Economic migration to Poland: Case of Ukraine and Vietnam

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28 November 2012
Poland’s migration profile

• Major country of emigration
  • 2 million citizens residing temporarily abroad

• Immigration: a marginal but steadily growing phenomenon
  • 63 thousand permanently residing foreigners = 0.2% of the overall permanent residents’ number
Economic migration

- Foreigners share in Polish labor market: 0.3%
- Native and foreign labor force: a complementary relation
- 2 types of labor migration
  - For top managerial positions: Western Europe, USA
  - For low skill sector: Former Soviet Republics States
Policy regulations

• Foreigners working in Poland are required to obtain a work permit

• Issue of illegal employment: exact numbers unknown
Case: Ukraine

- Poland as a main country of destination for Ukrainian migrants
- Ukrainian economic migration: seasonal
  - Language and geographical proximity
  - Extensive social capital within the migrant community
- Low skill sector of employment (agriculture, commerce, construction, food services, household)
2006: introduction of the seasonal employment opportunities for the citizens of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia

- Seasonal work permit visas:
  valid for 6 months within 12 months from the issuing date

- Issued based on a statement from the employer registered in the county office
Case: Ukraine

• Key dilemmas:
  – Assumption of seasonality but no mechanisms for establishing permanent residence
  – Legalization of stay does not correspond to the regularization of work
  – Difficulties in cooperation with Ukraine authorities (no control mechanisms)
Case: Vietnam

- **18-20 thousand** regular and **10 thousand** irregular migrants

- **Migration flows:**
  - Communist period: students (settled migrants)
  - Late 90’s on: economic migration

- **Migrant group characteristic:**
  - Commerce, food services sector
  - Self employment or employment by other Vietnamese
  - Concentrated in large cities
Case: Vietnam

• Key dilemmas:
  – Migrant group omitted in policy development
  – No cooperation with sending country
  – Hermetic migrant community
Economic migrants are a group with high health risk due to:
  – Poor work conditions
  – Poor housing conditions

No data on the use of healthcare by migrants (data on the legal status in Poland and country of origin are not being gathered)
• For the legally employed the employer is required to pay monthly health premium to the National Health Fund (NFZ)
  • Not valid in case of illegal employment
  • Data from qualitative research show reluctance in accessing public healthcare
    – Lack of information on how to access
    – Health not a priority among economic migrants

• Policy development: agreement on cooperation in the area of social security with Ukraine (18 May 2012)
**Economic migration and access to healthcare**

- **Key dilemma:**
  
  Poland does not ensure access to healthcare for economic migrants with high risk factor

- **Effect:**
  
  - Postponement of health aid seeking behaviors
    - danger to the individual, public health,
    - high costs of emergency services
## Recommendations

- Development of...
  - Adequate information systems regarding migrant rights
  - Support mechanisms for the enforcement of migrant rights in health care and labor market
  - Control mechanisms in the area of illegal employment of migrants
  - Effective cooperation between Poland as a host country and sending countries in the area of economic migration
Thank you!
For more information:

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