



## **Press Release on the Kick-off Meeting of EEPOW**

The kick off meeting of the Posting of Workers in Eastern Europe (EEPOW) project was held in Vienna on the 27th and 28th February. The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research was hosting the event and is leading a partnership of eight public and civil society organisations from four EU member States and four candidate countries from the area of Balkans.

The project, which started in January 2018 and lasts for 2 years, is implemented with the financial support from the European Union (Grant Agreement No. VS/2017/0349). EEPOW deals with the analysis and action on the best possible conditions to welcome the EU directive on posting within the different national systems of the countries involved in the project. One major characteristic of labour migration within the European Union (EU) is mobility from lower-income countries, often from Southern and Eastern Europe, towards higher-income Member states (MS) in the West and the North of Europe. Therefore, transitional periods for full access to the freedom of movement of workers in the internal European market have been applied for the latest accession countries. As a result, the posting of workers regulated by the Directive on the Posting of Workers (96/71/EC) has been one of the main channels for employment of workers from these countries to the rest of the EU until the lifting of the ban. The migratory trend is expected to continue once the candidate countries from the Western Balkans become full members, in particular when considering their recent history of migration towards EU member states since the fall of the previous political regimes.

The EEPOW Project aims to proactively address the issue of posting of workers at its pre-accession stage by assisting Eastern European countries, especially the four candidate countries Albania, FYROM, Montenegro, and Serbia, in implementing the Directive already before it gets into force, and by assisting in the prevention of social dumping, i.e. the use of cheap labour, to minimize associated risks for workers.

The project contributes to European Cohesion and Solidarity within the EU and between the EU and the candidate countries in the Western Balkans, helps to further consolidate national strategies, and reinforces transnational coordination between relevant stakeholders of the broader EU region. The specific objectives include improving transnational multi-stakeholder cooperation, increasing access to information, strengthening the evidence base through empirical research, and building institutional capacities.

During the two days meeting, the partnership agreed upon the operational and organizational aspects of the action. The action plan of EEPOW plans for the realization of empirical research and institutional needs assessment in the four candidate countries, of four country workshops with the main stakeholders in the four candidate countries and of Peer Reviews in the four member states involved.

The meeting in Vienna confirmed the relevance and interest toward the important topic of posting, and the partnership's commitment to work together toward the achievement of the common goals.

More information at <http://www.euro.centre.org/projects/detail/1673>.

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With financial support from the European Union

