

PAC-TUAC LMP on “Fair Labour Migration”



Policies to manage (lesser skilled) migration

17 October 2007

Georges Lemaitre

International Migration Division, OECD

Outline of presentation

- Current (and future) labour needs
- Current situation
- Irregular migration
- Recruitment
- Work-permit systems
- A possible road-map
- Summary and conclusions

Current (and future) labour needs

- Every country wants / expects to recruit higher skilled immigrants.
- Few countries (with southern Europe as an exception) want lesser skilled immigrants.
- But shortages are appearing with initial impact of aging.
 - Household work, agriculture, construction, cleaning, hotels and restaurants, food processing
- The shortages are likely to grow over time.
- How are these to be met?

Recent experience with lesser skilled migration in southern Europe and the United States

- Strong demand for workers, large potential supply in origin countries
- Few work permits available and when available, slow delivery
- Large underground economy and / or numerous employers willing to turn a blind eye on irregular status
- Relative ease of entry, low likelihood of detection
- A history of regularisations

In short, many factors favouring irregular migration of lesser skilled.

Irregular migration

- Modalities
 - Clandestine entry (boats, green borders)
 - Fraudulent entry (false documents)
 - Legal entry and overstay (asylum, tourist and business visits) – a high proportion of irregular migration in many countries
- Visas to non-OECD country residents as a source
 - significant numbers
 - require round-trip ticket, stay funds, perhaps an address in host country
 - at least two-thirds of irregular migrants enter legally (and overstay)
=> implicit selection
- Public and media attention are focused on clandestine entry => high visibility

Recruitment of lesser skilled workers

- Face-to-face in host countries => especially for care-workers in household sector
- Through migrant networks
 - Existing employees, relatives
- Through formal intermediaries
 - Employment agencies, employer groups
- Direct recruitment in origin countries

The latter two are currently under-developed in OECD countries.

Labour needs and migrants' intentions

- Are the needs temporary or longer term?
 - Agriculture (seasonal), construction (project-based)
 - Care-workers for the elderly, cleaning services
 - Is it realistic to fill long-term needs with temporary migrants?
- Do migrants want to stay temporarily or permanently?
 - Historical experience indicates that there were many returns of guestworkers to their home countries but also many who stayed.
 - Current stay rates of long-term migrants in most countries are in the 60-75 percent range.
 - Best not to rely on assumptions => designing migration programmes for temporariness

Work-permit granting systems

- Traditionally, cumbersome employment tests are required.
- Traditionally, permits are tied to a job offer, often with limited possibilities of change.
- There is a need to be expeditious for immediate labour needs.
- Employers want simplicity and rapidity.

Some observations on the current situation

- Irregular migration is not just a border-control problem. => Many enter legally.
- Irregular migration is therefore very difficult to stop if irregular immigrants can find jobs.
- Employers have shown willingness to regularise despite consequences.
- The objective is to design a system that works for employers and migrants and redirects irregular migration into regular channels.

A tentative roadmap

- Identify shortage areas and allow for recruitment without employment test, but with a cap.
- Recruitment methods
 - Abroad with simple procedures
 - Job search visas
- No / low tolerance policy for employment of irregular migrants => greater investment in enforcement (workplace inspection, electronic verification, etc.)
- Inducements for return (for temporary)
 - Financial (e.g. pension contributions, entry bonds)
 - Limited-duration stay, possibility of return
 - Collective responsibility measures

Some grey areas

- Can labour needs be identified with sufficient accuracy?
- Will country-of-origin recruitment « dry up » legal-entry sources of irregular migration?
- Can employment of irregular migrants be reduced to manageable levels through greater enforcement measures?
- How long a stay is realistically possible for temporary migrants?



Summary and conclusion

- The design of a successful migration policy for the lesser skilled has to address the question of irregular migration.
- Employers are part of the problem and this aspect needs to be addressed more directly.
- Quick and effective recruitment methods are essential.
- Temporary migration needs to be designed to work.
- Rules have to be clear.