

SOLIDAR and Global Progressive Forum event Decent Work for All: Making Migration Work for Development”

15 September 2010

Hosted by Juan Fernando López Aguilar MEP (S&D Spain & Chair LIBE Committee)
With keynote address by Anna Terrón i Cusí (Secretary of State for Immigration, Spain)

Summary

With this event, SOLIDAR and the Global Progressive Forum launched a three-year project which aims to mobilise support from European citizens and politicians for a rights-based approach to labour migration and decent work and for policy coherence for development.

The panel was composed of: co-organisers Javier Moreno-Sanchez, Global Progressive Forum Secretary General and Conny Reuter, SOLIDAR Secretary General; the host, Juan Fernandez López Aguilar, MEP S&D/Chair EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Anna Terrón i Cusí, Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration, Spain; Khadija Najlaoui, member of Kalayaan and Justice 4 Domestic Workers; and Jean-Claude Boidin, European Commission’s DG Development, Head of Unit “Human development, social cohesion and employment”. Panellists exchanged views on the question of how the integration of migrants could be improved and their rights be enforced at European level.

Full Report

Javier Moreno-Sanchez, Secretary General of the Global Progressive Forum opened the kick-off conference saying that developing the ways to make legal immigration possible was a priority on the Global Progressive Forum’s agenda. This includes fostering the integration of migrants and adding that integration cannot be enforced, but would happen when immigrants see the benefit, for instance, from learning the local language and having equal rights. It is also crucial to fight illegal immigration, i.e. fighting the mafias and networks involved in human trafficking and not fighting the victims of trafficking. Immigration combined with integration can be seen as a contribution to development objectives like the MDGs [1B Decent Work for All]; the SOLIDAR project addresses these objectives.

Conny Reuter, Secretary General of SOLIDAR reaffirmed SOLIDAR’s commitment to development in light of the MDG Summit (20-22 Sept) that will take stock of the gap towards achieving these goals. Development is about sustainable social and economic development, fair trade and also making migration work through Decent Work. Decent Work, as defined in the International Labour Organisation concept, is a bridge builder between the North and the South. The elements of fundamental principles and rights at work and ILO standards, employment and income opportunities, social protection and social dialogue are just as important for European citizens as they are for people in the South, where they are part of the reasons to migrate. Migration as a historic phenomenon is not in the first place an economic or political question but one about the cohesion of our societies, which depends on the integration of migrants.

Anna Terrón Í Cusí, State Secretary for Immigration and Emigration, Spain referred to the situation in Spain that has changed from being - historically - a country of emigrants to becoming a country of immigrants. In the last decade, there was an extraordinary inflow of migrants many of whom worked in the informal sector and the Socialist government focused on the fight against irregular migration, for regularisation and equality and dignity in the workplace. Due to the crisis, however, the migratory cycle changed and the numbers have dropped for the first time since 2007 (37% increase of number of immigrants in 2007; 12% in 2008; 7% in 2009; below 7% predicted for 2010). This shows the link between migration and economic factors such as the possibility of landing a job. Despite high unemployment rates, the figures are still positive, which is more and more because family reunifications take place on a large

scale. At the same time, there are also positive cases of development, like Peruvians who are considering returning and investing the money earned in Spain in Peru.

The Spanish government together with other EU Member States tries to respond to the challenges of managing diversity and human mobility. Policies are needed that allow for regular work and that guarantee equal rights and responsibilities and a framework to promote solidarity for all workers. Also, there is the need to focus on the integration of the second generation of immigrants and to develop the concept of citizenship.

Khadija Najlaoui, member of Kalayaan and Justice 4 Domestic Workers and a domestic worker in the UK shared her experiences:

“Many Moroccans have achieved higher education but most of them couldn’t find jobs. Most of us find jobs in garment factories because other countries would chose Morocco to do their garments. But the salary in this kind of job is not enough to provide a decent living that every human being deserves. My education was until year 7 only because my family was very poor and couldn't afford to send me to school. I couldn't bear in my heart that sometimes we had nothing to eat. My father was only earning 200 Dirhams a week (more or less £20) as security guard in a scrap metal factory. I was fourth of 7 children. Even though I was young and should have been studying and playing like other children, at the age of 15, I took the responsibility to help my family and started to work in a garment factory from 8 in the morning to 7 at night plus over time for 2 hours for 5 1/2 days a week. My salary was only 40 Dirhams a week (more or less £4). (...)

“I decided to work abroad; first in Dubai as a domestic worker because this was the fastest way to find a secure job in another country. I had a good family there but the hours of work were very long from 7 in the morning to 12.30 midnight and I was shocked with my salary because I earned actually a bit better in Morocco. (...)

During a stay in London, I decided to leave my employer. I found my friend who helped find a job. (...). In 2009, I became very ill and the doctor said I was overworked and advised me to rest but how could I rest? I had to work even when I was very ill. (...)

“I was lucky to find a new employer soon and managed to renew my visa and now start to rebuild my life again. I found my fellow domestic workers in Justice 4 Domestic Workers. We may be from different countries before coming to the UK but our sufferings back home are the same. The poverty was so bad that we were forced to leave our families in search of decent jobs. Many of us were forced to flee an abusive or violent employer, or were thrown out onto the street, often with nothing – no passport, no shelter, no food, nowhere to turn to. (...)

Khadija shared the results of a survey carried out by J4DW and Unite the Union on pay and working conditions of migrant domestic workers. Out of 111 members of J4DW:


- only 47 workers were issued written contracts;
- 105 were not paid the minimum wage;
- 63 were expected to work more than 55 hours a week;
- 46 had no paid holiday in a year;
- only 33 continued to be paid when sick;
- about half of them felt comfortable discussing their terms of employment with their employer; and
- 81 experience work-related stress symptoms such as headaches, sleeplessness and anxiety.

Khadija’s conclusions:

“Domestic work is work. Through this job we provide decent livelihood for our families from our countries of origin and help keep afloat its economy through our remittances and the commodities we send.

“We contribute to the productive economy of our host countries as carers of the families, so that they can go to work, and it is families that build every nation.

“Support the ILO Convention on the Rights of Domestic Workers!



Juan Fernandez López Aguilar, MEP S&D, Chair EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs spoke about the European model as a unique combination of rights, liberties, social protection and a commitment to those who are less well off. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 January 2010, with the now binding European Charter of Fundamental Rights, and streamlined decision-making, the European Parliament could be more demanding at European level and vis-a-vis the Member States in the implementation of the Stockholm Programme (2010-2014).

With Decent Work as part of the European migration and immigration policies, greater attention is given to the rights and freedoms on the labour market and the fight against exclusion. The 4th Ministerial Conference on Integration held during the Spanish Presidency highlighted integration as an important dimension of European migration policies, which could not be reduced to the question of internal security, but concerns questions of employment, education, social services and financial sustainability. With the **Lambrinidis Report** adopted 2006, the European Parliament committed to ensure equal opportunities and access to the labour market and to achieve Decent Work for all workers regardless of their origin. Currently, the European Parliament aims to establish a Single Permit – a single procedure for all foreign workers applying to work in the European Union. Further, confronted with rising xenophobia, racism, populism, individual or collective discrimination of migrants across Europe, the European Left is determined to fight these complex problems.

Jean-Claude Boidin, EC DG Development, Head of Unit “Human development, social cohesion and employment” congratulated the organisers on the project launch. As stated in the **Human Development Report 2009** mobility is a factor of development when migration is voluntary and rights are respected.

In DG Development, the question is how to link migration and development in the cooperation with the EU's partner countries. This was the focus of the three European institutions since the 2005 EU Council's 'Global approach to migration' and progress has been made to mainstream migration issues in development policies. On the other hand, it is more difficult to include development objectives in migration policies as the European Commission has less leeway in this policy area.

The Commission seeks to have honest dialogue with partners on issues such as brain drain, fighting illegal migration, encouraging legal economic migration and finding synergies between migration and development. The framework for that is the Africa-EU Partnership on migration, mobility and employment and the EU-Africa Summit at the end of November 2010 in Libya.

In terms of concrete measures, the EC is establishing migration observatories in the ACP countries for Europeans to better understand why Africans leave; and a remittances institute to be administered by the World Bank. The EC is also concerned with brain drain in the health sector knowing that half of the doctors from Cameroon work in Europe and half of the nurses trained in Zambia go to South Africa. They support the **WHO Global Code of Practice** on the international recruitment of health personnel, adopted in May 2009, which for the first time addresses countries of origin and destination.

Luis Miguel Pariza Castaños, EESC, Group II – Employees, Spain announced the adoption in the Plenary of 15 September 2010, of the resolution of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on the **Role of legal immigration in the context of demographic challenges**, requested by the Belgian Presidency. Therein, the EESC calls for a more active and common EU policy to admit foreign workers, both for highly-qualified and less-qualified jobs. European legislation on immigration should ensure equal treatment and decent working conditions, based on the principle of non-discrimination. The European Integration Forum is the platform to bring up and discuss initiatives between institutions and civil society representatives.

Conclusions and next steps

- The integration of migrants is an essential questions as it comes down to the fundamental question of how we want to organise living together and about the core values of Europe.
- With this project, SOLIDAR and the Global Progressive Forum together with organisations from the South will continue to campaign for decent work, social cohesion and life in dignity for all.

- The project aims to raise awareness among European citizens and decision-makers on the link between decent work, international migration and development and for decent work to be placed at the heart of development policies and for effective rights of migrants.
- SOLIDAR and the Global Progressive Forum support the ratification and implementation of instruments such as the UN Migrant Workers Convention and ILO Migrant Domestic Workers Convention.
- The case studies and activities developed in the project give examples to citizens and decision-makers alike on what the reality is for migrants in their country of origin and in Europe.