

Brief report of the Workshop on Capacity Building Activities in the Area of Migration organised by T.M.C. Asser Instituut

The workshop "Capacity Building Activities in the Area of Migration: From Policy Making to Effective Implementation" brought together representatives of governmental (Ministry of Justice and Security, Immigration and Naturalisation Services (IND), and Serbian Asylum Office), non-governmental (Vluchtelingenwerk and Spark) as well as international organisations (International Organisation of Migration (IOM)) to share their experiences and best practices. An interesting element of the workshop was the involvement of different organisations in different types of capacity building projects along the migration route to Europe: from countries of origin and countries in the region to transit countries, as well as the country of destination and the country in which the capacity building projects in question are developed, namely the Netherlands.

The first speaker, Yuri Schutte (Senior Advisor for International Migration Policy at the Ministry of Justice and Security) kicked off the workshop's discussion and talked about the Dutch government's broader approach to migration policy. This approach, also called "An integrated agenda", relies on prevention of irregular migration, reception and protection in the region, a solid asylum system in the Netherlands and the EU based on solidarity, efficient returns, promotion of legal migration and last but not least, integration and participation. According to Mr. Schutte, one could not really talk of a 'Dutch' approach to migration as government policies rely heavily on international and European approaches and standards in the area.

The second presentation was by Mr. Victor Koedam (IND) and Ms. Emilja Yoksic (Head of the Serbian Asylum Office) who collaborated in a Twinning project on 'asylum' and 'foreigners'. In this project, Serbian officials were trained on certain aspects of the asylum procedure including interview techniques, evidence assessment, and ensuring access to asylum. Serbia as a beneficiary country considered the project successful, as they were able to implement parts of the project even before the relevant legislative changes took place.

The third panellist, Mr. Goof van Dormolen (Manager Operations at the Dutch Council of Refugees - Vluchtelingenwerk) emphasised the role of NGOs and civil society in general. For example, volunteers played an important role in the reception centres in the Netherlands in 2015. However, their role does not stop there. Civil society and NGOs play an important role in helping refugees integrate. They also provide input when the government shapes their policies. Therefore, even if there are disagreements, he emphasised the importance of a dialogue between the government and NGOs. Interestingly, they provided trainings to Italian NGOs, teaching them the importance of remaining in contact with the Italian government by "agreeing to disagree". They also provide trainings on refugee law to lawyers in Turkey and the Balkans.

The fourth panellist Mr. Mohammed Skaik is Regional Economic Empowerment Manager for Spark, a Dutch NGO working for empowerment through entrepreneurship and higher education in conflict-affected societies. Spark provides capacity building trainings to local chambers of commerce in Turkey to help them develop projects for Syrian refugees. As they have come to realise that working only with entrepreneurs is neither enough nor sustainable, they have been working to build the capacity of local civil society as well as universities so that they can provide tailor-made courses for refugees. Overall, they are trying to create a supporting local environment for refugees.

Last but not least, we heard about the project of the International Organization for Migration called Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) from Mr. Mohamed Bashe Hassan. The project supports the development of targeted sectors in selected countries by strengthening the capacity of key institutions by engaging their diaspora communities in the Netherlands. In this case, Mr. Hassan was working with the Ministry of Justice of Somaliland to promote the rule of law.

According to the participants, some of the factors contributing to the success of a project were as follows: relevance, practicality, knowledge of the mandate and role of partner institutions,

commitment to the project, listening to and learning from each other so as to understand the specificities of the national system in which the project will be implemented, and flexibility to make the necessary adaptations.

The organisations employed various strategies to ensure the sustainability of their projects. While some ensured sustainability by broadening the scope of their projects with a view to positively shaping and influencing the broader environment within which they operate, others ensured that via the personal connections established in the partner institutions, which enabled them to cooperate and apply for further financing where needed.