



## Eurasylum's Monthly Policy Interviews

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on

*“UNESCO’s Programme activities on international migration”*

➤ **Eurasylum Ltd:** *UNESCO’s Programme on International Migration is linked to five core objectives: to increase the protection of migrants’ human rights; to improve the capacity of national policies to manage the impact of migration on society; to promote the value and respect of cultural diversity in multicultural societies; to contribute to the global fight against human trafficking; and to strengthen the capacity, sustainability and effectiveness of diaspora networks. Within each of these broad areas of intervention, could you guide us through the particular activities, implementation strategy and major outputs of your Programme to date?*

➤ **Paul de Guchteneire:** First of all I would like to share some excellent news that reached us this month: the Regional Authorities of Agrigento in the south of Italy have decided to award a prize to UNESCO for its work on migration. UNESCO was chosen as a ‘prestigious international institute that has worked with success over the years for the protection of migrant workers and members of their families’. Previous winners of this prize include actor and film director Roberto Benigni, for the defence of Human Rights through his film ‘La Vita e Bella’, the President of RAI Television, for the balanced information on the human tragedy of clandestine migrants, and in honour of the 19 Italian policemen that died on humanitarian action in the Middle East.

‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’. This was the opening line, some 60 years ago in 1946, of the declaration which founded UNESCO for the purpose of advancing, through education, science, culture and communication, the objectives of international peace and common welfare of mankind. It is exactly under this mandate that UNESCO studies and analyzes major social transformations in the world, including international migration and the changes that migration brings about in society.

The main priorities of UNESCO’s work on migration are closely linked to the thematic areas of human rights, education, science, culture and communication. In the area of *human rights* we collect detailed information on the situation of migrant populations around the world, and more specifically on the ratification and implementation of the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, which entered into force in July 2003. The primary objective of this Convention is to protect migrant workers and their families, a particularly vulnerable population, from exploitation and the violation of their human rights. In the past couple of years we published some 40 country reports on the situation of migrants in Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Africa and Latin America, all with the help of extensive networks of local specialists and researchers. We also disseminated some thirty thousand information kits on the Convention in five different languages to promote a better understanding of this treaty.

UNESCO works together with other intergovernmental Agencies such as the OHCHR, IOM and ILO, and with international NGOs, in the Steering Committee for the Campaign for Ratification of the Migrants Rights Convention. The number of countries that have ratified the convention is currently thirty-four, and many more ratifications are needed to make this convention a real, effective tool for the protection of migrants’ rights in all parts of the world.

Migration has a strong relation to issues of *education*, and UNESCO is particularly interested in the problem of *brain drain*, and the search for possibilities to remedy the loss of skilled migrants. One innovative approach to the issue of brain drain is to utilise the existence of diaspora networks for re-establishing links between migrants and their home countries and to benefit from return migration or so-called circular migration. A project is underway, in cooperation with the CNRS in France and the University of Bogota, Colombia, to create tools on the basis of the internet to promote communication through diaspora knowledge networks that facilitate the exchange of information and the international cooperation amongst migrant populations. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics collaborates with the OECD and EUROSTAT to improve empirical knowledge on

brain drain issues, by promoting the collection of data on the migratory patterns of the highly skilled.

In the area of *culture*, our Organization has recently adapted the *Convention on Cultural Diversity*, which provides a basis for the development of national cultural policies that promote a good balance between the need for integration and the need for safeguarding cultural diversity. Policy oriented works on religious diversity, language diversity, and integration issues are published in a peer reviewed *Journal on Multicultural Societies*, which is made available on the internet.

Finally, we support networks and international meetings to bring migration researchers and policy makers together to collect and exchange information on migration trends and on the development of new migration and integration policies. In February 2006 UNESCO organized an *International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus*, together with the Governments of Argentina and Uruguay, which included a specialised conference on migration in the city of Córdoba, Argentina.

➤ **Eurasyllum Ltd:** *One of UNESCO's recent priority activities, the results of which will be published in book form later this year, aimed to conduct an in-depth exploration of the 'Migration Without Borders' (MWB) scenario. The project aimed to foster a critical rethinking of current migration policies and practices, and to revisit the question of a right to mobility in a globalised world, in which migratory flows increasingly escape national governments' attempts to regulation. The project investigated, in particular, the ethical, economic, human rights and social implications of an 'open borders' policy. Could you sum up the key conclusions of this project and explain their policy significance for future migration management initiatives, taking into account, in particular, the growing inter-linkages between immigration policy and national security considerations, and the increased strengthening of border control policies in most host countries?*

➤ **Paul de Guchteneire:** The *Migration without Borders (MWB)* scenario is based upon both human-rights and policy considerations. First, article 13-2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that *'Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country'*. But what is the meaning of this right to emigration in the absence of immigration opportunities? Second, successful policies require an understanding of the possible future evolutions of international migration. Today, migration policies seem to lag behind and to react in a strictly restrictive way to new migration patterns, thus fueling the impression that they are unable or unwilling to address coherently the issues at stake. The MWB scenario is an attempt to investigate alternative rights-based approaches to the international movement of persons and to suggest new ideas to rethink the premises of current policies.

At this point it is important to emphasise that migration is and will remain the sovereign responsibility of nation states. Nevertheless, states can agree to *share* the sovereign responsibility for border controls and migration, as is the case in the European Union, and to a lesser extent in several other regional communities.

Free movement across national borders is often dismissed as a Utopia, but we should remember that freedom of movement within EU countries was a Utopia a few decades ago. Who would have thought, in the eighties, that moving from Poland to Ireland would become as easy as it is today? Who would have thought that by 2011 some 450 million inhabitants of 25 or more European states could migrate freely within the whole of the EU? The example of the EU policy on regional migration shows that today's Utopia may be tomorrow's reality.

At a time when most migrant receiving countries aim to increase the level of control at their borders, a scenario that explores fewer restrictions represents a major challenge, as it highlights some of the shortcomings of current policies: despite huge investments in migration control, irregular migration persists and is unlikely to decrease. Moreover, current tight migration controls may have severe human rights consequences, as, over the years, thousands of migrants die on their way to Western states. Those who manage to enter illegally, have to live without adequate documentation, work in precarious conditions and have limited access to welfare provisions and fundamental human rights.

The MWB scenario raises numerous questions, and calls for a careful exploration of the consequences of increased human movement. Security concerns are top priority for many countries, as well as the need for better policies for integration of new and old migrant populations. Migration is increasingly perceived as a threat to national security, and one must find ways to reconcile movement opportunities with security imperatives and with a new look at integration and social cohesion issues.

A right to mobility is a possible source of inspiration for future policies. Access to mobility should not be confined to Westerners or to the elite of skilled workers, as it is today. It could be an opportunity for all: in a global world characterised by cross-border flows and deep socio-economic inequalities, mobility is a resource that could be more evenly distributed. And while the MWB scenario seems difficult to implement in the immediate future, this should not keep us from using it as a stimulating source of ideas for fairer migration policies. The example of the European Union is already a very promising one: the member states of the EU have agreed to gradually allow free migration within the region, and after two years of partial implementation the first studies of the actual migration flows show that the measures have not created any chaos or major disturbances so far. This experience may very well be used in other regions such as MERCOSUR in Latin America and ECOWAS in Western Africa, where there is a willingness to promote further integration and to include free movement of people within the region.

➤ **Eurasyllum Ltd:** *Another major project supported by UNESCO relates to “Best Practices in International Migration”. The project aims to document successful migration policy initiatives that have a demonstrable and tangible impact on the improvement of people's quality of life, and that can provide a source of inspiration for the design of creative, successful and sustainable solutions to the management of migration. These initiatives are assessed, in particular, on the basis of the relevant provisions of the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Can you provide some examples of good practices collected through this project, and explain the way in which these might have been disseminated to, and discussed with, appropriate institutional players internationally, and the way in which they might have influenced particular policy/legal revisions in any of your Member States?*

➤ **Paul de Guchteneire:** If we take the issue of trafficking, we see that despite growing international mobilization, effective policies tackling the scourge at its roots remain scarce. One reason is lack of reliable data. But another one is that human trafficking is a sensitive topic, frequently associated with irregular migration, prostitution or child labour. Consequently it is often approached in a highly ideological or political way.

By contrast, UNESCO has chosen to develop the concept of Best Practices in the fight against human trafficking, to encourage a more results-oriented approach to this sensitive issue. We recently published a book entitled “Poverty, Gender and Human Trafficking: Rethinking Best Practices in Migration Management” (UNESCO, 2006) in which interventions by international organizations and NGOs are analysed on the basis of their understanding of trafficking and what they view as the “best” ways to fight it.

Although the book questions the concept of “Best practices” more than it provides a replicable framework of action to fight human trafficking, it gives several concrete examples of practices that are evaluated as successful by the implementing NGOs. For example, *Enfants Solidaires d’Afrique et du Monde* (ESAM), an NGO based in Benin, tackles the issue of child trafficking by fighting against child abuse and the transnational recruitment of children as domestic workers. They work to remove children from exploitative situations and they organise their reintegration into schools or vocational training; they also provide other sources of income to those involved in trafficking activities. In addition, the NGO established a code of conduct for employers of child domestic workers to avoid situations of abuse. The applicability of their strategy is broad and a similar project is underway at the sub-regional level.

What is important to understand is that Best Practices are not a universal truth. They are successful initiatives, which have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life, along the principles promoted in international standards such as the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. By referring to these activities as “Best Practices” it is suggested that they have a potential for replication; that other ideas can originate from them; and that they can serve as an inspiration to generate policies and initiatives elsewhere.

So far, we do not have a tool to measure the impact of our work on Best Practices in terms of policy change. What we see, however, is the interest demonstrated by member states and our partners in our work on human trafficking. We have had very constructive exchanges with other UN agencies, IOM and NGOs working in the field of migration, while collecting their views of “Best” practices in the course of preparing this publication. We have also disseminated the results of this project to all our member states in Africa and to partners in the region through our field offices.

We are currently working on providing examples of Best Practices in policy papers on human trafficking that we are preparing for six pilot countries in Western and Southern Africa: Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa. These policy papers can be compared to policy briefs or strategic papers, which give concrete policy recommendations and tools for governments to fight human trafficking more effectively. We are currently at the final stage of elaboration of these policy papers in West Africa.

Finally, UNESCO has organized a validation workshop with a number of relevant stakeholders from Benin, Nigeria and Togo in September 2005, with the participation of government officials and parliamentarians. We can already see that this awareness-raising work, undertaken by several UN agencies and NGOs, has contributed to the recent adoption of a law by the Benin parliament against the trafficking of children. The next step is of course to promote the full implementation of counter-trafficking measures by national and local governments in the region, together with NGOs and representatives of the victims.