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Workshop
“Human Trafficking:
Data Collection, Current Trends
and Institutional Approaches”

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Migrants' trafficking in Portugal: current trends

- Concepts, framework and methodology
 - Concepts
 - Context
 - Methodology
- Research results
 - Smuggling and trafficking of migrant labour
 - Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation
- Theoretical implications

Concepts, framework and methodology

- Research project “Migrants trafficking in Portugal: sociological, juridical and political perspectives” - funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and the High Commissioner for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIME), Portugal – 2004.
- Main issues dealt with in the project:
 - the study of migrants trafficking in Portugal:
 - characterisation of migrants trafficking’ networks
 - types of victims
 - causes and modalities
 - political framework
 - flows under study: workers, women and children
 - recommendations and political solutions

Concepts

- Different types of movements usually treated under the broad label of “trafficking”



- The most important distinctions:

smuggling / trafficking

migrant and forced labour / women’s sexual exploitation / children

- International definitions (UN, 2000): the main variables differentiating smuggling and trafficking:
 - exploitation
 - coercion and violence
 - fraud (in sum, abuse of human rights)



a large continuum of situations

Framework

- The rationale behind the project: Portugal has witnessed in the last 10 years (late 1990s/early 2000s) significant processes of smuggling / trafficking:
 - These were responsible for the large increase of irregular immigration flows, regularised in different ways
 - The figures:
 - In 2000: 207 607 legal foreigners (residence permits) – around 2% of total population
 - In 2004: 446 178 legal foreigners (residence permits and permits of stay) – around 4.5% of total population and almost 10% of total labour force
 - Main flows object of smuggling and / or trafficking:
 - trafficking of labour force coming from Eastern Europe and Brazil
 - trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, mainly coming from Brazil.

Methodology

- Research methodology - plural (and mainly indirect) approach:
 - theoretical and documental analysis, including scientific literature, media and legislation analysis;
 - research of judicial cases;
 - consultation to several governmental and non-governmental institutions related to the topic (semi-directive interviews to institutional representatives);
 - collection of life histories of traffickers / smugglers and victims.
- At a disciplinary level: contributions from sociology, law and political science.

Research results

Smuggling and trafficking of migrant labour - Eastern Europe

- Evolution
 - Eastern Europe: a novel migration to Portugal - main flows in the late 90s / early 2000s, with a peak in 2001
 - Main nationalities: Ukraine (most migrants), Moldavia, Russia and Romania
- Modes of operation
 - “Migration package” bought in the origin country, including tourist visa (short-term) to a Schengen country, travel and contact person in Portugal
 - Contact persons in Portugal provide housing or help finding job
 - Groups operating in defined areas of the territory are responsible for extorting migrants – demanding a “subsidy for protection” (independent from the initial debt), often using violent means

- Traffickers / smugglers networks
 - Contacts / members in the sending country, usually including a travel agency (responsible for advertisements of “travels” to the host country)
 - Transport personnel
 - Contacts / members in transit countries
 - Contacts / members in the host country
- Networks structure - different types of networks
 - Small and loose networks (finishing their interaction with immigrants almost after arrival) → smuggling
 - Large and well organised networks (formal hierarchy and job division), and having ties with criminal activities in the sending country (continuing their interaction with immigrants, usually by extorting, after arrival) → trafficking

- Victims
 - Mostly men targeted for low skilled jobs in civil construction
 - Also some women, targeted for domestic service and, occasionally, pushed for the sex industry.
- The operation of smuggling and trafficking networks is decreasing over time. Reasons:
 - Decrease of job offer (mainly construction)
 - End of most possibilities for acquiring a legal status
 - Police control
 - Better integration of immigrants (legalisation, information and informal social networks)
 - Return migration

However:

- A change in the modes of operation of trafficking networks may be occurring, with larger diversification of activities or more subtle forms of exploitation

Smuggling of migrant labour - Brazil

- Evolution: a “second wave” of Brazilian immigration began in the late 90s
- Modes of operation:
 - The “migration package” bought in Brazil usually includes air travel and contact person in Portugal (visas are not required)
 - Contact persons provide housing or help finding job
- Smugglers networks:
 - Contacts / members in the sending country, often including a travel agency
 - Contacts / members in the host country, responsible for receiving immigrants, finding house and getting work

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loose networks

- Victims
 - mostly men targeted for low skilled jobs in civil construction
- The operations of smuggling from Brazil seem to be considerable since the late 90s, due to a set of factors:
 - Push factors at the origin
 - Diverse job offer (construction, services, domestic cleaning)
 - More difficulties of illegal access to the USA since September 2001
 - Continuing possibilities for acquiring a legal status (special legalisation for Brazilians in 2003)

However:

- Strong informal networks among Brazilians in Portugal (together with cultural proximity with the host country) make the operation of organised and violent networks less relevant.

Trafficking of women from Brazil

- Evolution:
 - Increase in the late 90s, accompanying the growth of the sex industry all over the country (urban and non-urban locations) – night-bars, clubs, etc.
- Smugglers networks
 - Portuguese owners of night-bars, clubs, etc.
 - Contacts in Brazil, often women (with previous experience of prostitution or Portugal or not)
 - Other contacts in Portugal
- Networks structure
 - Loose and flexible networks; many small networks

- Victims
 - Most women come from low and low-middle classes
 - Some women have previous experience in prostitution, others not
 - Women sometimes know which activity they will perform in Portugal (although the degree of “fraud” is a matter of dispute)
 - Women seem to display some control over their destiny
 - The operations seem to be considerable since the late 90s. Reasons:
 - Push factors at the origin (poverty)
 - Demand for sex work in Portugal
 - Unregulated character of the industry
 - High incomes earned in this activity
- However: recent surge of police control

Theoretical implications

- Multiple causes are active in smuggling / trafficking (labour / sexual):
 - Push factors for emigration (Eastern Europe / Brazil / others)
 - EU regulations:
 - Schengen agreement
 - Pull factors for immigration:
 - Job offer in low skilled and scarcely regulated jobs (civil construction / cleaning / ... / sex industry)
 - Portuguese immigration policy:
 - Scarcity and slowness of legal ways for regular immigration (e.g. family reunion)
 - Severe immigration control
 - Various special legalisations of irregular migrants

- Several agents involved in the process of trafficking / smuggling:
 - Migrants / potential migrants / victims - often active and accountable agents in this process
 - Intermediary agents – more or less organised smuggling and trafficking networks
 - Employers (civil construction, domestic cleaning, night-bars, ...)
 - Non-governmental associations
 - Government and public authorities of the host country

- A regular interaction between these agents takes place
⇒ there is a permanent creation and (re)adaptation of strategies between individuals and groups



large variations in { type of smuggling / trafficking
 quantitative volume of the flows
 modes of operation

- The context is favourable to the creation and strengthening of “formal”/organised networks:
 - Support of individual migrants in their legitimate migratory strategy
 - Exploitation as a form of taking advantage of the migrants’ vulnerability

- In the Portuguese case: the adaptation of agents strategies has led to a profound change in the immigration patterns and channels in the last 10 years:
 - New sending countries (out of the Portuguese-speaking area – the traditional Portuguese migratory system)
 - Very strong increase of immigration in a short time span – between 2000 and 2002 – and strong decrease afterwards
 - Many of the networks activities resulted from short-term economic and policy changes (including legalisation policies)
- This dynamic interaction between different agents creates a very changeable profile of immigration (rhythms and characteristics)



a situation largely different from the traditional channels of migration

In sum:

- The conjunction of
 - individual aspirations for migration
 - stringent migration policies
 - organised intermediary agents
 - short-term economic demand

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lead to the surge of dynamic modalities for channelling flows
- The fact that each agent actively interacts with the others explains the continuing changes in the process