



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, is a leading European non-governmental organization that aims to promote respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe, including the right to health care, housing, education and fair working conditions.

PICUM is based in Brussels and works as a network of approximately 2,400 civil society organizations and individuals operating in 13 countries. Its monthly newsletter on issues affecting undocumented migrants is produced in seven languages and circulates to its network supporters and further. For more information, consult www.picum.org

PRESS RELEASE – Will undocumented migrants continue to be invisible in the new national action plans on social inclusion, health and pensions for 2006-2008?
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The Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process is a European mechanism through which Member States have decided to coordinate their actions and achieve greater convergence in the field of social policy. They have accordingly committed themselves to translate agreed European common objectives into “National Strategies for Social Inclusion, Pensions and Health and Long Term Care”. New plans, which should cover the period from 2006-2008 will be submitted to the European Commission by all Member States on 15 September 2006.

Since the first set of national action plans on social inclusion in 2001, EU Member States have been constantly requested by the European Commission to adopt specific and effective measures to reach the objective of making “a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion” as it was agreed in the Lisbon Summit in 2000.

Even if undocumented migrants are among the most socially excluded groups in Europe today, almost no mention of their presence and marginalization has been made in the different national plans on social inclusion so far.

Certainly, some countries continue to deny undocumented migrants the access to basic social services such as health care. Others, whilst partially allowing the enjoyment of some of undocumented migrants’ fundamental human rights, show great resistance to speak openly about their social policies towards undocumented migrants on the European level. Among the countries subject to study within the PICUM project, only Spain¹, Belgium², and the Netherlands³ have referred to undocumented migrants in previous reports. Yet Spain and Belgium seem to be the only EU Member States relatively open to give visibility to adopted measures aiming at facilitating access to health care for undocumented migrants.

The Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process constitutes the policy framework of a two-year project that PICUM is developing on access to health care for undocumented migrants. One of the main objectives of this EU co-financed PICUM project is precisely to target undocumented migrants into this

¹ See NAP Incl. 2001, pp. 13, 26, 33 and 34; NAP Incl. 2003, Annex I, p. 47 and Annex II, p. 85; Implementation Report on NAP Incl. 2003, pp. 5, 53, 64, 65 and 67.

² See NAP Incl. 2001, p. 41; NAP Incl. 2003, p. 28; Implementation Report on NAP Incl. 2003, pp. 11 and 20.

³ See NAP Incl. 2003, p. 8. The Dutch NAP only mentions that “those illegally in the Netherlands have no right to benefits and provisions”. In addition, it states, “the problem of illegality is a complicated issue which is dealt with extensively in other policy frameworks. This issue is not further addressed in the NAP”.

process on the European and national levels. To this aim, a coordinated action will be taken by PICUM and its project partners in eleven Member States to make undocumented migrants' social exclusion more visible in the next set of national reports (2008-2010). In the meantime, PICUM's partners in Belgium and Portugal have succeeded in accessing the consultation mechanisms for the action plans on the national level. Regretfully, however, only Belgium has reacted positively to PICUM's concerns.

PICUM expects that the main project outputs – a publication, reporting template and final conference in Brussels in June 2007 - will further contribute to fill this incomprehensive gap of the European Social Policy: the invisibility of undocumented migrants, one of the groups facing greatest risks of poverty and social exclusion in Europe.