

UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION IN 2009-2011

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

A. THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Within the framework of the Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has worked with institutions, experts and researchers concerned with the social impact of the economic and financial crisis to closely monitor and document the ways in which the crisis affects social transformations, and the implications this has for social policymaking. Along with other topics, migration will represent one of the fields of research and activities for this network.

The economic and financial crisis might impact discrimination and xenophobia directed at migrants. History shows that in times of economic depression problems regarding social cohesion emerge and lead to increasing exclusion and persecution against outsiders and foreigners. All previous crises, such as the Great Depression, the oil crisis and the Asian, Russian and Latin American financial crisis, have affected the situation of migrants in many ways and spurred resentment of foreign workers and xenophobic actions. Yet there is little hard evidence supporting xenophobic actions directed at immigrants, which makes it difficult to provide in-depth assessments of the phenomenon. Part of the problem is the complexity of xenophobia and discrimination processes, which operate at different levels in a mutually reinforcing manner. These processes are simultaneously rooted in individual, social, media, political and Government dynamics.

Given the multiple origins and occurrences of discrimination and xenophobia, the challenge is to develop strategies that are specifically relevant to the categories of actors and levels at stake. This also calls for more systematic gathering of data, through the elaboration of indicators and through independent monitoring bodies.

B. RECENT INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Free movement within regional organizations

UNESCO has launched a research project on attitudes and policies toward free movement within regional organizations. While free movement may be difficult to achieve at the world level, it may be a much more realistic and desirable policy option at the level of regional organizations. This research follows the 2007 UNESCO publication *Migration without borders*, which explored the scenario in which borders did not inhibit migration flows. In the end, the book promoted the idea of migration in a world without borders in which the freedom of movement would constitute a fundamental right.

By now, several African regional organizations—including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Southern Africa— have committed themselves to facilitating the

movement of people among their member States; the African Union, too, has regularly embraced free movement among its members as an objective to be pursued. These actions show the potential for regional migration governance, while also stressing the challenges raised by this endeavour.

A partnership has been set up with the United Nations University-Comparative Regional Integration Studies Programme (UNU-CRIS) at Bruges, Belgium, on the role of free movement of people as part of integration processes, and a worldwide study on attitudes and policies toward free movement among regional organizations has been launched. Some thirty regional organizations have been contacted and researched in order to understand their approach toward free movement, the measures taken so far, their successes and achievements, the obstacles encountered and the steps ahead. In addition, a network of experts is being constituted to shed

