

EU Enlargement, New Migration and Informal Labour: The European Dilemma of Mobility

A presentation by

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The EU enlargement eastwards and the final accession of eight CEE countries stand for a successful EU-driven post-communist institutional transformation. The process is meant to contribute to European competitiveness through economic restructuring in line with Lisbon strategy and the vision of a ‘knowledge based’ economy. It engenders free mobility of capital, goods, labour and services. The new labour mobility is supposed to solve the problems of the mismatch in national labour markets. However, in the context of global economic restructuring and the actual discrepancy between emigration pressures and still limited legal immigration opportunities, the EU enlargement eastwards has also reinforced the trends of informalisation of the economy and related new irregular East-West trans-national migration.

The rise of unemployment, irregular migration and the creation of new jobs in the informal economy have certainly incapacitated standard national economic policies. Additionally, they have challenged the established welfare, labour and migration regimes in advanced economies and fomented the search for post-national solutions. The most disquieting consequences of economic policies of deregulation are insurgence of populism, xenophobia, fundamentalism, terrorism and trans-national criminal networks. They are reflected in discontent with the new social conditions, informalisation of the economy and exclusions. Unfortunately, all are related to the phenomenon of migration, its perceptions and experiences. No wonder that migration has become one of the focal political issues in the EU as well as in the USA. They are formulated both as a social problem of multiculturalism i.e. integration of legal migrants and as economic problems of clandestine migrants’ informal employment that is jeopardising the existing premise of regular employment.

Against this background Dr. Branka Likić-Brborić presents the NIWL research programme that addresses the new configurations of European migrations and the practices of informal employment brought about by globalisation and EU enlargement eastwards. The research also explores their influence on the on-going transformation of the European welfare and migration regimes as well as its labour market institutions. Within this context she discusses the institutional policy and public responses to the phenomena of the informal economy, new forms of legal and clandestine immigration and employment on the different levels of governance. The focus is primarily on the global and EU approaches, and their interplay with different national contexts.

In that the presentation traces the development of a social dimension of globalisation and addresses the articulation of an inclusive, human rights based policy approach to migration management and the informal economy. The focus here is on the UN and the ILO's reformulation of social justice in terms of migrants' rights and 'decent work' for all workers, even those working in the informal economy. Dr. Branka Likić - Brborić maintains the need for the inclusion of a social dimension into the project of the EU enlargement and the changing EU migration regime.

Finally, in conjunction to the above discussion, she claims that both the EU approach to further enlargement and the related development model in general need a reformulation in order to meet the real challenges in the SEE region. This reformulation should involve the government policy that includes the development potentials that are generated both in society and community. The latter concerns new migratory flows, remittances, informal economy, ethnic communities, post-national networks and trans-national solidarity. This implies that the EU should open a dialogue to conceptualize a wider socio-economic approach to economic reforms in Southeast Europe in general and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular.