



EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IN TRANSITION: TRANSFORMATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF TEMPORARY MOBILITY OF PEOPLE (EURA-NET)

The objective of EURA-NET is to achieve an understanding of the current characteristics and related policy impacts of temporary transnational migration. The flows and patterns of temporary migration in the European-Asian context provide insights that may be relevant to other world regions. Insights from the research are expected to contribute to migration governance and development at national, European and international levels.

Evidence-based information is being gathered through a review of policies and interviews with individual migrants (and their family members) and national policy makers in China, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine, as well as at wider European and international levels.



DATE 31.10.2015

EURA-NET provides practical insights and theoretical analyses of the transformation processes and development impacts of temporary migration by looking at highly industrialized societies, transformation countries (emerging economies, transition countries) and developing countries.

The aim is to help national, European and international policy makers to address the challenges posed by temporary transnational migration. This will be done by discovering how policies structure movements of people in sending, transit and receiving countries and by shedding light on the international practices and experiences of individuals.

Besides ascertaining how policies structure transnational movement issues (WP1), the research conducted also includes making visible the international practices and lived experiences of individual migrants through semi-structured interviews (WP2). A total of 910 semi-structured interviews have been conducted among highly-skilled professionals, low-skilled workers, university and post-graduate students, entrepreneurs, family-based migrants, humanitarian migrants (refugees, asylum seekers), irregular migrants, returnees and migrants' family members 'left behind'. The interviews were completed in spring and summer 2015, just before the increase of migration flows from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya to European countries.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

In the search of the transformative characteristics of temporary migration, the findings of the semi-structured interviews are to be divided into four sections providing information on the migration context and the politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural domains.

MIGRATION CONTEXTS

The findings show that temporary transnational migration is an emerging phenomenon in some contexts and a long-term phenomenon in others. Migrants in different categories feel very differently about the temporary nature of their migration: while lifestyle migrants are at ease with temporary migration and make all they can out of it, humanitarian migrants face uncertain conditions and want to settle down in one place. Migrants' socio-economic status and social class are related to their migration experiences: university and post-graduate students, highly-skilled migrants and 'lifestyle seekers' aspire to be transnationally mobile, while low-skilled migration is rather permanent in nature (seasonal workers are an exception in this respect).

Differences in the **motivations** to move are discernible among European and Asian migrants and according to the class background of migrants. Among the European respondents, the motivational factors varied from professional motivations and family reasons to personal aspirations, such as seeking new experiences. The lower-skilled Asian migrants, especially seasonal workers, had moved to Europe first and foremost in order to earn money, while for university and post-graduate students and highly-skilled professionals, educational and professional motivations largely motivated their move to Europe. For Asian students, low tuition fees (Germany) or totally free education (Finland) were among the key motivational factors.

POLITICO-LEGAL ASPECTS

The entry regulations on migration between Asia and Europe appeared to be **asymmetrical**. Obtaining a visa or a residence or work permit is subject to heterogeneous legal norms. For instance, Filipinos travelling to Europe are required to comply with stringent requirements before they can be granted a visa to gain entry to Europe while Europeans travelling to the Philippines have visa-free entry for a maximum of 30 days, and this period can be extended. Most Europeans did not report difficulties in obtaining approval for their visits to Asian countries. However, obtaining a work permit is not always an easy task for European workers. In Thailand, Europeans often work without a work permit for considerable periods of time, and are forced to exit and return to Thailand every three months. Within Europe, despite the homogenized residence permit regime, undocumented migrants represent the majority in some country cases (Greece) while it is a small minority in some other cases (The Netherlands, Finland). Changes in the law, insecurity related to migration and refugee policies, as well as lack of consistent integration policies seem to be the major obstacles facing temporary migrants in Europe.

Some examples of temporary migrants being involved in **political activities** were reported in some countries but, on the whole, temporary migrants tend to avoid participation in political activities or organisations in the destination countries. With some exception, being constantly mobile seems to make people less interested in politics either at home or abroad. Temporary migrants do not join labour unions and, due to the lack of transparency and proper provision of information in the host country, they may not be aware of their rights and

entitlements. Complaints about complicated **bureaucratic practices** were common among different types of Asian and European migrants. For instance in Hungary, bureaucracy with endless paper work was considered by temporary migrants to be the most discouraging part of their lives. Refugees and asylum seekers in particular argued that the long waiting time for decisions on their asylum applications was a major obstacle.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Economic factors play a crucial role for the majority of Asians migrating to Europe, particularly among low-skilled workers. Jobs they obtain in Europe are typically labour-intensive and require minimal skills. A common push factor, particularly for Filipino and Thai migrants, is the responsibility to provide for their dependent family members at home, or to earn extra income outside the harvest season. Sending remittances home is traditionally an integral part of Asian migration, whereas Europeans hardly ever engage in this type of activity. The findings of EURA-NET moreover problematize the role **financial transfers** play in temporary migration. Some temporary migrants are not in an economic position to remit, or there is no socio-economic need among significant others. In the transit countries (Turkey, Greece, Ukraine) it was noted that migrants save their earnings to continue their transnational movements.

Many highly-skilled Europeans saw their stay in Asia as an important phase of their **career development**, and for most Asian high-skilled professionals transnational job opportunities represented an important step up in their professional careers. Among this group, money was not the main motivation to move: Europeans were satisfied with their earnings in Asia mainly in the case of China (particularly those from southern and eastern Europe). Many Europeans reported that their knowledge and professional skills are much appreciated and valued in China and other Asian countries. Likewise in Germany, the professional qualifications of highly-skilled Asian migrants were mostly fully recognized and the professionals were satisfied with their working environments. However, this was not the case among Asians in all European countries: rather temporary Asian migrants tend to be **underemployed**; they were either unemployed or worked in low-skilled and low paid precarious jobs. Very few of them worked in the jobs they used to do in their home countries. Labour exploitation and discrimination were also experienced in the European labour market. In particular, Thai workers had experienced discrimination, such as lower wages than those paid to European workers.

In particular, for many family-based migrants, moving abroad with their spouses meant clear **downward trend** in their careers. They were often unemployed in spite of their high qualifications and work experience in the country of origin. The main barrier to gaining employment was lack of proficiency in the language of the country of residence. Unemployment was also the main reason for their lack of real motivation to settle permanently in the host country. Likewise for humanitarian migrants moving to Europe meant a clear downward trend in their professional careers. Many of the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed had had good jobs and social status in their countries of origin.

Asians who had returned to their countries of origin after finishing their work or completing their studies in Europe generally found employment upon their return. Most of them acknowledged that their international experience had been helpful and the expertise they brought back with them was appreciated in their home countries. The situation was different for European returnees who reported bureaucratic problems and difficulties in finding employment in the home country.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS

One of the most challenging aspects of being constantly mobile is the **adaptation** to the host society. It became evident that the Asian and European migrants encounter a common obstacle along their adaptation paths, namely the **language barrier**. For a variety of reasons most of the temporary migrants interviewed were not learning the domestic languages of the receiving countries. Such reasons included envisaged short stay in the country in question; lack of time; lack of motivation to learn a not widely-spoken language; the good level of English spoken by people in the living/working environment; the difficulty of local languages; lack of language courses, and the cost of the courses. Temporary migrants typically learn only the very basics in order to cope in daily communication with authorities, in shopping, and so on. The findings nevertheless suggest that requiring migrants to learn domestic languages in order to ensure security of residence raise unrealistic expectations and is counter-productive for their socio-cultural inclusion. The research showed that **discrimination** is an obstacle to the socio-cultural integration of migrants both in Europe and Asia. This reflects the unwelcoming attitudes to foreign arrivals.

The role of diasporic communities is important for many Asian migrants. For instance, among Filipino interviewees, their adjustment and sense of being home in European host countries was often aided by their membership of Filipino associations and organisations. Both the Asian and European interviewees reported that it was not easy to develop close relationships with people in the destination societies. They associated mainly with their compatriots and other foreigners, with only limited and superficial connections to local people, whereas social relations with their relatives in the country of origin or in **transnational networks** were the

most significant for them. Most respondents were in contact with their family members on a daily basis, even several times a day. Advances in communication technology made it easy to communicate across borders on a daily basis. Transnational social bonds were maintained through phone-calls, e-mail, video chat via Skype, messaging applications for smartphones like WhatsApp and Viber, and also using social media such as Facebook.

KEY FINDINGS IN SUMMARY

- Transnational mobility is increasingly becoming commonplace.
- Strict immigration rules and bureaucratic practices are common obstacles to the inclusion of temporary migrants and may lead to irregular migration.
- Language barriers and coercive integration policies constitute important factors of exclusion.
- Financial transfers play a relatively minor role in temporary migration.
- Problems arise in the socio-economic inclusion of temporary migrants and their family members.
- For many Asians, moving to Europe means a clear downward trend in their careers.
- Most temporary migrants are not members of political organizations in countries of destination.
- Social isolation and discrimination are common problems among temporary migrants.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings suggest the following policy recommendations:

EU Member States need to acknowledge that Europe is not just a destination but also a source region of migrants.

For EU Member States this entails improving policies on return migration, developing better reintegration schemes for returnees and utilizing their skills and work experiences in a non-discriminatory manner. For the EU it implies developing a migration agenda with third countries which is less 'Eurocentric' and migration control-driven, but instead focused on developing more legal channels of entry for economic and humanitarian migrations. Attitudes in the EU need to change so as to make immigration and visa policies more open and flexible.

The research revealed that uncertainty about being allowed to stay threatens temporary migrants' well-being and professional career development. Migration policies should be more 'person-centric' and be better linked to the socio-economic characteristics, expectations and preferences of mobile individuals.

The findings call for improvements in the current EU and national immigration rules to better fit temporary mobility schemes.

There is a mismatch between the labour market needs and the ways in which national norms/laws frame temporary migratory movements. Recommendations for EU Member States include the reduction of legal requirements regarding third-country nationals coming to live and work in Europe. EU policies should reconsider their selective and utilitarian (needs-based) approaches to labour migration regulation. The EU should revise and adjust its currently fragmented legal framework on labour migration so as to facilitate high, medium and low-skilled immigration and legal channels for mobility from third countries. The skills and knowledge of returnees and family-based migrants and asylum seekers should be acknowledged more and should be duly considered in the European labour market. In particular, the spouses and family members of migrants should be assisted to find work in the destination countries. Supporting mechanisms should also be developed to encourage international students to stay in the host country after graduation and have access to the labour markets. At the same time, the EU should also be sensitive to of brain drain implications.

Integration policies should be established focusing on the socio-economic integration and equal and fair treatment of temporary migrants.

The EURA-NET research revealed the existence of a number of obstacles in relation to the socio-economic inclusion of temporary migrants. The framing of cross-border human mobility as 'temporary migration' is one of the factors limiting the opportunities for migrants to integrate, as the national policies do not cater for the possibility of temporary migrants remaining or settling in the destination country and being offered integration facilities (such as voluntary language courses) and treated equally and with the same rights as the mainstream population. Temporary migrants should be provided with easy-access information on immigration rules, and improve the processes for obtaining and renewing residence and work permits. Services in English should be enhanced and expanded, and free or inexpensive courses in the domestic languages should be provided to

interested migrants. The EU should mainly support the work of NGOs and civil society organisations as they play a key role in the inclusion of third country nationals and asylum seekers.

There is a need for a European asylum policy putting the asylum seekers agency at the heart of the system

Concerning the current asylum seekers movements to Europe, targeted integration policies on asylum seekers and refugees should be developed and implemented in cooperation with local, national and European stakeholders, and relevant international organisations (e.g. UNHCR) and civil society groups. In other words, the work will involve a multi-stakeholder approach. The focus should be shifted to socio-economic insertion in receiving labour markets and non-discrimination policies. The identification and documentation processes of refugees and asylum seekers need to be reviewed and expedited. The current asylum system should take into account asylum seekers' preferences and their family/private links in the determination of the state responsible for processing their asylum applications in the EU.

Proper reception conditions on the ground are a key condition for people to stay in the receiving countries instead of being compelled to move in search of better conditions. Access to health and education services should be ensured. Here, the EU should do more to enforce Member States' compliance with current EU asylum and human rights legal standards. Service and benefits in health care and social security entitlements should be made more easily accessible, and this entails building support systems for newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees. The right to work should be granted to asylum seekers and refugees.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The main objectives of the project are:

- ❖ **To compile an inventory of the quality and extent of temporary transnational migration and mobility and of related policies in the European-Asian context (WP1)**

The findings provide an inventory of the existing research on the issue, existing statistical data on transnational migration and mobility, and a review of the national and international initiatives and programmes on temporary migration.

- ❖ **To conduct a multi-level analysis of the transformative characteristics and development impacts of temporary transnational migration and mobility at local, national and international levels (WP2)**

The research data were gathered through **semi-structured interviews** among people with experiences of temporary cross-border movements between Europe and Asia and/or other transborder connections or activities in the European-Asian transnational social space. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in China, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine, with around 80 respondents in each country. The target groups included highly skilled (academics, corporate workers, e.g.), low-skilled workers (e.g. seasonal workers in agriculture, construction or services), foreign degree students, people moving for family reasons, humanitarian movers (refugees, asylum seekers), 'life-style seekers' (e.g. retirees), irregular migrants, returnees and migrants' family members.

Secondly, interview data are being gathered through **structured interviews** with policy-makers, authorities and civil society actors dealing with migration issues in China, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine. The number of respondents in each participating country is 40-60.

- ❖ **To investigate legal and policy frameworks and their impacts at European, national, international and global levels (WP3)**

This third step will be accomplished in order to analyse the present and future impacts of temporary mobility in the EU and third countries, and to produce a set of policy proposals and recommendations for addressing European governance of temporary migration and mobility. The research will scrutinize the governance of European initiatives and programmes for the temporary migration of third-country nationals to Europe, including EU mobility partnerships. Parallels will be drawn between similar forms of temporary mobility from countries and regions outside the EU, looking in particular at their impacts on host Member States and countries of origin and on the EU more generally.

PROJECT NAME	Transnational Migration in Transition: Transformative Characteristics of Temporary Mobility of People (EURA-NET)
COORDINATOR	Professor Pirkko Pitkänen, University of Tampere, Finland, pirkko.pitkanen@uta.fi
CONSORTIUM	Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels, Belgium Beijing Normal University (BNU), School of Social Development and Public Policy, Beijing, China University of Tampere (UTA), School of Education, Tampere, Finland Bielefeld University (UNIBI), Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD), Bielefeld, Germany University of Macedonia (UoM), The Economic and Social Sciences, Thessaloniki, Greece Economic Research Institute (KOPINT-TARKI), Budapest, Hungary Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum, India Maastricht University (UM), the Graduate School of Law, Maastricht, Netherlands Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC), Manila, Philippines Mahidol University (MU), Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Bangkok, Thailand Koç University (KU), Migration Research Center at Koç University (MiReKoc), Istanbul, Turkey Ethnology Institute of National Academy of Sciences (NASU), Lviv, Ukraine
FUNDING SCHEME	Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities, Collaborative project
DURATION	February 2014 - January 2017 (36 months).
BUDGET	EU contribution: 2,497,496 €
WEBSITE	www.uta.fi/aura-net/
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact: Project Manager Virve Kallioniemi-Chambers, virve.kallioniemi-chambers@uta.fi Researcher Jaakko Hyytiä, jaakko.hyytia@uta.fi
FURTHER READING	Pirkko Pitkänen and Sergio Carrera (eds.) 2014. TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IN TRANSITION: STATE OF THE ART REPORT ON TEMPORARY MIGRATION. Collected Working Papers from the EURA-NET project, http://www.uta.fi/edu/en/research/projects/aura-net/publications.html Pirkko Pitkänen and Mari Korpela (eds.) 2015. CHARACTERISTICS OF TEMPORARY TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION. Collected Working Papers from the EURA-NET project, http://www.uta.fi/edu/en/research/projects/aura-net/publications.html Mustafa Aksakal and Kerstin Schmidt-Verkerk. 2015. INTERNAL REPORT ON CONCEPTUAL CLAFICATIONS, http://www.uta.fi/edu/en/research/projects/aura-net/publications/Conceptual%20Framework%20on%20Temporary%20Migration.pdf