

Migration on the international agenda

The term migration covers voluntary, involuntary, legal and illegal movement across national borders. People relocate for a variety of reasons. Students, labour migrants, refugees and human trafficking victims are all part of the international migration scene.

European Migration Conference

At the end of June 2006, the UDI held a conference for the European migration authorities (GDISC – General Directors' Immigration Services Conference) in Oslo: "Managed Migration". This was the first European conference on legal migration (non-asylum) and formed part of the European cooperation on migration issues. This initiative reflects the strong international focus that is now found on student and labour immigration, family reunification and other temporary immigration. Among the themes for the conference were the social consequences of migration, labour immigration programmes for highly qualified labour, DNA testing, biometry, verification of documents, illegal immigration and family immigration. Delegates from 32 countries attended the conference.

What is migration?

Migration is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that comprises the need for labour, financial and democratic development, trade, integration, family immigration, human rights, social security and the need to combat illegal immigration.

Migration is a frequently discussed topic. It is no longer a question of whether a country should allow immigration, but rather how society handles the influx of migrants. Each country must develop a clear migration policy that considers the connections between the different dimensions of migration.

When handled properly, migration can have a positive impact on the financial and social situation in each country and region. Migration nevertheless represents a major challenge for most societies.

International activities

In October 2005, the GCIM (Global Commission for International Migration) published its report on behalf of the UN which considers all aspects of migration. This report has become the standard reference for much of the work undertaken nationally and internationally. The European Commission has followed up many of the themes in a number of reports on how the EU wishes to deal with international migration.

Migration and development

The relationship between migration and development was in focus in 2006. In Norway, an inter-ministerial working group with representatives from the The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID), the the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UDI and The Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (Norad) issued the report "Migration and development – better continuity and coordination" in May 2006. This is the first step on the way to further cooperation between the ministries and

agencies involved. The aim is to deal with migration in a manner that reinforces the positive effects of migration while reducing the negative consequences as much as possible.

Migration can promote development in the migrants' countries of origin through the transfer of funds and competence.

Registered remittances alone constitute almost three times the amount of official development aid and are considered to be an important effect of migration. Norway wishes to establish the best possible system for remittances, so that as many migrants as possible use the official channels and so that as much of the money as possible reaches the intended recipients in developing countries.

Migrants also acquire knowledge, which in turn can be transferred to their country of origin. Norway intends to facilitate the development and exchange of competence which occurs when individuals move from one country to another. It is therefore necessary to focus on circular and non-



permanent migration by developing flexible rules. Furthermore, measures are needed to prevent a brain-drain of human resources from undermining poor countries. In particular, Norway wishes to counteract the brain drain from the health sector in developing countries.

Migration in Europe

Over the past five years, significant changes have been made to the EU's migration policy and procedures due to the heavy influx of migrants into Europe. In 2006, the EU implemented a number of measures in the migration field and has focused on cooperation with African countries, not least with respect to migration flows across the Mediterranean, and is therefore trying to encourage cooperation and dialogue with these countries.

When it comes to labour migration, the EU focuses on a needs-based approach to migration (such as skilled labour and seasonal workers), as well as a common legal status for all lawful work migrants. The possibility of temporary and circular migration will also be considered, in addition to issues relating to the brain-drain problem.

Countering human trafficking

Norway has long had a sharp focus on human trafficking and is working on prevention, protection and international prosecution measures. In December 2006, the Government launched its new action plan against human trafficking, and the Ministry also laid down new and expanded rules governing residence for assumed victims. The current scheme, which has a reflection period, was also extended.

More specifically, the UDI's efforts to combat human trafficking are primarily focused on ensuring that assumed victims are identified at an early stage and receive the follow-up they are entitled to within the Directorate's area of responsibility. Applications for asylum and residence and work permits from this group are given priority.

In 2006, substantial efforts were also made to provide assistance and protection to assumed victims in the reception system. In cooperation with the reception centres, the police, health service and child welfare services, the UDI has been actively involved in ensuring that unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who may have been victims

Interdisciplinary cooperation

During 2006, the UDI's Department for Regions, Reception and Return held five seminars on interdisciplinary cooperation to counter human trafficking. The target group comprised reception centre employees, child welfare service employees, police and health service employees in the host municipalities, the UDI, IMDi, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, outreach services, shelter centre employees and NGOs.

of human trafficking are cared for and treated appropriately. Procedures have been developed to provide possible victims with protection, health examinations and care.

The UDI has also established five reception centres for the close follow-up of asylum seekers over 18 years of age who may have been victims of human trafficking. The objective is to provide follow-up that satisfies individual needs for information, care, safety and security.



Countries in focus

Every year many people apply to enter Norway. They have different reasons for coming here, so the UDI needs to have a knowledge of the countries they come from.

In 2006, Poland, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia in particular stood out, either by attracting media attention or because of the number of applicants, or both.

Lebanon

From 1975 to 1991, Lebanon was ravaged by civil war. The neighbouring states of Syria and Israel were also heavily involved during the civil war period, and Israel occupied areas of Southern Lebanon until May 2000. Syria withdrew its military presence from Lebanon in the spring of 2005, but continues to exert a strong influence in key areas of Lebanese politics.

On 12 July 2006, Israel carried out large-scale attacks against Lebanon after the Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel and took two Israeli soldiers as prisoners. A ceasefire was introduced on 14 August and has with only minor exceptions been observed. Approximately one million Lebanese fled the area, but most have now returned to their homes. In the wake of the war, a political power struggle arose which has so far not been resolved.

The war in the summer of 2006 led the UDI to set up an information telephone line for applicants and next of kin with ties to Lebanon. To minimise the burden on individual applicants, case processing was adapted to the special circumstances of the applicants. For example, the UDI gave priority to urgent cases and relaxed the requirements for visa and family immigration applications. While the situation lasted, the UDI did not make decisions which involved an obligation to return to Lebanon, and this included persons whose asylum application had been rejected.

Poland

After the Berlin wall came down in 1989, the Communists in Poland lost power through a partially free election. The Solidarity Party won a majority and formed the government. In 2006, the country was governed by the national conservative party PiS (Law and Justice) and the liberal party PO (the Citizens' Platform).

Poland's high unemployment rate is the biggest economic problem in the country.

Through their EU membership in 2004, Polish citizens gained easier access to the Norwegian labour market. Poland represented the largest proportion of work permits granted to foreign nationals in 2006. A total of 21 200 people were granted a first-issue permit, while 17 500 were granted renewed work permits. Possible motivation factors for working in Norway include high unemployment in the country of origin, the high wage level in Norway and having family and friends here.

Poland was also the country from which most family immigrants came in 2006. During the year 1700 permits were granted, mostly for reunification with a Polish national working in Norway.

Irak

From 1979 to 2003, Iraq was ruled by Saddam Hussein. His rule was characterised by suppression, conflict and war.

In March 2003, a coalition led by the USA invaded Iraq and Saddam Hussein was overthrown.

Northern Iraq has had limited self-rule since 1992. For many years, the two dominant parties in the region were in conflict, but since the ceasefire agreement in 1998 the region has seen positive development and political stability. There are currently no hostilities in the country and the security situation is generally good.

In southern and central regions of Iraq, the situation is quite different. In many places, the level of conflict is approaching that of civil war. In 2005 and 2006, Iraq saw a number of attacks on the civilian population based on religious and ethnic background.

Iraqis have been the largest group of asylum seekers over the past two years, although the figures are lower than at the end of the 1990s. The background of asylum seekers has gradually changed from being dominated by individuals from Northern Iraq in the 1990s (see "The MUF dispute" on page 20) to also include individuals from other parts of the country. Asylum applications often mention the risk of staying in Iraq due to a particular religious or ethnic background in a certain area.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has suffered political and military unrest for the last 25 years and has endured long periods of hostilities and anarchy. The Taliban declared Afghanistan an Islamic republic and introduced strict Islamic rule in 1996. In 2001, the Taliban were ousted and a transitional government took over.

Afghanistan is dominated by widespread poverty, extensive corruption, instability and a weak government. In the southern and eastern regions, armed conflict continues between coalition forces and the Taliban and other elements that are hostile to the government. The central authorities have no control outside the capital of Kabul. The rest of the country is generally controlled by warlords and local commanders.

Afghanis have for many years been one of the largest groups of asylum seekers in Norway. Until August 2003, all applicants were granted residence in Norway due to the security situation. Since April 2004, applicants not requiring protection have been rejected. Some particularly vulnerable groups, such as single women, unaccompanied minors, the sick and families with children, are granted residence either on protection or humanitarian grounds.

More than 3.5 million refugees have in recent years returned from neighbouring countries to what the UNHCR defines as safe areas. In 2006, Norway entered into an agreement with the UNHCR and Afghanistan concerning the return and reintegration of refugees. The agreement makes it possible to carry out both voluntary and forced return of former asylum seekers. One consequence of the agreement was the establishment of a project (the IRRANA project²) which the UDI's six regional offices administer in cooperation with the The International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The project will run until April 2007 and consists of financial aid and various forms of assistance to those returning.

2. Information, Return and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan.

Somalia

The majority of the population in Somalia belongs to the *Somali* ethnic group, which consists of six large clan families divided into sub-clans. Siad Barre led the country from 1969 until he was overthrown in 1991, and since then Somalia has been without a functioning central government. In the northern regions, state-like entities have been established, called Somaliland and Puntland, where the security situation has been relatively good.

In southern Somalia, clan-based militia fractions led by warlords have established control over various areas. The situation has been dominated by lawlessness and periodic armed conflict. Ethnic minorities and weak clans occupied by the militia of another clan have been particularly vulnerable in this situation. In December 2006, Ethiopian forces entered southern Somalia and helped the transitional government to take control from an alliance of Sharia courts. The situation continues to be very unclear.

For several years, Somalis have been one of the largest groups of asylum seekers coming to Norway. Due to the increased risk of a major armed conflict, the UDI and the UNE withdrew the obligation to return to Somalia, including the northern areas of Somaliland and Puntland, in November 2006 (in February 2007 the suspension on the obligation to leave Norway was abolished). The end result of this was that the processing of Somali cases became very complex. Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia and the USA's attack on suspected Al Qaeda members in January 2007 made the situation even more acute.