



Think Tank Korčula School

- Transforming Politics through a gender lens-

REPORT

REGIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION – GENDER PERSPECTIVES

ZAGREB, 27 - 29 September 2019

Introduction

The “Korčula School” Think Tank 2019 key thematic topic focused on South Eastern Europe regional labour mobility, with an emphasis on its gender differentiated aspects. Participants also discussed gender equality challenges in the region and held a session on the implementation of the joint regional gender equality platform, the activities of SD Women’s Forums and CEE Network for Gender Issues forward looking, strategy setting and initiatives. (Annex 1: Agenda)

The 2019 Korčula School was opened by Davor Bernardić, President, SDP Croatia with opening remarks by Maria João Rodrigues, President Foundation for Progressive European Studies (FEPS), former Member of European Parliament and Minister of Employment, Portugal, Zita Gurmai, President Party of European Socialists (PES) Women, Biljana Borzan, Head of Delegation and Member of European Parliament (SDP), Vice-President S&D Group and Daša Šašić Šilović, Chair International Board CEE Network. 72 participants from the region and European SD institutions participated. (Annex 2: List of participants)

A press conference was held after the opening session with the participation of key cable TV Networks in Croatia (HRT1, RTL, N1, Nova TV) and the Croatian news agency HINA announced the event to the media.

The 2019 session was organised in cooperation with the Olof Palme International Center, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Croatia), Party of European Socialists and PES Women, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (EFDS), Progresiva Slovenia. The publication on the 25 years of the CEE Network for Gender Issues was underwritten by the UK Labour Party Westminster Foundation. The report below has been prepared by the CEE Network for Gender Issues.

This report has been prepared by the CEE Network for Gender Issues and reflects its own rendition.

Regional labour migration – Reality and challenges

Executive Summary

The 2020 South Eastern European Strategy (SEE) sees intra-regional labour mobility as one of the main drivers of growth and development due to many economic, social and demographic factors. It can assist in alleviating the consequences of negative demographic trends, increase youth and women employment rates, address shortages in skilled and educated labour and curb labour migration and brain drain to countries in Western Europe (primarily Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia). Moreover, regional labour mobility can strongly contribute the lingering consequences of the regional conflicts of the nineties and nationalism, i.e. to the strengthening of mutual understanding, regional peace and security.

Still, many obstacles remain for regional labour migration – from the inadequate legislation or lack of its implementation to existing discrimination, nationalism and insecurity for intraregional migrant, particularly seasonal, workers. After all, regional labour migration depends on an enabling political and economic environment. In the best of circumstance a regulated intraregional labour market would be supportive of sustainable development. The intra-regional migration patterns show a prevalence of seasonal workers and still reflect the post-war migration of the population based on ethnicity. While overall women's participation in the labour force in the region has increased, including in formal employment, informal and precarious employment remains prevalent especially among women. Unemployment continues to plague the younger generation with a marked brain drain. Many women resort to seasonal work in the neighbouring countries, formally or informally, mainly in the health and care industry, domestic work, tourism and agriculture. The lack of data on the regional circulation of such workers demonstrates the need for more data collection (including disaggregated data) and analytical work to guide political positioning.

The Korčula School discussion, while looking at immediate challenges, addressed the mid-term and longer-term perspectives of regional labour circulation, its challenges, opportunities and impacts from demand to supply and its economic and social implications. It focused on gender disaggregation and especially the challenges and opportunities for women. Participants analysed three main aspects of regional labour migration, focusing on gender disaggregation:

- i. political and legislative environment
- ii. economic benefits and growth
- iii. human rights and security challenges

DISCUSSION	
Challenge/Issue	Recommendation
Issue 1: Regional strategy 2020	
<p>Regional labour mobility is not one of the priorities for governments and parties in the region and yet this is an issue that lies in the nexus between national and regional labour markets, labour mobility and migration couched within the broader picture of development and stability.</p> <p>Governments do not even have adequately formulated migration policies (including on a potential new migrant wave), let alone on regional mobility</p>	<p>Progressive parties should work with trade unions to develop positions on regional labour mobility vs migration</p> <p>These issues should be looked at through the lens of human rights, democracy, freedom of movement e.g. the Balkan “mini-Schengen”) and regional development</p> <p>Responses have to meet the standards of the European pillar of social rights, to address work life balance and working conditions, clear labour contracts with clear conditions and access to social protection.</p> <p>New forms of work, such as part time jobs and on-line jobs should also be addressed at national, regional and European levels (now being turned into European law)</p>
Issue 2: Reasons for mobility/migration	
<p>Surveys show that people are leaving or choosing to migrate not only because of low wages (came in the eighth place in a survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina) or just unemployment but due to the overall social and political circumstances, including disenchantment with politics and non-functioning state institutions. They also seek a better prospects for their children.</p> <p>Weakened industries and production in the transition to the benefit of service industries have created an undeployed pool of skilled workers seeking work regionally and in Europe (e.g. medical staff)</p> <p>Raising wages is not necessarily the answer and demographic policies take time. There is a general lack of policies on these issues and most are ad hoc.</p> <p>Quotas at universities and colleges are higher for high tech and professional degrees than those for artisans and technicians</p> <p>Within this group women are the most unemployed and represent a big pool of informal labour which renders them susceptible to seek employment in the region (often due to knowing the language and proximity to home) especially part time (in the care and health economy, as well as domestic work) and seasonal work (in agriculture). They</p>	<p>Holistic, comprehensive policies, short and long term, should be developed, to include demographic trends, education and labour deficiencies.</p> <p>Analysis should be conducted and potential measures developed to address the co-relation between regional labour mobility and migration of the labour force especially into Western Europe. This should also include a discussion on new technologies and changing professional requirements, the future of labour and labour relations</p> <p>Political parties on the left should deal with this issue and show, together with trade unions, solidarity and seek solutions</p> <p>National policies on sexual violence and harassment should also address women workers who cross regional borders for work as currently instances of violence against them remains anecdotal</p>

<p>often resort to jobs for which they are overqualified perpetuating the gender wage gap</p> <p>Circular migration does not necessarily answer the challenge</p> <p>Responses focusing on labour deficiency and demographics are shortsighted</p>	
<p>Issue 3: Inter-state agreements on labour mobility across the region</p>	
<p>Bilaterally signed agreements on these issues between states in the region are done without consultation with stakeholders, especially trade unions and do not respect collective agreements. Often these agreements flagrantly disrespect workers' rights</p>	<p>Pressure should be put on governments to conduct transparent negotiations between countries in the region with the participation of trade unions, recruiters and employers</p> <p>Domestic labour legislation should be applied to workers who are recruited from the region e.g. collective agreements, minimum wage, social services, meals and living conditions which are mostly left to the employer or to the worker</p> <p>Lessons could be learnt from cooperation between Slovenian and Croatian trade unions (now extended to Serbia), especially in view of the EU accession process</p> <p>The Nordic model could be as useful referral point</p>
<p>Issue 4: Recruitment</p>	
<p>No adequate monitoring of workers recruited through foreign companies e.g. work conducted by the Emirates and the use of Asian workers</p> <p>No disaggregation of responses relating to women workers, although there is a marked feminisation of migration and mobility. Recruited workers, especially women have no knowledge of bargaining, recruitment and working conditions</p> <p>Big companies are able to provide legal recruitment within agreed quotas, but small companies and employers most often than not resort to illegal employment. Inspection is not able to cover this "gray zone"</p>	<p>Address feminisation of labour mobility in the region. Women today tend to come alone, skilled and independent seeking a better future</p> <p>Inspect recruiting companies and monitor recruitment data and conditions</p> <p>Advisory services and counselling possibly within trade unions would be beneficial. Social services are also not equipped to deal with these issues</p> <p>Monitoring recruitment would also prevent trafficking which still exists across borders in the region</p>
<p>Issue 5: Statistics</p>	
<p>Lack of data collection and registers</p>	<p>Develop registers, improve household surveys and insist on gender disaggregation. This would allow for monitoring. E.g. Croatia does not even have a population census let alone a register of foreign workers</p> <p>Progressive parties should advocate for a register and database since the technology exists</p>

Issue 6: Inspection	
Inspection of presence of foreign workers is random and only in respect to wages/taxes and not working conditions	Increase inspection capacities in cooperation with employer associations, trade unions and social services for overall assessments
Issue 7: Treatment of the regional labour force	
Regional tensions and xenophobia among countries remain and impact labour mobility	<p>Progressive parties need to formulate responses beyond ad hoc reactions and the right wing discriminatory approaches</p> <p>Progressive parties need to prioritise workers' concerns who tend to vote for right wing and nationalistic parties and establish cooperation with trade unions (albeit mostly weak) on the same</p> <p>This topic could possibly be an issue for concrete regional cooperation among and between socialdemocratic parties</p>



GENDER EQUALITY – Reality and challenges, implementation of the Regional Gender Equality Platform

Participants engaged in a substantive political and ideological discussion on the situation in individual countries and the region. The EU accession process was one of the key concerns, in view of the latest developments.

Gender equality was addressed as the main issue relating to the functioning of our societies and the policies of socialdemocratic parties. This included a critical review of the position, role and perspectives of women’s forums within socialdemocratic parties.

A video from the 2019 Korčula School can be accessed at: www.ceegendernetwork.eu

DISCUSSION	
Challenge/Issue	Recommendation
Issue 1: Political concerns	
<p>Human rights, as well as gender equality are disrespected in countries like Poland and Hungary and there is no EU mechanism of enforcement of jointly agreed standards</p> <p>The EU and other international institutions like NATO support non-democratic regimes for the sake of “stabilocracy” and ineffective regional “peace” which narrows down the potential of democratic and progressive parties and civil society to address the democratic deficit</p> <p>The “stabilocracy” approach practiced by the EU, NATO and others overshadows the importance of the EU integration process as such vs just filling out the requirements of accession on paper</p> <p>The right is well financed, disciplined and adaptable whether in opposition or in government where it mainstreams its ideology further into the government institutions e.g. the military, law enforcement, NGO financing, Church financing and access</p> <p>When socialdemocratic and progressive parties win elections and take over the government their capacities are depleted, including in the number of women who remain in leading party positions</p> <p>While some Western European parties and foundations are able to make bridges to the centre right parties it is not certain that this could also be done in the region and if conducted at what cost in view of the fragile political circumstances and sharp ideological divides</p>	<p>Socialdemocratic parties from countries that have joined the EU need to support those aspiring to EU integration and to provide lessons learnt for mutual learning and positioning</p> <p>A “return” to socialdemocratic and progressive ideals should be a priority and parties should go beyond the preoccupation for political survival since opportunism and move to the right has not given dividends but turned away the progressive electorate</p> <p>Political action of socialdemocratic and progressive parties needs to prioritise communication with the public to address political apathy, the contamination of politics, scepticism and mistrust in politicians and political parties</p> <p>Design a longer term strategy and plan for leadership capacity building strategy (in the party and when in government) in socialdemocratic parties including those for women politicians</p>

Issue 2: Gender equality concerns	
<p>There is no awareness in the society, within the governments and often in parties that gender equality is at the crux of democracy, human rights and economic and social policies</p> <p>The Beijing Platform for Action, the Istanbul Convention, the EU standards and agreements on gender equality have not been implemented and met, but EU member states also do not represent a role model in this respect</p> <p>Gender equality does not count in budgets and personnel policies</p> <p>Women are more cautious in joining “corrupt” and non-transparent political practices and parties and are seeking space for their social and public engagement beyond these, e.g. in the NGO sector which in turn renders mistrust in cooperation with parties</p> <p>Women in key political and government positions often forget to represent women’s rights</p> <p>Women politicians often experience gender based harassment and are presented in a negative right within patriarchal societies</p> <p>Country and regional capacity building women’s academies exist but there is scope to better coordinate them which can be done regionally by the CEE Network</p> <p>Although party quotas exist, as well as gender equality positions within party documents there are no sanctions if they are not respected</p>	<p>SD parties need to address more strongly the issues of values with gender equality being one of the top on the list</p> <p>In parliaments and when in government SD parties should ensure gender sensitive budgeting and ensure that investments in women are mainstreamed</p> <p>Progressive parties should look at shorter and long term ramifications of mistrust among women for political activism and try to address these</p> <p>Review experiences of cooperation (and coalitions) between women from different political parties and ideological perspectives in parliament – can it work to support gender equality or is it window dressing</p> <p>Quotas have largely been achieved and now it is time to pass from the quantitative to the qualitative by empowering and strengthening the capacities of women who have been elected</p> <p>Political topics are in the interest of women and women in the SD parties should engage in decision making, at all levels, on the same and not only be relegated to gender equality of “women’s” issues</p> <p>It is not enough just to have women’s leadership academies but also to mainstream gender into political discourse, documents and party bodies, something that could be supported by SD foundations</p>
Issue 3: Position of women’s forums within SD parties in the region	
<p>Communication between parties and women’s forums is weak irrespective of the fact that they are an integral part of the same party</p> <p>There is an assessment that the status of women’s forums is being weakened and that they are especially used for campaigns and organisational issues</p> <p>Financing of women’s forums is inadequate and often not deliberate but ad hoc which impacts its programming and outreach</p> <p>Women’s forums are good vehicles for engagement with civil society</p>	<p>Conduct an independent more in-depth evaluation of the status and functioning of SD women’s forums</p> <p>Discuss with party leaderships the WF financing issue</p> <p>WFs should organise thematic sessions with party leaderships</p> <p>CEE Network to establish an eHub to foster communication and exchange among WFs and SD foundations</p>



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