

Capital City Universities Initiative – Victoria University of Wellington

Migration and Populism

23-24 February, 2017

On 24 February 2017 the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) hosted a policy—academic roundtable discussion on the topic ‘The effects of migration on domestic policy and politics’, as part of the final leg of the Capital City Universities Initiative (CCUI) symposium on Migration and Populism. The roundtable discussion brought together international specialists of the politics of migration, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) academics, and policy officials from a range of agencies in the migration sector to discuss current pressing political and social issue in the fields of human mobility, immigration policy and migrant integration politics cross-nationally.

International visiting academics present for the discussion (and who also contributed to an academic workshop and public lecture on related topics at Victoria University on 23 February 2017) were: Prof. Tim Bale (Queen Mary University, London), Prof. Jorge Tigno (Univ. of the Philippines, Manila), Emeritus Prof. Supang Chantavanich (Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok), Prof. Virginie Guiraudon (Sciences Po, Paris), Dr Elizabeth Chacko (George Washington University, Washington D.C.), and Mr Peter Hughes (ANU, Canberra). VUW academic leads for the CCUI events, Dr Fiona Barker and Dr Kate McMillan, were also present. Policy officials were present from a range of units within MBIE (Labour and Immigration Policy; Settlement Unit; Research and Evaluation; International Strategy), as well as from the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Office of Ethnic Communities, and the Human Rights Commission.

Key areas of discussion in the roundtable were the practice of immigration and emigration policy in a range of countries, human mobility in the context of free trade agreements, international and export education and its links to channels of migration, and anti-discrimination efforts in different countries. Overall, the discussion was lively and provided a valuable opportunity for the officials and academics to exchange knowledge and perspectives on a range of issues related to the highly salient and politicised area of immigration.

An MBIE official provided introductory and framing comments to familiarize visiting academics with the goals and challenges of immigration policy in New Zealand, including the key issue of how to ensure that immigration policy settings make New Zealand an attractive destination for skilled workers from around the world.

The visiting academics asked questions of the MBIE officials, covering topics such as: what New Zealand needs from immigration, how the government forms and adjusts the migration system to meet the country’s needs, and what New Zealand does to help migrant origin countries. MBIE officials provided detailed explanations of how the points-based immigration works for New Zealand, and laid out some of the challenges that come with administering such a selective process. Discussion of how the New Zealand government identifies target migrant markets evolved into a broader discourse on international freedom of movement, and what future trade deals between New Zealand and (specifically) the

United Kingdom and the United States might theoretically look like – Prof. Bale was particularly interested in what mobility measures or restrictions New Zealand might seek to include in any free trade deal with the UK. The large, and growing, Working Holiday Maker scheme was the subject of some discussion in the context of bilateral negotiations.

Given the current political salience of refugee movements worldwide, discussion also focused on how New Zealand distinguishes between refugees and migrants, how refugees are integrated, and the size of the New Zealand refugee quota. MBIE officials shared results of research on refugees' social, educational and employment outcomes in New Zealand.

Linked to the current contentious politics of refugees and migrants internationally, Prof. Tigno was interested in the public perception of migrants in New Zealand, as well as the impact social media has on this. A representative of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission explained some of the cases of race-based discrimination in New Zealand, as well as the work the HRC does with the public on this issue (e.g. empathy-building campaigns). MBIE Settlement officials also explained key strategies in encouraging positive public perception of migration, including ensuring that factual stories about migration and migrants are communicated via the media. Discussion of how governments respond to populations' fears around migration also considered the case of the UK where citizens' cultural anxieties were countered with economic arguments.

The role of state agencies in managing migration was also discussed and in this context MBIE officials were interested to hear a detailed description of the nuances and functioning of the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (OEA). A broader discussion of labour migration canvassed issues of how countries such as New Zealand can combat migrant exploitation (eg where there is a sham employment agreement provided as part of the immigration application), as well as the challenges of managing international student programmes when some students may seek to use this as a pathway to residence. Officials and academics discussed the tension between demand for international students as part of the export education sector and the need for robust systems of approval and quality education outcomes.