

Swiss Policy Actors in the Global Forum on Migration and Development 2011

Summary

Migration is an issue that affects almost everyone directly or indirectly and it has emerged as a key theme in international and national political debates. Switzerland lies in the middle of Europe, at the crossroads of migration routes and has one of the highest immigration rates in Europe. On a national level, migration is discussed very controversially in Switzerland as well as in other European countries. Besides that on an international level, the discussions about the migration-development nexus became more intense in the last years and made its way into scientific and political discussions.

In that context the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) was created in 2006 and it is the only forum in which the issue of migration and development is discussed on a global level. In 2011, Switzerland took over the chairmanship for the GFMD 2011. This thesis explores who the main Swiss policy actors are which have been actively involved in the GFMD 2011, how they have positioned themselves and what has been their contribution to the GFMD 2011. The findings of this study are based on participatory observation during two GFMD events, expert interviews with different Swiss policy actors, who were active in the GFMD 2011 and the study of relevant documents. The debates about the migration-development nexus and the discussions about the securitization of migration served as conceptual framework for this research.

The master thesis revealed that the Global Forum on Migration and Development is unique due to its continuity in comparison to previous initiatives on the global level, and also due to its characteristics; the forum is voluntary, non-binding, and state-led. On the one hand, the Swiss policy actors see these characteristics as an important factor for the success of the process. Due to these positively regarded aspects very open discussions are possible. But especially the non-binding nature of the process is also seen as a negative aspect of the forum, as it hinders concrete outcomes. The GFMD is divided into a traditional part for governments and the GFMD Civil Society Days for representatives of the civil

society. The Swiss policy actors, which were active in the GFMD 2011, can also be divided in these two categories, actors of the federal government and actors of the civil society. The private sector, which is also considered an important actor, is rather absent in the discussions about migration and development both in Switzerland and in the GFMD. Due to the whole-of-government approach in the area of migration, the actors of the federal administration, coming from three different federal departments, positioned themselves with a joint Swiss position in the GFMD. The representatives of the federal administration admitted that negotiations about the Swiss position were sometimes difficult, as the different actors pursue different interests. But they emphasized that in the end, it was always possible to find a compromise and all actors of the federal administration assessed the whole-of-government very positively. For the actors of the civil society it was easier to take a clear position, as every actor represents its own specific interests. Actors of the civil society as well as actors of the federal government have a very positive view of the Swiss GFMD chairmanship. The observation shows that the Swiss chairmanship contributed positively to the process of the GFMD, one of the reasons among others may be the introduction of a new format, which strengthened the role of the civil society. But also the influence of the GFMD on Switzerland and on the Swiss policy actors is seen as advantageous. The whole-of-government approach as well as the implementation of migration partnerships as an innovative instrument in Swiss migration policy are seen as outcomes of the GFMD. It has been shown that the Swiss policy actors position themselves in two different debates on the national and on the international level. The discussions - especially public discussions - on a national level have a strong focus on the domestic policy and migration is often linked with security issues. In comparison to the national level, where the sovereignty of Switzerland is ascribed great value, on an international level there is a strong focus on global governance and international cooperation in the area of migration.