



CHALLENGES OF MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION INTO LABOR MARKET OF EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

This article presents some of the challenges faced by migrants integrating into the labor market of the European Union (EU). The study was conducted in Lithuania, Romania, Cyprus, Spain, Finland, which participated in the project “Raising inclusion to the labor market of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, on the basis of entrepreneurial competencies development”. Migration is part of the labor market of the modern economy and is closely linked to the globalization process. Migration and mobility are part of European labor market initiatives in EU policies. The authors of this article focus on the integration of migrants into the labor market and the problems/challenges faced by migrants and employers in the five countries studied. Migration has inevitably been touched by almost all EU countries; more or less all countries in the study face the challenges of integrating migrants into the labor market. Therefore, it is important that these things be gradually integrated into labor market and educational policy plans. Migration in the international labor market is considered to be natural, not only because the movement is part of our lives, but also for many economic, social and cultural reasons.

KEY WORDS: migrant, integration, challenges, labour market, entrepreneurial

Introduction

One key feature of the processes of globalization and economic restructuring altering local economic development prospects and development trajectories across advanced economies of the world is the increase in international migration (Green et al., 2009).

It is claimed that global environmental change could drive anywhere from 50 to almost 700 million people to migrate by 2050. These claims contradict the complexity of the multi-causal relationship between coupled social-ecological systems and human mobility, yet they have fuelled the debate about “environmentally induced migration”. Empirical evidence, notably from a 23-case study supported by the European Commission, confirms that currently environmental factors are one of many variables driving migration (Warner, 2010).

The integration of migrants and their active participation in the labor market is amongst the most important questions in the European Union (EU). It is high on the public agenda, often covered in the news and also the concern of public. Integration process is important not only because of the economic aspect but also for promoting social cohesion. However, integration process has not been without challenges. One of the main obstacles to integration is migrants’ higher unemployment rates and lower incomes than native born (OECD/European Union 2015). There are many reasons for this, for example, lower education levels and locals’ discriminative attitude towards migrants. Many countries also have problems with recognizing education and qualifications acquired outside the EU. These obstacles have to be eliminated in order to have employment level up to 75% until 2020 as EU aims.

This article is based on research report of the international Erasmus+ Project called “RIECE” (acronym for “Raising Inclusion into the Labour Market of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, on the base of entrepreneurial competencies development”). The project involves 5 countries where the study was conducted: Lithuania, Romania, Cyprus, Spain, Finland. RIECE Project will create a new training program for refugees and asylum seekers as well as other migrants.

To succeed in this task, it is important first to identify the needs of the target group as well as to hear employers’ opinion about which challenges are the most important when employing migrants and how these have been overcome and how they should be approached in the future.

Goal of the research - to identify challenges and provide measures for migrants’ effective integration into the international labour market. Moreover, it was clarified, how well these challenges and problems are identified in different groups of people in participating countries.

Methods of research. This has been done with qualitative and quantitative research in the beginning of the project.

Review of literature

About 150 million persons live outside their home countries; in many states, legal application of human rights norms to non-citizens is inadequate or seriously deficient, especially regarding irregular migrants. Extensive hostility against, abuse of and violence towards migrants and other non-nationals has become much more visible worldwide in recent years (Taran, 2002).

Immigrant receiving countries are constantly looking for better ways to attract the most talented individuals to

fill labour shortages in the high skilled sector and low skilled workers that may allow for the provision of services at a lower cost (Vargas-Silva, 2012).

Europe's demographic situation is characterized by longevity and low fertility. This leads to the aging of domestic population and eventually its decline in workforce. Given the high levels of employment already reached by skilled EU-nationals, recruitment of migrants from third world countries is increasingly appearing as the main way of responding to the growing demand for medium and high skilled labour. At the same time, Europe experiences a continuing demand for low skilled labour. In this context Europe has to consider pro-active migration policies and measures to help identify future labour and skills gaps. And Europe should develop a genuine interest in becoming both more attractive for highly skilled migrants as well as more inclusive towards all employable migrants (Münz, 2007).

Differences across destination countries in immigrants' unemployment rates, as well as the gap in native working population, are expected to result from diverging states of national economies and country-specific policies regarding immigrants' labour market access (Fleischmann, Dronkers, 2010).

The concept of migration covers any movement of people – within a country or crossing its borders; long or short term; voluntary or coercive; search for work or unemployment; legal and illegal; migration to change the political, social, economic, cultural or other environment. Migration is changing the lives of people and states. To the population it's an opportunity to improve their living conditions by changing their place of residence and/or work, and immigrant countries are the source of new labour (Janusauskas et al., 2009).

There is an increasing number of migrant laborers, who want to fulfil their plans abroad or to achieve their goals there. A new country may be an opportunity for them to become what they want to be, do what they want to do and to have their dreams come true. If they can integrate, they might even feel at home in a foreign country. Migrants have real hope that they can expect more abroad. New atmosphere, challenges, and novelty could also act as a motivating factor. To decide to work abroad is not easy. To leave home country is a step by step process. Their lives would change. After evaluating their current situation and future prospects, they eventually come to a conclusion that elsewhere they might be able to achieve their plans, earn enough money to live a better life. If we live in a challenging environment, we also do more to ensure such compliances (Jozsa, Vinogradov, 2017).

Immigration, as a complex phenomenon, provides not only economic benefits, but also involves additional costs, such as social benefits for immigrant families, social integration costs for immigrants, worsening criminogenic situations, and the cost of investing in personal wealth and health security measures and other similar costs. Migration is a dynamic process that has a significant impact on the economic and social environment in the European Union (Janusauskas et al., 2009).

Integration to a new country is a multidimensional and complex process. Ruhs and Anderson (2010) wrote that migrants who are working illegally may gain economic

benefits by working in a certain occupation but at the cost of greater insecurity of residence; while migrants intending a short term stay may be much more concerned with maximising economic benefits than with social integration. In practice, different migrants not only have different options, but will attach different weights to security of residence, economic improvement, and social integration.

OECD/European Union (2015) separate 11 different factors contributing to the integration process. The participation in the labour market is a key to become a part of the host country. The job quality is also important, as migrants tend to have lower-status jobs than native-born. Third factor is cognitive skills, which are important determinants in the economic as well as social integration. Household income is a factor, which determines many socio-economical outcomes. Housing, health status and health care, civic engagement and social cohesion – the latter including also integrations' two-way process nature – are factors to integration process as well. Besides these factors, contextual factors have a remarkable influence into integration outcomes. They are shaped by socio-demographic characteristics such as age and gender. Another important factor is defining characteristics of immigrant population: what kind of lacking migrants may have related to the knowledge of the host society compared to the native-born. This gap tends to disappear during the stay depending also on language skills. Third contextual factor consists of household and family structures as home environment has an impact on children's schooling. Because of this multidimensionality, the integration processes' succession and challenges vary greatly from country to country as immigrant populations differ in their size, length of residence, age, education level, language and predominant entry categories. The integration policies play an important role as well. Many challenges are common in all countries but not all (OECD/European Union, 2015).

It is well-known that there is considerable variation in the economic performance of immigrant populations in different EU countries. This is mainly caused by the heterogeneous conditions of entry to the EU states, which strongly influence the distribution of socioeconomic characteristics of the immigrant population, as well as by differences in country-specific strategies to promote the integration of the existing immigrant population (Büchel, Frick, 2005).

However, the new environment can create new problems for them as well, such as integration, language difficulties, and cultural differences (cultural shock). Sometimes they realize that their plans failed. The integration into labour market has few challenges as cultural shock (Jozsa, 2015): 1. *The beginning of the relationship*: this is a new situation, the period of the comparison; everything is new and full of expectations. It's almost a euphoric condition. 2. *The real culture shock*: the cultural differences are more and more emerging and feeling of uncertainty increases. "What am I doing here? Are you sure you want this? Do I want it for me? "Everything is doubtful. 3. *The superficial adaptation*: the emigrants want to survive, and the feeling of being lost increases. "I have to integrate!" 4. *The period of depression and isolation*: people struggle and lack self-

confidence. 5. *Learning and integration*: they understand and learn differences between cultures and they begin to integrate. 6. *Autonomy and independence*: they have enough self-confidence, understand the local people and connect and meet them who represent their own culture.

Immigration has been and will be a main feature of European societies and social structures. The social integration of migrants has become a key element in the system integration of European societies. Using or not using the potential that immigration entails will also have a strong influence on the competitiveness of Europe in the world. The topic of education and migration will thus be relevant in the context of economic development, social cohesion and the stabilization of democratic cultures (Heckmann, 2008).

Proponents of human capital theory suggest that skill has a key role in employment prospects for international migrants – workers engage in a remunerated activity in a State where they are not a national – because the more skilled the worker, the greater is his/her productivity, thus the more productive worker enjoys a better job and mobility in the labour market. Critics argue that a policy emphasis on migrants' skill level tends to simplify the employment and broader socio-cultural challenges migrants face (Syed, J., 2008).

Research Methodology

As the term “migrant” might be defined very differently, it is important to clarify what definition we use in this report. In the research, immigrants are defined as the foreign-born population, no matter what their status or their country of origin. The definition is based on the purpose of the project: the training material is aimed to all migrants, no matter their status.

The *research questions* are: 1. What challenges do migrants experience when integrating to the international labour market? 2. What challenges do employers experience when hiring migrants? 3. What kind of coping/problem-solving methods do migrants have? 4. How do cultural surroundings (in workplaces and otherwise) affect to the situation?

The study will provide comparative data about the specific conditions of migrants' integration challenges in the partner countries in correlation with the social, cultural and economic circumstances. It will reveal the level of awareness on migrants' integration challenges and coping measures of each target groups in the project countries - migrants', employers and social workers. The research is done with three separate sets of questionnaires which have been targeted to migrants, social workers and employers. Questionnaires designed for migrants and social workers consists questions, which aim to identify challenges and provide measures for migrants' effective integration into the labour market.

The project was conducted in 2018. The sampling chosen for the study was: 150 migrants (30 from each partner country), 150 employers (30 from each country) and 50 social workers (10 from each country). Each partner was independently responsible of collecting the required amount of answers. Competences migrant should achieve if they want to integrate into the labour market.

With questionnaires, the project acquired information about preferences, needs and challenges related to migrants' employment. The project partners assessed the questionnaires before using them. With many questions on the same type, the answers supported each other, which improved the validity. The questions were clear and easy to answer. Each question consisted of several answers so that everyone could find a suitable option and the respondent could specify his answer verbally in several questions. The scale in the answering options was logical. These aspects make it more reliable. On the other hand, the small samples and random choosing of the respondents weakens both the validity and reliability. Respondents not necessarily represent the “average” migrant, employer or social worker in the participating countries.

Data Analysis and Results

Comparison of the partner countries. In relation to this report and its outcomes, it is important to take into account the numbers of immigrants' and their employment situation in participating countries. When comparing the RIECE partners, the unemployment rates amongst the whole population in the end of the year 2017 was in Lithuania 7,1 %, Finland 8,7 %, Romania 4,6 %, Cyprus 11,3 % and Spain 16,4 %.

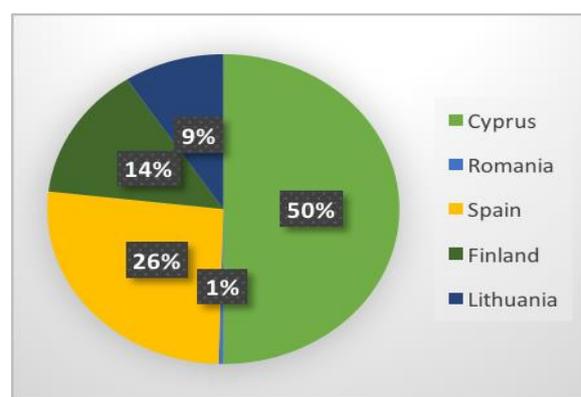


Fig. 1. Immigrants (%) of all population

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (2018)

If we compare that to the whole population (2017), it turns out that Cyprus (population of 854.8 thousand) has the highest percentage (23.3%) of immigrants. Spain's (population of 46.5 millions) percentage is second highest (12.9%). Finland's (population of 5.5 millions) were immigrants 6.3%, Lithuania's (population of 2.8 millions) immigrants were 4.5%. In Romania (population of 22.3 millions) the percentage is the smallest, only 0.2% (Eurostat, 2017).

Background factors of migrants

Migrant respondents in Spain and Cyprus were less educated than migrants in Lithuania and Romania. The most educated migrants were in Finland. Migrants in Romania had more difficulties with acknowledging their degree than migrants in Lithuania and Spain. Migrants in Finland had least difficulties and migrants in Cyprus had the most difficulties. The acknowledgement of the degree was related to the education: the migrants with less

education had more difficulties. The acknowledgement of the degree was also related to gender: men had more difficulties than women did.

The migrants in Cyprus were mostly men and less educated so this is probably the reason they had the difficulties with acknowledging their degree.

This bond with gender is an interesting result as difficulties in recognition of a degree is usually connected to higher education. Each country has its own recognition procedures although in EU there is a mutual recognition of professional qualifications amongst member countries (regulated by European Union directive 2005/36/EC).

The largest group of responded immigrants (47 %) in Finland came to the country because of a Finnish spouse. This might indicate to family reunifications. In Lithuania, most of the migrants came to study (59 %) and in Spain, most of them came to work (68 %). In Cyprus, most of the migrants came to work (44 %) but also 23 % came as refugees. In Romania 45 % of the migrants came to work and 27 % to study. The basis on why migrant came to a country is related to the acknowledgement of the degree: the asylum-seekers had most difficulties at the acknowledgement of the degree; the migrants who came because of a local spouse had no difficulties.

All responded migrants felt they had integrated to the country quite well. The highest score is in Spain and the lowest in Cyprus. Women felt more integrated than men did. Generally, the older the migrant, the more integrated he or she felt. Interestingly, the time spent in the country didn't generally correlate with the integration i.e. migrants don't feel any more integrated as the time passes. Only in Spain, the feeling of integration grew according to the time spent in Spain. The migrants in the fields of Education felt most integrated. Other circumstances in the migrants' background were not related to the integration.

Background of the employers

Most of the responded employers in all countries were from private sector. Finnish employers were mainly from the health and social sector (38 %) or from trade (24 %) and Lithuanian employers were mainly from catering (50 %) and logistics (20 %). Spanish employers were mainly from other sector (39 %) or from education (18 %). Cypriot employers were mainly from trade (45 %), education (24 %) or other (28 %). Romanian employers were distributed in many fields.

Most of the companies were small: 1-9 employees (38 %) or 10-49 employees (35 %) companies. Cyprus had bigger employers. Most of them (73 %) had only 1-9 migrants in the company. In Cyprus 31 % of the employers and in Spain 27 % of the employers have 10-49 migrants in the company. In Finland 28 % of the employers had no migrants employed.

Background of the social workers

Social workers' average work experience was 7,4 years. The social workers in Finland were least experienced (average 5,1) and the social workers in Romania most experienced (average 8,8 years). Most of the social workers had a bachelor's degree but there was great distribution in education. The most educated social workers are in Finland where 80 % of the social workers had masters' degree (this is also a qualification requirement). The least educated are the social workers in

Spain where 50 % of the social workers had completed vocational school (or similar).

Most of the social workers who answered the questionnaire worked with migrant customers daily (28 %) or weekly (28 %). In Cyprus 85 % of the social workers worked with them daily. In Finland and in Cyprus the social workers' migrant customers had most commonly come to the country as asylum-seekers, in Spain to work and in Lithuania and in Romania to study.

When speaking of RIECE partner countries, Finland belongs along with other Scandinavian countries to destination countries with significant recent and humanitarian migration. In these countries, humanitarian immigrants with their families have been a significant source of immigration. Both ends of the educational spectrum are overrepresented. These humanitarian migrants tend to struggle to integrate and adapt to the labour market quite poorly, even when integration policies in these countries are strong and immigrants well accessed to the public service.

Cyprus and Spain belong to new destinations with many recent labour immigrants. In Spain, as in most of the other southern European countries, immigrants tend to be low educated. In these countries, there has been a flux of labour migrants, who have come to work in low-skilled jobs during the 2000s global economic crisis. After the 2008 economical fall, the immigrants' unemployment rate has raised significantly as before it was even lower than among the native-born. Cyprus belongs to a group of new destination countries with many recent highly educated migrants amongst with other islands Malta, Ireland and Iceland. The situation of immigrants varies greatly in this group; however, they tend to have better socio-economical background than migrants in South-European countries do. The challenge is that educated migrants tend to be over-qualified for the labour market. Most new EU countries, including Lithuania, belong to group where countries with migrant population is shaped by border changes and/or national minorities. In these countries, foreign-born migrants are the result of border changes in the aftermath of Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain. Recent migration levels have not been high. Romania is labelled as emerging destination country with small immigrant population. As a result, the information on many factors related to migration is in many cases non-existent. However, the situation is changing and the numbers of migrants are growing (OECD/European Union, 2015).

When asked how migrants had tried to solve problems related to their employment, the most common response was that they were studying or had studied more. This may of course cover a wide variety of courses and themes from language courses to acquiring a new degree. Studying was especially important in Finland, whereas in Spain the most popular option was to seek help from the employment office or some other institution. In Cyprus, the most common answer was to talk to management or superior.

From the employers point of the view they had most problems with migrants applying jobs but not having the experience needed (30 %), the qualifications (28 %) or skills (28 %) needed. These problems may naturally indicate to same things as skills develop with experience

and may also be related to acquiring qualifications. However, when employers pointed the biggest problem when employing migrants, it was migrants not applying their jobs (42 % of the employers think so). Only 3 % of the employers' don't want to employ migrants.

The migrants themselves thought that the best solution for employment problems would be to learn new skills otherwise than studying a new degree (46 % of the migrant respondents think so).

In questionnaire there was a question related to the skills needed when considering employment in the country in question. Migrants and social workers thought that the native language skills is the most important skill. The next important are specific (job-related) skills. From the employer's point of view the specific (job-related) skills were most important and the native language skills come second. This may indicate that employers hire only migrants with necessary language skills.

There were some differences between countries in question. The native language skills had the most importance in Finland and in Lithuania. In Romania, migrants thought the native language skills have more importance than employers or social workers do.

Table 1. Perceived problems and challenges with aforementioned skills by answer groups

Have you / Do you migrant workers/customers have problems or challenges with these skills?	Migrants	Employers	Social workers
	Total (N=201)	Total (N=151)	Total (N=53)
I/They haven't got problem or challenges with these skills	11 %	56 %	60 %
Finnish/Lithuanian/Spanish/Greek/Romanian language skills	43 %	17 %	34 %
Other language skills	17 %	23 %	38 %
Learning skills	24 %	10 %	25 %
Networking skills	12 %	21 %	40 %
People skills, "soft skills"	14 %	11 %	19 %
IT skills	7 %	7 %	17 %
Entrepreneurial skills	11 %	48 %	40 %
Specific (job-related) skills	15 %	13 %	4 %
Other	0 %	3 %	2 %

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (2018)

Specific (job-related) skills had the most importance in Lithuania, in all of the groups, although they were important in all the countries except Cyprus. Learning skills had more importance in Finland, Romania and Lithuania. People skills ("soft skills") were also more important in Lithuania and in Finland than in other countries. Besides country-specific appreciations, these may relate to respondents' different employment fields.

Migrants did have problems with these aforementioned skills. There were many differences in the skills needed between the countries. In Finland, Lithuania and Romania migrants themselves thought they had mostly problems with native language.

Still the employers didn't feel this way, i.e. probably, they had employed only migrants with the needed language skills as stated before. However, this is a

skill the migrants should learn more about at least in these three countries.

Especially in Finland and in Romania the social workers felt their migrant customers had problems with other language skills as well. At least in Finland this may indicate to the need to know Swedish, Finland's another native language, in some positions, or then the importance of English language. There were other differences in answer groups' opinions as well. For example, in Lithuania and in Spain social workers and employers thought their migrant customers have problems with networking skills. However, migrants themselves didn't share this vision: in Lithuania none thought this way, in Spain only fifth. Another example were entrepreneurial skills: most of the employers and social workers in Spain, Lithuania and in Finland thought migrants have problems in those skills but migrants themselves in these countries didn't think so.

Differences between these opinions may relate to the aforementioned differences between responded migrants, employed migrants and those who need social services. It may also indicate that social workers and employers may not be that aware of the migrants' integration challenges. Notable to RIECE project however, is that networking is a skill the respondents think migrants should learn more about at least in Spain, Lithuania and in Finland and entrepreneurial skills in all countries except Cyprus.

Table 2. Respondents' experiences about migrants' problems and challenges with working culture by answer group

	Migrants	Employers	Social workers
	Total (N=201)	Total (N=151)	Total (N=53)
I/I/They haven't experienced any problems	32 %	47 %	13 %
working hours	19 %	19 %	25 %
Dressing	11 %	9 %	13 %
Religion	12 %	9 %	15 %
working methods	23 %	27 %	72 %
too outgoing	7 %	1 %	6 %
too introverted	4 %	5 %	6 %
lack of initiative	6 %	19 %	11 %
too much initiative	8 %	4 %	8 %
interaction with co-workers or customers	15 %	22 %	30 %
co-workers' or customers' attitudes	9 %	20 %	34 %
Other	2 %	6 %	4 %

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (2018)

Migrants would like to learn these skills mainly by attending to an appropriate course. Most of the migrants in Finland and in Lithuania would like to do so. In addition, one third of the migrants in Cyprus and in Romania and one fifth of the migrants in Spain would like to learn the skills like this.

Employers mainly encouraged migrants to attend to appropriate courses or allow migrants to learn the skills needed by practising them at work. The employers in Spain and in Romania also encouraged migrant workers to learn the skills by themselves on Internet or from

books. In Spain 42 % of the employers notified that they don't hire migrants who have skill deficits.

Migrants' possible problems with local working cultures were asked from all target groups. Most of the social workers in Finland thought that their migrant customers had problems with working methods, interaction with co-workers or customers and with co-workers' or customers' attitudes. Migrants themselves or the employers in Finland didn't see much problems. In Lithuania, migrants had some problems with working hours and methods, lack of initiative and co-workers' or customers' attitudes.

In Spain, migrants had most problems with working hours and methods, interaction with co-workers or customers and with co-workers' or customers' attitudes. Some migrants experienced problems with too much initiative but Spanish employers think that lack of initiative is more pressing problem. Social workers and employers in Cyprus thought that migrants have problems with working methods but migrants themselves don't think so on average. In Romania, migrants had mainly problems with working methods. Employers and social workers also thought that migrants have problems with lack of initiative.

These differences might again be explained with the differences between those migrants employers had employed, responded migrants and social workers' customers, but they might also tell something about the lack of awareness about migrants' problems in working life (RIECE, 2018).

Conclusions

Based on the questionnaires, one could say that migrants experience varying problems and challenges with employment. First, there are several deficits in migrants' skill needed in labour market.

- Networking skills is a theme that majority of respondents in Lithuania, Spain and Finland feel that migrants should know more about.
- Learning skills are considered to be lacking especially in Finland and in Romania (social workers' opinion) and in Cyprus (migrants themselves).
- The importance of entrepreneurial skills come up especially from the employers' questionnaire. This is important because based on the questionnaire there seems to be quite a few migrant entrepreneurs in other participating countries than Cyprus. Moreover, the entrepreneurial attitude is needed not only when starting your own business but also in other jobs as well. This theme is covered in curriculum but participating countries might give a special focus to it.
- The importance of language skills (native and otherwise) is clear.
- This is also consistent to the challenges employers experience when hiring migrants. Based on the questionnaire results, employers have most problems with job-applying migrants not having the experience (30%), qualifications (28%) or skills (28%) needed.
- Employers thought the biggest single problem is that migrants do not apply to their jobs (42%).

- Secondly, there are some problems with recognising a foreign degree.
- The problem-solving methods of migrants vary. The most common answers to the question related to solving employment-related problems indicate that migrants try to enhance their careers with studying more (25%), going to an internship or similar (24%), talking to management (24%) and seeking help from the employment office (23%).
- The opinion about migrants' learning needs differ between countries and target groups:
- The requirement and needs of labour market are considered important in all countries. Especially the social workers (75%) and employers (67%) think this is a theme worth focusing on.
- Native working culture is on average considered the secondly important topic. 51% of employers regard that this would be useful for migrants to learn more. According to the questionnaire, the most common problem were the working methods (41% from all the respondents saw this as a problem). Also, interaction with co-workers or customers (22%), co-workers' or customers' attitudes (21%) and working hours (21%) had caused problems.
- Entrepreneurship comes third: 38% from all the respondents think this is a useful topic to migrants. Social workers (45%) are more inclined to think this way than migrants and employers.
- Nearly third (30%) from all of the respondents consider that migrants should also know more about the local culture. The most common problem was other peoples' attitudes.

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RECEIVED: 3 October 2018

ACCEPTED: 20 December 2018

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