

Background information for the conference

‘Social and economic impact of migration: Central and East-European perspectives’

Key objectives

The conference is organised jointly by the Polish Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions). The Polish Presidency provides a unique opportunity to examine the highly complex implications of labour migration from a Central and East-European perspective. Eurofound has extensive and recent experience in migration research. A project researching workers’ mobility is currently underway, while other earlier projects were concerned with the integration of third country migrants within countries of the European Union. The first day of the conference will be dedicated to discussions related to the social and employment consequences of labour outflow from Central and Eastern Europe to the Member States of the former EU15 whereas the second day is concerned with labour inflow into these countries.

Content

The first session – setting the scene - will provide participants with an overview of the following issues:

- Trends and extent of labour outflow
- Which are the main sending countries?
- Sectoral and occupational patterns
- Educational status of migrants and types of jobs they occupy in the receiving countries

The subsequent sessions on social and employment impacts of labour outflow will be organised in two parts:

The first part on social consequences will focus on the situation of those left behind, i.e. the impact on families and children, as well as on the elderly population (within the context of the issues related to demographic change)

The second part will focus on employment challenges of migration and will discuss the following questions:

- Gaps and labour shortages in the sending countries as a consequence of increasing labour outflow
- Policy responses at national and local level to these gaps and shortages
- How do employers deal with labour shortages?

The afternoon sessions of the first day will be dedicated to three parallel working groups and a concluding panel debate.

The workshops will focus on three themes:

1. Impacts of migration on families, children and young adults

Increasing mobility offers both opportunities and risks for family life, stretching the capacity of men and women to reconcile work with family relationships and to provide family care. There are challenges facing family members who are left behind as well problems associated with taking the family abroad. The social consequences of migration are many and varied. Social and family connections can be adversely affected with links to the society and to the family reduced resulting in corresponding implications for children and the elderly alike.

Each working group, involving experts, policymakers and stakeholders from various organisations and countries, will be introduced by two focussed presentations on the policy objectives in relation to the theme of the session. Working groups will have an interactive format aimed at sharing experiences between participants on challenges and solutions in these key areas. The main objective of the working group will be to discuss measures and share good practices that address the social and employment challenges of labour outflow from the Central and East-European Member States.

2. Addressing labour shortages

The focus of this workshop is part of a broader debate in Europe, on the question of how to match labour demand and supply. The consequences of labour shortages in the sending countries are a key dimension of this debate and, the session will touch on concerns of 'brain drain', impact on education, training and the recognition of qualifications. The role of the social partners in addressing these labour shortages will also be discussed. In particular, there will be a focus on the health sector as a special case in point since it illustrates the complex role migration plays in meeting labour market needs. Amidst growing demographic pressures, this is of specific relevance. Equally the issue of training and retention of professionals plays an important role in this debate. What kind of cooperative arrangements could be made to balance the needs of sending and receiving countries? What is the role of universities and other professional or private organisations in this domain?

3. Management of migration processes at local and regional levels

This session will allow participants to debate possible future strategies addressing the migration issue, its costs and benefits. What is the role of non-state actors, local and regional authorities and the social partners, in developing and implementing labour mobility schemes?

The concluding panel debate of the first day will consist of a moderated reporting back from the parallel sessions and a final discussion. This session will take stock of the plenary discussion as well the main conclusions of the working groups.

Day 2 will be dedicated to the scale and type of migration flows to countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and will focus on the following issues:

- Is labour inflow an issue for countries in Central and Eastern Europe?
- What are the countries of origin of migrants (with special regard to Eastern Partnership countries and other third country nationals as well as return migrants)?

Following the initial overview, the last session will focus on challenges related to, and management of, labour inflow into Central and Eastern Europe. This session will also focus on debate surrounding the effectiveness of the integration strategies currently being established in countries of the region.

The way forward - The final concluding panel debate will reflect on the two-day debate and will highlight the main issues and challenges raised regarding migration and integration from a European perspective. High-level representatives from the EU institutions, national governments, and experts in migration and integration issues will offer their insights on the way forward. Among other issues, the following questions will be discussed:

Has there been adequate EU policy focus on tackling the social and employment impacts of labour outflow from the Central and East-European Member States?

What information, knowledge and capacities are required to design effective policies in this context?