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Longitudinal Study of Migrant Workers in the East of England 2008 – 2010

Executive Summary

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Executive summary

Introduction

This is the third and final report of the Longitudinal Study of Migrant Workers in the Eastern Region commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (2008 – 2010). Partly funded by the European Social Fund, the study explored the perspectives of migrant workers (and stakeholders) in relation to: factors that influence decisions on coming to the UK and length of stay; barriers to full participation in the regional economy; and, barriers to social inclusion in local communities.

Year 3 of the study conducted (i) 30 semi-structured interviews with European citizens from A2/A8 countries who have arrived in the UK since 2004, (ii) an analysis of eleven Polish blogs and (iii) 11 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in the region (evaluating the findings from the second interim report. The final report presents the data from year 3 and analyses them in the context of the previous years to identify trends regarding decision making on length of stay and barriers to full participation in the regional economy and barriers to social inclusion in local communities. It includes an extensive review of the literature relating to length of stay, summarises the findings of the survey with migrant workers which was carried out in year 1 and 2 (comparing the overall samples of year 1 and year 2 and where relevant the sub-sample of those 50 participants who responded to the year 1 and year 2 survey) and includes 8 case studies to illustrate the experiences and decision-making processes of European citizens from the A8/A2 countries. The final chapter provides an overview of the public policy context (at European, national, and regional levels) and discusses how public policy has impacted on A8 and A2 migrants' living and working in the East of England. The conclusion highlights the main findings from the mixed and multi-method design and provides a list of policy recommendations which relate to the length of stay of migrant workers in the region).

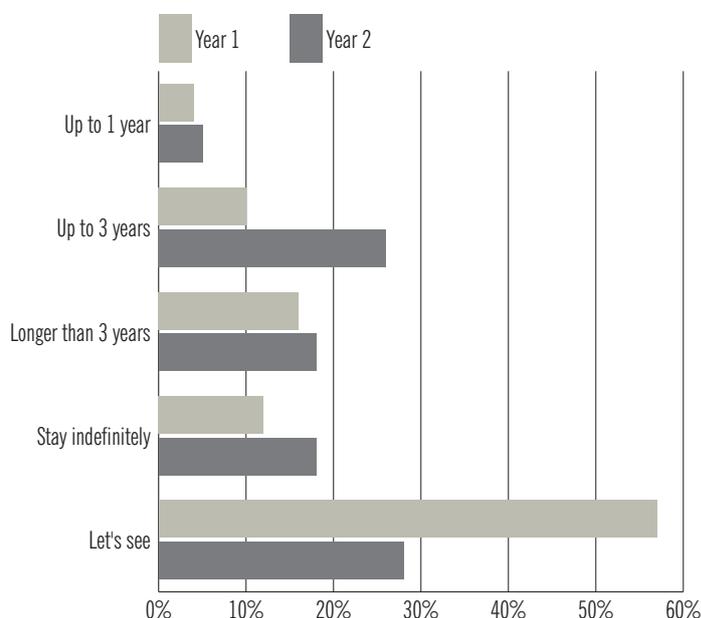
Quantitative findings

The following provides an overview of key quantitative data from year 1 and year 2 looking at length of stay and factors relating to length of stay (e.g. subjective and objective factors, perceptions of the social, economic and political situations in COO and the UK, barriers and aspirations).

Intended LOS

Amongst those who had responded to both years one can see that during the span of one year views on length of stay had become more concrete. While 57% selected in year 1 'I have no specific plans, let's see', in year 2 only 28% had this attitude. Instead, people were more likely to state that they would stay up to three years and slightly more participants also said that they intended to stay indefinitely (see figure E1).

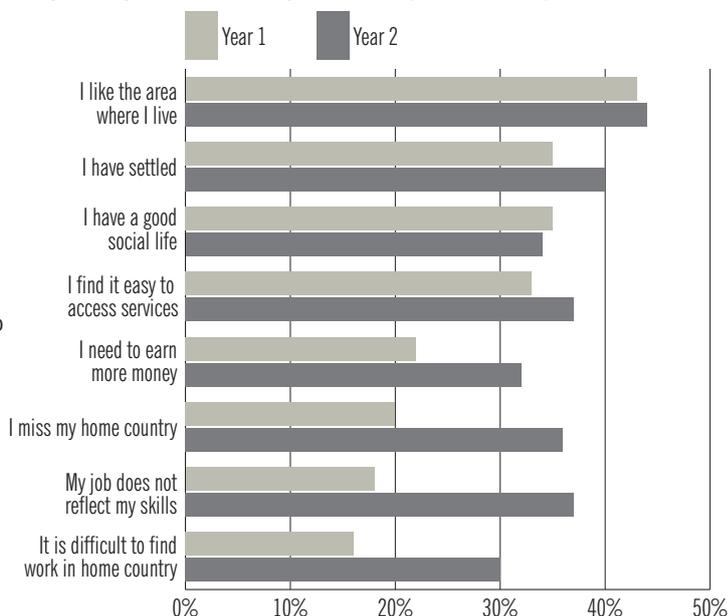
Figure E1:
Intended LOS (participants who responded to year 1 and year 2)



Subjective factors relating to LOS

Participants who responded to both years continued to self-identify the following four factors as being especially important for their decision making (although the ranking changed slightly between year 1 and year 2): 'I like the area where I live'; 'I have settled in the UK'; 'I have a good social life in the UK' and 'I find it easy to access services'. However, in year 2 participants placed more emphasis on the following factors: 'My job does not reflect my skills'; 'I miss my home country'; 'I need to earn more money'; and 'It is difficult to find work in home country' (see figure E2).

Figure E2:
Subjective factors influencing decisions on LOS (participants who responded to year 1 and year 2)



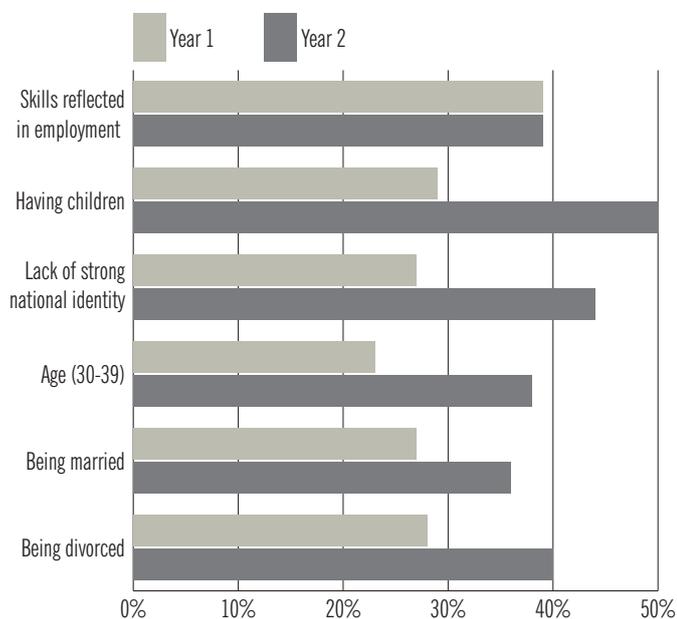
Objective factors relating to LOS

Objective factors showed a link (which was not significant) between certain variables and length of stay. The following objective factors related to a longer stay in the UK (i.e. longer than 3 years or indefinitely; see figure E3).

- Participants who indicated that their skills were reflected in employment were more likely to stay longer than those who did not see their skills reflected.
- Year 2 highlighted that migrants who were older (30–39) were more likely to stay longer (or indefinitely) than those who were younger (20–29); although this finding was not confirmed in year 1.
- Having children made a clear difference and participants with children wanted to stay longer than those without children.
- Those who did not identify strongly with their country-of-origin were also more likely to stay longer compared to those who showed a stronger national identity.
- Respondents who were married or divorced were more likely to stay longer than those who were single or co-habiting.

Figure E3:

Objective factors relating to a long stay (longer than 3 years or indefinite) (year 1, year 2)

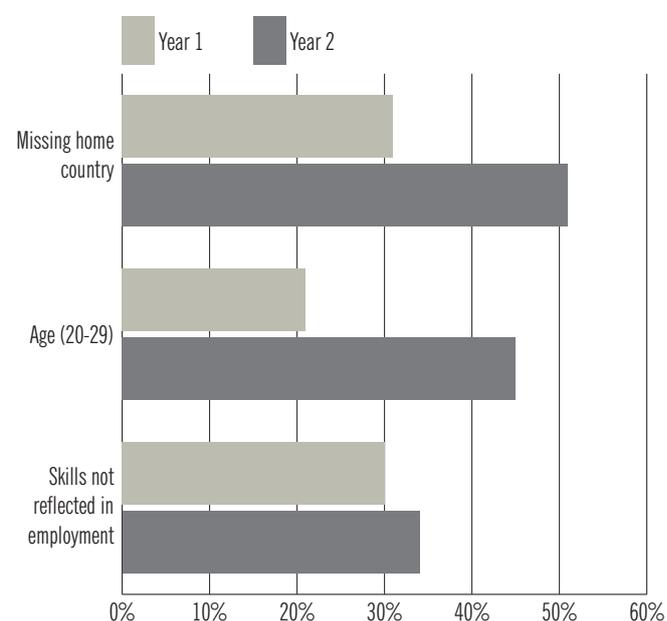


The following objective factors were related to a shorter stay in the UK (i.e. less than 3 years) see figure E4:

- In both years 'missing home' was a strong indicator for a shorter stay.
- The link between a younger age (20–29) and a shorter stay was especially seen in the year 2 sample.
- A non-reflection of skills also led to a shorter stay.

Figure E4:

Objective factors relating to a short stay (shorter than 3 years) (year 1, year 2)



Objective factors influencing a longer and shorter stay than initially planned

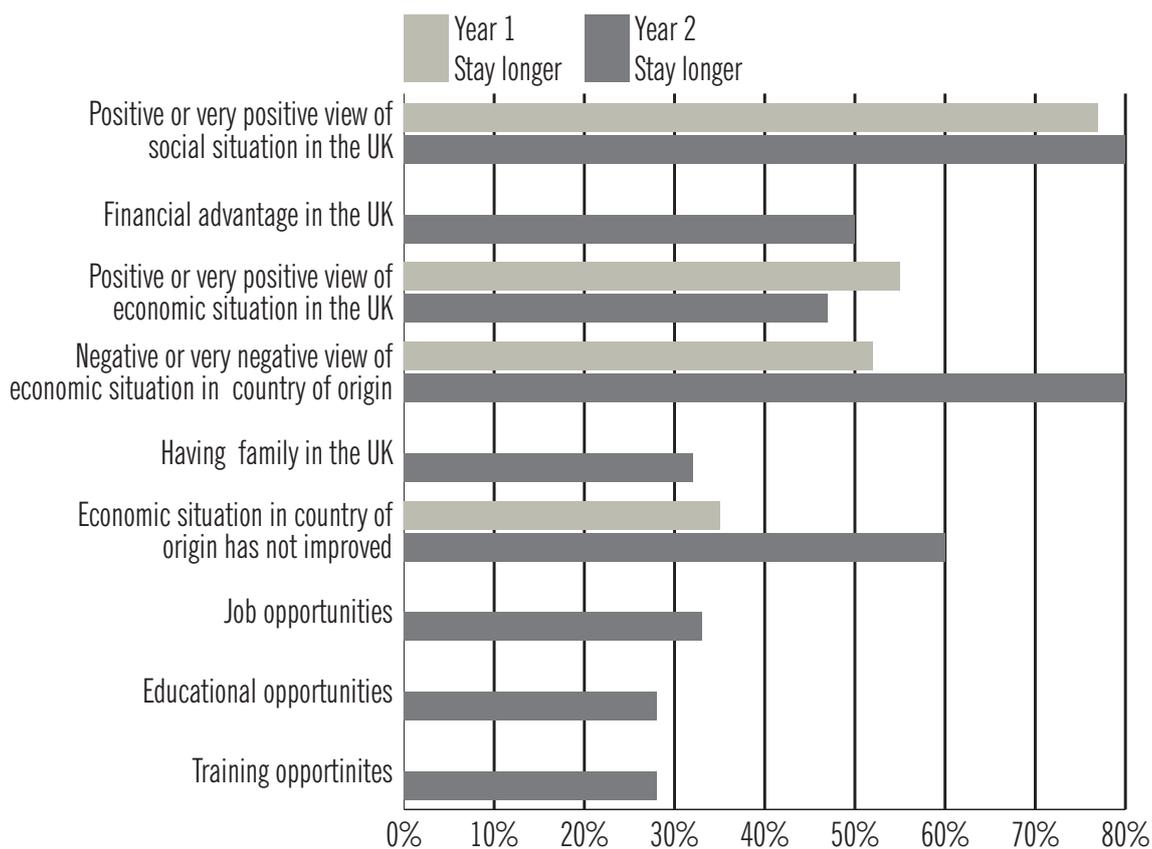
The following factors relate to a longer stay than initially planned (see figure E5).

- The samples from both years showed that the participants who wanted to stay longer had a positive or very positive view of the wider social situation in the UK which was also confirmed by interviews.
- The economic situation in the UK was viewed in a positive or very positive light by about half of the participants who decided to stay longer than initially planned.
- A factor which related to a longer stay (especially in the year 2 sample) was a negative or very negative perception of the economic situation in their home country and the concern that the economic situation in their home country had not improved.

- The year 2 sample showed that 'having a family in the UK' and 'perceiving a financial advantage in the UK' also related to a longer stay.
- A third of those who wanted to stay longer in year 2 said that the perception of the home country had a very strong influence on their length of stay.

Figure E5:

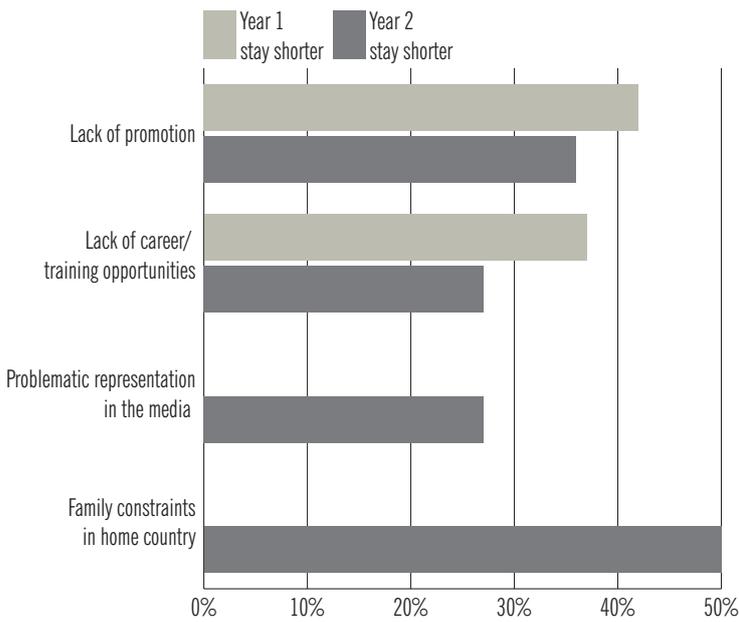
Factors relating to a longer stay than initially planned (year 1, year 2)¹



¹ Some additional questions were added to the year 2 survey following the analysis of year 1 findings and, therefore, not all indicators are comparable with year 1 findings (see also figure E6).

The overall samples from year 1 and year 2 showed that 'lack of promotion' and 'lack of training opportunities' led to a shorter stay. Year 2 findings highlighted that especially family constraints in the home country and the problematic media representation of A8/A2 migrants in the UK influenced a shorter stay in the UK (than initially planned; see figure E6).

Figure E6:
Factors relating to a shorter stay than initially planned (year 1, year 2)²



Perceptions of the economic, political and social situations in country of origin

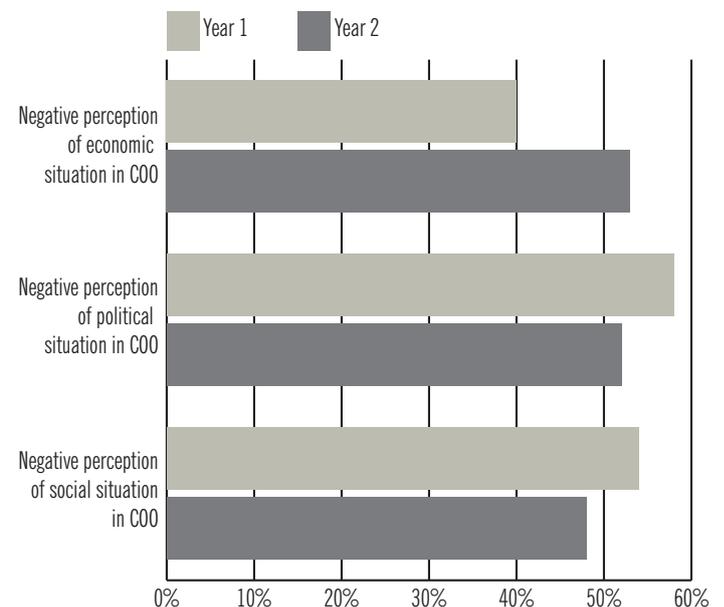
In both years participants of the overall samples expressed negative views regarding the economic situation in their respective home countries with a fairly large number ranking it as being 'negative' or 'very negative'. The overall samples show that perceptions had become more negative by year 2. However, those who responded to both years (with the majority being Polish) had a slightly less negative view of their home country's economic situation by year 2.

Migrants' perceptions of the political situation in their home countries were ranked by 58% in year 1 and 52% in year 2 as being negative or very negative (around 30% in both years thought it was neither good nor bad and 10% didn't know). Similar to the findings relating to the economic situation, the perception of participants who responded to both years was less negative by year 2.

Participants were also concerned about the social situation in their home countries with 54% in year 1 and 48% in year 2 perceiving it as 'negative' or 'very negative'; (again around 30% viewed it as neither good nor bad). Respondents who participated in both years had a similar view of their home country's social situation in both years.

In year 2 the majority of participants indicated that their perception of their home country had a strong or very strong influence upon their decision making on length of stay. Figure E7 presents findings for the overall samples in year 1 (161) and year 2 (61).

Figure E7:
Negative view of economic, political and social situation in COO (year1, year 2)

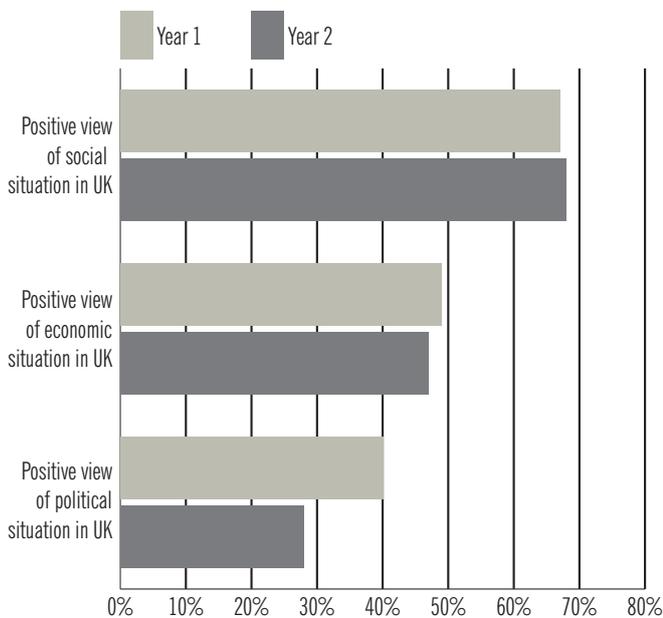


² The data relate to the overall sample of participants who had changed their mind regarding LOS and not to the sub-sample of those who stayed for a shorter or longer time; therefore, the data differ to those which were presented in the Executive of the 2nd interim report.

Perceptions of the economic, political and social situations in the UK

The social situation in the UK was viewed by the majority of the overall sample as being 'positive' or 'very positive' in both years, followed by a 'positive' or 'very positive' perception of the economic situation in the UK. Surprisingly, the perception of the economic situation had not changed between year 1 and year 2 while the political situation in the UK was perceived in a less positive light in year 2; between 30% and 40% selected neither good nor bad for the perception of the social, economic and political situations in the UK (see figure E8).

Figure E8:
Positive view of social, economic and political situation in the UK (year 1, year 2)

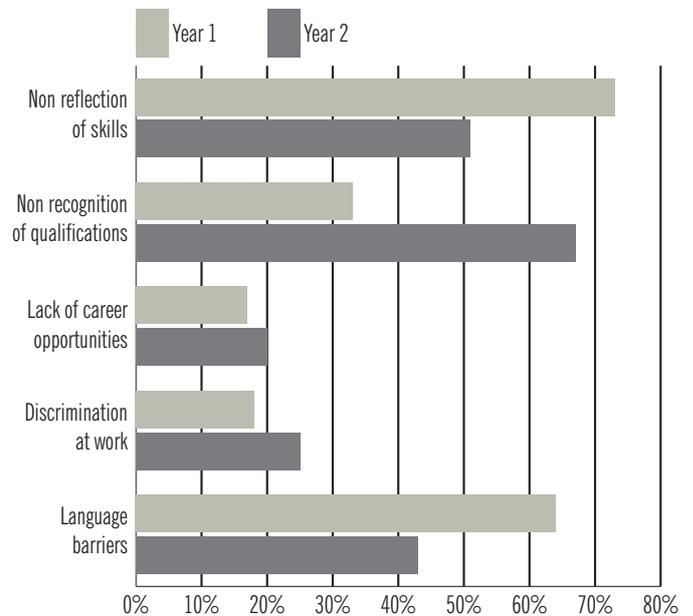


Employment related constraints and barriers

Year 1 showed a significant link between skills reflected in employment and length of stay. This significance was not shown in the second year sample, although those participants who felt that their skills were not adequately reflected were less likely to indicate an indefinite stay.

In both years participants highlighted a number of other employment constraints: non-recognition of qualifications, lack of promotion, a lack of career opportunities, discrimination at work and language barriers (see figure E9).

Figure E9:
Employment constraints and barriers (year 1, year 2)

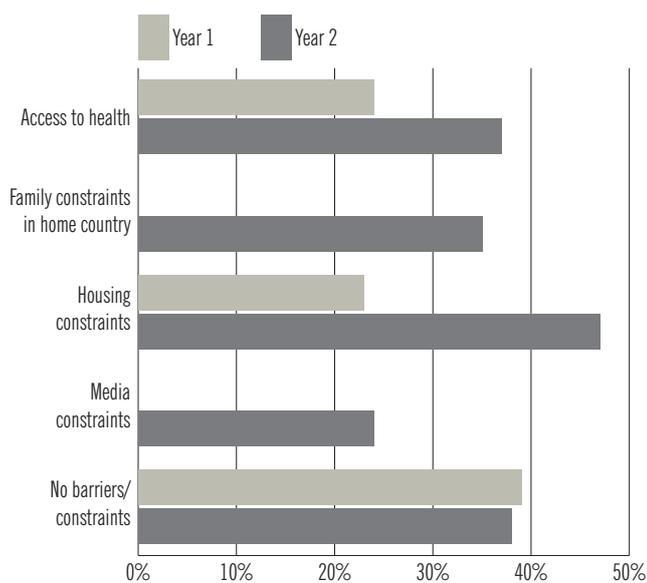


Non-employment related constraints and barriers

Both years highlighted a number of constraints and barriers which did not relate directly to employment. These were family constraints, barriers regarding health and housing and constraints relating to the representation of European citizens from the A8/A2 countries in the British media (see figure E10).

The findings above have indicated that in particular personal constraints relating to family in the country of origin and negative representation of A8/A2 migrants in the British media are linked to a shorter stay. It should be also noted that a large number of participants in both years indicated that they did not experience any constraints or barriers.

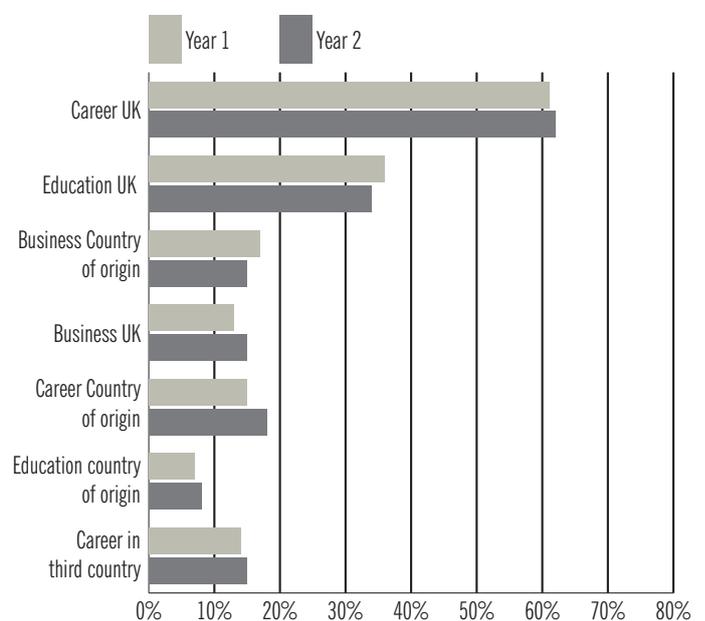
Figure E10:
Non-employment related constraints and barriers (year 1, year 2)



Aspirations³

The overall samples of year 1 and year 2 showed similarly high levels of aspirations amongst participants which impacts on length of stay. The majority saw their careers in the UK followed by education in the UK and opening their own business in the UK. A similar number of respondents wanted to set up a business in their home country and in the UK. A small number saw their career in their home country or in a third country. Less than 10% intended to further their study in their home country (see figure E11).

Figure E11:
Aspirations in the UK and COO (year 1, year 2)



3 More than one option could be selected regarding the question on aspirations.

Overview of main themes at year 3: quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data

Economic recession and length of stay

Year three findings confirmed the findings of both interim reports that the recession had a relatively small impact on decisions on length of stay. Although participants reflected on issues such as decreasing wage differentials between the UK and COO and on changes regarding the job market they did not consider a return to their COO or a move to a third country because of the recession. The fact that the economic situations in COO were considerably worse than in the UK meant that in relative terms the UK economic situation was perceived in a fairly positive light. Despite the continuing recession and government plans to cut public spending, participants felt that there were still (in comparison to COO) many opportunities and advantages in the UK including job opportunities, financial advantages and educational opportunities (although the latter will be significantly affected by increase in tuition fees as discussed below).

The findings of the third year showed that interviewees were negative or very negative with regard to economic developments in COO which they identified as an important factor in their decision making process on length of stay. Transnationalism, therefore, reflected in participants' ongoing comparative evaluations of the economic situation and experiences in COO and the UK, is crucial for the understanding of decision making processes on length of stay. A perspective which merely focuses on the objective economic situation in the UK would ignore the complex bundle of factors which impacts on migrants' perceptions and actions.

Personal, social and political factors affecting length of stay

The third year has continued to show the significance of personal, social and political factors for migrants' decisions on length of stay. At a personal level, relationships with partners, factors relating to family members in the COO and the UK (especially parents and children), the intention to have children, homesickness, satisfaction with life, feelings of identity and belonging, and aspirations, were influential in decisions on length of stay. In general the UK was perceived as offering (actual or potential opportunities) to fulfil and satisfy migrants' ideas and ambitions associated with a 'good quality of life'. In contrast, COO were perceived by many participants as places where 'life plans' were more difficult to realise. Although the majority of participants associated 'home' with specific positive connotations (e.g. with regard to food, 'knowing the social norms', traditions, nature, climate etc.) these did not impact on a return to COO in the large majority of cases.

Social factors (including the existence of social networks, the social context of the local area, participants' 'social lives' and the wider perception of the social situation in the UK) were very relevant for participants' decisions on length of stay. While participants accepted they had to make certain compromises

with regard to their employment positions, they were less flexible regarding social factors. Interviews and survey data throughout the study showed that those who intended to stay longer term or indefinitely were content or very content with their closer social situation and the wider situation in the UK.

Political factors were also relevant for decisions on length of stay in the context of COO. The majority of participants noted the interdependency between political, economic and social situations in COO and often argued that the political situation needed to change to improve the wider economic and social situation. While some participants showed frustration or disinterest in politics in COO, others were hopeful that elections might be an opportunity to foster change; although participants from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia were disappointed with the election results in their COO and, especially the (increased) levels of intolerance and discrimination towards minorities.

Shifting goals and longer stay

Throughout the years participants indicated very high levels of 'goal orientation' which corresponded with their high levels of ambitions and aspirations. There is clear progress noticeable from year one to year three with regard to goal formulation and goal achievement. While interviewees who had arrived recently were (understandably) concerned about immediate issues such as finding employment and accommodation and learning English, in the second year they were already formulating goals which emphasised 'quality of life' (with regard to employment, housing, education, personal and social life). By the third year many interviewees had achieved their goals reflected in the high number of qualification gained by year 3, a fairly large number of marriages and/or child births by year 3, a smaller number of employment progressions and a small number of property acquisitions. Aiming for and achieving these goals in the UK were often associated with a longer or indefinite stay in the UK. Throughout the study the findings on goal formulation and achievement (from the mixed and multi methods approaches) confirmed that migrants had strong ambitions and aspirations regarding personal development and advancement; 'making money quickly' was not their chief concern.

Non-recognition of skills

Throughout the three years of the study the non-recognition of skills in employment remained the main barrier for participants and impacted negatively on a longer or indefinite length of stay in the UK. The majority of participants who considered leaving the UK and moving to a third country (rather than returning to COO) indicated that their employment in the UK did not reflect their levels of skills (although they might have taken up further training, education and/or had good levels of spoken and written English) (see also the section on recommendations below). Since EU enlargement in 2004 research has highlighted the downgrading of EU citizens arriving from A8 countries and there does not seem to be a significant change in this situation. A8 migrants who are employed in positions which reflect their skills have often invested a large amount of 'active agency' to achieve these positions as reflected in our study.

One aim of this study was to research barriers to full participation in the regional economy. The above findings indicate that, despite some progress made in the context of recognition of qualifications, high levels of structural barriers remain which relate to the matching of employment positions to skills levels of A8 and A2 citizens in the UK. At the agency/individual level the study's findings highlight that migrants overcome many barriers at the individual level by being actively engaged in further education, training, English language improvement and generally by showing high levels of motivation, ambitions and aspirations. However, the study emphasises that at the policy level more action needs to be taken to overcome structural barriers such as the more or less automatic matching of migrants to 'low skilled' employment positions by employment agencies (often without being interested in their skills levels; as highlighted by interviewees throughout the study).

Media representation

Throughout the three years of the study participants have shown concern regarding negative media coverage of A8/A2 migration. For example, in the year 2 survey around a quarter selected 'a problematic representation of migrants in the media' as a reason to stay for a shorter period in the UK. By year 3 interviewees reflected on concepts such as insider/outsider, citizen/stranger, belonging/not belonging, home/not home and where media representation had a strong influence on feelings of belonging. In year 3 participants criticised and countered assertions by a large section of the British media about A8/A2 migrants. The exploration of 'barriers to social inclusion in local communities' was another research aim of the study and in this respect the British press was a key barrier with regard to social inclusion.

Fortunately, at the local level, participants had much more positive experiences and perceptions of the social situation in the UK which to some extent countered the barriers created by the media. As noted above, tolerance of diversity and the condemnation of discrimination (relating to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.) in the UK was mentioned by participants and impacted positively on a longer or indefinite stay in the UK. Participants had generally good social networks in their local area although they highlighted that long working hours and shift work often meant that their social life was limited. Some interviewees also mentioned the costs of leisure activities as a barrier. A small number of participants had experienced direct or indirect discrimination in employment, housing, health and in the local neighbourhood which might have been, to a certain extent, caused by the extremely negative, derogative and explicitly xenophobic reports of A8/A2 migration in some parts of the British press.

Language skills and other barriers

Language continued to be a barrier for some participants, although most had improved their language skills since year 1 of the study. It needs to be noted that participants felt that good levels of English did not necessarily counter downgrading in employment.

Barriers to accessing housing, personal health issues and constraints of local health services were mentioned by participants; however, there was a visible decline of these barriers by year 3 and it appeared that participants had overcome housing issues, in particular. An important barrier which was indicated by a larger number of participants related to family constraints in COO which could be an actual or potential reason for a shorter stay in the UK. Another barrier which is very likely to have an impact on future decisions on length of stay relates to the considerable increase of tuition fees in the UK. Participants had high aspirations with regard to educational achievements and the introduction of higher fees will be a significant barrier for fulfilling aspirations. It can be anticipated that especially those participants with high educational ambitions will move to third countries where fees are lower or non-existent and some degrees are taught in English (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden).

The ambitious and determined migrant

Throughout the three years, findings have confirmed the determination and high aspirations of participants. The vast majority of participants showed high ambitions regarding career, education and/or opening up their own businesses. With regard to career ambitions, the final year continued to demonstrate participants' high levels of active agency in order to fulfil their employment aspirations (by attending evening classes, studying part-time etc.); however, whilst some participants in the three years have managed to improve their employment positions significantly, others have been more static or downgraded in employment to accommodate other life scenarios such as having a family. By the third year the majority of interviewees have made significant advances educationally and engaged in undergraduate and postgraduate study, and other training opportunities. Despite some remaining barriers at the macro, meso and micro level participants indicated well developed coping strategies and a strong determination to fulfil their ambitions.

Public policy context

Over the three year period of the study, public policy at European, national (in sending and receiving countries) and regional levels has inevitably impacted on A8 and A2 migrants' living and working in the East of England. Currents of policy activity within, across and between multiple policy locales has opened up opportunities but also introduced constraints, acting as a destabilising factor as well as a stabilising factor in people's lives.

European citizenship

Accession to the European Union and acquisition of the freedoms of European citizenship is an obvious key determinant in the opportunities created for A8 and A2 citizens. At the same time, interviewees were also aware that their EU citizenship was not of the same order as that of citizens from other member states.

In the UK, a relatively light-touch Workers' Registration Scheme was introduced in 2004; in 2007, the UK imposed rather more stringent conditions for citizens from Romania and Bulgaria. Our three interviewees from Romania and Bulgaria were conscious of and commented on the additional limitation to their status as EU citizens. Nevertheless, across all three cohorts of interviewees, EU citizenship was viewed very positively and the opportunities EU membership had created were the dominant 'policy' feature in interviews.

National level policy

At a national level, whether indirect or direct policy initiatives, our study demonstrated a high level of ignorance about policy activity and related outcomes for A8/A2 migrants, improving only slightly with the passage of time and changes in circumstances, such as pregnancy.

There were mixed reasons for this:

1. The majority of interviewees were initially completely unaware that they could legitimately access services and benefits
2. The majority of interviewees did not have pre-arrival knowledge of opportunities to study with access to university education as EU citizens on a par with British citizens.
3. Knowledge had increased by year 3 of the study in relation to benefits and services operating at a general and national level with some positive impacts on people's lives in evidence: working tax credits and child benefits were chiefly referred to by interviewees; workplace rights relating to maternity leave, nursery provision and education of children and opportunities for further study and training at HE level were also mentioned.
4. The majority of participants were low users of state services or benefits. Nevertheless, the general framework of security created by the existence of welfare, education, law and order, government administration and healthcare services was noted again and again in interviews: 'I feel safe here'.

Intra-EU migration policy (regional level)

Specific interest in intra-European migration policy was very patchy. However, the Eastern region has engaged with serious and sustained policy activity in relation to new migrant communities with a number of 'migration champions' working within a complex of networked agencies at regional and local levels. Since 2004 the Eastern region's multi-agency network of 'migration stakeholders' have helped establish a number of initiatives supporting new communities, funded through various means, including Migration Impact Funding, and covering community development, community engagement and policing, education, training and skills, homelessness and housing, information advice and guidance.⁴

Our participants have been largely unaware of the activity behind such initiatives, although three interviewees have found employment in support work for other migrant workers linked to or funded by Strategic Migration Partnership activity in the

region. Other interviewees have also been aware of specific services regardless of whether they were a service user or not and, one or two interviewees had used the services of organisations which were set up specifically for migrant workers. Interviewees were mixed in their views as to how important such services were to them. Interview data suggests that those with weaker language skills and with more recent arrival dates were most likely to draw on informal and some specialised formal support (for example, language classes and multi-lingual advisory groups). Interviews also suggested that, to some extent, later arrivals simply were not aware of the limited support available to the earlier arrivals and experience the support currently available as the 'norm' in the UK.

Despite the variation in levels of awareness and use of formal service provision, interview data from across the three years of the study suggest that the existence of services and initiatives for migrant workers contributed to the sense of security and safety interviewees discussed in relation to the advantages of life in the UK.

Recent changes in the policy environment

A change in government in 2010 meant the realisation of the promised dismantling of regional networks – and threatens the dispersal of expertise developed through the network in the Eastern region. The Migration Impact Fund will be cancelled and funding for the range of organisations that help alleviate pressures on local communities and provide support to new communities is becoming increasingly difficult to access. With rising numbers of ill-equipped migrants escaping the Baltic States' stricken economies to rural locations in the Eastern region, it is only a matter of time before funding shortfalls become apparent as support services are pared back or cancelled altogether.

In May 2011, the seven year period of transitional arrangements for the 2004 Accession States comes to a close and thereafter A8 citizens will hold the same rights as established EU/ EEA citizens. There is also a possibility that in December 2011 arrangements in place for A2 citizens may also cease (or be extended). For interviewees, this represents a welcome shift, completing the 'normalisation' of their migration experiences.

Recommendations

Based on our findings over a three year period of study and in line with the East of England LGA Strategic Migration Partnership Business Plan, 2010 – 2011; specifically, strategic objective 4 (to work with local delivery partners to design and deliver services for migrants that meet local needs in the region), and strategic objective 6 (to promote community safety and cohesion through a multi-agency approach), we make the following recommendations:

- **Develop strategies to match skills levels with corresponding employment positions;** throughout the 3 year study, participants highlighted non-recognition of skill levels as a primary factor leading to a shorter stay in the UK. Matching skills levels with employment positions would not only satisfy the generally high to very high aspirations

⁴ (Government Office East and EELGA (SMP), 2010).

of European citizens from A8/A2 countries but also benefit the regional economy by filling and expanding higher skilled employment positions, enhancing the knowledge economy and increasing international competition.

- **Establish and foster economic networks with COO;** several participants were considering opening up businesses in COO in the medium to long term and/or pursuing careers in COO. Anticipating an improvement of economic, political and social situations in COO in the medium term, the region could lead on developing a strategy which would enhance opportunities for business links between COO, the UK (and possibly third countries where A8/A2 migrants might relocate to).
- **Develop concrete strategies to counter an outflow of highly ambitious A8/A2 citizens from the UK caused by the significant increase of university fees;** the significant increase of university fees in the UK is very likely to lead to an increased outflow from the UK of A8/A2 migrants with high educational aspirations. Rather than returning to COO with sometimes problematic education situations (regarding fees and time of study) it is expected that the majority of migrants with high educational and career ambitions will move into third countries; for example, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden offer certain degrees in English and charge lower fees (than the UK) or have no fees.
- **Foster closer cultural ties with COO;** this could be in the form of town-twinning initiatives or other transnational ventures promoting cooperation and understanding between different EU regions. The shared history of membership of the Hanse League, for example, could support the improvement of intercultural competency of communities and migrants, from the Baltic States in particular, helping to cushion the rupture experienced by migrants between home and here. Using such measures to value and validate the transnational indexicality of EU migrants has obvious cultural, social and economic benefits for both 'sending' and 'receiving' regions.
- **Find ways to more effectively tackle hostile press coverage of EU migrants;** this often serves to undermine the confidence of new EU citizens (particularly apparent in the study's Polish participants) inculcating a sense that British people are 'against them' even in the friendliest of encounters. Reportedly, some individuals revised their decisions about their length of stay on the basis of negative media reports. At the same time, Polish participants and blogs also reported hostile media coverage in the home country. Continuing to encourage a more balanced press response to intra-EU migration in the difficult period ahead should be attempted with the use of counter-'claims-makers' and the promotion of positive news items.
- **Improve futures thinking (forward-thinking policy research) to map out potential scenarios of the implications of increased, decreased or shifts in migrant flows to the region;** identifying likely 'push' factors in COO, identifying 'pull' factors, identifying potential sub-regions of settlement, identifying prospective skills and needs profile of newcomers, preparing communities for change and so on. Furthermore, regional policy needs to be more fully cognisant of the future implications of (unfettered) EU citizenship and freedom of movement and the widely-held view of intra-European migrants of the EU as an open jobs market.
- **Consider the impact of public spending cuts on the retention of a quality workforce;** the full implications of public spending cuts are difficult to foresee at this early stage, however, job losses seem inevitable. The buffer theory has been disproved and it is unlikely to be the case that intra-European migrants will return to COO leaving vacancies for British workers (and, besides, there is no guarantee that British people will be motivated to take on the types of occupations eschewed prior to the recession). However, there is a danger of 'brain waste', a complete stalling of the movement from low-skilled occupations primarily gained through employment agency contracts to better remunerated, more stable and fulfilling occupations that our study participants have been motivated to pursue and gain. Given that the transitional arrangements granted to 'old' EU member states will end by May 2011, the alternative for some may be to relocate to third countries within the EU to seek more rewarding employment and to maintain their living conditions.
- **Be aware that anticipated length of stay is not the same as actual length of stay;** as our study demonstrates, participants re-evaluated their projected length of stay quite frequently and earlier 'let's see' or 'just a brief spell in the UK' attitudes quickly translated into a longer stay or consideration of a permanent relocation and settlement with families. Policy and service development for intra-European migrants should not be developed on the misconception that migrants are driven solely by economic considerations and come in only one shape: hamsters!⁵ On the other hand, understanding that the searcher category is the most cited self-identification and that length of stay is contingent upon a number of factors provides a less than stable basis for service planning. However, our study demonstrates that individual COO economic and political push factors provide the key for anticipating a longer or permanent stay and, where push factors are weaker, quality of life and satisfaction of life goals play an important retaining role.

⁵ Storks, Hamsters, Searchers and Stayers were used to identify, respectively, circular migrants, 'one-off' migrants, those with open options and those with long-term plans in Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich's 2006 study. We added in an additional category of strategist to define migrants who place themselves strategically between the searcher and stayer categories.

We appreciate that some of the recommendations cannot be enacted at a regional level and require policy action at a national level, and that future sub-regional economic development agendas may complicate the pursuit of the regional recommendations proposed above. However, strategic migration partnership activity could, to a large extent, ensure a coherent response to and dissemination of, the issues raised in this report.



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