

# Exploring the Impact of Migration Within the European Union (EU): How Can We Harness Our Talents

## Conference Summary

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As part of the UK's Presidency of the EU, a conference was held in Dunblane, Scotland, (27-29th November 2005), to explore the nature and impact of migration across the EU. The conference was co-organised by the Scottish Executive Europe Division and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The conference was attended by around 80 representatives from the policy, practice and academic communities from across Europe.

This conference summary report, prepared by Mary-Anne Kate a postgraduate student at the University of Edinburgh, outlines the key issues highlighted during the conference.

The aims of the conference were to:

- Develop a shared understanding of the nature of migration across the EU in a period of demographic change;
- Share experiences of addressing the challenges of migration and identify what has worked and why;
- Explore new approaches/ tools to inform future policy and practice; and
- Explore the role of civil society in dealing with the challenges presented by migration.

Key issues raised included:

- Migration policies should deliver positive outcomes for all stakeholders including EU Member States, migrants and migrants' countries of origin;
- There is a need to address immigration at an EU level, as free movement across the European Union means that the immigration policy of one Member State directly impacts on Europe as a whole.
- Strategies that integrate the migrant into the host society effectively are required in order to enable social cohesion and to harness the positive benefits of migration.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Department or Scottish Ministers.

## Background

Europe is undergoing considerable demographic change. Against the background of a declining share of global population, Europe faces the twin challenges of an ageing population and decreasing fertility rates. The working age population is expected to fall by 20.8 million between 2005 and 2030. European countries are growing more concerned about the implications of these demographic changes and the role that international migration might have in addressing these. Migration is now the main component of population change in many European states, with flows most notably from the 'developing world' and Eastern Europe (including the 8 new European Union Member States).

The conference highlighted the potential positive economic and social benefits of migration and the need for integration policies that strengthen social cohesion and promote and celebrate cultural diversity. While asylum and family migration form integral parts of European migratory flows, the scope of the conference was largely focused on economic migration.

## Analysis

### Objective 1:

#### **Developing a shared understanding of the nature of migration across the EU in a period of demographic change**

Member States have traditionally facilitated migration specifically to address labour shortages. More recently, migration has been proposed as a means of addressing the economic consequences associated with an ageing and declining population.

#### ***Migration as a tool to address demographic change***

Europeans are having fewer children and are living longer. Sub-replacement level fertility rates and increases in life expectancy have resulted in ageing societies and population decline across Europe, although the effects are more apparent in some Member States and regions than in others. The increase in the proportion of older people creates pressures on health care, elder care and pension systems. Most governments are looking to increase pension contributions, savings or the retirement age as a means of addressing this problem. It was argued that to minimise the impact of an ageing and declining population, workforces will have to expand, and migration was seen to be an important means of achieving this outcome in the short to medium-term. However, 'replacement migration' has its limitations, in particular:

- The amount of replacement migration required is often more than a Member State could feasibly absorb. For example, each year Germany would need an additional one million migrant workers, without dependent family members, to stop the decline;
- Although migrant families often have higher birth rates than the host population, the second generation are likely to have similar birth rates; and
- In the longer-term, migrants will age. Thus for replacement migration to work, a continuous stream of migrants is required. Europe would need to compete for migrants with countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia, which may offer more generous settlement terms and conditions. Forecasts also indicate that the world population is set to decline, for numerous reasons such as the HIV epidemic in Africa. Therefore, there is no guarantee that there will be a pool of migrants for Europe to draw from in the future.

As a result of demographic change, many European countries are already reliant on the temporary migration of health care workers to provide health and elder care services to an increasing number of people. However, due to the worldwide shortage of workers in this field, this policy may not be sustainable. Furthermore, the recruitment of health care workers from developing countries raises ethical issues.

Replacement migration strategies and the temporary migration of health care workers are important tools in meeting the challenges arising from demographic change. However, as the reasons above have highlighted, migration alone will not resolve the issue. Options discussed included:

- Introducing family friendly policies, including child care, extended parental leave and gender equality in the work place. Research shows that Europeans would like to have 2.3 children, more than is required to stabilise the population, yet in reality are only having 1.5 children on average. There is little agreement on the reasons for this variation, although family friendly policies appear to have been successful in maintaining the birth rate in Nordic countries;
- Increasing the working age population by tackling long-term unemployment and discouraging early retirement;
- Reducing emigration: migration rates are based on inward and outward flows. Encouraging the return of Europeans living and working abroad and the ancestors of previous Diaspora, as Scotland is actively doing, could expand the working population; and

- Accepting that societies ‘age’ and accommodating for this change.

### **Labour migration**

There is consensus within Europe that labour migration is essential for economic stability, although there are differing opinions as to how labour migration should be structured. However, the immigration policy of one Member State has implications for the EU as a whole as a result of free movement. It is for this reason that the EU has expressed its commitment to developing a common immigration policy and has presented a Green Paper on a European approach to managing economic migration. Participants at the conference expressed various views as to how economic migration should be approached. Key questions raised were:

- *Should migrants be able to remain on a permanent or temporary basis?* Europe has traditionally preferred to limit migration to temporary measures in order to respond, for example, to economic downturn (to avoid unemployment for their citizens during recession). In discussion, permanent migration schemes were seen by many to be too inflexible to respond to changing circumstances. The Scottish Executive expressed a preference towards permanent migration to combat demographic change. Others cited the USA, Canada and Australia as countries that had flourished economically and socially as a result of their permanent migration schemes.
- *Should there be a provision for unskilled labour?* Differing opinions were expressed as to whether unskilled migrants are required. For example, the UK Home Office view was that, in the short-term at least, this need will be met by accession countries. Many of these migrants will return home when differences in wages and employment rates between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe decrease. It was also strongly argued that the need for unskilled labour is currently being met by the black market, and that these migrants should have the opportunity to provide their labour legally.
- *How should economic migration be harmonised?* Harmonisation could be achieved horizontally, where Directives would cover the conditions of entry and residence of any third country national working in the EU, or on a sectoral basis, where Directives would only apply to specific areas, such as seasonal workers or skilled migrants. The EESC expressed a preference towards horizontal harmonisation to ensure the need for economic migration is addressed holistically.
- *How are different needs for migrant labour best accommodated?* The need for migrant labour varies

significantly among Member States. For example Poland, with an unemployment rate of 17.7%, has little need for labour migration, as compared to Ireland, with an unemployment rate of 4.3%. The need for migrant labour also varies widely within Member States. Some localities or regions may wish to actively recruit migrants, while others may wish to restrict migration. This raised the question of whether it is possible or desirable to tie migrants to a particular region, given the right of freedom of movement at an EU or national level.

### **Objective 2:**

#### **To share our experiences of addressing the challenges of migration – Case study of Scotland’s Fresh Talent Initiative**

- Scotland’s population has been declining slowly since the early 1970s, and is now almost 5.1 million. Between 1995 and 2001, Scotland’s population fell by 1 per cent, while the UK population rose by 2.8 per cent and the EU average rose by 2.2 per cent. In this period, no other EU country experienced a population decline. Outward migration is no longer the major factor behind the declining population; a reduction in the death rate has been exceeded by a reduction in the birth rate.
- In response to concern that an ageing population will affect the economic future of Scotland, the Scottish Executive developed the Fresh Talent Initiative to encourage migration and to entice ex-patriot Scots to return. Fresh Talent also recognises the benefits of a more skilled and diverse workforce.
- The initiative focuses on promoting Scotland as a place to live and work, through a number of means. These include providing information on the UK’s Work Permit Scheme, and through ex-patriot networks in order to target the Scottish Diaspora. A Relocation Advisory Service has been created to provide advice and guidance to those interested in living and working in Scotland. The initiative also provides foreign graduates of Scottish universities and colleges with the option to remain in Scotland for an additional two years after graduation. The Scottish Executive continues to work closely with the Home Office on further measures that will provide greater access for migrants who wish to live, work and study in Scotland.
- The Scottish Executive has expressed a positive view towards increasing diversity through migration, viewing this as a means of becoming more internationally competitive and enriching the cultural life of the country. Fresh Talent has been promoted in conjunction with an anti-racism campaign, *One Scotland: No place for racism*, which aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes and their

negative impact on society and to promote the benefits of a diverse Scotland.

- The initiative has been met with interest from potential migrants. Since the scheme began in June 2005, over 300,000 people have visited the Relocation Advisory Service's website and over 2,000 graduates have taken the opportunity to extend their stay in Scotland.

### **Objective 3:**

#### **To explore new approaches/tools to inform future policy and practice**

The migration practices of Member States should take into account the impact on the migrant and their country of origin, and not just the impact on the host society. The conference highlighted two principles on which future policy and practice at the national and EU level should be governed – firstly, migration policies should be responsible and mutually beneficial to the migrant and their country of origin, and secondly, migration policies should be developed in association with strong integration policies to ensure social cohesion.

#### **Responsible immigration policies**

The need for responsible migration policies and practices that limit further 'brain drain' from developing countries, provide avenues for legal migration and which address the root cause of irregular migration was raised.

*Restricting the 'brain drain':* Push and pull factors have resulted in a steady brain drain of skilled professionals leaving the developing world in favour of Europe. The impact of skilled migration on developing countries is variable. Member States should assess the risks of 'brain drain' and modify their practices accordingly. Opportunities to work overseas often provide benefits for the skilled professional at the expense of their community. For example, the emigration of Zimbabwean nurses has significant consequences for the local population, particularly as many of the population are living with HIV/AIDS and there is a high demand for medical care. Alternatively, migration may be mutually beneficial for the individual and their community. A further example described was the emigration of Filipino nurses, which has a positive economic impact on the Philippines: nurses are specifically trained for the export market and their remittances are vital to their country's economy.

*Providing avenues for legal migration:* As Member States provide very few avenues for potential migrants to settle and/or work in Europe, many migrants enter covertly to work in the black market or enter under migration categories to

which they are not genuinely entitled, for example as an asylum-seeker or family member. One of the primary pull factors for irregular migration is the existence of European labour markets geared towards illegal work. As a result, many irregular migrants work in the black economy; undertaking unskilled jobs that most locals would be unwilling to do. Discussion focused on the need to address these irregular migration flows by, for example, providing legal routes for unskilled migrants to enter Europe.

#### *A policy option - Circular migration*

- 'Circular migration' was proposed in papers given by the International Organization for Migration and the European Commission as an option to provide legal routes for migration and reduce the impact of 'brain drain'.
- Circular migration involves the migrant working temporarily abroad, returning to their origin country, working temporarily abroad once more, and again returning to their origin country. Circular migration is ideal for economic migrants who wish to improve their financial position, but would prefer not to move permanently resulting in 'brain circulation' rather than 'brain drain'. For the Member State, circular migration is a means of providing labour during times of economic upturn, and it does not have a long term socio-cultural impact on the host society.
- Scepticism about the potential success of the strategy was expressed, particularly in light of the large scale failure of European guest worker programmes where very few participants returned home. It was stressed that for circular migration to work, financial incentives for the migrant to return home and legal means for returning to Europe temporarily to work would be important. The implications of managed circular migration strategies for integration policies would also be critical to consider.

*Addressing the root cause of irregular migration:* The European Commission acknowledges that the only effective means of reducing the number of illegal migrants and asylum-seekers is to deal more effectively with the root causes by providing development assistance and durable solutions to resolve refugee situations. It should be noted that the 'brain drain' from the 'Third World' to the 'developed world' may itself be impeding development, which in turn encourages irregular migration.

#### **Strong integration policies**

During the conference, it was argued that integration strategies should be at the heart of immigration policies. A successful integration strategy, whether at European, national, regional or local level, can harness the positive

aspects of migration and minimize the potentially adverse effects that immigration can have on social cohesion. Governments must work in partnership with a cross-section of stakeholders including the voluntary and community sectors, non-governmental organisations, migrant organisations and representatives, and religious leaders/faith groups if integration strategies are to be effective. This is of particular importance as many migrants may be reluctant to approach government organisations for assistance, or may not be aware of the services that are available to them.

To build a dynamic and inclusive society, it was proposed that integration strategies could:

- *Provide targeted settlement services to migrants:* Many migrants require assistance to enable them to fully participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the host society. As language is perhaps the most significant barrier to integration, access to host country language classes can be vital. Migrants are often not familiar with societal norms and values, nor aware of their importance or meaning and this lack of awareness can hamper attempts to integrate, or may even result in a desire not to integrate into the host society. For this reason, some have argued that cultural orientation should be available to migrants from non-Western or non-secular countries. Migrants will often need more assistance on arrival to access health care, education and adequate housing. Access to family reunification is also essential for those separated from family members.
- *Improve the public perception of migration:* Political leaders and the media strongly influence public opinion regarding immigration. It was argued that a negative and sensationalist discourse on immigration that focuses on the need for tighter border security to control 'illegal' immigrants, the numbers of 'bogus' asylum-seekers and links to radicalisation and terrorism, is associated with the proliferation of xenophobic and racist attitudes. A positive political message and more favourable media coverage could help modify the public's attitude towards immigration, and in turn, lead to more favourable interactions between migrants and the host society and enhance the migrant's settlement experience. Strategies need to be developed to promote political comment and media coverage that is balanced, informed and non-inflammatory.
- *Implement anti-racism strategies:* Anti-racism strategies that not only promote equality, but celebrate the benefits of living in a socially, culturally and ethnically diverse society, can foster more positive attitudes towards migrants.

- *Strengthen anti-discrimination legislation:* Legislation should not only enforce equal treatment, but should also promote anti-discriminatory policies and practice.
- *Mainstream services to ensure they cater for the particular needs of migrants:* Migrants are often reliant on the voluntary and community sectors and their own migrant communities for information about the range of services that are available to them and how these services are best accessed. As this information is disseminated on an *ad-hoc* basis, the information provided may be patchy. Migrants may also be reluctant to use mainstream services, particularly if service provision is not culturally appropriate or fails to cater for their specific needs, for example the need for an interpreter. For these reasons, migrants may not access the services they require and to which they are entitled. To avoid discrimination in service delivery, governments and their funded service providers should adopt strategic policies that ensure migrants are aware how to access mainstream services. However, service providers should be responsive to the particular needs of migrant communities.
- *Strengthen social inclusion strategies:* Migration policies could also benefit from being linked to wider strategies of social inclusion at an EU, national and local level. For example, the implications of migration can be viewed negatively if migration policies are not balanced by effective employment strategies that offer routes out of poverty to non-migrant residents. Residents with economic and social opportunities are more likely to be tolerant to migrants than those that are disenfranchised. Much work needs to be done to prevent the social exclusion of migrants. It was argued, at this conference, that marginalisation, not immigration, was a contributing factor to the recent civil unrest in Europe, and the growing extremism that led to the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London. Paradoxically, other recent events have led to a fear of immigrants and Islam, which is resulting in the further marginalisation of immigrant and Muslim communities in Europe. Effective social inclusion strategies have a key role to play in preventing the further marginalisation and exclusion of immigrant communities and potential outbreaks of civil unrest.
- *Extend citizenship rights:* Citizenship confers with it certain civil, political and social rights and can be an important milestone for the migrant as it fosters a feeling of belonging and provides the opportunity for full participation in society. Currently, only those who are citizens of a Member State are deemed to hold EU citizenship. The EESC, amongst others, would like to see eligibility extended to migrants who reside in the EU on a stable basis, viewing citizenship as necessary if migrants

are to be able to achieve full participation and integration in society. Without access to citizenship and opportunities for civic participation, migrants can remain at a greater risk of marginalisation and social exclusion.

- **Address the diverse needs of migrants:** It is important to recognise that the support requirements of migrants are diverse and vary depending on a wide range of factors. These include, for example, familial and cultural links within the host community, skill and educational level, culture, religion, language ability, physical and mental health, whether they are single or part of a family unit, or indeed separated from them, the likely duration of their stay, individual circumstances and character.
- **Extend to include the needs of irregular migrants:** The legality of the migrant's status has repercussions for integration policy. Services, particularly government services, are often provided only to those persons who are legally resident. However, the greatest need for services often comes from covert migrants, or those that no longer have legal status. This group of people are particularly vulnerable and require access to assistance and appropriate services. Furthermore, failure to address the needs of these migrants may impact negatively on social inclusion.

#### **Objective 4:**

#### **To explore the role of civil society in dealing with the challenges**

Civil society plays a crucial role in the successful integration of migrants. Participants attending this conference expressed the need for host societies to foster a greater understanding of the migrant experience among their citizens. It was proposed that:

- Individuals be encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of the migrant – firstly by imagining what it might be like to be separated from their home country, family, raising children away from family networks, and to be in a country where they may not understand cultural norms or even the language; and secondly, how it would feel to receive a hostile reaction, and the significant difference that a welcoming and tolerant attitude could make to their wellbeing; Individuals take responsibility for the consequences of their interactions with migrants. First impressions have a lasting impact on the migrant and their attitude towards the host society. It was argued that if the migrant feels that the host society is welcoming and open minded, this can facilitate integration, but if the reaction of the host society appears hostile, this may impede integration; and
- Avenues for establishing meaningful and positive contacts with migrants be provided.

## Discussion

Europe has a long-term economic need for migration and this carries with it a profound social and cultural impact. This conference highlighted the need for a more joined-up approach to migration policy and integration policy at a European, national, regional and local level to ensure that migration is mutually beneficial, in both the short and long-term, to the host community and the migrant. This is essential if social cohesion is to be realised in our increasingly diverse societies. The conference also underlined the need for Member States to consider the impact of their migration policies on Europe as a whole. Furthermore, as migration is an international phenomenon, Member States must recognise that their migration policies have significant consequences for the migrant's country of origin. The conference established a need for greater collaboration amongst Member States in providing an evidence base and in establishing a new 'vocabulary' of migration to inform migration and integration policy.

## About the Conference Paper

The conference, a collaboration between the Scottish Executive and EESC, was held in Dunblane between 27th - 29th November 2005. Speakers included officials from all tiers of government, including the European Commission, Home Office, Scottish Executive, EESC, the City of Nynashamn Sweden, representatives from the International Organisation for Migration, the Commission for Racial Equality, European Women's Lobby and leading academics. The event was attended by around 70 participants from across Europe, including government officials, NGOs, employers groups, researchers and academics.

This report was prepared by Mary-Anne Kate, a PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh, whose research specialisms are comparative immigration and asylum policy.

### **End Notes**

1. A migrant is generally defined as a person who changes their country of residence for a period of one year or more. Migration may be permanent or temporary, voluntary or forced, legal (with the Member State's authorisation) or irregular (without Member State's authorisation). Migration occurs as result of a combination of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors are those which *force* a person to move, for example poverty, unemployment, human rights violations, war and natural disasters. Pull factors are those which *encourage* a person to move, generally in order to secure a higher standard of living, such as employment opportunities. Prospective migrants are drawn to Europe as a result of a combination of push and pull factors.



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