

*Guide to raise awareness and mobilise the social
partners on the equal treatment of immigrants at the
workplace and at social level*

Kapsalis Apostolos

Athens 2007

Introduction

The present Guide coincides with the completion of the workshops organised in the framework of the second round of the Community Initiative EQUAL and more specifically in the framework of the project “**Observatory and Structures’ Network for the Strengthening of Economic Immigrants and Refugees in the Job Market**”, which is carried out by the Development Partnership “**Strengthening of economic immigrants and refugees in the job market**”, co-ordinated by the Trade Union Confederations INE/GSEE-ADEDY.

The particular workshops were held in various cities around Greece, such as Athens, Volos, Piraeus, Patras and Thessaloniki, with the participation of trade unions, employers’ associations and organisations of immigrants. It was the first time in Greece that the social partners mutually focused on the problem of discrimination against immigrants in the Greek labour market at local level.

The relevant discussions in each of these workshops were supported scientifically by two previous texts, which were written in the framework of the aforementioned project in 2007: the study “**Immigrants and their integration in the Greek job market**” and the “**Workplace Discrimination Management Guide**”.

The first text analyses the central concepts and the main parameters of the phenomenon of discrimination against immigrants in the Greek labour market, while the second points out the employers’ important role in the prevention and treatment of the particular problem.

The present guide aims to raise the social partners’ awareness and to mobilise them on the issue of equal treatment of immigrants and takes into account the supporting documents mentioned above.

More specifically, though, it focuses on the variety of ideas and questions exchanged between the very protagonists of the country’s social and work life during the workshops, which were carried out successfully with the participation and representation of the three parties in the five aforementioned Greek cities.

Besides, both the pioneering idea of the organisation and the successful realisation of these meetings with regard to the problem of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic

origin prove that the social partners' awareness towards this significant social issue is already rising.

However, realising the significance and the dimension of a social phenomenon, or even the responsibility that weighs on each social partner individually, is not enough. Necessary as these may be, the fight against racism and discrimination cannot be effective in any country unless one or more criteria are met.

This criterion is twofold: it consists of the prerequisite political action combined with its practical implementation, on the one hand, and the (co)realisation regarding a mutual agreement for the implementation of certain defined and specialised actions towards the establishment of a place of equality and democracy for all in the Greek labour market.

So, the present guide aims to establish a global framework with a view to gradually satisfy the necessary requirements mentioned above, which pertain to the social partners' awareness and mobilisation.

It addresses mainly all the natural and legal entities of the representative trade unions and employers' associations at all levels of organisation. The same applies – though secondarily – to the representative immigrant communities and unions.

This is due to the fact that the special features characterising the phenomenon of immigration in Greece, on the one hand, and certain objective difficulties – of mainly institutional nature – in the representation of immigrants at a secondary and tertiary level, on the other, essentially reduce the chances of a direct trilateral action, although, at any rate, such a course would be very encouraging and desirable.

So, aiming at an integrated effort to define specific focal points and areas of joint research and action for the traditional social partners of the country, the present guide consists of two sections:

- The first section focuses on the analysis of the current situation in Greece, as well as on the potential effectiveness of a common and coordinated attempt against workplace discrimination by employers and employees.
- The second section is an attempt to classify certain specialised suggestions and ideas in order for direct relevant actions to be undertaken by employees' and employers' organisations. It illustrates examples of actions undertaken in other

European countries, while emphasis is put on integrated and successful examples from the near past.

1. Immigrant workers and Greek employers: two not well-defined roles in Greece

Each country bears certain quality features regarding its labour market, its workforce and potential for development. Immigration, as a current economic and social phenomenon, either in terms of organised movements on the basis of previous transnational agreements or in the form of irregular flows of economic immigrants, adjusts and/or evolves in all countries according to these quality features.

If we wished to summarise in a single phrase the nature and the course of the phenomenon of immigration in Greece, from the beginning of the 90s until today, we could easily come up with the following title: ***“Unskilled workers employed in small and medium-sized enterprises in the framework of an unorganised and often undeclared labour market”***.

- The information on the ***unskilled immigrant workforce*** derives from studies on at least two sectors of economy, in which more than half of the male and female immigrant population in Greece has been employed during the past seventeen years: the construction sector and the private households, respectively.

As regards male immigrants, it is a fact that the arrival of economic immigrants to Greece was not strongly connected to a specific national development orientation nor could it have been part of a similar financial scope, not even in the case of the 2004 Olympic Games.

Besides, according to the official or independent scientific records available, the vast majority of economic immigrants came to Greece on their own initiative before 1994-95, i.e. two or three years before Athens was elected as the host city for the 2004 Olympic Games.

Consequently, either from 1990 to 1998 (before the beginning of any construction works for the Games), or from 1998 to 2004 (during the construction of sports and other facilities for the Games), more than 50% of (mainly male) immigrants was employed and is still employed in the construction sector, due to the specific structural characteristics of this particular sector of economy.

For many reasons – which cannot be analysed in the present guide – the construction sector grew significantly during the past seventeen years. In any country, such a growth is always followed by an increased demand for a large number of (unskilled) workers.

So, if it was not for the phenomenon of mass immigration in the beginning of the 90s, with the particular features it acquired, it is evident that this need would have been covered either by native workers or – if that was not the case – the country would have resorted to an organised invitation of foreign workers, an example followed in Ireland, where, as a result, 1.5 million Polish builders have settled during the past five years.

As regards female immigrants, the situation was quite similar. The phenomenon of rural depopulation and the mass and rapid education of Greek women as well as their equally rapid entrance in the labour market brought about a radical change in the country's social and labour standards.

Strong cultural beliefs, in connection with the role traditionally assigned to women and the task division within the Greek household, together with the lack of substantial governmental policy for the encouragement of motherhood and the institution of family, are factors that rendered the presence and the work of hundreds of female immigrants an issue of pivotal importance.

Today, female immigrants who work as domestic workers are an essential part of the well-ordered function of the household and the couple's undisturbed professional activity, making up with their work, to a great extent, for the lack of social policies for child and elderly people's care.

In any case, given that 70% of the Greek working population is even nowadays graduates of elementary or secondary schools, it is evident that entrants on the labour market, be it (adult) natives or immigrants, will be automatically led to jobs with low education and skill requirements.

- Moreover, as it is usually the case in countries with irregular labour markets like Greece, the phenomenon of the (completely or partially) *undeclared labour market* flourishes.

Based on historical evidence, it also emerges that voluntary economic immigration automatically leads these “new” workers to the so-called “parallel” labour market, increasing the national rates of illegal employment and tax and social security contribution evasion. However natural this prospect may seem for hundreds of thousands of new economic immigrants, it is not necessarily unavoidable.

Throughout the past decade, from the first “legalisation” programmes of 1998, until the last “chance” offered by Law 3536//2007, only 1/3 of immigrants has obtained a valid residence permit, 1/3 has a certificate proving that they have filed the documents required for a permit renewal and 1/3 has no papers at all¹.

This extremely low rate of legal immigrants was caused, mainly, by the Greek State’s reaction towards the new reality that was established in Greece in a sudden and rapid way. Greek governments have been completely inactive up until 1998 and openly reluctant from 1998 until today to effectively and successfully establish a legal status regulating the residence and work permits for the immigrant population in Greece.

So, the direct and indirect institutional obstacles that have been hindering the immigrants’ accessibility to the legal labour market have entrapped them in the nets of the black labour market. Even in cases where there are clear intentions from the employer’s side, it is practically impossible to legally hire a particular immigrant when they do not have a valid residence permit.

- Finally, in relation to the last part of the descriptive title we attempted to give to the current immigration situation in Greece, it is not surprising that the majority of immigrants are employed in, mainly, *small and medium-sized enterprises*, given that more than 90% of the Greek enterprises belong to this category.

However, this dimension has certain significant and determinative consequences over the potential awareness and mobilisation of employers regarding the problem of workplace discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin. A job position in a small or medium-sized enterprise is accompanied by certain particularities pertaining to the size and the social status of these enterprises.

¹ These estimates are mentioned in Kapsalis Apostolos (ed.), Undeclared Work the immigrant “Legalisation”, INE/GSEE-ADEDY Studies, vol. 27, 2007, p, 43

Irrespective of the employee's nationality, very often in these enterprises the relations developed between employers and employees transcend the narrow frames of the standard "employer-employee" relation type, especially in the sectors of economy where the majority of immigrant workers are employed.

Employers and employees very often work together, in the same working environment and under similar working conditions. Some typical examples may be a building contractor and the builder's labourers, people working in the cleaning services, a trader and the employee(s) in a retail shop or a handicraft establishment, a farmer or a cattle breeder and the farm workers, a restaurant or hotel owner and the employees in the catering-tourism sector in tourist areas.

In similar cases, the well-defined roles and traditional status can easily change, resulting in the creation of colleague, friendly or family – metaphorically and literally speaking – relations, which is usually the case in the private household sector where relations develop among the domestic worker(s) and the members of the family.

Moreover, the smallest the enterprise and the more the employers contribute with their personal work, the easier it is for these personal relations developed between the two parties to result in an increased effort to meet the legal job and social security requirements or needs.

In Greece, immigrant workers are employed in specific sectors, i.e. for both sexes a) in the agriculture and cattle industry, b) in the manufacturing sector and c) in hotels and restaurants. Besides, the construction sector absorbs the majority of male immigrant workers and the private household sector the majority of female immigrant workers. As mentioned above, both sectors employ about 50% out of the total number of workers from each category.

Consequently, to a great extent, Greek employers and immigrant workers become, in practice, colleagues or business associates, or the former become typically (and essentially) employees in their own company. So, the situation in Greece presents certain particularities, which facilitate the assessment of the immigrants' specific needs and the prospect of cooperation in order to undertake joint actions regarding the fight against workplace discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin.

Besides, considering all the above, it is not surprising that hardly ever have the representatives of trade unions and employers' associations expressed opposed opinions on the issue of immigration in Greece when asked to adopt a stance.

A typical example is the social partners' collaboration in the framework of an institutionally established consultation and cooperation body, the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC). The experience gained to date, both in the case of the group of experts forming the ESC's Opinions to be adopted and in the case of the General Assembly, where the Opinions are approved by the representatives of social groups, does not leave much room for misinterpretation.

The social partners' comments on the majority of the State's legislative proposals were made on the basis of common views and opinions regarding the social, economic and merely labour and social security related developments brought about by the hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers and their families.

In the framework of the official consultation launched on the occasion of the 1997 Presidential Decrees, the second "chance of legalisation" (Law 2910/2001) or the third "chance" (Laws 3386/2005 and 3536/2007), the opinions and criticisms expressed by the GSEE, GSEVEE, ESEE, PASEGES and GESASE representatives were, more or less, common and unanimous and, very often, even the SEV representatives expressed similar views².

The joint cooperation programme has recently moved into a new dimension, the participation in the draft of an Annual Report on the application of the principle of equal treatment, according to the competencies entrusted upon the ESC by article 18 of Law 3304/2005. This Law incorporated, after a very long delay, the two EC Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC on measures to combat discrimination in the social and professional life into the Greek national legislation.

It consists of a more precise effort to regulate the current situation pertaining to the fight against all forms of discrimination at the workplace and at a social level in general, while the signs of accord between the employers' and employees' sides in the adoption of the first two annual reports³ indicate a high level of agreement, evident in the immigration-related laws.

² The ESC's relevant Opinions are the following: 8/1997, 38/2001, 133/2005 and 165/2007.

³ For the years 2005 and 2006.

It is, however, a fact that, with the exception of the previous consultations that took place as a result of the social partners' institutional obligations, there have been but few initiatives for the organisation of meetings and discussions on these issues. Evidently, there is a lack of proper organisation and realisation of self-contained bilateral actions and discussions at national and local level.

For the objective reasons previously analysed in a concise way, given the social background created in relation to the immigrants' work, the efforts for the formation of common standards and for a unanimous selection of methods and actions in order to intervene in the problem of immigrant discrimination seem in advance promising.

This was solemnly proved during the workshops carried out in many Greek cities, where the most important elements were the creation of an atmosphere of constructive dialogue and the common understanding for the majority of subjects discussed.

Besides, qualitative research in the two well-known studies regarding the employers' predisposition towards immigrant workers⁴, confirms the undeniable objective reality, as this is illustrated in the labour force surveys conducted by the National Statistical Service of Greece during the past few years, i.e. the low rate of discriminating behaviour against immigrants at the pre-hiring and post-hiring phase.

There is, however, some, probably controversial, (pre)disposition – at a theoretical level – as well as a persistence of certain stereotypes about foreign citizens in general or about the level of work activity of people of a certain nationality.

Therefore, to the advantage of the second generation immigrants, who are now entering the labour market under different terms and with different and more qualifications compared to their parents, it is socially necessary to prevent cases and behaviours that could impede the way to their full social integration.

The present objective and subjective conditions favour this potential. What remains is the decision to undertake certain actions in order to raise awareness and mobilise the social partners in practice.

⁴ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, *Survey on employers' attitudes towards foreign workers*, 2004, and the Community Programme Horizons/Equal, *Pan-Hellenic survey on employers' social stance and attitudes towards foreign workers*, 2007.

2. Suggesting actions and initiatives with a view to raise awareness and mobilise the social partners.

It would be wrong to assume that Greece lags behind other countries that have been receiving immigrants for many years regarding the social partners' awareness and mobilisation on the problem of discrimination and racism.

First of all, it may be true that only few steps have been taken towards this direction, but it is also true that, to date, there have not been recorded any particularly serious problems in the integration of immigrants in the country's labour market and social life, nor any dangerous instances of racist violence or xenophobic treatment.

It is also a fact that in Europe in general, or at least in certain EU countries, there has been some progress regarding the subject examined, and in many cases effective, but this does not imply that certain social problems have been completely eliminated, nor that awareness-raising has always been self-evident.

Moreover, it should not be underestimated that, in recent history and during the past decade, the most significant and most typical national discussions and actions followed decisions and initiatives undertaken, one way or another, at community level.

Even in countries with colonial past or others with significant experience in the reception of immigrants, the social partners hesitate to jointly intervene in order to prevent or tackle instances of discrimination and marginalisation in their societies.

The situation began to change after 1995; Phenomena such as ghettos, exclusion, racist attacks and the increasing influence of overtly xenophobic and neo-Nazi political formations had already been established in most European countries, to a small or greater extent.

The social partners soon realised at a supranational level that employment and equal access to job opportunities in particular is the key to these developments. Moreover, feeling the weight of responsibility, as leaders of the social life, they decided to undertake action, in parallel with the procedures carried out by the EU institutions, for the fight against racism and xenophobia.

Thus, on 21 October 1995, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the

European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation (CEEP) signed a "***Joint declaration on the prevention of racial discrimination and xenophobia and promotion of equal treatment at the workplace***".

In countries with prior activity in that field either independently or with the joint efforts of employers and employees, this particular declaration laid a foundation for joint actions to be undertaken and several others to be coordinated.

From the relevant documents of qualitative assessment⁵ of this particular initiative undertaken by the social partners within the European countries, it emerges that it has been decided that certain significant intervention be made, particularly in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. In countries such as Portugal and Greece, the social partners included their commitment in the following year's National General Collective Labour Agreement.

About Greece in particular, in the framework of the EGSSE of 1996-1997 and in article 14, "Racism and Xenophobia", it is stated that "*The parties adopt the joint declaration against racism and recognise the need to plan and put into practice specific policies of equal opportunities and equal treatment in recruitment, selection, work allocation and access to training and education*". On the contrary, in the comparative study by the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) it is characteristically stated that⁶ "*However, it appears that no joint action is being planned and the SEV employers' organisation doubts if this issue will be included in the next national agreement*".

It is also worth noting that the European Union declared 1997 to be the "*European Year against Racism*"; as a result, several employers' and employees' took certain initiatives, in the framework of actions organised and funded directly from the EU.

Thus, it becomes very difficult to realise whether a certain action that was (co)decided by the trade unions and employers' associations in a certain country was a continuation of the independent effort to raise awareness and mobilise the European social partners or simply a participation to the EU programmes, which are part of a wider political framework for the fight against racism as a more general phenomenon extending beyond the workplace.

⁵ The most popular comparative study is *Social Partners and Racism: the impact of the European joint declaration*, EIRO, 28/06/1997.

⁶ EIRO, id.

In any case, for Greece, “*it is reported that there has been no action by central organisations to disseminate information, and that there is a lack of information at the base*”⁷. This phenomenon is not inexplicable, yet it cannot be attributed to an inherent indifference from the part of the Greek trade unions and employers’ associations.

Naturally, in order to intervene effectively in a situation, particularly a new one, such as the sudden and completely disorganised entrance of thousands of economic immigrants in the country, it is necessary to be aware of their quantitative and mainly qualitative characteristics.

In 1995 and even 1997, when these European actions were undertaken, the number, age, education, occupation and geographical and sectoral distribution of immigrants in Greece were still unknown.

The first attempt to record this data and organise the residence and employment of economic immigrants was made much later, in 1998; however, the results of this investigatory research were not published before 2002⁸; they were accompanied by heavy controversy regarding the credibility of the outcome, due to limited participation of immigrants in the registration and “legalisation” programmes introduced with the Presidential Decrees of 1997.

In other words, the State’s attitude towards the new situation hindered, to a great extent, any political intervention from the part the social partners. However, we should not underestimate the significance of another factor, i.e. the lack of common forms of consultation, which is evident in the country’s wider labour culture.

During the past five years, these necessary scientific requirements slowly began to be met, while a satisfactory amount of detailed study and specialised research work on the labour, economic and social dimension of immigration is gradually published.

Therefore, if we assume that, in practice, the social partners only began to realise and undertake common action in 2002, and given that, even today, there are no reliable official statistical data on immigration, the idea of close cooperation between GSEE

⁷ EIRO, id.

⁸ Kavounidou Tzeni, *Study on the economic and social integration of immigrants*, Employment Observatory, 2002.

and GSEVEE, of which the present guide forms part, can probably be considered direct, focused and qualitatively targeted.

An action to raise awareness and further mobilise the social partners on the fight against workplace discrimination can be suggested at three levels: national, sectoral and company level.

- At a **national level**, both Confederations, of workers on the one hand and of small businesses and trades on the other⁹, could maintain, encourage and systematise certain forms of trilateral consultation at local level, on the basis of workshops carried out in the framework of the project “*Observatory and Structures’ Network for the Strengthening of Economic Immigrants and Refugees in the Job Market*”.

Such a procedure would enable both Confederations to collect the necessary information, suggestions and concerns from their representatives and from members of immigrant organisations, regarding the problems and particularities of each region as far as the issue of discrimination against immigrant workers is concerned. Representatives from other labour bodies, such as ESEE, PASEGES, and GESASE could participate in these meetings, especially in areas with a developed agricultural economy.

A well-organised equivalent action would offer the social partners the opportunity to form an integrated opinion on the issue of immigration and probably manage to come before the National Committee for the social integration of immigrants with common views and suggestions.

Naturally, in order to achieve such an ambitious purpose, the Confederations of employers and employees need to answer a particularly pivotal and thorny question: *is there a real determination to tackle the problem of undeclared work in Greece?*

The Greek State, as already mentioned, with its attitude towards immigration has shown remarkable tolerance regarding the problem of undeclared work of the economic immigrants, not only before but even after 1998.

Tacitly, and at a political/economic level, this kind of tolerance from the State’s part stems from an established and widely prevalent impression, according to which the

⁹ And why not the federation of enterprises (SEV) as well.

effort to increase economic and company competitiveness relies not on the encouragement of innovation and the enhancement of product quality, but on the decrease in labour costs.

In relation to this impression, it is argued that the tolerance towards the completely or partially unregistered workers (natives or immigrants) and, more specifically, the institutional blockage for access to legal labour relations, particularly in the case of immigrants, subconsciously serve the country's development goals and, therefore, the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

So, the social partners must answer *whether, according to this logic, undeclared and uninsured work could, either in the short or in the long run, eventually prove beneficial for employees and employers and consequently for the country's economy and why.*

These questions were answered in a conclusive way by the Spanish social partners, as thanks to the actions they undertook, Spain is today a remarkable example to be imitated by all European countries. In **Spain**, the confederations of employees and employers agreed on the need to immediately and extensively tackle the problem of undeclared work in the domestic labour market.

Regarding the issue examined in the present guide, the social partners in Spain realised that the fight against the phenomenon of the black labour market involved a persistent, wide, simple and fast "legalisation" process of the illegal immigrants who lived in the country.

Furthermore, in the beginning of 2005, the largest employers' confederation, CEOE, and the union confederations, CC.OO and UGT, demanded from the Spanish Government to establish the necessary official procedures, from which benefited about 600.000 immigrants. As a result, today, the vast majority of immigrants in Spain are legal foreign workers.

Furthermore, similar projects encouraging the integration of immigrants into the labour market are realised in other countries, such as Italy and Portugal. In the framework of a potential equivalent initiative by the Greek social partners, an informative visit by the representatives of GSEE and GSEVEE to their Spanish (or other European) counterparts could prove a very constructive choice.

Besides, even in countries with successful programmes of immigrant integration the social partners tend to organise such visits. One example is the case of **Sweden**: during the past decade, the trade unions LO and TCO and the employers' association SAF organised a joint official visit to the UK in order to closely examine the joint work of the Confederations TUC and CBI, respectively, regarding the problem of discrimination at the workplace.

In this connection, the British social partners have set a remarkable example with relative actions, which include joint informative publications and workshops at national level. Recently, (September 2005) the two aforementioned Confederations together with the British Government signed a joint declaration regarding the management of immigration flows.

It is to be desired that the social partners in Greece will be inspired by similar practices that have been successfully adopted in the past by northern or southern EU countries.

In **Portugal**, in the past decade, the Government and the national employers' confederations, CIP, CCP and CAP, and the union confederation, UGT, undertook joint actions and commitments, which are established in the texts of the joint declarations for the encouragement of the fight against racism and xenophobia at the workplace.

In **Ireland**, the close co-operation between the central trade union, (ICTU), and the employers' confederation, (IBEC), resulted in the publication of a "*Joint code of practice on preventing racism in the workplace*" (1995), which includes certain guidelines on how to combat discrimination. Furthermore, the social partners have recently undertaken several interesting additional actions at local and company level in the framework of the «Anti-Racist Workplace Week» initiative (7-13 November 2005).

- At a **sectoral level** it is probably easier to plan and realise actions and projects to raise awareness and mobilise the social partners.

For reasons mentioned in the first section of this guide, the vast majority of immigrants in Greece are employed in three or four sectors of economic activity. Particularly in sectors where the employers are legal entities, the cooperation with the

trade unions in order to undertake joint actions to prevent and combat discriminatory behaviour has a better potential for success.

However, the same does not apply to cases where the employers are mainly individuals, whose representation and/or organisation, even at sectoral level, is in fact difficult or impossible. Typical examples from Greece are, on the one hand, the sector of homeworkers and, on the other, the sector of agriculture and livestock farming, where the employers of immigrant workers are normally private households.

In any other case, the social partners could take joint and specialised initiatives, given that, in general, collective negotiation and consultation are carried out under different conditions at sectoral and national level. Obviously, a first step towards this direction could be the inclusion of clauses or specific mention regarding the fight against discrimination in the conclusion or revision of sectoral collective agreements.

Upon this point, it is advisable to follow the exact same initiatives that are usually carried out by the Confederations of both sides. For example, the strong activity of certain European representative organisations of employers and workers noted in the **trade** sector could prove a good practice.

The organisations EuroCommerce and Uni-Europa Commerce display a high awareness-raising and mobilisation rate at **European level**. This cooperation is expressed in the joint declaration on *Corporate Social Responsibility*, signed on 30/11/2004.

Besides, this statement incorporates two previous relevant texts and, more specifically, the *Agreement on fundamental rights and principles at work* (1999) and the *Joint statement on combating racism and xenophobia* (2000).

The Belgian example from the temporary employment sector is also noteworthy. In the framework of a sectoral collective agreement that was concluded in 1997 in **Belgium**, a second agreement on combating racial discrimination at the workplace was signed by the employers' organisation, (UPEDI), the temporary employment agencies, (Interim), and the trade unions, FGTB and CSC.

This activity responds to the need to sufficiently protect a large number of workers-members of an eminently vulnerable section of the population, in the framework of an exceptionally flexible form of employment, i.e. job opportunities through (temporary) employment agencies.

The significance in the social partners' initiative is that the joint agreement integrates a Code of Good Practice to prevent racial discrimination against foreign temporary workers; article 3 of this Code of Good Practice states, for example, that "Skills and experience gained in other countries shall not be ruled out automatically or without examination from the employers' part".

- Finally, at **company level**, the effort to improve the social partners' awareness on the problem of immigrant discrimination is considered much easier and in the case of Greece, more or less, a reality, as analysed in the first section of this guide.

However, in order for this mobilisation from the part of the social partners to take the form or the nature of a collective agreement or regulation, it is essential that a company has an increased number of employees and that a corporate society is formed, which is not always the case, especially in the case of Greek enterprises with mainly immigrant workers.

Particularly during the past decade, and in almost all EU countries where small and medium-sized enterprises prevail, there are several examples of awareness-raising through self-contained agreements or specific mention in the framework of collective negotiations. The majority of these are found in the metal industry in Germany and Belgium or in various other sectors in the Netherlands and France.

All these cases are very interesting, especially when, at company level, adjustments are made to parameters and areas where discriminatory behaviour against immigrants has always been a problem. Nowadays in **France** there is an ongoing effort for the diffusion of company-level collective agreements focusing exclusively on the fight against racism and discrimination.

The most common initiative is that of the trade union CFDT entitled "*1000 agreements on diversity*" ("*1000 accords pour la diversité*"); it is an effort to motivate all the enterprises in France to follow the examples of collective agreements concluded by the private company Mutuelle Atlantique (2005) or the car manufacturer PSA Peugeot Citroen (2004).

In the case of the second company, this agreement regulates, in a binding way, several issues, such as the training of the staff in charge of recruitment and equal opportunity matters, the encouragement to hire and place qualified workers from underprivileged

regions in posts of responsibility or even the introduction of a system for the objective/qualitative analysis of the professional development of immigrant workers.

Epilogue

Compared to their activity during the past decade, the social partners awareness-raising efforts decreased in 2007, contrary to what we would expect considering the fact that 2007 was designated as the *European Year of Equal Opportunities for All*. Instead, there was some activity from the part of the EU political institutions and secondarily from the national governments of the Member States.

The year 2007 will be remembered as the year during which there was an attempt to establish a new model for the treatment of the phenomenon of immigration, by encouraging programmes of “selective” immigration and by narrowing the legal paths through which “obligatory” immigration is enabled (family reunification, for example).

The focal point, instead of the actions that would engage the social partners in a systematic effort for the full integration of immigrants, was the invention of the EU “Blue Card”, based on the US Green Card, for highly qualified and “useful” immigrant workers.

Hard-working people, employees and employers in small and medium-sized enterprises, realise better than anyone else that social phenomena such as discriminating behaviour, marginalisation, widespread poverty, ghettos and the situation of generalised insecurity hinder both the work of the individual and the general business activity.

The recurrence of violent riots in the suburbs of France in November 2007, twenty-four months after the riots of November 2005, are a clear evidence that the political priorities and actions undertaken in 2007 regarding selective immigration policies, by the Italian Commissioner responsible for immigration issues in the European Union, or in the framework of cooperation between the President of the French Republic and the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, were ineffective.

The social responsibility that falls upon the trade unions and the employers’ associations calls for a close cooperation between the two social partners in order to combat discrimination. It is their responsibility to raise awareness and mobilise, not only the members of their organisations but the entire society as well. Such a scope proves necessary and urgent, even if the Governments show signs of inactivity, ignorance or disagreement.

As regards Greece, if the immigration policy makers had any desire to cooperate, then they would not have rejected the social partners' joint and unanimous suggestions to their entirety, as these are being expressed for about a decade by the institutional body of the Economic and Social Council.

Similarly, they would have met their legal obligation to, at least typically, participate in the draft of the Annual Report on the application of the principle of equal treatment, which is entrusted on the same institutional body.

Second generation immigrants have already begun to massively enter the Greek labour market and to suffer early forms of discrimination of, mainly, institutional nature against them, either when they come of age or when they graduate from higher education institutes.

Contemporary European history of immigration leaves no room for complacency and further neglect: in the key sector of employment it is never too early to combat immigrant discrimination...