

Lessons and experiences from the Talent Attract and Support Services (TASS)-project; a guide for organising and providing welcoming services to foreign talents in regions and cities



Background and aim of the brochure

This brochure contains an overview of experiences and good practices in the field of so-called Talent Attract and Support Services (TASS) services, based on the work in the TASS-project. This sub-project was part of the INTERREG IVC Mini-Programme “Brain-Flow” addressing the phenomenon of brain drain and brain gain in border regions.

The ultimate goal of the TASS sub-project was to contribute to the economic growth and welfare of participating regions, by the strengthening the regional support services for high educated talents in order that the regional business sectors can better compete in a knowledge based global economic context.

This project brought actors together from six European regions that face similar challenges in attracting and welcoming highly qualified labour migrants. Four regions had an active evaluation and design function in the project. Two regions were observers in the project. These region share that they are border regions and although maybe not peripheral or economically weak, they are not the core economic region in their country. They are not necessarily rural but do not have the main cities of their country. The actors and regions were;

- the Fundación MODERNA from the Spanish region Navarra
- the University of Twente, the World Trade Centre Hengelo/municipality of Hengelo within the Dutch province of Overijssel;
- the municipalities Arnhem and Nijmegen within the Dutch province of Gelderland;
- the municipality of Dusseldorf within the German bundesland Nord Rhine Westphalia.
- The municipality of Karlstad from the Swedish region Hedmark and the city of Basel within the Swiss region Basiliensis were observers in the project

The regions made an inventory and evaluation of services in their regions looking for overlap, gaps and potential improvements. The recommendations not only concerned the services but also the most appropriate design of the organisational structure, like Talent Attraction and Support Expat Centres, the role of actors and their responsibilities. The recommendations were based on the analyses in the own region but also on the exchange and transfer of available best practices in the field of support services for talent attraction and retention between the regions and best practices from elsewhere in the world.

In this brochure we will not try to summarise the regional reports but draw general lessons from these experiences and best practices we found. The brochure was written with the target group of actors in other regions in mind, that want to improve the services in their regions. The starting idea is this brochure is that regions should have an interest in facilitating the move and the welcome of high educated labour migrants to their region if they want to compete in the global economic competition.

In the rest of the brochure we will use the more general used word ‘welcoming services’ next to the world TASS services. Given the wide variety in administrative systems, rules and cultures between countries our recommendations are not a handbook for regions but more observations and particular attention points for region that want to organise our improve their welcoming services.

Ratio of the project

Europe has never before welcomed a greater number of highly qualified people in a way that institutional measures had to be taken. Talent Attract and Support Services or welcoming services until now are linked with the presence of international companies in core regions and the exchange of personal between their settlements worldwide.

Migration of labour force between regions and countries is a very natural process. Particular highly educated people are very mobile, but people with all kind of competences move around the world to places where their labour is in demand. Under welcoming services we understand here all kind of activities that help labour migrants to come and re-allocate to another region and to settle there, including activities to bind and keep them in this new region.

Welcoming services are relevant for all categories of labour migrants. Here we focus on highly skilled or highly educated labour migrants. For this focus we have three motives. First of all these people are in demand by many regions, so there is competition for these people. Our thesis then is that those regions who have organised their welcoming services have a competitive advantage in acquiring these scarce human resources over other regions. Secondly, these people might be crucial for certain regional (economic) activities. They might be so in demand, that without them certain regional activities stop or are endangered. Of course this also can be the case for people in important service jobs like doctors, nurses and teachers. And also people with less educating and competences might be in high demand, but probably less in the position of the particular person without which the motor stops. Thirdly, actors in regions already spent a lot of money in acquiring and/or re-allocating these scarce resources as part of their organisations HR policies. For welcoming services aiming at this category of people, cooperation between these organisations who are in demand for high skilled people might bring a lot of advantages and surplus value. But of course many of these services are relevant for all categories of labour migrants and students from other regions.

In welcoming services people immediately think about foreign labour migrants. For people from a foreign countries the process of re-allocation is often much more difficult and more in need of support. But many re-allocation services are also relevant for people who re-allocate within a country, as we will see. And here also our thesis from above holds. If people are in demand by many regions, there is competition for these people, and those regions who have organised their welcoming services have a competitive advantage in acquiring these scarce human resources over other regions. Even if these people come from the same country and have therefore many advantages over foreign labour migrant, in the sense that they know the country, (labour) culture, have the necessary papers and qualifications and know the systems, like health care, housing, public services, etc.

In other words the general problem of having enough human capital in the region is narrowed down to the problem of organising the pull of the right labour migrants. All kinds of other subjects are related migration immigrants like their qualification and the use of the competences of migrants. Here we have a specific focus on improving the pull factors and we do not look at push factors like the economic crisis or the political climate in the region of origin of the labour migrants. But we also look at activities concerning the retention of labour migrants in the region.

Who needs to be moved and re-allocated?

Traditionally Expat were employees that were sent to a branch of a company in a certain region for a number of years. The whole process of re-allocation to the new region would be facilitated by employer. With the globalisation and the increasing labour mobility among the highly skilled more and more people re-allocate to other regions on their own initiative. Sometimes their move and their welcome is organised by their new employer. But more and more these migrants have to rely on general welcoming services, because companies are not able to organize this themselves given the number of foreign employees or the lack in experience in receiving foreign employees. Sometimes there are specialised Expat centre, potentially sponsored by their new employer, and sometimes a lot is left to the own initiative of the migrant. But even for companies that do have a lot of foreign employees and have experience how to welcome them, it might be more efficient to buy in welcoming services. In this guide we also look at some experiences with welcoming services for interregional labour migrants and international students because of the overlap in activities.

The starting idea is this Guide is that regions should have an interest in facilitating the move and the welcome of this group of migrants. If regions are in competition over scarce high skilled labour force those region who have organised facilities for highly skilled labour migrants will have a competitive advantage. They not only will feel more welcome and this might influence their decision to move to the region, but also if there like in the new region is quicker and better organised the chance that they will stay for a longer period in the region is much bigger.

What are welcoming services?

Under welcoming services we understand here all kind of activities that help labour migrants to come and re-allocate to another region and to settle there, including activities to bind and keep them in this new region. There are many ways to divide welcoming services:

- according to the type of labour migrant;
- according to the type of services;
- In phases a migrant has to go through to in settling in a new country;
- in terms of who is offering the services.

In this Guide we focus on a broad set of interrelated activities in four phases :

- Pre-arrival
- Actual re-allocation
- Soft landing (professional and social integration)
- Retention

Pre-arrival

We include in this guide also activities that concern a pro-active approach of regions to interest international knowledge migrants to come and work in their region. In the small definitions of expats this would not be necessary because employees of a company would be asked to work in a certain branch of the company in a certain region. There are two sides to the pre-arrival process, the interest and willingness to work in a particular region at the one hand and the interest in a certain job on the other hand. For some people a very interesting job in a less attractive region might be a reason not to move there. For others a region a particular region might be so interesting they would be happy with any available job. We split up here in two groups of activities:

- Interesting labour migrant for the region by providing information on the region and potential jobs;
- matching between interested migrants and available jobs;

Region marketing

What might people make willing to move to another region for work? In times of severe economic crisis people might want to move anywhere as long as they can find a good job. There is a big difference in immigrating to another country to potentially stay there the rest of your life and immigrating as part of a process of job-hopping. Traditional migration would be first migrate and then find a job. The push factor in the home region are strong. In this guide we are interested in people that come for a job and that the region wants to attract through its specific pull factors.

Pull factors are specific for persons and for regions. Migration starts with looking for better opportunities in life for oneself or ones children. We are all looking for a certain quality of life. Quality of life is subjective. Some people might want to move to a faraway region because it is less hectic or because of the beautiful nature. While other more cosmopolitan types would never want to leave cities and associate quality of life with city life (Haich, Coenen and Knall, 2013).

If the job itself or the attractiveness of the region are the main determinants to re-allocate, in the end it comes down to information on the region and its jobs. In this Guide for the pre-arrival phase is element of interesting labour migrant for the region by providing information on the region and potential jobs. This not only concerns migrants who re-allocate on their own initiative but also real expats, who come on invitation of their company, will be interested in pre-arrival information

If people thinks they are welcome in a region and it is easy to settle there and they will be helped to move and re-allocate, this is a competitive advantage for the region in the battle for global talent.

This process of information delivery to labour migrants fits in the general process of region branding and marketing. Regions give in their marketing often information about how to attractive the region is to work in and what job possibilities are available

Some specific points of attention:

- Regions should be aware in their branding that there is a difference in the target groups of branding and marketing. Job migrants do not come as tourist so they would appreciate different information than tourists. So if a region brands itself as the horse region of the

country or the garden of the country it will not attract highly educated people, when the real message for young migrants would need to be it is an attractive dynamic, high tech economy. There might of course be overlap in information on quality of life in the region and touristic information. But to interest job migrants, specific information is needed about economy, work possibilities, etc.

- Further people have different wishes concerning their job career and quality of life. People who are at the end of their career might be more interested to leave the hectic environment of their previous job and are looking for a more balanced life. Younger people might be particular interested in the possibility to job hop and make career. While mid-career professionals might be looking for a particular quality of life for their families in a non-core region. Quality of life is subjective (Haisch, Coenen and Knall, 2013). Where cosmopolite oriented people might look for the hectic city life in core economic region, others might particular look for quality of life in close social networks, peace, quietness and nature. The subjective interpretation of quality of life needs to be considered in the branding and marketing of a region.
- It is might be difficult to design general marketing campaigns that will appeal to people from very different cultures. But it is important that potential migrants get a good feeling about the welcoming culture. This welcoming culture not only depends on aspects as societal openness and tolerance, but also on language skills in the population. An survey under expats in one of our partner regions Basiliensis showed that even with a large community of Expats, these expats still can have the feeling of not being integrated. To give a good impression on what a region has to offer it can make use of regional ambassadors, Expats from certain countries that already live in the region. Direct contacts between these ambassadors and potential labour migrants might provide the migrants with very valuable information about what to expect in the destination region.
- A special target group of migrants are those who have that have their roots in the region because either they were born there or they studied in that region. This is the concept of warm place marketing (Hospers) that makes it attractive to invest in contact and re-migration measures for this group (David et al, 2013).
- Another special target group are people who have already networks in the region. We see some job migrants and companies often move to certain region. For instance the German city of Dusseldorf, partner in the TASS project, is the largest and most preferred location for Japanese companies and Japanese expats in Germany. The presence of a large community of Japanese and Japanese business makes it more attractive for newcomers to also move there.

Box 1

Twente.com is the website for branding the region Twente, part of the TASS-project. The Foundation for Regional branding in Twente was founded in 2010. It encourages and initiates collaboration between organizations in the region and promotes the great products and services that together shape the 'Twente brand'. The foundation has only one goal: to put Twente on the map as a top technological, entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge region. To offer its current citizens, students and entrepreneurs an environment where they feel at home and to attract new talent to expand this growing number of (international) students and professionals who already live in Twente. The foundation is cofounded by government and companies. The site offers information on living, working, studying and staying in the region. Much of the information is in two languages (Dutch and English). There is a direct connection to the information of the Expat Centre. It also presents available jobs for higher educated in the region. The website is also a community. People can find people in the branch of work but also people from the same home country. So if somebody is interested in a particular job or is interested in the region he can make contact with a compatriot, potentially even working in the same branch. There are more similar websites in the world, sometimes for regions and sometimes for cities. For TASS particular the link to reallocation information and availability of concrete jobs is important. Another interesting example is the website Welcome2work from the city of Jönköping that uses creativity and humour in their welcoming services.

Matching

For labour migrants that potentially want to re-allocate on their own initiative a matching between interested migrants and available jobs. If we assume that people migrate to a region if they have a concrete job offer than this matching process is part of the pre-arrival. Through regional marketing the region tries to interest people for the region or particular jobs.

Sometimes this matching can be an individual initiative by companies like doing job interviews with potential job candidates in Spain process of other forms of headhunting. But it might be efficient to do the matching together, like the example of the TASS-project partner region Twente where organisations in the region put their vacancies on a website together. Or presenting the region as a whole on master or job fairs and not as individual companies. In the Brainflow project partner region South-Westphalia, companies that are member of the region marketing are provided by the regional marketing organisation with logos they can use in their own campaigns.

A special category of early movers are students that already study in the region. This contributes to what we called before the 'warm place' feeling. Some region or business branches, like food companies in the so-called food valley region around the university city Wageningen in the Netherlands. Foreign food technology students are attracted to do a master with the intention to matching them after graduation with companies. Some regions, like the partner region Twente, have measures in place to match foreign graduates with companies. In the Netherlands master and PhD-graduates can make use of a so-called search year' within their residence permit, to allow them to find a job while staying in the country.

Actual re-allocation

The activities in the actual re-allocation are about facilitating the move from one region to another. We split here re-allocation up in two aspects; work related and private life related. The reason for this is that often employers do help with formalities like visa and work permits, but see the organisation of the private life, like housing and schools for children, as a responsibility for the employee. Sometimes there are mixed forms where employers take the responsibility for organising for instance housing. These mixed forms resemble much more the way how companies dealt with their 'classical' expats, employers that semi-voluntary moved from regional branch to regional branch of the same company. We saw in our project also differences in efforts for different groups of employers. For instance for hierarchical high ranked expats, like ceo's, more efforts were done. This is of course related to costs the company wants to make. Every re-allocation can be seen as an investment. For some categories of employers, through binding to the companies, the return on this investment is much clearer.

Typically welcoming services will consist out:

- Help with fulfilling certain formalities, either organising it physically so the foreign talent can organise it on the spot or by providing basic information, which can also and through other means of communication;
- Information about and assistance with work related issues like the tax system, insurance and banking issues and training courses and career opportunities;
- Information about and assistance with living related issues like housing, social contacts, culture, recreation, sport.

All our inventories shows that employers and foreign talents prefer that information and assistance can be found in one place. This can be a physical place like an expat desk or a combination of a physical place and information available on websites. This either might an organisation that takes care of all these issue or coordinates its own efforts with the efforts of other organisations, as long as there is the 'one shop idea', that one go to one place for all his needs.

Work related re-allocation

To be able to re-allocate to another country and have a status to stay and work there many rules apply. These regulations and laws vary widely between countries so it is impossible to go into detail about specific rules here. Some countries have also administrative handbooks for organisations that need to provide these services

The welcoming services do not have to limited to the moment a foreign talent enters the country. Many things might have to be organized by the migrant at forehand and will ask action from the migrant himself before the actual relocation can start. For welcoming services offering information on what is needed can be important. This might be advice on what is needed but also on the time scale. So for instance , know-how about visa regulations, resident permits and ID cards and how long it takes to obtain them. Every labor migrant should do some research at fore hand and much general information can be obtained from embassy or consulate in the won country or from national websites. But also specific information is needed on the region, even it national rules apply, like were the nearest embassy or consulate can be found.

Private life related re-allocation

The needs of a foreign talent entering a new country follows a kind of Maslow pyramid of needs (Expat-project, 2013). Housing for instance will come before setting up a social network. Our inventory shows that high on the list of settlement requirements are nurseries and kindergartens

It is difficult to strictly define what is work and what is private life related. What your employer things should organize yourself only provide with very basic information. Of course what is not work related needs extra information and are person specific or depend on personal choices, like what is family situation, are there pets, does the talent want to drive a car, etc. But also for this personal situation and personal choices specific knowledge and experiences can make the whole process more efficient and make people feel welcome. Sometimes expat desks and offices make use of volunteers that goes through this process themselves and can help form their own experiences. If all the red tape and private needs are organised the soft landing in terms of a professional and social integration starts.

Professional and social integration and community building

An important aspect of the soft landing is the social and professional integration of the labour migrants. The questions is who should be interested to organise this social and professional integration; the migrants themselves, their employers or government. We see in different regions different activities that or organised by one of these actors or by actors together. Who takes the initiate to bring them together or bring new members to the community. Real expats are often highly mobile groups of people that move on quickly. This might ask for some intervention outside of the expat community to keep to keep the wheel turning. If community building is related to region marketing seen the example of region branding twente in box 1 The marketing organisation brings the community together. Nevertheless community building relies very much on the use of volunteers and self-organisation.

Box 2

In the TASS-project partner region Basiliensis with the town of Basel with about 180,000 residents, the third largest city in Switzerland, has a very large expat population. About 30% of the population of Basel are expats of all ages, coming from hundreds of different countries. Given the large amount of expats and the city size the expats are organised in all kind of expat groups based on gender (women clubs), language and country of origin. There is a very wide variety of services available like international schools and sport clubs for expats.

Box 3

The Brainport region around the city of Eindhoven in the Southeast of the Netherlands is a strong developing high tech region. Brainport's economic success is the result of cooperation between science, industry and government. As part of the culture of cooperation and open innovation the Brainport organisation takes also responsibility for the professional integration of the human capital it attracts. Brain Talent Region is a portal for international studies and jobs in the Southeast of the Netherlands. And the Brainport International Community enhances all the regional initiatives and is the network for all internationals coming to, settling in and living in the Southeast Netherlands.

Box 4

An example of strong self-organised community of foreigners in a city closely cooperating with government is the Japanese community in the city of Dusseldorf, one of the partners in the TASS-project. Düsseldorf and its surroundings have the third-largest Japanese community in Europe after London and Paris, and the largest in Germany (about 11,000 people). Given the population of 600,000 people here, that represents 1.3 percent of the population, higher than London and Paris in relative percentage of the population. 500 Japanese companies are based in North Rhine-Westphalia and 412 of them in Düsseldorf and the surrounding area. The Japanese Club has more than 5,000 members and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Düsseldorf has over 500 ordinary and extraordinary members. There is also a Japanese International School modelled on the Japanese education system with about 650 girls pupils with Japanese teachers. The parents organised the school association, while the City of Düsseldorf provided the construction site. A Japan Day is being held annually in May attracting between 700,000 and a million people.

Box 5

The Jolly Dragon events community was started to help Finnish and International people get to understand each other by playing together. It enable strangers to play together in games at a city-wide level in so-called events. The idea is that these events, 2500 events per year, encourages understanding and builds bridges.

Box 6

Strengthening the expat community by organising meetings is a welcoming service activity in the TASS project partner Nijmegen. A variety of meetings have been organised in Nijmegen since 2007. The meetings are not too formal and are accessible to new arrivals as well as for those international employees who have been in the region for some time. The meetings stimulate the creation of a network among expats, exchanging thoughts amongst 'their own kind' and the discussion of problems at all levels.

Retention

A type of welcoming services that is often overlooked is retention. If we invest a lot of money in getting people to a region, than we want to keep these people as long as possible. This concerns the investments the organisation they work for has made, but also the societal investments. A common complaint cited by foreign talent is the lack of a social network. This is where the community building from the previous section comes in, the better they are socially and professional integrated the greater the change they will stay in the region. If they are unsatisfied with their job but well integrated in the region, the more change that they might want to move from job to job in the region. Part of welcoming services should be taking away obstacles for going from job to job, for instance working permit bound to one (type of) organisation. The same may count for helping international students to their first job in the region after graduation.

Monitoring the wishes and needs for welcoming services

Welcoming services must be tailor made to the specific regional situation. They should reflect the needs of the relevant economic clusters, the type and number of expat workers required and the wishes and needs the knowledge migrants and their employers in the region. In the TASS project the regions started with an inventory of the wishes and needs of the present expats and their employers. Also providers of welcoming services were interviewed.

The inventory in the region shows that there is a lot of overlap between what expats in the different regions want, but also differences. The assessment has to be split up between:

- Judgement about the existence of services and what is missed;
- Satisfaction with the quality of the service provision and facilities in the region.
- Satisfaction about that the availability and quality (available in English) of information about these services and information about regulations, legislation and leisure activities in the region.

Similar questions can be asked to the international students, employers, who might need different services than the expats, and service providers. The inventory can be done in the form of a survey, face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Community building initiatives, like coffee meeting (see box 8) can also be used to monitor the wishes and needs of expats.

It is also very important to stay in touch with the employers of these expats. If there is a standing organisation in the form of an expat office where there is a collaboration with the major companies and institutions, but also with the intermediaries (relocation agencies, housing agencies etc.) this organisation can directly monitor the needs from their members. In a loser organisation or when such an organisation is still in a built up phase a kind of a platform of employers or a sounding board group.

Box 7

The TASS-projectpartner the city of Dusseldorf worked during the TASS project with a group of representatives from the administrative departments, politicians, university representatives, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK), welfare organizations and immigrant organizations as well as representatives from companies to get to know which measures are needed to attract Expats and which support our companies do need. Exchanging views between the different stakeholder groups and different perspectives is key to achieve comprehensive results. An online survey, conducted during the TASS project shows that in Düsseldorf numerous activities and valuable projects exist which aim to help Expats and the international communities and make them feel at home in Düsseldorf. But the city also realized, that the challenges for international people are the diversity and fragmentation of information as well as the different points of contact. For Expats and companies who are approaching the city this can lead to confusion. We think that an enhanced communication about what we do is key.

Box 8

One of our partners in the TASS project the World Trade Center Twente Office in Hengelo organises so-called Expat Coffee Morning to meet other expats living in the Twente region. These meetings are organised to create the opportunity to network with other expats, and to find out about expat related topics, including all kind of services and the opinion of other Expats about these services.

Organisation

The political, administrative and economic systems, the culture and the history of receiving labour migrants are very different between regions. Therefore there cannot be one model of organising welcoming services. Successful models cannot simply be copied to another region. However, regions that have been less active till now, simply because they had a limited number of foreign labour migrants, might want to prepare for an increasing flow of foreign talents. And this might mean that they have to critically look at the organisation of the welcoming services. This critical assessment might follow from the process of needs assessment among expats and their employers as discussed in the previous. We will discuss here:

- the cooperation between public, private and third party partners
- scale, cooperation, expat numbers and services;
- models of finance.

The cooperation between public, private and third party partners

Cooperation between public, private and third party is important for efficiency by sharing resources and knowledge. Some services related to law and administrative procedures lie with government. Some services can best be left to market forces while other activities will depend on volunteers and third parties. The optimal mix depends on the situation in the city or region. The example of a successful cooperation, the city of Toronto, shows that apart from finding a right mix of responsibilities the basis for a successful cooperation is a shared goal, to make labour immigration of high skilled and talented migrants the source of the region's economic growth. All actors have a strong commitment in collaboration with each other and the government and political leaders also clearly facilitate and lead the process by providing funding and setting priorities.

Organising the responsibilities for welcoming services on a regional scale starts with identifying the leading actor and the right (administrative) scale. In regions where welcoming services are non-existent, regional authorities are most suited to take the initiative. Where companies are already acting to attract knowledge workers, a form of public-private cooperation is preferable. The government involvement can be linked to the provision of administrative basic functions (like work and resident permits).

Box 9

The Canadian city of Toronto received nearly 50% of all recent immigrants to Canada and the city calls itself the city of migration. The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), established in 2003, is a multi-stakeholder council which gathers employers, service providers, community agencies and all three levels of government. TRIEC implements local and practical solutions in skilled immigrant's employment through strengthening professional immigrant networks, sharing knowledge for employer organisational change and increasing engagement between employers and skilled immigrants. In addition the Maytree Foundation's promotes the diversity and the internationalisation of Toronto region and the ACCES Employment office focuses on skilled immigrants through providing professional training and job search to ease newcomer's access to the job market in Toronto region. Serving nearly 16,000 skilled immigrants a year, ACCES succeed in helping 80% of its clients to land their first job in their professional field within 6 months. Also other third party actors, such as host program and mentoring program support the employment of skilled immigrants.

Scale, cooperation, expat numbers and services

What the example of Toronto also shows is that there is a correlation between the actual number of labour migrants has to do with the capacity, knowledge and the actual right to provide certain services. If the number of expats is limited in a town or region it is not always (financially) possible and uphold the knowledge and capacity to offer a high degree of service provision to foreign talents. The next two text boxes below point to a best practice situation (Expat Center South) and the situation in middle sized towns (150.000 inhabitants) and smaller regions (600.00 inhabitants). The difference is that expats that use the fully utilized Expat centre get all their paperwork in order, and only need to get a municipal personal records database (GBA) change. If the municipality or region does not have a fully utilized Expat centre organisation yet, the consequence is that different task are spread over different organisations. And even if there is an Expat centre organisation, this scale to provide certain services. Like mentioned before in all inventories in the partner regions both employees as foreign talents prefer 'one shop' organisations for a stress free re-allocation.

Box 10

The Netherlands has a total of around 100,000 foreign knowledge workers. The TASS project partner cities Arnhem (150.000 inhabitants) and Nijmegen (165.000 inhabitants) estimated to have 2,000 expats living and working there over both the short and longer term. The regio around Arnhem-Nijmegen (SRAN) has about 740.000 inhabitants. Together with the other TASS-project region Twente (620.000) with the region South of Limburg and the region Eindhoven form the four biggest city agglomerations outside the Randstad-region, Other regions have considerably more expats (Eindhoven region: 4,000, Maastricht/Heerlen (South of Limburg): 3,000) and cities in the Randstad region The Hague: 10,000, Amsterdam: 15,000-20,000, (source: CBS (Statistics Netherlands 2011).

Box 11

Holland Expat Center South is responsible for facilitating expats in the region of Eindhoven and Tilburg, and more recently also in Breda and Maastricht. The IND, Brainport Development, Brabantse Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij, Midpoint Brabant and the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg also participate in the Expat Center South. The services of the Expat Center South are oriented towards fulfilling the wishes and needs of expats (and their families) and to quickly helping or updating them on formalities, accommodation, tax obligations, insurance, training, education, personal and social wishes and recreational activities.

Box 12

The partner cities in the TASS project Nijmegen and Arnhem are examples of cities without yet an specific fully equipped expat organisation. After arriving in the Netherlands the expat has a number of issues to arrange, for which he or she has to approach a variety of bodies. These are registration with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and the municipal personal records database (GBA in Dutch). The expat also has to obtain a personal identifier (BSN in Dutch, or citizen service number) to be able to open a bank account, receive a salary or sign a rental contract. At the moment it is not possible in Arnhem and Nijmegen to process these transactions at the same time and at the same counter. The expat has to await obtaining the details, or must travel to Rijswijk, Den Bosch or Zwolle for further registration. The Nijmegen municipality does indeed have an expat desk, but it is not equipped to handle all these issues. The result is that new employees must make several trips to the relevant organisation(s) to arrange these matters. In the Twente region there is an expat centre (partner in our project) but they cannot provide all services because of the number of expats. IND will only set up a sub office with a minimum number of expats in the region.

Models of finance.

Organisations who are in demand for labour migrant can choose to bear the costs themselves or share costs with others. Organising welcoming services together with other organisations does not only save costs but also can add value shared expertise and shared resource, like houses owned by a company to rent out to expats.

In most regions welcoming services are provided by various actors. Some individual (larger) companies provide welcoming services to expats working for them. Also commercial actors, like real estate brokers, provide specific services to expats. For certain services the public sector is an indispensable player, for instance related to registration and permits. For the benefit of the expat and for efficiency reasons, it is advisable to coordinate the delivery of services between the public and private sectors.

There is a private market for services that can be left to this private market. There is not a problem in competition in the free market, unless it involves government money. Tax payers money should not finance overlap in welcoming services. If organisations work together in providing services in for instance an expat office or desk or any other form of one-stop organisation this can be financed by contributions and yearly fees. In the start-up of such an organisation some form of co-financing with a (start) subsidy of government might be important. Employers should be asked not only to contribute to work related welcoming services. Because the well-being of expats in the region is a combined responsibility between the business sector and the municipality, a (financial) contribution is necessary from both groups.

Some guiding principles for effective welcoming services

1 – Tailor-made

Welcoming services must be tailor-made to the specific regional situation.

They should reflect the needs of the relevant economic clusters, the type and number of expat workers required and the wishes and needs the knowledge migrants and their employers in the region.

- Regions that intend to set up or improve their welcoming services should start with an inventory of the supply and demand of existing welcoming services and analyse the wishes and needs of the knowledge migrants and companies.
- When welcoming services are in operation it is important to monitor the wishes and needs of the knowledge migrants and employers and keep the services up to date. This can be achieved by organising regular meetings and focus groups with the target group.
- It is advisable to involve expats in the region directly in defining and supplying welcoming services. This will add to the quality and relevance of the services.
- The target group of the welcoming services include both the ‘typical’ expats - employees that regularly move between international divisions of their company – next to other, more independent knowledge migrants and international students.

2 – Public-private and third party cooperation

In most regions welcoming services are provided by various actors. Some individual (larger) companies provide welcoming services to expats working for them. Also commercial actors, like real estate brokers, provide specific services to expats. For certain services the public sector is an indispensable player, for instance related to registration and permits. For the benefit of the expat and for efficiency reasons, it is advisable to coordinate the delivery of services between the public and private sectors.

- Organising the responsibilities for welcoming services on a regional scale starts with identifying the leading actor and the right (administrative) scale. In regions where welcoming services are non-existent, regional authorities are most suited to take the initiative. Where companies are already acting to attract knowledge workers, a form of public-private cooperation is preferable. The government involvement can be linked to the provision of administrative basic functions (like work and resident permits).
- Not for all services the own region might be the optimal scale. Regions should consider this and look for cooperation with other regions if relevant.

3 - One-stop-shop

Both international knowledge migrants and companies employing expats indicate that they prefer a one-stop-shop approach to welcoming services. This can be organised as a coordinated support desk where expats are assisted in their orientation and directed to specific services and providers in line with their individual needs. Such a one-stop shop requires a smart collaboration between all public

and private organisations that provide services to expats in a region. But it does not mean that all services need to be delivered by one actor.

4 Welcoming services more than also pre-arrival and retention activities

TASS identifies that the labour migration process has four distinct phases, that every expat goes through:

- pre-arrival phase,
- relocation,
- soft landing (professional and social integration of the expat),
- retention.

In many regions welcoming services concentrate on the relocation and soft landing phases. The pre-arrival and retention phase can be further strengthened based on the following recommendations:

In the pre-arrival phase potential knowledge migrants are informed about and attracted to the region through regional marketing. Welcoming services can play a crucial role by giving interested expats the feeling that their move will be easy and fully facilitated. Effective marketing of the welcoming services can give regions a competitive advantage in the competition for talents.

In the retention phase it's all about keeping the knowledge migrants in the region. Career opportunities are clearly an important factor. But expats must also feel fully settled and integrated in their new home region. Welcoming services can facilitate expat community building and contribute to a welcoming culture towards foreigners in the region. For example by making health care services and schools available in foreign languages.

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