

Summary of the Final Seminar

On June 25 in Brussels (Crown Plaza hotel) took place the Final Seminar 'Cost and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries' concluding 2-year long project by the same name. The event gathered nearly 50 participants, including government representatives from the selected EU states (Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden), selected EaP countries (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Belarus), civil society (IOM, ICMPD) and representatives of academia (CEU, EUI, Warwick University, Trinity College Dublin)

Klaus F. Zimmermann from IZA and Giovanni Cremonini, representing the EU, welcomed the guests, officially inaugurating the seminar. The event was divided between three main sessions followed by Panel discussion on policy recommendations and the Report of the Rapporteur.

First session **"Migration from the Eastern Partnership Countries and Policy Conclusions"** commenced with the presentation by Klaus Zimmermann and was followed by a brief but inspiring discussion chaired by Martin Kahanec from the CEU. The presenter pointed out some of the characteristics of the EU-EaP migration:

- Migration plays important role in facilitating the economic restructuring (overall the benefits surplus the costs).
- The EaP migrants entering the EU are mostly well educated but employed in low skilled sectors of the economy. In general there are no negative effect on wages or employment of other groups of workers in receiving countries
- Fears over uncontrollable inflows following liberalisation of labour markets are unjustified

This led to propose the policy lesson:

- Incorporate migration issues in national strategies as well as sectoral action plans
- Increase institutional coordination
- Start the negotiation of supplementary treaties aiming at the implementation of the Single Permit directive
- Implement measures to increase the role of diasporas in promoting investment and growth
- Adopt a visa-free travel regime
- Adopt a stepped-up engagement with the EaP countries through EU-level, multilateral and bilateral mobility frameworks
- Enhance complementary migrant integration policies

The commentators stressed that EaP migrants are often skilled and well-educated, but there are currently barriers in place for them to realize their potential in Europe. Challenges such as skill mismatch and countries not recognizing their qualifications – particularly those migrants with technical and vocational skills – are still hampering migrant "immersion" into EU labour market and lead to downscaling. Both sending and receiving countries could alleviate downscaling by creating frameworks for transferring qualifications, perhaps looking towards already existing frameworks such as the Bologna Process for inspiration.

Matthias Luecke, CASE fellow, chaired the second session **“EaP workers in EU Labour Markets: Unleashing potential for mutual gains”** commenced with a presentation by Martin Kahanec.

The key arguments stemming from the presentation were following:

- Europe needs mobility and migration (aging, skill shortages)
- It is reasonable to expect steady, modest migration flows from EaP countries (mostly Ukraine) to the EU over the next decade
- Moderately, and temporarily, increased flows can be expected if a more liberal migration framework is put in place
- The effects of past and projected mobility generally positive
- More transparent and liberal migration framework provides for better matching and more favourable impacts on sending and receiving countries, and on migrants

The presentation was followed by a few valid remarks from the commentators.

Sabrina Marchetti from EUI addressed the specifics of the Italian case study. She pointed out that looking at migration through the lens of age, we can glean very valuable information. She offered insights on circular migration, specifically that the notion of circularity being a nascent type of migration – the starting point for larger migratory flows – does not apply in the Italian case: Ukrainian women in particular used circular migration as a strategy to extend the time frame they can work during.

Irina Molodikova from CEU advocated for shortening the time it takes for a migrant to settle down – find housing, getting permission to work, etc. – once the migrant has arrived. This could promote migration to the EU for highly qualified workers, as are found in the EaP.

Representative of Sweden - Erik Reho - shared his country experiences with migration from the EaP countries. He emphasized the GDP of Sweden increased as more migrants came. The Swedish government enacted a reform that removed nationality- or region-based quotas based on the idea that the “market knows best.” He also mentioned social networks were at times the only source of information on local migration laws.

Third session **“ Labour Migration from the EaP: The Potential for Mutual Gains”** was chaired by Allan Barrett from the Trinity College Dublin. An introductory presentation was delivered by Matthias Luecke (in replacement of Luca Barbone) with the following conclusions and recommendation:

- Labour migration in the EaP countries generates large benefits for the migrants and their families as well as for economic and social development in migrants’ home countries
- Framing policies with a view to direct and indirect consequences on migration should become more important as the importance of migration rises
- Current labour migration institutional framework inadequate in most EaP countries
- Leadership is the key - No institutional arrangement to foster migration will be effective or long-lasting without substantial support from the top
- Minimizing Social Consequences Requires focused policies - High priority should be assigned to helping in the implementation of the Single Permit initiative (a EU task) through any necessary side negotiations with MS. This would contribute to improving social security for labour migrants and stabilize host country pension systems
- Visa liberalization would deepen good neighbourly relations with EaP countries without leading to a huge increase in labour migration

The presentation prompted a few remarks from the audience (commentators)

Diane Cheianu brought audience's attention to the Moldovan experience, discussing Moldova's experience with creating a diaspora bureau (in response to growing demand for accommodating the needs of migrants). She supported developing programs to support entrepreneurialism and investment in home countries. She addressed the need for social security agreements with countries with larger Moldovan population, such as Italy and Russia, in order to secure pensions and stability for Moldovan migrants abroad.

Jennifer Smith from the Warwick University appreciated the value of the policy recommendations suggested by the project papers. However, given popular fears of migrants, policy liberalization would be difficult to achieve (it's partially the consequence of the miscalculations of the number of migrants after accession of the new state to the EU).

Hanna Vakhitova brought in the Ukrainian perspective on migration. She criticized the tendency for countries to sign agreement after agreement on migration without giving legal status to immigrants to travel. She characterized the downscaling of Ukrainian immigrants in the EU as exporting a domestic problem.

Adrian Chrobot (Mission of Poland to the EU) stressed two main advantages of Europe in the domain of EaP migration. He first stressed that the geographical closeness of these two regions is a huge advantage for promoting circular migration – to keeping it legal and impermanent. He also briefly described a systems of certificates as an good practice introduced by the Polish government – a solution that facilitates circular migration.

“Panel discussion on policy recommendation” was chaired by Klaus F. Zimmermann and provided a platform for participants.

Borbala Szigeti from the EC brought participants' attention to the EU Labour migration directives (applicable to all third country nationals)

-Blue card – already under implementation (not obligatory).

-Single permit directive – which is to be implemented by all members states as of the end of this year

-Proposal on seasonal employees

All these directives have so called “more favourable provision clause”, which essentially allows to go beyond the minimum ‘expectations’ set out by those directives.

Georg Jashi, government official from Georgia, deliberated on the differing perspectives on circular migration in the EU and in Georgia. He advocated for tailoring policy to fit the needs of specific countries so that both sides can benefit – in the case of Georgia, this was to prevent brain drain and to protect migrants, who often do not even realize that they are protected by the EU Charter on Human Rights.

Anna Platonova, a representative from the Brussels Regional Office of the International Organization for Migration, started by reminding the attendees of the logic behind most EU countries having an employer-led labor immigration system, the fact that this system delegates decisions to the employer, hereby lower administrative costs and tying migration directly to the needs of the labor

market. She pointed out, however, that most employers in the EU are small and medium-sized companies and do not have the capacity to effectively recruit abroad.

Allan Barrett (TCD) reflected on the immigration debate in Ireland. He focused on Ireland's experience as a small country with a massive diaspora. He pointed out the soft power advantage of having a diaspora – the political advantages (as is the case of Ireland vis-à-vis the United States), economic advantages, and the advantages to the tourism industry. He also brought attention to the linkage between migration and the free trade; the linkage that often gets overlooked.

“Raport of the rapporteur”, was the last point in the agenda. Mathias Luecke wrapped up the main sessions of the seminar, pointing to the main policies to move forward with:

- More focus on migrants' access to information and support. Facilitating eventual settlement or re-integration of a migrants
- Adopting comprehensive perspective referred to as “migration lens”; policies shouldn't be narrow to few areas such as the border control but rather should constitute a comprehensive overview of the areas affected by migration
- Full liberalisation is highly unlikely, but gradual liberalisation would bring solution to many concerns raised throughout the seminar (bilateral agreements)