Chapter 14
Promotion of Migrant Entrepreneurship:
The Portuguese Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a dynamic reality in today's global and modern societies, representing challenges and opportunities. Studies show that migrants and refugees are resilient and more likely than non-migrants to start new businesses, although they still encounter obstacles mainly associated with their legal status. The High Commission for Migration (ACM) is a public institute in Portugal responsible for the implementation of public policies for the reception and integration of migrants. Through its Migrant Entrepreneur Support Office (GAEM), ACM promotes a range of initiatives to support migrants and refugees wishing to develop micro-business in Portugal, based primarily on skills development, capacity building, networking, and institutional referral. From the Portuguese experience, this chapter will describe the investment in public measures in this area, demonstrating how the promotion of entrepreneurship is a fundamental dimension for the integration of migrants and how ACM supports migrants and refugees in the development of their entrepreneurial projects.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is now a global phenomenon and people's mobility can happen for a variety of reasons. Thus, host countries may face challenges arising from migratory flows and the different migrant profiles received. However, these countries can also turn into opportunities those which, according to Oliveira (2004, p. 65), are the resources that immigrants bring to host societies, such as their qualifications or their professional and business experiences, allowing to determine their choices with regard to their

economic insertion. This chapter will therefore focus on the dimension of integration related to labour market insertion through business creation.

With a methodology based in a qualitative approach, characterized as exploratory research, we opted for a case study (PEI), plus bibliographic and documentary analysis to support the investigations about the question:

How initiatives with person-centred and competency-based methodologies can influence the integration of migrants through the creation of a business?

Undoubtedly, alongside the positive aspects of migrants in host societies, are the difficulties that migrants experience in their integration, which are specific to their legal status. According to Oliveira (2004, p. 65), one can point out as obstacles to achieving the economic objectives of migrants the constraints determined by immigration policies, hostile public opinion, ignorance of the language, lack of knowledge in the process of looking for work or discrimination in the access to the labour market.

In the first part of this chapter, the authors will briefly characterize the migratory flows in Portugal, signalling out which political measures have been developed, particularly on the support of business creation, while referring, in a broader perspective, to those which are the European Commission's guidelines to support the creation of business by migrants. The positive impacts that business creation has on host countries will also be mentioned, as well as the difficulties of migrants in the business creation process, as referred in several sources and also by the services of the High Commission for Migration (ACM).

Based on the recognition of the potential of immigrants, the intention to remove the barriers faced by migrants, as well as the fostering of immigrant entrepreneurship, ACM has developed initiatives to support migrants who want to start a business in Portugal, which will be explained below, mostly by highlighting the Project for the Promotion of Immigrant Entrepreneurship (PEI). The presentation of these initiatives aims to highlight how dynamic, practical, person-centred and competency-based methodologies can influence the integration of migrants through the creation of a business and how relevant is the identification and interaction with other resources.

Migration in Portugal: The Context to Create a Business

In the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the 60s and 70s, Portugal was mostly a country of emigration, a situation that began to be reversed since the 90s with the entry of foreign citizens in the country.

In the first decade of the 21st century there was a slowdown in the entry of migrants in Portugal. However, according to data from the Immigration and Borders Service, as evidenced in its annual statistical report (SEF/GEPF, 2019), although the negative variations in foreign population residing in Portugal in the years 2005 and 2010-2015, the situation has been changing. In 2018, Portugal registered 480.300 foreigners with a valid residence permit, which is unprecedented, since it is the highest stock since 1976. These citizens represent close to 5% of the population, and are mainly from Brazil, Cape Verde and Romania.

Recently, Portugal has also seen an increase in the number of foreign students. In a statement from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (2018), it is stated that the number of foreign students has increased by 48% since 2014-2015, representing today around fifty thousand students and 13% of the total students enrolled. Regarding the issuance of residence permits, SEF data (SEF/GEPF, 2019) indicates that among the reasons for granting residence permits, study was, in 2018, ranking third, right after family reunion and professional activity.

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