

The Eastern Migration and the Labor Markets in the EU: The Case of Romanian Workers in Spain

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Abstract. This paper focuses on one of the most debated issues in the context of Eastern enlargement, id est the 'danger' of expected massive East-West migration, and its impact on the labor market in the EU.

During the 90's, a large number of immigrants arrived in Western European states from the Eastern part of the continent. Some factors induced a negative perception on East-West migration shared by the public opinion. We refer to the relatively high rate of unemployment in the EU countries, while the presence of immigrants is seen as a source of pressure on labor market supply. To address the public opinion's fears, transitional arrangements concerning free movement of workers from the new 8 Central and Eastern members have been implemented. Similar arrangements are being concluded between each EU country and the future new members -Romania and Bulgaria – on a bilateral base.

The free movement of labor is one of the four pillars of EU Internal Market. It was assumed that the right of free movement would be followed by appropriate geographical and occupational mobility. The real picture is very different from what was expected and, in spite of a high unemployment rate, the intra-EU mobility continues to be very low.

Given the above mentioned, the East-West migration and its impact on the labor market have to be examined in the context of the paradoxical situation in the EU countries: unemployment and shortages in labor supply. Most recent studies clearly showed that the enlargement had a positive impact on the EU labor market, and the flow of workers from the East did not crowd out the workers in the host countries. Put it differently, the migrants fit more the labor market demand, probably on a complementary base.

Our micro-study intended to reveal the role of Romanian migrant workers in one of the most dynamic EU economies. To this end we carried out a research based on questionnaires. Given the limited number of responses, our findings cannot be generalized. Still, they complement the knowledge on this issue.

The paper is structured as follows: the first chapter makes a short literature review concerning the immigration and the EU labor market; based on statistics, the second chapter analyses several aspects of the mobility issue in the EU labor market, while the core of the paper is a case study, based on questionnaires, on Romanian workers in Spain, illustrating the immigrants' role in one of the most dynamic economies. The last part concludes.

Keywords: *labor market, mobility, and Eastern migration*

Introduction

During the '90s a large number of immigrants arrived in Western European states from the Eastern part of the continent, either following the new atmosphere of 'freedom' and openness, or trying to escape from the political situation in former Yugoslavia, which turned into a bloody conflict. Anyhow, there are several facts and factors that induced a negative perception on East-West migration. Firstly, we would mention the relatively high rate of unemployment in the EU countries, and consequently, the presence of immigrants generally seen as a kind of source for jobs' thieving, even in the case of legal immigrants. When the enlargement issue became a clear perspective, Eastern immigration turned into a serious matter of concern. It is also important to stress that the EU citizens' perception was different from the one shared by the business environment (see, the report provided by PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2004¹⁶). Still, to address the public opinion's fears, and certainly for political reasons, not only for economic ones, transitional arrangements concerning the free movement of workers from the new 8 Central and Eastern members have been concluded. After two years of working restrictions, the fears proved to be not only exaggerated, but a barrier to a better functioning of the labor market, as well. No invasion of migrants occurred. The recent attitude reconsideration of the various EU countries is a recognition of the 'migrant workers' positive role in the EU economy. It is also the time to call the Eastern labor movement, 'mobility', as it is in fact, at least when it is fuelled by economic reasons, and being under legal arrangements. The meaning is not a semantic one, but the expression of a certain treatment – discriminatory or non-discriminatory one.

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¹⁶ PriceWaterHouse Coopers (2004) - *Managing mobility matters - a European perspective*

1. The labor market– the weakest pillar of the EU’s Single Market

As it is well known, the free movement of labor is one of the EU’s Internal Market four pillars. It was assumed that the right of free movement would be followed by appropriate geographical and occupational mobility, and that an integrated EU labor market will contribute to the adjustment of certain economic structural de-equilibrium. The smoothly functioning of the monetary union itself is mainly based on the single market with completed four freedoms: goods, services, capital, and persons.

In spite of difficulties, major steps have already been undertaken regarding the first three freedoms, but the workers’ mobility is still lagging behind. Therefore, the real picture is very different from what was expected and, in spite of high unemployment rate, the mobility continues to be very low¹⁷. The attitude towards mobility differs among professional and age groups, and also from one country to another. But, for the EU as a whole, the low mobility is a real matter of concern, and several measures to improve the situation have been already taken. A lot of barriers might explain the situation. Among them, there are usually mentioned: linguistic barriers, cultural differences, fear of mobility’s negative impact on family life, and even lack of mobility culture: high risk and incertitude aversion, etc.¹⁸. Consequently, in the case of Western Europeans we may talk about a *propensity to immobility*.

2. Eastern migration is filling somehow the mismatches in the labor market

The issue of Eastern enlargement’s impact on the Western migration flow was widely examined under various aspects such as changes in labor supply and in employment rate, changes in wage variables, if any, etc.¹⁹ Studies in this field put into evidence the causes, which might be various mismatches between supply and demand²⁰; and came to the conclusion that the amount of Eastern immigration is

¹⁷ Špidla (2006), in http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/workersmobility2006/int_spidla_en.htm, downloaded in April 2006;

¹⁸ Euro-barometer (2006) - Survey on geographical and labor market mobility - *Europeans and mobility: first results of wide survey*, in http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/workersmobility2006/int_spidla_en.htm;

¹⁹ Ockmann (2005);

²⁰ Boswell and Straubhaar (2005)

not a real issue; on the contrary, the lack of labor force will be a real problem in the near future. There were also studies that draw attention on the fact that EU lacks a pro-active immigration policy and a system to identify the future shortages on the labor market and on qualifications²¹.

The East-West migration and its impact on the labor market have to be examined in the context of the paradoxical situation in the EU countries: on one side, relatively high unemployment rate and, on the other side, shortages in labor supply.

Chronologically, the literature in the field might be split into two components:

1. The first one focused on forecasting the potential migration flows induced by the first Eastern enlargement, and to anticipate their impact. Econometric models and empirical surveys tried to estimate the size of migration flows based on variables such as GDP/ inhabitant, or labor market situation (unemployment rate) in the CEECs.²² The results clearly showed the decreasing number of Eastern migrants along with GDP/inhabitant gap reduction, FDI inflow in CEECs and job creation, but also because of negative demographic changes in CEECs. Moreover, finding and employing workers will become a real problem in the future;

In spite of evidence, and in spite of clear labor shortages in certain sectors (low skilled sector: agriculture, constructions, cleaning services etc.; highly skilled sectors: IT, medicine, technical and economic engineering etc.)²³, and the difficulties faced by the social security system, restrictions – as transitional arrangements - were imposed to limit immigration from new member states;

2. The second component, a more recent one, made an evaluation on Eastern migration issue two years after EU's enlargement and of migration restrictions imposed on a bilateral base. The latest EU Commission Report on impact of workers' mobility from the new EU members clearly showed that the enlargement had a positive impact on the EU's labor market, and the flow of

²¹ Munz (2004)

²² Boeri and Brueker (2000); Fassmann and Munz (2001);Kunz (2002); Brueker (2003), Kelo and Wachter (2004)

²³ See, the EURES portal that provide information about the labour needs in each EU country. The portal is accessed mainly by the highly skilled persons, which explains the poor demand for low skilled jobs.



workers from the East did not crowd out the workers in the host countries²⁴. On the contrary, they played an important role in several sectors as it was revealed recently by the *Manpower Report 2006*. The fear for social dumping might be considered exaggerated. To this, one might add the official opinions and evaluations made in many EU countries (Great Britain, Spain, Italy) concerning the immigrants' contribution to the activity in various economic and social sectors (agriculture, constructions, health care, domestic service or IT), and to their contribution to the budget (as tax payers). Moreover, the most open countries, but also the most interested in taking advantage of highly skilled immigrants, launched initiatives in order to attract selectively the immigrants: the points system in the Immigration Act (UK); the green card for IT specialists (Germany, Ireland) etc. A new orientation is also promoted at the EU level. Still, given the fragmentation of labor market and the specific structural problems in each EU countries, it is difficult to imagine one single immigration policy.²⁵

Since the perspective of an increased intra-EU geographical mobility doesn't seem very realistic, we think that EU should focus on promoting more occupational mobility (as an instrument to face the challenges of dynamic economies), and on taking into consideration, as a 'compensatory' measure, the regional development and capital mobility.

Concerning the non-EU migrants, the results show that the immigration was more important than intra-EU mobility. Put it differently, the migrants fit more the labor market demand, probably on a complementary base. Since the migration waves' from Romania and Bulgaria already took place, and given the experience of the other 8 CEE new members, transitional arrangements seem to be unnecessary. Despite the evidence, several EU countries reconsidered their initial options for opening their labor markets for Romania and Bulgaria and announced the launching of 2 year transitional period. In the case of EU members we refer to Great Britain, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark and France. In opposition, opting for free access, we find countries like: Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Finland. Also, very recently, a non-EU member, Iceland, announced its decision to limit the access for workers from the two mentioned countries. Italy is still undecided, but there are chances to condition

²⁴ COM(2006), *Report on the Functioning of the Transitional Arrangements set out in the 2003 Accession Treaty*, Brussels, 2006

²⁵ Turmann (2004)

the free access by a strong partnership to combat the illegal migration coming from Romania²⁶.

3. Case study: Romanian workers on the Spanish labor market

3.1. Spanish labor market – short description

The Spanish labor market has registered important changes in the past 4-5 years, especially because of the increased insertion of women into the labor market, and also because of the high number of immigrants. Several indicators may complete the picture of the labor market situation in 2003.

Table 1: Labor Market Indicators (EU/Spain)

Labor market indicators EU/Spain	The active population rate	Employment rate for older people	Temporary employment	Unemployment rate
EU	62 .9	40.2	12.8	9.1
Spain	59 .7	40.8	30.6	11.3

Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE - El Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas)

As one might see, the indicators of Spanish labor market are rather close to the EU average, except for the temporary employment, which is much higher, due to the share of the agriculture sector in the Spanish economy.

Spanish emigration has played, from different points of view, a very important role in the history of the Spanish population, as a response to the governmental policies or the economic forces failure to provide Spaniards with a decent standard of living²⁷.

Paradoxically, having a rather high unemployment rate, Spain is one of the most important receiving countries. It means that there are sectors in need for workers, and immigration is mainly accepted on a complementary base. According to Padron Municipal Statistics (Local register of inhabitants) there were 3.690.000 foreigners in Spain (January, the 1st, 2005), 1.5 million persons more than in the

²⁶ Information provided by *www.euractiv.ro*, 30 Oct. 2006

²⁷ Carmen Egea Jiménez and Vicente Rodríguez Rodríguez - *Return migration scenarios of retired migrants from the province of Jaén, Spain*

Ministry of Internal Affairs statistics²⁸. This means that an important number is still represented by irregular immigrants.

With a continuous trend of GDP growth, over the EU's average, and a decrease in the level of unemployment, Spain is, in some respect, still considered a country of emigration, generally for unskilled labor. However, according to **Padron Municipal**²⁹, we witness an important change in the stock of immigrants, from less than 1 million in 1999 to more than 3.6 millions in 2005! Spain is also considered to be one of the main important "gates" towards the EU for people coming from the Third World, with the main flows of immigrants coming from Latin America, from Africa, and only in the last years from Eastern Europe.

If we refer to the labor market we need to take into account the internal migration, the return migration (Spain is a country registering a high rate of return migration³⁰), and the immigrants, as well. The legal immigrants enter Spain by the use of two main methods- the annual quota and the temporary work permits for seasonal workers.

To address the problems the labor market was confronted with, but also to address the problems induced by the irregular immigration, the Immigration Act (2004) was amended. Then, a program for legalising the situation of irregular immigrants was introduced in 2005 (this is also called the **Amnesty Program**). On 31st of March 2005, there was a number of 2.054.453 residence permits in Spain, out of which 26% were granted to EU citizens and 9% to non-EU citizens³¹.

As statistics prove³², Spain has a falling birth rate, ageing population and presents the typical segmentation of the labor market for a developed economy in:

- A superior segment, with high salaries and career perspectives, present in fields like IT, banking, financial services, etc in which immigrants work only as exceptions;
- An inferior segment, with low salaries and low career perspectives, in fields like crop collection, constructions, hotel assistance, domestic services, jobs which are lately covered by unskilled immigrants.

²⁸ The "*padrón*" or "*certificado de empadronamiento*" refers to the process of registering with the town hall as a resident of a municipality. The figures are provided by Balch (2005, pp. 5-6)

²⁹ Quoted in Balch (2005)

³⁰ According to J. Adda, Christian Dustmann and Josep Mestresz (2006)- *A Dynamic Model of Return Migration*

³¹ Ibidem p.6-7

³² Eurostat – Structural Indicators, 2005

Within the latter segment, in agriculture, statistics prove a yearly decrease in the number of jobs of about 2.1% starting from 2001. Still, seasonal labor shortages are the reason for attracting immigrants from Eastern Europe. In the same time, in constructions, domestic services and catering there is an important increase in terms of job creation.

3.2. Romanian immigrants on the Spanish labor market

In Spain are registered 550.252 persons (15% out of total number of immigrants) coming from non-EU (Eastern) countries. Out of this number, only 177,863 (9%) are beneficiaries of residence permits. According to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, and Padron Municipal, there were 314.349 Romanian immigrants, which place them on the third place, after the immigrants coming from Morocco and Ecuador. This means that about 57% of Non-EU European Immigrants in Spain are Romanians, a growing community.

There is little and only general information on Romanian immigrants working in the EU countries. Many questions might raise concerning firstly who are they, which are their main reasons for emigration, which is their education level, the training and qualifications, the kind of jobs they have/occupation, their employment status, the way of finding a job in the host country. Some information might be provided by the Romanian Department for Labor Abroad, especially when it is about the migrants getting contracts through the department. The most reliable information might be obtained by a large number of direct interviews. Therefore, only extended empirical research would provide us the real picture of the situation 'sur place'. We only hope to contribute, with a small part, to this picture.

We are also aware of the fact that this research findings should be completed with information on the situation 'at home', the migration impact on the family economic situation (the role of financial and non-financial remittances), on family life, on gender roles etc. Such an extended research has to be an interdisciplinary one, based on a network of research centres specialized in several fields (rural development, macro and micro economy, gender studies, labor market analysis, etc). We support the idea of such a network, due to an important number of PhD students being already involved in migration research.

We chose Spain because of the important number of Romanian immigrants working there (according to estimations, about 25% of total Romanian migrants, which means about 500,000 persons) and also because the attractiveness for Spain as country of destination for Romanian workers is very high (language and culture similarities, rather friendly attitude from Spanish people, networking etc.). The number of Romanian immigrants might increase in the following periods, even if Spain announced its intention to introduce a 2 year transition period for Romanians and Bulgarians, as it was the situation for the 8 CEECs in 2004. As it happened with Romanian migrants to America long time ago, we find Romanian concentrated communities in certain Spanish areas. The aim of the research was also to see the typology of Romanian immigrant worker in Spain, comparing with those in other EU countries.

3.3. Findings from the micro-study

Our research was based on questionnaires addressed to Romanian workers in Spain*. The questionnaire aimed to provide a socio-economic approach, including aspects such as age, reasons of emigration, legal status, kind of jobs, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with there life in Spain, professional and personal relations, identity etc.. For this paper, we have processed only the information regarding the migrant characteristics which are important for the labor market³³. Given the migrants' reluctance to answer to some questions included in the questionnaire, especially if they held an illegal status, and also if their jobs were considered as not to be reported for various reasons, the sample is a small one and the interviewers were randomly selected (69 answers). The sampling has adopted the "snowball" technique. Therefore, we do not claim that the sample is representative of the Romanian population in the respective countries.

* We are grateful to our student Ioana Pop who is working in Spain, and who collected a number of 51 answers, and to a Romanian psychologist who is also working in Spain, and collected 19 questionnaires.

³³ A more detailed analysis was carried out in the paper "Romanian immigrant workers in the Mediterranean area and in Northern Europe – the importance of the cultural background in the integration process" in Campbell, W, Birsan, M, Savulescu Voudouri, Cramarenco R.A *sociological comparative study in Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark* (to be published in VIIIth Congress Cultura Europea, Pamplona , conference proceedings).

Table 2. Number of Romanian workers at different age levels in Spain

Age	No of answers	%
20 – 29	43	62.3
30 – 40	14	20.3
41 – 54	10	14.5
55 and older	2	2.9
Total	69	100

As presented in the table above, the young and very young persons represent more than 80% in our sample, which is above the average figures from the new member states immigration within the EU's internal market. One possible explanation might be the lack of commitment concerning family responsibilities (for the first group), and, on the contrary, the responsibility for the welfare of the families for the second group, but also the need to experience the possibility of working abroad, following almost 50 years of severe restrictions. In the same time, subjects related to these two groups might not have time to build a strong and motivating career at home, so that it is easier for them to choose an alternative abroad.

Table 3. Number of men and women at different age levels

Age	Men		Women	
	No of answers	%	No of answers	%
20 – 29	16	76.2	27	56.3
30 – 40	3	14.3	11	22.9
41 – 54	2	9.5	8	16.7
55 and older	0	0	2	4.2
Total	21	100	48	100

Even though a trend of feminisation of migration is reflected in our sample (65.5 % of total respondents are women), following the general trend in the Spanish immigration³⁴, the percentage of men belonging to the relevant age groups (young and very young) is higher. Still, the percentage of women older than 40 is higher than men's. One explanation may be the structure of the Spanish labor market which offers immigrants jobs in the second sector, mainly agriculture and

³⁴ Balch (2005), pp.11-12

constructions, where the need is for young unskilled men and domestic, caring or tourism related services, where the need is for women.

Table 4. Level of education

	No. of respondents	%
High School	41	59.4
Graduate	14	20.3
Master or PhD	2	2.9
Vocational training / schooling for a particular profession	10	14.5
Other	1	1.4
Student	1	1.4
Total	69	100

High school graduates dominate the sample. Still, graduate and postgraduate levels of education are also important. For the entire group, we might say that the Romanian immigrants in Spain have a good level of education, even though, as table 8 proves, more than half of them work under their qualification level.

Table 5. Reasons for emigration

Reason	No of answers	%
Unemployment	11	15.9
Low salary	22	31.9
Other	36	52.1
No response	0	0
Total	69	100

We were tempted to consider unemployment and low salary as the most important reasons for emigration to Spain. However, the majority of the Romanian workers in the sample gave another reason than unemployment and low salary, without a specific answer. We cannot speculate about this situation but one possible explanation might be the fact that most of them are looking for their first job. Therefore, they were not employed at home and did not have any salary before.

Table 6. Desire to stay longer in country of immigration

Desire to stay longer	No of answers	%
Yes	68	99
No	1	1
Don't know	0	0
No response	0	0
Total	69	100

In our sample, a single person is decided to leave Spain immediately. This doesn't mean that the others opted for *no return* to Romania, but simply for a longer stay, and maybe for a return in the years to come. According to most of the respondents, they intend to return as their reasons for migration disappear. The situation has changed from the beginning of 2006, when the Spanish government started the process of legalizing the status of irregular immigrants, out of which Romanians represent an important group.

As seen in the table below, the percentage of illegal/irregular workers is still high.

Table 7. Legal status

Legitimacy of work	No of answers	%
Legal	47	68.1
Not Legal	22	31.9
Missing	0	0
Total	69	100

Table 8. Working according to own qualification

Qualification	No of answers	%
Own qualification	14	20.3
Lower than own qualification	45	65.2
Other qualification	10	14.5
Job as a student	0	0
Total	69	100

More than 65% of respondents declared that they work under their qualification. It means that the Spanish labor market is open for low skilled jobs,

low paid but probably better than the similar job or similar qualification for a job in Romania. Even indirectly, this means that the economic reason is the real dominant reason influencing the decision to emigrate.

Table 9. Correspondence of salary to kind of work

Correspondence	No of answers	%
Yes	40	58.0
No	27	39.1
Not relevant	0	0
No response	2	2.9
Total	69	100

About two thirds of respondents consider the salary as fair, as long as they compare the salary's level to those paid in Romania for similar jobs. .

Table 10. Ways of finding a job

Ways of finding a job	No of respondents	%
Formal in Romania	2	2.9
Formal in Spain	0	0
Informal in Romania	4	5.8
Informal in Spain	60	87.0
No response / irrelevant	3	4.3
Total	69	100

The way of finding a job is obvious, meaning informal in the country of destination: the network of friends, relatives, persons from the same town/village function as the main means for finding a job in Spain.

Conclusions

The features revealed by our micro study allows us to sketch the profile of the Romanians working and living in Spain – majority: women, young and very young, medium and highly educated, without relevant work experience at home, opting for a long stay and for a possible return to the country of origin, working legally but under their qualification, finding a good match between salary and the

kind of the job performed, generally satisfied with living conditions and professional relations, with the 'new life'.

If we compare this profile to the one identified in Greece³⁵, another Southern country of immigration, we find some similarities and differences: the majority of Romanian immigrants who entered these countries of immigration have a high school diploma and most of them have found a job in an informal way in the country of destination; the majority of respondents in Greece and Spain work under their qualification or in another qualification. As far as the differences are concerned, we found a higher propensity to return home in the case of respondents in Greece once their objective-mainly an economic one- has been fulfilled. The cultural similarities, including the language, may explain why the respondents in Spain opted for a longer stay.

Can we talk about a Southern type of emigration?

The answer is open and depends mostly on the findings concerning the immigrants to other Southern countries, and to comparative studies focused on the Northern countries and the Southern countries, as well.

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³⁵ See Campbell, W, Birsan, M, Savulescu Voudouri, Cramarenco R.- Romanian immigrant workers in the Mediterranean area and in Northern Europe – the importance of the cultural background in the integration process. *A sociological comparative study in Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark*

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