

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Skills validation for returning migrants under the Mobility Partnership

10 – 11 November 2011
Chisinau, Hotel Leograd



Since 2009 the ETF has collaborated with the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in developing a system that contributes to the transparency of adult workers' skills, through quality-assured assessment and validation against national occupational standards. The ETF project is part of the labour market component of the EU-Republic of Moldova Mobility Partnership, and it is focussed on recognising the skills of returning migrants to value them in the domestic labour market.

The overall objective of this conference was therefore to disseminate the Moldovan experience and lessons learnt to Georgia and Armenia, within the context of the Eastern Partnership's cooperation on the Stockholm Programme and the Mobility Partnerships.

The Mobility Partnership is embedded into the tight cooperation with the European Union affirmed **Ms Natalia Gherman**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova. By this conference, one important recommendation of the High-Level policy meeting on the Stockholm Programme and the Eastern Partnership (in January 2011) is followed up: to exchange information and practice among the countries involved in Mobility Partnerships. Besides the Republic of Moldova (2008) and Georgia (2009), a new Mobility Partnership agreement has been signed between the European Union and Armenia on 27-28 October 2011. The Republic of Moldova has, step-by-step, moved towards the development of migration policy and, in particular, addressed the issue of skills of migrants. The Action

Plan on Migration and Asylum, adopted on 9 November 2011 emphasizes on promotion of recognition of skills and qualifications, including also validation of skills of migrants.

The Head of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, **Mr Dirk Schübel** stated the importance of sustainable development and this kind of growth would not be possible without skills development and validation, without investment into education. This is why the EU pays especial attention to developing partnership with third countries. The Mobility Partnership is a good example of policy dialogue and implementation in the field of management of migration. Mutual learning through this instrument includes also labour and employment component, leading to a “win-win-win” situation. The EC has approved a new package of support the VET sector in the Republic of Moldova.

The Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family, **Mr Sergiu Sainciuc**, informed about the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2020” which puts quality of education and training, human capital development as first priority. Migrants represent an important part of country’s human capital and the Republic of Moldova intends to employ as many returning migrants as possible. Services for professional re-integration, improved entrepreneurial learning will be strengthened.

Ms Loretta Handrabura, Deputy Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova, confirmed the national priority on quality of education and training. New strategies and policies are being developed by the Government to create a culture of learning in the country. It is important to value learning at any age and to motivate people through recognition of their achievements.

Ms Lilia Palii, Director at the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova, stated the importance of migration and skills validation for Moldovan economic development. The work done on occupational standards will facilitate educational planning and then professional career development.

More than 60 participants from 9 different countries attended the conference. The representatives from the Republics of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, and Ukraine have common challenges in their labour markets and agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation and common actions in the field of migration and skills.

The experience of the Republic of Moldova has been enriched with analysis of labour migration with a particular focus of the policies and actions promoted to attract Moldovan migrants to return and the importance of offering a system for VNFIL in order to recognise the acquired skills. There are important sectors like construction where investments, in particular foreign investments, are based on the skills of the workers as a pre-requisite for certification and for participating in tenders. Ukrainian employers give value to VNFIL elements has also been presented and discussed. Actions in attracting migrants to return and set up their own business have also been presented and discussed.

The conference was a valuable occasion for analysing the practical experience acquired in Moldova in the implementation of the Mobility Partnership and to disseminate the lessons learnt to Georgia and Armenia.

The participating countries agreed to continue to exchange experience on how to set up a solid system of skills development and validation of learning processes (share occupational standards templates), involvement of social partners (creation of partnership, nationally agreed structure, institutionalisation of sector committees), what should be role of different stakeholders, and also how to assure quality (who should define quality criteria for validation).

This co-operation will be further strengthened in 2012, as contribution to promote co-operation in the ENPI region.