Fact Sheet: Feasibility study on the labour market performance of regularised migrants in Europe (REGANE)

Objectives: The objectives of this feasibility study are threefold:

1. To determine the feasibility of conducting a comparative quantitative survey of the labour market performance of regularised immigrants in seven European countries;
2. To identify the best design for an empirical study of the labour market performance of regularised and irregular migrants and prepare draft tools for implementation of the survey;
3. To provide tentative results on the labour market trajectories of regularised migrants – on the basis of exploratory qualitative research conducted within the feasibility study.

Background and rationale of the study

The regularisation of irregular immigrants remains one of the main controversial policy options in regard to policies towards irregular migrants. While there is an increasing realisation that in some contexts regularisation may be an appropriate and necessary response to the sustained presence of irregular migrants, opposition against regularisation remains strong, often based on principled considerations as well as concerns about negative side effects of regularisation. Proponents of regularisation argue that besides sometimes being necessary for reasons of fundamental rights (such as in cases where the respect for family and private life is at stake), regularisation may be unavoidable for practical reasons – notably, if removal is not a viable option. Regularisation may also help to bring informal employment relationships out of the shadow and in that context also has the potential to address the vulnerability to exploitation and difficult working situations that is associated with an irregular status (for more information, see an ICMPD discussion paper written for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], available here). In this sense, its proponents argue, regularisation can also be seen as an instrument for legal integration. However, still very little is known about the wider impacts of regularisation and specifically the impact of regularisation on those regularised: there is less than a handful of studies that have investigated such impacts.

An earlier study conducted by ICMPD between 2007 and 2009 ( "Regularisations in Europe", REGINE) on behalf of DG Justice, Freedom and Security (now DG Home) identified the overall extent of regularisation, the different forms, rationales and target groups of regularisation, while linking regularisation to the complex causes of irregularity, differing patterns of irregular migration and different overall policy responses to irregular migration across the EU. However,
as a study largely based on desk research and limited primary data collection from public authorities and other stakeholders, the study was unable to provide robust evidence regarding the wider impacts of regularisation. In particular, it failed to provide robust and conclusive evidence on the the impact of regularisation on labour market trajectories of regularised migrants. However, such evidence is crucial in order to shed light on the potential costs and benefits of regularisation and in order to understand how benefits can be maximised and costs minimised.

**Aims of the study**

The REGANE study sets out to address this gap. In its feasibility study phase, the study has three main aims. First, it will assess the feasibility of conducting a quantitative survey amongst regularised and non-regularised migrants in 7 European countries; secondly, it will explore the best design for a quantitative empirical study of labour market trajectories of regularised migrants; and thirdly, it will undertake exploratory qualitative research involving relevant experts, public authorities and migrants – thus not only preparing the ground for the implementation of the quantitative survey but also providing preliminary results regarding labour market trajectories of regularised migrants. The quantitative survey prepared through this feasibility study itself is planned to be implemented in a second phase of the project, expected to be launched in 2013. Combined with the qualitative insights won in the first phase of the project, as well as complementary desk and empirical research, the survey will provide the first systematic comparative assessment of individual level impacts of regularisation on irregular migrants regularised in Europe.

**Key Facts**

**Donor(s):** European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusions, contract Nr. VS/2012/0296 (SI2.632540)

**Duration:** October 2012 to October 2013 (Feasibility study)

**Countries:** DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PL, SE

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