

FROM MIGRATION TO MANAGEMENT OSLO KICK-OFF MEETING REFLECTIONS

First of all, I would like to say that what I realized is that **our countries are in really different stages in relation to immigration** (different history, very recent immigration in Spain, and no receiving culture in our country, essentially)

In the twentieth century, specially in the 60s and in the 70s, Spain was a land of migrants that sent a lot of workers to countries such as Germany, The Netherlands or France. The money the immigrants sent back to Spain was one of our engine of development. So, while you started co living with non-western employees (you have had Pakistan workers since the 70s, for example), we had another role: we were in some cases the foreign workforce.

But in the last 10 years this tendency has twisted: on the one hand, Spanish workers are no longer providing workplaces abroad, while on the other, our Labour Market is receiving an increasing number of foreigners. According to this, currently our policies are not focused yet in the empowerment of immigrant origin employees, but in their access to the Labour Market. We are working on sensitizing both citizenship and companies about the need of engaging immigrant workers and, at the same time, helping newcomers with their main barriers: language, Spanish or Catalan working culture, insecurity...

This is briefly the basis of my following reflections, especially the ones that talk about the surprising aspects for me in the study cases shown in Oslo.

The things that surprised me:

1. In the first study case (The Norwegian Recruitment Project), the role of the companies surprised me, because in our day-to-day life we are used to see how companies refuse immigrant workers though they have job vacancies. The three Norwegian companies agreed in participating in the recruitment of the candidates as well as in assuming part of the expenses in the organization of the course, in spite of the important costs of these actions.

Only referring to the economic ones, I think that it would be very difficult that this happened in our countries nowadays: it could only run if public money was invested, and it financed almost the whole project (in yours each candidate cost approximately 10000 EUR, and the replacement at the workplace was not included)

2. Another thing that I found amazing is that the final evaluation of the project was a written exam while the course seemed to be based on other contents (personal development, communication skills, role-plays...) more practical, I think. That the written exam was a "guarantee" needed by the companies can

be understood, but in my opinion it seems that it didn't fit with the content of the course and it could give final misleading results

3. Again in the first study case, as it was discussed in the meeting, I believe that the contents and the experience of attending the course were really useful for all the participants that finished it. But on the other hand, I think that organizing a course for accessing leadership with no planned leadership vacancies in the company, may have bad consequences for some of the participants (unmotivated them..) and it may be a "loss" of money for the company as well.

4. Finally, it seemed to me that immigrants' workforce is seen in your country as a possibility to grow and learn and also to find out Norwegian "mistakes" regarding to management, employment or labour culture. In our country, always in the line of my introductory paragraph, I think immigrants are still seen mostly as a danger, instead of as a challenge or as a source of innovation/ideas that can help us improve.

What I found similar: the barriers

The main barriers for immigrants in Norway are shared for immigrants in Catalonia or Spain: insecurity at different levels; fear of opposition from their own group or from the workers from the receiving country; lack of plans for career development in the workplace... But one of the most important ones they have to access leadership positions is the language as well.

Most immigrants from non Western countries have a lack of language skills, though in our case, for some of them they have twice the difficulty (Eastern Europe people, workers from Senegal, Moroccans...) because we have two official languages: Spanish and Catalan. It means that people that live in Manresa have to know and speak both to be able to access most jobs. It's really tough to get a job if you cannot understand both, and being fluent in Catalan is very good valued.

In regard to Latin Americans, although we share Spanish as mother tongue, they are really surprised, and I should say upset, when they arrive in our service and they realize that they need to learn another language to be in the best position to get a job. Language is for them a barrier, even though they know Spanish.