

# East–West migration: who's going where?



European policymakers and citizens alike support the idea of mobility across borders in the EU. But concerns about the possible negative effects of labour inflow from other Member States have led to restrictions on the free movement of workers at each successive EU enlargement, with the exception of the 1995 accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. When ten countries joined in 2004, only three Member States – Ireland, the UK and Sweden – opened up their labour markets completely. All other countries applied restrictions for workers from the eight eastern European new Member States. Most of these restrictions have now been lifted.

**When Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union in 2007, Finland and Sweden were the only EU15 countries that kept their labour markets open. Malta and Hungary joined with the EU15, imposing restrictions on the mobility of Bulgarian and Romanian workers.**

## Preferred destinations

What is the level of inflow of workers from new eastern European Member States? According to data from the European Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2.75 million people originating from the 12 new Member States (NMS12) formed part of the working age population of the EU15 in 2007. This is equivalent to 1.1%. Real figures could be higher, as illegal migrants are not captured in the statistics. Not surprisingly, given the restrictions in place, the situation differs from country to country. Looking at the active working age population, Ireland had the highest share at over 5.4%. In second place in 2006 was Spain, with 2.3%. In Germany, only 1% of the active working age population came from the NMS12.

**In 2005, 3.5% of the active working age population of Lithuania lived in an EU15 country. For Poland, the percentage was 2.1% and for Slovakia 2%.**

## Upwardly mobile?

Are today's low levels of inflow likely to soar in the future? Eurobarometer data helps to estimate the future intentions of people from new Member States to migrate to another EU country. Comparison of data from 2001, 2005 and 2007 shows a certain dynamic over time: EU accession led to a temporary 'euphoria' regarding intentions to move. This is



especially apparent for the Baltic countries and Poland. Intentions to move increased strongly between 2001 and 2005, then dropped by more than 50% between then and the 2007 survey. In 2007, around 5% of the working age population claimed they were planning to move, translating into a firm intention to migrate of between 1.7% and 2.5%. A similar trend is likely to lead to lower figures also for Bulgaria and Romania, where the firm intention to migrate within the next five years was estimated to be between 2.2% and 3.2% in 2007.

**Countries with high migration inflows such as Ireland and Spain have benefited economically. Countries with restrictive regimes such as Germany and Austria may have received significant numbers of undocumented migrants performing undeclared work.**

## Good jobs? Bad jobs?

It is important to realise that migrants originating from within the EU – the vast majority of whom have medium or high levels of education – constitute a minority of migrant workers in the EU labour market. Paradoxically, migrants from outside the EU, who generally have more restricted rights to work in the EU, make up 80% of the migrant population. Eurofound research on the quantity and quality of jobs created between 1995 and 2006 in the EU shows that in countries that have experienced rapid employment expansion such as Spain and Ireland and have also absorbed high volumes of migrants, most net employment growth in the lower-quality jobs is accounted for by non-national workers. Job growth in high-quality jobs is overall higher, but this is driven by national rather than non-national workers.

## Further information

This fact sheet forms part of the Eurofound resource pack on *East, west, home is best? Migration in Europe*.

The pack explores the issue of migration, providing insights from the perspective of Member States, cities and workers.

For a copy of the pack or for further information on this area of activity, please email: [migration@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:migration@eurofound.europa.eu)

To view the resource pack online and all other Eurofound materials on this topic, please visit: [www.eurofound.europa.eu/resourcepacks/migration.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/resourcepacks/migration.htm)

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