

M2M project meeting in Manresa, Spain in June 18-20

Report from the Norwegian partner, Vox

What we found surprising

- a) It was surprising that a city of about 75 000 inhabitants run so many different projects with the aim of integrating immigrants. It seems as the local authorities are not only facing the challenges immigration gives, but are also interested in finding good solutions. We were surprised and felt very honoured when invited to the Ajuntament /City Council of Manresa to meet the Mayor. The Spanish mentality celebrating events is both encouraging and valuable for us who are not so used to this.
- b) We also found it surprising that there are so many good initiatives and projects targeting immigrants in such a small city. We will mention some of them:
 - We found it very positive that one of the projects, the Athenea project has women as its target group and that the projects goal is to help competent women to get a high skilled job. Another aim of the project is to show that women have a potential but few opportunities. It is important to focus on women and especially on immigrant women since immigrant women meet more barriers than the men.
 - The Vapor Llonch project was also a very good example of best practice on recruiting and training of unemployed people. What surprised us was the cooperation between Sabadel City council, Vapor Llonch and the enterprise "Hotels resort". The City Council supports the project with money. Vapor Llonch organized the different courses and the management of Hotels resort has committed itself to give work to 50% of the course participants. This is a very model of successful cooperation between private enterprises and public authorities. This is a win-win situation.
 - The holistic approach to managers and employees in general in the DIESA chain of restaurants also impressed us. There will be more on this on the M2M website.
- c) It seems that in Catalunya many of the immigrants come from other European countries and South America. The South-Americans speak Spanish and share the culture and the religion but we know that some of them have very little education from the home countries and this is a problem. In Norway we have a lot of immigrants from Asia (Iran, Iraq and Pakistan) and Africa (Somalia). These groups speak languages very different from Norwegian and many of them are Muslims while the Norwegian are Protestants. The cultural barriers between the majority population and immigrants in Norway seem to be higher and integration more difficult. There was not so much focus on the Moroccans which seem to be one of the largest immigrant groups in the area. But this may be due to the fact that the M2M project is focusing on immigrants, their qualifications and management. In one of the presentations we were told that the Moroccan immigrants are often lacking reading, writing and language skills and have their working experience from the agricultural sector.

What we recognize from our country

- a) In Manresa immigrants live concentrated in certain areas of the town, mostly in the old part of the city. The reason for this is maybe that houses are cheaper in this area?. There has been an increasing immigration from countries like Poland and the immigrants are mostly men coming to find work. We also learned that reunification of families has grown the last years. This is also the case in Norway.
- b) In Norway we are focused on giving immigrants opportunities on the background of “equality” and democracy principles, that all persons have the same rights. We also have antidiscrimination laws that prevent discriminations based on ethnical background, religion etc. In Spain it seems that “social responsibility” thinking in working life is growing. We got the impression that the Spaniards are good at putting principles and ideas into practice, for example decide by contracts that a certain number of employees in enterprises participating in the social economy project should belong to groups that are at risk of being marginalized.
- c) One thing that is similar in Spain and Norway is the understanding that competent immigrants are a resource for the country and its company and that they should be helped to find suitable jobs. In both countries public authorities acknowledges this responsibility and aim at finding appropriate measures.