

Migration from the Eastern Partnership Countries to the European Union – Options for a Better Future

Executive Summary

This study presents a summary of the findings and recommendations stemming from the project entitled “*Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Countries*” for the European Commission (Contract No. 2011/270-312, tender procedure EuropeAid/130215/C/SER/Multi). The project has resulted in the production of 11 country studies (for the six Eastern Partnership countries, and for five EU destination countries: United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland, Germany), and two general reports: “Labour Migration from the Eastern Partnership Countries: Evolution and Policy Options for Better Outcomes” (Barbone, Bonch-Osmolovskiy and Luecke 2013) and “Labour Migration from EaP Countries to the EU: Assessment of Costs and Benefits and Proposals for Better Labour Market Matching” (Kahanec, Zimmermann, Kurekova and Biavaschi 2013).

In this Final Paper, we first summarize the evidence on costs and benefits of migration specifically for EaP and EU countries. We find that (i) the balance of costs and benefits is positive for both sending and receiving countries; (ii) costs can be reduced, and benefits maximized, by the use of appropriate policies that facilitate mobility and integration of migrants and their families, and that help manage the economic consequences of large remittance flows; (iii) labour migrants from the EaP countries could help the member states of the European Union to fill skills gaps at all levels over the next few years, as the demographic transition intensifies in Europe.

As a result of the analysis and findings of this project, we propose a gradual liberalisation of mobility between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries as a first-best policy alternative. Several possible initiatives that we propose to facilitate better mobility outcomes include:

For the EaP countries:

- The adoption of a migration lens in all aspects of public policies that affect migration and its outcomes, through explicit incorporation of migration issues in national strategies as well as sectoral action plans.
- Better institutional coordination, the adoption of a strategic vision for labour migration, and eventually the designation of a single national entity to coordinate and facilitate labour migration strategies.

- As Member States adopt legislation to implement the Single Permit directive, EaP countries should strive to negotiate supplementary treaties fully to enable non-EU migrants to obtain work and residence permits via a single procedure and greater access to countries' social safety nets, including social security.
- Measures to increase the role of diasporas in promoting investment and growth, both on the policy side (better business environment) and on the government organizational side (by providing voice and support to diasporas on matters of domestic concern)

For the EU and its Member States:

- The adoption of a visa-free travel regime;
- A stepped-up engagement with the EaP countries through EU-level, multilateral and bilateral mobility frameworks, encompassing a more comprehensive application of the Blue Card directive, work permit liberalization and facilitation, programs for specific professions and sectors, as well as simplification and increased transparency of immigration procedures.
- Enhancement of complementary migrant integration policies, including skill transferability, recognition of social rights, reduction of informational gaps, management of public opinion and involvement of relevant stakeholders.