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Migrants as Cheap Labourers in Europe: Towards Critical Assessment of Integration

SUMMARY

Many “third country” migrants are recruited to the EU for unskilled labour, filling in positions that are unattractive to the “domestic” workforce. Current integration policies declare integration as a two-way process that should equalise migrants’ opportunities with those of the “nationals”. However, integration often appears blind to addressing specific migrant positions, in particular migrants as precarious and low-paid workers. This article discusses in a comparative perspective the precarious positions of migrants from “third countries” in six EU member states – Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. The article first addresses most recent data on migrant populations and discusses the sectors of migrant work. The assumption is that current migration and integration policies are to a large extent devoid of the migrants’ own perceptions and needs. It is therefore pivotal for the presented argument to provide visibility of migrants and discuss their own living and working experiences. Considering migrants as “partners in communication”, the article analyses interviews and focus groups engaging 150 migrants that were conducted in the six countries in 2009. Attention is devoted to discussing the themes that emerge in migrant narratives, analysing the cross-country similarities and differences in the economies that are largely sustained by a migrant workforce. By exploring the precarious labour market experiences of migrants, the article questions the validity of the concept of integration that remains an important objective of current EU migration regimes.

KEY WORDS: migrant work, precarious work, labour market, migrant integration, third country migrants, migration regimes

INTRODUCTION

Many migrants, especially those coming from so-called third countries, are recruited to the EU, responding to job demands for unskilled labour and filling positions that are unattractive to the domestic workforce. EU migration regimes (Kofman, 2005) declare integration to be a strategy of intercultural learning, as a two-way process that should equalise the migrants’ opportunities with those of the nationals. However, integration strategies as they are applied across European societies often appear blind to addressing the specific migrant positions and their

needs (Slany, Kontos and Liapi, 2010), in particular those of migrants as precarious and low-paid workers (Pajnik and Campani, 2011). Whereas EU nationals have the formal ability freely to enter the labour market, migrants from third countries are required to obtain work permits, and integration mechanisms across EU states condition the migrants' various rights, such as social rights, education and schooling, political participation etc., with a valid work permit. Recent research (Lazaridis, 2011; Pajnik and Campani, 2011; Medica and Lukič, 2011) has shown that such measures produce a situation where the life conditions of migrants are narrowly determined by their position in the labour market that becomes a prerequisite for integration prospects.

The common EU agenda for integration of migrants defines integration as the processes of the migrants' inclusion into the social, political, educational, labour-market and cultural spheres of life. Integration is also defined as a "dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States".¹ What appears at the declarative level to be a process of equalization of opportunities for migrants is often seen in practice as a mechanism that sustains the "conditioned lives" of migrant populations (Pajnik, 2011). We aim in this article to assess current integration processes in European societies by reflecting problems migrants are faced with in their everyday life. We base our analysis on critical reflection of the concept of integration that has been emerging recently in works by various authors; for example, Brubaker (2003) talks about integration as a "return of assimilation", Balibar (2004) is critical in treating it as a mechanism of migrants' "recolonization". Similarly, Tambiah (2000) discusses integration as a "subordinated integration", while Kostakopoulou (2010) has recently shown its "preservationist" nature, arguing that integration can hardly bring other than adaptation and loyalty on behalf of migrants.

We aim in this article to reflect on integration by considering the positions of migrants who are engaged in low-paid sectors of the economy, and it seems there is no better case than this in which to address empirically the above-mentioned problems with integration. Labour migration is not a new research topic. What is new, however, are practices of conditioning migrant's lives related to their labour in post-Fordist societies, when these are compared to the times of industrialization. Decades ago, Michael Piore's *Birds of Passage* (1980) has shown that up to 10 per cent and more of migrant workers in the 1970s, much as today, performed the 3D jobs as active labourers. In the period that followed, some authors have shown how labour market related statuses essentially determine migrants' lives (Brubaker, 1989; Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Devitt, 2011) and how they function to sustain

¹ Cf. *A Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union*, COM (2005) 389: (5).

growth in capitalist globalizing economies (Sassen, 1998; Bauman, 2004; Papastergiadis, 2000). This article aims to bridge the gap in contemporary research where a void is observed in endeavours that would elaborate on a labour dimension of contemporary migration from the *migrants*’ perspective.

We discuss from a critical comparative perspective the living and working positions of migrants from third countries in the six EU member states – Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia – who mainly work in specific sectors of the economy, e.g. construction, manufacturing, agriculture or care work. These are the sectors that generally engage large percentages of migrants and we are interested in exploring how these sectors affect migrants’ lives, particularly in social and economic terms.² Covering six EU member states, this article compares and contrasts the various experiences of countries with the longer tradition in migration policy and immigration history (Germany), with pronounced regional immigration patterns and migration policies with a local emphasis (Finland, Cyprus), a newer immigration country (Italy) and countries with the socialist past (Slovenia, Hungary). These countries also proved to be a good sample because they are clustered around the North/South division and “old”/“new” countries of migration in the European context. While Finland, for example, offers new business opportunities to migrants from neighbouring Russia, Slovenian and Hungarian labour markets seem to be more closed to migrants, even if coming from immediate neighbouring countries. If Italy, Germany, Cyprus and Finland note a trend of feminized migration, Slovenia and Hungary show a pattern where the vast majority of migrants are males. Subsequently, sectors of employment differ among the countries; if Cyprus employs most migrants in the food and service industry, the main sector of employment in Slovenia is construction (Pajnik and Campani, 2011). We thus focus in this article on discussing both the differences between the countries and also the similarities related to the positions and experiences of migrants in low paid sectors of the economy.

We first address the most recent data on migrant populations in the respective countries, and then reflect labour market policies and migrant work patterns with

² The article analyses data obtained for the project “PRIMTS – Prospects for Integration of Migrants from ‘Third Countries’ and their Labour Market Situations: Towards Policies and Action” (EC, 2008–2010). Data that relate to specific case studies consult country reports that were written in the years 2009–2010 by Nicos Trimikliniotis, Corina Demetriou, Mihaela Fulas-Souroulla (Cyprus), Aino Saarinen, Vierve Hietala, Maija Jäppinen (Finland), Maria Kontos, Sidonia Blättler (Germany), Andrea Pető, Noemi Kakucs, Dora Dezső (Hungary), Giovanna Campani, Tiziana Chiappelli, Olivia Salimbeni (Italy) and Mojca Pajnik, Veronika Bajt, Sanja Herič (Slovenia). We consult three reports on each specific country case, and these are: *Analysis of data on (un)employment of “third country nationals” and of industry and service sectors where they work*; *Mapping and Evaluating Migration and Integration Policies*; and *Interviews and Focus Group Analysis Report*. See <http://primts.mirovni-institut.si/>.

the purpose of assessing broader integration policies. The assumption is that current European and national migration and integration policies are to a large extent blind to migrants' own perceptions and needs (cf. Lazaridis, 2011; Pajnik and Campani, 2011; Slany, Kontos and Liapi, 2010). In this context, the article discusses integration that remains an important policy objective of current EU migration regimes. Therefore, it is pivotal for our argument to provide visibility of the migrants and discuss the migrants' own living and working experiences. Inviting migrants as partners in communication, we consult interviews and focus groups discussions with migrants that were conducted in the six countries. By bringing in the voices of migrants, it is our aim to provide a "consulted" analysis of current policies, highlighting some of the pertinent problems migrants are faced with as cheap labourers in European societies. Our aim is to address integration both as a concept and as a policy orientation of migration management, and provide new reflections on the contradictions of integration.

ON METHODOLOGY

The minimum common denominator is to define third country migrants as citizens of countries that do not belong either to the EU or the European Economic Area.³ In the research we have observed that country statistics predominantly use the umbrella category of foreigners – signifying all those who are not citizens of a country of their stay. We have also found that the numbers of migrants from third countries may vary among sources and are therefore often difficult to compare. To be able to generate a comprehensive assessment of third country migrant populations in the defined six EU member states we have not only consulted the existing studies and data, but have also analysed the raw statistical data on third country migrants that are gathered by various agencies in the defined countries. In addition to the assessment of data, our approach has been to analyse specific integration policies, namely labour market policies, and to see how they affect the position of third country migrants.

We were interested in exploring some specific policy provisions as they are adopted by national states in the context of the wider EU migration/integration regime, and in exploring the meanings and the effects of their "integrational" potential. Therefore, the approach we used combined the existing data on the population of third country migrants and the study of policies, while it also integrated findings

³ We use the officially established term "third country" migrants or migrants from "third countries" albeit with reservation as the term is far from being value free. Similar is true for the term foreigner that in this article appears when reference to the term is made by offices that gather the data here discussed.

from the field work. Namely, being attentive to the agency of migrants and considering the fact that policies are often devoid from the migrants' own needs, we invited migrants as partners in our analysis of integration regimes. We have employed lightly structured, in-depth biographical narrative interviews, and in-person focus groups as methods and the primary focus has been to gather and analyse migrants' work/life-related biographies, and to show what they tell us about the contemporary framing of migration and integration policies across Europe. Interview narratives gave us insight into the concrete experiences of migrants, and the focus groups provided additional information based on the shared/contrasting opinions of migrants on migration and integration regimes.

The interview and the focus group partners were selected according to the sectors of their work, gender and regional dimension, in order to diversify the sample as much as possible. Thus, while approaching migrants as our research partners we were attentive to developing the purposive sampling with the goal to include as many experiences as possible. We have explored the positions of male and female migrants who fill the labour demand of different economic sectors such as the construction, farming, or care sector in the post-2000 period. The assumption was that work conditions in the devalued sectors determine the migrants' lives as economically and socially insecure. Therefore, every effort was made to include migrants with a great variety of experiences related to different sectors of work.

Even though the focus was on third country documented migrants in the labour market, including asylum seekers and refugees with access to the labour market, we also included undocumented migrants. The latter especially are a significant category in the labour markets of Italy, Cyprus and Germany. In addition, citizens of new EU member states, which were considered third country migrants before 2004 and 2007, were also included in the research to a minor extent, especially in the countries where these populations make up a significant share of labour migrants, such as in Germany (Poles), Italy (Romanians), Hungary (ethnic Hungarians from Romania) and Finland (Estonians), whose labour market experiences were often found similar to those of migrants from third countries.

The field work was carried out in 2009 in each of the respective countries and it includes discussions with 150 migrants overall. 106 narrative interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed, with 6 focus groups each engaging from 5 to 9 migrants, or 44 migrants in total.⁴ The ethical issues related to protecting the respondents and the data were given our full attention. The field work ensured that migrants always participated upon their own voluntary consent and every effort was made to secure the respondents' anonymity.

⁴ Number of interviews per country was as follows: Cyprus 16, Finland 17, Germany 17, Hungary 22, Italy 16, Slovenia 18, and focus group participants included the following numbers: Cyprus 8, Finland 8, Germany 6, Hungary 7, Italy 9 and Slovenia 6.

Below we first present some characteristics of migration where we compare trends of migrant mobility among the respective six countries, and discuss statistical data on third country migrants. What follows is an analysis of recent policies that address integration in relation to the labour market, where we debate their appearances and implementation in the respective countries. This is then followed by an analysis of the migrants' own experiences with the policies; by consulting interviews and focus groups we aim to provide a more "consulted" analysis of contemporary European migration regimes.

MIGRATION AND LABOUR MARKET TRENDS FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

In terms of ways of migration in the six countries, we can broadly distinguish two patterns. One is the pattern of migration predominantly from the neighbouring countries or countries of the same region, which is typical of Hungary, Finland and Slovenia. On the other hand, in Germany and Italy, where the tradition of migration has been the longest, as well as in Cyprus, the statistics show the trend of migration from more distant countries and from other continents.

Most migrants migrating to Hungary are ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Ukraine and Serbia. The Romanian citizens constitute approximately half of all migrants, whereas citizens of Ukraine and Serbia represent around 20 per cent of third country migrants. Among the non-European migrants, the most numerous group are Asian migrants from China and Vietnam. Occasionally, asylum seekers from conflict areas such as Afghanistan or Iraq also migrate to Hungary. Similarly, Finland recently started attracting many migrants from the countries in the region, particularly third country migrants coming from the former Soviet Union and Estonia, a significant portion of whom are also ethnic Finns. Another significant group of migrants in Finland are refugees, initially coming from Chile and Vietnam. Later many arrived also from the African continent, especially from Somalia, and from the Middle East and other parts of Asia. Migration from countries of the region is also quite typical of Slovenia, predominately migration from Yugoslavia's successor states, given that these migrants represent more than 85 per cent of all third country migrants. Much like in other countries, increased migration from Asia (China, Thailand) is also present in Slovenia; however, the share of migrants from non-European countries in Slovenia is very low, representing less than 3 per cent of all migrants (Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010; Saarinen, Hietala and Jäppinen, 2009–2010; Pajnik, Bajt and Herič, 2009–2010).

Most migrants migrate to Italy and Germany, which are the biggest countries in terms of population in our country sample. At the end of 2008, Italy had almost 4

millions documented migrants living in the country (about 3 millions are from third countries), making a total of 6.7 per cent of the population, which is slightly above the EU average of 6 per cent. In the same period, Germany had 4.3 million third country migrants living in the country, which amounted to 5.3 per cent of the total population. However, the specificity of Germany is that almost half of the whole foreign population are EU residents, so including them the total number of migrants in Germany is 7.3 million, representing 9 per cent of the total population. In Germany the biggest migrant group comes from Turkey, followed by Russia and the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The neighbouring Poles, who until 2004, prior to Poland's accession to the EU, had been considered third country migrants, also make up a significant group of migrants. Similarly in Italy, the Romanians, who are now EU citizens, had been third country migrants before 2007. They are the biggest migrant group, followed by Albanians, Moroccans, Chinese and Ukrainians. Over recent years, the number of people from Africa arriving in Italy has also increased, and a high presence of people from Asia has also been noted (Campani, Chiappelli and Salimbeni, 2009–2010; Kontos and Blättler, 2009–2010).

Cyprus is one of only five EU member states where the majority of non-nationals are from other EU countries, and third country migrants only represent 5.7 per cent. Another peculiarity is that asylum seekers and international students make up a large part of the migration flows, although Cyprus is also characterized by labour migration. In March 2009, of the 138,000 non-Cypriot nationals legally residing in Cyprus over 70,000 were EU citizens. Both groups together represent around 20–25 per cent of the working population. It is estimated that another 25,000–35,000 undocumented migrants live in Cyprus. Most labour migrants come from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, China and Arab and Middle Eastern countries (Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Fulian-Souroulla, 2009–2010).

In terms of gender specificities, Slovenia demonstrates a pattern where more than two thirds of migrants are men, whereas in Hungary, Finland and Germany the balance is more evenly distributed. There are more migrant women than men in Italy and Cyprus, where the feminisation of migration has been noted in the last few years. Sectors that involve migrant women, in particular the so-called feminised sectors, are domestic and care work, health care sectors, beauty spas and wellness business, as well as sex work. Especially Germany, Finland, Italy and Cyprus have very vibrant female dominated sectors of economy, whereas in Slovenia female third country migrant employment is less visible and for the time being the majority of female migrants come under the family reunification provisions. In Germany, Cyprus and in Finland, where the increased trend of female labour migration is present, family reunification is also a significant reason for migration.

In Finland, many women migrants also come as refugees, similarly as in Italy and Cyprus – where the ratio between female and male migrants is the highest in favour of women (Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010; Saarinen, Hietala and Jäppinen, 2009–2010; Campani, Chiappelli and Salimbeni, 2009–2010; Kontos and Blättler, 2009–2010; Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Fulian-Souroulla, 2009–2010; Pajnik, Bajt and Herič, 2009–2010).

Our data show that, in general, there are two wider patterns of segmentation of sectors where migrants work: low-wage, manual and low-skilled sectors and the non-manual service sector, which usually demands more skills and pays better – though not necessarily. The sectors where most third country migrants work overlap significantly in all the six countries, since most migrants can be found in similar occupations. Whereas construction is the sector that employs the most third country migrants in Hungary and Slovenia and is the second most prevailing sector of work for migrants in Germany and Italy, in Cyprus and Finland most migrants find employment in the hotel and restaurant businesses/the hospitality industry and wholesale and retail, while the construction sector is also filled by migrants in these two countries as well. In all six countries, manufacturing, the hotel and restaurant business, and wholesale trade and retail are therefore other major sectors dominated by third country migrants. Especially construction, manufacturing and the car industry are sectors employing many migrants in all countries. Among the non-industrial sectors, the hotel and restaurant business and increasingly the health-spa industry are most prevalent, while domestic work is also of great significance (Saarinen, Hietala and Jäppinen, 2009–2010; Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010; Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Fulian-Souroulla, 2009–2010; Pajnik, Bajt and Herič, 2009–2010).

Overall, our research has shown that most of third country migrants across EU states work from one short-term contract to another, facing insecurities and often also unequal treatment by their superiors and colleagues. This inequality frequently results in lower wages, more working hours and less social security. The comparison of all six countries revealed many commonalities between the positions of migrants in the labour market, though there are also some country specificities that are rather unique.

In Italy, the informal labour market plays a more prominent role than in the other five countries, creating a vicious circle where migrants are needed by the labour market and over-exploited at work. Industry, care services and agriculture are the sectors that offer the highest number of placements, but these are unstable and require a high degree of mobility. The enterprise that employs mostly foreign labour is that of small businesses. The increase of self-employment of migrants in

Italy is another country specificity, which even though it also occurs in other countries is not so prevalent as in Italy. To compare, in Slovenia more and more self-employment was registered over recent years; however, it was curtailed with the *Decree on Restrictions and Prohibition of Employment and Work of Aliens* in 2009, which prohibited issuing new permits for the representatives of micro and small companies and for the representatives of branch offices. An additional peculiarity of Slovenia is that seasonal work has been almost completely banned in the wake of the current economic crisis, with only seasonal work in agriculture and forestry remaining. Similarly, in Hungary, only agricultural and domestic seasonal work is possible, which makes Slovenia and Hungary the two countries where migrants have limited access to seasonal work.

Another peculiarity is the minor employment in Germany. It is employment for a few hours a week, with 16 per cent of employed third country migrants in the country involved in this type of labour market engagement. The sub-provinces of Eastern Finland, which border Russia, where the new settlers from Russia represent almost 60 per cent of all foreigners, are known for high and long-term unemployment, but trans-border business also offers opportunities and is becoming well integrated in the evolving local Russian-Finnish economy. These trans-border business opportunities are a significant country peculiarity in terms of the positive effects of migration. At the same time, Finland also shows the highest discrepancies in employment of third country migrants in comparison to its citizens, which speaks of difficulties in accessing the labour market as a migrant. Similar migrant employment problems have been noticed in Hungary, Cyprus and Slovenia and are mostly a consequence of strict conditions for obtaining a work permit (Saarinen, Hietala and Jäppinen, 2009–2010; Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010; Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Fulian-Souroulla, 2009–2010; Pajnik, Bajt and Herič, 2009–2010).

INTEGRATION AS A MECHANISM FOR CLOSURE OF NATIONAL LABOUR MARKETS AND THE EFFECTS ON THIRD COUNTRY MIGRANTS

When operationalizing integration, recent research (Niessen and Huddleston 2009; MIPEX, 2011) has approached integration in close relation to the various policies that affect the migrants' positioning in social, political and economic spheres. For example, the recent MIPEX report (2011) analyses integration in relation to labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination. Finland is positioned best among the six countries in addressing these integration policies. It is placed fourth of 31 countries included in the analysis reporting a "slightly favourable" situation

for migrants, with Italy occupying position 10, also with a “slightly favourable” situation that is, however, deteriorating. Germany appears 12th, Slovenia 18th, Hungary 21st with “halfway favourable”, while Cyprus occupies the lower position at the number 30 with “slightly unfavourable” migration policies (MIPEX, 2011).

Our research targeted specific groups of migrants and approached integration differently, analysing the migrants’ own social and economic lives together with critical discussion on integration policies that respond to the economic and social well-being of the migrant population (cf. Pajnik and Campani, 2011). Thus, our analysis aims at shedding light on integration as this relates to the labour market dimension affecting migrants in low-paid sectors of work. Below we discuss integration (im)possibilities for migrants at the intersection of policies and the migrants’ own work and life experiences across the six countries.

Migration policies in most EU states exhibit a trend in designing entry requirements for migrants according to specific national labour market needs. Our research (cf. Pajnik and Campani, 2011) confirmed that migrants classified as entering with an attempt to work are steered into professions that are considered as a deficit by the national labour market demands, or as 3D work (cf. Medica and Lukič, 2011). Reflecting the EU agenda, all six EU countries have a similar general orientation in labour market policies regarding third country migrants. Whereas EU nationals have the right to free movement and are entitled to social and other rights comparable to those of nationals, countries generally require that third country migrants obtain residence permits and, in case of employment, work permits as well, in order to enter and legally reside in the state. However, the rules regarding entering, the types of permits third country migrants can obtain and the rights attached to their status differ among the countries in question.

In terms of residence permit requirements, each country has its own specific regulations, usually further dependent on the third country migrants’ employment status. In Germany, for example, cooks, domestic, agricultural, entertainment and construction workers (who enter the country as exceptions to the recruitment ban) receive only temporary legal status. In Finland, four different categories of residence permits exist, i.e. a temporary permit, a continuous permit, a permanent permit, and a long-term EC residence permit, which all significantly affect the migrant’s work and life opportunities, with the latter permit being the one that makes easier free movement of third country migrants and their families within the EU (Kontos and Blättler, 2009–2010; Saarinen, Hietala and Jäppinen, 2009–2010).

Hungary grants short term entry visas, residence visas that limit the duration of stay, and a type of visa issued to third country migrants who arrive to Hungary with the intention of undertaking employment or seasonal work, and this is a precondition

tion for obtaining the residence permit. The rules regarding entry and stay of third country migrants in Hungary were significantly modified in 2007, yet the ethnic Hungarians still enjoy preferential treatment (Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010). In Slovenia, two types of residence permit exist – temporary and permanent. Permanent residence permit awards more rights in terms of socio-economic provisions and can be granted to a third country migrant who has been residing in Slovenia for a period of 5 years uninterruptedly on the basis of a temporary residence permit. Third country migrants wishing to access the labour market must also have a work permit. There are three types of work permit: permits for work that are temporary and are subject to quota restrictions, employment permits that are issued to migrants for a maximum of one year and are issued based on the employer's application, while a personal work permit is the only permit not related to the labour market demand and, in principle, gives a migrant the same level of rights as enjoyed by the Slovene nationals, including unemployment benefits. Research in Slovenia (Pajnik, 2011; cf. Medica and Lukič, 2011) identified problems with types of permits that tie migrants to their employer. Namely, migrants often face exploitation and are rendered powerless in relation to the employer, enduring exploitation so as not to lose the permit.

Similarly to Hungary and Slovenia, in Cyprus, too, work permits are granted under the condition that the migrant worker is attached to a specific employer (the applicant) without the freedom to change jobs unless the original employer consents to such change or there is a labour dispute. In Italy, a residence permit cannot last longer than the duration of a work contract if it is tied to employment, which is a commonality observed also in Hungary and Slovenia. Workers who lose their jobs have the right to be registered as unemployed and legally reside in Italy for the next six months. On the expiration of this period, and if they are still unemployed, they risk losing their status and becoming irregular migrants. The acquisition of a permanent residence card in Italy is possible after 5 years of residence (albeit factually difficult to obtain due to bureaucratic obstacles) (Petö, Kakucs and Dezső, 2009–2010; Campani, Chiappelli and Salimbeni, 2009–2010; Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Fulian-Souroulla, 2009–2010).

The perspective of a critical policy evaluation, focusing on entry, residence and the related work regulations has pointed to stratification patterns in contemporary labour migration management. It comes as no surprise that the analysed policies relegate migrants to those sectors that are especially prone to hard working conditions, where exploitation of workers is not uncommon. A specific rationale of current European migration policies is detected which channel migrants to the precarious “traditionally migrant” sectors of the economy, where they are additionally burdened

by a high level of job insecurity, low payment and a low level of social benefits, and where they face de-skilling, language barriers, and discrimination in the workplace. They are also largely black economies that also reproduce the gender, class, and ethnic divides. The analysis confirms the thesis that the current economies of European societies produce “conditioned lives” (Pajnik, 2011) of migrants where legal statuses – be they temporary, regular or irregular – the labour market realities of unstable jobs, and insecure work relations produce what appears to be the forced flexibilization of migrants that serves the needs of global capital (Campani, 2007).

THE MIGRANTS’ EXPERIENCES AS PRECARIOUS WORKERS

In the present world governed by the ideology of development and the need for growing economies, labour migration has become a key feature in enabling post-industrialised countries to meet their economic, labour and productivity challenges. Migration is often explained as an instrument for adjusting the skills, age, demographic and sectorial composition of national labour markets. It provides responses to fast changing needs for skills due to technological advancement, structural change and transformation of the labour market. In many countries, migration also offers a potential for replenishing a declining work force (ILO, 2006: 12).

It stems from the interviews and focus groups that a significant number of third country poor working conditions and low wages, and this finding is confirmed for all the analysed country cases. Migrant workers are often over-qualified for low-skilled jobs that they perform, which are frequently characterised by longer working hours, higher occupational instability and physically demanding work, while they also face additional health and safety risks. While some sectors that are better unionised may provide general protection of the employees, migrant workers are frequently the last in line both in terms of job safety and in terms of appropriate working conditions. Some of our interview partners said they just learned to be as indifferent as possible and many migrants described their coping strategy as just “stick with it and bear it”, meaning they have to endure at their work place at least long enough to earn enough money to change employers, or that the required years are completed in order to gain a more stable permit. In cases where work permits are not tied to specific employers, migrants are freer to choose other employment and move between sectors; however, many described this as practically impossible due to the current situation on the labour market and the unfavourable conditions for migrant work.

The fieldwork showed that there are problems particularly in some sectors of work that employ high shares of migrant workers. Cleaning, for instance, is increas-

ingly a migrants' profession (e.g. in Finland, Germany and Slovenia) and outsourcing has deepened the precarious situation of workers in big cleaning companies. Additionally, black market practices seem to be employed in the cleaning sector. In terms of gender, household work is a very visible female migrant dominated sector (Lutz, 2011), many times invisible in statistics and in trade union work. Domestic workers are generally a very low-paid group that is in a vulnerable situation partially because they often live with their employers and depend on them in many ways (Hrženjak, 2011). Also, the construction sector has proven from a cross-country comparative perspective to determine the insecurity of migrant workers (Toksöz and Akpınar, 2009; Shelley, 2007; Medica and Lukič, 2012). Among the principal findings of our field work is the observation that the migrants' experiences are very similar across the six states, even if they adopt different policy measurements. Nuances in policy particularities that all reflect the common EU migration agenda seem to fade away greatly when it comes to concrete migrant experiences. Still, the analyses confirms that insecurity is pronounced where labour market and migration policies, oriented towards closure (i.e. entry requirements or work permit) are combined with peculiarities of sectors of work and their inclusion in globalization trends (cf. Sassen, 1998; Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989).

Living as a migrant labour force, experiencing “modern day slavery”

Most of our interview partners experienced bad relations with their employers. In many cases the bad experience occurred during their first employment, often because they did not know their rights, mainly due to the uncertainty and vulnerability of their positions, which allowed their employers to take advantage of them. “Typical” migrant problems were disclosed in the narrations across the six countries that point to certain structural problems of contemporary societies. The majority talk about working long hours, having bad salaries or receiving less than agreed upon initially, having no health and social insurance, not getting free days and vacations, experiences with bad attitudes on the part of their bosses or co-workers, unfair treatment, indecent/inadequate living conditions and so forth. The comparative analysis of first employments shows that most migrants change their job usually because of their bad experience with their first employer. A personal care worker, for instance, explains the hardship of being constantly on duty, describing her work situation as “modern day slavery”, a comparison that is becoming quite frequent when speaking of contemporary migrant work conditions:

Really it is an experience that I would not wish upon anyone. I wouldn't wish it upon anyone because it is a type of prison, a kind of prison, let's say, I called it modern slavery, yes, yes, I called it this, modern slavery because it is modern in

the sense that at least you are paid, but twenty-four hour back to back shift work does not exist at all, a person is deprived of his or her liberty, because you can't move how you want, you don't rest when you want, you don't sleep when you want, it is difficult (Michelle, 49, Cameroon, lives and works in Italy).

We all got paid on the hands without, without insurance. This was catastrophe, real catastrophe. We slept in, in, in the basement, on, you know ... I lived, I slept in one house in Ljubljana-Polje ... in the cold, without, without heating. This was hard. But this, this my children and wife don't know. I never told them, spoke of this, you know, this is difficult when your children hear how you live. So, this is, you know, this is still, still difficult (Fatlindi, 35, Kosovo, lives and works in Slovenia).

The interviews confirm that there are specific labour market sectors that are more accessible to migrants (e.g. agriculture, cleaning, care, restaurants, construction and heavy industry). Better paid and higher skilled sectors are more rarely accessible to migrants, except sectors with deficit professions. Looking for a better job, many of our interviewees talked about the plans to change their sector of work as soon as they get the opportunity. The segmented labour markets, however, do not allow easy movement from one sector to another, especially in countries where migrant workers are tied to one specific employer, like in Cyprus. Nevertheless, changing between different work sectors and doing many different jobs is also an experience shared by a significant share of migrants.

I like said to everybody I knew that I looked for a job, any job, that I wanted to work. So they helped me a lot. I got a job, nearby, I knew the company owner. I worked for him two years. [...] And then there was a recession after two years. So I lost the job again. So I had to look for a new job again. At that time, when it was really difficult to get a job, I tried every sort of job, anything suitable for me which I can do, I'll take it and try. And then, I was looking for a job on the web site of the [Employment] Service and I found it in XY, it's where it was. Yes, that's in XY. I called because there was a phone number there and I told them what I could do. They invited me for an interview, I went there and they took me. The payment is very low, you know. My gross salary is now the same as my net salary at the last job. Like that, yes. But I told myself I stay here until I find another job. It's more or less okay. And now I'm here and I had a 3-month contract. And in the meantime I looked for another job and now I've got another job. I'll start in two days. It's again through someone I know, like that (Ali, 42, Iran, lives and works in Slovenia).

I want to find job to be here. I want to work every time, but don't find ... Someday somebody called me to come and clean his house, okay. And I go. Sometimes

somebody calls to come to do something. Like this, but not every time! Just little money you take, one hour you finish ... Cyprus is not easy, you know ... Yes, is like this. You don't do job you want, no. For me a job means working for one month, you take your salary, you have life. You have salary, you have life, like this, yeah (Zango, 36, Burkina Faso, lives and works in Cyprus).

Many interview partners also went through the phase of irregularity, working as undocumented workers. Some had to accept undocumented work because they did not get work permits. Some did it to increase their income, since many jobs are paid more in cash if the employers do not have to pay contributions for their workers. However, working as unregistered workers puts migrants in even more vulnerable and precarious positions and many migrants say they would not opt for this kind of work if they had any other choice.

We cannot force them to give us more money because we are not legal to work. So if they say 4 euro or 5 euro we must say obviously yes. No, you must give me 6 euro ... It doesn't happen like this. For other girls I don't know. For me, I never say no, I need some more. Whatever it is, I just take it (Mabel, 26, India, lives and works in Cyprus).

In all the six countries there is ample evidence of migrant deskilling. Migrant narratives in all countries confirmed that some interview partners have experienced deskilling with not having their diplomas, skills and prior working experiences recognised. This finding is directly opposite to the proclaimed need for more highly skilled migrants that has been made in many member states. And even though the need for more educated migrants has been identified, most migrants still work in construction, heavy and light industry, manufacturing and agriculture, where typically the demand is for a lower educated workforce. In our interview sample we had numerous migrants with higher education, who were, however, engaged in low-skilled jobs or were unemployed. They report that no-one was interested in their prior education, while many also do not have their education recognised. This means they cannot formally engage in the profession for which they were trained, a common situation of keeping the migrant workforce in lower positions on the European labour market.

My hair went grey while I was looking for practical work. Nobody wanted to take me because I was a migrant. I really came across a huge problem. It drove me to tears. Nobody wanted to take me. My first practical work was Kierrätyskeskus [recycling centre] [...] and I had to sort, clean, sift and then it was sold, it is like, um, a second-hand shop. Simply and there I got deeply depressed again. Gosh, why did I go to school, wasn't I "vukovac" – you know what it means, the best student in the elementary school, the best student in the secondary school – and

now God has punished me, has brought the war upon me, I changed my world, moved to another part of the world only to lower myself and to do things that could be done by someone who cannot sign his own name. And it hurts, because knowledge is not valued at all (Danica, 37, Bosnia and Herzegovina, lives and works in Finland).

Our interviews and focus groups hence exhibit a notable de-skilling of migrants regardless of their status, their mode of entry or their education level and prior working experiences. Even when migrants manage to arrange formal recognition of their education, their abilities and qualifications frequently remain devalued. Many migrant workers, particularly men employed in construction, but also women engaged in domestic work, may have competitive working experience and notable education and skills, yet they are unable to reach their full potential and remain caught in “migrant professions”. Moreover, we can see from the migrants’ accounts that even when migrants manage to arrange formal recognition of their education and find work in their chosen sector, their abilities and qualifications frequently remain devalued, their possibilities for job advancement are limited and they often perform jobs at a level below their actual skills.

CONCLUSIONS: MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK TAILORED TO THE MIGRANTS’ NEEDS

In relation to migrants, the integration rationale in principle stresses the actual enjoyment by migrants of opportunities in law and practice that are comparable to those of nationals. However, research on policies and employment trends, combined with the migrants’ own accounts that are presented in this article point to the migrant’s “conditioned lives”, where one’s integration prospects are highly dependent on one’s formally recognized status; one permit is tied to another that hardly makes integration possible. Without a work permit it is not possible to obtain a residence permit; without a personal work permit it is not possible to obtain a permanent residence permit; without a permanent residence permit it is not possible to obtain citizenship; without a personal work permit it is not possible to register with the Employment Service; without a permanent residence permit it is not possible to join the medical insurance scheme; without citizenship it is not possible to apply for non-profit rents. And so on. (cf. Pajnik, 2011: 246).

It can be argued that the logic of constant conditioning keeps migrants at the outskirts of integration (Balibar, 2004). The research in the six countries shows that current migration management at the European level is still predominately oriented towards promoting strategies of prevention of migration (Guiraudon and Joppke,

2001) and that it hinders the possibilities of treating migrants as political equals. In this context it seems that integration does not provide an adequate answer to supersede the migrant's subordination. To the contrary, integration policies, specifically those related to migrant labour as shown in this article hardly challenge "the foreigner-the national" divide. Rather, being adopted primarily as policies that aim at protecting the national, they seem to perpetuate the mentioned divide.

Recent research (Kostakopoulou, 2010) has questioned the potential of integration and has wondered to what extent this is becoming a "reactionary concept". The migrants' labour market integration is still tied closely to nationalization processes of national states whereby the logic persists that the domestic or the national labour market should prioritize the nationals and prevent migrants' unwanted penetration. Interviews with migrants also reveal the existence of what can be called "conditioned integration", a process that does not have the real capacity of treating migrants as equals. Migrants are welcome on national labour markets but always to a limited extent: they are welcome to perform 3D jobs, they are welcome to come only if the domestic labour force does not suffice for economic growth, they are welcome only if prepared for naturalization etc. To add to this, recent research (Kontos, 2011) has shown how references to integration are even used to promote the need to prevent migration. It has been happening in Germany where slogans such as "Germany is not the country of immigration but integration" have gained impact in public debates (Kontos, 2011).

Theoretically, one can thus challenge the validity of integration as a concept. Empirically, the research presented here has shown how migration and integration regimes sustain many migrant workers in precarious, lower sectors of the labour market, chiefly in unskilled or semi-skilled work. At this level the relevant questions relate to the imperative of equal treatment of migrants. In interviews and focus groups migrants themselves have stressed several mechanisms that could potentially lead to equality policies. Among them, as it was stressed, is the condition of equalizing the migrants' access to labour market and consequently to social services on an equal footing, regardless of the variety of statuses. It was also strongly stressed in our empirical material that regimes should more substantially reflect the actual everyday practices of migrants and seek solutions accordingly, thus more realistically and in a more grounded manner. For example, the fact that migrants mostly reside in populated and industrial areas should be reflected in specific local policies, or the fact that construction and cleaning sectors are recognized as severe sources of migrants' insecurity, should lead to regulations oriented towards the migrants' greater security. It is also pronounced in the empirical material that more should be done to ensure the actual implementation of non-discrimination in reality and not

just in principle. Most importantly, it stems from the field work that equality politics should not be dependent on the migrant's current statuses. It has emerged from the interviews that the same rights should be ensured by labour policies for workers, regardless of the type of work contract and notwithstanding the differences in work permit types. Among other mechanisms, the need has been expressed to promote recognition of the migrants' qualifications and capture their true potential (so-called counter deskilling mechanisms), to ensure non-discrimination in employment, to open housing, and health and social policies to cater to the migrants' specific situations and needs. That said, we can conclude by arguing that an improvement in current policies at the national and European level is needed as are the imagination and political will to think and act beyond their limits.

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Mojca PAJNIK

Migranti kao jeftini radnici u Europi: prema kritičkoj ocjeni integracije

SAŽETAK

Mnogi migranti iz »trećih zemalja« regrutiraju se u Europsku uniju za nekvalificirani rad, popunjavajući mjesta koja su neatraktivna »domaćoj« radnoj snazi. Sadašnje migracijske politike proglašavaju integraciju dvosmjernim procesom koji bi trebao izjednačiti mogućnosti migranata s mogućnostima »državljana«. No integracija često previda specifične pozicije migranata, posebice onu kao prekarnih i loše plaćenih radnika. Ovaj se rad iz komparativne perspektive bavi nesigurnim položajima migranata iz »trećih zemalja« nastanjenim u šest zemalja Europske unije – Cipru, Finskoj, Njemačkoj, Mađarskoj, Italiji i Sloveniji. Najprije se iznose najnoviji podaci o migrantskim populacijama i raspravlja o sektorima u kojima migranti rade. Pretpostavlja se da aktualne migracijske i integracijske politike rijetko uzimaju u obzir percepcije i potrebe samih migranata. Zato je za iznesenu raspravu ključno da osigura vidljivost migranata te razmotri njihova životna i radna iskustva. Tretirajući migrante kao »partnere u komunikaciji«, članak analizira rezultate intervjua i fokusnih skupina iz 2009. u kojima je sudjelovalo ukupno 150 migranata iz šest zemalja. Pozornost je posvećena raspravama o temama koje se pojavljuju u pričama migranata, uz analizu sličnosti i razlika između ekonomija istraživanih zemalja koje se uvelike temelje na migrantskoj radnoj snazi. Istražujući prekarna iskustva migranata na tržištima rada, rad propituje valjanost koncepta integracije, koji ostaje važni cilj sadašnjih migracijskih režima Europske unije.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: migrantski rad, prekarni rad, tržište rada, integracija migranata, migranti iz trećih zemalja, migracijski režimi