

RECONCILING SHORT AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES IN MIGRATION POLICIES

First of all, we would like to thank the OECD for organizing this discussion and giving the possibility to present some reflections on Polish experience with regard to migration policy.

The tensions between long-term and short-term goals of migration policy rise difficulties for most of developed countries, in particular at the moment of economic crises. During economic downturn on one hand there is a strong pressure to limit the influx of labour migrants as well as reduce expenditures on migrants' support, while this is a group particularly vulnerable to unemployment. On the other hand this is the moment when more efforts are needed especially in the area of integration in order to achieve long-term goals of migration policy.

Polish experience in the field of migration differs from experience of most of the OECD countries. Percentage of foreigners in Polish population is still very low. Relatively low is the influx of migrants for reasons different than work (ex. family reunification or international protection). We have a demand driven migration policy. Poland became more open to labour migrants only few years ago, in 2006, when a new instrument was introduced. It gave the possibility to employ on temporary bases foreigners from a given group of countries, without the necessity to apply for a work permit. The grounds for this constitute a declaration of the employer stating the essential elements of migrant's work and registered in local labour market office. Furthermore, in 2009 there were significant changes that simplified the procedure of application for work permit.

Relatively good shape of Polish economy which has been constantly growing (between 2008 and 2013 GDP in Poland grew by 20 % while the average GDP for EU countries was around 0%) together with the outflow of Polish citizens who after our accession to the EU decided to work in other member states, resulted in an increase of participation of third country nationals in Polish labour market. Between 2008 and 2013 the number of work permits issued per year grew by 120% from 18 thousand to 39 thousands.

The above mentioned simplified procedure of admission to Polish labour market based on employers' declaration to employ a foreigner for a period up to 6 months is even of greater significant to Polish economy. The number of such declarations increased by 50% between 2008 and 2013 from 156 thousands to 235 thousands registered per year. This year even higher growth in the number of both work permits and declarations is noted. Still not a significant share of our labour market though.

These numbers show that in Poland the demand for foreign labour force concerns short-term employment mostly in the sector of agriculture, construction and home care and childcare services. It is also concentrated in big cities and in regions with developed horticulture.

Nonetheless we are aware that this is a temporary situation. Therefore, we constantly monitor demographic trends and experiences of other countries that have already passed the way from being an emigration to an immigration country. Hence, it is particularly important to have the possibility to discuss this issue on the OECD Forum.

From the beginning of 90' the fertility rate in Poland has significantly decreased, in consequence the cohorts entering labour market at present are less numerous. Although we have introduced recently changes in the family policy, it should be expected that in incoming years shortages of labour force will be face in growing number of sectors and professions. Already today we note high demand for employees in transport, commerce, gastronomy, tourism and services, but also for highly qualified professionals.

We may say that our system is well adopted to current economic situation, but it is necessary to think about future developments that most probably will involve more constant demand on foreign labour force, also due to demographic situation. For this reason we offer a possibility to pass from temporary employment based on employer's declaration (for a period up to 6 months) to employment on the bases of work permit that may be issued for a period up to 3 years. This solution should enhance a smooth and gradual transition from circular migrations to long-term and possibly to permanent residence.

A strategic document adopted in 2012 "Polish migration policy – current situation and postulated actions" includes also other recommendations with the aim to attract highly qualified migrants or to develop an integration policy of migrants.

Moreover, Poland is a good example of a country where migration helps to absorb choc of economic or geopolitical nature. First in 2004 the opening of labour markets in some Member States at the time of a high unemployment helped to ease the tension on Polish labour market (phenomenon of decompression). In addition to that, there was a significant increase in migrants remittances which helped to limit the poverty level in some regions. However, it should be noted that these are short-term results of mobility, and in longer perspective it may become less significant due to problems caused by depopulation or outflow of the most active and entrepreneurial individuals. It is important to evoke this perspective in particular at this

point when in some states public debate is strongly dominated by negative consequences of mobility only for receiving countries.

Poland is of the opinion that workers mobility is one of the important instruments of integration which enhance prosperity and welfare for all citizens in free-mobility area. In long term it will result in higher convergence in wages and living standards in all member state, in particular if enhanced by further actions in the field of cohesion policy.

The second example refers to a geopolitical chock most probably are facing right now. In previous years more than a half of all issued work permits and 95% of registered employers' declarations concern Ukrainian citizens. In last months we note even higher increase in influx of Ukrainian citizens which probably is linked to political and economic difficulties that this country is facing. They are using the simplified and flexible scheme which originally was set up in order to enable short-term employment, now it gives a possibility for a stay and work legally due to political developments or difficult personal situation.

To conclude, Poland, with its important emigration experience and experience on immigration that is constantly gained, is of the opinion that it is necessary not to perceive the phenomenon of migration as a possible threat but as a possibility to maximize opportunities. Certainly, it is not easy to manage migratory processes. These phenomena are characterized by inertia and to a large extend are autonomous to public policies. In particular migration policy is based on assumptions on future economic and social developments, which are extremely difficult to foresee. Therefore, it is not possible to elaborate one strategy and consequently put it into practice. Acting in the field of migrations demands constant monitoring and adaptation to possible changes. It should be accompanied by an adequate information policy which would help to build good migration climate and develop better, fact-based, understanding for its processes in the receiving society. Hence, as labour immigration brings visible short-term and long term benefits, spending on migration policy, in particular with regard to integration on the labour market, are investments that will benefit in long-term perspective. Migration policy must be however coherent to other policies.

