

Labour mobility within Europe. Comparison of opportunities between Belgium and Lithuania

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1. Introduction

Migration and labour mobility is an issue growing in importance in European countries, especially for the new member states. According to statistical data of the Department of Statistics in Lithuania, for a long time migration and work in another country was an important topic in Lithuania. During the last ten years, about 200 thousands Lithuanians “disappeared” from the country (Department of Statistics in Lithuania). It is supposed to be a migration for a work, especially illegal, purposes. Concerning the illegal work in the other European Union countries, there are neither enough facts nor information about people working illegally. On the other hand, affording people the opportunity to migrate freely in order to find a job and opening the borders of the states, the regulation of migration is possible. It means legal advices, information and institutions promoting labour mobility. Lithuania, as a new member state of the European Union, is obliged to introduce this right of free movement of workers for its citizens. It is important to analyse how the right of free movement of workers is presented in one of the old member states - Belgium - and what can be transferred to Lithuania. On the other hand, it is also significant to clarify what can be done to improve the European system promoting the free movement of workers.

The migration of highly skilled workers can be linked with the global expansion of transnational companies. Also, a shortage of certain groups of specialists, influences the flow of highly skilled workers from the other countries. It means the migration possibility from the less developed new member states to the more developed countries of the European Union. The interviews conducted with both Belgian and Lithuanian citizens, working (high) skilled work (projects managers, project coordinators, doctors, scientists) reveal their migration purposes and advantages of living and working in a foreign country.

The purpose of this paper is to explore and analyse the situation of labour mobility in the European Union - how Belgium and Lithuania deal with and promote the right of free movement of workers in the EU.

2. Migration in Europe

2.1. Migration in Europe after the 2nd World War

The EU Member States have a long tradition of immigration, which, on the whole, has contributed positively to economic growth and labour market adaptability. According to J.P. Garson and A. Loizillon, since the early 1950s European countries experienced four main **migration periods**:

- 1) Immediate post-war migration was characterized by the return of ethnic citizens and other displaced persons to their country of origin. Despite this, the reconstruction of post-war Europe generated large labour shortages and government authorities, firms and private agencies actively recruited migrant workers.
- 2) The beginning of the second period of migration was marked by the economic crisis of the mid-1970s due to the oil price increase in 1973. Several European countries reduced or tried to reduce immigration. Although employment-related migration fell dramatically until the late 1980s, other categories of migration entries increased significantly, especially family reunification flows.

- 3) The third migration period, which began in the late 1980s, is characterized by the diversification of host and sending countries. The traditional emigration countries in Europe, such as Spain, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Portugal, gradually became countries of immigration.

This period is also characterized by the predominance of family reunification flows in several European countries. Also, a renewed interest in employment-related migration was occurring, notably for skilled and highly skilled labour in the late 1990s.

After the collapse of the former USSR and the opening of frontiers, East-West migration and particularly movement of ethnic minorities increased. These flows were significant during the late 1980s and the early 1990s and were directed to a limited number of European Union countries, mainly Germany.

- 4) In the fourth migration period, the observed increase in employment-related migration, is the result of several factors: on the one hand, the intensity of the late 1990s expansion phase and, on the other, the development of information and communication technology, health and education, sectors which require skilled and highly-skilled labour, are in shortage in some countries. The increase in employment-related migration also includes unskilled foreign labour. (Garson and Loizillon, 2003).

2. 2. Migration of Lithuanian population in the recent decade (since 1990)

The main migration periods reviewed in the previous chapter are on the whole similar to the Lithuanian situation. The major demographic changes in the last decade are related to reduction of birth rate and increase of out migration in the country. Birth rate is quite precisely recorded by the national statistics. Emigration, on the contrary, is almost never registered.

According to R. Lazutka and A. Pocius, after the restoration of the Independent State, out migration of the Lithuanian population was determined by two main factors. First, at the beginning of the time period (1990-93) part of Slavic descendants returned to Russia, Byelorussia and other countries of the former USSR, and quite a large number of Lithuanians returned from them. Second, upon the commencement of economic reform in Lithuania the economic situation grew worse, unemployment increased, and state borders were opened. Furthermore, visa regimes for entrance to many West European countries were cancelled. Therefore a part of Lithuanian population moved to EU countries and the USA looking for employment. (Lazutka and Pocius, 2002).

Although employment and permanent residence permits in Western countries are issued only in exceptional cases, the majority of migration to the West is unregistered. Therefore it is not reflected by the national statistics, according to which only 2-4 thousand residents annually left Lithuania in recent years. Illegal migration of population is clearly typical for Lithuania, as it is for the majority of the Eastern countries. But precise numbers of illegal migration are not known. (Lazutka and Pocius, 2002).

R. Lazutka and A. Pocius in their research report mention the basic factors inducing emigration of CEE residents to the Western countries:

- Lower level of economic and social development in general;
- Lower general living standard;
- High unemployment;
- Low level of income;
- Inefficient policies with respect to business conditions and taxes by central and local government institutions.

The above mentioned authors state, that better educated persons are much more mobile in the domestic market, they have higher intensity of domestic migration. But there is a lack of reliable information on the intensity of out migration flows between population groups with various levels of education. (Lazutka and Pocius, 2002).

2.3. Migration of highly skilled workers and recruiting internationally

According to R. Iredale, highly skilled migrants represent an increasingly large component of global migration streams. He estimates, that there are 1.5 million professionals from developing countries in the industrial countries alone. Types of movement include permanent settlement to major immigrant receiving countries, temporary migration both within and outside multinational corporations, refugee flows and family reunion. Most of the countries take highly skilled workers on a temporary basis, supposedly to meet skills shortages until they can train their own stock of skilled workers. (Iredale, 2001). On the other hand, migration plays a positive international role allocating human resources, skills and positive cultural traits. Immigrants often bring positive entrepreneurial attitudes to their host countries, a strong work ethic and valuable links with other cultures and markets (Benson-Rea and Rawlinson, 2003).

Highly skilled workers are normally defined as having a university degree or extensive/ equivalent experience in a given field. According to R. Iredale, it includes highly skilled specialist, independent executives and senior managers, specialized technicians or tradepersons, investors, business persons, “keyworkers” and sub-contract workers (Iredale, 2001).

2.4. Recent and potential migration to Europe from new Member States

In the recent years, two major socio-economic trends have been noticed in Europe: demographic change and skill shortage in the labour market. S. Mahroum states, that “changing the European demographic towards older and smaller populations will impact on the availability of sufficient skilled workforces in European societies. As the size of the population as a whole has stabilized, the age of population continues to grow older” (Mahroum, 2001, p.29). It means the difficulties in finding the people with the right skills to fill vacancies.

According to this situation, there have been significant changes both in attitude and action in the EU towards the immigration of the highly skilled workers. Despite the strict immigration policies since the mid 1970s in the EU, immigration from outside the EU continued to rise during the 1980s and 1990s, ranging between 700,000 and 1.2 million annually (Mahroum, 2001). It excludes illegal immigration, which, though difficult to register, is estimated at around 500,000 a year. Three main legal channels have facilitated legal immigration to EU countries: temporary work permits, family reunion and asylum seeking.

The majority of immigrants flows to the EU originate from Eastern Europe, especially from the Balkans and Africa, but only a minority of the immigrants from these regions can be classified as highly skilled. The share of highly skilled immigrants/ non-nationals in the EU varies across countries. S. Mahroum states, that Belgium has the biggest amount of high skilled immigrants; Germany and UK share the second and third places.

Geography has a major impact on the regional distribution of migrants from the CEECs - present member states - across the EU: around 70 per cent of the citizens from the ten Central and East European countries (present member states) reside in Austria and Germany, i.e. neighbouring countries which have long borders with the CEECs. (Potential Migration from Central and Eastern Europe into the EU-15, report, 2003).

Among the new ten member states of the EU, the share of citizens residing in the EU is highest for Slovenia, Poland, Estonia and Hungary. Data derived from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey suggests that the migrant population from the CEECs possesses a higher share of completed secondary and tertiary education than the native population in the host countries of the EU (Boeri/Brücker et al., 2001).

According to the study which is based on opinion polls and intentions to emigrate expressed by people of working-age (15 to 65 years), information on their socio-economic characteristics is provided:

these people would be mainly male (62,4%), young (62,1% between 15 and 29 years) and better educated than their country's national average.

Transitional periods, demographic changes and economic catching-up should make it possible to manage the East-West migrations without seriously disturbing labour markets. According to the report "Potential Migration from Central and Eastern Europe into the EU-15", economic catching-up should stimulate employment. It means, that the new member states could become countries which attract immigration, in particular from countries on the eastern fringes (Ukraine, Byelorussia, Russia, Turkey). This phenomenon is already starting to appear (from Ukraine to Poland or from Romania to Hungary). (Potential Migration from Central and Eastern Europe into the EU-15, report, 2003).

2.5. Extents of future migration from Lithuania

There is an opinion presented, that upon free movement of workers approximately 1,8 million of the employed or 3,9 million of residents will immigrate within 10 years to better developed countries from the ten Eastern and Central European countries (total number of residents in the new member states - 105 million). Within 10 years time the flow of migration should reduce from 330 thousand down to 145 thousand persons per annum. (Boeri T., Brucker H., 2000).

Concerning the Lithuanian situation, the conclusions were made, that within 10 years up to 2% of the employed should leave Lithuania in search of employment, and in addition to their family members that makes - up to 4% of the country's residents. Emigration from Lithuania is expected to exceed immigration within 20-30 years (including re-emigrants, too). But the increase of Lithuanian labour resources abroad is expected to reduce even in the near future. (Lazutka and Pocius, 2002).

The survey of graduates from higher educational institutions conducted by the Institute of Labour and Social Research in 2000, and more than 2/3 (69%) of surveyed workers would like to work abroad for 1-2 years, 13% - would not like to work abroad, 18% - have no clear-cut opinion. It means a high inclination of graduates with higher education to work in foreign countries and high risk of brain drain.

According to the other data of a scientists' mobility survey carried out in 1995, more than 80% of scientists would like to leave to foreign countries (even having employment in Lithuania) for more than 1 year to work according to their area of expertise (Lazutka and Pocius, 2002).

R. Lazutka and A. Pocius claim, that in the long run having a higher-qualified job in the native country may become more cost-effective than having low-qualified job abroad (after the development of tendencies for life standards of Central and Western Europe countries getting closer). It means that people staying in the native country will win more than those who are leaving after opening the borders.

3. European Union and free movement of workers

3.1. Free movement of workers in the EU - legislative and practical backgrounds

Legislative background

Besides the Treaty Of Rome, which is a constitution of the European Union and the basic document of free movement of persons within the Community (Consolidated version of the Treaty establishing the European Community), free movement of workers is a right of European citizenship, as is defined in other regulations as well.

According to **Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68** of the Council of the 15th October 1968 on freedom of movement for workers within the Community, "any national of a Member State, shall, irrespective of his place of residence, have the right to take up an activity as an employed person, and to pursue such activity, within the territory of another Member State in accordance with the provisions laid

down by law, regulation or administrative action governing the employment of nationals of that State” and “with the same priority as nationals of that State” (Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68, 1968).

Regulation EEC/1612/68 guarantees freedom of movement for workers within the Community, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of nationality in employment, pay and working conditions, eligibility for housing and the right of families to join migrant workers.

Regulation EEC/1408/71 and 574/72 (practical implementation) guarantee the equal access to national social security schemes. Regulation 1408/71 applies to workers having the nationality of one of the Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA= the European Union plus Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland) and Switzerland. However, from July 2003 it was extended to non-EU citizens legally resident in one of the Member States (except Denmark). (Vanpoucke, Essers, 2004). The most important co-ordinating principles of 1408/71 are the determination of a single applicable social security legislation, to avoid the conflict of laws; the obligation to export payments such as family allowance, sickness, invalidity, retirement pensions and death benefits; the aggregation of insurance periods in the different Member States; the co-ordination of calculation methods for payments (Vanpoucke, Essers, 2004).

Besides the above mentioned regulations, there are many other regulations and directives, concerning mobility of workers. For example, regulation EEC/312/76 guarantees equal access to trade union membership and eligibility for workplace representative bodies; there are directives seeking to break down educational and occupational deterrents to the free movement of labour, etc. (Employment terms and conditions, 2003).

Practical background

In order to implement the right of free movement, EURES - European Employment Services - were established in every member state. EURES brings together the European Commission and the public employment services of the countries belonging to the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland. Other regional and national bodies concerned with employment issues are also included, such as trade unions, employers' organisations, as well as local and regional authorities. EURES consists of two elements: computer network and a network of trained advisers (Euroadvisers) (Archer, Rabon, 1995).

The purpose of the EURES network is to provide services for the benefit of workers and employers as well as any citizen wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of persons. This involves three types of service provision: information, advice and recruitment/placement (job-matching).

EURES has a particularly important role to play in cross-border regions. These are employment catchment areas in which there are significant levels of cross-border commuting. People who live in one country and work in another have to cope with different national practices and legal systems. They may come across administrative, legal or tax obstacles to mobility on a daily basis (<http://europa.eu.int/eures>).

3.2. BELGIUM. Flanders: Structure and Institutions

Background information about Belgium:

Belgium gained its independence in 1830. In the last three decades the country experienced five sets of institutional reforms and developed into a federal structure. Now, the management of Belgium is spread over different authorities, each of them independently exercising their competences in different fields:

- **The federal state** holds important competences, such as: foreign affairs, defence, justice, financial policy, social security, important sectors of public health and domestic affairs.

- **Language-based communities:** the Flemish community, the French community and the German-speaking community. The communities are competent in such areas as culture, education and social welfare.
- **Three regions, based on economic concerns:** the Flemish region, the Walloon region and the Brussels capital region. They are competent for such matters as economic policy, employment policy, housing, town and country planning, environmental matters.

Regions and communities are entitled to run foreign relations themselves in the areas of their respective legal competence. The same Parliament and the same Government exercise the competences of the Flemish community and the Flemish region.

Belgium is made up of 10 provinces and 589 municipalities, which play the role of local authorities. (Blonpain, 2002).

3.2.1. Flanders: employment issues and EURES (European Employment Service)

Institutions and services in Flanders

As it was written in the previous chapter, European Employment Services, according to European Commission provisions, are established in every European Union country. Belgian Eures-advisors are working in Public Employment Services, Trade Unions and employers' organisations.

As far as employment policy is concerned within the regions in Belgium, there are separate public employment services in the country:

- VDAB Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training;
- Le FOREM in Walloon;
- BGDA/ ORBEM in Brussels region and
- Public employment services for German community in Belgium.

The role of EURES-advisor in **VDAB Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training** are:

- Support of VDAB service (register of job-seekers, keeping contacts with companies, vacancies etc.);
- Composition of information material for VDAB;
- Provision of specialized information;
- Large scale recruitment;
- Organisation of information sessions: internal and external;
- Elaboration of projects;
- Cooperation with colleges of higher education;
- Promotion of Eures;
- Participation in fairs;
- Annual organization of job fair EUROJOB.

(VDAB, 2002 and Presentation:VDAB, 2004).

EURES-advisers are also found in the **employers' organisations** in Belgium. **Unizo** is working in Flanders region and its target public is small and middle size enterprises and self-employed people.

EURES-advisor's functions in Unizo are:

- **Advising about:** creation of enterprises; self-employed activity; double status; projects with defined duration – secondment; recruitment.
- **Social security issues:** which legislation has to be used; what are social formalities; which are competent organisations to ask for the further help or advise; which documents are needed.

- **Taxation:** which fiscal system will apply, splitting taxes, etc.
- **Legal matters:** obligations concerning the Register of Commerce, the VAT-administration, employment contracts (models, clauses, commercial representative).
- **Providing general information:** living and working conditions, working hours, taxes, housing, cross border zone, language courses, nationality, passports, etc.

EURES-adviser in Employers' organisation Unizo is co-operating with other partners – other EURES networks, links with services provided by the employers' organization; close co-operation with other organizations (study bureaux, ministries, local governments, EC, intercommunal bodies, and other regional actors); exchanging information with different programmes (like Interreg III). (Unizo, 2002)

3.2.2. Trade unions in Belgium and EURES

Belgian trade unions

Trade Unions in Belgium are completely free and independent of the Government in as far as their establishment and functioning is concerned. Belgian trade unions have the right to give advices in counting the cost of living index, energy, economic development etc. (Blanpain, 2002).

Belgian Trade unions play a *big role in labour relations*, in organisation of all labour related issues. In the first place the Belgian trade unions defend: automatic indexing of wages; guaranteed minimum wage; permanent appointment and maintenance of the (more beneficial) pensions system in the public sector; unlimited duration of unemployment benefit; work guarantees or at least income guarantees for key employees in companies in the event of collective redundancy/closure; and the trade union monopoly of (legally-regulated) employee representation in companies.

Belgian trade unions are involved in the development of the social security system and also in the paying out of unemployment benefits. The health insurance funds, the so-called "mutual health funds", which provide compulsory health insurance, usually belong to the same pillar as the trade unions and the trade union secretariats, together with the offices of these health insurance funds, also play a central role in the pillar network to guarantee an extensive range of social services; for example, on information and consultation about pensions, and social housing schemes. (Van Gyes, 2000).

The most important trade unions in Belgium are *Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV-CSC)* and the *Socialist-inclined Belgian General Federation of Labour (ABVV-FGTV)*. Less important is the *Federation of Liberal Unions of Belgium (ACLVB-CGSLB)* (Blanpain, 2000).

Also, trade unions in Belgium have EURES-advisors, who are giving advices for persons who are willing to migrate for a work purpose.

EURES and Belgian trade unions

The target group of EURES advisor in the ABVV is *the members (or potential members) of this trade union*, who are working as Belgians in another country of European Economic Area, or are *the members of European Economic Area*, working in Belgium and having questions and problems concerning cross-boarder work.

Typical clients' groups:

- classical cross-boarder workers;
- posted workers;
- workers of 'changed nationality of a company' (because of taxation or less administrative charges, the offices are moved to a neighbour country and in meantime the activities don't change a place, for example, transport sector, call-centres, field of tourism);
- people, who are working in 2 or more countries of European Economic Area.

- Labour migration within European Economic Area.
(Annual work report of Eures-advisor in ABVV, 2003).

3.2.3. EuresChannel network

Cross-border mobility in the French-Belgian border region is a reality that a large number of employers and workers have been living for many years. A Cross-border worker is a worker or self-employed person who carries out his professional activity in another member state of the EU than where he lives, on condition that he returns to the country where he lives at least once a week. (<http://www.eureschannel.org>).

The employment mobility has been the centre of discussions of informal cross-border contacts between the public employment services and the trade unions of the Nord/Pas-de-Calais and Hainaut region since the end of the eighties.

In 1993, the integration of the concept of “free circulation of people and goods” in the European Convention lead to the creation of EURES - European Employment Services. In the border regions where employment mobility has been a reality for some years, “special” cross-border Eures networks were created.

EURES HNFK (abbreviation of the four regions concerned: Hainaut, Nord/Pas-de-Calais, West-Flanders and Kent) is *the first cross-border EURES network with a European field of action* that counts no less than 8 million inhabitants.

Recently, *EuresChannel* is a network that rests on the *voluntary co-operation* of its constituting members. *EuresChannel promotes the cross-border employment mobility* in the French-Belgian-English border region. Therefore EuresChannel helps both employers and employees with their knowledge in this field.

The basic service of EuresChannel is offering *free information and advice on cross-border employment*, according to the needs of the customer.

EuresChannel addresses three groups of public in particular:

- The **jobseeker** who wants to take on the challenge and look for work across the border or who has questions concerning the work and living conditions abroad.
- The **cross-border worker** who is already active abroad but who encounters specific problems and who has specific questions concerning his tax, social security, contract of employment, etc.
- The **employer** who wishes to recruit people from abroad or who is considering starting a business across the border.

3.3. Free movement of workers and new member states

3.3.1. Transitional period

Free movement of persons is one of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Community Law and includes the right to live and work in another Member State. The right of free movement within the Community concerns workers, students, pensioners and EU citizens in general. It means European citizenship.

Moving to another country is a big decision and people have to be very good and accurate informed about their rights.

- An EU citizen has the right to work in another Member State without a work permit;
- Equality of treatment in employment matters as compared to nationals;
- Workers are entitled to the same social and tax advantages as nationals;

- The worker's family, whatever their nationality, are entitled to join him or her.
- Full co-ordination of social security. It means:
 - The exportation of pension rights and other benefits – rights acquired by a worker must be maintained by a worker as he/she moves from one Member State to another.
 - Aggregation - social security contributions in different countries are added together without distinction to ensure that the worker always has the appropriate cover and can immediately benefit from insurance in the new country and accumulates benefits in the same way as if he/she had spent their working life in one place.
- Equality of treatment – in particular the worker's family is entitled to receive family allowances on the same basis as nationals;
- Community rules on mutual recognition of professional qualifications will apply fully.

It is important to note, that the freedom of movement of EU citizens is more than just access to the labour market, and most of this freedom will in fact not be covered by the transitional arrangement. People from the new member states already have the right to set up a business (through a company, or as a self-employed person) in an old Member State. The professional qualifications will be recognized, people will be free to travel, or to go and live in another Member State, for instance as a student or a prisoner, or as a family member of someone who is working there.

Concerning restrictions, it can only affect access to the labour market. Once a worker is admitted to a new Member State to work or to look for a job, there can be no discrimination on grounds of nationality. This is the case, with some limited exceptions, for jobs both in the public and private sectors. Discrimination is also prevented at the job search stage.

3.3.2. Labour mobility - Lithuanian situation

Labour mobility is a rather new phenomenon for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It was only after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the communist forms of government that the region underwent a rapid development and labour migration reached serious dimensions. (Migration and the Labour Market in Central and Eastern Europe, 2004).

Lithuania, as a new member state of the EU, has not had an experience of a right to free movement of workers. Working abroad, since the year of re-independence (1991), is organised by bilateral agreements of a country or the private agencies mediating for recruiting in the Western European or other foreign countries. The private agencies had to have a licence given from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in Lithuania, which let it to engage in such activity. Actually, it was a good and profit activity since the collapse of USSR and the opening of borders.

Besides the work in the other country, the problem and discussions of human trafficking occurred in Lithuania, as well in the other Baltic or post-communistic states. (Sipavičienė, 2004). It is important to mention that this social problem occurs in the field of illegal work and "legal work" organised by private "agencies" or persons, trafficking persons for low paid illegal work or prostitution in West European countries.

According to the Public Employment Services in Lithuania, the working abroad was organised through transnational agreements and partnership agreements. Trans-national agreements cover internships in Germany and Sweden and temporary work agreements in Poland and Ukraine. Au-pair and seasonal works are also organised by Public Employment Services in Lithuania (Beinoravičienė, 2004).

According to European Commission provisions, EURES were also established by PES in Lithuania. There are 8 Eures offices and 8 EURES-advisors, 46 assistants of EURES-advisors in Lithuania at the moment.

Concerning the free movement of workers and its influences on Lithuania, the main positive and negative tendencies, according to Social Security and Labour Ministry of Lithuania, have to be mentioned. In terms of the advantages of free movement of workers, it is believed that unemployment will be “exported” to the other EU countries. It means the currently unemployed persons will be willing to leave Lithuania and find a job in other countries, the firstly in Ireland and United Kingdom, which opened their borders to the new member states. Also, the state of Lithuania will save money in paying unemployment benefits and the unemployment problem will be less acute in the country (Greičius, 2004).

Second, the workers who left Lithuania some years ago may come back to the country bringing back new knowledge and experiences and involvement to the Lithuanian labour market. Also, people who are planning to work in other European country for a while, will come back to Lithuania having new knowledge of technology, handling some foreign languages and gained new work experiences.

The third positive issue is seen as the “coming back” of incomes. It means the return of citizens, who left the country some years ago for a work (legal or illegal) in the other countries.

And fourth, the decrease of need to pay social allowances is connected with emigrating persons. People who will use the right of free movement of workers are expected to take their family members with them, so there will be no need to pay family benefits. On the other hand, it is connected with unemployment “export” and unemployment benefits as well. (Greičius, 2004).

Despite the positive influences to Lithuania, there are some negative tendencies concerning the free movement of workers and the Lithuanian situation. First of all, the negative influence on the use of factors of production; also income - the reduction of incomes to one inhabitant of Lithuania; decrease of savings; social polarisation; decrease of current financing of the social security fund.

The foreseeable negative factor to Lithuania state is the negative influence on the use of factors of production, which means the losing of specialists in the certain fields. To detail, the graduate after finishing their higher education in Lithuanian universities and higher schools may leave the country for the work purpose in another member state. The state loses the resources, which were invested to prepare specialists for Lithuania.

Also, by reduce the amount of working people, the GDP (general domestic product) will be lower, too. To sum up, the income for 1 inhabitant will be lower in Lithuania. Decrease of savings means that the state will receive less taxes because of less workers in the country. As the other negative influence to Lithuania because of free labour movement, social polarization should be mentioned. Because of different distributions of social groups in Lithuania after leaving for work in another member state, different levels of unemployment may occur in different regions of the country; also different development of industry, which influences the economical and also social living conditions in the certain region. (Greičius, 2004).

One important issue, which will confront a negative influence, is the decrease of current financing of social security fund. The social security fund in Lithuania (SoDra) will get less payments because of working people leaving to another countries.

To sum up, the labour markets will become more open in European Union and will be much easier to migrate for work purpose in another member state. Also, economics will influence the labour mobility: to which countries, to which extent and to what kind of specialists. Lithuania, as a new member state, will be influenced by both the positive and negative tendencies of free movement of workers.

4. Research: Working abroad - Belgians' and Lithuanians' practical experience

4.1. Research description

Problem statement

The purpose of this research is to find out and compare the experiences of Belgian and Lithuanian people who were working or are working in another European country than their own (in EEA). Citizens of Belgium, since creation of the European Community, are using the right of free movement. Lithuanians, on the contrary, will have a full right of free movement of workers after some years of restriction period in the EU labour markets. It is important to clarify whether any differences of experiences exist between Belgian and Lithuanian workers working in another country than their own.

Despite the low percentage of mobility within the Member States (1.2 % of the EU population moved from one region to another in 1999 (Social Agenda, 7/2003), the mobility, especially of the highly skilled workers, is an issue growing in importance; which also means "brain drain" from less developed countries. On the other hand, illegal migration is one of the most important topics co-ordinating and regulating employment issues in the EU. It is significant to find out what stimulates people to find a job in another country and what kind of advantages are given from living and working in a foreign country.

Concerning Lithuania, as well as other new Member States, an attitude, that Western European countries may provide them with better living and working conditions and the great jobs supply, may occur in the society after enlargement of the European Union in 2004. It is important to analyse the experience of the citizens of West Europe, in this case - Belgian people, who were working or are working in the other member states of the EU and which problems and difficulties they encountered in the reality and what kind of solutions were found out from that. Also, what kind of suggestions might experienced people give for those, who are willing to leave their own country for the work purpose in the other state.

One of the most important reasons for conducting this study is also to find out the suggestions, how it would be possible to improve the European system of dealing with labour mobility.

The focus on this inquiry is to find out the experienced advantages and disadvantages of Lithuanian and Belgian people, who were working in another European country. Comparison is made in order to reveal if there are any differences between experiences of workers from the EU and non-EU country. As well as this it is important to reveal for what reason people want to find a job in another country.

Both Belgian and Lithuanian citizen were asked questions like:

- what advantages do you see from living and working in the other country than in your own;
- what disadvantages do you see from living and working in the other country than in your own;
- what kind of problems did you have because of living and working in another country;
- what could you suggest to someone who is willing to find a job in another country.

Research design and methods

The qualitative research approach and semi-structured interviews were used in this study. The clear list of issues and questions were prepared to interview both Belgian and Lithuanian people who were working or are working in another European country (EU/ EEA countries).

The research was conducted with four Belgian people currently working in another Member State of EU or who had just finished a job in a foreign country, and also four Lithuanian people, working or who had already worked in the countries of the European Economic Area.

The participants were selected based on legal and professional work (high-skilled labour) in the foreign country. The similarities of the participants were that they have been working in another European country for more than one year, and they are at least 30 years old.

4.2. Reporting of outcomes

Presentation of research participants:

	Name of participant (sex: m; f) and age	Citizenship	Background education and profession	Countries and length, where have been working (years=yr)	Years of working abroad in general
1.	Jake (m), 43	Belgian	Left school when was 16 , started to work in family flowers business; <u>manager</u> .	Belgium (20 yr), France (2 yr), Holland (2 yr).	4 years
2.	Mauris (m), 50	Belgian and Romanian	Education - electrical engineer. Product procurement/ supply manager in an international company.	Romania (13 yr); Greece (1 yr); Canada (3 yr); France (2 yr); Germany (1,5 yr); Belgium (11 yr); USA (3 yr for a Belgian company).	34, 5 years
3.	Pieter (m), 35	Belgian	Catering; also background on accountancy and administration. Now - <u>project coordinator</u> .	Belgium, UK (6 yr)	6 years
4.	Joris (m), 32	Belgian	Finished graphical technology; circus school. Now - <u>project coordinator</u> .	Belgium (4 yr); Italy (5 yr)	5 years
5.	Beata (f), 30	Lithuanian	Finished he higher school of social work in Germany; now - <u>doing PhD in Lithuania</u> .	Lithuania, Germany (3,5 years for studies and 1 year working)	1 year
6.	Jolita (f), 39	Lithuanian	Family doctor	Lithuania (1 yr); Norway (11 yr)	11 years
7.	Darius (m), 38	Lithuanian, Norwegian	Neurologist; PhD in medicine.	Norway (12 yr)	12 years
8.	Jone (f), 35	Lithuanian	Doctor, specialized in psychiatry.	Internships in England (5 weeks), Italy (4 weeks); Turkey (4 weeks). Working in Denmark (4 yr); Greenland (3 yr).	7 years

4.3. Comparison of Belgians and Lithuanians experience working abroad

Concerning the purpose of migration, the variety of things, presented by participants of the research, that influenced the decision to move and work in another country. Personal life influenced the

movements to work in another European country for three interviewees (two Lithuanians and one Belgian). Also, staying for work after finishing studies were more common for Lithuanians. On the other hand, one Belgian started as a trainee and got an offer for a job in a country later. In comparison to Lithuanians, Belgian participants mentioned more extensive reasons for leaving their native country, for example as “preposition for well paid job”, “changing job and environment”, “surprises and something to grow up”, “to be able to move free”. Taking in the consideration that Lithuania was not a member of European Union until the 1st of May 2004 and even people, who participated in the research, started to work in other European country, for example 12 or 7 years ago (7th, 8th interviews), which means just after Lithuania gained its independence, it is possible to make the conclusion that Lithuanians were using an opportunity to go to a foreign country, to study and gain some experience in that time. On the other hand, Belgian participants, as European citizens have always had a right of free movement and a choice to work in their own country or to try the chances in the other member state. It seems, that Belgian interviewees, besides the personal reasons, considered it their right to choose the other member state and use the right for free movement in order to reach their aims and experience new things.

Concerning advantages of living and working in a foreign country, learning new things and personal progress were mostly emphasized by the Belgian participants of the research. It was expressed in such way as “new life and people”, “new start”, “different environment is stimulating creativity, adaptability, flexibility and leads to personal progress”. On the contrary, Lithuanians stressed better working conditions and work culture, higher salary and bigger security in another country. Only one Lithuanian participant, who carried on working after completing studies in a foreign country mentioned learning criteria, identification and perception of her nation's culture and mentality. According to this, we can come to a conclusion that Belgians, who participated in the research, talking about the working activity in the other European country than their own, are very concerned about self-realisation and personal progress, also seek higher aims such as learning from the interaction of some cultures. Lithuanian participants, on the contrary, declare only the basic level of advantages such as better working conditions and salary than in their own country. The meaning of these kind of attitudes could be concealed in the fact that Lithuania, as the state, could not ensure the basic needs for its citizens and the mentality of the nation might be influenced by low economical and social security in the country after gaining re-independence in 1990.

Concerning the difficulties and problems during the working period in another member state, Belgians complained about a lot of administrative and “paper” work, doing translations, losing a lot of time waiting for some documents while transferring them from one country to another. Lithuanians, participating in the interviews, also had some kind of difficulties with registering in foreigners’ office, getting visas, working permits, but they did not consider that as a big problem rather as a difficulty and “stress in the beginning”. On the contrary, Lithuanians marked psychological and social difficulties, which were not mentioned by any Belgian participant. Some Lithuanian interviewees emphasized the lack of a social network of relatives and observation of generations’ differences. Concerning this expressed disadvantage, we could presume the differences of Belgian and Lithuanian traditions and family role. Beside this, the disadvantage for lack of close people might be influenced by the gender issue: all Belgian interviewees were male and this kind of disadvantage was expressed by the three Lithuanian women.

Referring to administrative issues and nationality, both Eastern European participants (2nd and 7th interviewees) - Romanian, after naturalisation as a Belgian citizen and as a Lithuanian, after becoming a Norwegian citizen (both of them have double citizenship) acknowledged the fact about the easier way of dealing with bureaucratic issues concerning labour migration.

People living and working in another European country for between one and 30+ years gave many different pieces of advices to others who would like to experience what living and working in a foreign country mean. All participants emphasized the importance of knowing the language of a

country both for work purposes and for creation of the social network. Two Belgians, one working in a foreign country for over 6 years and another, worked in six countries over 30 years, revealed a need of knowing more than one language for finding a high skilled work.

Belgian participants, who had been working in more than one other member state, advised to be aware in advance of financial issues (salary; tax refund etc.), also about medical insurance, retirement schemes and the taxation system.

Two Lithuanians, at the moment living and working in Scandinavian countries for more than 7 years, advised shaking off the prejudice about new cultures and accepting the reality and culture of the country. It leads to a broader and more open attitude.

People, who have never thought about a possibility to work in a foreign country and spending more than one year there, may change their attitudes and thinking. On the other hand, people who have spent a lot of years “on the road” might be not thinking about settling down and working in one country. The experiences of the interviewed people are very different. A Belgian citizen, who worked 6 years in the UK (3rd interview), do not think about coming back and would agree to a job proposal in another member state. Another Belgian participant of the research, does not reject the possibility to migrate for work purposes to another member state, too. On the other hand, both of them have doubts about their age for moving again and feel the need for stability. Despite this, the decision would be influenced by a concrete situation, salary and job proposal.

It is important to remark, that the majority of the research participants (2 Belgians and 3 Lithuanians) are working or would like to do the projects between their own and another European country.

Research participants, both Lithuanians and Belgians, by moving and working into the other European countries, encountered differences and new situations both in their living and working environments. The mostly mentioned differences concerning work were the different way and attitudes to work than in their own country, which was expressed by saying “less stress and competition” (4th and 7th interviews), “no cooperation, individual work” (1st interview), “attitude to the worker, asking questions” (4th interview), “democracy in decision making” and “flexibility in working hours” (7th interview), also various strategies for motivation in the work.

Concerning the adaptation to a new country and efforts to create their own social network, the experiences of Belgian and Lithuanian workers were very different and individual. However, the emphasize of language skills was very important criteria of involvement to a local community. Also, the positive attitude towards a country helps for adaptation - “accept culture and things as they are” (3rd interviewee), “to assume that this is a right way of doing this” (1st interviewee), “do not be ill disposed towards differences” (8th interviewee), “let the new things happen, get some experience and bring them back” (4th interviewee). Lithuanians emphasized the need to have activities within the local Lithuanian community or to make contacts with their nationals also residing in the same foreign country (5th, 6th, 7th interviewees). On the contrary, Belgian people, participated in the interviews, did not mention the need to come into contact with Belgians residing and working in a foreign country. However, one Belgian expressed the need for maintaining the traditions and identity of the native country (4th interviewee).

Suggestions to improve the European system for labour migration.

Belgians, as European Union citizens, have been having the right of free movement for work purposes in another member states and were using some services or information the EU provides concerning issues of labour migration, offered some suggestions to improving the European issues on work mobility. An interviewee, who has been working in five member states during his over thirty years internationally working career, expressed the opinion that the EURES (European Employment Services) services were very helpful but still a lot of improvements have to be done in the field of labour mobility. He

proposed the establishment of a cross-checking agency for people working internationally. It would be one office, which would deal with the issues of registering, health and social insurance, would provide proper information and consultations concerning financial and taxation questions and all the issues concerning the labour migration. Also, one professional language should be used in order to avoid misunderstandings between the countries and to avoid many bureaucratic procedures and to save time as well. The same need to have one European agency co-ordinating and managing issues on labour migration was expressed by another Belgian interviewee, who did a five years seasonal job in Italy and experienced delays of transferring documents.

5. Conclusions and suggestions

Migration periods, which Europe experienced after 2nd World War, are partly similar to Lithuania as well. Lithuanian citizens, experienced exiling to penal servitude in Siberia and Germany during the war, Soviet Union occupation and its residents flow to the country, did not have a right to move freely, the movement was even restricted until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

After the re-independence of Lithuania in 1990, the emigration flow began to Western European countries, and, on the other hand, Lithuanian citizens, resided during soviet times in European countries or USA, came back as well. After the re-independence of the state, Lithuanians had the opportunities to work in another European country intermediating of the public employment services in Lithuania, which were assisting people to find a job in the countries having bilateral agreements, also for season work, au-pair or temporary jobs in the different countries. On the other hand, re-independence and the possibility to travel without visas, especially to West European countries, caused the wish to go and work abroad, especially staying illegally longer in a foreign country.

Recently, after accession into the European Union and partly free borders for labour mobility, the big interest in migrating to the old member states is foreseen. Especially it may be a tempting opportunity for skilled, young individuals. On the other hand, transitional periods fully implement the right of free movement during 7 years. It means, that only few countries (UK, Ireland) fully opened the boarders to the new member states.

Concerning Lithuania, it may encounter both the positive and negative effects of free movement of workers. On one hand, the unemployment rate because of emigration would be lower and the state would save money instead of paying benefits. On the other hand, Lithuania may loose young skilled specialists, after the finishing their studies leaving to other European countries to work. Beside this, less payments will be collected for the social security fund. However, it is predicted that after some years the economical conditions should be more equal in the new member states compared to the old member states, which means, people who would stay in their native country should have more advantages in the time being than those who are migrating for a work purpose now.

European Employment Services (EURES) implementing the European citizenship right of free movements of workers provide people, willing to move and work in another country in EEA, with various information about living and working conditions, employment issues etc. Belgium has a big experience in the field of free movement of workers and a wide EURES network in the country, connecting public employment services, employers' organisations and trade unions. Besides this, EuresChannel, coordinating mobility in the cross-border region, is established. On the contrary, EURES-advisors network in Lithuania has just been created and EURES-advisors may be found only in labour exchange offices. From my critical point of view, it would be useful to enlarge the network of EURES-advisers in Lithuania, the firstly, advertising their services and informing people what kind of possibilities and rights they have, where they could receive more detailed information and advise.

Lithuanian trade unions in comparison with Belgian, do not play such important role in labour relations and social policy, but their role is growing as well. At the moment it is hard to imagine EURES-advisors in Lithuanian trade unions. However, it is important to create an accession for the information and advices Eures provides in Lithuanian trade unions as well. Also, taking into consideration the purposes of leaving the native country in order to work in another, Lithuanians mentioned better work conditions, better environment and work culture in other European country. It means, trade unions should play a stronger role fighting and ensuring the proper work conditions in Lithuania and beside this, inform people about working and living conditions in the other member states. From my point of view, the proper information would decrease the superficial knowledge about the conditions in the other country and would inspire people to prepare well before leaving the native country. On the other hand, in terms of the European level, providing extensive information in the native country might prevent social problems, such as unemployment, marginalisation etc. in another host member state.

The another thing, which I would like to suggest to establish in the Lithuanian situation, is the information and advice services in the higher education institutions. Of course, there are many possibilities for students to go to another country for a while (for example, Erasmus/Socrates programme, Leonardo, AIESECC, Work and Travel etc.) during their study period, but I think it is necessary to inform young graduates about possibilities and legal ways to find a job in the other country. Also, providing the legal and detailed information about working in the other European countries is necessary ensure and prevent human trafficking, which is occurring in Lithuania as well as in the other Baltic States. On the other hand, the state in order to avoid brain drain from Lithuania should support and encourage big leading Lithuanian companies to employ young graduates or to establish traineeships programs.

Taking into the consideration the experience of Belgian people, who have been working in the other European states and who participated in the interview, we can make a conclusion that the existing free movement of workers is a general idea and a right provided by the European Community. The reality, especially obvious in cross-border regions, is different. Practically, there are many differences between legislation, social and health security systems, taxation systems in every European country. Of course, the main idea and right exist, but in order to use the right of free labour mobility, a person is obliged to follow the national laws of the country. Otherwise, he/ she can encounter a situation, when he/ she will not be accessed to the rights of social and health security or will have problems of paying taxes in the wrong way. Also, according to the interviewed people, there is a lack of a co-ordination of the whole system of labour mobility. There was a need to establish one managing and co-ordinating agency on the European level expressed. The agency, perceived as a cross-checking table, benchmarking system, would take care of all documents and issues (health and social security, taxation etc.) concerning labour mobility. It is especially indispensable for people working internationally.

For example, EuresChannel organisation was established to co-ordinate the cross-border region of Belgium, France and UK. Issues of cross-border work for Lithuania, having frontiers with Latvia, Byelorussia, Poland and Kaliningrad (Russia), are not very actual at the moment. On the other hand, especially after the enlargement of the European Union, the labour mobility may occur between Baltic States. Taken into the consideration the language differences, it will not be very extensive, however, the people having managerial positions may move to work from one country to another. Concerning labour mobility in the Baltic States, it is significant to have specialized information about health and social security schemes, taxation issues in these countries. From my point of view, some problems concerning social and health security, taxation and other issues may occur after some years, when people will have bigger experience in moving to another countries.

According to the practical experience of people who have been working in the other European country, besides the need to find as much detailed information as possible, the language knowledge of

that country is strongly emphasized. Knowing the language is a big advantage, which come from defending ones own rights, gaining more experience and promotion in the working place, also entering into social relations and creating ones own social network in a foreign country, which is very important. Also, the positive attitude to a host country is necessary in order to adapt and be welcome there. On the other hand, experience in working and living abroad give a broader and more open understanding on the cultures, which means both personal development such as flexibility, adaptability and advantages in professional field - creativity, new ideas, understanding of the other markets and needs, people's behaviour and cultural differences.

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