



**CIMIC**

Centrum voor Intercultureel Management en Internationale Communicatie

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**CIMIC – KHMechelen, Belgium**

**Jo Bastiaens**

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Report of study visit Oslo

*What does CIMIC want to get out of the partnership?*

In principle, and at a broad level, CIMIC regards European cooperation always as a learning experience. Specifically, I am interested to learn how other countries and organizations in Europe deal with issues related to the professional integration of ethnic minorities and migrants in society, especially including in education and on the job market. Furthermore, and complementary to the research projects CIMIC has been conducting in the past couple of years, we are currently seeking to build partnerships and learning opportunities with different organizations the EU to address the problem of facilitating access from migrant graduates to management jobs in various sectors of society. From its side, and given its own vast network, CIMIC will also be able to provide opportunities for European partners to get to know a variety of organizations and initiatives in Belgium. I expect to integrate partnership outcomes in our on-going research on immigrants in professional higher education in Flanders. Whereas the research so far has focused on exclusion mechanisms with regard to the inflow and retention of immigrants within higher education, the European partnership will allow us to orient attention to the outflow and integration of graduates on the labour market. Further, the partnership will be integrated in our own training and extension programs with clients and learners on this particular subject. Especially the findings from comparative analysis and best practices will be carried forward and capitalized in our activity programs.

*What elements did I recognize from my own country?*

What I recognized is that organizations typically try to solve problems by organizing training programs. What I also recognized is that there seems to be awareness or at least some uncertainty about the question whether training is always the best solution when we are dealing with problems of diversity. These are discussions that we are also confronted with in CIMIC training and consulting activities, which often lay bare a (hidden) problem of organizational change.

It appears that integration of immigrants in work contexts remains a sensitive point, in Norway as in Belgium. Especially the promotion of capable immigrant workers into mid- to top-management positions does not come easily. Special measures are warranted. Training migrant workers particular management skills is only one approach, which needs to be complemented with a firm commitment of the management of organizations. This was obvious in the cases presented by VOX (i.e. the agreement with three major companies in Oslo), and the discussions we had with the person from the hospital, and the critical perspective of the Danish participant (New Danes on the labour market).



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*What elements surprised me most?*

First of all, what struck me most was the very different situation regarding the immigration situation in Norway (and in the other countries represented in the project) as compared to Belgium, and this in many ways. In spite of commonalities, attention was drawn to the differences in numbers and concentrations, different countries of origin, different policies, and different approaches in how governments, countries and populations respond to the presence of immigrants in society. Other concepts are used in policy and practice. Some of the countries tend to reflect a perspective of assimilation, whereas others appeared closer to integration or even mutual integration. Sometimes these concepts are even hard to translate in other languages. I faced problems translating the Flemish notion of 'inburgering' into English and contented myself with 'civic integration' even though that doesn't cover the rather special attention that we tend to give to the aspect of 'language'. These differences often reflect the political context and culture of the receiving society.

Another interesting perspective for me was the VOX training case where attention was given to the special competencies some of the immigrants have acquired through their immigrant experience. Some of these competencies (i.e. attention to relational aspects on the work floor, communicative skills, etc.) appeared to fit well with the skills required as a floor manager. It seems to me that such a perspective is needed.

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