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Polish plumbers and Romanian strawberry pickers: how the populist framing of EU migration impacts national policies

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The EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 that effectively increased migration from the EU's new member states to its old ones, or the EU-15, has prompted debate in several countries regarding policies aimed at countering worker migration. In response, we here investigate the controversy by focusing on Poles and Romanians as the figures of such migration, which in old member states has spurred xenophobic attitudes. Specifically, we examine how many Poles and Romanians actually migrated, to which countries, and the reasons behind their migration, as well as scrutinise the development of xenophobic attitudes toward Polish and Romanian immigrants and how such intolerance impacts national policies in old member states? In conclusion, we argue that the debate concerning migration within the EU not only exaggerates actual migration, but also promotes myths meant to protect national interests, thereby suggesting that policies aimed at countering worker migration require evidence-based research.

Keywords: worker migration; EU directives; evidence-based policy; xenophobia; discrimination

Introduction

In this article, we confront European national policies affecting the free movement of EU citizens from Central and East Europe (CEE) to its other areas. Given that public administration's recent upward trend in applying evidence-based policy (Bartlett, 2013; Marsh & McConnell, 2010; Pawson, 2006; Sanderson, 2002), we question to what extent policies affecting the migration of EU citizens are actually based on evidence. In this sense, the purpose of the paper is to describe movement patterns and attitudes toward them by analysing two cases that inform current debates concerning institutional arrangements for the free movement of EU citizens: Polish and Romanian migrant workers. At present, these figures – here referred to as the Polish plumber and the Romanian strawberry picker – are fitting empirical examples, if not also symbols, of East–West movement across the European Union.

Since the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007, public worry over the increased movement of people within the European Union has compounded, and in suit, migration and integration are currently sensitive issues for policy-makers, politicians and citizens of old EU member states (EU-OMS, or the EU-15). Though the free circulation of

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goods, persons, services and capital constitutes the four economic freedoms set up as pillars of the single European market (Consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) [Consolidated TEU & TFEU], 2008), the principle upholding the free circulation of people has taken heat amid recent waves of EU enlargement. Despite, initial focus on the advantages of cultivating an educated, mobile workforce, the global financial crisis that struck Europe beginning in 2009 constricted the labour market in many EU countries. In public debates, immigrants have consequently been portrayed not only as competitors in these labour markets, but also as the unwanted beneficiaries of social and unemployment benefits. The influx of workers from CEE countries seeking employment, education and improved living standards met reluctance, if not resistance, from destination countries, usually in the form of policies obstructing the principle of free circulation.

In response to these policies, in this paper, we investigate the controversy in terms of what is known about the number of migrant Poles and Romanians, their destinations within the EU-15, and the actual impact of their migration, as well as seek to clarify the relationship between such knowledge and the framing of national migration policies in the EU-15. We first address EU policies i.e. the Directive 2006/123/EC on services in the internal market regulating the free movement of workers commonly known as the ‘Bolkestein Directive’, the discussion surrounding it and national policies that react to this directive. We secondly investigate to what extent these policies stem from actual evidence. Thereafter, in the third section, we focus on scholarship addressing the effects of migration within Europe, as well as compare statistics from international organisations and national agencies. In the fourth section, we discuss the conflict between actual movement flows of EU citizens and the ideological framing of such flows in different EU countries. Lastly, we draw conclusions respecting the disjoint between the facts, attitudes, and policies and its consequences for the reform of laws regarding migration.

The background of the problem

The fall of socialism in 1989 and the liberation of people from East and Central Europe ushered in a new era in European history. Fifteen years later, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia applied for EU membership, which was granted during the fifth EU enlargement on 1 May 2004. Romania and Bulgaria soon followed and became members in the sixth EU enlargement on 1 January 2007. Post-socialist countries were generally welcomed into EU structures, for EU enlargement meant an expanded internal market and new opportunities for exporting goods from the West to the East, from which the West no doubt stood to profit. Yet, these countries’ membership was at once perceived with scepticism, for it permitted the free movement of people from the EU’s new member states (EU-NMS) to the EU-15.

The Constitutional Treaty signed by national leaders in October 2004 manifested the political ambitions of the European Union and advocated the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital within it. In the preamble to the Consolidated Version of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) developed by EU secondary legislation and case law of the Court of Justice, the European Union is expected

to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, ... to ensure the economic and social progress of their States by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe, ... as the essential objective of their efforts the constant

improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples. (Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [Consolidated TFEU], 2012, p. 49)

Part III, article 26, point 2 of this same treaty states that the internal market ‘shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Treaties’ (Consolidated TFEU, 2012, p. 59). In fact, chapter 1, article 45 of the treaty regulates the free movement of workers and explains that EU citizens are entitled to (1) look for jobs in other EU countries, (2) work there without needing a work permit, (3) reside there for that purpose, (4) stay there even after employment has ceased and (5) enjoy equal treatment as nationals in access to employment, working conditions, and all other social and tax advantages (Consolidated TFEU, 2012, p. 65f). In sum, though new EU member states were welcomed in the EU, their citizens nonetheless faced limitations regarding their free mobility, including posted workers employed in the country of origin and providing services in another country. According to van Hoek and Houwerzijl (2011),

Several ‘old’ member states (EU15) applied or still apply a transitional regime with respect to the free movement of workers from eight new member states that joined the EU in 2004 and the two other new member states – Romania and Bulgaria – which acceded in 2007. Germany and Austria, for instance, negotiated the possibility to impose restrictions to the free movement of services insofar as these involve cross-border posting of workers. (p. 17)

Furthermore, the Posting of Workers Directive in article 2(1) has held that a posted worker was perceived as any ‘worker who, for a limited period, carries out his [or her] work in the territory of a member state other than the state in which he [or she] normally works’ (p. 3). Later, article 3(1) formulates hard rules for workers’ protection in the EU-15, including maximum work periods and minimum rest periods; minimum paid annual holidays; minimum rates of pay, including overtime rates, though such do not apply to supplementary occupational retirement pension schemes; and conditions for hiring outworkers, particularly for temporary employment (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union: Directive 96/71/EC, 1997).

The controversy over migration intensified with the adoption of the European Union Directive 2006/123/EC concerning services in the internal market, an issue closely related to the free movement of workers. The document became widely known as the Bolkestein Directive, after Frederick ‘Frits’ Bolkestein, the Dutch politician responsible for internal market taxation and issues regarding the customs union in the European Commission during 1999–2004. Removing border barriers within the European Union was perceived as ‘a basic condition for overcoming the difficulties encountered in implementing the Lisbon Strategy and for reviving the European economy, particularly in terms of employment and investment’ (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union: Directive 2006/123/EC, 27.12.2006, L 376/37, 2006). As such, the aim was ‘to achieve an internal market for services, with the right balance between market opening and preserving public services and social and consumer rights’ (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union: Directive 2006/123/EC, 27.12.2006, L 376/37, 2006). The Bolkestein Directive advocated the country of origin principle holding that a company providing services in another EU country should operate according to the regulations of its home country. Bolkestein defended the directive’s

making benefits as clear as possible, notably by citing a personal problem he had faced: while seeking a decent French plumber, he realised the possible advantage of being able to search for such services elsewhere – for instance, in Poland. From this example was born the image of the Polish plumber. Initially, reactions to this symbol of worker migration were mostly amenable. In fact, the Polish National Tourist Office posted a portrait of a 21-year-old plumber, thereby ridiculing the fear of Polish workers and inviting people to visit Poland. The French mayor of the city where Bolkestein lived even handed Bolkestein a list with all of plumbing firms in his neighbourhood.

Soon, however, these associations shifted. The symbol of the Polish plumber came to be used in the campaign against European unification – among others, the leader of *Mouvement pour la France* and the so-called ‘no’ camp, Philippe de Villiers. In this campaign, the plumber represented cheap labour arriving from Central Europe and symbolised a challenge to Western societies precisely because he was a migrant – uncivilised, inferior, and threatening to the national lifestyle – and because he was taking advantage of the newly liberalised EU market, making money, and seemingly redirecting work away from his hosts (cf. Maryniak, 2006). Along with the Polish plumber was another image of the CEE migrant: the Romanian strawberry picker, a figure that emerged in the mid-1990s of Romanian seasonal labour migrants in Spain involved in picking fruit, usually strawberries (Balcanu, 2008). The figure quickly became a term used primarily in the Romanian press to label Romanian seasonal migrant workers regardless of their destination country, frequency of return – usually three, six, or nine months – and field of work, be it construction or agriculture.

Following the French *non* to the referendum facing the European Constitution, seconded by the Dutch *nee*, the Polish plumber became a common symbol of anti-EU populism. Polls in EU countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland indicated decreasing support for additional European integration, especially among less educated, low-skilled citizens. Conservative media fuelled the fear by reporting on instances in which immigrants had ‘stolen’ work from unemployed French and British youth and thereby undermined domestic economies. By the same token, the policy was also said to enable social dumping. Without any barriers, entrepreneurs could and would employ immigrants at far cheaper rates than native workers, if not entirely relocate production to low-wage countries with a lower level of regulation in terms of worker rights. Unsurprisingly, the Bolkestein Directive ultimately precipitated mass protests. Opponents to the free movement of people within the European Union even gave the Bolkestein Directive a new epithet: the Frankenstein directive.

In a sense, the resulting conflicts were caused by opposite reasoning regarding the free movement of workers. Representatives of business such as investors, producers and employers strive to lower labour costs, which are met by the desires of migrant workers to earn higher wages than possible at home. Caught in the middle are native workers, consequently pressured by increased competition on the labour market with workers who accept far lower wages than familiar to professionals in the EU-15. For all involved, with the notable exception of business, the result was heightened dissatisfaction.

The free movement of people within the European Union became a touchy subject, especially as more people and politicians in the EU-15 started to criticise it, as well as in light of the EU-15’s earlier experience with labour migration in the 1970s. The effects on the labour market and welfare systems in particular have raised lasting controversies (cf. Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2010, pp. 63–94). In current political discourse,

immigrants continue to be depicted as unwanted competitors in the labour market and the undeserving beneficiaries of social and unemployment benefits.

The framing of the free movement of EU citizens also became conspicuously negative, which has in turn impacted public opinion. In 2011, the Eurobarometer asked respondents in their survey the following question: 'Please tell me whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, or totally disagree with each of the following statements: The internal market in the European Union has flooded our country with cheap labour'. Except Luxemburg, Sweden, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Malta, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, in each other EU member country the majority of respondents agreed with the statement. In fact, the response 'totally agree' garnered a 96% response rate in Cyprus, 71% in Greece, 70% in Belgium, 70% in Austria, 68% in the United Kingdom and 66% in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2011, p. 20).

National policies regarding the mass migration of workers

With the debut of the recent sustained and devastating economic crisis, migrants in general and the free movement of persons from CEE to the EU-15 in particular have induced a noticeably protectionist and conservative political discourse. The result has been many awkward policies, some predictably proposed by populist parties, though others have emerged from governmental parties less vocal on the issue. In his overview of the history of Europe's guest-worker policies, Castles (2006) mentions the policies that would emerge in order to contain the free movement of people through the EU, such as the strict enforcement of immigration and employment laws, protecting the rights of migrants, widespread monitoring and incentives for the return home of temporary workers. This is indeed seen in practice.

In the United Kingdom, the British National Party pleaded to stop immigration from CEE and for Poles already in the country to be deported. Ethnically charged attacks against Polish people living in London were increasingly reported, the most recent being the xenophobic assault of a Polish biker whose helmet showed the image of the Polish flag. In January 2014, British prime minister David Cameron matched the anti-Polish atmosphere by announcing a series of measures to cut immigration and to restrict the access to welfare benefits and health care for the EU migrants. Cameron asserted, for example, that 'he could win a change in the EU's governing treaties that would allow Britain to withhold welfare payments such as child benefits from workers of other European nations' (Kirkup, 2014) – that is, from parents currently employed in the UK. Cameron even questioned adherence to the Passport of Rights (Caldarini, 2012, p. 64) accepted by the European Commission, which coordinates the use of social security for EU citizens who live, work and move across Europe.

In France, a highly disputed incident was the demolition of encampments inhabited by Roma people from Romania and Bulgaria that commenced in 2012. Initially set up as temporary housing, the encampments were gradually transformed into more or less permanent dwellings for Roma families. However, the camps were known to cause several complex social problems, ranging from chronic poverty, discrimination, and school dropout to reported disturbances of public order and concerns for hygiene and public health. The decision to dismantle the camps, coupled with a policy to provide return-to-origin country compensations, incited heated discussion both in France and abroad. Though Manuel Carlos Valls Galfetti – the french minister of the Interior, stated that the evictions were based on concerns for sanitation and tensions with working-class neighbours, members of

the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticised the collective expulsion as an act of racism and xenophobia.

In August 2011, the European Commission approved Spain's introduction of temporary restrictions on the free movement of Romanian workers (European Commission News, 2011). According to data presented by the Spanish authority to the European Commission, serious disturbances in Spain's labour market had intensified, reportedly due to the number of Romanian nationals who had settled in the country, which in September 2012 was estimated to be roughly 913,000 or 17% of the foreign population. The authority asserted that the annual increase of Romanians in Spain was about 12,000. According to the EU labour force survey, Romanian nationals living in Spain were, however, strongly afflicted with unemployment; 36.4% of the (economically active) Romanians in Spain had no job compared to 23.3% of Spanish nationals. In fact, the employment rate among working-age (15–64) Romanian citizens in Spain was estimated to be 50.8% (European Commission News, 2012).

In the Netherlands, the initiative by Dutch populist political leader Geert Wilders, a member of the Dutch Parliament for the populist Freedom Party, to set up a website where concerned citizens could submit their complaints about nuisances provoked by Eastern Europeans is particularly noteworthy (Meldpunt overlast Midden –en Oost Europeanen). The presentation of the website made explicit reference to Poles, Romanians, and Bulgarians living in the Netherlands, suggested complaints such as losing one's job, and provided examples of nuisances that could be addressed. In ignoring arguments citing the positive contributions of citizens of these countries and denouncing the initiative as discriminatory, the website provoked letters of protest from the countries' ambassadors. Though the Dutch government coolly dissociated itself from the initiative, the fact that the cabinet at the time depended on parliamentary support from the Freedom Party caused quite a stir in terms of defining the so-called 'migrant problem'. The initiative of the Dutch Freedom Party (Meldpunt overlast Midden -en Oost Europeanen) illustrates concerns that associate worker migration with welfare tourism.

In the UK, the campaign executed throughout 2013, mostly in British media, raised worries of an intense forthcoming increase in welfare-seeking migrants from Romania and Bulgaria as of 1 January 2014, when transitional arrangements concerning access to the labour market expired. This campaign came hand in hand with numerous proposals by the British cabinet to limit migrants' access to social benefits. The campaign aimed to discourage Romanian and Bulgarian citizens from moving to the United Kingdom and was met by a humorous counterpart in Romanian media encouraging Britons to visit Romania to get to know the country (Awful Weather, 2013) When expectations of thousands of migrants who would flood the UK on 1 January 2014 were not confirmed, the Romanian ambassador likewise jocularly remarked on the irony to the British public. Nonetheless, plans to restrict migration persist, including those requiring migrants to earn a minimum amount of income, imposing a three-month barrier to social benefits and threatening deportation in the case of unemployment.

These events and measures have not been isolated incidents, but also impacted national policies detrimental to the free movement of people, especially from new EU member states. Barriers found in national policies limiting the free movement of people include:

- Postponing the free movement of people from new EU member states for as long as possible. These measures have been imposed on countries of the fifth and sixth enlargements and more recently upon Croatia in particular. The two-year delay of

freedom of movement and limits on the number of migrants are practiced in many countries, including Germany, France, Belgium, Ireland, Luxemburg, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (e.g. BBS, News UK Politics, 15 January 2014).

- Indirect discriminatory policies. The European court found residence and language requirements to be forms of indirect discrimination since they affect non-nationals more than nationals, though in many cases they continue to apply (EurActiv, 17 July 2014).
- The refusal to recognise qualifications, experience and diplomas earned in foreign countries. For instance, Dutch and French law requires lawyers to have obtained their law degrees from a Dutch or French law school, respectively (Edward, 1990).
- Creating enduring bureaucratic barriers by making it obligatory yet complex to acquire work permits, limiting the duration of the permits after which the bureaucratic process must start anew and restricting access to permits for foreigners with any criminal history.
- Setting additional criteria for foreign business, such as the need to cooperate with local companies and/or workers, as stipulated in Dutch municipalities in their procurement of projects.
- Discriminatory recruitment rules, such as a requirement to have a domestic working licence, quotas and/or nationality requirements for specific types of jobs.
- Unfavourable pay, promotion rules and working conditions – for instance, overtime pay at a rate less than that awarded domestic workers.
- The denial of the fundamental rights of migrant workers regarding social housing, access to medical services and child allowances. For example, if housing is arranged, then it is sometimes arranged in deplorable conditions, as in Italy, where such housing was unsanitary and employers illegally failed to inform migrants of their rights. Some situations have been so grave that suicide became frequent, women were raped and men were assaulted. An investigation by the Italian government in 2007 acknowledged the abuses, yet concluded that no law could counter the behaviour and that any measures would be very costly in relation to the frequency of events (cf. Transform!, 2012).
- Restrictive migration policies involving the selective additional monitoring and fining of employers who hire foreigners for work permits and registration.
- Insufficient monitoring and controlling of sometimes abominable application of the so-called ‘truck system’ by employers, which forces migrant workers both to live in lodgings provided by employers at extraordinarily high rents, often by sharing rooms, and sometimes to buy their food and drinks from employers, which thereby diminishes their real wages to a rate far below the domestic minimum wage yet slightly higher than that in the migrants’ home countries.

The basis of evidence

From the above, however, it remains questionable whether national policies in senior EU countries were based on evidence found in statistics about the actual flow of worker migration and scholarly research on the effects thereof or only reactions to the negative framing of worker migration. Crucial about the protests against the Bolkestein Directive was the dual fear of its consequences – namely, that it would first result in massive

migration from East to West Europe, thereby jeopardising the jobs of workers in the EU-15, as well as that the effects of such migration would be detrimental to the already depressed wages in the EU-OMS. In a sense, the chief question of this paper is thus whether those fears are valid.

The real massiveness of the free movement of citizens of EU-NMS into EU-OMS

The movement of workers from the Central European countries into West European states was expected given the significant differences in wealth between the regions. One reason that citizens seek work abroad is that other nations offer better incomes. In the EU, vast differences in income persist. Figure 1 provides an overview of average incomes in EU countries in both 2007 and 2012, showing how average earnings differ across EU member states as well.

Figure 1 demonstrates the considerable differences in average incomes between EU-OMS and EU-NMS. Luxembourg is the outlier, though incomes in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom are far higher than those in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, and Romania. From the perspective of *homo oeconomicus*, it is thus a valid expectation that many people from countries with low average incomes will migrate to countries with higher average incomes. Even before the EU enlargement, wealthier EU countries experienced the influx of immigrants from outside the EU. Table 1 shows the movement patterns of EU citizens and total immigration into more affluent EU countries.

The fear of many EU-OMS was that after the EU enlargement, the movement of EU citizens would eclipse that of citizens of non-EU countries. Fear is, however, different from evidence. Table 1 reveals that the numbers of circulating EU citizens into Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain are clearly lower than those of immigrants from non-EU countries. The same absolute numbers of immigrants counted per cent in relation to the population of a destination country clarify that the ranking of the most recent EU-27 countries by immigrants differs. Luxembourg, Cyprus, Austria, Malta and Belgium have the highest share of EU citizens in their countries, though non-EU immigrants dominate within all affluent EU countries.

In what follows, we present evidence that fleshes out the Polish and Romanian free movement of persons using Polish and Romanian official statistics and reports, as well

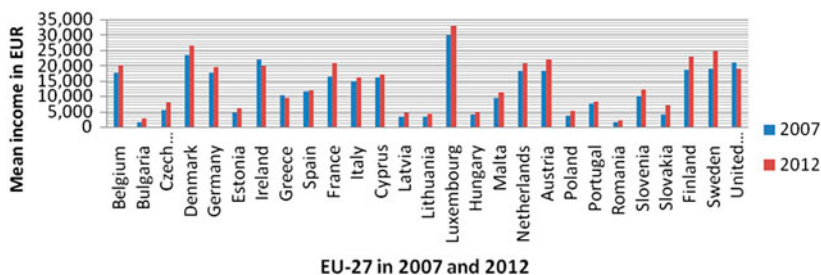


Figure 1. Mean yearly income (in EUR) in the EU-27 in 2007 and 2012.

Source: European Commission: Eurostat (2015a). Database: Distribution of income (ilc_di), mean and median income by age and sex (source: SILC) (ilc_di03) (Retrieved 15 March 2015).

Table 1. Movement of EU citizens by most attractive EU countries, 2004–2012, and the pattern of total immigration into EU countries (in numbers and percentages in relation to national populations), 2012.

Country name	Population 2012	Total Immig. 2012	Total % 2012	EU-27 Immig. 2012	EU-27% 2012	EU-27 2010	EU-27 2008	EU-27 2007	EU-27 2004
1. Germany	81,843,743	592,175	0.723	298,541	0.364	156,779	335,914	343,851	301,486
2. The United King	63,495,303	498,040	0.784	157,554	0.248	175,960	197,720	171,863	:
3. Italy	59,394,207	350,772	0.590	104,078	0.175	118,611	212,862	324,801	95,300
4. Spain	46,818,219	304,053	0.649	100,321	0.214	127,974	168,374	389,203	249,278
5. France	65,287,861	327,431	0.501	90,774	0.139	71,926	65,411	64,875	:
6. Belgium	11,094,850	147,387	1.328	64,857	0.584	60,893	:	58,025	:
7. Austria	8408,121	91,557	1.088	51,887	0.617	38,486	39,377	37,743	42,895
8. The Netherlands	16,730,348	124,566	0.744	51,216	0.306	46,389	55,413	43,228	26,351
9. Sweden	9482,855	103,059	1.086	25,338	0.267	24,154	30,389	31,352	16,417
10. Greece	11,123,034	110,139	0.990	24,832	0.223	18,740	25,689	:	:
11. Poland	38,538,447	217,546	0.564	24,446	0.063	12,505	3060	196	164
12. Ireland	4,582,707	54,439	1.187	22,252	0.485	21,320	44,913	78,377	:
13. Denmark	5,580,516	54,409	0.974	19,802	0.354	16,671	19,970	21,381	11,120
14. Luxembourg	524,853	20,478	3.901	15,561	2.964	12,592	13,906	12,859	9756
15. Czech Republic	10,505,445	34,337	0.326	12,075	0.114	14,838	21,760	23,026	21,502
16. Hungary	9,931,925	33,702	0.339	10,358	0.104	13,242	17,664	8997	12,545
17. Finland	5,401,267	31,278	0.579	10,281	0.190	7101	7346	6803	4159
18. Cyprus	862,011	17,476	2.026	10,197	1.182	11,895	6480	8680	:
19. Bulgaria	7,327,224	14,103	0.192	4136	0.056	:	1	6	:
20. Romania	20,095,996	167,266	0.832	3450	0.017	6272	5350	:	:
21. Malta	417,546	7111	1.703	2461	0.589	2144	2180	3767	:
22. Slovakia	5,404,322	5419	0.100	2418	0.044	5969	8523	9183	5153
23. Slovenia	2,055,496	15,022	0.730	2179	0.106	2026	2070	2646	407
24. Portugal	10,542,398	14,606	0.138	1341	0.012	2445	3908	:	:
25. Lithuania	3,003,641	19,843	0.660	738	0.024	149	376	315	601
26. Latvia	2,044,813	13,303	0.650	539	0.026	:	:	:	:
27. Estonia	1,325,217	2639	0.199	70	0.005	512	991	1089	292

Sources: European Commission: Eurostat (2015b).

Databases: International Migration: Immigration by five year age group, sex and citizenship [migr_imm1ctzj]; Population EU-27_2004–2013_demo_pjan-3 (Retrieved 28 February 2015) and author calculations.

as data from the International Migration Database of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and European Commission: Eurostat.

As Table 2 shows, discrepancies exist among national data from Poland and Romania, from OECD and from Eurostat. The OECD database lacks all information about Romanian's population (OECD, 2014), though the organisation's International Migration Database details how many Romanians moved into the world's countries during 2000–2012 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD.Stat Extracts], 2015). By totalling the inflows of Romanians into other countries, it is clear that 291,685 persons (1.45% of the Romanian population counted in relation to Eurostat data) moved from Romania in 2012.

Table 2 shows that data from the national statistics of Poland and Romania, from the OECD, and from Eurostat differ and that, in many cases, are lacking. This circumstance calls into question the basis for growing xenophobic attitudes toward Poles and Romanians in some EU-15 countries. Immigration from the EU-NMS into the EU-OMS was observed before the 2004 enlargement and has shown an upward trend since 2007. However, the free mobility of EU citizens concerns more or less all EU countries; as shown in Table 1 and Figure 2, the movement of Poles and Romanians constitute a slight share in this circulation.

An examination of the specific situations in Poland and Romania might explain their citizens' inclination to seek out better lives in other EU countries.

Poland

Polish workers are anticipated to circulate within the European Union due to a wage gap between Poland and the EU-15. For Poland, the average monthly gross wage in 2012 (by 30 December 2012) was zł 3521.70 (€863), though the figure was somewhat higher in the public sector at zł 4107.25 (€1007) and somewhat lower at zł 3343.31 (€820) in the private sector. Relative poverty in the country in 2006 occurred among 12.7% of the Polish urban population and 25.8% of the rural population compared to

Table 2. Comparison of data regarding Polish and Romanian movement in the European Union between national statistics and data from the OECD and Eurostat.

	Poland 2012	Romania 2012
<i>Data on population</i>		
National data	38,533,300	20,060,182
Eurostat data	38,538,447	20,095,996
OECD data	38,533,790	–
<i>Data on total migration</i>		
National data	49,731	18,001
Eurostat data	275,603	170,186
OECD data	280,936	291,685
<i>Data on migration to EU-15</i>		
National data	35,338	–
Eurostat data	–	–
OECD data	–	–

Sources: Central Statistical Office of Poland [GUS] (2014), National Institute of Statistics in Romania (2014), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD.Stat Extracts] (2014). Database: Demography and Population; European Commission: Eurostat (2015b).

Databases: International Migration: Immigration by five year age group, sex and citizenship [migr_imm1ctz]; Population EU-27_2004–2013_demo_pjan-3, and author calculations.

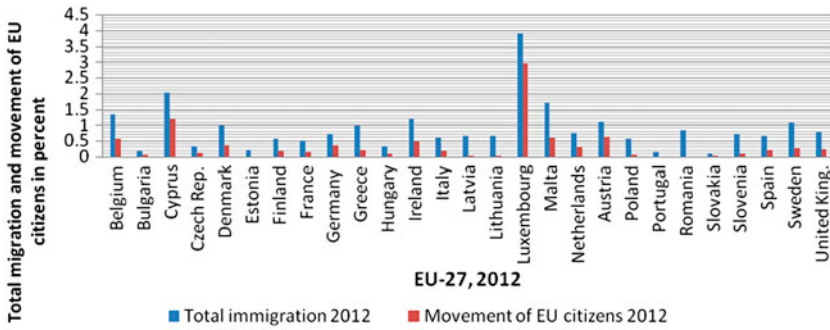


Figure 2. Total migration and movement of EU citizens in the EU-27, 2012 (in percentage of total population).

Sources: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD.Stat Extracts] (2014). Database: Demography and Population; European Commission: Eurostat (2015c). Databases: Population EU-27_2004–2013 (demo_pjan-3) and International Migration: Immigration by five year age group, sex and citizenship [migr_imm1ctz]; Population EU-27_2004–2013_demo_pjan-3 (Retrieved 28 February 2015), and author calculations.

2012 figures of 16 and 23.9%, respectively. Estimated by the Institute of Labour and Social Studies for one-person employee’s household, the subsistence minimum in Poland affected 7.8% of the population in 2006 and 6.7% in 2012 (Central Statistical Office of Poland [GUS], 2013, p. 11). Notably, Polish average monthly wages in 2011 according to Directorate-General for Internal Policies (2015, p. 30) was €756 but still far lower than those in the EU-OMS for the same year. In the United Kingdom, the average monthly wage in 2011 was €3284 and in Germany €2789, quadruple respective triple the average salary in Poland. Thus, migration from Poland to those and other affluent EU states is expected (Figure 3).

Official Polish statistics reveal that during 2011–2012, the five most attractive EU countries for Poles were Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy. In general, Poles have preferred to settle in English- or German-speaking countries or else those where it is possible to communicate in these languages (Table 3). Though roughly two million Poles have left Poland since 2004, not everybody has ventured to EU countries (TVP Polonia 24, 2012), and it remains ambiguous what leaving the

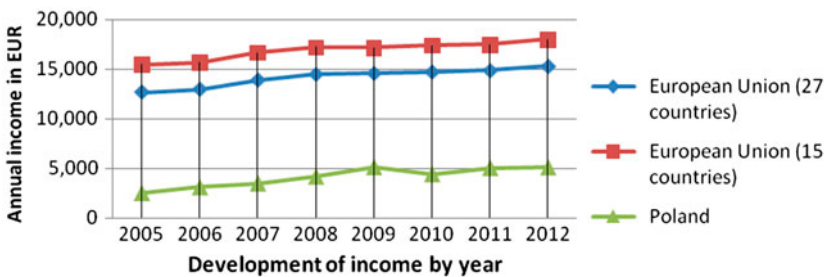


Figure 3. The development of annual incomes (in EUR) in Poland, 2005–2012.

Source: European Commission: Eurostat (2015a). Database: Mean and median income by age and sex (source: SILC) [ilc_di03] (Retrieved 12 March 2015).

Table 3. Inflows of Poles and Romanians into the most attractive EU-15 countries in relation to national populations, 2012 (in numbers and percentages).

Country	Population in 2012	Total number of Poles in 2012	% of Poles in relation to total population	Total number of Romanians in 2012	% of Romanians in relation to total population
<i>The European Union</i>		35,338		–	
1. Germany	81,843,743	12,269	0.0149	1907	0.0023
2. The United Kingdom	63,495,303	11,212	0.0176	301	0.0004
3. Ireland	4,582,707	2094	0.0456	–	–
4. The Netherlands	16,730,348	2022	0.0120	–	–
5. Italy	59,394,207	1355	0.0022	2097	0.0035
6. France	65,287,861	1161	0.0017	660	0.0010
7. Austria	8,408,121	982	0.0116	1032	0.0122
8. Belgium	11,094,850	820	0.0073	154	0.0013
9. Spain	46,818,219	677	0.0014	–	–
10. Sweden	9,482,855	677	0.0071	–	–

Sources: Central Statistical Office of Poland [GUS], (2014), National Institute of Statistics in Romania (2014), and author calculations.

country involves exactly. International migration for permanent residence was on average roughly 21,000 per year or 210,000 per decade, which involves approximately 0.5% of the total Polish population in 2012. Regarding temporary migration, data remain sorely limited, for only persons registered as temporary workers or who study in another EU country are tallied. In Poland, citizens are obligated to inform the Reporting Office about any six-month absence from the country, though Poles who frequently return only to leave again often neglect to report.

According to the GUS (2013) in 2012, there were 569,771 Poles at the age of at least 15 years temporarily absent from their place of permanent residence in Poland. This subset constitutes 1.4% of the Polish population, of those temporarily absent Poles: 302,781 were single, 205,757 were married, 25,202 were widowed and 36,031 were divorced. Regarding education level, 585,911 Poles of at least 13 years of age were temporarily absent from their place of permanent residence in Poland, 105,569 of which had graduated from university, 14,080 had a postsecondary education, 159,386 a secondary education, 68,349 a basic vocational education and 54,430 a lower secondary education; all others remain unknown. The international migration of Poles for permanent residence was 21,200 in 2012, of which 9804 were of the age of 20–39 years. From Polish statistics, it can thus be derived that migration from a Polish perspective is minor and, moreover, that one cannot conclude that all migrants have been low-educated and low-skilled workers.

From the perspective of the recipient countries according OECD data, however, the situation is surprisingly different (Table 4 and Figure 4).

The share of Polish people living in Germany during 2011–2012 was approximately 0.22% of Germany's population, in the Netherlands 0.11% and in Austria 0.08%.

OECD statistics indicate that during 2004–2012, two million Poles resided in the eight most preferred EU countries. The differences are, of course, due to differences in definition and measurement. According to OECD's definition,

Table 4. Inflow of Poles into the most attractive EU-15 countries, 2004–2012.

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Austria	7041	6784	5699	5285	4393	3848	4218	6907	7105
Belgium	3481	4816	6694	9393	8963	9911	8887	9287	8617
Germany	125,042	147,716	151,743	139,967	119,867	112,027	115,587	164,705	177,758
Italy	11,029	10,072	11,345	18,500	11,409	8945	7035	5471	4618
The Netherlands	4484	5651	6772	9236	13,277	12,654	14,477	18,610	18,332
Sweden	2458	3420	6347	7525	6,97	5167	4414	4403	4433
Spain	7520	8479	15,796	17,269	7961	4637	4197	3972	3331
The United Kingdom	16,000	49,000	60,000	88,000	55,000	32,000	34,000	33,000	30,000
Total	177,055	235,938	264,396	295,175	227,84	189,189	192,815	246,355	254,194

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2015).

The concept of foreign population may include persons born abroad who retained the nationality of their country of origin, but also second and third generations born in the host country. The characteristics of the population of foreign nationals depend on a number of factors: the history of migration flows, natural increase in the foreign population and naturalisations. The nature of legislation on citizenship and the incentives foreigners have to naturalise, both play a role in determining the extent to which native-born persons may or may not be foreign nationals. (OECD, 2015)

This explanation recommends extreme care in interpreting these statistics. Figures can easily present skewed views, such as the OECD figures do by not differentiating temporary and permanent residence or Polish nationality and descent from Polish immigrants. Such differentiation is important, Table 4 suggests a total inflow of Polish migrants during 2004–2012 exceeding two million to these eight countries alone, though a portion of these people are repeatedly counted year after year while coming in to ask for temporary work permits. Members of yet another portion have not migrated, but were born in the recipient country as children of Polish parents.

One way to solve the dilemma is to investigate how migration has affected the population of Poland. Despite suggestions that Poland lost a vital chunk of its workforce due to massive East–West migration, the reputedly ‘massive’ migration of Poles did not negatively influence the Polish population whatsoever. On the contrary, Polish demographics show a stable, if not increased, population from 38,153,000 in 2005 to 38,533,000 in 2012. The working-age population constituted 64% of this count in 2005 and 63.9% in 2012. In fact, only a pre-working age population decrease is visible – from 20.6% in 2005 to 18.3% in 2012 – while citizens of post-working age increased from 15.4 to 17.8% in those same years. Such demographic data can also be explained by the retirement of baby boomers and the low birthrate in the early 1990s owing to political instability in Poland. The activity rate was 54.9% in 2005 and 55.9% in 2012, of which employment was at 45.2 and 50.2% in some years, during which unemployment stood at 17.7 and 19.1%, respectively. Long-term unemployment affected 52% of total unemployed persons (3,045,000) in 2005 and 34.8% (1,749,000) in 2012 (Demographic Yearbook of Poland, 2014; Poland in figures, 2013). The preliminary conclusion must therefore be that Polish worker migration due to Polish EU membership and the Bolkestein Directive is not exactly known. As far as we can interpret them, the statistics underscore that Polish migration has been negligible from the perspectives of both Poland and recipient countries, for annual Polish migration accounts for 0.02%–0.05% of the recipient countries’ workforce with the exception of Germany (0.15–0.22%) and Austria (0.08%).

Romania

In Romania, the monthly average gross earnings in 2009 for men were even lower than in Poland – RON 1906 (€428.48) – and for women, at RON 1405 (€315.85), compared to RON 2098 (€471.65) for men and RON 1530 for women (€343.96) in 2011. In 2012, the monthly average unemployment allowance amounted to RON 421 (€94.64) and accounted for 60% of the gross minimum wage. The average wages in Romania are half of those in Poland and the wage gap with the EU-OMS therefore twice as high. As such, more Romanians should be expected to migrate than Poles, given the drastically higher incentives. Yet, regardless of this logic, such migration is not a reality, as what follows shows.

Table 5. Inflow of Romanians to EU member states.

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Germany	23,545	23,274	23,353	42,899	48,225	57,273	75,531	97,518	120,524
Italy	6341	43,878	38,213	261,273	162,277	100,68	90,895	90,096	81,666
Spain	103,572	108,294	131,457	197,642	71,482	52,440	62,644	60,898	34,638
Belgium	1438	2322	3059	5491	6779	6066	8020	10,889	11,165
Hungary	12,129	8895	7872	6735	9987	7104	6581	5804	4243
Portugal	787	787	605	242	5252	8111	6047	4582	3010
The Netherlands	649	513	705	2345	2411	2167	2627	2743	2535
France	1796	1734	1850	2393	3655	2539	2716	2726	0
Total	207,326	189,697	207,114	519,02	310,068	236,38	255,061	275,256	257,781

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2015).

Shortly after the sixth enlargement of 2007, Romanians indeed migrated, though they preferred migration to Canada (2045), the United States (1793) and only later to other EU countries. The largest group of migrants constituted people aged 18–40 years (6621). Romanian statistics, however, do not provide information about the sex or education level of migrants, yet they do furnish data regarding the number of Romanians who migrated permanently to EU countries to work. These figures appear in Tables 3 and 2. With a total Romanian population of approximately 20 million people, the numbers are surprisingly low and, as such, comparable to Polish numbers. Only 0.05% of the Romanian population permanently migrated in 2009 and 0.09% in 2011.

From recipient countries' points of view, the situation is again different, however, OECD statistics reveal that during 2004–2012, 2457,703 Romanians searched for work in Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Hungary and Austria.

These figures include Romanian migration that occurred long before the country's EU membership. Directly after the sixth enlargement, a rapid influx to especially Italy and Spain was visible, though the numbers dropped as rapidly the year after, and Romanians did not replace these two countries for others in the years that followed.

Again, one must be careful while interpreting such statistics. As in the Polish case, a pattern of return migration can be observed; Romanian migrants come back every three months on average due to restrictions imposed by Romania's not being a member of the Schengen Agreement and because longer stays require visas. It is thus quite likely that individual migrants are counted multiple times in national and international statistics. Given the frequency of their three-month returns, it is also highly likely that migrants avoid fulfilling registration requirements in recipient countries, thereby making estimates of migration even more difficult to interpret.

Yet, the Romanian case differs from the Polish case in one crucial aspect: its workforce seems to have decreased. During 2002–2012, the Romanian population decreased with approximately 150,000 people a year, of which roughly half departed for a long period (i.e. more than 12 months). They moved especially to Italy, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Greece, Belgium, Austria, Portugal and France, though for all but the last country their share in the recipient countries' populations is nearly invisible. Again, the conclusion must be that Romanian worker migration due to EU membership and the Bolkestein Directive cannot be exactly known, though insofar as they can be interpreted, available statistics point out that Romanian migration is somewhat larger than that of Poles.

We are not the first to dispute the view that the accession of 12 countries during 2004–2007 caused huge cross-country worker movement. Barrell, Fitzgerald and Riley (2010) showed that, shortly after the EU enlargement of 2004, some workers from the EU-NMS, especially from countries with a high unemployment rate, indeed moved to the EU-15 to search for work. They also found, however, that this development of the free movement of persons was far from justifying the expectations and fears of the EU-15.

In general, research points out that the free movement of people in Europe remains limited. A Eurobarometer survey published in 2011 indicated that roughly 90% of EU citizens reported having never worked in a member state other than their home country, compared to 7% who have worked in another member state and 3% in another member state at the moment. These results are in line with those of the 2009 survey, in which 8% of EU citizens reported having worked in another member state and 3% that they were doing so currently (European Commission, 2011, p. 32). The same data also show that the workforce of the EU-NMS does not belong to the most mobile EU citizens;

Luxembourg and Ireland are the highest exporters of labour, whereas such is minimal in the Czech Republic, Malta and Bulgaria (European Commission, 2011, p. 32).

Interpretation of outcomes

Given the figures presented above about the migration of workers from EU-NMS, especially Polish and Rumanian workers, to the EU-15 before and after their countries' accession to the EU, the challenging question becomes whether massive migration is an applicable term for the situation. As always, the answer depends on the boundaries of *massive* and on one's trust in available statistical data. If the reliability and validity of statistical data are disputed, as they are in this paper, due to dubious variance and the noteworthy difference in definitions used, then of course no answer is possible. Even if one puts some stock in the data, the answer to whether there emerged massive worker migration owing to the accession of Poland and Romania to the European Union can still vary. For example, in terms of whether countries of origin see a significant reduction in their workforce, we argue that such is not the case, for the Polish population remained stable at around 38 million and even increased to roughly 400,000 during 2005–2012.

Another interpretation of *massive* could stem from the host country's perceiving a significant increase in Polish and Romanian workers there. However, in all countries of the EU-15, the percentage of Polish migrants hovers at 0.01–0.02% and of Romanians at 0.001–0.002% (Table 3), which is according to any criterion exceptionally low.

A third definition of *massive* could imply that the flow of migrant workers is one-sided and that Polish and Romanian worker migration significantly exceeds the migration of workers from other countries. However, as Figure 2 shows, in 2012 only 0.5% of Poles and 0.8% of Romanians were migrant workers, which is less than among the citizens of Belgium, Germany, Malta, Greece, and Austria, far less than in Luxembourg, and about the same as in the United Kingdom.

A fourth definition of *massive* may crop up from the sudden, significant increase in Polish and Romanian worker migration given their countries' accession to the European Union in 2004 and 2007, respectively. For this criterion, data are inconclusive. Accession indeed prompted an increase in migrant workers from Poland and Romania in the first years following accession except in Austria. Table 3 shows a significant increase in Polish migration to especially Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Also shown there is that, in all EU countries except the Netherlands, such an increase is temporary, for the numbers start to decrease again in 2008. Romania's accession to the European Union had a similar effect in terms of migration. As Table 5 shows, Romanian accession brought about a rapid influx of Romanian labourers in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France in 2007; the table also shows that this increase reversed one year later in Italy and Spain and the next year in France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Only Germany continued to experience a steady influx of Romanian workers.

Figure 5 concerning Polish migration and Figure 6 concerning Romanian migration show from the perspective of host countries that, in the case of the Polish, apart from Germany, and of Romanians, apart from Italy and Spain, the increase of workers in most old EU member states was a rather gradual development. Based on these data, one cannot but conclude that worker migration increased, albeit not suddenly and not always continuously.

The reality of the negative effects of worker migration

Social effects

Scholars also dispute the presupposition of negative effects caused by internal EU worker migration. Economic effects are derived from the participation of immigrants in welfare programmes and include the cost of education, healthcare, and benefits from tax revenues. Yet, it remains difficult to represent the fiscal effects of migration (Smith & Edmonston, 1997); even if effects are visible, they are not solely negative. There is some evidence that:

Immigrants may also contribute to social security funds but often never claim their benefits in retirement, either because they go back to countries of origin, make contributions to fictional social security accounts, or die on average earlier than native workers. Most serious studies indicate that migration can play only a limited and temporary role in redressing demographic imbalances of populations. (Freeman & Kessler, 2008, p. 666, following United Nations, 2000)

Some do, however, point to negative effects. Freeman and Kessler (2008) emphasise, ‘If immigrants pay less in taxes than they receive in government benefits, opposition to immigration may stem from concern over fiscal rather than (or in addition to) wage effects’ (p. 661). They refer to research conducted by Borjas (1999, 2002, 2003) and Fix and Passel (2002) confirming that immigrant-headed households receive more benefits than non-immigrant ones (Freeman & Kessler, 2008, p. 674).

Graziano and Vink (2013) but also Vink and Grazino (2007) argue, by contrast, that the fear of such possible effects is exaggerated. For them and others, social policy (Graziano, 2003), immigration policy (Vink, 2001), and foreign policy (Tonra, 2001) did become important issues in the debate, though they at once demonstrate how poorly the harmonisation of national policies on this point has evolved in the EU. Based on a fiscal study, Treffer (1998) concludes that ‘immigration does not affect the economic welfare of natives or immigrants and immigration surplus is zero’ (Freeman & Kessler, 2008, p. 660; following Treffer, 1998, p. 213).

Furthermore, a study in Germany in January 2014 pointed out that the 3.14 million unemployed people in Germany, of which 10,200 are Romanians (0.33%) and 8,900 Bulgarians (0.28%). Unemployment among migrant workers was 10.7%, which hardly differed among Germans (*Spiegel Online*, 6 April 2014).

The effect on wages

As for the effect of worker migration on wages, because migrant workers accept lower wages than native workers, because in their home country they are used to even much lower wages, and because the supply of labour in the host country increases as a result of their migration, wages take a hit and thus afflict migrant workers in host countries. No matter how sound the argument from a theoretical point of view, research on this relationship remains inconclusive and depends on whether several factors have been taken into account. When such research investigates the impact of worker migration on average wages, the effect is visible, yet though statistically significant is also low (€1–3 per month). Moreover, research distinguishing the wages of migrant workers and native workers concludes that those of native workers tend to increase (cf. Figures 1 and 4, which show an increase of average incomes in the EU-15 during 2005–2012). Some investigators have explained this unexpected effect in light of the surplus generated by

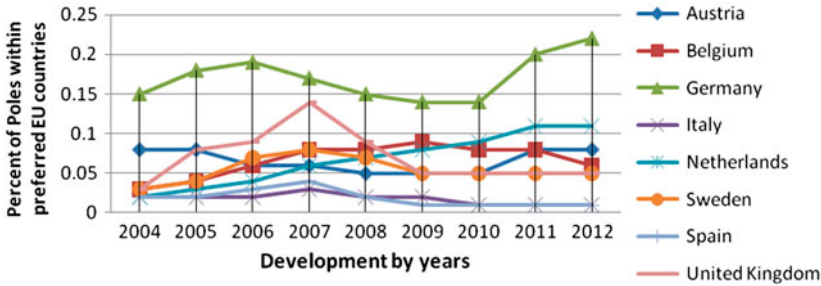


Figure 4. Per cent of Poles within preferred EU countries in relation to the countries’ population.
 Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2015).

migrant workers, who significantly contribute to production in exchange for low wages, hence the benefit of native workers (Lemos, 2014). The wage effect also seems to depend on whether the host country has a general minimum wage. In Europe, laws requiring the payment of at least a general minimum wage to workers over a certain age are in effect in 21 of 28 countries (Schulten, 2014). While in countries lacking a general minimum wage the effect on lowering wages might be visible, such is not the case in countries where a general minimum wage is in effect. Thirdly, the appearance of the effect depends on the state of the economy in the host country. When the economy is performing ‘below full capacity’, worker migration may have a substitution effect, though it has yet to be seen to complement native labour in times of economic prosperity. Figures 5 and 6 show that when the economic crisis hit Europe in 2009, the number of migrants from Poland and Romania decreased immediately in countries they preferred to settle in before: for Poland, Germany and the United Kingdom, and for Romanians, Germany and Spain.

The effects also depend on whether researchers distinguish migrant workers seeking a job in host countries and posted workers who migrate to another country yet stay employed with the company in their country of origin. Therefore, one cannot but agree with Kahanec, Zaiceva, and Zimmermann (2009) based on a review of studies of the effects of worker migration in the European Union that:

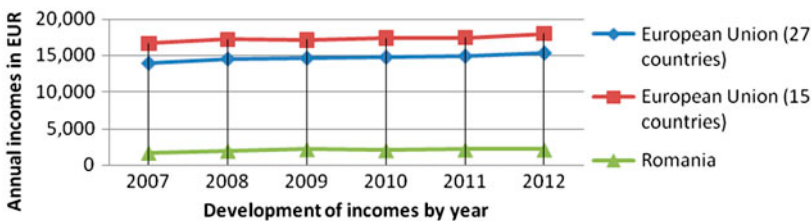


Figure 5. The development of annual incomes (in EUR) in Romania 2007–2012.
 Source: European Commission: Eurostat (2015a). Database: Mean and median income by age and sex (source: SILC) [ilc_di03] (Retrieved 12 March 2015).

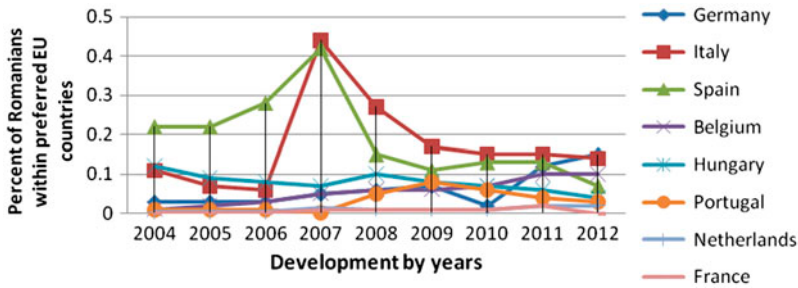


Figure 6. Per cent of Romanians within EU countries in relation to the national population. Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2015).

To date, no evidence shows that these primarily economic migrants would displace native workers or lower their wages; even if crowding-out occurred in certain sectors or occupations, aggregate data suggest that such natives found well-paid jobs elsewhere or that they would be more dependent on welfare than natives. (Kahanec et al., 2009, p. 1)

Interpretation of outcomes

In any overview of many other effects, the results would be the same regarding wages. If anything stands out, it is that research outcomes are far from unanimous concerning the effects of the free movement of people in the European Union and the effects of migrant workers from the EU-NMS to the EU-15. In fact, most serious research casts great doubt on the assumed negative effects of worker migration. As argued above, outcomes vary with the number of control variables insofar as distinctions can be made between the wages of native and migrant workers, between times of economic crisis and economic prosperity, between countries with a legal general minimum wage and those without and between the kind of employment of migrant workers.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have investigated migration patterns in the European Union by focusing on the two nationalities that have become symbols of the anti-EU populist parties – namely, Poles and Romanians. In terms of the question asking what is known about the volume of migrating Poles and Romanians and the effects, we generally conclude that the outcomes of recent research are inconclusive regarding both aspects of the question. Nonetheless, if we were to take a conservative stand and approach the most unfavourable data as the truest data, then the analysis would still suggest that the fear of massive migration from Poland and Romania to the EU-OMS was not justified. In fact, the migration patterns, though not always based on sound statistics, point to the migration of only a very small portion of Poles and Romanians, most of whom are temporary and only a few of whom have become permanent residents. From the perspective of recipient countries, the numbers are modest indeed, as less than 0.1% of their workforce consists of Poles and Romanians.

It is awkward that the fears, the framing, and the biased interpretation of statistics have had detrimental, life-changing consequences, as seen in many incidents in recipient countries used by right-wing populist politicians to gain political support and electoral appeal (MUDDE, 2013). In increasingly more European countries, such fears seem to

dominate debates over the free movement of people within the European Union – fears that apply to macroeconomic impacts and effects on social security, wages and unemployment. The fears apply especially to migrant workers from the new member states. In this sense, when French, German or Spanish workers move across the EU, it is framed as the advantage of a flexible labour market, though when Poles and Romanians migrate, it is perceived to be dangerous and interpreted as social dumping.

Our description of policies based upon inconclusive and incomplete data, coupled with their being principally based on attention to problems in mass media and fear of the growth of populist parties, calls for a more balanced description of ‘the intra-EU migration problem’ and points to the limits of the available data.

The entire case of EU migration and the policies developed represent a counterfactual to the official commitment to evidence-based policy. The policies mentioned in this paper illustrate governments trying to restrict migration without having any notion about migration volume or actual effects of restrictions in response. The fears constantly renewed and brought about by media and some political parties seem to be more influential in policy-making than any evidence about the matter and have caused many governments to alter their policies and include restrictions in legislation regarding the free movement of people in the EU.

Such reactions pose serious consequences for the effectiveness of EU policies on migration. Elsner and Zimmermann (2013) concluded in the German case that migration policies aiming to reduce worker migration are hardly effective in accomplishing their goal, for the volume of migration is especially dependent on the economic situation of the recipient country and that the recipient country would have been better off if it had immediately opened up to migrant workers. Maatsch (2012) has argued similarly that misperceptions of East–West migration and of the impact of EU legislation have contributed to overestimations of the impact of migration on social protections in recipient countries.

If evidence-based policy-making can be favoured, then with this paper, we advocate in the context of migrants in the EU refraining from ideological framing, debunking myths underlying many policy processes and ideally promoting public policies based upon empirical evidence.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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