



PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS
Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, I.P.

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

EXCHANGES BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETIES AND CULTURE

Assembleia da Republica de Portugal, 30 January 2012

MIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE EUROMED REGION

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INITIAL WORDS

I would like to express that it is a particular honour for ACIDI – The High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue – to participate in this high-level meeting of EUROMED in Lisbon and to speak about the Portuguese case, a country that has made such significant progress in terms of immigrants' integration.

The new century brought a major investment in the development of integration policies and the reinforcement of the integration service provided by the Portuguese public administration. These policy options led to the international recognition of Portugal as one of the countries with the best integration policies (MIPEX 2007 and 2010, UNDP 2009, IOM 2010). In 2011 the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI), being the Portuguese public institute for the integration of immigrants, also received the first prize in the *European Public Sector Award* - EPSA 2011 under the theme 2 'Opening Up the Public Sector Through Collaborative Governance'.¹

¹ Further at www.epsa2011.eu



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I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the policies, practices and developments on immigrant integration that have contributed to Portugal national and international recognition, specially those linked to the employment of immigrants.

1. IMMIGRATION TO PORTUGAL

Within an EU context, Portugal shares with other Member States the experience of an increase in the immigration of Third Country Nationals in recent years. However, the onset of positive net migration dates back only to the early 1990s, and Portugal, in common with a number of other EU Member States, continues to experience significant emigration, as well as inward migration.

Largely related to the de-colonisation process, significant communities of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been present in Portugal since the late 1970s, including Cape Verdeans, Guineans, Angolans and Mozambicans. It was not until the late 1990s and early twenty-first century that larger numbers of non-Portuguese speaking immigrants began to arrive to the country, mostly from Eastern Europe, together with increasing numbers of Brazilians. The growth of immigration flows and the diversification of origins have brought new challenges and complexities for public policy, particularly in relation to information and service provision to immigrants, labour market integration and political participation.

Although the increase in the foreign population in Portugal has not yet reached the proportions observed in other Western European countries, the settlement of immigrants has presented new challenges. During the past thirty years Portugal has gradually had to deal with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity at its "metropolitan" boundaries. The country has had to adapt – and continues to have to do so – to this new reality. At the level of public policy – with regard to the management of immigration - several changes are easily identifiable at a normative level. There is a sufficient body of legislation, whether resulting from national initiative or from the ratification of international treaties and European Union directives.





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Legal migration has the potential to make a significant contribution to the growth of the Portuguese economy, and to the country's competitiveness within the European Union. In order for this to occur, migration and labour market integration policies must target all categories of migrants, and adequately respond to an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

In Portugal, as in other Member States, the capacity of migration policy and the labour market to provide such a response is hampered by the phenomenon of illegal migration, which, as well as being detrimental to the economy as a whole, also places migrants in a vulnerable situation with regard to employment rights.

2. IMMIGRANTS ACCESS TO THE PORTUGUESE LABOUR MARKET

In the past decades the presence of immigrants in the labour market of Portugal has mainly reflected the demand and transformations of the Portuguese economy. Research undertaken has characterised the immigrant population as a labour force quite flexible and inexpensive that has been substituting the native population in unqualified sectors (e.g. civil construction, domestic labour) and complementing them in high qualified sectors (e.g. health sector with doctors and nurses; marketing; design).

While approximately 5% of the Portuguese population is immigrants, they represent a full 10% of the Portuguese labour market. As Portugal has the lowest annual number of asylum seekers in the European Union (less than 300 per year), the overwhelming majority of immigration is related to the labour market. Employment rates among immigrants in Portugal are higher than those of nationals and the employment and labour market participation of immigrant women is higher in Portugal than in any other OECD country.

Hence, in the past decades immigrants become a fundamental necessity of the Portuguese labour market. However, the labour market has been characterized by several disfunctionalities that affect the immigrant population. Being more precise, although the Portuguese labour market needs immigrant labour force, there are immigrants experiencing unemployment or in precarious



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labour conditions. Moreover, although Portugal presents lack of high qualified professionals in certain sectors, immigrants still face difficulties in the recognition of their diplomas, or some of them work below their skilled level. In other words there is a human capital available in Portugal that is not totally brought into play.

3. ACIDI AND THE CLARIFICATION OF INTEGRATION POLICY IN PORTUGAL

Acknowledging the importance to promote a consistent policy for the integration of immigrants, Portugal has a public institute only focusing on that aim. This state service - with the official name of High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI, IP) -, as a transversal intervention service, reports to the Prime-Minister. Hence, in Portugal immigrants' integration is seen in a holist perspective, interlinking the different ministries, and not only as a labour market or security matter.

Since 2007, ACIDI attributions are not only integrating immigrants and ethnic minorities in Portugal but also "hosting" them. By hosting the legislator intend to highlight the importance of not only integrate immigrants but also make them welcome in Portugal, creating facilities to better receive them. In a humanistic approach, it is further reinforced in public discourse the positive impacts that immigrants have to Portuguese society and it is underlined the public recognition that immigrants are needed for the country.

4. INTEGRATION MEASURES TO STIMULATE THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE PORTUGUESE LABOUR MARKET

Consequently in the past years several measures have been implemented by the Portuguese Government with the aim of increasing the integration of immigrants into the labour market:²

² Those policies have been reflecting several recommendations of the European Commission, namely CE n.º 741/2004 of the Council (available at <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/printversion/pt/cha/c11320.htm>)



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1. In relation to security of employment and **workers' rights for immigrants**, Portugal fully meets international best practice, as set out in the MIPEX Index – *Migrant Integration Policy Index*. Immigrants in Portugal are eligible to accept most jobs and may start a business, contributing to the achievement of 94% in the III Index by Portugal in the area of eligibility. In other words, 94% was achieved in relation to labour market integration measures, which are a priority in terms of Portuguese integration policy. Immigrants' working rights are enshrined in article 59 of the Portuguese constitution, which establishes that workers enjoy economic rights, without distinction as to "age, sex, race, citizenship, country of origin, religion, or political or ideological convictions." Undocumented migrants have specific rights in terms of access to health, education and redress for victims of trafficking.
2. In addition labour market integration is considered one of the central focuses of integration policy. Recognising that more still needs to be done in this area, in terms of labour market integration the Portuguese Government's included in its second action *Plan for Immigrant Integration*³ nine measures related to employment, professional training and business dynamics (but several other measures under other areas are also related to this aim):
 - Reinforcing immigrants' entrepreneurship incentives (measure 14);
 - Reinforcing inspections of employers using illegal immigrant labour (measure 15);
 - Reinforce the rendering of information/training for immigrant workers on their rights and duties regarding employment issues (measure 16);
 - Simplifying the qualifications recognition process (measure 17);
 - Incentives for the social responsibility of organisations, based on ethical principles and the promotion of diversity (measure 18);
 - Creating an information system on highly-qualified immigrants (measure 19);
 - Consolidation of the intervention Programme for Unemployed (measure 20);
 - Facilitation and promotion of access to professional training and employment (measure 21);

³ English version available at http://www.acidi.gov.pt/docs/PII/PII_Ing.pdf



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- Guaranteeing the renewal of immigrant residence permits in the event of employers' non-compliance with Social Security obligations (measure 22).

Hence, despite the recession, the Portuguese government has continued their policy measures towards the integration of immigrants. In fact, the welcoming and integration of migrants is one of the political priorities of the present Government of Portugal. Therefore, is developing its Second Plan for Immigrant Integration (2010-2013), which comprises 90 measures across various policy areas.

Like its predecessor – the First Plan for Immigrant Integration (2007-2009) –, the Second Plan was compiled on the basis of joint contributions from all ministries, as well as contributions and proposals from civil society, namely immigrant associations, Consultative Committee for Immigration Affairs (COCAI) members, the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR), and researchers working with the Immigration Observatory. All these efforts have met with a very positive reception at international level, as attested by the 2011 EPSA award to ACIDI, 2010 MIPLEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) and, by the United Nations Human Development Report of 2009, which places Portugal at the top of the ranking in immigrant integration policy.

To ensure the concerted action of all ministries and the supervision and evaluation of the proposed objectives, the Network of Focal Points for Supervision is to be retained, working under the coordination of the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, I. P. (ACIDI, IP).⁴ Actually, in the work carried out by the ACIDI, I.P., it has been applied a comprehensive and integrated vision to the phenomenon of immigration, in

⁴ The ACIDI, I.P. it is a Public Institute that was established in May 2007, initially created by **Decree-Law no. 202/2006, dated 27th October** which approved the organic law of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and merged the former High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities. It is under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister, possessing administrative autonomy. The High Commission's mission is to collaborate in the conception, implementation and evaluation of public policies, both cross-cutting and sector-specific, relevant for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, as well as promoting dialogue between various cultures, ethnicities and religions, but also to combat all forms of discrimination based on race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin or religion through dialogue and integration policies. For more information, please see ACIDI's Organic Law (**Decree-Law no. 167/2007**, dated 3rd May).



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all of different aspects. In fact, for the Portuguese government, legal immigration is target as a *positive vision*, as an opportunity for development of Portugal and as fundamental vehicle to the future protection of human rights, values and freedoms.

In sum, this action plan is based on a holistic approach and on the participation of the different entities that are responsible for the implementation of the corresponding policies. This substantial political investment, within the framework of political and social consensus, represents another structural step forward.

3. Inspired by the Common Agenda for Integration, several Member States have been defining concrete integration programmes for immigrants that mainly refer to the 'one-stop-shop' (OSS) model. In Portugal, the **National Immigration Support Centres** (*Centros Nacionais de Apoio ao Imigrante - CNAI*⁵) were set up in 2004. Their establishment, in Lisbon and Porto, seeks to provide an integrated, efficient and humane response to the integration issues of immigrants who have chosen Portugal as their host country. Within this innovative model, **the participation of intercultural mediators is fundamental. Mediators** guarantee not only a cultural and linguistic proximity to each immigrant who uses the services of these centres, but also a fundamental proximity between public administration and immigrant citizens. Furthermore, the participation of civil society institutions, as partners in the management of this project, can bring important outcomes. This results in the development of immigrant integration policy becoming a shared responsibility.

The National Immigrant Support Centres runs an Employment Support Office for immigrants. This is part of the national network of job centres, and has seen an increase in the use of its services in recent years. In addition, in 2007 ACIDI, IP and the Institute for

⁵ The two Portuguese *National Immigrant Support Centres* (CNAI) were recognized as an example of best practices in the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners* (Available for download at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_en.pdf). The integration and cooperation of different public services, previously with different locations and schedules, and new services that cater for the concrete needs of immigrants, which were not until then offered to immigrants, became a fundamental service for newcomers and permanent immigrants.



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Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) established a network of local job centres specifically for immigrants, formed through partnerships with local organisations – principally immigrant associations. Many of the immigrant job centres are located in districts with high numbers of immigrants.

Promoting the entrepreneurship: (1) *Support Office for Immigrant Entrepreneurship*: to create friendly interfaces and integrated solution between Immigrants and the Public Administration, in 2004 ACIDI created the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAI). Within the Lisbon CNAI it works since 2007 a Support Office for Immigrant Entrepreneurship whose mission is to supports and guiding entrepreneurial initiatives (e.g. legal aspects of business creation, existing incentives and financial supports, training institutions). The Support Centre also supports immigrant entrepreneurship through a partnership with the National Association for the Right to Credit and will in the future collaborate with the General Board of Economic Practice, and the Institute for the Support of Small and Medium Enterprises and Innovation. And (2) Linked to this office a new programme was launched this month aiming to raise awareness on immigrant entrepreneurship. The target group will be mainly immigrant communities that reside in vulnerable and poor neighbourhoods. This programme includes training and empowerment actions for business creation.⁶

4. to promote the recognition of qualifications and certification of competences: (1) On 2007 the new immigrant act defined a special legal status for qualified immigrants that came to Portugal. This comprises a package of measures to attract highly qualified people to live in Portugal; (2) Aiming to make more flexible the access to the Portuguese labour market and the recognition of qualifications, in 2007-2008 Portugal approved further legal developments in this respect (Law-Decree n.º 341/2007, October 12, and Portaria n.º 29/2008, January 10)⁷ - new legal regime for the recognition of degrees, articulated with the characteristics of the degrees attributed by Portuguese Universities, and new rule to the

⁶ Further details at <http://www.acidi.gov.pt/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2909>

⁷ Further details at http://www.acidi.gov.pt/docs/Publicacoes/brochingl/GuiaIngles_web.pdf



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process of registration of foreigner diplomas. This regulation applies to degrees at the levels of Bachelor (*licenciado*), Masters and Doctorate as defined in the Portuguese system; and (3) Under this framework was further reinforced the special programme for the integration of immigrant doctors - integration of 150 doctors in the Portuguese National Health Service (Portaria n.º 925/2008, August 18) – that results from a partnership of different institutions: Portuguese Ministry of Health, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Jesuit Refugee Service of Portugal.

5. promoting the training and certification of competences: (1) reinforcing a programme on Portuguese language courses – Portugal Acolhe – promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, in 2009 the Portuguese government created a training programme for immigrants to learn technical Portuguese language⁸ (training adapted to specific professions – retail, hotel, beauty care, construction and civil engineering) and a general Portuguese language⁹. And (2) Portugal further have developed in the past couple of years a new mainstream programme for the certification of competences, based on work experience, targeting both national and immigrants residing in Portugal – *Novas Oportunidades*.

6. to combat the discrimination in the labour market both by concrete anti-discrimination actions or with raising awareness actions. The *Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination* (CICDR) is the Portuguese institution, an independent commission, that actively acts in this domain. The Commission is composed of representatives of Government organisations, members of parliament, immigrant and anti-racist associations and representatives of trade unions and employers' organisations. Its principal mission is to accompany the application of legislation that, in Portugal, combats discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry and national or ethnic origin. In this sense, competences are attributed to it to collect information in relation to practice of discriminatory acts, recommending the adoption of legislative measures, promoting the

⁸ Further details at <http://www.acidi.gov.pt/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=1099>

⁹ Further details at <http://www.acidi.gov.pt/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=1098>



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realisation of studies and research work on racial discrimination and making public cases of effective violations of the law.

Furthermore, recognising that immigrant have been facing additional difficulties in the Portuguese labour market due to the current economic downturn, the decline of demand in the economic sectors where most immigrants are normally incorporated (e.g. construction) and difficulties in transferring education in the migratory fluxes, the Portuguese governments also promoted specific reinforcing approaches:

5. INTEGRATION POLICIES IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC CRISES

After the investments of the past decade that reach international recognition the million Euros questions would be – *What can change in Portuguese integration policies with the economic crises, the State deficit and the Troika commitments?*

Despite the economic stagnation, the growth of unemployment and the State deficit that Portugal is facing, it is important to acknowledge that Portuguese society has been able to continuing positively welcome and integrate immigrants:

- According to 2011 Eurobarometer survey (75), only 3% of the surveyed Portuguese considered that immigration is a EU problem and 0% considered that is a problem that Portugal is facing in at the moment (compared to 20% and 12% respectively for UE27 average), being the most important topic of concern in Portugal the economic situation (47%, when to 33% for UE27);
- This positive attitude towards immigration has also been very important in terms of public debate and legislative activity on immigration and integration. New immigration (2007) and nationality (2006) laws have been approved by an overwhelming majority in the Portuguese Parliament (being in agreement both right and left wing parties in this respect) as a step forward in welcoming and integrating immigrants;





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- Under the second action plan for immigrant integration approved in 2010 it was even underlined that *"It is precisely because of these economic cycles that the State must act to reinforce and consolidate public policy on integration – policy which is one of the keystones of immigration policy and the social cohesion of the country"*.

These results agree with an intuitive perception that until now in Portugal a global social calm exists in relation to the question of immigration, demonstrated through a lack of serious cases of xenophobia, racism or basic, general hostility felt by immigrants. Furthermore political parties (until today) neither did not use immigration as a political topic of debate nor was developed an anti-immigrant sentiment in public opinion.

Even so the recession changed of course the situation regarding the integration of migrants:

- The **immigrants unemployment grow** (as happen for the nationals), is decreasing the income of immigrant families and the need for social support. Accordingly in 2010 the Government of that time, not compromising the integration policies developed until than, reinforced some social support policies to answer to the new challenges that the economic crises raised.
- there is a **specific Intervention Programme for Unemployed Immigrants**, which strives to facilitate the social, cultural and professional insertion of the immigrant population legally residing in Portugal through special vocational training, Adult Education and Training courses, Occupational Programmes and access to the Job Centre services. There are also Employment Support Offices in the National Centres that seek to support job offers and professional training to immigrants.
- Also for immigrants that want to create their own job and/or an alternative to unemployment, ACIDI created a support programme for immigrant entrepreneurship, valuing the potential of the entrepreneurship of many immigrants, putting available training courses and technical support in the definition of business plans and access to microcredit.
- Regardless the context of today's economic and financial crisis, the **Second Plan for Immigrant Integration approved in 2010** (and that was not withdrawn with the new



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right wing colligation in government) continues to strengthen and consolidated measures to support immigrant populations. Some other measures, in particular, highlight the concern of present economic framework.

- Moreover, Portugal simplified the **Family Reunification and the Welcoming process during this global crisis** by extending the range of documents which immigrants can produce as proof of income. For instance, the Ordinance no. 760/2009 dated 16th July, which establishes the proof of means of subsistence required by foreign citizens for their permanent admission to Portugal, adopted an exceptional and temporary solution that responds in a fair and balanced way to the situation that the country is experiencing. Therefore, unemployed immigrants can request to stay exceptionally in Portugal.

In June 2011 a right wing colligation government was formed with social democrats and the popular party (the same colligation that in 2004 created the One-Stop-Shop approach) and again important signs were given to the continuity of integration policies investments – the government programme underlined that the action plan for immigrant integration will be generally continued and the I (nominated in 2008) was invited by the new government to continue my work at ACIDI with my team.

6. DISSUASIVE SANCTIONS FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The impositions of **sanctions** and the **enforcement** of labour laws regulating illegal working are essential elements in combating illegal employment. The need for an increase in labour inspections in Portugal is continually underlined. However, this must be combined with more effective management of migration flows and control of the admission of irregular migrants.

Since 2003, under Portuguese law, companies that employ illegal immigrants are fined. Companies that have illegal workers are also obliged to cover all necessary expenses for the residence and removal of the foreign citizens. Employers that do not pay wages to foreign



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workers (legal or illegal) or that do not make their welfare and tax contributions regarding the amounts withheld of the worker's wages, are also fined.

Aiming to counteract illegal immigration, the Law makes employers responsible for complying with the law regarding the payment of wages, tax and welfare contributions by immigrant workers. This corresponds to the intention set out in the European Commission's Policy Plan to place the responsibility for illegal employment on the employers, and in the Commission's Proposal for a Directive providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals (COM(2007) 249 final).

The Government's Plan for Immigrant Integration provides for collaboration between the Authority for Working Conditions and the Foreigners and Borders Service in order to combat illegal employment, particularly with regard to exploitation (measure 15). This should facilitate greater cooperation between authorities exercising the complementary roles of labour inspection and border control.

7. AREAS OF CONCERN

As a feature of the recent immigration history of Portugal, and the country's ageing population employment rates among immigrants in Portugal are higher than those of nationals, and the employment and labour market participation of immigrant women is higher in Portugal than in any other OECD country. There is however, as outlined above, cause for concern in relation to unemployment and high-skilled workers in low-skilled jobs. Among Eastern and Southeast European migrants particularly, 80% of highly skilled workers are overqualified for their jobs.

Another worrying issue is that immigrants earn on average 20% less than Portuguese workers, and this figure remains above 10% even if one controls for other socio-economic factors. Migrants from Portuguese-speaking African countries earn significantly less than other migrant groups; work predominantly in low-skilled sectors and present low educational attainment.



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Therefore in addition to active inclusion policies already in place, there is a pressing need to involve immigrants in training and certification programmes, and processes to validate their skills, in order to integrate them into the labour market.

The following initiatives are therefore considered of significance:

1. The **recognition of the qualifications** of skilled migrants is essential to the process of integration into the labour market of the receiving country.
2. A further good practice has been developed in Portugal in relation to equipping **job centres** to facilitate the labour market integration of immigrants. The National Immigrant Support Centre, under the auspices of the Government's High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI, IP), runs an *Employment Support Office for immigrants*. This is part of the network of job centres, and has seen an increase in the use of its services in recent years. The Support Centre also supports immigrant entrepreneurship.
3. The provision of **language courses and vocational training** to migrants facilitates their insertion into the labour market, together with providing for an increased likelihood that they will work at the appropriate skill level. This should be a priority in policy-making, in terms of providing the optimum levels of access to language courses, where the migrant is not fluent in the language of the receiving country. Vocationally-orientated introductory courses may also contribute to migrant workers converting skilled acquired in their country of origin, so that they may use these skills in the context of the receiving country. Portugal has a programme of language and civic training, providing 50 hours of tuition. One of the recommendations of the OECD report was to provide a higher number of hours of targeted language training, particularly to unemployed migrants.
4. Assured access to effective **social welfare** entitlements represents an incentive for labour market integration and legal working. Immigrants residing legally in Portugal for a



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minimum period, and their family members, are entitled to the same rights in this area as national citizens. The employer is responsible for registering employees for social welfare, and for paying social welfare contributions.

5. importance of a greater involvement of the **social partners**, particularly to improve working conditions and raise awareness of the problems of illegal migration. Training programmes for employed migrants and traineeships for unemployed migrants, provided by employers, are also considered to be particularly required.

The social partners do participate in labour migration and integration policy in Portugal through the Consultative Council for Immigration Affairs (COCAI) within the structure of the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue. The Consultative Council is a forum for political discussion and policy-making for social partners, immigrant associations and charitable associations. This is in line with the concerns of the Council of Europe regarding the necessity for States to ensure the implementation of mechanisms of consultation and participation for immigrants in initiatives undertaken to promote integration and inter-community relations.

8. OTHER POLICIES THAT CAN REDUCE THE ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT OF MIGRANTS

1. The implementation of **information campaigns** in relation to the problems and difficulties of illegal employment can be effective in the fight against work exploitation and the protection of the employment rights of migrants. The Government's Plan for Immigrant Integration foresees greater support for information campaigns on integration in the workplace, together with strengthening structures for inspecting employers and applying legal penalties.
2. In certain exceptional cases, where a migrant is considered to have integrated fully into Portuguese society and has resided in the country for a considerable period of time, there is a



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mechanism by which migrants in an irregular situation can be granted **residence permits**. Legal status granted to a migrant is a strong incentive to enter into legal employment.

3. The **protection** provided by the social welfare system should also provide an incentive for workers to enter into legal employment contracts. Employers in Portugal are responsible for making social services payments in respect of all employees. Services provided include financial support for family responsibilities, illness, parenting and adoption, unemployment, accidents at work and occupational illnesses, invalids, old age and death, as well as economic and social deficiencies and dependence.
4. The Immigration Law provides an incentive to **illegal migrants** to opt for **voluntary return**, rather than be deported. The Law therefore aims to promote legal channels of immigration and discourage the use of illegal channels, combined with a coherent integration policy. The Immigration Law has gone some way towards improving the transparency and accessibility of the legal migration process.
5. The establishment of **information centres in the countries of origin** of migrants provides for the provision of accurate information to potential migrants on legal channels of migration and job-seeking. These centres can also provide information on the risks inherent in irregular migration and illegal employment, by informing potential migrants of their employment rights as regards conditions, social welfare, remuneration, and so on. The Portuguese Government have such a centre in the Cape Verde islands, one of the major countries of origin of migrants in Portugal.

IN CONCLUSION it is our believe that the present economic context of European Union and changes in some political scenarios should not interfere in the integration discourse of European Commission nor countries investment in integration policies. The disinvestment today in integration policies can have not only serious damaging consequences for the long-term of immigrant integration in host societies, but also in short-term to societies global cohesion.



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This has been precisely the attitude of Portugal that, although facing an economic crises and managing its several impacts both in native and immigrant population, namely having to reduce public budget in all areas (including integration), did not diminished the commitment for immigrant integration.

This political option is undoubtedly linked to the fact that countries need workers but receive people whose dignity and integration needs to not diminish with economic crises.

Employment generates income and social status and is thus considered by the Portuguese Government, in agreement with the European Commission, to be one of the most important aspects of immigrants' integration.

Thank you very much for your attention and I look forward to further discussions and exchange of experiences in this area.

