



Construction Trade Unions develop common actions for all the workers of their industry in different regions of the country

p.2



The CGTP-IN Migrations Department held three workshops jointly with the Regional Trades Councils of Lisbon, Porto and Évora

p.4



Editorial

With the publishing of this first edition of Integrating, the CGTP-IN fulfills an ambition of many years: to have an information tool on the theme of migration flows. And, despite the fact that its edition is one of the activities of the Project “Immigration – informing and training to integrate better”, this does not minimize its communicational trade union confederation nature.

Emigration is a right recognized by the United Nations which exists in Democratic Societies – but massive emigration from a country is a direct accusation to the political power of that country and to the lousy living and working conditions that prevail in it!

And massive migrations are economic migrations of working men and women who, against all odds, are trying to get abroad what their country is not capable of offering them: a life with dignity! Thus, “work” is the driving force of most migrants. Portugal is well aware of this reality, in particular when, in the sixties of the last century, around a million and a half Portuguese went abroad due to hunger, unemployment and underdevelopment, but also due to an unfair colonial war and a fascist dictatorship that only the 25th of April brought down!

Since its foundation, CGTP-IN observed, followed and supported Portuguese emigrants and developed trade union activity among the

continues on p. 2

The strength of solidarity continues!



Trade Unions

continued from p.1

Portuguese communities abroad in close cooperation with the Unions of the host countries and with all those who share similar interests: to defend immigrants' rights and their right to a harmonious integration in the welcome society.

Today, Portugal is a "social lab" of migration flows – about 5% of our population is composed of immigrants, while, each year, tens of thousands of Portuguese continue emigrating.

For the CGTP-IN, in this moment of great hardship (but also of important struggles, as the General Strike of 24th November), it is crucial to keep going and to reinforce the union's activity with the immigrants in Portugal and to improve our cooperation with the social movements. This also represents the coherent continuity of our past! The struggle against precariousness and social exclusion within the working class in Portugal is global. Solidarity is essential both for workers on open-ended contracts and for those on fixed term agreements; for the young and the old; for men and women; for the private and the public sector; for services and transport and for manufacturing; for nationals and immigrants – and the message of immigrants' rights is one of the goals of this Project!

In this moment of strong intervention, action and union struggle of the CGTP-IN against the PSD/CDS Government, which is clearly ultra liberal and conservative - making of the workers and of labour and social rights its main enemy - it is crucial to state that immigrants in Portugal are brothers and comrades of all Portuguese workers, men and women.

In this framework, we declare that immigrants do not only have inalienable rights, but also that they must be treated with respect and dignity by our society. Therefore, our struggle is common and increasingly necessary – this is the essential message of the first edition of this Newsletter!

Carlos Trindade
Member of CGTP-IN's
Executive Committee
Responsible for the
Migrations Department

Construction, Pottery and Glass Portuguese Trade Union Federation

Precariousness makes unionization harder

There is no rigorous estimate about the number of illegal immigrants in the Construction Sector in Portugal; in 2008, estimations announced a total number of 70 000 legal immigrants in our country, many of them in Construction, but this "official" number is often underestimated. The majority is in regions of Lisbon, Setúbal, Faro and Porto.

The Construction Trade Unions, all over the country, develop a common action directed at all the workers in the industry, from recruitment to the official's and shop steward's elections and to the resolution of conflicts in the workplaces.

It is possible to do more and better, particularly in the frame of the rising of exploitation which grows in the workplaces.

The main difficulty has to do with labour precariousness at several levels, fear of losing jobs and the huge labour mobility that exists.

The language also creates problems in the union message assimilation.

Trade Unions play a very important role, from the workplace to the society, in solving the immigrant worker's problems.

From the intervention and struggle for effective and stable labour contracts, better salaries and rights, adequate health and safety conditions, right to social security, education, housing, culture and sport.

It is essential to contribute so that immigrant workers are not used in an employer strategy of keeping low salaries, high precariousness and exploitation of all workers.

It is very timely to continue the struggle for the effective integration of immigrant workers, underlying the fight against the illegal exploitation of their work, racism and xenophobia and demanding the effective guarantee of the right to family reunion and the valuing of the diverse cultural identities, the respect for the

difference and the effective intercultural dialogue.

It is essential that immigrant workers may be even more contacted by the sectoral Unions to ensure their unionisation; that they may pressurize the employers and the Labour Conditions Authority to guarantee the effectiveness of the legal rights and to assure the full enforcement of the Collective Agreement.

CGTP's action should deepen even further the bond with the Unions and of these with the immigrant workers, defining joint strategies of intervention and demands, disseminating and valorizing all the positive results achieved.

The full labour and social integration of all foreigner citizens who are working and living in Portugal is an indeclinable duty of the Portuguese State, that CGTP-IN, at all levels where it is represented, will continue to claim and demand, as a renewed necessity

|| *The full labour and social integration of all foreign citizens who work and live in Portugal is an indeclinable duty of the Portuguese State* ||

Communities

Brazil House, Carlos Henrique Vianna

Xenophobia has not increased

B.I. — What is the representation of the Brazilian community currently in Portugal, in terms of population and employment?

C.H.V. — There are approximately 150 thousand Brazilians in Portugal, including more than 10 thousand who have already obtained Portuguese nationality.

B.I. — Could you describe the projects and actions that your Association has been developing for the inclusion of your community in Portugal?

C.H.V. — The Brazil House has had, for many years, a legal aid department, a welcome/guidance service and a department for employment insertion. These 3 services try to help integrate the immigrants in the Portuguese society. Besides this, it sits in official immigration advisory boards, such as the COCAI and other instances that promote the immigrants agenda.

B.I. — In brief words, which are the main obstacles and positive factors that your community comes across, to integrate in Portugal?

C.H.V. — The Portuguese state takes a globally positive stance in relation to the integration of immigrants. In Portugal we do not find (or we find far less) hostility problems created by political groups or society in relation to immigrants, compared with Italy, Holland and other European countries. Nevertheless, there is prejudice against Brazilian women, a fact that offends us and that we judge unacceptable. There are problems to rent houses or rooms when it comes to Brazilian women. In any case, and despite the current crisis, xenophobic feelings do not seem to have increased in Portugal.

B.I. — The immigration laws were recently changed in Portugal. Can we say that the new law gives foreign citizens more protection? What changed in relation to the old law? What is still missing for better laws to be adopted?

C.H.V. — Not that recently. There is a positive evolution in comparison with the previous law, translated in a much larger number of residence permits granted over

the last few years and a high number of immigrants who naturalized and obtained Portuguese nationality.

There are many complaints concerning difficulties in obtaining family reunion. And there is a group of undocumented people who are unable to become regularized, since they cannot testify their entry in Portugal. These are issues that need to be solved.

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The CGTP-IN is a very important actor, that, from the very beginning, defended immigrants rights in general and more favourable legislation in particular
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B.I. — How would you comment the action of CGTP-IN and its member Unions regarding immigration policies in Portugal and regarding their support and solidarity to migrant workers?

C.H.V. — The CGTP-IN is a very important actor, that, from the very beginning, defended immigrants rights in general and a more favourable legislation in particular.

Immigrants associations and particularly the Brazil House count on this support and on CGTP-IN's active militancy in favour of our cause and this has a translation into daily work of the CGTP-IN in different fronts unfortunately, the majority of migrant workers lack trade union consciousness, to a large extent due to fear of employers retaliation.

B.I. — What needs to be improved regarding our two organisations' collaboration?

C.H.V. — The Brazil House is available to join trade union recruitment campaigns carried out by the CGTP-IN member unions and explicitly supports the coming general strike we can also promote joint awareness raising actions, talks, etc, on labour rights for migrant workers and immigrants in general.



Regional Workshops

Workshops included in the project's development

The CGTP-IN Migrations Department held, during the last few months, together with its Lisbon, Porto and Évora Regional Trades Councils, three workshops that were part of the project development work.

The objective of these workshops was, on the one hand, to present and discuss the **Socio-Economic Study on Immigration and the Legal Guide on Migrant Workers Rights**, both produced in the framework of the Information and Awareness Campaign that the CGTP-IN is conducting with this project and, on the other, to present and reflect upon the **Positions, Guidelines and Demands of the CGTP-IN on trade union work on Migrations**. And, naturally and consequently, to discuss with the participants the existing labour and social problems prevailing amidst the communities and the possible ways of contributing to their resolution.

The meetings were attended by trade union officials and activists, both migrant and national, who are daily involved in contacts with migrant workers and their problems, as well as by social activists from immigrant and solidarity associations and different institutions. Given their origin and daily work, they spoke, in a very committed and inter-active way, of many and diverse concrete issues and presented solutions for the future work.

The concrete problems and the participants' views

The problems, comments and opinions put forward by the participants in the three workshops mostly concerned: (i) the absolute lack of knowledge of many immigrants about the means available to support them, mainly in terms of their regularization and enforcement of labour laws; (ii) the high number of unemployed that exists in the immigrant communities and who is not entitled to social benefits as a result of being immigrants, even when they are holders of documents testifying that they are working or have already worked; (iii) the existing discrimination (camouflaged or clear) and the lack of information on how to fight that situation; (iv) the difficulty faced by Eastern European immigrants in learning

|| *Concrete problems and possible ways of solving them came out in the day light!*
Strengthening trade union action and cooperation is the right course to improve the integration of immigrants! ||

Portuguese; (v) in general terms, the absence of a proper welcome by the national authorities, when immigrants need to deal with official papers, as is the case of renewing their visas ; (vi) that Portugal is still in need of immigrant manpower and, therefore, it must treat immigrants in a welcoming perspective; (vii) that, just like for Portuguese citizens, unemployment is rising amongst the Brazilian community; (viii) that trade unions have been playing a very relevant role in testifying that immigrants are employed with a labour link; (ix) that immigrants must enjoy the same rights as those of Portuguese nationals, by namely being entitled to social benefits as well as to the right of electing and being elected for several political bodies; (x) that, more recently, the traffic of human beings has been increasing in Portugal and that the IEE (Institute of Strategic Studies) relationship with the trade unions has been vital to help detect and aid the people who are victims of these networks of human trafficking; (xi) that renewing visas at the SEF for Eastern European immigrants is more expensive than for those of CPLP nationals. Besides, at the SEF, they often get no help in trying to sort out their legal papers ; (xii) as for Article 88° of the Law, that there are different SEF interpretations concerning the required forms and information given, and even situations in which we find SEF officials virtually prompting immigrants to go back to their respective countries of origin; (xiii) as for immigrants who are self-employed (green pay slips), they are facing problems with the renewal of their





visas, since they do not have an individual contract link and the SEF does not accept the renewal, even when regular social security deductions are shown as evidence; (xiv) Job Centres do not accept the requests for unemployment benefits from immigrants registered at the Tax Office as self-employed and therefore they become totally unprotected with regard to their economic situation.

Because of these multiple problems, the CGTP-IN officials presented - using the CGTP-IN printed support materials (in four languages: Portuguese, English, Rumanian and Ukrainian) that were disclosed in the beginning of the workshops - some of the possible ways of overcoming them and made comments on some of the participants' views.

Trade Union cooperation of the CGTP-IN with the Immigrants and Solidarity Associations

Besides the trade union reality, workshops also reflected the openly social vision put forward by the representatives of the immigrants, solidarity associations and different official bodies, with their common trace of working directly with immigrant communities.

Thus, in the Lisbon workshop participated the Brazil House, the Institute of Strategic Studies, the JOC (Catholic Workers Youth), the FAR (Anti-Racist Front), the MDM (Democratic Women's Movement), Immigrant Solidarity and the Federation of Cape Verde Associations in Portugal. In Porto, on 7 October, the Cape Verde Association of North Portugal, the Angolan Migrant Women's Association, the Portugal/Mozambique Friendship Society, ATLAS – Cultural Cooperative, the CNLI – National Committee for Migrants Regularization, the KALINA – Eastern European Immigrants Association and the UNIVA - Port of Arrival.

The attendance of such a large number of social movements is an important sign that cooperation and joint work does exist but also that it needs to be strengthened, with the aim of improving the immigrants living and working conditions.

Future perspectives

During the workshops, some suggestions were made for our future work, such as: (i) setting up a network to collect and disseminate knowledge that may be common to all official organisations con-

nected with immigration, in order to contribute to solve the lack of information on tools available; (ii) to draft a Handbook with standards on welcoming; (iii) to create a network of trade unions, associations, services, organisations and official bodies that do permanent work for immigrants, to try and solve the problems of lack of welcome by the Portuguese authorities; (iv) sending of a written request, jointly signed by unions and associations, to different state bodies connected with immigration, asking for improvements in personal relations and treatment; (v) creating a broad united platform of trade unions and immigrant and solidarity associations with the purpose, on the one hand, of extending solidarity to immigrants in their struggles for regularization and, on the other, to help detect and expose illegal forms of work, thus helping to minimize the many cases of immigrants precariousness; (vi) the need for more periodical and precise guidelines from the trade union confederation on how to sensitize immigrants for trade union struggle in defense of decent work and better working conditions. Many participants also mentioned that the current CGTP-IN campaign is very timely and that the workshops were an excellent occasion for developing dialogue and sharing experiences geared at future action. On the other hand, and since the need of a legal tool to help trade unionists and other social activists, clarify doubts and provide legal directives had been felt for some time, the edition of the Legal Guide, produced in the scope of the project, was also considered very timely.

Engagements for action on integration

Most of the participants made positive remarks on CGTP-IN's activity. But, even more important, their showed their readiness to continue acting in common to try and protect the immigrants rights. At the end of each of the workshops, the CGTP-IN - while thanking all participants for their presence, declared that, with the holding of the campaign and all initiatives and materials organised and produced - intends to contribute with its solidarity to the integration of immigrants in our democratic society. And it declares this engagement for all its future actions.

Mónica Almeida,
Project Technician

Interview



We live in a globalized world in which migration processes have a large dimension and importance in societies. Certainly, different causes lead citizens from several countries to migrate to Portugal, with an increasing number of those who choose our country to restart their lives

Manuel Carvalho da Silva, General-Secretary of CGTP-IN

Migration processes are components of change in societies

B.I. — Could this mean that Portugal became more inviting in a democratic perspective? In your opinion, which is or are the causes?

C.S. — Current migration processes are one of the deepest components of change that nowadays mark societies. We are challenged to build a society with more universality, multilateralism and multiculturalism. For many reasons, Portugal became an inviting country after 25th of April 1974.

The first welcome experience started with the reintegration of more than half a million Portuguese citizens who came to Portugal as a result of the independence of the former colonies.

We had the entrance of many immigrants

from the PALOP (Portuguese Speaking African Countries) for reasons of historical bounds and of some cultural identity dimensions, particularly in periods of more accentuated economic activity. The same happened with immigrants from Eastern European countries.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to underline three other aspects that I consider relevant: i) Portugal has practically always had a relevant dimension of emigration and immigration, which has helped fill the demographic deficits and lack of certain types of manpower; ii) to many immigrants, coming to Portugal was used as a gateway to the EU/Europe; iii) the relation with immigrants and the welcoming framework by the Portuguese does not present any visible obsta-

cles.

Immigrants have given a big contribution to the country's developing process.

|| *Immigrants have given a big contribution to the country's developing process* ||

B.I. — In general terms, how do you explain the presence of immigrant workers and the fact that they already represent a large permanent dimension in the Portuguese society? How do you see the future?

C.S. — There are communities from several countries that started to create roots and attract others and the country's demographic balance has been achieved with immigration. But the future is a question mark in view of economic recession, high unemployment, cuts in wages and in social protection, and the lowering of society's rate of development. This regression of the country will lead not only to a reduction of the attraction of immigrants, but will also expose those who are here to added difficulties and exploitation.

Also it is not possible to put more pressure on the Portuguese to emigrate, for the current PSD/CDS government has been adopting this strategy of pushing the youth (namely those with degrees) to leave the country and, in this context, there will be unscrupulous employers who will seek to use immigrants to pay lower wages or even to stimulate the underground economy.

B.I. — Recently, in Portugal, the legislation on immigration was changed. Can we say that this new law is more protective of foreign citizens? What has changed in comparison with the former law? What is still missing in this legislation?

C.S. — The current legislation is known as reasonably protective of the immigrants, but what is missing is its effective enforcement in several areas: labour, health, education or housing. And, sometimes, it is possible to see a double discrimination in relation to migrant women, besides cases of discrimination and injustice.

Still missing out are, for example: a more effective control of the law's enforcement at a labour level; support measures in different areas and reciprocal integration, that facilitate immigrants inclusion in the Portuguese society but also a real interaction between the Portuguese and the immigrants and among different communities.

B.I. — What is the role that Trade Unions and the CGTP-IN in particular may play

in order to solve the problems of the undocumented, in the fight against underground work and against social and labour injustices?

C.S. —The generality of immigrants in our country is looking for jobs, so it is in the work places and conditions that their fundamental rights and integration should be assured.

Illegal cases are essentially created by unscrupulous employers that seek for immediate profit by exploiting the fear and ignorance of migrant workers.

As occurs in this campaign that the CGTP-

|| *This regression of the country will lead not only to a reduction of the attraction of immigrants, but will also expose those who are here to added difficulties and exploitation* ||

IN is developing, Trade Unions try to come close to immigrants, inform them and build trust. It is necessary to bring down the barrier of fear and inform them on their labour rights, which are exactly the same as those of the Portuguese, and make them aware of the need to fight discrimination, with the Union's help.

The CGTP-IN has, for a long time, intervened by helping immigrants in general, those who are of undocumented and in the fight against underground work.

Trade Unions seek to guide and assist, through their legal departments, by creating conditions for regularization and to provide evidence of effective labour, which is essential to regularization. As it is said in the dissemination campaign leaflet "migrants are entitled to labour and social rights, with or without documents, as long as they develop an economic activity."

As for other areas of social problems experienced by immigrants, CGTP-IN has always been present and giving a contribution with its action in several platforms of intervention, along with immigrants and anti-racist associations or public advisory bodies. Concrete examples of this action are the participation in the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) and in the Advisory Council for Immigration Affairs (COCAI).



The Project

Brief presentation of the Project Immigration – Informing and Training to Integrate Better

Aims

To have immigrant workers loose inhibition and gain confidence in themselves, to seek for and to know their rights, to fight against situations of discrimination they suffer in the workplaces and in other aspects of their private and family life, and to participate in trade union action, are the main goals of the Project “Immigration – Informing and Training to Integrate Better”, that we started in December 2009. Trough these aims, we hope to help in their better integration in society in general and in the labour world in particular, raising their self awareness of their own reality and a better knowledge of that same reality by the elected trade union officials and cadres, strengthen trade union action on behalf of immigrant workers’ rights and reinforcing their integration and participation in trade union activity.

Target-Audience

The target-audience of this Project is composed mainly by trade union activists, shop stewards and elected officials who work with immigrant workers and by immigrants themselves (activists, shop stewards or elected officials). Besides them, were invited to participate in the Regional Workshops and in the Final Conference, immigrants associations and those who fight for immigrants rights.

Activities

Awareness Rising Sessions

During this Project we disseminated to the entire Trade Union Movement (MSU), thousands of informative documents in four languages – Portuguese, Ukrainian, Rumanian and English – to reach the majority of the immigrants.

- Legal Guide (in Portuguese, English, Ukrainian and Rumanian), by Ana Cecília Simões, from the CGTP-IN Research Department;
- Study on the Economic and Social Situation of the Immigrants in Portugal, by Amílcar Ramos, from the CGTP-IN Research Department;
- A Leaflet, targeted at immigrants, for information and appeal to unionization (four languages);

- A Poster (four languages);
- A Newsletter “INTEGRATING” (in four languages) whose first edition is the one you are now reading and that, after the Campaign, will become the information and communication tool of CGTP-IN’s Migrations Department.

Regional Workshops: in order to directly raise awareness among our target audience we organised several regional workshops, in cooperation with our Regional Trades Councils of Unions of Évora, Porto, Lisbon, Coimbra and Faro (the last two will shortly take place). There were already dozens of participants in these workshops, coming from trade unions and from the immigrants’ association movement.

International Trade Union Conference on Immigration, 16th December

We expect to gather 200 people in this Conference. For us, it is important to be able to expand the union’s analysis with others representing non-union organisations and in an international perspective. In fact, in this

Conference, the immigration issues will be addressed from a labour-union angle and enlarged to the social sphere, through an exchange of analysis and experiences between the CGTP-IN and others who have social and trade union work experiences on immigration at national and international level.

Giorgio Casula
Project Technical Coordinator

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We expect helping the immigrants to better integrate in society in general and in the labour world in particular, raising better knowledge of the immigrants’ reality
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Immigration

Informing and training
to integrate better