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V. CONFERENCE

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The Social and Economic Impact of Migration. A Central and East-European Perspective, Eurofund and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Warsaw 17–18th November 2011

One of the evident symptoms indicating the interrelation between the political, the social and the scientific fields of interests in migration is the increasing number of events dedicated to this issue, such as conferences, meetings and workshops. The conference *The Social and Economic Impact of Migration. A Central and East-European Perspective*, which took place in Warsaw on the 17th and 18th November 2011, is a perfect example of this tendency. The conference was organized jointly by the Polish Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and Eurofund (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions). Polish Presidency provided a unique opportunity to examine the complex implications of labour migration from a Central and East-European perspective. Among around 100 conference participants were professionals affiliated to governmental bodies, employer and employee organizations and NGOs from more than 20 countries. Such a variety of affiliations indicates the complexity and multi-dimensional character of intra-EU mobility, especially migratory flows from the New Members States to the former EU-15 countries. There seems to be high demand for the debate on migration implications among experts, policymakers and stakeholders as migratory flows pose a lot of questions and difficulties.

The conference in Warsaw involved two plenary sessions, three workshops and a final panel debate. The first day of the conference was given over to discussions related to the social and employment consequences of labour outflow from CEE countries to the Member States of the former EU-15. The second day was devoted to concerns relating to labour inflow into these countries. During the first conference day there were three workshops on: impact of migration on families, children and young adults; labour shortages and the management of migration processes at local and regional levels.

In her keynote address Czesława Ostrowska – Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Poland – pointed out the shift in thinking and talking about migration in recent years. Contemporary politicians, policymakers and economists tend to look at migration as a process which can and should be

professionally managed and as a process which can bring new opportunities and gains for individuals and the whole society. László Andor – EU Commissioner for Employment – in his address set the scene for the further debate indicating five areas at the macro-structural level that should be examined. First of all, Andor argued that the temporary high level of mobility would not last forever. Secondly, one should stop talking about the ‘brain drain’ effect of the migratory flows as only 20% of the outflow had tertiary education. Thirdly, the economic impact of the outflow on GDP per capita should be analysed in the long run. Andor argued that one cannot underestimate the effect of migrants’ transfers back home in boosting the economy. Finally, the Commissioner pointed out the fact that in many cases, the mobility is not permanent, many migrants would return and bring their cultural capital back to their country. It suggests that one should talk about a ‘brain gain’ instead of a ‘brain drain’ effect. László Andor mentioned two more issues which need to be taken under consideration: the ageing workforce in Europe and the demand for third countries migration to the European Union.

The thematic session on the social and employment impact of emigration was opened by Constatinos Fotakis – an advisor in the Directorate General of Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission – who argued that while one could not talk about a ‘brain drain’, it would be too early to announce the ‘brain gain’ effect of mobility. In the light of recent studies the overall economic impact of intra-EU mobility could be seen as positive (total remittances in the period of 2004–2009 are estimated to be 1,7% of GDP), however it reminded a relatively limited phenomenon. Fotakis argued that global competition, demographic ageing and growing domestic demand would strive for higher levels of mobility.

This positive picture of intra-EU mobility was blurred by Peter Makara – a scientific adviser of Semmelweis University in Budapest, who focused on the socio-economic context of contemporary migration, in particular – on the conditions of high uncertainty caused by economic crisis. According to Makara, the idea of free movement within the EU had a double-faced character. On the one hand, the EU citizens could experience more freedom of movement, on the other hand, this freedom was overshadowed by ‘3D jobs’ and exclusion. Makara argued that the whole experience of labour mobility in Europe was full of contradictions. Migratory flows created difficulties, conflicts, challenges in relation to transferability of skills, children and integration. This thematic session was summed up by Anna Krasteva – the Director of Centre for European Refugees, Migration and Ethnic Studies in Bulgaria. Krasteva critically evaluated all the narratives which were used in the debate on contemporary migration: the narrative of transnationalism, returnees, a migrant as a member of an ‘underclass’, a migrant as a gendered figure and the most powerful – ‘brain gain’ versus ‘brain drain’ narrative.

The second thematic session focused on the social consequences and challenges of migration. Charles Woolfson – a professor of labour studies at REMESCO in Linköping University in Sweden – provided an in-depth analysis of the economic crisis in the Baltic States and migratory outflow in recent years. According to Woolfson the perception of labour migration in the Baltic States had changed from the understanding of migration as an ‘exit’ to understanding it as an ‘exodus’ due

to the shock of the crisis of capitalism and the decline in living standards. The scale of the crisis was huge. The macroeconomic indicators showed a 20% loss of GDP, a 10% decline in salaries and increasing inequalities measured by the Gini Index. All these processes went along with de-solidarisation of society, decrease in social trust, internal devaluation and social unrest. In this context migratory outflow seemed to be a rational reaction for the '3Ds': disillusion, disempowerment and disenfranchisement. Jörg Peschener – a specialist working for the European Commission (DG EMPL's Employment analysis) – in his presentation focused on the perspectives of Europe's long-term welfare vis-à-vis a shrinking workforce. According to macroeconomic analysis the workforce in the EU-27 will shrink by around 42 millions in the next 50 years. The European Commission has introduced a few guidelines to deal with this issue. To overcome the problem member states have to shift employment rate, increase productivity via skills development and adopt a modern approach towards qualified migration. Migration, therefore, has to be managed at the European level and becomes the key element in addressing the problem. The discussion over employment consequences and the challenges of migration was continued by Vladimíra Drbalová – a member of the European Economic and Social Committee. Drbalová argued that the target of a 75% employment rate in the EU could be reached but there had to be better match between employees' skills and labour market needs. What is more, the target could not be reached without immigrants from the outside of Europe. Such a solution requires a new immigration policy at the European level. So far, such a cohesive policy has not existed, each country has had its own policy ranging from a protectionist policy towards its own citizens to the open one – actively attracting migrant workers.

The second half of the first conference day was given over to three parallel working groups. Working groups had an interactive format aimed at sharing experiences, measures and good practices related to the social and employment challenges of labour outflow from the Central and East-European Member States between experts, policymakers and stakeholders. The first workshop focused on the impact of migration on families, children and young adults. Irina Brych – a migration officer from Caritas Ukraine – presented the research findings on migratory outflow implications and the response to emerging difficulties. The main implications of long term migration brought to light by the researchers were: misunderstandings in family life, difficulties in personal development, education of children, significant drop in family values and lack of care for elderly people. Caritas Ukraine run a few projects in response to all of these consequences. The organization runs a voluntary return project and several social centers for the children of labour migrants to ensure successful re-integration of Ukrainians who were returning home. Brych's presentation focused on the 'dark side' of the migratory outflow – its negative consequences for families and society in general.

The second workshop was devoted to the issue of labour shortages. John Hurley – Research Officer in the Employment and Competitiveness research unit at Eurofund – provided an insight into two employment sectors. According to the presented data, the low paid sector is predominantly filled with migrant workers, whereas high-paid jobs are available mainly to native workers. Predictions based

on recent studies lead one to the conclusion that there would be a demand for high and medium qualifications in the future. Giovanni Lamura – a social gerontologist – in his presentation focused on employment in the long-term care sector in Italy. Lamura presented his research findings on the role of migrant LTC (Long Term Care) workers, the perspective of LTC recipients, the impact of formal LTC provision and the migrant LTC workers perspective.

The last workshop was given over to the management of the migration processes at local and regional levels. Petr Novak – a head of the unit for Foreigners and Refugees at the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic – presented the experiences of a state integration programme for recognized refugees. Novak shared practices relating to the resettlement of Burmese refugees in the Czech Republic.

The first conference day ended up with the plenary session. The panelists (Lech Pilawski, Joanna Unter Schütz, Andrew Michta, Mamodou Jallow) drew conclusions on the most significant aspects of the debate on the implications of migration: the role of social capital in migration processes, the demand for non-EU migration, the challenge of the management of migratory flows and the issue of return migrants and their social, cultural and economic capital.

The second day of the conference was devoted to the scale and type of migration flows to countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Following the initial overview, the last session focused on challenges related to, and management of the labour inflow into CEE countries, especially the effectiveness of the integration strategies currently being established in the countries of the region. Kinga Wysieńska – an expert from the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland – talked of the practices and legal situation of immigrants in Poland as an example of immigration policy which still needed to be developed. Anastasia Fetsi – head of Thematic Expertise Development Department in the European Training Foundation – presented skill profiles of immigrants from Moldova and Ukraine. The profiles were based on findings from ETF's surveys. According to Fetsi, there was no universal truth in the debate on 'brain drain', 'brain gain', circulation and waste in migratory processes. The perception of migration depended on country-specific conditions and individual migrant characteristics. In conclusion, Fetsi argued that a 'win-win-win' scenario was possible if all parties would cooperate with better management of migration at the European level. Jolanta Jaworowska – Governmental Programmes Director of IBM – shared the experiences related to labour mobility from the global perspective. Jaworowska argued that the need for short term skilled mobility is crucial for the stability of the labour market in the contemporary world. The mobility highly depends on economic and cultural factors. Low mobility in Poland leads to the paradoxical situation in which western professionals observed the opportunities for a quick career in Poland and were more likely to take positions which could not be taken by their Polish counterparts, who were not that 'ready to move'. Maciej Duszczyk – Deputy Director of the Institute of Social Policy in Poland – pointed out the fact that there was nothing like a single immigration policy in CEE countries. Such a policy was difficult to develop due to the high number of differentiating factors between countries. Duszczyk argued that an immigration policy was missing in Poland because the level of employment immigration was relatively low. However, one could notice a significant increase in

immigrant numbers. One could expect Poland to become a country of immigration in the future.

The final concluding panel reflected on the findings and debate of the previous sessions highlighting the main issues and challenges that had arisen regarding migration and integration from European perspective. High-level representatives from EU institutions, national governments and experts in migration and integration issues (Georg Fischer, Maarten Camps, Katrin Hirseland) offered their insights on the way forward. Maarten Camps – Director General for Employment at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands – claimed that we could benefit from migration but we had to face three challenges. First of all, there had to be a preference for the employment of nationals. Secondly, there had to be a mechanism to promote employers who treated their workers fairly. Thirdly, we had to fight the ‘benefit tourism’, in other words, we should not allow migrants who took up social benefits without a contribution to society. Katrin Hirseland – head of the ‘Central Aspects of Integration Support’ unit at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany – focused on the issue of inclusion and social cohesion as a key challenge. She argued that the successful integration of migrants was not just about language courses, it involved: recognition of diplomas/qualifications, second generation of immigrants (access to education, labour market) and adequate and helpful information for people who intended to migrate. All these activities could reduce the costs of migration in the long run.

To sum up, the conference in Warsaw did not provide solutions to the challenges posed by migratory flows within the EU, but it was a significant step towards better cooperation between academics, stake holders, policymakers and NGO representatives who will shape the future of migration – its directions, type and management.