



EU Dialogue, Local Solutions: Briefing for the Seminar on Migration in Spain

Online, 25 February 2022

In 2014, CEMR and EPSU signed a set of joint guidelines on migration and strengthening anti-discrimination in local and regional government.¹ These had been negotiated over the previous months in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Local and Regional Government.

Whilst migration is often thought of as an issue for central government, local and regional governments play an important role both as employers of migrants and as providers of services that promote inclusion into the receiving society.

Evolution of the guidelines

Both EPSU and CEMR, as well as their respective affiliates, had long dealt with the topic of migration, prior to the elaboration of the guidelines. In 2010 EPSU completed a survey of its members in local and regional government, which gave a detailed picture of:²

- Recruitment and involvement of migrants into unions
- Services provided by the union to migrants
- Inclusion of migration issues in collective bargaining and union policy
- Union members' role in providing services to migrants
- Campaigns on migrants' rights and improving services

In 2012, the two social partner organisations jointly published a report on migration and mobility within local and regional government within the framework of the 'Future of the Workplace' project. This joint work laid the foundation for the elaboration of the guidelines, agreed in 2014.

The guidelines were then updated in 2016 in response to the new inflows into Europe from the Middle East starting in 2015.³ This update also took account of follow up work conducted by both social partners. A seminar, held in Berlin in January 2016, collected experiences from local and regional governments across the continent, including Sweden, Germany and Greece.⁴

¹ <https://www.epsu.org/system/files/articles/files/MigrationGuidelines2014EPSUCEMR-3.pdf>

² https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Final_Report_Migration_March_2010_-_EN.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/migration-and-strengthening-anti-discrimination-local-and-regional-governments_en

⁴ <https://www.epsu.org/article/2016-27-january>

The role of local and regional governments

Although immigration policy is usually the preserve of central government, local and regional governments play an often-overlooked part as both an important employer of migrants and a provider of services. These may be services specifically aimed at migrants, like language courses and assistance entering the labour market, or public services available to everyone but which are particularly important to migrants trying to build a new life, like public housing or childcare. Due to the proximity of local services to the population, LRGs are often the first point of contact for refugees and migrants. Services provided by LRGs can also help build community cohesion by bringing together people from different backgrounds into shared spaces, like schools, youth clubs, leisure centres and public housing. LRGs are often tasked, statutorily or voluntarily, as providers of training and education for labour market integration, or wider civic inclusion (be that specifically aimed at migrants or at the population as a whole.)

However, underfunding and competition for scarce financial resources can sometimes mean local authorities have to manage resentment between those born in an area and those who have arrived more recently. Underfunding can also be a point of tension between LRGs, who experience its daily consequences and have to provide services in a tight financial environment, and national governments, often buffeted by political headwinds around migration.

As an employer, local authorities often deliver services delivered by a high number of migrant employees, particularly care. Even when these are not delivered in-house, local and regional governments also have a special responsibility as procurers to ensure inclusive and welcoming workplaces.

EPSU and CEMR's joint guidelines

The joint guidelines, both when adopted in 2014 and as updated in 2016, seek to maximise the benefits of migration to Europe's cities and regions, whilst recognising the key role that LRGs need to play in ensuring those benefits are fully realised.

The guidelines set out a series of actions to be taken by social partners, national and European, at EU, member-state and local level. These can be summarised as:

- Working to ensure respect for EU legislation and international agreements related to migration and for better adaptation of structural funds to enable LRGs to assist with inclusion
- Promoting inclusion for migrant workers, and wider issues of inclusion within the labour market and society, in local, national, and European social dialogue
- Monitoring the implementation of the guidelines, and the situation in general, through the Social Dialogue Committee
- Drawing attention to the link between good working conditions in LRGs and quality services to migrants, as well as to the need for more qualified personnel, linguistic and cultural mediation, etc.

- Reviewing recruitment practices and barriers to employment for migrants, including ensuring work environments are welcoming and affirming, through training and mediation
- Providing quality training to management and front-desk workers, and identifying and tackling discrimination in LRG workplaces
- Involving migrant workers through workplace consultation and participation
- Investigating ways that LRGs procurement policies can be harnessed to promote diversity and equality
- Including equality and diversity principles in partnership agreements with other municipalities
- Spearheading public and internal communication to counter prejudice and hostility
- Ensuring access to national funds to promote inclusion, where available

The inclusion of the topic of inclusion of migrants within the present project to mark 15 years of the Social Dialogue Committee in Local and Regional Government demonstrates both social partners' commitment to the monitoring and analysis described above.

This seminar will provide an important opportunity for both employers and unions to gauge the ongoing usefulness of the guidelines and if they may need to be further revised or updated, as well as to share further examples of best practice.



With the financial support of the European Commission