



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project

支持中欧人员往来和移民领域对话项目



International Labour Organization

IOM-MPS BEEA Joint Field Assessment on Foreigners' Administration in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province

8-10 December 2015

Draft Summary Report

IOM organized a joint field assessment visit to Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, to study how the city authorities manage foreign migrants (or "foreigners' administration"). Conducted in close coordination with the Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS BEEA) the objectives were to study the management of foreign nationals in Yiwu, explore potential opportunities and analyze approaches to address irregular migration, including the option of voluntary return of irregular migrants.

Mr. Pär Liljert, Head of IOM Liaison Office in China led the delegation from Beijing, which included three other senior officials from the EU Delegation, the Embassy of Sweden and the British Embassy in Beijing. Moreover, one official of MPS BEEA participated in this two-day visit. Local authorities including officials from BEEA in Zhejiang province, Jinhua municipal Public Security Bureau, Yiwu municipal Public Security Bureau, Police Station in Jiangdong Street, Jimingshan Community, Judicial Office of International Trade City of Yiwu Judicial Bureau also participated in the two-day assessment.



The delegation held good discussions with local officials about the situation of foreigners in Yiwu, operations surrounding management of foreigners in Yiwu, special measures on integration and dispute settlements. The Chinese officials also discussed the challenges that they face in managing legal foreigners (regular migrants) and handling illegal foreigners (irregular migrants). Representatives from the EU Embassies and EU Delegation shared

European practices and presented approaches practiced and measures put in place in managing migrants.

The delegation was warmly welcomed by the Director of Yiwu Public Security Bureau (PSB) and Deputy Director of Exit and Entry Administration Bureau of Yiwu. The two officials also briefly talked about the roles and responsibilities of the Exit and Entry administration Bureau. The joint assessment team had the opportunity to visit the Jimingshan community of Jiangdong Street and to meet with the foreign nationals of this community.



A local NGO “*Yiwu Tongyue Social Service Centre*” introduced one of their ongoing projects: “Building Yiwu International Fusion Community”. The project is an initiative under Yiwu international trade comprehensive reform experimental unit and offers specialized social services for the foreigners. The assessment team also visited the *Reception Centre* of Exit and Entry Administration and the *Yiwu Mediation Committee* to exchange ideas with local officials of Exit and Entry Administration, *Judicial Bureau* as well as foreign mediators from different countries. The discussions and exchanges were productive and provided the joint

assessment team with a good view on specific features on management of foreigners in Yiwu, the integration of foreigners into the local society, and the opportunities and challenges of exit and entry administration in Yiwu.

About Yiwu

Located in the center of Zhejiang Province, Yiwu covers an administrative area of 1,105 km² with a built-up area of over 100 km².¹ Yiwu ranks ninth on the chart of hundred most dynamic counties of China. As an international port city, it enjoys extensive international trade and commerce exchange with the world. The city promotes One Belt and One Road Strategy and in line with central government’s advocacy for intercontinental land trade, it maintains direct trade and commerce with Europe through Yiwu-Madrid railway line.

The largest wholesale center for small consumer goods in China, Yiwu has turned into an e-commerce village, counting for 32,000 e-commerce shops. The sum of business transactions in Yiwu reached 100 billion CNY from January to September 2015. With the fast economic development and expansion of small commodity markets, Yiwu is inhabited by around 760,000 local and 1.31 million floating population. In 2014, around 447,000 foreign nationals from 213 countries and regions resided in Yiwu.

Key findings of the field assessment

1. Data on foreigners in Jimingshan community, Yiwu
 - In December 2015, Jimingshan community counted 3,512 permanent residents and 20,000 floating population in addition to 926 foreigners from 59 countries and 168 foreign enterprises/companies.
 - The largest groups come from the Middle-East, North Africa and Korea (ROK). Recently, there has been an increase in the number of African migrants. There are around 300 African migrants, mainly from Sudan, the Republic of Guinea, Senegal and Somalia. An African Association was recently set up.

¹ http://english.yw.gov.cn/english_1/e_gyyw/e_hyc/



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- Long-term stay resident foreigners mainly engage in investment and trade. 70% are male and have already brought their families to Yiwu. Short-term resident foreigners make procurements. Most foreigners have experience of living in other places such as Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Dubai, etc.
- Since most foreigners are entrepreneurs, the proportion of irregular status is relatively low.
- Some long-term residents from Singapore, Senegal, India, Syria, Iraq, Iran met the assessment team and described that the local government is committed to take policy and practical measures to facilitate foreign investment and trade in Yiwu. An example is the issuance of two-year residence permit.

“Foreigners’ management” in Yiwu

The Yiwu municipal government maintains good cooperation with other organizations to promote the rights and interests of migrants. It encourages the migrants to participate in the local social insurance system to benefit from welfare services. The children of migrants have access to the local education system. The mediation committee is set up to provide dispute settlement services.

- Responsible for a community inhabited by 15,427 registered foreigners, the local police station of Jimingshan community of Jiangdong Street follows various measures to facilitate the life of foreigners, including creating a special window of providing various services to foreigners and expanding the services on the spot to ensure the registration of foreigners in this community.

By funding a local Chinese NGO “Yiwu Tongyue Service Centre”, under “Building Yiwu International Fusion Community” project, the city government aims to provide social services to the migrants of Jimingshan community. The government cooperates with social workers, volunteers and academics to carry out various activities in Jimingshan community, including arranging language training, setting up hotline services, organizing community-level intercultural activities, organizing Silk Road Forums. Such approaches strengthen the integration of foreigners into the local community.

- In order to further disseminate information on services available to migrants, the Centre, in direct partnership with migrants of the community, jointly produced “Yiwu Overseas Community Service Manual”. The Manual includes detailed information on exit and entry administration, transportation services etc. The Center also uses social media and printed material to create awareness on the services of the Center.
- The Yiwu municipality has recognized the results of the Project on Building Yiwu International Fusion Community and agreed to fund and further extend the project for two additional years, a model which can potentially be applied in other communities as well.

General information about inbound foreigners in Yiwu

- Total entries in Yiwu reaches 400,000, accounting for 25% of Zhejiang province population. Main entries are from India, Korea, Iran, Egypt and Pakistan. The number of Yiwu Foreign



merchants remained stable through 2013, 2014 and 2015. There are 12,000 migrants (from 200 countries and regions) permanently residing in Yiwu. Middle-Eastern and African merchants account respectively for 55% and over 20 %. Yiwu has recorded 20,000 entries of European citizens, including UK (3,300), France (3,000) and Sweden (700) as well as 300 Europeans with permanent residence permit.

- The Exit and Entry Administration issues over 20,000 visas every year, which accounts for one third of visa issuances in Zhejiang province.

Measures taken by Exit and Entry Administration to facilitate the foreigners in Yiwu

The Exit and Entry Administration has created an appointment mechanism to reduce waiting time for migrants coming to the “Service Centre” of Exit and Entry Administration, which is located within the Foreign Trade Center with many other municipal organizations. Well-established merchants are entitled to two-year residence permit. Considering the conflict situation in the home country of some of the migrants, particularly Syrians, “humanitarian visas” is also offered and includes 30 days’ extension of residence visa for vulnerable groups and funding of travel costs for returns. In addition, Yiwu Exit and Entry Administration regularly conduct awareness-raising campaigns on local laws, regulations and its assistance services.

- The Service Center processes visa applications within 5 working days;
- Foreigners overstaying their visa with maximum 10 days will be given a warning but visa will be extended;
- The lay-out and services provided of the Service Center is very similar to Visa Application Centers utilized by many European countries, and illustrates similarities on migration processes between EU and China.

The challenges that the Exit and Entry Administration is facing in Yiwu

- Managing the over-stay and illegal employment among foreign migrants from neighboring countries are of main concerns of Yiwu BEEA.
- The Exit and Entry Administration has difficulties to repatriate the over-stayers due to coordination gaps between Yiwu EEA and relevant Embassies.
- Increasing number of family members are coming to Yiwu, with nearly half of the inbound foreigners being family members. Exchanges were held with European counterparts on the similarities of family reunification in the European context. A useful, even though informal, exchange of ideas and experiences regarding the law in different countries for accepting families with more than one wife was also held.
- In some cases cultural differences deters the social integration of some foreign migrants. As an example, some migrants prefer sending their children to schools operated by migrants’ communities, which are not recognized by local government.



- Although Yiwu doesn't have a large number on refugees and asylum seekers², the Exit and Entry Administration is facing challenges on how to settle them. An interesting exchange was also held amongst European and Chinese counterparts regarding some individuals with refugee status in Europe who lives or regularly visits Yiwu.
- Through profile and biometric data-matching, the Exit and Entry Administration identified and captured 5 foreigners in 2015, who in violation of entry ban tried to re-enter China by changing their identity. In connection with biometrics a general discussion was held regarding the need for biometrics to be implemented for foreigners applying at overseas Chinese embassies.
- With increasing migration the issue of terrorism is a high priority for the authorities in Yiwu and there has been one example of a known terrorist having visited.

The Mediation Committee for Foreign-related Disputes

A special Mediation Committee for Foreign-related Disputes is set up in Yiwu which aims to mediate in mainly business-related disputes and invites migrants to get involved. The initial goal of hiring foreign mediators was simply to help with language barriers, but their experience and cultural advantages have helped the committee achieve better results. By the end of 2014, the committee was able to solve 181 cases of dispute, involving a sum of 32 million CNY. Ten migrants were able to recuperate their losses, amounting 19.7 million CNY. From cultural and legal perspective, the mediation approach serves also as an important platform for the Chinese and migrants to learn and understand their differences.

Conclusion

- This joint assessment created an excellent opportunity for European experts and Chinese officials to directly exchange experience on managing foreign migrants. Through the discussions during the on-site visits, both sides gained further understanding on the characteristics of operations as well as reality on the ground of managing foreign migrants. Many common areas and similar approaches were identified as a result of which interest was expressed by both side to explore ways of working together in this area in future. Chinese local authorities shared insight on their policies and operations in managing migrants in Yiwu and presented their specific methods to promote migrants' social integration. The assessment was a good exercise to draw upon the Yiwu model and China's approach in managing migrants within a specific city context.
- As regards irregular migrants and communications gaps between Chinese local authorities and foreign embassies, IOM showed commitment to assist and use its good relations and network with foreign embassies in Beijing to facilitate better exchange.
- Chinese local authorities showed interest in the Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration (AVRR) concept that was introduced by European experts during the assessment and due to its cost-effectiveness and its being mutually beneficial for migrants and states, implementing such programme in Yiwu was also envisioned by local authorities.

² 22 registered asylum seekers in 2015, with a majority coming from Iraq. Most of them already have working permits but apply for asylum with the intention of resettlement in third countries.