



Santé Mentale Exclusion Sociale
Mental Health Social Exclusion

INVISIBLE WOUNDS – Dignity & Health

MIGRANTS Integration through active participation & inclusive solidarity

European Seminar SMES: Athens 25-26 February 2010



INTRODUCTION¹

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.

It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life

Nelson Mandela

BACKGROUND:

After the 10th SMES-Europa Conference in Rome 23-26/01/2008, which focused also on the theme of "**Migrants: Dignity - Health**", this topic of migration and active integration continued to be of great interest to professionals, working in the social & health sector in favour of marginalized and excluded people.

The European Year **2010** for combating Poverty and Social exclusion will be a very important opportunity for promotion of new, positive and courageous migration policy, in respect of Dignity and Health - also of undocumented migrants !

Migrant People today, especially undocumented migrants, but including also asylum seekers, refugees and all others who abandoned home, country, family in reason of **HOPE** of better conditions of life for himself and families, are more and more **undesirable** today in Europe.

Distrust, undesirability, and its corollary active rejection, characterizes the policies relating to migrants, as often for the homeless leaving in the street in extreme situation of poverty and abandonment. The humanitarian welcome/acceptance and the principle of solidarity and civic integration remain at level of good intentions, while exclusion and discrimination feed the political discourse as well the reactions of citizens.

The punitive measures to control denounced by European Parliament (2005), continuing to be the main initiatives of migration policy: *"The European Parliament regrets that so far the measures adopted by the Council and Member States have been primarily punitive measures to control migration flows rather than proactive in third countries. It recalled its view that strategies to reduce poverty, improve living conditions and working to create jobs and develop training in countries of origin, contributed to normalising migration flows in the long term. For the European Parliament, it is also imperative to take full account of the potential of immigration in a context of co-development. In this context, it encourages the integration of migration in EU foreign policy while recalling that the use of development aid is not enough to address the root causes of migration".* (09/06/2005 - EP: non-legislative resolution)

¹ *In synthesis we present in this introduction the 3 Announcements sent inviting many Associations working in Migration Field to join us in the Athens Seminar*

The 'illegal' (so called ...) migrants, and other marginalized populations, are only the tip of the iceberg of a social structural phenomenon handled often inadequately and sometimes inconsistently by the political class in Europe. In a way, these *other and different*, require us to consider the situation scandalous and untenable.

The marginal and excluded people: **undocumented & home-less = without**: >permit, >identity, >care, >home, >job...**less**, are increasingly discriminated against, exploited and often actively rejected. In addition, because of their status - *so-called illegal* - these people are seen as a threat to public order and therefore any means, (both administrative and policing) seem justified to counter this threat.

Undocumented migrants have no other means to protect themselves but to hide at the risk **of remaining without identity and without social aid** rather than risk being expelled. As a result they remain without any law and are thus vulnerable to exploitation and arbitrary decisions. ***In such a context, is it possible for an NGO and Association, for a social and health worker, to give meaning to their work when they are permanently faced with administrative norms and political decisions which are quite contrary to fundamental / universal RIGHT and professional ethics?***

In dealing with the above, SMES-Europa proposed a seminar of perspective and proposition, in one of Mediterranean city where the problem is more "**visible – critic – urgent** " where the frequently landing are a visible symptom of all this human suffering. In a way, these other and different, require us to consider the situation scandalous and untenable.

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In addition, because of their status - so-called illegal - these people are seen as a threat to public order and therefore any means, (both administrative and policing) seem justified to counter this threat. Undocumented migrants have no other means to protect themselves but to hide at the risk of remaining without identity and without social aid rather than risk being expelled. As a result they remain without any law and are thus vulnerable to exploitation and arbitrary decisions.

This seminar entitled "**Invisible Wounds: Dignity and Vulnerability**" should be a forum for exchange of ideas, reflections and experiences as thorough and challenging a discussion where comparing opinions, legislations and practices concerning: welcome or rejection, accessibility to health & social services, participation & integration. The ethical - legal - health - social answers, in political context, will then be investigated. Further discussion of ways to protect the inalienable right of every person to dignity, health, including undocumented migrants will then take place.

For this exchange we invited divers Associations who are affected in daily practices by this issue, in order to prepare together this European seminar, by sending us suggestions and proposals based on these **two preliminary questions**:

1. **How to contribute to the right of all to happiness** by involving professionals and civil society ? How to generate a **burst of true humanism** in the face of indecision and denial of fundamental human right when public institutions are complacent with those who exploit migrants without a residence permit?
2. **Is it possible to propose, in today's Europe, a culture of solidarity**, alternative to the **mistrust** of poor migrants, "economic" asylum seekers? In what manner can we pressurise the public service to accompany and support "solidarity services"?

From these questions as a backdrop, we should be able to improve the preparation and realisation of the seminar, both in terms of content and method:

GENERAL THEME - Statement : health and mental health of migrants, respecting their right to health and a dignified life is not one of priorities in European migration policies, but various types of administrative and subjective barriers - concretely - prevent access to public health and social services. Until when the '**solidarity ambulatory services**' replace the basic duty of public health system ?

TARGET : special attention should be paid to *invisible wounds and vulnerability* of :

- a. **Migrants, especially undocumented** who are seen often as "invaders", an attribution to justify any form of loss of rights, malfeasance and exploitation...;
- b. **Workers in favour of migrants**, who are all the time faced with the contradictory and inconsistent regulations in legislation, ethics, etc.. ...;
- c. **Population** , which is kept on alert by fear more than the wish of being supportive of solidarity and participation ...

TOPICS: The seminar will be a forum for exchange of ideas, experiences and proposals concerning Migrants condition and more specifically:

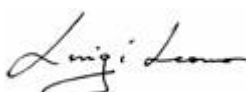
1. **Human Right, respect of Dignity** and access to rights: invisible wounds as consequences of denied rights;
2. **Health and Mental Health** : invisible wounds as a consequence of traumatic past, present difficulties and humiliations and no hope in future;
3. **Participation and job** : participation of migrants as a resource for building new and multiethnic community. Invisible wounds as consequences of exploitation & trafficking .
4. **Integration and habitat** : no social cohesion and community integration without respect for diversity; invisible wounds as consequence of pressure for assimilation.

Many past wounds visible and invisible, are part of the baggage that accompanies them in this path of migration. BUT many wounds affecting migrants are also dramatic consequences of arrogant political attitudes towards them, of humiliation, rejection and criminalisation ?

Migration can become for Europe today an inspiring challenge or only a complex social problem, that would not be solved with the promised 20 billion \$ in 3 years (G8 Aquila 10 July - Adnkronos) and simultaneous closing of borders.

In this specific forum, where the wounds must find adequate cure & care, we will :

- **To reflect together** on dramatic consequences, wounds, of current European policies on migration – in particular irregular one - on mental health of migrants, but also of workers with and for migrants, and of citizens who live in permanent contact with they .
- **To introduce and evaluate** efficient and innovative projects, aiming at a real integration through active participation.
- **To propose some models** of welcoming and integrating migrants, based on the respect of human rights and human diversity, and on participation, which is the only way to real improvements in security and social cohesion.
- **To converge in a common declaration** concerning some fundamental and irrenounceable points: 1. no detention camps in Europa - 2. free access to health services for all -



Luigi Leonori President of SMES