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Making a success of integrating immigrants into the labour market

Minutes



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



Peer Review:
**Making a success of integrating immigrants
into the labour market**
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*The Peer Review was hosted by the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)
and the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (VOX)*

Day 1

Dyveke Hamza, IMDi Deputy Director General, welcomed participants. She pointed out that one-third of immigrants in Norway live in Oslo, thus creating positive side effects: a vibrant culture, diversity, multiculturalism and innovation, as well as issues of segregation and social exclusion.

On behalf of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, **Oyvind Opland** drew attention to the Europe 2020 strategy targets relating to employment, education and combating poverty, which also depend on the good integration of migrants. This topic has already featured in the social Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and is an important area for peer review and mutual learning. Recent population growth in the Member States has largely been driven by migration. There are variations between Member States in terms of policies, challenges and outcomes, but also common themes, such as the integration of migrants into the labour market. Migrants face higher risks of unemployment and exclusion than native populations. This is an important issue to tackle across a range of policy areas, where mutual learning can make a significant contribution to resolving challenges.

In June 2010, the European Council agreed on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This underscores that in order to reach long-term targets, we have to focus on the social dimension – One cannot talk about growth in isolation, especially as long as millions of Europeans are at risk of poverty. Inclusive growth means amongst others empowering people, investing in skills and fighting poverty. The challenge posed by the scale and persistence of poverty and exclusion is also reflected in the agreement on a European target to reduce the number of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020. The poverty risk for migrants is over 30% in some Member States, and between 20% and 30% in some others. The quick integration and inclusion of newcomers is therefore essential to the 2020 targets. Active inclusion strategies combining income support linked to the labour market, training and qualifications and better access to social services are agreed policy priorities for the EU. The topics under discussion at this Peer Review are important building blocks for the implementation of such strategies.

Integrating immigrants into the labour market in Norway: context of the programme and main issues

Dyveke Hamza said that in Norway, immigrants should be able to participate in the labour market and society as quickly as possible after arrival, with equal living conditions and opportunities.

The immigrant population is diverse, with communities from Africa, Latin America and Asia growing fastest, as well as increasing numbers from new EU Member States and neighbouring countries. 2010 figures indicate 580,000 people of immigrant background, equalling 10.3% of a total population of 4.5 million, with 98,000 born in Norway of immigrant parents. Official forecasts predict an immigrant population of 1.8-2.8 million by 2060.

Immigrants fall into four groups:

- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Labour migrants
- Family reunification
- Irregular residents

Poles and Pakistanis make up the largest groups, followed by Swedes, who compete for low-skilled jobs. Norway has 430 municipalities, and 420 of them settle migrants.

The Norwegian context is characterised by high GDP and low unemployment (2.2% among Norwegian-born population). Despite some increase due to the recession, Norway has not suffered as much as many EU countries. Gender equality is a very important element in the nordic welfare model. The employment level amongst women in the nordic countries is rather high. Most families have two incomes. Both genders participate in the labour market, while the Nordic welfare model guarantees a comparatively high benefit level. Does this discourage migrants from working? It has a large public sector, but relatively few low-skilled jobs. Very few employers use English or other languages, so mastery of Norwegian is vital.

State governance offers a high level of local autonomy to react to local needs, with very few sanctions available to central government. The Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is a strong political force. The social partners also participate in policy development. This presents challenges in getting all actors to work towards the same goals and targets.

Norway has a high employment rate: for example 67% of women are in jobs, compared with 57% of immigrant women. Unemployment is 2.7% overall, but three times higher (7.3%) for the immigrant population than for native Norwegians. In some African groups, e.g. Somalis, the rate of 13.5% is "alarmingly high". Trends include a falling immigrant employment rate in 2009, with unemployment likely to continue to rise to 2012. Incomers are twice as likely to be overqualified for the positions they hold.

Norway's Action Plan for integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population came into force in 2007, with five areas for action: employment; childhood; education and language; gender; and participation. Three pieces of legislation govern education and training: the Act on Adult Education and the Education Act relate to individual needs, whereas the Introductory Act focuses on status. More work is needed to harmonise these measures and ensure individual immigrants are not left out. The Anti-discrimination Act of 2010 has yet to be evaluated, but aims to stop discrimination and unfair dismissal and guarantee equal opportunities in the labour market. Municipalities receive grants for language training and integration services.

A model for programmes was devised in 2004. Key elements are Norwegian language learning and social studies, with work-oriented training and preparation for employment. But programmes are implemented differently in different municipalities, bringing problems of quality consistency.

The main programmes are:

- The right and obligation to participate in Norwegian language training and social studies
- The Introductory Programme
- Second Chance projects
- NAVs Qualification Programme (nationwide, not just for immigrants)

Future trends: Norway is going in the same direction as Denmark towards mandatory language tests for immigrants, increasing language training from 300 to 600 hours, and a possible citizenship test.

Questions

Questions focused on the poverty rate among immigrants, and programmes for irregular immigrants. **Dyveke Hamza** said that immigrants are over-represented among low-skilled workers, low-income families and single-parent families. Norway has no programmes for irregular immigrants apart from deportation. Refugees are accommodated all over the country, in 420 municipalities, compared with 320 in 2009, but there is a trend to centralise in cities, especially Oslo. People lose their social benefits if they choose to move. Registration as unemployed is voluntary, but necessary for receipt of benefits. Irregular immigrants have no rights apart from education and healthcare if necessary. No figures exist on numbers of refugees as a proportion of migrants.

Integrating immigrants into the labour market in Norway: different programmes and evaluation results

The Introductory Programme for refugees

Anne Edman, IMDi adviser, described the **Introductory Programme for Refugees**. The main objective is to enable refugees to enter the labour market or start to study as soon as possible. In 2005-2009, the programme dealt with 8,000-10,000 candidates per year. Key elements comprise two-year (three-year maximum) study of Norwegian language and social studies in preparation for labour market entry. Full-time attendance is compulsory for receipt of an income of up to €18,000 per year. Each participant follows an individual plan, and most go on to work in social services or healthcare. In 2008, 63% were in work or study one year after completing the programme (75% of men, 51% of women). However, the numbers moving directly into work declined from 53% in 2008 to 44% in 2009.

Evaluation by the Institute for Labour and Social Research (FAFO) shows that close follow-up improves outcomes, but temporary disruptions (e.g. maternity leave) have a negative impact. There is also a potential 'lock-in' effect: some candidates would be ready for the labour market in less than two years, but there is no incentive to leave the programme.

Women from Somalia have the lowest transition rate (15% in 2009), compared with 61% of women from Ethiopia. But Somali women also have the lowest qualifications, with 60% having failed to complete primary school. The situation is not satisfactory, but improves with the participants' length of residence. 52% of Somalis who completed the programme in 2005 were in work or study by 2008, including 36% of women.

The Second Chance Project

Senior IMDi adviser **Morten Sonnicks**, coordinator of the **Second Chance programme**, said the scheme was launched in 2005 as a trial project, targeting long-stay immigrants who have difficulties entering the labour market. Initially it worked with long-term social welfare recipients, and since there are now not so many left, in 2009 it was refocused towards young jobless people aged 18-25, and stay-at-home mothers.

The main objective is sustainable employment. Although it is a nationwide project, not all municipalities are involved. It offers full-time qualification for up to two years. Each participant follows an individual programme, with a single contact person. Elements include language training, work training and placements, physical education and life-coping skills.

In 2009 the programme had a budget of NOK 23 million, plus an extra NOK 15 million to respond to the recession. There were 39 local projects, with 625 participants, plus 250 who benefited from the extra grant. Results in 2009 showed 42% of participants went into jobs or study. This can be seen as a good result given the vulnerable target group with many difficulties.

Successful elements include individual mapping and follow-up (each social worker has a maximum of 15 clients); group working; offering young people (many of whom live alone and have no positive role models) a broader perspective; and recruitment of mothers via the 'grapevine'. This takes time and must involve husbands and families, but women are now starting to come forward voluntarily. The approach must be holistic – not just work-focused – offering life skills beneficial to living conditions, health, family networking etc.

The challenges include dealing with diverse problems e.g. women complain of pains/illnesses that cannot be diagnosed. Childcare is in short supply in many municipalities. Motivation is difficult for mothers and young people. The main goal is for the lessons to be taken up by ordinary local services once the project finishes. The project will produce a handbook by 2011 to spread successful practices. Future plans include further measures for young immigrants, and co-operation with GPs in exploring perceptions of illness and pain and promoting healthy eating etc. A survey of former participants will set out to show how sustainable results are.

Unemployment and Labour Market measures

Adviser **Benedicte Hollen** from the **Norwegian Directorate of Labour and Welfare (NAV)** said the policy objective is to get more people into work, focusing on their potential rather than limitations. Norway has a high employment rate compared with other countries, partly because a large proportion of women work. Seven out of 10 women and almost eight out of 10 men are currently in employment. Big differences exist between employment rates of immigrants from different countries: e.g. 32.4% of women from Afghanistan compared with 22.3% of women from Somalia.

NAV offices exist in all municipalities (with more in big cities). NAV administers one third of the Norwegian national budget, through benefit and pension schemes, and serves the whole population. However, immigrants form one of the priority target groups: people from a migrant background make up 32% of the jobless but less than 11% of the overall population. In 2009,

41% of participants in qualification programme labour market schemes were immigrants, with Somalis as the biggest group (22%).

The national Directorate of Labour and Welfare devolves responsibility for implementation of labour market policies to county services, which make their own assessment of local user and labour market needs. The qualification programme provides education and vocational training for people on benefits, together with follow-up tailored to individual needs, not target groups. The service is a legal right for people who fulfil the necessary criteria. 44 % of the NAV offices offer the Introductory Programme as a part of their services. In Oslo, 72% of participants in labour market schemes are immigrants, 8% of whom have taken part in the Introductory Programme. One of the main challenges for newcomers is weak Norwegian language skills.

Questions and answers

Peer Review participants asked a number of questions:

Does Norway have intermediate goals for specific groups furthest from the labour market, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of integration - e.g. achieving better self-esteem, supporting children with homework? Are such aspects evaluated? It seems that 30 years ago, less than 50% of Norwegian women worked, therefore, results for immigrant women are unlikely to be achieved in two years, especially if they have suffered from persecutions in their countries of origin or never went to school. Does Norway promote role models for young people, through the media, or education materials as it is also an important dimension? Is intercultural training provided e.g. for health service staff? Are migrants' associations involved, and if so, how? What role do NGOs play in the Second Chance project?

How does Norway deal with immigrants from EU countries who have freedom of movement? Why do most Introductory Programme participants go into health and social care, given that these jobs require good communication and language skills? Tailored measures for big groups are very expensive, what is the cost per individual?

What prevents people moving into work after completing a qualification programme? Why is maternity leave disruptive? What proportion of immigrants requires assistance in Norway, and what is their contribution to the national economy? What is the attitude of the media and the general public?

Nazek Ramadan, from the European Anti-Poverty Network, who also sits on the UK government social inclusion advisory group, said she would take a lot back from the Norwegian practices.

Dyveke Hamza said both programmes are work related and measure 'hard' indicators. But a debate is going on about developing soft indicators to monitor integration policies in terms of social inclusion. Norway's Department of Health has launched some initiatives for multicultural training and awareness-raising among doctors.

Social benefits are determined by status. Labour migrants without refugee status have to pay for their own language training and are only entitled to unemployment benefits after paying taxes. Qualification programmes are designed to meet demands in the labour market. Candidates for posts that require language and cultural skills receive tailor-made training or internships. Some employers help staff to upgrade their qualifications.

She counselled caution in criticising the media, but nonetheless pointed to a recent survey showing that most press articles are problem-oriented, contributing to a perception of 'them' and 'us'. Only 6% of journalists' sources have an immigrant background. Media play a crucial role in influencing racism and discrimination.

Research shows that employment discrimination can be intended or unintended. Direct discrimination occurs in recruitment because managers tend to employ people who look like them, and even when they give jobs to minorities, they can be sceptical about their abilities. IMDi works with employers' associations, who now understand that Norwegian businesses risk losing out on global talent. Trade unions are also quite focused on the issue, but there is a long way to go.

Anne Edman said Norway does not measure soft indicators – only transition into work. This is a political question, because it is considered important for women to be employed. Ref. gender equality and the tradition in Norway for women having a strong position in important areas of society. Two-three years is indeed short, and longer follow-up is needed. The transition rate into work after the Introductory Programme is good because the scheme is well adapted. Participants go into health care because there is a high demand for labour.

Maternity leave can be a problem because if refugees get pregnant soon after entering the programme, they remain at home without contacts. After one year of language learning, it is easy to forget over a 10-month break without practice. This leads to poor results. Some refugees, especially if they are illiterate, do find it hard to study for six hours a day, and a combination of work training programmes together with classroom lessons might be more effective.

Morten Sonnicks said IMDi is aware that intermediate goals are useful. Local projects have their own indicators. It would be interesting to know more about multicultural cooperation in health care and with local community representatives. NGOs currently have no role in the Second Chance programme at national level, but are important locally in recruiting mothers, offering role models etc. The programme is rather expensive because of the high level of individual follow-up, and resources are scarce. However, a national survey concluded that it pays off well when costs are compared to long-term benefits.

Mental health is an issue that affects outcomes and needs to be addressed. It can also influence perceptions of pain and disability.

Presentation of a 2010 study carried out by FAFO (Institute for Labour and Social Research), on immigrant women in the Introductory Programme (NIP)

FAFO researcher **Hanne Kavli** presented the study, carried out in cooperation with the Institute for Social Research, which focused on women with special difficulties such as low education or many children. She reiterated that NIP is a compulsory, full-time programme for newly arrived refugees lasting two to three years, with the right to 10-12 months maternity leave. It offers an income of approx €16,700 per participant, not household, which is important for women. The research looked at women from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia, which are the three countries with the lowest transition rate into work. Many countries would regard the results as good, but Norway's national goal is 65% transfer into work or study. The data are based on experience over a 10-year period, plus interviews with participants, case workers and teachers.

Participants have a wide range of goals, falling largely into two categories: work and citizenship. It is necessary to think beyond just what leads to employment. But there is also a danger that women tend to be categorised at point of arrival, before they have an opportunity to express their skills: it is assumed that some will never be capable of working, their expected trajectory is "from school to kitchen". These women receive limited work training and experience, and apart from language education, courses often consist of parenting, social networking (with other immigrants) or physical training, which is easy and cheap for municipalities. There is not much individual adaptation. Content should include basic educational skills as well as Norwegian. This has been happening in Oslo (maths, English, social science), and participants find it meaningful and motivating, especially women who have never been to school. Some have a "hunger" for formal education. Recognition, status and motivation are all relevant factors.

Language teaching by itself can become lengthy and boring, so it should be coupled with work training. However, many women want to stay at school for as long as possible, and find it too stressful to combine work and education, so the right type of work training must be identified.

Refugees who have undergone painful experiences need 'safety arenas' such as mother/child groups. Once their surroundings are stable they can move on. Childcare is essential. Study groups are also useful in providing a space where women can do their own 'homework'. Other initiatives include dialogue with GPs to avoid long waiting times.

User input helps to make courses more effective and is empowering, but it can take a long time to prepare participants, who may be more focused on goals than contents. Who should decide on content? 60% of case workers interviewed said they give in to clients' wishes, even if they disagree, because involving individuals in course design helps to motivate them.

General discussion

Questions related to whether the researchers took account of gender roles in women's family and background. For example, many Iraqi migrants are Kurdish, Afghani women may have been barred from education by the Taliban. In the UK there are still cases of men preventing their wives from going to school. Involving families is very important. What is the impact of 10 years' experience? Do daughters now go to school longer? Acceptance into the native community is another important condition for integration, and many migrants who work are still not accepted. Does Norway make any effort to change attitudes among the host community? Is economic support the same for single and childless women as for mothers? Are there integration programmes for 'trailing spouses' following their professional wives/husbands?

Eda Gemi from the European Women's Lobby referred to the failure of integration models in countries like Germany and France, and wondered whether the Norwegian model includes cultural integration or only employment and citizenship. Some migrant groups adapt more easily than others, and this has to be taken into account in achieving good outcomes.

Rønnaug Eitrem from the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion said apart from education and employment, the aim is also to take part in society. There is a cultural dimension included in the Norwegian social studies.

Anne Edman said only 40% of Somali women have any education. But there are no data on the proportion on Kurdish women or Afghani women's background. It is a condition of the NIP that married women have to have their own bank account for receipt of payment, which is the same for all participants, although parents receive extra child allowance. Working with different groups helps staff to get to know appropriate solutions. Refugees with post-traumatic stress can get grants for treatment.

Dyveke Hamza explained that some local authorities use a 'family learning model' where the husband and wife together define where the family should be in five years, taking account of the benefits of the Norwegian model of a two-income household. Although Norway's integration plan prioritises work and self-sufficiency, recent attention has turned more to social inclusion. Immigration and multiculturalism are relatively new phenomena in Norway and there is a growing awareness of the long-term results of integration.

'Spouse programmes' exist for professional ex-pats working temporarily in Norway, for example in the oil industry, but they have no obligation to take part in language training unless they wish to apply for Norwegian citizenship, and few do. There are about 12,000 people in this category, for whom English is the working language, and who tend to send their children to international schools.

Integration is a two-way process and there are efforts to work with the host community to promote dialogue at state and local levels. Local arenas bring together county and municipal authorities, NGOs and migrant groups. The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities coordinates dialogue, which is also important at the macro level to provide a framework for integration. Hostility to migrants does exist.

Hanne Kavli said findings show better results for men who have taken part in the NIP than others, although this is less clear for women. Female labour market participation grows in line with years of residence, unlike men, suggesting that women take longer to gain qualifications. This time perspective is important: women may need seven or eight years to get into work. Progress should not be measured by unattainable indicators. She gave the example of one woman who took a year to be able to look her confidently in the eyes. Attitudes within communities to women entering the labour market vary according to different phases of life and whether they have children – but this is true even in different EU countries.

Ellen Røst from IMDi noted that Norway's adult education system is not well adapted to the needs of the labour market. The system is outdated, for both Norwegian and immigrant women.

Katarina Heraldsveit from IMDi said user surveys on soft indicators exist at local level (asking questions like: 'Do you have a sense of belonging?'). The government's political declarations also focus on equal opportunities and living conditions, and combating racism and discrimination. Policies take account of ethnic communities as actors in society, with fora for them to participate. However the NIP is designed as an introduction to a new society, working on the principle that all women should have a 'taste' of work even if they have children or health problems.

Site visit

After lunch, the Peer Review participants visited the Bærum Adult Education Centre outside Oslo to learn about the practical framework for language and social studies training for immigrants. They also met students taking a 36-week pre-nursing assistants' course, and watched a videoed

role play designed to help trainees cope with real-life situations in the workplace, and communicate in Norwegian.

Aud Grethe Blaker, Deputy Head of the centre, gave a presentation showing how immigrants learn the basic skills they need to integrate into Norwegian workplaces, including the informal principles that govern working relationships. Work-related language learning has the advantage of combining theory and practice. Learning is adapted to students' needs, with individual follow-up. It has a win-win effect because it aids integration while at the same time creating a qualified labour force to fill gaps in the market.

Björg Ilebakk, Deputy Director of the VOX Integration Department, said that some 30,000 immigrants take Norwegian language courses each year. VOX is part of the Ministry of Education, and provides the framework for Norwegian language education, developing curricula, funding providers and administering tests. More students are now choosing to take tests to validate their learning. Work-related language training is more motivating since it offers students a practical arena in which to use their skills, and creates a bond with the labour market. On the down side, it requires more resources and is more time consuming for teachers.

Day 2

Stakeholder statements

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

Nazek Ramadan said the EAPN welcomes Norway's approach to migrants, which is comprehensive, with key features conforming to legal conventions. However, the network has certain concerns, focusing on the lack of flexibility to accommodate different levels of education and capacity. In practical terms, 300 hours could be too short, and content of courses could be improved, with migrants themselves involved in training.

Another concern is the degree of autonomy among municipalities, leading to variations in quality. EAPN supports the Second Chance Project, although it seems to lack a starting point based on individual assessment of a person's background and potential.

Adopting a rights-based approach is really important. Provision should not be linked solely to a person's status, which can change, creating the risk of individuals falling through the net or being forced into the black economy. Better access to social rights and services is crucial to integration. The labour market should be inclusive, with pathways to quality jobs. In Norway the job offer is very restrictive and does not cater for people with higher qualifications, such as dentists and teachers. The labour market should be a means not an end to integration, which is about full participation in society and being part of the community. Engaging NGOs and migrant groups in the development of policy and the delivery of training would add value.

EAPN asked its member organisations to provide good examples. In **Spain**, NGOs are involved in policy design. Undocumented migrants have access to healthcare and education, as in Norway, although this is not the case in all EU countries.

In **Italy**, the labour market is not inclusive. Migrants, even second generation, have to set up their

own companies to get out of low-paid jobs. This has a negative impact on the economy of a country with a shortage of skilled workers. Lack of recognition of qualifications is a problem in many EU states, including the **UK**, which has no real strategy for integration, passing the responsibility on to NGO s and other sectors and agencies. **Sweden** offers a good example of a holistic approach with individually tailored programmes.

Honoratte Kashale Muhanzi from the EAPN in Norway was concerned about lack of information on social rights and getting a job, with 70% of the labour market accessed through networks. Public services are not a good role model as they do not engage many migrants.

European Women's Lobby

Amandine Bach said the EWL is the largest network of women's organisations in Europe, with more than 2,500 members. Since 2006 it has been helping to develop the European Network of Migrant Women. Immigrants' employment has been a key area of concern for both the EWL and the European Network of Migrant Women, and one key recommendation we have had towards Member States has been to provide all migrant women with affordable training and language courses. In this regard, we very much welcome the Norwegian system.

There are many good elements in the Norwegian system, for a question of time, she focused on key recommendations and some key issues to pay attention to in the development of such programmes. One key concern, for example, is the current trend towards testing as a condition to granting citizenship or long-term residence. She recalled also that training should be a long-term investment that enables women to improve their daily lives. Therefore it is important for programmes to have multiple goals, including not only integration into the labour market but also better knowledge of their rights and access to public services, which are key to migrant women's integration.

EWL's main recommendations include:

1. Programmes should be designed and monitored in partnership with migrant organisations, which would help to make programmes more effective. The Zaragoza Ministerial conference on integration in April 2010 recognised the role of civil society that can play a key role in providing expertise and fight stereotypes.
2. Programmes should take account of different levels of education.
3. Training must be accessible. In Germany, women were frustrated because courses took place in the evening, making it difficult to arrange childcare. They should not be too far from migrants' homes, and be adapted to disabled or illiterate people.
4. Coordination between authorities is essential, including employment, education and communication services (to liaise with media).
5. Removing legal obstacles to employment. Asylum-seekers should be able to work as soon as they arrive. Ms Bach referred to Ireland, where asylum seekers are prohibited to work which clearly impedes their possibilities to have an employment in the future given the long time an asylum procedure might take. She invited the group to read AkiDwA's report on this issue.

6. A positive public and media discourse, with policy-makers speaking out about migrants' contribution to society.
7. Public services tailored to a diverse population, with intercultural training for staff. For example, GPs who are unaware of female genital mutilation will not ask the right questions.
8. Strong anti-discrimination legislation, with individualisation of women's rights. Family reunification schemes in many countries make women dependent on their husbands, forcing them to remain in violent marriages to avoid deportation.

Many initiatives are designed for migration control rather than integration. Compulsory tests can discriminate against women, and form part of a negative discourse that brands immigrants as a problem. Requirements for civic integration are very subjective, given that Europe is a diverse continent and people have different concepts of European values. Tests fail to take account of women's lower literacy levels that are a reality in some regions of the world and, if adopted, should offer exemptions for family members or on grounds of illiteracy or mental disability.

Presentation of the Discussion Paper (see PowerPoint)

Thematic expert **Manuela Samek Lodovici**, from the Istituto per le Ricerche Sociali (IRS) in Milan, outlined the European policy framework. Europeans are getting older and European countries need immigrants as a source of labour. Some 32 million foreigners live in the EU, plus an estimated 8 million irregular immigrants. In Eastern European Member States, immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon, but there are significant problems with stateless people and large minorities – specifically Roma. Third country immigrants suffer higher unemployment and get poorer quality work. It is important that they should acquire human capital through decent jobs. Over-qualification is particularly pronounced among women. Conditions for second-generation immigrants vary a lot between countries.

Labour mobility is core to EU policy, but there has been very little EU-level intervention on integration: the principle of subsidiarity applies, with the EU setting minimum standards. Nonetheless, Member States have recognised that what happens in one country affects its neighbours and that it is necessary to adopt an umbrella approach – the Open Method of Coordination – together with Directives regulating discrimination in the labour market etc. Research suggests that the approach is moving away from the rights of immigrants towards rights and *obligations*, forcing individuals to adapt to host societies.

The EU sets common priorities and provides financial support. A common, non-binding framework for integration has been in place since 2004. The 2005 *Communication on the Third Annual report on Migration and Integration* established tools and indicators. Labour Market integration is also mainstreamed through the European Employment Strategy, the Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010, and other policies. The EU supports projects, especially in the poorer Member States, through a number of financial instruments, including the European Refugee Fund. In countries like Italy, these are the only available resources for projects.

National integration policies show significant national and sometimes regional differences across the EU. Implementation of Directives also varies. There is a clear trend towards an activation

approach and an increase in the number of countries applying linguistic requirements (75% in 2009). Nineteen countries offer language courses and eight make them compulsory. Active labour market policies encounter problems reaching their target group – especially women. Different conditions apply to efforts to attract high-skilled immigrants, but if the overall framework is too restrictive, they will not come. In countries like Italy, when immigrants lose their jobs they also lose their work permits and all rights to benefits.

The economic crisis has penalised immigrants through less resources for integration, new restrictions e.g. on family reunification, and voluntary return schemes. Public opinion has also turned towards priority for nationals.

The Norwegian programmes feature fast intervention; targeting of different groups (immigrants are not all the same – they may be refugees, long-term residents etc); and a mandatory character, coupled with a risk of lock-in effects and lack of involvement of NGOs. Ms Lodovici highlighted some of the lessons and questions arising:

- Immigration and integration policies are different. Mixing them up can distort the focus of integration.
- The vertical and horizontal interaction of different actors should be strengthened.
- Are mandatory courses a good tool for integration? They may become a barrier.
- Is testing desirable? Dutch research shows that employers do not consider test results. Language proficiency and integration are not synonymous.
- Quality of teaching: in Italy, teachers leading language course for immigrants are little recognised in their qualifications, and are usually employed with temporary contracts and poor pay.
- Research shows that citizenship can be a tool assisting integration – in which case it should be offered as soon as possible. But many countries regard it as a reward to be given only when full integration has been achieved.
- How can standards be equalised across Member States, given differing circumstances? Italy has eight times as many immigrants as Norway, making some measures impossible.
- Evaluation is difficult. It is hard to isolate programme outcomes from the impact of other policy measures. Some countries do not collect data on ethnic origin, to avoid discrimination.

She listed six main topics for discussion:

1. Are mandatory language courses and tests a good tool for labour market integration?
2. How could integration programmes, language courses and tests be designed in order to support the labour market integration of immigrants?
3. Is naturalisation a tool for labour market integration or only a certification of successful integration?
4. How can the governance system support the labour market integration of immigrants?

5. How can integration policies be further developed in the light of the current fiscal consolidation?
6. How to evaluate outcomes and impacts of integration policies?

Peer country contributions and discussion

Theme 1: integration programmes

Sonja Pimperl from the Vienna Public Employment Service for Youth in **Austria** wanted qualifications to be more easily comparable between EU Member States. Close, individual follow-up after language courses is important, as are career choice programmes and activation measures such as help with job applications and interview techniques. There is a lack of role models, especially for young people and for second generation immigrants. Vienna is introducing more and more mentoring programmes because they really seem to work, and migrants who have 'made it' are very happy to share their experiences. Youngsters can begin to see that it's 'cool' to be a migrant – "there are things I can do that others can't". But mentoring has to be voluntary.

Migrants' networks are different from Austrian ones: they are more 'horizontal', because of a lack of contacts in high-skilled jobs or influential positions. Mentoring opens up new opportunities. As regards the problem of reaching the target group, Vienna's *'Mummy learns German'* programme, where young women can take language classes in the same location as their children's school or kindergarten, has proved successful. At the same time, mothers get to know one another, and their children's teachers. Employment services are also starting to visit mosques and place articles in migrants' newspapers, and have produced a DVD in Turkish and other languages. In classes for job-seekers, Austria has for some time provided gender consultants to deal with queries and problems. Vienna's 2007 Diversity Programme proposed the introduction of diversity consultants, who must now be included in tenders submitted by training organisations.

Ms Pimperl added a word of warning: some migrant groups, such as the Turkish community, now have adequate infrastructure to enable them to support each other without integrating. But seeking to employ immigrants with migrant entrepreneurs merely reinforces the development of ghettos. Indeed second generation migrants are not keen to work for ethnic employers.

Barbara Bohaczek from the Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, added that 18% of the population has an immigrant background, but this rises to 36% in Vienna, so integration is an important issue in Austria.

Markus Seppelin from the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health said **Finland** adopts a similar approach to Norway and Sweden, with activation and training, free language courses and social benefits. The main issue is resources: unemployment is higher in Finland, and economic restraints bring the need to choose priorities.

The question of language is complicated. Finland is officially bilingual, so Finns already have to pass a language test for employment in public services etc. There are no mandatory tests for immigrants, and English tends to be the common language among ethnic groups. He wondered whether Finland should not become more confident in demanding native language skills.

Ismo Söderling from the Finnish Institute of Migration said Finland lacks a fast integration track from training into work. The new Integration Act will come into force in spring 2011. It widens the

target group from unemployed people to all those with residence permits, but the government is not offering more resources. There is also a lack of coordination between targeted programmes and mainstream policies, whereas Norwegian language and vocational training is very well combined. This is a lesson the Finnish participants can take back from the Peer Review.

Lucia Tardani from *Italia Lavoro*, the technical Agency of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies said **Italy** has different needs and a different approach. As per ISTAT data, on January 2010 there were 4.2 million migrants in the country, amounting to 7% of the population, plus some 560,000 irregular entrants estimated (corresponding to 11% out of foreign population). 53% are from European countries, and there are significant communities from Romania, Albania, Morocco, China and Ukraine. Immigration tends to be long-term, but the integration process is complex. Second generation represent 13,5% out of resident migrant people. Work (60%) and family reunification (31%) are currently the predominant reasons for resident permits. Foreigners make up 8% of the Italian workforce, generating 9.7% of GDP – a large contribution to the economy. The unemployment rate for foreign workers is 13%, compared to 8% for Italians, 9.7% for women and 26.4% for young people. Two out of 10 migrants are self-employed. Most work in low-paid sectors like services (especially personal care services) and construction industries. 45% have a high school diploma and are well qualified, but the labour market is not inclusive. Access to labour market from abroad is regulated by a quota system established by the government (fixed maximum number of regular entries). Since 2008, stiffer penalties have existed for irregular immigrants. Fees were raised, renewal of residence permits is to be conditional on integration and a language test will be required to obtain the long-term residence permit

The Italian integration model is very different compared to the Norwegian one, the State plays a subsidiary role in providing the legal framework to foster integration and gives the major responsibility of integration to Local Entities.

There are some elements for changing in the integration policies: strengthening of institutional cooperation (agreement between Ministry of Interiors and Ministry of Labour) and the political document “Plan for integration and security” (June 2010). Current integration policy identifies five lines of intervention: education and learning the Italian language and civic values (with a 30% ceiling on the enrolment of foreign students in a single classroom); labour inclusion stressing interventions in countries of origin through guidance and training (migration flows should be managed on the basis of analysis and recognition of labour market needs); housing; access to essential services; minors and second generation migrants. This should require concrete commitments by public administration and private operators to develop tools, but they are not yet ready.

Given the importance of integration in the labour market, the Ministry of Labour’s technical agency *Italia Lavoro* is implementing measures in the following areas:

- Providing support to national administration for the foreign work force needs assessment and management of migration flows;
- Developing tools and methodologies to strengthen public employment services, which are very decentralised. Training operators and recognition of competences;
- Providing assistance to migrant associations and NGOs, which have a big role in integration. Strengthening coordination of local actors;
- Incentives to companies – experimental projects for financial incentives to hire migrants, or

awareness-raising;

- Implementing measures in cooperation with the countries of origin to foster the management of migration flows.

Dionisis Balourdos from the Greek National Centre for Social Research recalled that Greece is suffering a deep financial crisis. It is a new receiving country, and immigrants now make up 8% of the population – or 10% counting irregular arrivals. Most are in Athens, and the largest group (over 60%) is Albanian. Most work in '3-D' jobs (dirty, dangerous and demanding). The immigrant unemployment rate of over 10% is higher than that of the Greek population (9.5%).

Knowledge of the Greek language is a condition for long-term resident status. Immigrants have to pass an interview test, followed by Level Two exams on language, culture and history. The system is subsidised by the EU through the Operational Programme on Employment and Vocational Training. More than 30,000 people have taken part in the programme *Greek language for immigrants*, but few have passed the exams.

Other measures include a 2005 law regularising irregular immigrants, but problems persists regarding the recognition of qualifications. The current Greek language learning programme for migrants, refugees and the unemployed is targeted at 8,000 jobless people.

Eda Gemi works in a vocational training centre in Greece and is directly involved in implementing the language learning programme. The second phase of *Greek language for immigrants* finished two months ago, but the main problem was that the course was too hard for asylum seekers. It was judged to be a failure because it cost money but participants did not pass the exams. What is needed is a reassessment of the content.

Helga Arnesen from the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning explained that asylum-seekers' children have a right to attend school up to 16. Immigrants should get 50 hours of social studies as an introduction to Norwegian society, in their own language. This is a good approach but difficult to organise in all municipalities.

Anita Kleinberga from the Latvian Ministry of Justice, said that in Latvia, immigration only arrived on the political agenda in 2007. Before that, attention focused on ethnic minorities. Most efforts are project-based rather than state policy, with two e-learning projects currently underway. Most immigrants are in Riga. Integration is subsumed under cultural policy, although it may develop further in future. Latvia has a strong civil society with 13,000 registered NGOs, 7,000 of them active. Of these, 250 are ethnic minority NGO's. Most newcomers come from the former CIS, Russia and Moldova. The Peer Review offered good lessons and new ideas for the design of programmes.

Anita Üdre from the Safe House shelter in Riga said in 2009 asylum-seekers came from a number of countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Belarus, Iraq and Eritrea. 22 people were granted refugee status and 27 alternative status. Her organisation was set up three years ago to work for trafficked people and refugees. It has implemented four projects including the *Meeting Room* project, in active partnership with local authorities and NGOs, creating a website with information for immigrants available in English, French, Latvian and Russian. In 2009 it received support from the European Refugee Fund for a project funding psychologists, health and social workers to aid socially excluded people with health problems etc.

In 2010 the *Young Volunteers* project aimed to educate young people about refugees and their problems. It organised excursions, made a film about asylum-seekers' lives, and sent speakers

into schools etc. Finally the *Step by Step* project, financed by the Soros Foundation, helped to educate social workers and specialists dealing with migrants.

Theme 2: governance/economic cutbacks

Dyveke Hamza referred to KIM, the Contact Committee for Immigrants, an association of NGOs with a secretariat collocated with IMDi, funded by the state. It is a contact point between the government and immigrant communities which raises issues and takes part in policy development, monitoring for unwanted side effects. KIM is also on the user panel of NAV – therefore it is not true to say that NGOs are absent from policy-making in Norway. The social partners are also involved at national level via the Committee for Employment and Integration, set up in 2007.

Shoaib Sultan from KIM said that as part of the policy-making procedure, the Ministry sends proposals to different stakeholders and they give their views. KIM is a national organisation with members throughout the country, and although it is appointed by government, its mandate is to be critical.

Rønnaug Eitrem said the Ministry would recommend to the Norwegian government that failure to pass a language test should *not* mean disqualification from citizenship. “We are still discussing whether to have compulsory citizenship tests. This is an open question,” she added. Integration and immigration policy is now split between the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (integration) and the Ministry of Justice.

Nazek Ramadan pointed out that the UK has a long history of immigration, with well established migrant communities. Support comes mainly from NGOs. A range of private education courses are widely available, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

New language and citizenship tests have been introduced. For economic migrants, the level of English required is so high that that makes it difficult to achieve. This has caused problems in, for example, service sectors like Chinese restaurants that cannot recruit chefs. Citizenship tests were so hard when first introduced that some British people themselves cannot answer all the questions. People like domestic workers may have been in the UK for many years but not had the time off work to attend classes. The government has cut down support for courses. This policy is problematic because many migrants are eager to learn English language and culture, and are willing to attend courses at night and weekends. Applying for asylum takes a long time, and during that period people are not allowed to work. Once they obtain it, they get little or no help and are expected to help themselves as they can now access mainstream services.

The business sector, which was opposed to a cap on immigration, should be involved in policy-making, together with other stakeholders. Problems are now appearing in the labour market in sectors where qualified staff cannot be found. The government tends to respond to public attitude and pressure, but has recently shown more flexibility in response to the business sector concerns. There is no UK strategy for integration, apart from one in London which aims to influence its implementation rather than enforce it, although the government does fund pilot projects assisting mainly refugees into settlement and employment. By and large, migrants are expected to use mainstream services.

Barbara Bohaczek said the Austrian National Action Plan for Integration (2010) involves all levels of government plus the social partners and NGOs. Many immigrant children do not speak German, and in Vienna there are classes where 70-80% of the students have poor German skills. Education must start early, so the government has adopted a compulsory kindergarten strategy.

In Italy, three ministries are involved in migration policies, explained **Lucia Tardani**: Interior, Labour and Social Policies, and External Affairs. Local governments are in charge of integration policies implementation but the welfare system is complicated: the Regions are in charge of planning social integration policies, health care and part of housing; public employment services are competence of the Provinces; Municipalities are in charge of administration services, compulsory education, social housing and procedures for granting residence and social benefits. This decentralised and fragmented welfare system leads to the provision of different quality of services at national and local level.

Shoaib Sultan said KIM and the ministry give an annual prize for mentoring – this is one way to create role models. Oslo has also cooperated with employers to set up the *Global Future* programme for mentoring and education. Separating integration and immigration is very important, he added. Full integration takes about three generations, and new migrants have very little in common with people from the same country who have been living in Norway for 50 years.

Markus Seppelin reported that responsibilities are clearly defined in Finland, with municipalities responsible for implementing programmes. But who is responsible for motivating people who do not wish to integrate?

Anita Kleinberga pointed out that Latvia has some 300,000 ‘non-citizens’ who arrived from other parts of the Soviet Union before independence in 1991. This changed the ethnic balance of the country, and a decision was made not to grant them automatic citizenship after the USSR broke up. Today, mainly Russian-speaking non-citizens make up over 16% of the population. Special language courses have not been effective. Many know Latvian but refuse to use it. They are angry at their lack of status and this creates a psychological barrier. Their children have the right to citizenship but often parents do not take this opportunity. A current lack of funding is generating even less cooperation. However the Second Chance project model might be appropriate, taking people out of the grey economy and qualifying them for citizenship, if employers can be persuaded to participate.

Morten Sonnicks said that in Norway it has not been hard to get employers involved or secure work placements. The more employers cooperate, the better the results and opportunities for migrants. Social partner participation is important, since trade unions are in the workplace and can open doors. Language skills have added value for workers in the downturn since research shows 50% of employers consider this aspect when selecting candidates to fire.

A series of ministries are involved in immigration policy in Greece, stated **Dionisis Balourdos**, but in 2007 a new law created a national committee for the integration of immigrants, which is interdepartmental. It has met a couple of times, and is discussing an ambitious, holistic action plan covering integration, access to services etc. The problem is funding.

The economic recession has created new patterns of migration in Greece, added **Eda Gemi**. The last two years have seen many Albanian migrants returning home, or taking temporary work. This has posed new challenges for the government.

Theme 3: Citizenship, language and evaluation

Debate centred on whether adding conditions for citizenship is a tool for integration or exclusion. Naturalisation in itself does not guarantee integration – for example in Austria there are many Austrian citizens who are socially excluded. If tests became a condition of Norwegian citizenship,

there would be a question of exceptions for health reasons etc. Employers would thus be able to identify individuals with special problems. Furthermore, EU citizens do not have to pass a test to live and work in another Member State even if they do not speak the language, so there is a danger of third country nationals suffering unfair discrimination.

The Italian juridical system, said **Lucia Tardani**, follows the *ius sanguinis* principle. The majority of applications for naturalisation are related to marriage. Until now the knowledge of the language was not mandatory in Italy but now legislation has changed and there are four normative levels that regulate language learning: integration agreement for new entries (new arrivals must sign a contract with the State promising to pass A2 level language tests within two years); long permanent resident (A2); access to university (B2) and strengthening of Italian language within compulsory education. Four official bodies (three public universities plus the Dante Alighieri Institute) monitor the certification of the language standards according to the Common European Framework of reference for Languages. The public language courses for migrant people are generally carried out by Permanent Territorial Centres for adult education (funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social policies through the Municipalities, Regions and Provinces) in cooperation with vocational centres, schools and migrant associations. Quality of services varies a lot from region to region in Italy.

Shoaib Sultan emphasised the need to distinguish between different groups of migrants. Highly skilled individuals are often headhunted and do not have to learn the language, whereas people who move to Norway to make a new life will need the tools to function fully in society.

Barbara Bohaczek warned that language tests can be used as a means of exclusion. In Austria, family reunification is by far the biggest reason for immigration, leading to a high proportion of low-skilled workers. The country wants to attract more highly qualified people and exclude the low-skilled. There is a move towards 'pre-departure' mandatory language tests.

Honoratte Kashale Muhanzi felt language skills are important in motivating immigrants to learn more.

Rønnaug Eitrem said language testing is designed to motivate people and enable society to assess results. Society already operates on the basis of documentation of competences, and this is not necessarily different for migrants. Employers will draw their own conclusions about candidates' language skills. Labour immigrants are assumed to have an income and therefore to be able to pay for their courses. The principle of free movement in the EU implies that people are moving to work and therefore should be able to support themselves.

Amandine Bach argued that the Norwegian context is specific. In a country like Cyprus, domestic workers are given only four-year, short-term visas, and are excluded from integration measures. It is estimated that one in three families employs a foreign domestic worker, because there is a lack of childcare and school hours finish early. They do not have access to language classes, even though they need to be able to communicate with children in their care work. She insisted that short-term migrants should not be excluded from integration support measures.

As regards pre-departure language tests for people seeking family reunification, she pointed out that individuals have a right to family life, which in itself forms an important component in integration. Such rights are granted automatically to high-skilled workers. She queried the aim of testing. Is it designed to offer migrants more opportunities? Do employers need it as a criterion for hiring? Dutch research shows they do not, since recruitment is based on the full content of a worker's CV.

Ellen Røst pointed out that written tests are common in a number of fields of work. In Norway, some 400,000 people have limited reading and writing skills. As for EU citizens, Norway is bound by rules that give additional mobility rights to Member State citizens.

Katarina Heraldsveit queried whether it is in a country's interests to have first and second generation migrant citizens without democratic rights. Does that encourage integration? Denmark is thinking of introducing pre-departure testing, but this is very selective and makes it harder and harder for migrants to integrate.

Relevance and Key Learning Elements

Manuela Samek Lodovici highlighted a number of key learning elements from the two-day debate.

- Wide differences exist between immigrant groups, which include long-stay, temporary, asylum-seekers and refugees, labour migrants, family reunion arrivals, and ethnic minorities living within countries, sometimes for generations. All have specific integration problems.
- Some countries adopt different approaches to different groups. For example in Finland, ethnic minorities maintain a degree of segregation, whereas policy towards migrants is aimed at integration.
- Circumstances vary very widely from one country to another, ranging from small numbers of migrants to communities of many millions. This demands different approaches.
- Migrants tend to concentrate in urban areas, for example Vienna in Austria, and this in itself poses challenges.
- Targeted versus mainstreaming approaches: the former can disadvantage groups who are not covered by specifically targeted actions.
- More evidence is needed of what policies work. Are efforts in Norway and Austria to make contact with young people and stay-at-home mothers proving effective, for example?
- A number of specific initiatives are proving successful in some countries and could be transferred elsewhere. These include mentoring schemes and social support networks, and expert diversity and gender consultants. There are also moves towards special training for service providers, to raise awareness of the challenges facing immigrants.
- How can immigrants be motivated to want to integrate and how effective are language courses in this regard? Acquisition of citizenship may be one incentive, but if the procedures become too hard, involving exams and qualifications, this may put more people off.
- Some countries, like Latvia, Greece and Italy, have the problem of large proportions of immigrants in the informal labour market. In order to reduce the number of irregular immigrants, action is needed to regulate the black economy.
- Many participants underlined the need to involve NGOs, immigrant associations, private service providers, and the social partners. European companies are increasingly in need of workers, and so could be encouraged to contribute towards training.

- The issue of mandatory language courses and compulsory testing is a particularly sensitive one. The main question relating to this policy approach is: what is the aim? If testing is designed to provide more information for society (policy-makers and employers) as in Norway, it may be justified. But when language exams become a condition of citizenship, they are problematic, leading to a confusion of integration and immigration policies. Testing can become a barrier rather than an aid to integration. This is seen in the Austrian proposal to use it as a means to control immigration flow, as well as in other EU countries that are increasingly erecting barriers to immigration. How can governments demand loyalty from individuals if they refuse to give them citizenship – as in the case of Latvia's 'non-citizens'.
- The current financial crisis is increasing pressure on resources and generating cuts in many support programmes, which is likely to be counterproductive in the long run.
- Generally, there is a lack of research data allowing for the evaluation of different policies.

Closing remarks

Oyvind Opland said the Peer Review had revealed some very good examples of active inclusion strategies, adapted to the needs of the people they address. The approach of combined language and labour market learning can be an efficient measure, which is important in a time where many face reduced budgets. The question of women's participation had come up a lot, and adopting a family focus has been shown as a good strategy. Better coordination of ministries and other actors is also a positive development underscored in the peer review. It is important to communicate their rights and opportunities to all groups of migrants.

Both intermediate and end goals must be taken into consideration to identify progress towards targets. In achieving social inclusion for migrants, many focus on labour market integration as the main significant indicator, but to get a full picture of progress one needs also to take into account other factors, such as social cohesion. Barriers to integration persist, and countries are still debating the correct policy mix.

Anne Edman closed the meeting by observing that we do not live in a perfect world, and yet there are many possibilities. It would be interesting to meet again in two years' time to see what has been achieved.