

MOBILE IDENTITIES

MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES



mobile identities

National Policy Recommendations

2015

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Final National Policy Recommendations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mobile Identities “Migration and Integration in Transnational Communities” is a transnational project financed by the European Commission, DG Home, European Integration Fund that aims at evaluating the impact of existing policies on integration in fostering the well-being of migrants involved in temporary or circular migration from third countries. Recently, circular and temporary migration has become a hot political topic in many European countries. This type of migration seems to offer a triple-win situation – win-win-win approach –, which favors all interested parties, in particular: country of destination, country of origin, and the migrants. The attractiveness of this type of migration is related not only to the gains that the receiving countries tend to accrue, but also to the impact of this type of migration on the socio-economic development of home countries. The main goal of this project is to evaluate the impact of existing policies on integration in fostering well-being of migrants involved in temporary or circular migration, and to provide policy recommendations. In order to gather different views on circular and temporary migration, a national workshop organized with stakeholders and migration experts, while were interviews conducted with stakeholders. In addition, a dedicated workshop with young knowledge workers/migrants was organized, while also a semi-structured interviews were held.

Migration policies are to be created for migrants; they refer to actions and decisions to support, prepare, enable and protect the socio-economic position of migrants; they can also be created by migrants in collaboration with other migrants. The result of the first type of policies is to involve more stakeholders in migrants’ positions, while the outcome of the second approach is to create partners. Furthermore, international migration in the Dutch context is also related to development, but at the same time development is also related to international migration. Experiences from guest workers after the Second World War show that migrants from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece mainly returned back to their countries of origin, mainly because those countries experienced a strong economic development. In contrast, migrants from countries such as Turkey and Morocco that experienced not such a strong economic ‘jump’ mostly remained in Europe. Therefore, socio-economic development in the sending countries will not only attract brain-gain – the return of the stock of diaspora back to their country of origin – but would also have a significant impact on the rate of emigration.

This document offers policy recommendations and lessons learned related to the work cited above. Before describing our findings and proposing strategic policies, we would like to first give some information about stakeholders. The stakeholder is someone who is strongly involved, and has a clear responsibility for a certain policy issue. Therefore, a stakeholder may be: Non-governmental

Organizations (NGOs), political parties, human right organizations, and employment agencies. In this study, we have defined stakeholders based on the aim and focus of our case study. Therefore, our stakeholders are either directly involved in Dutch projects, such as the Blue Birds project, or they are involved in different programs relating to circular migration.

Stakeholders include in particular representatives from different ministries (e.g., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and Ministry of Security and Justice), national and international organizations (e.g., IOM the Netherlands, and the African Diaspora Policy Centre), recruitment agencies (e.g., Manpower), and academic institutions (e.g., VU University Amsterdam, and University of Amsterdam (UVA)). In the next section, we briefly discuss our research strategy and our information base, and then we present our main findings from our interviews with stakeholders and workshops, and finally we offer our conclusions and policy recommendations.

2. RESEARCH AND DATA

This study includes desk research – literature review and review of Dutch migration policies –, field research – interviews with migrants and stakeholders –, and workshops – expert meeting with key stakeholders and a workshop with young knowledge migrants – on circular and temporary migration in the Netherlands. We used two methods for interviewing migrants and stakeholders. To a large extent, we conducted face-to-face interviews, while with those migrants who had returned back to their country of origin – especially for migrants from the Blue Birds Program (BBP) – the interviews were either conducted through telephone or by Skype.

The same approach was also adopted for the interviews with stakeholders, with an exception that two of our stakeholders – due to time limitation – preferred to have written down the relevant questions, and then they provided written answers. We conducted a total of 10 interviews with stakeholders, and on average each interview took 25 to 30 minutes.

2.1. Interview with Stakeholders

Based on the definition of stakeholders presented in the introductory part of this policy document. We have conducted interviews and invited different stakeholders in our expert workshop. The interviews were conducted between December 1, 2014 to June 20, 2015, both in person and by telephone, while the workshop was held on 4th of May 2015 from 10:00 AM to 13:00 PM at the IOM office in the Hague. A total of 10 interviews were conducted. The main goals of these research activities were to understand different stakeholders opinions and views on circular migration in the Netherlands. We also aimed to know the challenges and opportunities of circular migration in the context of the Netherlands for future policy programs.

2.2. Interviews with Migrants

We collected qualitative information from circular/temporary migrants who were nationals of third countries, and came to the Netherlands legally. We used the common definition of a migrant – an immigrant is a person who lives for an uninterrupted period of 12 months in a country different from his/her country of birth. In this period short visits to other countries are allowed, but no more than 6 months can be spent in such countries – our approach for interviewing the migrants is based on the above definition. We tried to find migrants from third countries who are residing legally (or lived) in the Netherlands and hold an option for return – the main characteristic of temporary/circular

migrants is the return at the end of their contract or permit of staying – to their country of origin. Furthermore, the Mobile Identities Project (MIP) aims to investigate the state of art on circular/temporary migration in five EU countries. According to the definition and aims of this project, migrants' period of staying in the host country should be limited. Therefore, those migrants who have a permanent residence or have double nationality (Dutch and their country of origin) are automatically excluded from the sample, unless if they share the information from the time that they had temporary status¹.

Migrants from Eastern European countries are also excluded from this project. The Netherlands hosts a large number of eastern European migrants for temporary and seasonal works. These measures not only made the sample of migrant hard to find, but also included various limitations; firstly, the identification of migrants with the characteristics mentioned above; and secondly, the interviewees' availability and willingness to participate both in terms of time and attitudes toward the study.

The Netherlands is pioneer country in providing job opportunities for programmed temporary/circular migration. The Dutch Blue Birds Project, (BBP) however, was not a very successful project, but provided great lessons for future temporary/circular migration. The number of migrants hosted in the Netherlands through this program was very limited: in total, 8 migrants could benefit from this project. Finding these migrants for an interview after 2 years, who are scattered around the world, was a challenging task, but with hard work and intensive search on Google and LinkedIn profiles, and constant contact with both migrants and employers, we could find 6 out of these 8 migrants for an interview. Furthermore, as the Blue Birds was the only tested pilot circular migration program in Europe, these migrants were contacted and interviewed many times by different research institutes before us. Therefore, they were tired of giving any other interviews. We sent them many mails and reached them by their telephones, and explained them clearly the goals and objectives of our project. Then, they showed their willingness to give an interview. The rest of our group comprises 14 migrants who are temporary migrants who came to the Netherland for different purposes, e.g. for work, visit, or study.

On average, each interview took 25 to 30 minutes, and the interview was divided into three main parts. Personal questions (we gathered not only personal information from interviewees, but also on his/her

¹ We had interview with two migrants with such a status; one was a circular migrants and now he holds a permanent residence; the second was a student who came to the Netherlands for study and then got a permanent residence, because she is here employed now.

family, for example, education of parents/spouse, marital status, residential location, birth location, if it was different from residential, etc); questions related to work and social life (for example, social life outside work station, diversity of friendship, social interaction inside the work station, experience of any discrimination, etc); and specific questions about migration (for example the reason for coming to the Netherlands, reason for leaving, future migration scenarios, recommendation for better improvement of circular migration programmed, etc.).

2.3 Expert Meeting

The expert meeting was part of our assigned activities of this project. The main objective of this expert meeting on circular migration was to understand different stakeholders' opinions and views on circular migration in the Netherlands. This meeting was held in International Organization for Migration (IOM) main office in the Hague, and aimed to know the challenges, opportunities, and feasibilities of circular migration in the context of the Netherlands.

We had participants from different organizations, such as IOM, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Diaspora Center, and VU University of Amsterdam. The meeting started at 10:00 AM in the morning in The Hague by Prof. Peter Nijkamp, and was later followed by Dr. Marin Wyss, the chief of IOM mission in the Netherlands. Prof. Peter Nijkamp presented the objectives of the program and described the win-win-win situation of circular migration. Martin Wyss presented the objectives of the host organization, and also emphasised the benefits that circular and temporary migration may bring to the host societies. Masood Gheasi presented and explained the findings of our interviews with migrants, and then we started our round table discussion on circular and temporary migration. We had two round table discussions and each round table had an hour of discussion with following questions:

- Is circular migration an optimal solution to fill the labour shortages in the Netherlands?
- Are there other forms of circular migration taking place between the Netherlands and developing countries? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of these practices for the different stakeholders?
- What are the challenges faced by migrants, autochthonous population, companies, labour unions, NGOs and public administration when dealing with circular migration?

Issues: social and labour conditions, housing, context of National employment, institutional coordination...

- How do programmed circular migration (both the possibility of it and the difficulties to undertake it) affect migrants in the country of origin and in the Netherlands? Challenges on the integration posed by voluntary circular migration in the country of origin and in the Netherlands. (Related to issues such as: family and community dynamics, employment prospects, schooling...).
- What have we learned from recent migration and development?
- Policy recommendations in these areas bearing in mind more optimistic or pessimistic future scenarios.

2.4 Workshop and Interviews with Young Knowledge Workers

We have invited 38 foreign students with different nationalities in a dedicated workshop on ‘temporary/circular migration in the Netherlands’. First, Prof. Peter Nijkamp and Dr. Karima Kourtit explained the objectives of our program and also explained the win-win-win situation of circular migration. The aim of this workshop was to gather temporary migrants’ experiences from their temporary status. We had prepared a systematic survey questionnaire² that included several questions; those were distributed to our participants. The questionnaire took about half an hour minutes to complete and had the aim to collect a wide range of opinions and experiences regarding circular and temporary migration. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts; in the first part, we asked some personal questions (we gathered not only personal information, but also on his/her family, marital status); questions related to work and social life (for example, social life outside work station, diversity of friendship, etc.), and specific questions about migration (for example, the reasons for coming to the Netherlands, reasons for leaving, future migration scenarios, etc.).

3. FINDINGS

It is important to indicate that nowadays migration has become a controversial topic all over Europe, and the political debate on international migration is very intense in some European countries. Clearly, we have to take into account the 2008 economic crisis that raised unemployment rate in Europe and the recent political unrest in many Arab and African countries, which caused thousands of people to emigrate from their country of origin to the Europe. The public opinion in the Netherlands has been heavily influenced by large flows of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, and has created the idea that migration flows in the country are uncontrollable. Therefore, the political atmosphere in the Netherlands is not in favour of programs to allow more migrants, even not in the form of circular and temporary migration.

In general, the stakeholders' opinion on migration and development and in particular on circular migration was rather positive, and indicated that it is obvious that the Netherlands is in shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labours – due to an increase in the number of elderly people and a decrease in population growth – and that therefore, circular migration can create a situation of triple win. However, challenges were articulated on the second and third win of this approach. Given the labor market requirements and the under-evaluation of third countries nationals' education and work experiences in the Netherlands, this can create a mismatch situation between the qualification of migrants and available employment opportunities. If a migrant with a higher/medium skill will be employed in low skilled jobs – due to under-evaluation of a migrants' degree (human capital) in the Netherlands –, there is no knowledge transfer, and there will be no win situation, neither for migrants nor for the countries of origin.

During the interview with different ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and Ministry of Security and Justice) it has become clear that there is a lack of political support for circular and temporary migration in the Netherlands. An interviewee from one of the ministries indicated that *“There is an inverse correlation between welcoming more migrants, specially low and medium skilled migrants with increasing rate of unemployment in the Netherlands, and it is even difficult to explain that we bring new migrants in the form of a pilot project in the country. There is no political support at the moment and as the Blue Birds pilot project failed, it is unlikely that any other pilot project would be more successful. It is also important to indicate that in the Netherlands there is no specific legislation for circular migration.”* It is interesting that however, the Netherlands encourages circular migration – it is one of the sixth priority policies according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs –, but in the Ministry of Security and Justice there are no dedicated legal measures for circular migration. This indicates that there is an inconsistency in migration policies between different stakeholders in the Dutch governmental system.

Circular migration through multinational companies, and an intra-corporate transfer scheme would create another potential win-win-win situation. For example, the Dutch beer brewery company Heineken creates training and employment opportunities in the Netherlands for its workers around the world, and this happens very smoothly with less negative political debate. In contrast, if such a program would come from the Dutch governmental side, it might face many difficulties, so that the chances of success would also be limited, because of bureaucracy and lack of political support.

In regards to the return of migrants back to their country of origin, creating a stronger collaboration between the sending and receiving countries is needed to understand the needs of both countries. The linkage between the two countries is important, to match from one side the suppliers of labour services (workers), and from the other side, the demands of labour services (employers). Moreover, return migrants should preferably be welcomed as heroes in their countries of origin, not as losers, and a bonus might be given from the country of destination to these migrants, so that they can get the same type of opportunity next time. These measures will not only increase circularity, but also would have a significant impact on reducing illegal migration.

The Netherlands is also a pioneer country in developing interlinked migration and development policies. Successful programs are: the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) and Migration for Development in Africa: Ghana Health. These programs did not only establish the broken link between migrants and their country of origin, but also established a long-term exchange of knowledge and cooperation between the diaspora institutions that are involved in the Netherlands with similar institutions in the country of origin. TRQN provides temporary assignments – to a maximum of 6 months – for migrants in the Netherlands to contribute to the development of their country of origin³.

³ The partner countries are Afghanistan, Armenia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Iraq, Morocco, Somalia, and Sudan.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration policies in a narrow sense regulate the flow of people in and out of the country and include bilateral and multilateral agreements in the area of emigration and immigration. In this sense, labour migration is highly sensitive to the political situation in both the sending country and the country of destination, i.e., the Netherlands. A change in government, may impact on government policies substantially and has as a consequence a significant impact on the mode of migration, and may have a drastic impact on the capacity and well-being of migrants.

On the basis of our briefly explained results, our provisional policy recommendations or lessons are divided into short-term and long-term recommendations.

4.1. Short-Term Recommendations

- Policies should focus more on the visibility of circular migration programs, such as the Blue Birds, in the countries of origin. By making such programs more visible in the future, it may create a situation of sound talent competition based on human capital quality, and it offers the host country a fair chance to select the best possible candidates.
- The Blue Birds program was meant to be a circular migration pilot program, but from the implication perspective it was a temporary migration program. Therefore, future circular migration programs need not only to ensure the circularity of human capital, but also need to clearly define the taxonomy for developing such programs with a common goal.
- Recent Dutch experiences from the impact of diaspora on social and economic development of developing countries show that the stock of diaspora can play a significant role in the social and economic development of their country of origin. Therefore, policies to make these migrants more mobile and involved are needed.
- Today, women migrants are recognized not only as dependents, as part of the family reunification process, or as forced migrants in displacement situations, but also as independent agents and family supporters or strategists. Therefore, gender composition needs more focus at the outlet.
- Social integration is an important issue, and it turns out that migrants often experienced loneliness; thus, social integration and social capital aspects should deserve more attention in the policy development for future circular migration programs.

- The economic literature has indicated that human capital, particularly skilled human capital, is a significant factor for long-term socio-economic growth and development. For this reason, the return of skilled migrants is often considered as the main factor to turn the vicious circle of brain drain into a virtuous circulation of the factor labor. Highly educated and talented migrants appear to show generally a strong commitment to return back to their country of origin. Therefore, more focused policies or improvement of current policies are needed and to be carefully designed, while their focus needs to be more on increased mobility and social participation of these migrants.

4.2. Long-Term Recommendations

- A close socio-economic and political collaboration is needed between the sending and receiving countries to share a clear understanding about the needs of both countries. This can be achieved through a solid and balanced bilateral agreement with a clear commitment.
- Circular migration programs should be future-oriented, and bilateral agreements should be operating for longer period of time in order to create enough room for the Netherlands to benefit from its investment on circular migrants.
- The recruitment of migrants from third countries always deals with the recognition of migrants' qualifications and the selection of migrants. In practice, more freedom of choice might be granted to employers and recruiters in the Netherlands to fill their labor shortages by recruiting people with skills and qualifications they need. This can bypass many regulations for the recognition of qualifications including the government employment agencies like UWV.
- Future circular migration programs should ensure that the scope and impact of the policy are well understood by all stakeholders before it is implemented, and that the costs of this policy should be compared with its benefits that will accrue to all stakeholders.
- Circularity of migrants can smoothly happen inside multinational companies. This not only decreases the concerns on the mismatch of the migrants' qualifications with the jobs in the Netherlands, but also receives less negative political attention. Therefore, policies to encourage these companies and to give technical support (in the form of advice and guidance), are needed to meet ambitions on the joint benefits of migration and development goals.

5. CONCLUSION

This project started at the time that the economic crisis had a deeply-rooted impact on the economic situation of the Netherlands. Clearly, the main goal of the current government is to reduce the unemployment rate in the country and not to focus on welcoming more migrants.

Circular migration in the Netherlands has been observed from two different perspectives; first, invitation of migrants for temporary jobs in the Netherlands; and second, contribution of diaspora to progress in their countries of origin. The first approach has become a very sensitive political topic in the Netherlands. The second approach evolves very smoothly, has received positive attention, and has become rather successful. An important factor that makes the second approach more promising is the lack of mobility barriers to migrants' movements between their countries of origin and the Netherlands. The diasporas who participated in the second approach appeared to have either a Dutch nationality or a permanent residence permit.

In general, more empirical insights and exploratory circulation programs are needed to develop Dutch policies and related programmes in the context of circular and temporary migration in Europe and the Netherlands (multi-level approach). Our findings show a strong diversity in consumption, working and learning patterns, communication, values and preference systems, needs and decisions of circular and temporary migrants in the Netherlands. These differences are not sufficiently addressed in the Dutch policies and related programmes for with circular and temporary migration and their communication strategies. This evidence calls for more emphasis on 'etno-marketing' and 'diversity policy' for circular and temporary migration policy to strengthen and expanding 'bonding and bridging' strategies in order achieve the so-called 'win-win-win' situation that would favour all interested parties, in particular: country of destination, country of origin, and the migrants.

As a concluding comment, it is foreseen that the Netherlands will need a certain influx of migrants in the future. Therefore, it is important to test programs like 'Blue Birds' now and to draw lessons from it in order to be well prepared for future needs of labour markets in the Dutch society.

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