Reflections on designing an inclusive model for migrants who live in Cyprus

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Introduction

Managing migration has become a central topic of discussion in European countries in an attempt to respond to complex and mixed migratory flows over the recent years (Betts, 2011; Geiger and Pecoud, 2010). In particular, the Member-States have setup national plans to cope with the rapid increase of Third Country Nationals, giving emphasis to their successful and active integration. However, the whole approach is under a major political, societal and economic challenge (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2011). The current economic recession brings forward questions of whether migrants are more or less likely to place demands on the welfare state and employment relative to natives, and whether funds should be directed to their integration. This is also supported by the perception that low-skilled migrants consume more governmental services than they pay in taxes. EU member states have not reached a solid conclusion of attempting to exclude migrants from access to citizen-based socio-economic privileges or will implement an inclusive policy for immigrants under the perspective of internationalised human rights' recognition.

This paper attempts to illustrate an ideal social protection system in which settlement and integration can be actively achieved. Following that it will illustrate the case of Cyprus, proceeding to critical analysis of what has been achieved the last few years and raising arguments about the pseudo-dilemma if migrants should have access to the social protection system. It is argued that the same elements which shaped the native's social inclusion systems also influence and improve the immigration policy. It is suggested that rather than create additional and more complex welfare dependencies, a different approach in correlation to the development of a flexible labour market and to the establishment of social integration policies may have positive results towards an active integration.

Assumptions and ideas about migrant adaptation

Until today there is not a common agreement in the literature about the interpretation of migrants' integration: 'There is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. ... The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated' (Ager and Strang, 2008: 167). Several authors underline the need to be seen as a societal goal, putting forward the necessity of succeeding migrant integration and minimizing the costs incurred as a result of migrant non-integration under a humanitarian perspective. Reflecting on this thought, a number of important questions are raised such as what characterizes a successful societal integration; which are the main components of it and for whom? Furthermore as it is anticipated the migrants' integration into the local societies consists of another critical question in need to be answered regarding the development of such a policy. Under which lens needs to be seen? The host country's which develop the social policy or in the eyes of migrants who attempt to realize the challenges of accessing new cultural, social, economic or political resources?

Several authors relate migrants' integration to the society as the society's ability to provide equal opportunities and rights for all citizens. Therefore integration is the ability to have access to different services and resources (Bayam *et al.*, 2009; Ager and Strang, 2008; Carens, 2005). In case society's members can tolerate any such social mobility, irrespectively of their country or culture origin, it is then most common, the dominant's group norm on what are appropriate or legitimate, to be accepted and adopted by migrants (Bourdieu, 1986).

The last decade's migration literature discusses about the cosmopolitanism model as a way of conceiving social relations (Calhoun, 2008; Delanty, 2006). Social integration is being seen as a model of the citizens of the world (Beck, 2007; Calhoun, 2008). The nation-state-model has been abandoned and refers to the universality. There is no longer interest with migrant assimilation to a single nation-state and attempt to teach them to adopt the local behavioral norms. It attempts to define a symmetry between the universal and the individualistic, between collective and individual rights and loyalties. Migrants and locals are

expected to respect one another through common accepted principles such as 'we are all different' (Foner, 2007), and 'differences are enriching' (Calhoun, 2008). Priority is given to the efforts of developing ideas of a shared humanity to achieve social integration (Beck, 2007).

Human rights, social justice, equal opportunities are the main values, which should enrich the policies towards a 'human integration' and 'universal values' (Steger, 2003). Those values have to be accepted unanimous by both the dominant group and the migrants. On the final stage a new ideal social formation will be developed, in which differences are treated with respectful acceptance (Glick Schiller *et al.,* 2011).

The 'cosmopolitan citizens may be considered as the world migrants, who they wish and would like to (having the freedom) travel and stay to several places and/or countries, at least for a specific period, and being treated equally and fairly. According to Roudomentof (2005) a large part of them belong to the 'middle class' (in their country of origin), individuals who are looking for better life and professional opportunities. This group actively pursues new societal forms of equality, and urge to create an alternative social attitude of respectful acceptance of the 'others'; inclusion policies on economic, social and cultural differences are some of the main components of those forms (Kwok-bun and Pluss, 2013). Although it can be argued that they do not represent the groups of migrants who are poor and unqualified, they are those who can seek to transcend the simultaneity of the binaries of 'difference' and 'sameness,' patriotism and transnationality, assimilationism and multiculturalism. They set pressure to create societies in which people have equal opportunities and are treated equally. Their rights and responsibilities are recognised and respected.

Carrera and Wiesbrock (2009) argue that there is constant struggle between the integration model of TCNs at a European level and the nationalist, quite often assimilative, models. They consider EU approach as a soft-policy (non-legally binding or enforceable), with the Commission playing a coordinating role in the exchange of national practices and experiences on the integration of TCNs among member states. Though it could be argued that this discretion allows the

development of different policies and practices which can be transferred to other countries as well, it retains sovereignty over the development of a European Integration model. The perception about cosmopolitanism, as a model of social integration, sets out to bridge the gap between the different particularistic ethno-political loyalties of migrants by bringing forward the universal bonds of solidarity (Beck, 2007).

By accepting this model as a fundamental principle of active integration, the need for specific policies, that will support this philosophy, arises. Such policies are referred to development of system that will provide adequate information and orientation; language training and skills development; labour market access and the promotion of tolerance or otherwise welcoming communities. These policies will result to the development of a holistic social protection system, which will promote and empower the values of co-habitat, mutual respect, solidarity and active citizenship for the members of local societies.

A brief explanation of how a pattern of such measures, established at a national level, that will promote the idea of 'cosmopolitan' model for all different categories of migrants, is explained in the following section.

From settlement to active integration

Settlement is the first step towards achieving integration and social inclusion (Henderson, 2004). It refers to the short-term transitional issues faced by newcomer migrants who moved to a new country, while integration is an ongoing process of mutual accommodation between an individual and society (Westin, 2000).

In case a host country has setup and operate such programmes, usually, aims to assist immigrants and/or refugees to overcome barriers specific to the newcomer experience (such as a lack of language skills and limited knowledge of country's cultural characteristics). The ultimate goal is to embrace them a feeling that they can participate in social, cultural, civic and economic life in the host country. The experience from implementing such programs in several countries combines in general terms the following four main areas of interest:

- information and orientation;
- language training and skills development;
- labour market access;
- and welcome communities.

While the state undertakes actions at strategic level, the provided services (implementation phase) are delivered by service provider organizations (Netherlands, Canada, Portugal are some examples of it) (Reis Oliveira *et al.,* 2009; Phillips, 2006; Taylor, 2013). The main characteristics of each area are described below:

i) Information and Orientation: The provision of settlement-related information and orientation is fundamental to the successful settlement of newcomers in the host country. Several tools are provided for individuals to enable them to learn about the necessity actions than need to enquire in order to become able to have an independent settlement (e.g. acquiring a social insurance number card, drivers' license, health card, etc.). An ideal situation exists when this information is available prior to arrival to enable newcomers to plan more effectively.

   The actual goals of establishing such a program are not completed in the provision of accurate and relevant information that is needed to make informed settlement decisions and access settlement services. It is extended to the wider idea of contextual understanding of life in the host country including legislation and civic participation rights. The effectiveness of such programs is extended when a number of different governmental departments agree to participate and join forces with the voluntary organisations. Those are the cases of one stop-shop in Portugal (One stop shop) (Reis Oliveira *et al.,* 2009), Spain (CEPI) (Phillips, 2006) and in Canada (Taylor, 2013).

ii) Language Training and Skills Development: the second area is referred to the development of the newcomers' ability to communicate with the local society's members to either in a common accepted language (i.e. English) or to the official one. The provision of language training has long been recognised as key to both the initial settlement and the longer term integration of migrants. Language

learning services are intended to help the new migrants to develop sufficient linguistic communication skills (including literacy) and other skills (including soft skills) in different contexts (e.g. employment related and social) to enable newcomers to function in the host society and contribute to the economy.

Different organisations beginning from public institutions till private lifelong providers design and deliver various language learning services for newcomers, including language assessment and official language instruction.

Furthermore, in relation to close collaboration with public employment service, a training scheme needs to be introduced to provide the necessity skills to migrants to cover positions that are in need at a national level. Other examples may be the provision of communication skills and interview techniques to become competent to get a job at the host country.

iii) Labour Market Access

Labour market participation is a critical indicator of successful settlement for migrants of working age, and the early engagement of immigrants in employment is a central goal of most immigration policies (Henderson, 2004). The majority of migrants who travel to another country intend to enter to the labour force. This is actually, their primary objective upon arrival. However, a number of difficulties exist almost for every country when they first attempt to integrate into the labour market (Urso, 2013). Such difficulties include individual and systemic barriers such as foreign credential recognition, lack of local culture experience, lack of knowledge of workplace culture and/or discrimination (Taylor, 2013).

It is the role of those labour market services (i.e. public employment services) which attempt to address these barriers and equip newcomers with the necessary information and support they need to enter into the labour market and even skills at a later stage to be efficient to contribute to the economy. It may also, in some cases, provide opportunities to practice language skills and to connect with other groups but also with locals (the case of Finland, Germany and Austria). In the previous mentioned cases. Those organisations include services such as job search skills, networking, internships, mentorships, and/or work placements. This

programming is delivered by a range of partners including service provider organizations, labour market organizations like chambers of commerce and employers themselves in some cases (Urso, 2013; Biffl, 2013).

iv) Welcome Communities

This area refers to the development of tolerate communities that value and facilitate the contribution of migrants. It is one of the most complex and difficult phases and the local communities need to adopt a friendly behaviour (even in times of austerity), organise events and activities to communicate to the migrants the new environment for them; rights, allowances and obligations. The development of such phase it actively involves several stakeholders ranging from the State till voluntary organisations, which have to collaboratively develop plans, strategies and tools (e.g. Local Immigration Partnerships, to communicate best practices and shares information and expertise and to connect vulnerable groups with local residents and establish formal and informal support networks.

To evolve to such model is required both strong centralised power that does not hesitate to crush provincial or ethnic opposition, in relation to transfer of power to local level. The former proposes the changes; however the history illustrates that the exercise of power at this level is also related to bureaucratic and sometimes arrogant exercise of power, often full of good intentions but almost always streamlining solutions that don't take the powerless groups' experiences and wishes into account, nor those of marginalized minority groups. A common strategy that characterises national policies is the focus on ensuring the people from diverse backgrounds participate in the political, economic and cultural life of their country, by emphasising the value of a true "national" citizen; focus on obligations. Quite often it is requested to accept already existing institutions and to participate in those despite possible incommensurability with their ethnic values (Vorobyova, 2006).

It is the role of local authorities to introduce practices and transnational connections at local level to become able to bypass national limitations and secure migrants' social inclusion (Favell, 2001). Municipal policies are the major stakeholders to minimise any conflict and establish peaceful relations between

the migrant communities and the local population. They are able to improve intercultural relations which cannot be identified as belonging to any one area of political action. When such policies are successful they create a climate of trust and goodwill. In addition to that the creation of such a climate contributes to a subjective feeling of security, while in contrast leads to lower crime rate. Furthermore, a more peaceful social climate can contribute to the local public discourse surrounding the issue of migrant and their position in society.

It is important for policymakers to recognise that many parallels in practice need to be established at several layers. The adoption of policies targeted at specific migrant groups is a vital tool for identifying needs and the delivering successful outcomes.

Migration in Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean. It has been inhabited since 10,000 BC and conquered numerous times throughout its history. In 1954 it became an independent state having formerly been a British colony. The shifting historical background helps describe a cultural identity of the Cypriot people that has been influenced by different populations and civilizations, which have determined the evolution of the country economically, culturally and socially. One could argue that Cyprus has been characterized by its tolerance in which different ethnic and religious communities can live and work together (Cochliou and Spaneas, 2008).

The economic growth on the island in the decade of 1980 resulted to an increased demand for labour. It was the period of 1990, which the State decided to abandoned the previous restrictive policies. A large number of temporary work visas to foreigners were granted for the first time in the history of Cyprus. Working permits could last for a period of six years, however, at a later phase, the time period was shortened in response to concern that an EU directive on the long-term residence of third-country nationals could allow for permanent settlement after five years. Nowadays, the permits are attached to work contracts to an employer within a sector that is deemed to have labour shortages that Cypriots cannot or will not fill. However, this change in policy legislation in 1990 resulted in an increase of legal

(documented) Third Country Nationals migrant workers from 545 in 1990 to ~68,000 in 2011 (CyStat, 2011). Given its size of population, Cyprus has been transformed from a country of emigration to a net immigration receiving country (Sylikiotis, 2006). The majority of migrants work as domestic workers, followed by the service industry (including tourism), manufacturing and agriculture; construction industries also have attracted large numbers of migrant labour.

Political events that occurred at international level had also affected the patterns of migration to Cyprus. The collapse of Soviet Union resulted in labour migration from countries that were previously part of the USSR. Most notably, Pontiac Greeks migrated from the Caucasus region, as they were entitled to Greek nationality, which allowed them to immigrate to Cyprus without the normal bureaucratic formalities. The Gulf War (in both periods), ongoing turmoil in Palestine, and the War in the Balkans, also contributed to an observed increase of the number of migrants who flew their countries and arrived in Cyprus.

The country was not prepared to accept such large populations of immigrants since legal, administrative and operational infrastructure was not in place (Cochliou and Spaneas, 2008). The current numbers of migrants living in Cyprus (asylum seekers and TCN) cannot be integrated within local societies and in common with other countries this has created a form of moral panic (Hamphries, 2004). The growing, negative image of asylum seekers has been compounded by their portrayed in the media and among the general public following reports of illegal activities and offences. As a counterbalance, there is insufficient knowledge about their contribution to the local society and to its economic growth (Trimikliniotis, 2013; Pashardes and Polycarpou, 2011; Gregoriou *et al.,* 2010). Furthermore questions about the kind of (multi-cultural) society along to the sort of integration should be promoted are still under negotiation (Tsiartas, 2013). From a country of net emigration up to recent times, the last two decades Cyprus has been transformed into a country of immigration, and of ethnic, cultural and social diversity. Over a twenty per cent of the current population was born abroad or have an ethnic identity other than the majority of the population according to the Census results (2011). However, still cannot be argued that the Cypriot society has adopted

effectively all these changes, though it has followed the international and European legislation regarding migration. It is in the process of developing an innate tolerance in national culture and the State is looking to adjust the national policies towards the European directives. In a time of economic crisis there may be justified fears that attitudes may harden, and that therefore greater effort will need to made in realising the policies of integration and diversity with which the State has responded to date to the changing complexion of Cypriot society. For example, integration remains significant both as a State policy goal and as a targeted outcome for projects working with refugees (Solidarity Funds, 2010).

Progressive steps are also marked in the labour market, as it has opened its economy and has been accepted foreign workers in specific sectors. However, according to MIPEX, it discourages long-term integration, as a number of obstacles need to overcome to allow migrant workers to have access and integration, in a long-term basis, in the labour market. It also highlights the few opportunities for them to the naturalization process.

Taking under consideration the above mentioned areas of developing a comprehensive and inclusive system that can accommodate the large numbers of migrants that currently live in Cyprus, it seems appropriate to explore each area to find any progress made and/or areas that need to be improved.

i) Information and Orientation: it is an area in which there is a dichotomy about the quality of services provided. The government portal as well as the Ministry of Interior provides all the necessary electronic information for an individual that he/she is planning to migrate to Cyprus. However, specialised services are missing when they come here, such as Migrants' Citizen Information Centres to provide information about their obligations and rights and even to support them for the first period they come to the country.

ii) Language Training and Skills Development: Though from the beginning a number of seminars and courses they are available and free of charge, a good dissemination for the existence of them is still missing. The lack of obligation to learn the language may be argued that contributes to the

negative stereotype of the local population. The last few years a systematic effort is being taken place by the utilisation of European co-funded projects.

iii) Labour Market Access: As it was mentioned earlier, the access to the market has been improved, however a transparent and rights-based labour migration system still needs to be developed (PICUM, 2013). From period to period there incidents and/or accusations about discriminatory practices and exploitative conditions. Monitoring of the quality of minimum working standards along to the flexibility of changing employers without losing their residence and work permit may help towards the improvement of the current system.

iv) Welcome Communities: Currently minimal steps have been done towards this direction. Only the last few years the local authorities have been introduced programmes for migrants to integrate them into the daily life of their local societies. Local Authorities need to undertake an important role in the integration policy, by creating structures of participative democracy with migrants associations and setting up a dialogue which will also involve new communities.They have also to help the new communities to build capacity to effectively articulate their needs and to consult them effectively. This process can be achieved by including them to social partnerships.

To summarise the previous arguments, there is no single explanation for the lack of social and labour integration of migrants in Cyprus. The situation is far more complex and has many intricate interrelated components. In addition to the presentation of main obstacles, attitudes and perceptions held by both the minority and the majority population influences both individual and group perceptions, giving emphasis to cultural differences and prejudices notwithstanding. Lastly, institutional provisions of the labour market and the welfare state are instrumental in facilitating or restricting both access to employment and the social integration of diverse minority groups (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2011).

The next section attempts to provide a critical discussion on how the theoretical model can be implemented in the case of Cyprus.

Conclusions

The European Union is built on the diversity of distinct cultural, religious and social traditions embodied in the cultures of its Member States (Carrera and Wiesbrock, 2009). Amidst all these differences there is one parallel that can be drawn – integration of migrant minorities is a major social challenge and a goal in all of them. It is essential to emphasize at both European and national level. It is home to people of many different racial, ethnic, religious and national backgrounds (Urso, 2013). Overall its economy and cultures have been enriched by the contributions of migrants (Urso, 2013). However there is no single explanation for the lack of social and labour market integration of minorities in the EU (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2011). Deficits in education and training, in relation to the lack of knowledge of the main language are some of the most observable prohibit characteristics that hamper their access to the labour market and their ability to find steady employment (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2011). This situation also exists also for the case of Cyprus (Trimikliniotis, 2013). Furthermore, conservative perceptions about the value of having migrants' community in the local society contribute to the maintenance of negative stereotypes by both the minority and the majority population.

The review of main indicators highlighted above illustrate that a change in a number of key areas of activity in the public arena (employment, language skills training, provision of information, welcome communities etc.) are indicative of successful integration. The suggested model discusses the introduction of a different perception which promotes the idea of 'Full and Equal Citizens' that overpass the national borders and adopts a humanitarian perspective. Cosmopolitan model relies on ideas of global justice, equality in principle, non-ethnocentric modes of thinking, or global human rights, to promote a new mode of human relations and integration on the global scale (Kwok-bun and Pluss, 2013). The local understanding has to be enriched by ideas and assumptions of theories of migrant adaptation. Understanding the causes and consequences of migrants' behavioural type in the integration

process is essential to help identify the reasons and effects of longer-term migrant non-integration. Both the theoretical and empirical findings of the Cypriot conditions indicate that a policy transformation may lead to the integration of migrants. It is understood that the adaptation processes of any one migrant can encompass different types though the suggested model recognises and respects the migrant's behaviour and anxiety to be accepted by the new community. To achieve this scope, different elements need to be constructed to support the overall goal. It attempts to persuade the different stakeholder parties to adopt effective policies which will combine both general and targeted integration policies. Those polices have to be balanced, complementary and reinforcing. The general policies create an institutional and social environment which discourages discrimination and encourages targeted action. Specific integration policies and positive action are necessary if institutional conditions, including discrimination, exclude minorities from participating in the labour market or other spheres of social and economic life to a degree that is beyond the capacity of policies based on the principle of equal treatment.

Sufficient linguistic skills are a critical prerequisite: it does not refer to successful participation in education and training but also is an essential element to enhance labour market integration. This may well require targeted action to bring them in contact with education and training. Any formal, legal barriers or other obstacles which hinder access to education and training need to be dismantled.

Parallel to that, the national policy of labour market needs to become more flexible and open to people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The risk of social inclusion can be reduced by active labour market policies: in particular through employment incentives and training schemes. Employment in the public sector has to be reconsidered and people from migrant minorities may be employed for several positions. For this to function there must be sufficient flexibility with regard to employment protection and wages. Government actions have to be taken at all levels: the local, regional and in national level.

Apart from public policies, private and business initiatives also are important, as well as public-private partnerships, at all levels of implementation. One of the valuable

insights is that most initiatives, involve partnerships between business, non-governmental and public organizations. Good practice requires that the specific local context and the particular challenges faced by minorities need to be highlighted and appreciated. One of the most important features successful initiatives have in common is that they establish networks, which bring together public and nongovernmental actors from both the native and the minority population. Encouraging interaction between the groups can trigger positive dynamics to help overcome existing societal and cultural barriers and social exclusion.

The economic and social conditions of migrants will only improve once negative attitudes and outright discrimination can be overcome. This requires coordination with other changes in a comprehensive plan covering all critical aspects. That includes institutional reform, in relation to the establishment of an anti-discrimination legislation. It is very important to gather clear empirical evidence on the feasibility and benefits of better integration and to publicize examples of successful integration.

The utilisation of Integration Fund and the presentation of best practices examples illustrates that improvements in the conditions of minorities are possible by the effective collaboration of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Working together they can influence and even change the institutional and societal factors which will result to the improvement of social and economic well-being of migrant groups.

The media can and have to play a particular role in raising awareness. They can circulate unbiased information on migrants, good practices and individual success stories. In this way these projects and personal experiences can act as role models for others and encourage further initiatives.

Cyprus demographics and cultural practices will evolve with these developments, and Cypriots will continually need to adjust to these changes. The greatest efforts of adaptation have already been made by migrants themselves, who built their homes, developed roots, set up enterprises and contributed to the country's economic growth. It's the indigents' now time to undertake their role and shift to a universal social inclusion system.

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