

## **ESOPO - SOCIAL EUROPE OPPORTUNITIES "Because Europe is not a fable!"**

ESOPO was a co-financed project run by the [INCA France](#) between November 2011 and January 2013, as a follow-up to “Transnational exchanges on social security in Europe” (TESSE). Italo Stellan, President of INCA France has answered some questions describing the activities carried out and their main achievements.

### **1) What was the purpose of the ESOPO project?**

The aim of the project was to assess the level of knowledge of migrant workers concerning EU law on the coordination of security schemes.

### **2) According to the results of the project what was the level of awareness of workers about the coordination of social security schemes in Europe and how can it be improved?**

From 808 questionnaires submitted, it resulted that less than 50% of the persons interviewed were aware of EU legislation on free movement. The grade of knowledge was particularly low amongst non-EU nationals and we realised that citizens tend to get informed only in case of need and not in advance.

The survey brought to light that the efforts carried out by national and European institutions to inform citizens of their rights should be improved, especially for persons injured at work. Therefore, we consider of the utmost importance the involvement of organisations and trade unions as well as the establishment of networks to properly advise citizens. We believe the provisions on social security coordination should be improved and that a real harmonisation of the rules is needed.

### **3) What were the concrete recommendations to ensure the application of EU Regulations on social security rights?**

Our recommendations aimed at highlighting the obstacles to the freedom of movement of workers through a raising-awareness-by-protecting approach. We paid particular attention to issues such as linguistic mediation and training modules on labour rights. We suggested the building of networks of associations, the launch of informative campaigns on social security and the application of the case law of the European Court of Justice.

We also remarked the problems stemming from social exclusion as well as the measures to tackle unemployment and reorganise the norms which apply to the labour market. On the other hand, we gave our opinions on the activities of trade unions and organisations. They were invited to address crucial matters such as the creation of databases on occupational safety, the collective bargaining and the enforcement of EU laws. As a result, our advice targeted both institutions and associations, because we believe that everyone should do their part to improve the working conditions of migrant persons.

#### **4) What is, in your opinion, the relation between enhanced coordination of social security systems and the European citizenship?**

The reason behind all this is the very survival of Europe. If we do not lay down a more effective coordination of social security systems and if a concrete harmonisation of rights and benefits is not established, the concept of European citizenship will continue to be inconsistent and perceived as a hindrance to local development. Without a social Europe there is no Europe. This is the key result in every survey assessing citizens' liking of the community life. Developing a social Europe means to give strength to our cultures and to the criteria of integration and lay the grounds for the construction of the European nation.