

BUILDING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN MIGRATION ISSUES

In 1992 Slovenia, a country of 2 million inhabitants, experienced a massive arrival of approximately 60.000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Croatia. Then, the first beginnings of migration policy were created which was initially focused on refugees and gradually developed. The first experiences about the inclusion of these refugees were extremely useful for the development of integration policies aimed at other categories of foreigners.

Modern migrations are complex and require migration policies capable of changing. Only in this way can states adapt to the challenges of the modern migratory societies. Successful migration policies build public confidence in the system which is efficient and operates under certain rules. If such confidence is not established, this essentially makes difficult any necessary changes in migration policy.

Based on past experiences and different projects Slovenia endeavours to reach public benevolence for migration policies implemented by the state, especially in the integration areas. These projects are particularly designed to inform the public in the importance of including all the categories of foreigners into the society, promote the acceptance of diversities and train the professionals on inter-cultural competences. Confidence is enhanced and maintained by a continuous provision of programmes.

Projects for informing the public

In 2008 a survey was performed in Slovenia the results of which sent a clear signal regarding the need to raise public awareness about migration and integration issues.

Every state administration can influence the media presentation of immigration or integration problems by dedicating a certain amount to these topics and providing objective and constructive information on the issues, as well as by promoting contacts between the migrants and the host society. The media play an important role since they provide balanced reports and information on the public attitude towards immigrants.

Since 2008, the Republic of Slovenia/MOI has provided various public information projects also in the form of media campaigns for raising awareness among broader public about the importance of including migrants in the society, their economic potentials, diversity and at the same time equality. These campaigns work both ways since they address and encourage migrants to participate in as large numbers as possible in the state integration programmes. Through public media campaigns, Slovenia wishes to rouse the feeling that migrants do not present only a social burden, threat to health or national security, but a human capital which can be enriched by engagement and from which we can all have benefits.

Inter cultural dialogue programmes

Since 2004, the Republic of Slovenia (MOI) assisted by European funds, primarily the European Refugee Fund and later also the European Integration Fund has been continually providing inter-cultural dialogue programmes. The initial focus on the importance of establishing the dialogue with refugees was reoriented in 2008 towards all migrants.

Problems originating from inter-cultural dialogue remain above all on a local level. This fact caused a gradual decentralisation of the programmes which in 2006 still locally centralised particularly due to the awareness about the importance of the local level. Local operators were selected for their implementation since they are familiar with local problems.

In 2011 and 2012, a pilot raising awareness project was performed as well as the training of employers about the importance of introducing the inter-cultural dialogue at work. In 2013 and 2014 there were also inter-cultural dialogue programmes performed in prisons and in the area of media which raised awareness among the public about a multi-cultural society which is alive in various domains of man's work. Such continuous programmes are believed to be a good and efficient policy tool which gains public confidence in the long run.

Training of professional public

Employees in the areas where the interests of public services and migrants overlap (i.e. administrative units, employment services, centres for social work, educational institutions...) are in the majority of cases the first contact points for migrants.

Since 2010, the Republic of Slovenia/MOI performs trainings on inter-cultural dialogue, relations and competences. Trainings were designed for administrative units' staff, employment services, centres for social work, and primary as well as secondary schools. The responses of participants were mainly positive and their satisfaction at work increased.

The fact remains that conscious public servants are a lengthening piece of politics which tries in a manner that prevents in advance potential conflicts and misunderstandings to submit concrete information. Training programmes on inter-cultural competences will be therefore performed continuously and in the future we will also broaden the circle of public servants for whom the programme has been designed.