Migration and EU Enlargement: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe

Fears of large-scale emigration from Central and Eastern Europe have been a major concern for policy makers in Western Europe. But the reality of the past decade is that internal migration flows between the countries of this region have accounted for far greater movement in terms of numbers than emigration from the region to Western Europe or North America.

What are the prospects for the future? Will the enlargement of the European Union eastwards alter migration flows and policies? Do the countries of Central and Eastern Europe provide a buffer zone between the EU and other countries further to the East and South of this region? Or will they be a future source of migration westwards?

A new OECD publication, *Migration and EU Enlargement: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe*, shows that East-West flows are currently lower than in 1989-1992 and that they broadly correspond to a process of regional integration confined to border regions. Temporary migration of workers is a growing phenomenon, however, both within Central and Eastern Europe and from this region towards Western Europe. Central and Eastern European countries are also attracting migrants from further East, reflecting significant economic imbalances both within the region and between it and the countries on its Eastern borders.

Judging by unemployment figures, the Czech Republic and Hungary are the most attractive markets for migrants looking to find employment in Central and Eastern Europe, whilst Bulgaria and Romania are at the other end of the scale. However, based on Western Europe’s post-war experience, fears of mass migration flows from East to West appear likely to prove exaggerated.

The prospective enlargement of the EU will require countries in Central and Eastern Europe to review their migration policies, notably with regard to the countries with which they will share external borders of an enlarged EU. Border controls, the control of migration flows, visa policies and measures to combat the illegal employment of foreigners will all require more precise legislation and more effective implementation procedures. Conditions for foreign workers will also need to be improved in such areas as the delivery and renewal of work permits and the recruitment roles of specialised public or private agencies.

Journalists may obtain this report from the OECD Media Relations Division (request by fax: 33 1 45 24 80 03 or by email: news.contact@oecd.org).

For further information, journalists can contact Jean-Pierre Garson, OECD Non-Member Economies and International Migration Division (tel: 33 1 45 24 91 74 or jean-pierre.garson@oecd.org) or Jacob Arfwedson, OECD Media Relations Division (tel: 33 1 45 24 81 03 or jacob.arfwedson@oecd.org).