

THEMATIC CONTRIBUTION (NOVALLIA ASSOCIATION)

POPULATION MOVEMENTS: AN ASSET FOR EUROPE

There are at least three ways to enter the debate on population movements in the European Union:

- The **Erasmus-type** programs, which are popular with young Europeans, who have been allowed to study in a country other than their own, and therefore to go beyond cultural borders while respecting the specificities of each population on its territory, with its customs, way of life, social and religious practices etc. Each year produces its thousands of "Erasmus babies" who do not imagine, for the rest of their lives, that they will be forced to live otherwise than without internal borders and without the intermixing that the European Union allows. From generation to generation, they constitute the cement of Europe.
- The problem of **posted workers**.
- The arrival of those who **are** globally called "**migrants**", who come from outside the European Union.

The last two topics played an important role in motivating voters to support Brexit in England and far-right political parties in many countries.

social motivation, especially with seconded workers (internal European movements), and identity" motivation with migrants (coming from outside Europe).

With regard to **seconded work**, unless the construction of Europe is called into question by itself and in particular the principle of free movement, we must define modalities that allow both the movement of workers and their acceptance by the citizens of each Member State. It is a question of ensuring that these movements, which are necessary, do not lead to **unfair competition between** workers from one country and those from another.

In the current functioning, with regulations that roughly stipulate that the wages paid are in line with the wages of the host country and that social contributions are those of the country of origin, some countries feel cheated: some because they see social dumping to the detriment of their competing workers, others because their nationals are exploited and that, despite this, the States with the highest social standards want to challenge the directive.

In fact, a large part of the problem is that the rules laid down in the directive **are not respected**. If these rules were complied with, including with regard to working conditions and the constraints imposed on the employer concerning in particular the housing of foreign employees, the cost to the company in France of a posted worker would be equivalent to that of a French worker.

The lack of respect for the rules and the proliferation of fraudulent schemes have led both to the scandalous exploitation of workers from certain Eastern European countries and to the rejection of the system by the natives.

The only acceptable way out in the renegotiation of the directive is to retain the formula "**equal pay for equal work, equal pay at the same workplace**", including identical benefits. It would be opportune for the European trade unions and the European trade union confederation to make their voice heard more clearly and mobilize their nationals (!).

The question of **migrants, on the other** hand, arises in a different way and concerns populations that are different from one another, often with different motivations. Syrian refugees, for example, would, for the vast majority of them, like to return home. Their reception would thus be temporary. Migrants from African countries, taking considerable risks and at the cost of extreme suffering, have fled misery and often persecution. They are seeking in Europe a permanent settlement for **a decent life**. This movement is unlikely to stop for a long time, especially since it will be rapidly amplified by the phenomenon of **climatic migration**, whose first manifestations are appearing in Africa, Southeast Asia, etc...

An answer that would consist in wanting to close our borders (French or European) is totally illusory and counterproductive. A border closure is always reciprocal and we would be quite incapable of implementing it in reality .

The European Commission tried to do what it could, namely to distribute migrants, and thus their reception, among the member countries.

Angela Merkel's Germany welcomed the most, even under the critics of its partners. France very few, and other countries such as Hungary or Poland have refused to take their share, except to sort among the candidates for hosting.

It is true that migration policy remains the competence of the member states (it would therefore be necessary to

modify this rule to move towards qualified majority decisions).

It is also true that the Dublin agreements are still in force and provide that it is the country of first reception that deals with the question of **refugee status**. Greece and Italy find themselves in even greater difficulty.

As for the "deal" with Turkey, whose undemocratic evolution is known, it charges this country, in return for payment, to keep Syrian refugees on its territory while waiting for better days.

If, at the other end of the chain, the British destination is so popular with migrants, it is because of the language spoken there and the fact that you can work there without papers. And since, in application of the Le Touquet agreement, the border is in France, the situation during the Brexit negotiations is a bit blocked.

A number of **international** rules and **agreements** need to be changed, but this will not be enough.

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In order to be aware of what is happening there and thus ensure better care for migrant populations, **the Frontex agency** must be strengthened, evolve in its methods and really fulfill its role.

In order to limit "economic" immigration, especially of young Africans with "no future", **Africa's development** must be supported. This is the purpose of the Juncker 2 plan, consisting mainly of loans. But it will be necessary to go further and invest public money on the African continent. As for climate issues, which cause some populations to flee their own countries, they are addressed by the **Paris Agreement** resulting from COP 21, which must not only be respected (including in its financial aspect) but probably strengthened given the urgency to act.

Nevertheless, in the coming years many more migrants will arrive in Europe.

First observation: what does "numerous" mean in a space of 500 million inhabitants, whose different countries have moreover been built up by successive waves of immigration? Let's rediscover a sense of proportion, and revise **our history!**

Second observation: reception and integration tools exist. They simply have to be used.

Let's start by countering the **propaganda** and "fake news" of the extreme right, especially regarding the "privileges" enjoyed by migrants or the link maintained in public opinion with those involved in terrorism. We do not respond to human distress by spreading false ideas. In this respect, the media and political leaders have an important mission to fulfill.

The integrating role of the **school** is major: to give the newcomers the minimum knowledge so that they can participate in social life (language, knowledge of customs and rules ...), to insert the children in their social environment and enable them to acquire the means to "make their life", but also towards the local population, to provide an education "to accept the other" ...

With regard to the religious question, often put forward as a brake on integration, simple respect for the **principle of secularism** (the law of 1905, without unnecessary adjectives), with a reminder and concrete explanation as soon as one arrives on French soil, should greatly facilitate living together.

Third observation: given its economic and demographic situation, Europe **needs** immigrants. We simply need to **welcome** them, distribute them in an organized manner, and give them work to integrate them.

In fact, migrants do not "take the work of the French". They occupy "the jobs that remain". And in any case, if they come with their labor force, they also come with

their consumption needs and those of their families. They also bring their intelligence and culture. Their presence is enriching in many ways.

We still have to convince the vast majority of our fellow citizens of all this, in coherence with our republican values as defenders of human rights. In particular, we must rely on "good examples" of integration, especially in **rural areas**, some of which have regained youth and dynamism through the arrival of migrant populations. Let us renew the **positive word of the left, in** order to solve a crucial problem in Europe, while opening perspectives for the future.
