU-level policy formation in the field of the social protection of migrant workers. Using the information pool being prepared, the co-ordination of national and EU-level social security regulations will be more efficient and targeted in the area of unemployment benefits and long-term provision (e.g. pension).

The database and the conclusions deduced from it will also support the work of the **new national bodies** to be set up under the 2014/54/EU Directive with the aim of facilitating the rights of migrant workers.

An important element in the success of the seminar was the carefully selected composition of speakers, who represented both renowned scholars on the subject and **also those players doing the fieldwork** with migrants. We were able to learn from the experience of the trade union activist, the labour supervisor, the head of the department dealing with social integration in the local municipality, or the manager of a private health insurance company. Their contribution highlighted very clearly both the results and the difficulties in working with migrant workers.

A workshop organized by HIVA with the participants of the project co-ordination helped to understand in more detail the statistical and methodological tools used to set up the database on the social protection of mobile workers. The presentation showed the functioning of the carefully composed **social security database** in Belgium, prepared and constructed with the efforts of several years and also influenced by the opinion of social partners. The database contains in a single, centrally managed IT system the most important information on the social situation of each individual in Belgium: type of employment, branch and size of the company, working hours, personal income, seniority, nationality, citizenship, residence, family status, work ability, social contributions paid, social benefits received etc. Respecting the personality rights to individual confidentiality, professionals interested in these questions and (through their help) the **social partners** can draw from this central database a lot of valuable information on the different aspects of social life in the country, including the life of migrants.

There was consensus that the above information available in a migration host country can be valuable to the countries of origin as well. A big challenge of migration is that in most cases people migrating from their home country **do not leave much information on their employment plans, or the planned host country**. According to the official statistics, **only 2-5% of migrants report the change in residence in their countries before they leave**, and this situation does not change if they manage to work and stay abroad. This makes it very difficult both to support migrant workers after leaving their home country and to collect information on their work and living conditions in the new environment. This information could, however, be very important for advising and counselling others who consider migrating in the future. Co-operation and an exchange of information between the authorities and civil society organizations in the host country and countries of origin would thus be vital.

3 Changing country to seek/create jobs

17-19 October 2014, Trento, Italy, organized by UNAIE

The focal point of the seminar was to highlight the ways and conditions that can make emigration from and immigration to a country a **successful career development path**.

Taking Italy as a reference country for this topic was a good choice, as Italy is one of the few countries in Europe experiencing both immigration and emigration to a significant extent. In 2012, the number of emigrants was over 100,000 people, while the number of immigrants was 351,000. The trend in immigration and emigration is, however, different: between 2008 and 2012, immigration decreased by 34%, while emigration increased by 31%.

Franco Narducci, President of UNAIE, pointed out that the Italian labour market is still too rigid and closed, and this is also one of the reasons for the increasing mobility of young professionals. Unemployment periods are too long, employers are only willing to sign short-term employment contracts. Young apprentices have poor work experience, on-the-job training is much less important than in Germany or in Switzerland. It would be desirable for Italian youths to leave the country not because of the lack of attractive domestic job opportunities, but to have a wider choice in acquiring work experience and advancing professionally.

Overall the emigration rate is increasing in Italy, the majority of Italian emigrants are targeting Europe, but many of them go to the USA and to South America as well.

In total, however, work mobility has not helped enough to offset the negative labour market impact of the economic recession the country has now

been in for seven years. The employment rate in Italy is 59%, significantly lower than the European average (65%). The mixture of emigration and immigration is not favourable, as the majority of immigrants are low-skilled workers, able to perform only menial work, whereas the migrant Italians are well educated, university or high-school graduates. If this trend continues, then the Italian economy will lose its competitiveness. It is worth considering that the number of jobs demanding better-skilled blue-collar workers is decreasing. Nowadays it is easier in Italy to find a low-prestige job with bad working conditions than one which requires better training. The over-qualification of workers compared to the job requirements is most prevalent among immigrant women (the frequency is 50%, while among nationals it is only 21%). During a recession, self-employment or starting a small business is also a solution for survival. It is interesting that the failure rate of new small businesses is lower among those initiated by immigrants. Immigrants, however, face much more difficulty than locals in starting a business. It is more difficult to open a bank account, to get bank loans, consequently they are forced into self-financing, or to rely on family support.

Lively interest was aroused by the presentation held by **Lukasz Olstza** from Poland, representing a civil society organization supporting immigrants to Poland. Poland is probably the first country in Eastern Europe where immigration is becoming a more and more sensitive phenomenon. The main reason is the crisis in Ukraine: the number of immigrants from Ukraine is increasing. According to the experience of this civil society organization, the key problems making the integration of immigrants difficult are language, a lack of knowledge of how to look for a job and, last but not least, discrimination from the employers. An interesting observation, however, is that not only the locals but also the immigrants have preconceptions about their chances of being integrated. They are too passive in looking for opportunities because they are convinced that it has no sense, that they would be rejected anyway. Prejudices and preconceptions have to be reduced. One way

of doing it is to explain to the immigrants that finding a good job in Poland is difficult not only for them but for the Polish nationals as well. It is also important to persuade the immigrants to avoid being employed in undeclared work. It may be easier to find a job in this way, moreover it could seemingly pay more, but in the long run they will lose a lot: sickness benefits, pension eligibility, holiday pay.

One of the main activities of this civil society organization is contacting employers in Poland to find out their demand for workers and then organize training programmes for the jobs in demand. With this proactive approach, they are more successful in helping immigrants to get work than other aid providers. Another innovative project they have started recently is the leadership training programme provided for immigrants. With this programme they are educating activists among those immigrants who are already integrated in the local community and who are doing the same job as this Polish civil society organization, or even more: they give not only job search advice, but organize cultural events, family programmes, sport days etc.

The representatives of the Italian trade union confederation CGIL-CSIL-UIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori, Unione Italiana del Lavoro) pointed out that because of the falling fertility rate in Italy, immigration is necessary to maintain population growth. Immigrants are already producing roughly a quarter of Italy's GDP. The employment rate of immigrants is significantly higher than that of the nationals, but since the crisis it has fallen from 87% to 73%. The difference in the employment rate of the working age population, with that of immigrants being higher, is clear proof that immigrants are coming to Italy to work, to find a job and not to receive social benefits. The industries employing the highest rate of immigrants are manufacturing, construction and, in the case of women, domestic work. It is an alarming sign, however, that 80% of undeclared work is done by immigrant people. Even in declared

jobs, migrants on average earn 25% less for the same jobs and with the same qualification than nationals. The unfavourable working and wage conditions of immigrants are partly due to the greater vulnerability of immigrants. Losing their job is often equal to losing their residence permit as well, because the residence permit is connected with proving the ability to have a revenue-generating job in Italy.

Immigrants are often missing professional or language training opportunities as they spend any non-work time travelling back to their home country. Regulation of worker mobility may be necessary in order to adapt better to the situation of supply and demand in the labour market. Regulations should stimulate primarily the immigration of better-skilled migrants to Italy.

Trade unions are more successful now in organizing migrant workers than nationals. The membership rate among immigrants is 40%. From another point of view, 7.5% of the members of Christian trade unions in Italy are immigrants. Trade unions have recently co-operated more actively with other civil society organizations in protecting the interests of immigrants more effectively.

4 The labour market and migration in the EU: How to curb social exclusion of migrants and the role of the trade unions and migrant organizations in processes of integration

24-26 October 2014, Madrid, organized by H+D

Spain's net migration balance has changed radically in the last five years. While in 2008, the number of immigrants (close to 600,000 per year) was almost double those emigrating from the country, by 2012 the ratio had reversed: the number of emigrants (447,000) exceeded the number of immigrants by 50%. This reverse process reflects the impact of the economic recession on the country, and the consequences were also well perceived in the content of the seminar presentations.

Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga, President of H+D, informed the participants of the history of the work of H+D, highlighting that the target of its activity is four million Filipinos leaving to Latin America and to Spain. They are migrants with a multilingual, multicultural background and this makes the job of H+D a challenging task.

Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Co-president of the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA), emphasized the importance of the fight against prejudices about migrants. He recalled the case of the unexpected mass immigration to Italy from Albania after the political changes there. Italy had to find quick solutions to tackle the situation, and it was not an easy task. He also reminded the seminar of the huge emotional and personal burden placed on the families of migrant mothers often leaving their children behind. Referring to the situation in Italy and in Spain, he stressed that tensions inflicted by migration should not be used as a pretext for territorial disengagement intentions currently observed in Catalonia or in Lombardy.

Marina del Corral, Secretary General for Emigration and Immigration, Ministry of Employment and Social Security, underlined the positive aspects of migration. She referred to the financial transfers of migrants to the home countries, and the knowledge transfer in the case of both highly educated and less educated persons. There is increasing competition in the European Union for well educated and younger workers. The high unemployment rate in Spain is a consequence of several problems: a rigid labour market, low entrepreneurial skills, a high drop-out rate from schools, many high-school graduates with education not needed by the labour market. Spain is in need of a significant reform of the labour market. Training and education must be adapted much more to the demand of the economy. The German model with strong emphasis on practical skills acquired via on-the-job training is a positive one worth adapting.

Antonio López-Istúriz, Member of the European Parliament, Secretary General of the European People's Party, called for better co-ordination of the support for migrants in Europe. The present system is too fragmented and therefore not very efficient. A positive example could be the practice of the USA with USAID, which is operating with a well constructed, well focused strategy. Another important task of the EU is to fight against the mafia organizing illegal migration into Europe. Nowadays there are many critics of European integration, but Europe is still a continent many people would like to live on, seeing it as a place of social justice, stability and escape. With regard to the policy cornerstones expected by EPP from the new Commission, he stressed that politicians, among them the members of the European Parliament, should have a bigger role in policy formation. The highly educated and experienced expert staff of the Commission, the "bureaucracy", is of course indispensable, but primarily for preparing and implementing the decisions taken by politicians.

José Luís Fernández Santillana, Head of the Studies Department of Unión Sindical Obrera (USO), gave a detailed overview of the labour market in Spain from the workers' perspective. The main problems of the labour market are the high youth unemployment rate and the increasing proportion of short-term work contracts, which is worrying. He showed the striking demographic forecast of the age distribution of the Spanish population in a few decades to come. Should net migration to Spain turn negative in the long run, this will deepen the demographic imbalances in the country. The ageing population should draw attention to the employment conditions of older workers as well. At present, workers over 45 have similar difficulties in finding a job to young people. The difference is that the option of cross-border mobility or migration is much less available for them. This is why long-term unemployment is more frequent in the case of older workers than in other age groups.

György Lajtai, economic expert of MOSZ, informed the seminar-goers of the latest statistics on the cross-border mobility of workers in the European Union. The figures demonstrate that migrant workers have a higher employment rate than nationals, but also a higher unemployment rate. This proves that cross-border mobility provides a better chance of finding a job, but is also associated with a higher probability of losing it and with a longer time to find a new one. In order to reduce the so-called push factors of mobility, i.e. the forced type of mobility, it is necessary to improve the conditions of internal mobility in the Eastern and Southern countries of Europe, including first of all job creation, but also lifelong learning opportunities, personal and public transport conditions, and rented residential capacities. The discussion following the presentation made it clear that a distinction has to be drawn between mobility and migration in Europe. In the case of citizens of EU member states, the term 'mobility' should be used, as it also refers to the increasingly common way of working and living abroad, that is in a broader space of Europe than before.

5 Combining the freedom of movement and services in the EU Single Market with adequate protection of workers and social progress

6-7 November 2014, Ljubljana, Slovenia, organized by ZD NSi

Roswitha Gottbehüt, Secretary General of EZA, underlined the importance of protecting the right to the free movement of workers against recent attempts to limit it. However, misuse of this key principle can also be observed, like the practice of social dumping. Workers' organizations have to co-operate in order to support migrant workers abroad and to enable free movement to be a tool for career development and finding better jobs.

Marco Boleo, MCL (Movimento Cristiano Lavoratori, Italy), shared his observations concerning migration and work mobility in Italy. He criticized the EU immigration policy that leaves Italy more and more to its own devices with the burden of immigration from Northern Africa and the Middle East. Immigrants are employed mostly in low-quality, low-paid jobs, but even their employment has decreased since the start of the economic recession. Nevertheless, both the Italian economy and the welfare system are creating a stable demand for an immigrant workforce. The economy is relying more on immigrants due to the fact that the traditionally strong Italian SME sector can maintain its competitiveness using cheap manual labour. The welfare system is increasing the demand for immigrants because family care could not function without the large number of foreign domestic workers.

György Lajtai, MOSZ, analyzed the role of push and pull factors inducing work mobility in Europe. He presented statistics indicating that the push factors (high unemployment, a lack of lifelong learning opportunities, low work income, a lack of internal mobility perspectives) are dominant for the

time being in stimulating mobility – at least from a Southeast European perspective. If this situation does not change, mobility can become a one-way street, resulting in fragile demographic structures, large depopulated areas in Eastern and Southeast Europe. Investments in more and better jobs and in social infrastructure (education, training, public transport, affordable housing) in the countries of origin of migrant workers could, however, bring about a positive outcome.

Klemen Stibelj, NSi, introduced key data on migration and mobility trends in Slovenia. He reminded the seminar that Slovenia had already become a country of immigration in the 1970s, when internal migration in the former Yugoslav republics (especially from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia) was the prevailing form of immigration to the country. Even today the territory of the former Yugoslavia remains the single largest area of origin of immigrants coming to Slovenia. Although Slovenia ranks quite favourably in terms of social policy provisions available to individuals, there are some indications that point to increasing social and economic inequalities, especially in the period after the economic crisis from 2009. Especially evident are unfavourable labour market developments, increasing unemployment rates, also among those with tertiary education, which also has implications for the brain drain from Slovenia that has gradually become apparent in the last couple of years. No specific policy measures have been taken to address the issue so far.

Robin Schweiger, Jesuit Refugee Service, and **Alenka Petek**, Caritas Slovenia, informed the participants of the activities of their organizations among immigrants in Slovenia. Schweiger said the biggest problem for asylum seekers is the very long waiting time until the decision is made, whereas the rate of asylum seekers accepted is low, on average 10-15%. Mrs Petek cited in her presentation several concrete cases of immigrants exploited and abused by their employers, and described the ways they are providing sup-

port to these vulnerable groups. Among others, they have initiated a special programme to eliminate the channels of human trafficking.

Andreas Gjecaj, ÖZA (Österreichisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerbildung, Austria), informed the seminar of the increasing number of immigrants in Austria. By 2013, the number of immigrants had reached 1.6 million, i.e. close to 20% of the Austrian population. The government now supports primarily the immigration of highly skilled workers. In addition, serious financial criteria were set up for immigrants to obtain a work and residence permit in Austria. A strict anti-dumping law was introduced in the country as well, which protects efficiently the interests of both mobile and local workers. He highlighted the importance of language skills and the regularization (mutual recognition) of professional qualifications in facilitating the integration of mobile workers in the societies of the host countries.

Panagiotis Kordatos, DAKE (Dimokratiki Anexartiti Kinisi Ergazomenon, Greece), gave a detailed report on the conditions influencing the mobility of workers in the country. The surveys reflect an increasing number of people wishing to leave Greece, primarily because of the pessimistic employment and income prospects. The recent trends in work mobility revealed the increasing inequalities between the economic development of the Northern and Southern European countries. More solidarity is needed in Europe to prevent the negative consequences of mobility, such as the loss of young professionals by the countries fighting austerity measures. The trade unions are not against the free movement of workers in the EU, they see it as an important value, but the present mobility trend is not sustainable, as it could deepen the economic and social tensions in Greece.

Mojca Perat, SAK (Socialna akademija, Slovenia), spoke about the specifics of the mobility of young people in Slovenia. She explained that while the ERASMUS programmes are supporting the employment chances of young

workers, there are no similar opportunities for people over the age of 30. Another issue that has to be resolved is the short-term impact of the present youth employment programme. The youth guarantee programme is not effective in counteracting the increasing practice of concluding fixed-term work contracts and offering part-time jobs. Moreover, many employers are exchanging existing young workers for newer ones in order to obtain the subsidies offered by the programme.

The presentations were followed by a lively and open exchange of ideas in the form of a panel discussion. The participants agreed on the positive potential of the free movement of workers in the EU. The opinions differed, however, on how to manage some of the negative aspects of mobility, such as brain drain, or some of the undesirable causes, such as excessive wage differences between the less and more developed countries. The extent, structure and timeframe of mobility were also evaluated differently. The case of Italy was seen as an example of a positive, long-term mobility pattern, as after several years most of the emigrants returned to their home country and used the knowledge and money gained abroad, while others were supporting financially family members staying at home. Other speakers were more sceptical about this outcome in the dominant countries of origin of work mobility now, i.e. Eastern Europe. There was unanimous agreement, however, that mobility channels should be more transparent and that direct contact between migrant workers and employers should be encouraged. Trade unions should participate more actively in preparing workers for mobility and also in protecting their interests in the host countries. The wider acceptance of professional qualifications in the host countries could also help migrant workers to get qualified jobs abroad.

As the detailed presentation of the five seminars that were part of the project co-ordination shows, assisting workers with migration and mobility is a topical task of importance to workers' organisations all over Europe, but especially in the five countries that hosted the seminars.

The fact that the co-ordination of the seminars was so successful in terms of content was down to the keenness and special commitment of the EZA member centres involved. Although four seminars had to be held within a very short time (mid-October to early November 2014) for organisational reasons, representatives of the seminars involved in the co-ordination were invariably present as speakers and discussants, and that was a factor that made a major contribution to the interchange and production of shared results.

In the course of the project co-ordination it also became evident that work migration and mobility will remain a topical issue in the EZA “European social dialogue” education and training programme in the near future.