

THE MAIN ACTIVITIES OF IMEPO ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Hellenic Migration Policy Institute

The Hellenic Migration Policy Institute (IMEPO) is charged with the task of advising the Greek Government on issues related to Greek migration policy. It was founded in 2002 and is supervised by the Minister of Interior Affairs. The aim of IMEPO is to study international migration, identify the mechanisms affecting its evolution, and acquire the necessary know-how so that Greece can meet the challenges of a migrant-receiving country on the basis of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. To this effect, IMEPO conducts research and surveys and participates in international programmes aiming at developing and implementing innovative actions on migration issues. In addition, it organizes international and national conferences promoting the exchange of views and experience in the field of migration. Lastly, IMEPO has developed a cooperation network with international organizations, institutes and governmental bodies of Canada, European Union countries and the United States of America.

What follows is a synopsis of the main activities of IMEPO that took place from 2004 to 2007, namely surveys, programmes and conferences that addressed key aspects of the international migration and development nexus.

A. SURVEYS

Migrant surveys play an important role in the work plan of IMEPO. The following paragraphs summarize the most important surveys in which IMEPO was involved:

- The survey “Migrants in Greece: Acculturation and psychosocial adaptation” was implemented by the University of Athens within the framework of the circular migration pilot project of the World Bank. The aim of the survey was to study the social and educational background and the past and present professional experience of migrants living in Greece, to investigate their strategies in order to deal with the challenges of intercultural contact, to record their social relations—both with Greeks and fellow countrymen—and their views on the level and quality of their integration in Greece. The survey began in the spring of 2006 and was concluded in September 2007. The sample consisted of 601 individual migrants selected according to the following criteria. First, they had to be born in a country other than Greece. Therefore, second and third generation migrants born in Greece to foreign-born parents could not participate. Individuals with refugee status were also excluded from the sample. Second, the participants should be over the age of 18 years. The results of the survey were announced at a national conference organized by IMEPO in Athens in November 2006. They are accessible to the academic community for further analysis.
- Within the framework of the circular migration pilot project of the World Bank, the Athens University of Economics and Business conducted the survey “Migrants in Greece: Remuneration, remittances, entrepreneurship”, which was concluded in June 2007. The survey examined the financial situation of migrants, including their employment, business activities and remittances. With regard to remittances, two new factors were introduced: employment stability and the relative financial position of the migrant’s family in the country of origin. In addition, the salary levels were analysed on the basis of Jacob Mincer’s theory on human capital and remuneration of work. Furthermore, an econometric module examined the possibility that a dual migrant labour

market existed: one market with stable and well-paid jobs and, in parallel, another one with temporary and badly-paid jobs. For this survey, the sample of 601 migrants described above was used. It is unlikely that the sample contained a representative percentage of undocumented migrants, since this group of migrants usually avoids public places.

- The survey “The psycho-social profile of migrants in Greece” was carried out by the Panteion University of Social Sciences and Run Communications SA. The study aimed at defining the psycho-social profile of migrants and at understanding the way migrants themselves, on the one hand, and the native-born population, on the other hand, view the concept of integration. For the collection of data, migrants’ focus groups were assembled from among the five largest groups of migrants in Greece. At the same time, a sample of 250 Greek students was interviewed on the basis of closed questions. The study was completed in March 2007 and the results of the survey were announced at a national conference organized by IMEPO in Athens, Greece, in November 2007. The results are also accessible to the academic community for further analysis.

B. EUROPEAN PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

As mentioned above, IMEPO also participates in European projects that aim to integrate migrants in the labour market, to combat human trafficking and to assist the return of migrants to their countries of origin. Specifically, IMEPO participates in the following programmes:

- IMEPO participates in the project ASPIDDA: Combating exploitation—creating perspective¹, carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) within the framework of the community initiative EQUAL. The specific objectives of this project include combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination in the labour market against victims of human trafficking, the protection of migrants’ fundamental rights and the creation of all necessary conditions for the smooth integration of migrants into the society and the labour market. Additionally, the project focuses on sensitizing and informing society, in order to change attitudes and create a climate of solidarity towards victims of human trafficking. The implementation of the actions is still in progress.
- Under the programme for financial and technical assistance to third countries in the field of migration and asylum (AENEAS), a programme to build mechanisms to effectively and sustainably implement readmission agreements between Albania, countries of the European Union and third countries was developed. Most of the actions foreseen in this two-year programme would take place in Albania and would aim at supporting the Albanian authorities to implement the readmission agreement between the European Union and Albania. The entities participating in this programme are the Greek Ministry of Interior Affairs, IMEPO, the Government of Albania, and the IOM office in Tirana. For the implementation of the programme, the following actions were undertaken: (a) capacity-building and training of the agencies dealing with return and readmission to Albania; (b) information exchange among the agencies involved in the implementation of the readmission agreements, and (c) creation of mechanisms for the return of migrants to Albania.
- IMEPO in cooperation with the IOM office in Moldova has carried out the programme: “ITHACA - Prevention of trafficking in human beings in Moldova”. It aimed at combating human trafficking in and smuggling of Moldovan women and girls for sexual exploitation. Within the framework of the programme, the following actions were undertaken: (a) sensitizing the society and supporting potential human trafficking victims through printed material; (b)

supporting long-term reintegration of human trafficking victims in Moldova through the development of small enterprises; (c) promoting the vocational training of victims of human trafficking, and (d) examining human trafficking in Moldova and describing the profile of potential victims of human trafficking.

- For the project INTI 2006: One-Stop-Shop, a cooperation among the following entities has been established: Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e as Minorias Étnicas (ACIME) of Portugal, Dirección General de Integración de los Inmigrantes of Spain, IMEPO, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Direzione Generale dell' Immigrazione of Italy, Netzwerk Migration in Europe of Germany, IOM office in Portugal, and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies of the Netherlands. The project aims to confront the challenges of host societies in their interaction with migrant communities and to propose concrete measures. Upon completion of the project, the following outcomes are expected: (a) assessment of the application of the One-Stop-Shop (OSS) as a centralized model to migrants' integration in Member States and the involvement of sociocultural mediators from civil society institutions; (b) definition of a local network of institutions according to the OSS model in each country involved in the project; (c) writing and disseminating a Handbook on how to implement the "One-stop-shop" model for the integration of immigrants in Member States, and (d) encouraging Member States to apply to OSS model recognizing the needed adaptations to each context at national, regional and local levels.

C. CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

In order to disseminate the results of the studies already conducted, as well as to promote international dialogue on migration management and the challenge of integrating migrants in host societies, IMEPO organizes international conferences in cooperation with foreign research institutes also active in the field of migration such as the German Bertelsmann Stiftung, IOM, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and OECD:

- The first joint conference of IMEPO and MPI titled "Migration management: The Greek, European and international contexts" took place in 2004. The basic thematic sessions of the conference were: (a) relations with third countries; (b) immigrant integration, and (c) racism and xenophobia.
- In the meeting "Capturing the benefits of migration in South-eastern Europe", held in 2005, panels addressed the following subjects: (a) the contribution of cities, regions and NGOs to integration; (b) circular migration as a development tool for sending and receiving countries; (c) the role of circular migration in creating an integrated regional labour market in South-eastern Europe; (d) the economic benefits of migration, and (e) the role employers and unions play in integrating immigrants.
- The main topics of the conference "The global Hellenic migration retreat", held in 2006 were: (a) the history and current state of immigration in Greece; (b) the challenges of integration in Greece and around the world, and (c) European and global perspectives on immigration.
- The basic thematic sessions of the conference "The migration policy puzzle: How to share responsibilities for managing immigration and integration", held in 2007 were: (a) levels of governance: the role of supranational, national and regional organizations in making migration

- IMEPO cooperated with the Migration Policy Institute and the Bertelsmann Stiftung in organizing the first meeting of the Transatlantic Task Force on Immigration and Integration in Greece in June 2007. The subject of this meeting was circular migration. Among the participants were Mr. Antonio Vittorino, the former European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs and Ms. Ana Palacio Vallelersundi, Senior Vice President and Group General Counsel of the World Bank.
- A conference on “Migration and development: A Euro-Mediterranean perspective” was organized by IMEPO in cooperation with the Development Centre of the OECD in Rhodes, Greece, in April 2007 to analyse results of the OECD project “Gaining from migration” that aimed at better understanding the new mobility system, identifying policies to improve mobility management, enabling integration of migrants and expanding options for engaging sending countries.
- IMEPO organized a scientific conference on “Migration in Greece: Experiences, policies, perspectives”, which attracted hundreds of academics and experts active in the field of migration. The objective of this conference was to present and discuss migration flows towards Greece, migrants in Greece, the impact of migrants’ presence, as well as the factors and policies that affect flows of migrants and their integration into the Greek society and economy.

NOTE

¹ The Project entitled ASPIDDA: Combating exploitation—creating perspective is implemented by the Developmental Partnership ASPIDDA (Developmental Partnership to Promote Equal Rights for Trafficked Persons) and aims at combating discriminations suffered by victims of trafficking—in their majority migrant women—protecting and claiming for their fundamental rights and creating appropriate conditions for their social and labour integration. (<http://www.aspidda.org/English/Default.aspx>).