

EVOLUTION OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET IN THE EU COUNTRIES

Prof. Ing. Magdaléna Přívarová, CSc.
University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia

ABSTRACT

The migrant's integration onto the labour market is an important problem for every immigration country. Having a job constitutes the main source of revenue for immigrants and contributes to foster their integration inside society for example by facilitating access to decent housing, by fostering interactions with other people on the job place, by accelerating the learning of language in the host country. Active participation in the labour market is also necessary to assure that the population of the host country accepts more immigrants. The paper begins by examining immigrants' skills. It then examines the situation of immigrants in the labour market and analyses the development of their employment and unemployment rates as well as the development of indicators relating to exclusion from the labour market - long-term unemployment. It continues by examining characteristics of jobs occupied by immigrants: types of contracts and level of qualification required for those jobs. It also examines the evolution of the over-qualification process. Two methods will be used to evaluate the results of the target group (i.e. immigrants) compared to the results of the reference group (i.e., those born in the host country): calculate the gaps between both results (presented in percentage points) and establish changes in percentage points in 2007 and 2017. Statistical data show that in every country of the EU, differences in the labour market exist between nationals and foreigners. Integration strategies in the labour market can help to guarantee equality of chances.

Keywords: migrant, integration, labour market, EU countries

INTRODUCTION

Humans live within a society and their integration inside of it is stronger if they create links with various social groups (family, school, company) which are part of it. In European societies, working is a general activity that contributes to the constitution of a social link and social cohesion.

The question of individual integration on the labour market is even more important concerning migrants, because work constitutes the main source of revenue of most migrants. In this context, we can consider the total exclusion of migrants from the labour market as the main obstacle for integration. However, legal access to the labour market, under rational conditions, helps to prevent clandestine work and migrants' exploitation.

Nevertheless, integrating migrants in the labour market is not important only on the economic point of view. It also contributes to foster their integration in the society as a whole, for example by facilitating access to living places, contacts with the native population, etc. [1].

Yet, in most EU countries, migrants have worse results on the job level than natives (see below).

MAIN DETERMINANTS FOR MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION ON THE LABOUR MARKET

We can divide determinants affecting migrants' integration on the labour market into individual determinants (which means sociodemographic characteristics of migrants) and institutional determinants (integration strategies on the labour market).

Sociodemographic characteristics of migrants

Concerning sociodemographic characteristics, we can see that in most EU countries, the employment rate for migrant women is below the employment rate for native women. The causes for this situation are plenty. We can mention among them two which are especially accurate. First, a lot of migrant women were motivated to come to foreign countries to join their husbands (so the main motivation was not working). Secondly, in their origin country, the women's employment rate is generally very low.

Amongst these sociodemographic characteristics, the education level plays an important role. Migrants, in general, are overrepresented among people having an education level below the second cycle of secondary studies. In many countries, a non-neglecting proportion of this population didn't reach the first cycle of secondary studies, generally considered as the minimum level to be operational on the labour market [4].

The part of immigrant population having a weak education level represents a third of immigrants in the whole EU – 39% of immigrants coming from countries outside the EU, and about 26% of people born inside EU – against 23% people born in the country. We count 13 million immigrants having a weak education level inside EU. They are more than their pairs graduates from superior studies (11 million people, which makes 19% of the total population).

Immigrants having a high education level are plenty in countries like Poland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. In traditional immigration European countries, on the opposite, as for South Europe and Swede, immigrants are mainly over-represented among people having a weak education level, their part being higher than 35% in South European countries, in Belgium and France. In EU countries, 12% of people born in foreign countries have a very weak education level (15% among immigrants born outside EU), against 5% of native people [5].

The part of superior graduates amongst immigrants has grown of 7 percentage points for the last ten years in EU (see table 1). In half of countries, however, this rise has been weaker than the native people one. It was most pronounced in Poland, in the United Kingdom and in Luxembourg. These increases are mainly due to the fact that recent immigrants have higher education levels than ancient immigrants, in almost the totality of the country.

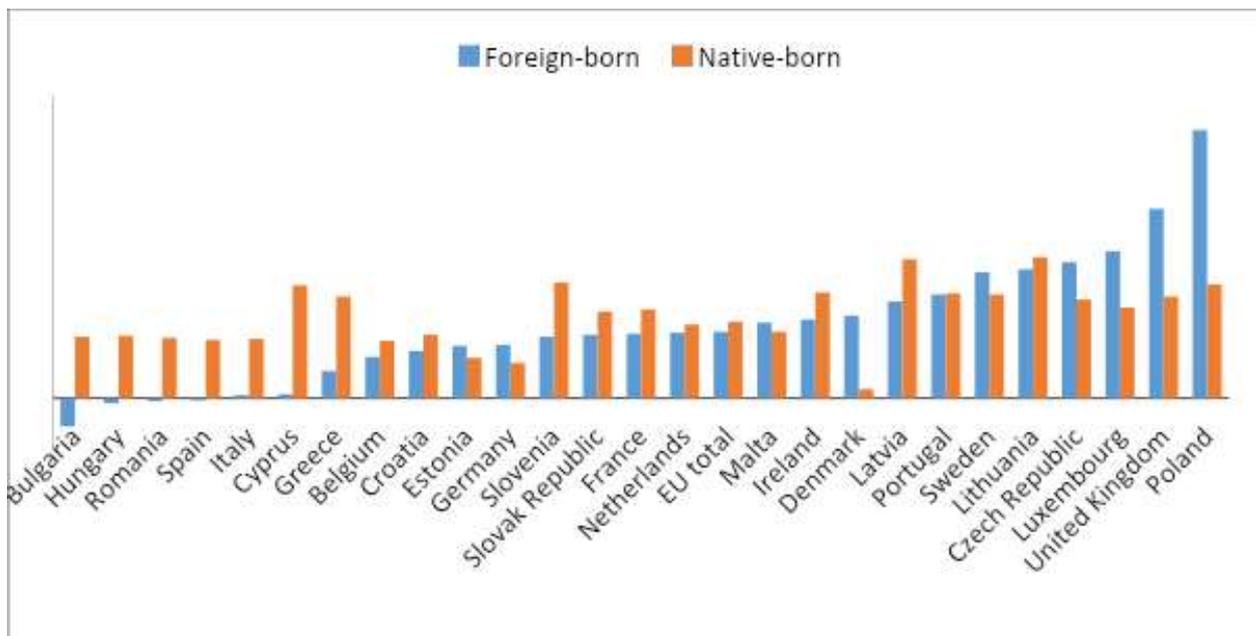


Figure 1 – Changes in the share of the highly qualified

Changes in percentage points, 15 to 64 year-old, 2007 to 2017

Source: Own elaboration based on the Eurostat data

Language mastery in the host country is the main skill immigrants need to come on the job market. Two thirds of people born in foreign countries who live in an EU country declare having at least a good mastery of the language. Nearly 30% of immigrants have the host country's language as a mother tongue.

To facilitate the learning of the host country's language to immigrants having limited resources, it is necessary to offer them a linguistic formation financed by public funds. Most of EU countries now propose such formations. In this context, we can explore the case of Sweden. In this country, migrant workers have the right to learn Swedish during their working hours.

In most other countries, like Italy or Spain, language formations and social integration systems for migrants and their participation to common life are taken care by local collectivities or by non-governmental organizations, sometimes financed by the state.

Linguistic skills go further than mastery of the host country's language. Immigrants use daily more languages than native people. Within the EU, 76% immigrants master quite well at least one foreign language, against only 52% native people.

After the worldwide economic crisis, the unemployment rate has increased in the whole EU. It has however fallen back today. However, this recovery was less profitable for immigrants than for natives. South European countries having a lot of recent immigrants and lower education levels – for example Spain, Greece, or Italy – have been more damaged by the crisis, with Ireland.

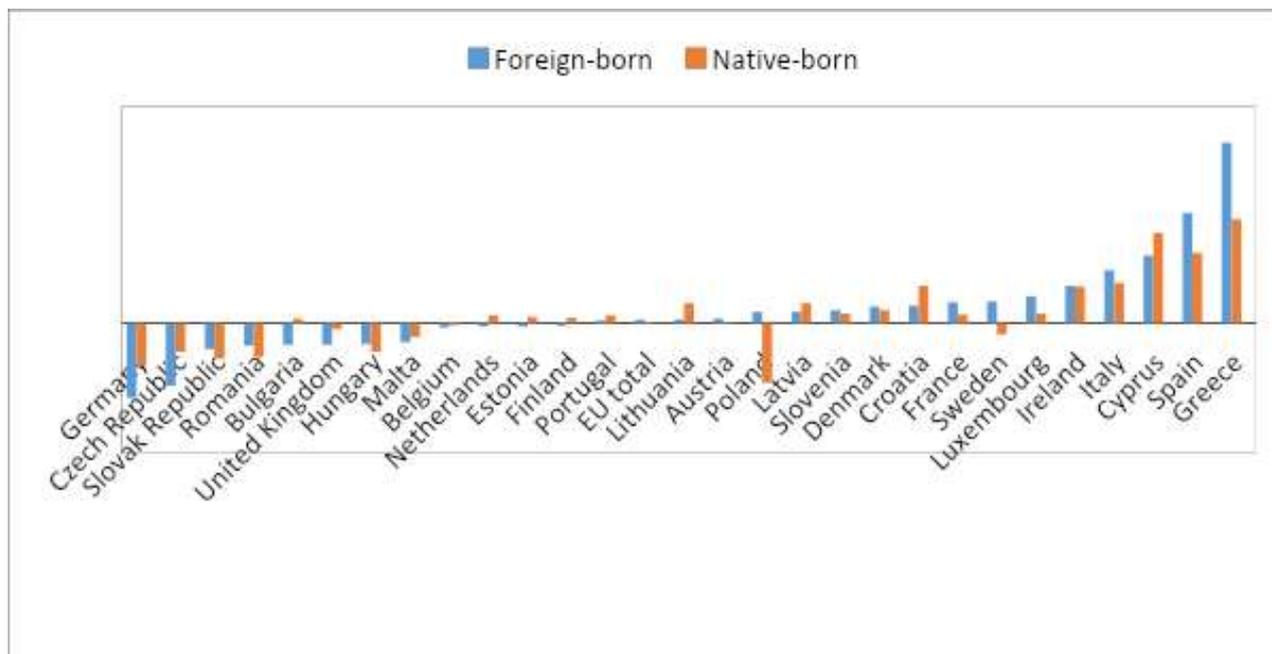


Figure 2 – Changes in the unemployment rates

Changes in percentage points, 15 to 64 year-old, 2007 to 2017

Source: Own elaboration based on the Eurostat data

Ten years ago, immigrants were less susceptible than native people to be jobless more than 12 months, in EU countries. Long lasting unemployment rate is now similar to native’s one, after a rise of 7 percentage points in the EU, which represents three times more than the one of native people. The proportion of immigrants being long lasting jobless, among all jobless population, has grown of more than 20 points in countries which were strongly hit by the worldwide economic crisis, such as Ireland, Latvia, Greece and Spain. This proportion has significantly dropped in a few countries only, like Estonia and Czech Republic. Long Lasting unemployment is more frequent among people born in foreign countries in two thirds of EU countries, especially Nordic countries. In Denmark, Sweden or Lithuania, this rate is higher from more than 10 percentage points than the one for native people. On the opposite, jobless people born in foreign countries suffer less from long lasting unemployment than people born in South European countries, Ireland and United Kingdom.

Inside the EU, 15% people born in foreign countries working have a temporary job, against 12% native workers. In the EU, the proportion of temporary workers is even higher amongst immigrants coming from outside the EU (18%).

Likewise, in about half EU countries, the proportion of temporary workers born in foreign countries is higher of at least 5 points than native people and this gap is even more important in Nordic countries and traditional immigration destination having a lo of immigrants with weak education levels. This gap is also important in Spain, Greece, and Poland. On the opposite, temporary work represents less than 10% migrants’ employment in most of Central or Eastern Europe, and in European countries having recently welcomed a lot of migrants having high education levels.

In EU countries, 20% of migrant workers have low-level jobs, or “elementary professions”, against 8% natives. Indeed, in almost all countries, migrant workers concentrate of low-level

jobs. In South Europe (except Portugal), at least 30% migrants have such jobs, which represents three times native people.

Only in Portugal, Malta and in several Central European countries (like Bulgaria and Slovakia) migrants are not overrepresented in elementary professions. In these countries, migrants are more to occupy high-level jobs than native people, the gap reaching no less than 10 percentage points in Poland.

In the whole EU, more than a third of migrants with a high education level are downgraded in the job they occupy – a rate higher of 13 percentage points than native EU people (see Figure 3).

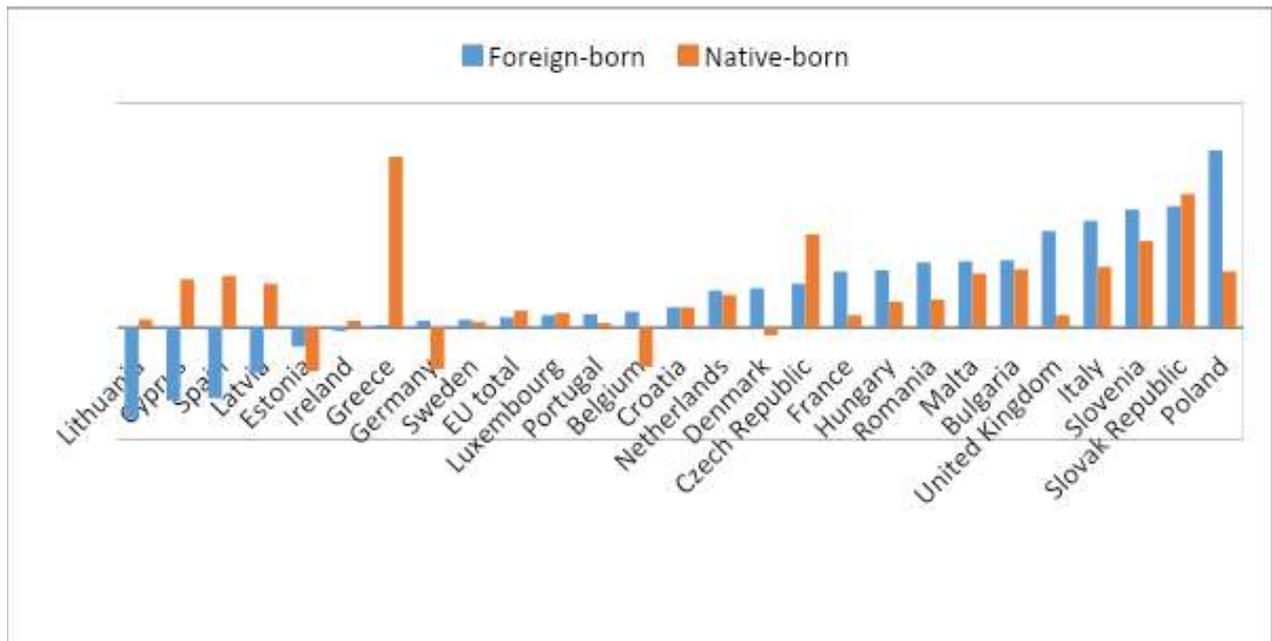


Figure 3 – Changes in the over-qualification rates

Changes in percentage points among highly qualified, 15 to 64 year-old, 2007 to 2017

Source: Own elaboration based on the Eurostat data

Migrants recently arrived are particularly touched by downgrading, with a rate higher of 7 percentage points to settled migrants in the EU. However, even settled migrants living in their host country for at least 10 years have a downgrading rate higher than 6 points than native people. Another group very reached by downgrading problem is people born in foreign countries and graduated in foreign countries. The downgrading rate of foreign-graduated migrants is twice higher than their graduated pairs in South Europe, Nordic countries, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

In most South European countries and Baltic countries, native people have more risk to be downgraded than before the crisis, while this problem seems to reach less migrants. That could be due to the fact that downgraded migrants have lost their job before the crisis, which reduced their downgrading rate but increased their unemployment rate [3].

Integration strategies on the labour market

Among EU countries, huge differences between national immigration policies exist. We can mention policies having a negative effect on integration. For example, in Austria (but also in Slovakia) several measures create a lack of safety for the resident status in case of unemployment. Being jobless for a long time leads to a no-renewal of the residence permit, which means, to a forced return into the origin state. This measure brings an important pressure on the worker losing his job. He must find a new job very fast and very often he has to accept any job he is proposed, even if it has a low salary and doesn't match with his formation or with his expectations.

Other countries have policies encouraging immigration. Among them, we can mention programs allowing migrants a true integration (for example, language formation programs).

We can remark that integration strategies for migrants on the labour market imply a large amount of measures [2]. These measures include, amongst others, a better adequacy between migrants' competencies and jobs thanks to more efficient evaluation and foreign competencies recognition procedures, and to the implementation of active policies for the labour market [6].

In the context of foreign diplomas recognition, we have to mention that recently, a lot of EU countries have adopted measures fostering the immigration of highly qualified workers (EU Blue Card).

CONCLUSION

Active participation in the labour market is necessary to assure social cohesion and so that the host country population accepts more migrants.

We can say that the unemployment rate is an indicator (quite viable) putting in evidence difficulties to integrate migrants onto the labour market.

We can see that in all EU countries, except Czech Republic, the unemployment rate for migrants is higher than the one for natives. In Austria, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden, the unemployment rate is even twice higher than the one for natives.

What are the causes of this situation? First of all, they are types of jobs occupied by migrants: very often, they are less stable and require low qualifications, which means that they are more sensitive to the economic situation. Secondly, migrants work very often in sectors very sensitive to conjuncture, for example the building sector.

Further, according to recent statistical data, in every country welcoming an important migrant population, migrants having a high education level have lower employment rates than native populations. Moreover, about 35% EU people with tertiary education are employed in low – or middle-level professions. This phenomenon represents a loss for mobile workers themselves and for destination and origin countries. This leads us to consider that qualifications and professional experience obtained in foreign countries are significantly under-evaluated on the labour market.

We can explain this situation partly by the fact that employers sometimes have the feeling that diplomas from foreign countries are not fully "equivalent" to those obtained in the national area. Moreover, Language mastery in the host country is considered as the key factor if the job

requires a high level of education. For these reasons, migrant in most EU countries are touched a disproportional way by the phenomenon of “overqualified” – which means the fact, for highly qualified people, to have a low – or middle-qualified jobs. In this context we have to say that actually a lot of native workers also are in an “overqualified” situations. This information is very important to avoid too optimistic expectations from high qualified migrants.

Statistical data show too that important differences exist between migrants’ integration policies for the labour market. Each European state has to take into consideration its own special conditions.

Integration strategies in the labour market can help to guarantee equality of chances.

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