The Experiences of Accession 8 migrants in England: motivations, work and agency

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Aims

The study looks at motivations and experiences of Accession 8 [A8] migrants. This paper questions the usefulness of the homogenising category ‘A8 migrant worker’ as a tool for understanding the diverse experiences of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who have recently come to live and work in the United Kingdom.

Methodology

This qualitative study was carried out in March 2008 in Leeds. In total, 89 people took part in the research. The fieldwork

consisted of:

- a series of group interviews with members of three, newly resident, A8 migrant groups – Polish, Slovak and Slovak Roma migrants
- interviews with 10 key informants, who recruited, employed or acted as community support workers for A8 migrants
- 4 parallel focus group interviews with members of the established West Indian, Pakistani and ‘white’ host communities in neighbourhoods that had recently experienced the arrival of significant numbers of A8 migrants
- 3 focus groups with agencies involved in the provision and/or administration of local public services [for example City Council, primary care trusts, housing providers and schools]

Key issues

The study highlights a number of commonalities among A8 migrants, however it also implies heterogeneity within the group often categorised simply as new A8 migrant workers. Diversity within this group is apparent in respect of 3 particular aspects: the motivations and forms of movement undertaken by A8 migrants; their experiences of work within the UK paid labour market; and the extent to which the experience of migration offers new individual and collective opportunities and potentially enables people to reconfigure aspects of their identity.

Conclusions

The report points out that temporary, circular and/or transitory labour migrants remain an important element of the latest phase of new European migration; however it is increasingly problematic to discuss A8 migration in such a stereotypical manner. The report includes some positive and negative consequences of migration from the migrants' point of view.

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