



Eurofound

Labour mobility within the EU: The impact of return migration

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Country codes of the EU Member States

AT	Austria	IT	Italy
BE	Belgium	LT	Lithuania
BG	Bulgaria	LU	Luxembourg
CY	Cyprus	LV	Latvia
CZ	Czech Republic	MT	Malta
DE	Germany	NL	Netherlands
DK	Denmark	PL	Poland
EE	Estonia	PT	Portugal
EL	Greece	RO	Romania
ES	Spain	SE	Sweden
FI	Finland	SI	Slovenia
FR	France	SK	Slovakia
HU	Hungary	UK	United Kingdom
IE	Ireland		

Abbreviations

CEE	Central and eastern Europe
EU	European Union
EU15	Member States of the European Union prior to the accession of 10 candidate countries on 1 May 2004. The EU15 comprises the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom
EU8	Eight Member States of the European Union in central and eastern Europe that acceded to the EU in 2004: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
EU2	Two Member States of the European Union in central and eastern Europe that acceded to the EU in 2007: Romania and Bulgaria
EU8+2	Ten Member States of the European Union in central and eastern Europe that acceded to the EU on 1 May 2004 or later: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania
GDP	Gross domestic product
LFS	Labour Force Survey
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Executive summary

Introduction

There is growing interest in the return migration of mobile workers from the central and eastern European (CEE) Member States of the EU because one of the consequences of the recent economic and financial crisis may be an acceleration in the return of these workers from the EU15 to their home countries. This research explores to what extent this has happened by generating new empirical evidence, not only through an analysis of the existing statistical data and literature, but also through interviews with returnees, policymakers and experts on migration. The four CEE countries considered were Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania because of their different experiences both in terms of outflow and return migration. The case studies provided rich qualitative data on the returnees' motivations to return, as well as the circumstances in their home countries encouraging or, on the contrary, deterring return migration. Interview material also provided new insights into labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees, as well as existing policies to help returnees with reintegration into the labour market.

Policy context

Free movement of people is one of the key factors for smart and sustainable growth as emphasised by the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' and 'Youth on the move'. According to the former, 'the potential of intra-EU mobility ... is not fully utilised and insufficiently targeted to meet labour market needs, despite the substantial contribution of migrants to employment and growth'. After the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, migrant flows from the EU8+2 to the EU15 increased substantially, which contributed to a better allocation of labour across the EU. Migration can, however, have some negative consequences for migrants (if they accept low-quality jobs and their human capital is underutilised) and on the home countries (if they lose their labour force, especially highly skilled workers).

Both EU and national policymakers are challenged by the demand for policy actions that would help tackle the issues that currently make it difficult for CEE migrants and returnees to take full advantage of their human capital and opportunities offered by the free movement of labour in the EU. In order to address those challenges, a better understanding of ongoing processes of return migration is required.

Key findings

- **No mass return took place during the economic crisis.** Instead, many emigrants opted for either a wait-and-see strategy by staying in the host countries or migrating onward to other destination countries.
- **The impacts of the economic crisis on return migration differed somewhat across the four selected countries.** In Poland and Romania, the most prominent impacts were the freezing of emigration, a growth in the rate of return that would probably have happened later anyway, and an increase of circularity (where migrants return to the host country repeatedly for short periods), followed by another rise in emigration. In Latvia, the global downturn increased emigration and diminished return migration, which had accelerated in 2006 and 2007, when there was rapid economic growth and substantial wage increases in many sectors. At the same time, the impact on Hungary was minor as the level of labour migration from Hungary, as well as return migration to the country, is low compared to the other three countries.
- **The economic crisis mainly accelerated foreseen returns.** Because of the economic crisis, some of the foreseen returns happened earlier than emigrants had planned, due to the worsening economic conditions. The economic situation complemented personal or family reasons when considering return.
- **Most returnees went back for family reasons or because they had achieved their emigration goals.** Family reasons tended to fall in two categories: returning to join family in the home country, or returning with family to the

home country because of a partner's employment or a child's transition to another education cycle. Accomplishment of plans or, conversely, disappointment with the real experience of migration, was also among the most important motives.

- **At home returnees looked for better opportunities to develop professionally.** Those skilled, but not highly qualified employees in 'brain waste' situations abroad returned to their home countries in order to return to their profession as well. However, they were likely to encounter difficulties in reintegrating successfully into the home labour market due to the gap in their career development. This was particularly true for young people without work experience relevant to their qualification.
- **Mobility experience of highly skilled returnees was appreciated in the home labour markets, whereas this was usually not the case with the low-skilled mobile workers.** The returnees were in a better position if international work experience was important for the employer. This was usually not the case in low-skilled jobs, where workers experienced difficulties in using their new skills.
- **The four CEE countries considered have implemented various policy initiatives targeting returnees, and to different extents.** In Latvia and Poland such initiatives were developed because of the massive outflow of people and the consequent labour market shortages. In Romania initiatives were created because of pressure from the authorities in receiving countries to manage the flow of emigrants. However, policy factors seem to be of negligible importance for returnees due to their general scepticism towards these policies and limited visibility of the policy initiatives among the targeted group.

Policy pointers

The policy recommendations below suggest actions that would help to tackle the issues that currently make it difficult for CEE migrants and returnees to take full advantage of their human capital and of the opportunities offered by the free movement of labour in the EU.

- **Assisting returnees who took deskilling jobs abroad – measures against 'brain waste'**
Skilled workers who took up jobs below their qualification level often face difficulties reintegrating in their home labour market after their return. Their potential is squandered in both receiving and sending countries. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the deskilling phenomenon both at Member State and EU level.
- **Improving cooperation between public and private initiatives as well as NGOs, exploring the necessary synergies**
Due to the limited trust in politicians observed in the region, any policy initiatives targeting returnees should involve NGOs or private sector entities rather than governments alone.
- **Improving data gathering on the outflow of mobile workers and return migration to enable a clearer view on the scale of mobility**
EU Member States should take actions to improve official statistics on outflow and return migration, perhaps by creating incentives for mobile workers to officially declare their emigration. As regards return migration specifically, it would be helpful if a common definition of 'return migration' could be adopted across the EU to facilitate comparison.

Introduction 1

The return of mobile workers to their home countries is a permanent feature of intra-European mobility. Yet the return of workers from the new Member States who have been employed in the EU15 countries has only attracted close attention from academics, experts and practitioners in the past few years. While earlier studies predicted that most of the labour migrants from the CEE countries intend to stay for the short or medium term, the economic crisis is likely to have altered their return patterns, for example in terms of who returns and why, and what their pathways into the labour market in their home countries are. This study aims to answer a number of questions on returning workers. Has the economic crisis really encouraged returns? What circumstances attract or deter return migration to particular countries? Do returnees enjoy an advantage over the non-mobile population in the labour market? What policies are in place for inclusion of the returnees in home country labour markets? Finally, how do the CEE countries differ in these respects?

Aim

This research aimed to contribute to a better understanding of return migration to the CEE countries by generating new empirical evidence through an analysis of statistical data and literature and through interviews with returnees, policymakers and experts on migration in the four selected CEE countries. The research focused, firstly, on the returnees' motivations to come back as well as circumstances in their home countries attracting or deterring return migration. Secondly, it focused on the labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees and existing policies to help returnees with reintegration into the labour market.

Methodology

Although some research is being conducted on the return migration of CEE nationals, very little cross-country comparative data are available on return mobility of workers. The added value of this project was qualitative research (in-depth interviews and a literature review) based on a common template for four country case studies, which makes some kind of comparison possible.

The following four CEE countries were selected for the comprehensive analysis: Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. The selection was based on their differences in size, in terms of the extent of labour migration from each of them, the impact of the economic crisis, and also their level of economic development. With these cross-country differences, it was assumed that both the common trends could be identified and those specific conditions could be revealed which explain at least to some extent variations in return across countries. The target period for the research was 2004–2010, with a special focus on the effects of the economic crisis which started in mid-2007 but gained momentum in late 2008.

Case studies

The results of the research are drawn mainly from the comparative analysis of the four country case studies. Each case study was based on:

- a comprehensive review of literature and various other sources including European and national statistical databases, academic papers, policy reports, legislation, and media reports (see the bibliography);
- interviews with at least 10 returnees on their motivations for return and their mobility experience (from 10 to 14 per case study, 47 in total) conducted according to the same questionnaire in four countries;
- interviews with at least five officials responsible for return migration schemes or national experts involved in schemes or initiatives attracting return migrants or retaining potential migrants in each country (from five to nine per case study, 27 in total), also conducted according to the same questionnaire in four countries.

In addition, the final report covers literature on the subject, including classical and more recent theoretical works (for example, Cerase, 1974; Borjas, 1989; Ghosh, 2000) as well as some very recent pan-European studies (for example, Fuller et al, 2010; 2011; Holland et al, 2011; Koehler et al, 2010).

Definitions

This research focuses on return migration and does not analyse short-term or circular migration in detail. According to the definition agreed upon within the research framework, returnees or returning migrants are persons who lived abroad for at least one year, but returned voluntarily to their home country and intend to stay in their home country one year or more. The definition follows the Eurostat definition according to which a migrant is a person who establishes his/her usual place of residence in the destination country for 12 months or more (Herm, 2008). As for intention to stay in the home country for at least one year, that was included as a criterion for defining returned migrants in order to distinguish between return migration and short-term or circular migration (also known as commuting). These terms refer to repeated short stays (of less than 12 months), often taking place within less than a year. Furthermore, important research questions were whether return migrants face difficulties reintegrating into the labour market and whether the available services are adequate and sufficient for them. These questions are obviously relevant for longer-term return migrants rather than those who have been abroad for a short period of less than one year.

Report contents

Chapter 2 discusses the effects of the economic crisis on return migration to the selected CEE countries, based partly on the available data. Chapter 3 briefly outlines the key socioeconomic characteristics of the returning mobile workers. Chapter 4 analyses economic, social and cultural circumstances affecting return migration to the CEE countries under consideration. Chapter 5 considers incentives behind the decision to return, outlining different categories of returnees by their motivation. It also examines the cyclical pattern in mobility. Chapter 6 analyses labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees while Chapter 7 reviews existing policies for reintegration of returnees into the labour market. The final chapter summarises the main findings of the research and presents recommendations for policymakers.

Impact of the economic crisis 2

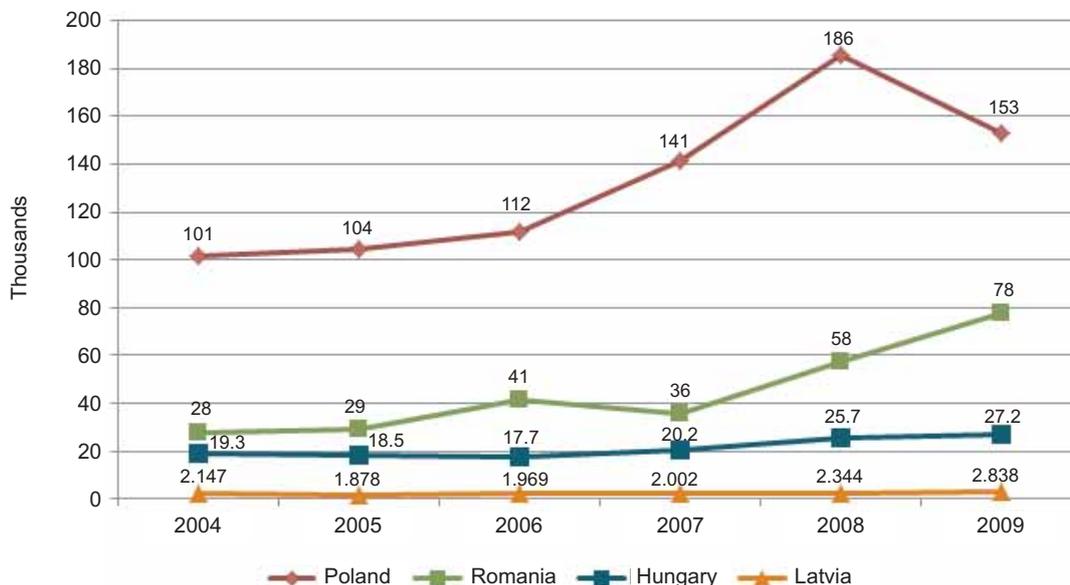
Expectations

At the onset of the global economic crisis it was anticipated that the economic downturn would trigger return migration of EU8+2 nationals from the EU15 countries. These expectations were based primarily on the fact that the recession has hit migrant workers harder than nationals in most EU15 countries, as most of the migrants worked in the sectors that were severely affected by the crisis: manufacturing, construction and the tourist industry. Research shows that the economic recession had a greater impact on migrants than native workers and resulted in a widening of the gap between migrants and nationals (Fuller et al, 2010, pp. 24–26). Furthermore, it was also expected that the comparatively small economic decline in some CEE countries (for example, Poland did not experience negative GDP growth) would act as a pull factor for return migration during the crisis.

Outflows

Data from destination countries indeed show an increased outflow of nationals of the countries under consideration, starting in 2007. The UK and Ireland witnessed the most rapid turnover of workers from the EU8+2, particularly Poland. For example, of the 1.4 million EU8 workers who arrived in the UK between May 2004 and March 2009, almost half had returned to their home countries by the end of 2008 (EHRC and MPI, 2009). Rough estimates of outflows from selected EU15 countries can be derived from the OECD International Migration Database (see Figure 1). However, it is not evident that all CEE migrants who left the EU15 actually returned to their home countries. At least some of them chose onward migration to other destination countries, as an increase in the number of immigrants from the EU8+2 indicates.

Figure 1: *Outflows of nationals from study countries, 2004–2009*



Notes: Data cover outflows from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Statistics on the outflows from the UK and Belgium include only data about Poles who left both countries in 2007–2009 and 2004–2007 respectively. Data on the outflows from Denmark in 2009 are missing altogether.

Source: *OECD International Migration Database (OECD.Stat)*

No mass return

There is emerging agreement among researchers that, contrary to popular belief and expectations, mass return migration of CEE nationals did not occur during the economic recession (case studies; Koehler et al, 2010, p. 24; Holland et al, 2011, p. 35). Instead emigrants employed a wait-and-see strategy. It is highly possible that, as in the case of previous global economic slowdowns, the last financial crisis resulted in slight freezing of migration flows (both emigration and return migration) rather than an intensification of returns. What has been taken as a sign of a large-scale return migration (the number of Poles living abroad shrank by 15% in 2009 compared to the previous year) appeared to be an ‘overestimate’ (Central Statistical Office (Poland), 2011, p. 3), which had already been traced by Iglicka (2009, p. 3; 2010b; 2011, p. 11).

The Polish case study revealed that because of the economic downturn, migrants are more likely to change their strategies while abroad and to wait for the end of the crisis, accepting lower wages, working part time, or when unemployed making use of the available benefits. The Romanian case study also indicated the importance of the higher income and, related to this, the higher benefit level abroad for the decision not to return. A study by the Soros Foundation (Ulrich et al, 2011), based on interviews with Romanian experts in the field of management of migration, showed that Romanian mass return migration is prevented by these factors. Another factor deterring return migration was the higher possibility of finding a job abroad than at home, despite the economic downturn. As the Romanian case study stressed, even those migrants who lacked employment abroad may have been able to find a job more easily than in Romania, as job vacancies fell dramatically in Romania in 2009 and 2010. Therefore, as concluded by Stoiciu et al (2011, p. 144), Romanian’s propensity for emigration is higher than the propensity for return:

the economic crisis has not caused a wave of massive return of Romanians working abroad and those back home are likely to be here for a limited period. Despite the economic crisis that hit Western European countries, labour market opportunities are still much more numerous there than in Romania. In fact, the number of non-migrants stating that they want to go to work abroad is almost three times higher than the number of returnees; therefore the economic crisis increased the propensity for migration, and accounted for a rather small level of return migration. In addition, the crisis in Romania and the lack of opportunities made the labour migration project for most Romanians a necessity and the only possible alternative for a decent life and not an option.

Intentions to return

There is no clear evidence that the economic crisis would have encouraged emigrants from EU8+2 to think about returning. To illustrate how emigrants see the impact of the economic crisis on their lives and intentions to return, the results of one web survey of internet-using Polish emigrants in the UK (Polarity UK, 2009) is worthy of mention.¹

[When asked] about the effects of the current economic crisis, every other respondent answered that they have not felt the effects of the crisis themselves but have heard that some friends have lost their jobs, or that their companies’ number of contracts and orders have dramatically decreased. Nearly 12 per cent of the survey respondents lost their jobs due to group dismissals, reductions in the size of departments/units, business closures, and liquidation of their workplace. Polish emigrants also claimed that the recession had an impact on their daily lives: they had to restrain their spending, look for extra sources of income, reduce their savings, give up holidays, or go for more vocational training. Every third respondent declared the need for a change in skills in order to survive the economic downturn. However, when asked if Poles in the UK want to return to Poland because of the economic crisis, nearly 90 per cent said that this was not true for Polish migrants in the UK.

(Koehler et al, 2010, p. 139)

¹ Results of web surveys need to be viewed critically as they capture only a certain segment of migrants, namely emigrants who are Internet users. Moreover, they relate only to declarations that can change overnight. No generalisations should be made based on these results since N=200.

Marcu (2011) questioned the Romanian immigrant population in the autonomous community of Madrid about their intention to return. The research showed that the decision to return concerned 71% of the respondents. However, when asked about the conditioning factors of return or about the timing of the return this percentage was lower (only 47% of those questioned said that they wished to return to their country within the next five years). Finally, when asked about the probability of return, those who were certain or very certain about returning to their country within the next five years represented only 39% of the total number of Romanian immigrants in Madrid, even at the time of the deep economic recession.

Results from research done before the economic recession in Ireland (2005–2006) and the UK (2007) showed that the majority of respondents had been planning to return to Latvia in three to five years' time (SolidData, 2011). However, when the time came not all of them returned; some settled in permanently, others could not achieve the set aim (for example, to accumulate sufficient capital to start a family in the home country or set up a small business) and therefore stayed longer, postponing the return. The latest social survey of Latvians currently living abroad (843 respondents, 39% of whom are in the UK, 14% in Ireland, 14% in the US and 16% in Scandinavian countries) shows that only a fifth think that they will return to Latvia. Around 19% said that they never wish to return to Latvia. Less than half (42%) of the respondents expressed a wish to return, but they were unsure if they ever would.

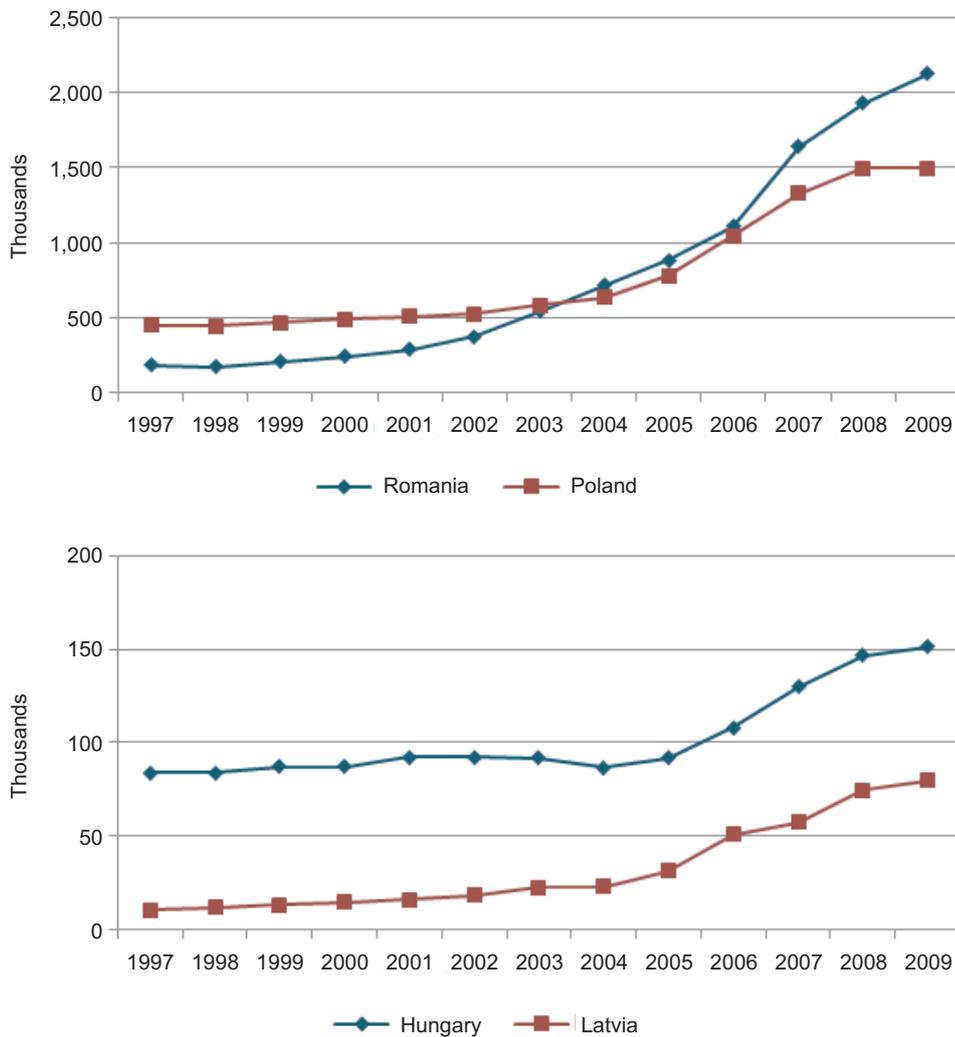
Acceleration of returns

Nevertheless, it seems that the economic crisis could accelerate the process of return for some of those emigrants who initially intended to return one day to their home country. A return may be part of the natural migration cycle: at some point, migrants may decide to return for personal and family reasons, regardless of the economic circumstances (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 15). Two web-based surveys of Polish emigrants in the UK and Ireland confirmed that the economic situation in both sending and receiving labour markets is more contextual and is of secondary importance compared to an emigrant's personal and family life (Polarity UK, 2009; Zbikowska-Ruszczak, 2009). Still, worsening economic conditions in the host country may be a strong supplementary factor to personal or family reasons when considering return. Because of these economic conditions some returns took place earlier than emigrants had planned.

Emigration

In general, the growth in the emigration rate from the EU8+2 countries offset the increase in return migration. Holland et al (2011) note that following the global crisis net emigration rates from both EU8 and EU2 areas dropped sharply but remained in the positive range (Holland et al, 2011, p. 50). For example, Hárs (2011) states that the increasing trend of Hungarian workers' mobility before the economic crisis continued after a short pause at the onset of the crisis. The Polish case study also stressed that the return migration flow has been more or less balanced by the 'counter-stream' of emigration. To confirm this, Figure 2 shows that numbers of citizens of the four selected countries in EU15 countries continued to grow or remained unchanged for the period 2007–2009 despite the economic downturn.

Figure 2: Number of citizens from study countries in EU15 countries, 1997–2009



Source: Holland et al, 2011

Circularity

It is also likely that one of the consequences of the economic crisis was more intense circular migration among EU15 and EU8+2 countries, including the four countries under consideration. According to Grabowska-Lusińska (2010), even those who choose to return to Poland for good do not rule out further short-term emigration. Indeed, it has been observed that Polish returnees, after some time spent in Poland, re-emigrate – often to the country of the first emigration (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2010). Marcu (2011) found the same trend for temporary return among the Romanians coming back from Spain, a country where unemployment has reached a very high level during the past few years. In Hungary the number of migrants returning home has risen during the recession, but the repeated emigration of returnees is very likely as many of them have been unable to find a job back home, especially if they do not have educational qualifications beyond basic schooling (Fuller et al, 2010, p. 65). So, as the Romanian case study stressed, a more circular pattern of Romanian migration may arise in a context of uncertainty on a worldwide scale. The same seems to be true for the rest of the countries concerned.

The increased circularity reflects a high responsiveness of labour force migration to labour market fluctuations across the EU that was probably prompted by, among other things, the decreasing restrictions on free movement of workers within the EU. Because of the provisions on free movement of workers, migrants return to their countries of origin once they lose their jobs, confident that they will be able to go back to their host countries in a better economic climate (EHRC and MPI, 2009).

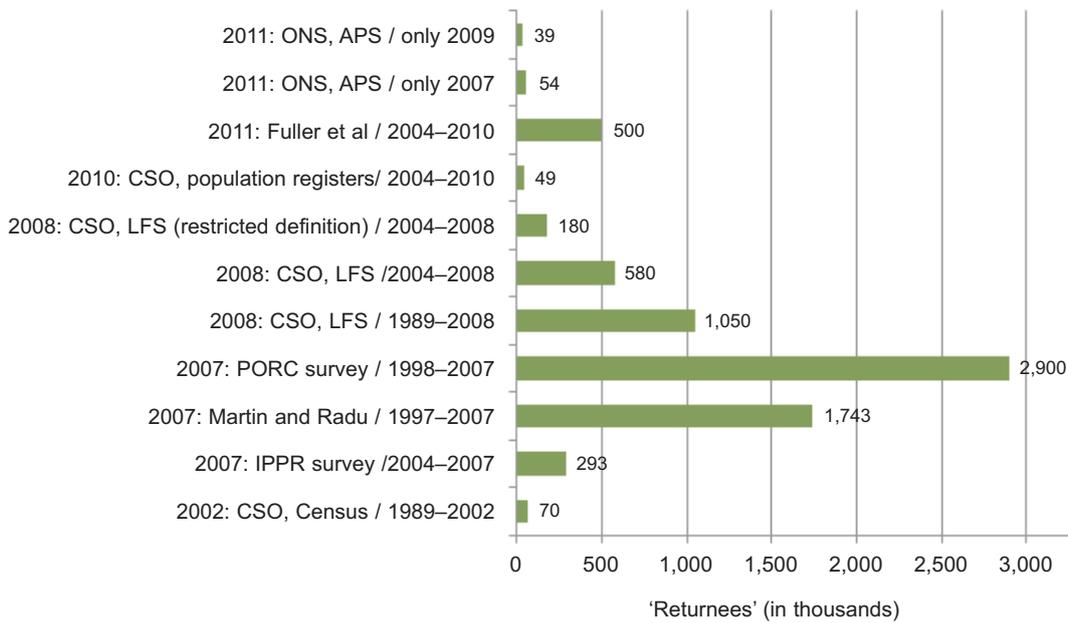
Differences among countries

The impacts of the economic crisis on migration discussed above – ‘freezing’ of emigration, rise in the number of returns that would have probably happened anyway, only later, and increase of circularity followed again by increasing emigration – are most prominent in Poland and Romania, whereas the recession influenced the migration of Latvians somewhat differently. The global economic downturn in the context of Latvia increased emigration and diminished return migration. Return migration accelerated in the years 2006 and 2007, when there was rapid economic growth in the Baltic states and substantial wage increases in many sectors. In late 2008, however, the economy started to collapse, with a drop of 18% in GDP in 2009, as was reported by Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, and a major increase in unemployment. This led to another period of outward migration (Krišjāne et al, 2011) and decreasing returns. According to Hazans (2010), the current wave of emigration is much more likely to be permanent than the wave which took place after 1 May 2004.

Challenges in estimating return migration

It should be acknowledged that it is a challenge to assess how extensively the economic crisis influenced return migration to the CEE countries since there are no precise estimations of the extent of return migration. Giving an accurate figure for the exact number of returnees requires high-quality data, yet the data available are often fragmented, not easily comparable between countries, and do not reflect the very dynamic and complex nature of the migration process. The biggest challenge arises when it comes to comparing different statistics as they are based on different definitions of returnees. Figure 3 illustrates how much variation there is in estimates of return migration to Poland provided by different data sources; estimates range from 49,000 to 2.9 million. This variation is determined mainly by the three following factors: 1) the broadness of the definition of ‘returned migrant’ (most of the estimates of return migration include short-term migrants); 2) the period that is covered by the data; 3) the data collection method (for example, data based on the official registration of migration clearly underestimate the level of migration). In the case of Poland, only one estimate was based on a definition that more or less fits the definition of returned migrants used in this research (‘returnees or returning migrants are persons who lived abroad for at least one year, but returned to their home country and who intend to stay in their home country one year or more’). For more details on the estimation of return migration see the annex to this report.

Figure 3: Estimates of return migration to Poland from different data sources



Notes: On the left side of the diagram (vertical axis) the names of the sources are listed in chronological order from the top downwards. The time period covered by the data is indicated after the slash at each source.

Source: *Own elaboration*

Profile of returnees 3

This chapter aims to establish which types of migrants return to the selected CEE countries. The chapter begins by outlining their profile as a group by their sociodemographic characteristics: age, gender, family status, ethnic background and geographical distribution in their home countries. Then it describes the key socioeconomic characteristics of the returning mobile workers (level of education and skills, labour market status while abroad). Explanations of how socioeconomic profiles of returnees differ by country are also provided where the relevant data are available.

Sociodemographic characteristics of returnees

Age

People of working age (15–65 years old) prevail both among emigrants and returnees in the selected countries. However, it seems that people over 45 are underrepresented among returnees in comparison with the non-mobile population. Just 15% of people who returned to Romania from Spain in 2009 were 45 years old or more (National Institute of Statistics in Spain, data from the population register, 2009). Similarly, only 20% of Hungarian returnees are of that age (Hárs, 2011). According to research on the return migration of Latvians, the likelihood of return decreases with age and reaches its minimum point at 50 years age as 9 out of 10 migrants are younger than 50 (Hazans and Philips, 2011). Thus, as indicated by the Polish case study, in general people of mobile age (20–44 years old) dominate among returnees (Kaczmarczyk, 2008; Grabowska-Lusińska et al, 2009; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski, 2009).

Yet, returnees appear to be a little bit older on average than emigrants, who mostly migrate in their twenties. According to Eurostat research on all EU Member State nationals, the median age of nationals returning to their home country was over 30 in several Member States in 2008 (Herm, 2008). That seems to be true for the selected CEE countries as well. The Hungarian case study revealed that half of the emigrants who returned to Hungary in the period 2008–2010 were aged between 30 and 45. The same trend was observed in Romania in cases of Romanians returning from Spain. In Latvia about one-third of returnees are also over 35. Only Polish returnees are generally young: people under the age of 30 dominate among them.

Gender

More men than women are returning to their home countries. This trend was observed in a few case studies. In Romania men tend to be more numerous than women among returnees. For example, data from the population register of Spain show that in 2009 3,200 of the Romanians who left Spain were men, compared with 2,300 women. According to Hungarian LFS estimates, about two-thirds of returnees were also men. The trend that returning men outnumber women may be linked with the masculinisation of the migration process and the types of jobs taken by men abroad in which seasonality and circularity are the main characteristics. Moreover, men predominate in the sectors that were hardest hit by the economic crisis (construction, manufacturing, tourism), while women, who tend to take social care jobs or provide other daily services, were less affected by the economic downturn. On the other hand, men and women may differ in terms of their propensity for return. Research by Martin and Radu (2009) highlighted important differences between men and women's rate of return (11.09% and 4.51% respectively). However, there is no conclusive evidence on whether men or women are more likely to return. The Romanian case study showed that women are less likely to return. The situation is quite the opposite in Hungary, where women were found to be more likely to return compared to the emigrant population as a whole in the period 2008–2010 (Hárs, 2011).

Family status

Generally migrants, including returnees, are more likely to be single, as the Polish case study indicated. However, family status affects migration decisions, especially those made by women. The Latvian report stressed that women are less likely to leave family behind; therefore they are more likely to be tied movers (move in the interest of their family) or to live alone before moving. In line with this, an important motive for women to return to Latvia is a wish to start families or raise them in Latvia. In Romania married women are also most likely to return for the sake of family cohesion and

for children, especially if they believe that migration has a negative impact on their family life (Marcu, 2011). Single women with low qualifications are less likely to return, while highly qualified single women return once they achieve their career goals abroad.

Geography

Emigrants tend to return to the same regions where they departed from. Recent research on return migration of Romanians (Stoiciu et al, 2011) revealed a positive correlation between the rate of departure and the rate of return. Likewise, the authors showed that the rate of return is higher for the less-developed localities. The Polish case study distinguished between the regions (*voivodships*) attracting the largest share of returnees (those in central and eastern Poland: Kuyavia-Pomerania, Greater Poland, Lower Silesia and Łódź *voivodships*) and the regions with higher rate of returns, when compared to the overall number of emigrants from those regions (Świętokrzyskie, Lubusz and Greater Poland *voivodships*). However, there is no obvious correlation between the rate of returns and the level of development in the case of Polish regions (see Table 1).

Table 1: GDP compared with return migration status in Polish voivodships, 2008

Voivodship	GDP*	
Mazowieckie (Masovian)	89	
Śląskie (Silesian)	61	
Dolnośląskie (Lower Silesian)	60	High share of returnees
Wielkopolskie (Greater Poland)	59	High share of returnees, high rate of returns
Poland	56	
Pomorskie (Pomeranian)	53	
Łódzkie (Łódź)	52	High rate of returns
Zachodniopomorskie (West Pomeranian)	51	
Małopolskie (Lesser Poland)	49	
Kujawsko-Pomorskie (Kuyavian-Pomeranian)	49	High share of returnees
Lubuskie (Lubusz)	48	
Opolskie (Opolskie)	48	
Świętokrzyskie (Świętokrzyskie)	45	High rate of returns
Warmińsko-Mazurskie (Warmian-Masurian)	42	
Podlaskie (Podlaskie)	41	
Lubelskie (Lublin)	39	High rate of returns
Podkarpackie (Podkarpackie)	39	

* Per inhabitant in purchasing power parity, 2008; EU27=100

Source: Central Statistical Office (Poland) 2010, p. 42, after Eurostat

The Polish report also mentions traditional migration routes from particular localities that may influence return migration. Emigration to the USA took place mainly from the regions of Podkarpackie, Lesser Poland and partly from Lubelskie. Belgium was popular among migrants from Podlaskie. Germany was the main destination for migrants from Silesia, Lower Silesia or Lubelskie.

Based on the Polish report it may also be concluded that returnees from villages and small towns are overrepresented among returned migrants when compared to the total population. The first possible reason is that emigrants from cities (perhaps also with higher education) fare better on foreign labour markets and therefore are less likely to return. Secondly, the cost of living in big cities (such as Warsaw) and the high cost of buying a flat might also deter the decision

to return. This is not always the case for those who decide to settle in small towns and villages, where the prices of land and property are generally lower (Grabowska-Lusińska et al, 2009; Strategic Consulting Centre, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

Occupation-related characteristics of returnees

Skills and education

Return migrants with higher educational or skills levels outnumber those with relatively lower skills in Poland, Latvia and Hungary. Most of the return migrants who came back to Poland between 2001 and 2008 had a secondary or tertiary education (ISCED 3–6). About half of Hungarian returnees had secondary or tertiary education, while the rest had vocational or primary education (ISCED 1–2). The share of returnees with secondary or tertiary education increased during the period 2008–2010 in Hungary. Only in Romania do returnees with low skills or education outnumber returnees with high skills.

Skills levels among returnees vary depending on their host countries. The Romanian report stresses that the selection of returnees is more likely to be negative (more emigrants with lower skills than with higher skills return) from countries like Italy and Spain. The situation might, however, be different for those returnees who come from the USA or from other European countries like France and Germany. Ambrosini et al (2011) found that Romanian returnees from these countries are more positively selected relative to the non-mobile population; that is, they have higher skills than non-migrants. Even so, highly skilled returnees may represent only a tiny fraction of the returnees in Romania, as the latter countries receive far fewer Romanians than Spain and Italy. Comparison between the UK and Sweden as host countries for Latvians also revealed some compositional differences. Emigrants to the UK (as well as returnees from there) can be described as skilled workers from the service sector in Latvia who end up in low-skilled, low-paid jobs in picking and packing factories, as labourers and cleaners. People moving to Sweden are more likely to be students, women with family obligations, or skilled workers who often remain in the same occupational status and are employed in the construction and service sectors (Apsīte, 2011).

In general, people with lower qualifications (lower education or skills levels) seem to be more likely to return to the selected CEE countries. Research in three different regions of Poland revealed that return migration was also more prevalent among less educated men than among women. According to the research, 48.9% of men with vocational education returned, compared to 16.8% of women with this level of education. A negative correlation between education and returns was observed – the more educated the migrants, the less likely it is that they will return (probably because they have fewer problems with integration, better language skills and more desired qualifications in the labour market of the host country). Therefore, returns were more frequent among migrants with vocational training than among those with higher education (Strategic Consulting Centre, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). A similar trend emerged in 2009 in Hungary – probably due to the fact that in 2009 many migrant men with lower skills lost their jobs in Germany and returned home (Hárs, 2011). Hárs (2011) concludes that unskilled emigrant workers are most likely to return. These trends are in line with what has been suggested by Agunias (2006): that returnees are more likely to be the least skilled and to be performing poorly abroad.

Labour market status abroad

Returnees have most often been employed in various low-skilled manual jobs abroad. Research on Latvian emigrants to the UK shows that even emigrants with high levels of education and certain professional skills and qualifications acquired in Latvia are often employed in low-skilled and low-paid occupations in the UK (Apsīte, 2011). Latvians who become migrants do so because they seek a rapid increase of financial resources and are therefore often employed in deskilling jobs abroad. Research based on LFS 2002–2007 data also shows that the share of manual workers among migrants has been rising steadily. The share of unskilled manual workers has also increased, and one in four Latvian migrants now works in unskilled jobs. The number of low-skilled non-manual workers has been declining, and the share

of highly skilled non-manual workers has dropped sharply compared to the pre-accession period (Hazans and Philips, 2010).

Returnees very often have a lower occupational status abroad compared to their previous job in the home country ('brain waste' situation). That was the case for nearly all returnees in Latvia. For example, a woman with a master's degree in international relations worked as a nanny in day care and in the evenings as a cleaner in a nightclub and a bank during her two-year stay in Iceland. Most Romanian returnees worked in the construction industry, domestic service and agriculture in the host country – the industries most affected by the economic crisis (interviews with returnees; Vlase, 2011; Stoiciu et al, 2011). The deskilling process abroad may have long-term consequences for a migrant upon return – a gap in their professional career and subsequent marginalisation in the labour market and in social life may occur (Iglicka, 2008, p. 70; Iglicka, 2010b, p. 27).

Summary

People with the following sociodemographic characteristics are most likely to dominate among the mobile workers returning to the four selected CEE countries:

- aged 30–45 years old, except for Poland, where returnees under the age of 30 predominate;
- male, who outnumber female returnees and seem to be more likely to return in all countries studied except Hungary;
- single (however, the migration decisions of married people, especially women, are strongly influenced by their family status);
- having tertiary and secondary education (or lower in the case of Romania);
- employed in low-skilled manual jobs abroad for which they were overqualified;
- tending to return to the same regions where they departed from; therefore returnees from villages and small towns are overrepresented among returned migrants as more people emigrate from such localities.

Economic, social and cultural influences 4

Social, economic and cultural circumstances that attract or deter mobile workers are macro-level factors that influence the patterns of return and are not dependent on individual or family circumstances. They can be studied at the national and regional level. While some characteristics are evident at the national level (for example, policies to attract workers, overall economic prospects and inflation), mobile workers are mainly responsive to the regional situation. Their trajectories depend on where they return to – areas they originally come from or major cities. According to Ghosh (2000), their choice of place to settle upon return reveals the relative weight of various motivating factors. For example, returning to a disadvantaged place with limited opportunities would signify a low importance of economic factors. In addition, meso-level factors are important in decisions concerning emigration and return – first and foremost the society-wide acceptance of migration as a way to solve economic problems, and the existence of ethnic networks that migrant workers can rely on in the host country. Individual motivations are discussed in Chapter 5.

Factors encouraging return migration

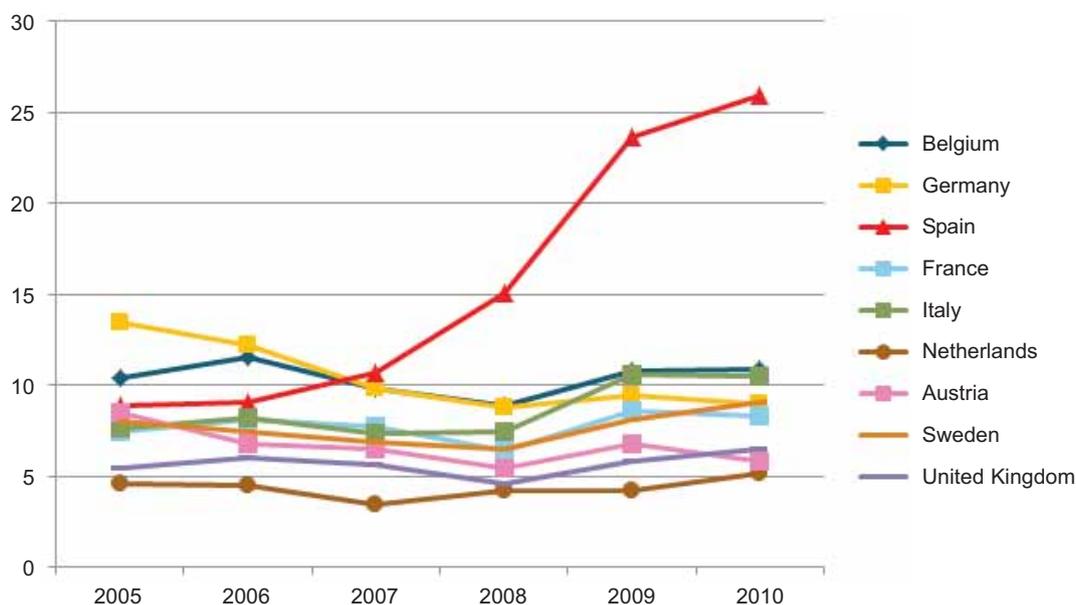
Migrant workers tend to follow socioeconomic developments in their home countries and judge individual opportunity structures available to workers with a similar background. Yet the extent to which economic, social and political factors influence the workers abroad also depends on the availability of information (through media and social networks). Social factors (social policies) affected high- and low-skilled migrants equally, whereas policies targeted towards some migrant groups affected very highly qualified or, on the contrary, very vulnerable workers in our sample.

Across all skill sets and backgrounds, several factors potentially attracting return migration can be identified as important to mobile workers considering return. Firstly, they consider the comparative economic advantage of living in the home country – the difference between salaries and cost of living. If this condition is favourable, this is a sufficient factor for return, according to several interviewees. In Poland, our analysis found that the difference in the cost of living between home and some host countries became less significant, as interviewed returnees and experts stated.

Factors relating to employability are often closely followed by mobile workers. Before the crisis, competitive offers in the home countries were available for some skill sets. Those who returned during the economic boom years (2006–2007) found reintegration rather easy.

Both the economic boom and the crisis made some workers reconsider the comparative economic advantage of the home countries. The home country can become a safe place to wait until the situation improves. The changes in employment situation of migrant workers in their host countries are an important factor when it comes to the decision to return, although Ghosh (2000) considers it more of a contextual factor. Figure 4 shows that, as the crisis started, very significant increases in the unemployment rate of foreign nationals were registered especially in Spain. However, the data capture mostly those unemployed individuals who were actively looking for work.

Figure 4: Unemployment rate of foreign nationals in selected EU27 countries (%)



Note: Unemployed persons are all persons 15 to 64 years of age (16 to 74 years in Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden (1995–2000) and the UK) who were not employed during the reference week, had actively sought work during the past four weeks and were ready to begin working immediately or within two weeks. Figures show the unemployment rate in the most popular host countries. Note that Eurostat indicates that the data from the Netherlands are not reliable.

Source: Eurostat

Taking into account migration trajectories, Romanian workers were the most affected by the rising unemployment of foreign nationals. Yet the data also suggest that they chose to return from Italy and Spain to a lesser extent than mobile workers from the UK and Ireland. When the host countries were affected by the economic downturn, migrants who had large networks often adopted a wait-and-see strategy. Some migrants found jobs in the informal economy, while others changed sectors – for example, seeking employment in agriculture and services (Koehler et al, 2010). On the other hand, where such networks were not extensive in the host country, migrants tended to return after they felt the effects of the economic crisis, according to an expert interviewed in Hungary. In such cases, the home country’s advantage is the absence of a language barrier and different job search patterns. The latter factor influences employability, as seen by the returnees. Latvian and Polish returnees who came back during the economic boom (2006–2007) did not need to rely on networks to find employment and reintegrate successfully into the labour market. On the other hand, Romanian returnees felt that, in the absence of networks, their employability would be very limited and hampered by corruption.

Comparatively better opportunities for professional development in the home countries were mentioned as an attracting factor, as mobile workers were expecting to use their language and intercultural skills and have a competitive advantage in the home country’s labour market, as in the case of this young interviewee who noticed that, while living in the UK, her life ‘stopped’:

After about two years I started thinking about return, the homesickness was one of the reasons, but also the awareness that I must continue my education and think about the future ... I couldn’t afford to do that in the UK, and in Poland I felt I could develop more than in my work in the UK.

(28-year-old Polish woman who spent six years in the UK)

This situation arises because of the market niches available to CEE migrant workers: ‘I would say that people who go there with a plan and higher ambitions are in the minority; these are those who don’t want to serve coffee for the next three years’ (30-year-old Polish man who spent four and a half years in the UK). Some theories view return migration arising as a result of asymmetric information on the skills level of immigrants (Borjas, 1989). In the case of CEE migration, the target country may offer higher financial returns, but the home country often has better information about the returnees’ skills and qualifications, as there is no language barrier and no limitations on the recognition of qualifications obtained before emigrating. In Poland, 66% of returnees admitted that the job they took up abroad was not in line with their qualifications (Central Statistical Office (Poland), 2008). Workers are aware of their competitive advantage and estimate where they can maximise it. For the highly qualified, competitive advantage is higher in the main economic centres of the home countries than in the globalised cities in the EU15:

London is a global city which attracts people from all over the world ... If you are a qualified accountant in London you are one of many, many thousands trying to reach that finance manager, finance director position.

(Co-owner, AERInternational, Poland)

By contrast, low-skilled and pre-retirement age workers often feel they have a competitive disadvantage in their home countries. Data from Poland indicated that higher unemployment rates among returnees, compared to non-migrants, affect mainly low-skilled workers. Self-employment was a popular strategy among those with vocational and secondary education (Strategic Consulting Centre, 2010). While the importance of career development for highly qualified returnees was particularly prominent in Poland, Hungarian returnees suggested that their host countries offered better professional development opportunities, so this factor did not encourage them to return to Hungary.

As earlier research had found, a new mobility infrastructure may increase the likelihood of labour mobility and access to labour markets abroad, but reduce the likelihood of a residential move (Zaiceva and Zimmermann, 2008). Based on the calculation of living costs and salaries, migrant workers in some places in CEE may relocate to their home countries and engage in seasonal mobility, particularly as large labour markets of neighbouring countries (such as Germany) open to them. There is some evidence of this possibility from the empirical research carried out for this study, for instance, an older-generation Romanian woman considering joining her husband in Italy. In principle, such a decision counts as a return, although the main or one of the main sources of these workers’ income may still come from a foreign country. However, more research is needed on this aspect.

Migrant networks and chain migration alleviate the risks and costs of relocation and allow easier access to jobs and services (Zaiceva and Zimmerman, 2008). The importance of networks is underlined in the empirical research for this study in Latvia, as well as in an earlier micro-level study by Oteanu. Her research shows that in Catholic villages in Romania, the church was an important facilitator of labour migration to other Catholic countries: churches were supporting the search for jobs abroad and places to stay for mobile workers, and kept statistics of their mobility. While abroad, workers could count on mediation in sending remittances and networking by delegated Romanian priests. On the other hand, mobile workers from Orthodox villages relied on family networks. Extended families often mediated emigration and return, administering remittances and investments into entrepreneurial activities (Oteanu, 2007, pp. 38–39). The network expected to cover the needs of the family first (for instance, to repay family debts) before starting entrepreneurial activities (Oteanu, 2007, p. 40). Research also found that religious communities and schools that were created as a spin-off from social networks were central in facilitating return of Polish migrant workers: Saturday schools specialised in preparing migrant children to adapt to the Polish school curriculum (White and Ryan, 2008, p. 1490). Social networks back in smaller towns in Poland mediated the process of finding employment abroad and upon return, while in major cities this task was carried out by formal institutions and employment agencies (White and Ryan, 2008).

Hungarian interviewees also mentioned discrimination and disadvantage experienced in the host countries' labour market. Some cases of workers' rights violations were analysed in a report initiated by the Polish Ombudsmen (Carby-Hall, 2008). Yet this factor did not strongly affect the motivation to return.

Returnees who have benefited from targeted policies to facilitate return migration tend to view such policies very positively (CDS, 2010; Iglicka, 2010; Grabowska-Lusińska et al, 2009). Such activities are not necessarily initiated by public authorities. For example, assistance from the Barka Foundation, which helps homeless or otherwise vulnerable Polish migrants, facilitated the return of 1,700 migrants. In the interview sample, one Hungarian returnee used the programme for highly qualified returnees (researchers). While there could have been other individual motivations, the policy was what largely facilitated the return and provided the certainty and high status the returnee wanted.

Specific individual circumstances (such as illness or new care needs) may prompt mobile workers to reconsider the benefits offered by their countries' welfare systems vis-à-vis those in the host countries. For instance, one Latvian migrant worker could not receive medical treatment in the host country and thus returned. This is not necessarily due to limited access or awareness of the host country's welfare system. For example, Hungarian returnees who made the decision to come back to Hungary for family reasons pointed out that longer parental leave was appreciated.

Summary

Economic conditions in the home country are the main factor that workers take into account when making decisions. Yet in some situations other factors gain prominence: welfare provision, access to affordable medical care and professional networks. Cross-country differences, it appears, were smaller than regional differences or varying opportunities for different groups of migrant workers.

Factors deterring return migration

The factors deterring return migration typically relate to lack of certainty, which arises for many reasons. Depending on the migration trajectory and migrant profile, the uncertainty can be related to employability, quality of life and reintegration. Migrant workers tend to follow socioeconomic trends in their home countries or regions and estimate the possibilities of reintegration. Unemployment rate and regional discrepancies, lack of support structures (social services as well as family or professional networks) often negatively influence their decision to return. This is particularly true for lower-qualified returnees from disadvantaged regions, who do not have networks to rely on.

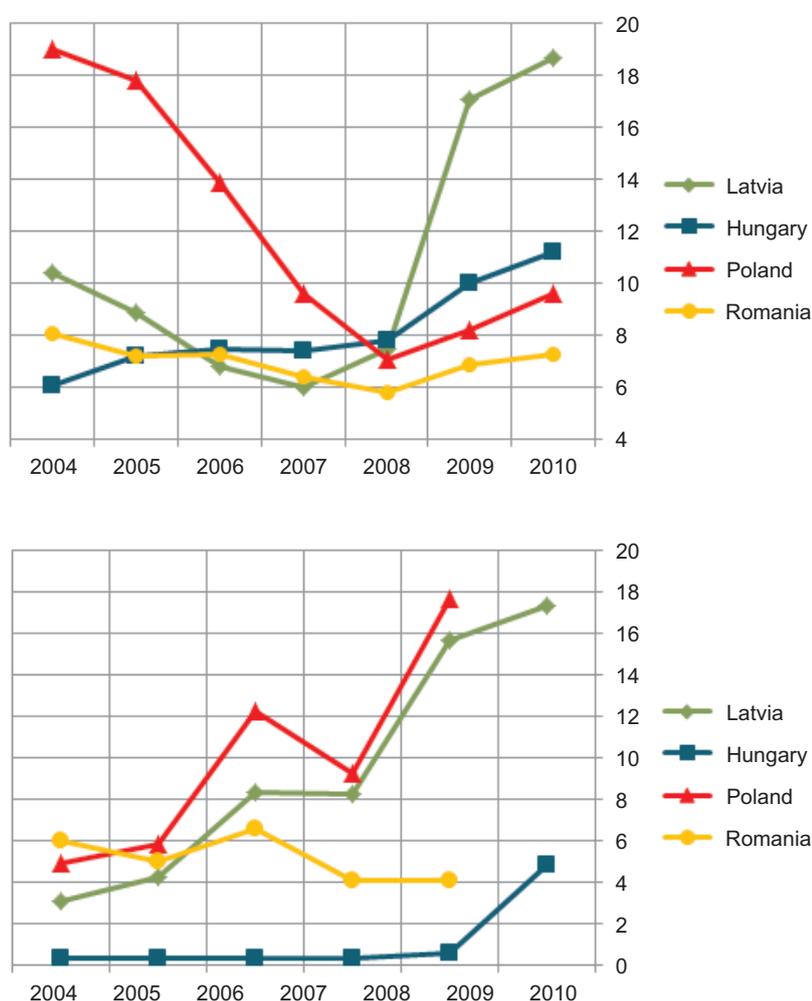
Economic factors: The rise in home ownership, limited portability of social security entitlements, lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, and poor information flows about labour markets were identified as the main deterring factors for intra-EU mobility at large (Zaiceva and Zimmerman, 2008). When making migration decisions, workers consider various alternatives based on the costs of migration, in terms of financial and legal restrictions not only for migrant workers in general, but also for specific occupational and skill sets. Migrant workers are highly responsive to the opportunities available for their skill sets in their region. Research based on LFS 2002–2007 data shows that the proportion of manual workers among Latvian migrants has been rising steadily. The share of unskilled manual workers has increased so that one in four Latvian migrants now does manual work. The number of low-skilled non-manual workers has been declining. The share of highly skilled non-manual workers has dropped sharply compared to the pre-accession period (Hazans and Philips, 2011).

The main deterring factor for returning to CEE is the economic situation of the region. As our analysis has shown, salaries still lag significantly behind those available in the EU15. High unemployment also pushes people to seek work abroad, although this parameter is rather uneven across the selected countries (for example, it is rather low in Romania, but it must be noted that the figures representing active job-seekers are not always reliable). Hungary has the lowest employment rate in the EU and a large inactive population. The unemployment rate reached 12% in 2010, but even for

employed workers the net increase in real wages was only 3% from 2005 to 2009, while inflation was nearly 8% during the boom years, and prices continued to rise during the current downturn. In Latvia, the unemployment rate doubled during the crisis – returnees already reflect that those who returned during the economic boom were lucky.

Figure 5 shows the patterns of unemployment rate and emigration. Decreasing unemployment rates between 2004 and 2008 can be attributed both to economic growth and to emigration. While it is generally presumed that emigration reacts to economic fluctuations with some lag, the graph shows how emigration from the selected countries was even more sensitive to the economic downturn than the unemployment rate.

Figure 5: Unemployment rate (% , upper graph) and emigration per 10,000 inhabitants (nationals only, lower graph) in study countries



Source: Eurostat (unemployment rate – job-seekers), authors' calculations

Potential returnees are sensitive to poor economic news from home. In Hungary, the performance of the industrial and construction sectors fell strongly during the period, and real wages fluctuated considerably. In addition, the employment rate remained low. A similar situation was found in Latvia, where the sharp economic downturn and soaring unemployment rate drove new flows of emigration and deterred return. The relative impact of the crisis is important: the main destination countries (the UK, Ireland and Scandinavian countries) did not suffer from the recession as severely as Latvia, even though Ireland was deeply affected and many jobs were lost in the UK.

The difference in salaries between CEE and the main host countries remains, although some convergence has taken place during the economic boom. The need to support one's family remaining in the home country, particularly elderly parents receiving insufficient pensions, pushes migrant workers to look for every opportunity to remain abroad (Cramarencu-Cucuruzan, 2010, p. 81). As Polish returnees mentioned in the case study analysis, a minimum salary in the UK is sufficient for a decent life, unlike in Poland.

One specific feature of Latvia is that when salaries plummeted again and unemployment rates soared, the burden of mortgages became unmanageable for many individuals. Debts, particularly mortgages, characteristic for the economic boom period, are a particular feature of Latvian labour migration. Almost half of the respondents to a recent survey have debts (SolidData, 2011). Many potential returnees are deterred by their inability to repay their loans in their home country. On the other hand, this does not mean they gave up real estate in their home country. Real estate, particularly before the crisis, has been considered as a safe long-term investment in stability and security. Ownership of apartments and land was identified as one of the pull factors to return.

The correlation between loan take-up and migration is not so straightforward. Eurostat data show that home ownership is much more widespread in the selected countries (from 84% in Latvia to 98% in Romania; EU12 average, 87%) than on average in the EU27 (71%). While home owners with mortgages account for only 8% of the population in Latvia (24% in Hungary) and thus below EU12 and EU27 average, young families are more affected by the burden of mortgage loans. Mortgages were more widespread in households with dependent children (6%) than without them (2%). In addition, the rise of the popularity of mortgages should also be taken into account. Between 2007 and 2009 the share of home owners with mortgages tripled in Latvia, but in 2010 it decreased to the level of 2008. The share of home owners with mortgages continued rising in Hungary. The difference in the levels of migration between Hungary and Latvia could be explained by the fact that migration was normalised in Latvian society as a way to solve economic problems. More research is needed to determine whether loan conditions influenced the inability to repay loans in Latvia and hence encouraged more emigration or delayed returns.

Regional differences are an important factor deterring return migration. Economically stronger regions cannot balance the disadvantages of less-developed ones. In Romania, the poorest region's GDP per capita is nearly four times lower than that of the capital region. Many people are tied to their town, according to the case study, and it is likely that if they have to move due to push factors, many would prefer to work where their income will be higher (foreign countries rather than major Romanian cities).

It also depends on where somebody is returning. If someone returns to a small town in Podkarpackie voivodship where the only employer is a local supermarket then [return] is not attractive. But if somebody has some experience of working in a big city, then if he comes back to Warsaw, employers would probably be eager to employ him.

(Member of Prime Minister's Strategic Advisors Team, Poland)

The situation of the region may contribute to the overall negative perception of the home country:

Me and my partner decided to return to Poland full of positive energy, which soon disappeared ... no good job offers, earnings below the level of when we left. ... having graduated from university and worked in different places.

(32-year-old Polish woman who spent seven years in the United Kingdom)

This is echoed in the story of a Romanian returnee:

What is there to do in Romania? There's nothing going on. I myself realised that when I came back, I saw that I didn't know what to do. ... Even if they [returnees] come to Romania for one or two months they become aware that it was still better there [abroad].

(32-year-old Romanian man, who spent one year each in Spain and Belgium)

Those who considered entrepreneurship, as in the case of some Hungarian interviewees, were deterred by administrative barriers. Romanian interviewees also mentioned administrative barriers and corruption in finding employment or starting a business. Hungarian interviewees who considered becoming self-employed found this possibility burdensome. Some new entrepreneurs did not expect their businesses to be sustainable.

As explained above, mobile workers are responsive to the 'economy of expectations'. Pessimistic forecasts may deter undecided workers. This is also reflected in mobile workers' narratives: they need to see change in order to be motivated to return, but instead they see stagnation. However, overall economic trends matter less when they do not affect the specific locality or qualification. Mobile workers tend to migrate to areas where there is greater economic certainty: if they perceive the situation in their home countries as more uncertain they prefer to wait and see, whereas if they can expect greater stability at home (even if their income is lower), they look for opportunities to reintegrate at home.

Political factors: Many returnees across the selected countries exhibit a general distrust of their home country's government and tend to be sceptical towards (and in most cases unaware of) policies aimed at facilitating return migration (including in Poland, where initiatives to facilitate return were more extensive). They view such policies as false promises of improvement in the quality of life; in their opinion, public policies are not aimed at actually facilitating change in their home countries.

Social factors: In all the case studies, returnees noted poor quality of public services, bad service they receive from staff, and lack of transparency in administrative procedures as deterrent factors. Many Polish returnees mention the poor quality of public services at home, and the better social care and better financial support for families abroad. Latvian returnees also see social services as a deterring factor, particularly those who have experience living in Scandinavian countries. Less generous unemployment benefits and less support for childcare and healthcare as well as lack of transparency in the public sector in general have been mentioned by Hungarian returnees as well. Across the selected countries, the quality of public services strengthens the feeling of higher security in the host country – a very important emotional factor. This factor also translates into the perceived cultural reasons deterring return – alienation from the home country (see illustrative quotes under 'Cultural factors' below) and its non-mobile population, which tends to be rather hostile to returnees. As shown by the cases below, hostility of public servants contributes to the image of a generally hostile reception of returnees in the home country. These factors contribute to the disappointment many returnees feel during their reintegration, but they directly affect return in specific cases; for example, when returning with children. Negative experience or knowledge about such experience of other returnees with public services relating to children may deter mobile workers who consider returning for family reasons:

I was unemployed (in Austria) and got pregnant, moved home, while the father is Hungarian and the baby will be born in Hungary ... and no one knows how I will get childcare aid or how much or from which state ... It seems to be a unique case. They have 2–3 kinds of typical cases that they are prepared for but this is a special one, and there is not yet a solution.

(35-year-old Hungarian woman who spent six years in Austria)

Bureaucracy and the unsatisfactory quality of services were mentioned as an important factor to face in all the selected countries: 'here in Hungary they [public servants] make you feel that they are doing you a favour by just doing their job ... In Austria it's more like a service', says a Hungarian returnee. A Romanian returnee, comparing medical services, frames them as opposites in the home and host country: 'Back there (in Italy), if you go to the Emergency Room with your children, no matter what colour you are, you are very well taken care of, very welcome' (35-year-old Romanian woman who spent 11 years in Italy). However, this factor affects the returnees' reflections on their decision rather than the decision itself. Only in Latvia did returnees mention social services as specifically deterring their return. In most other countries this factor appeared to be perceived as an unpleasant reality to deal with once the decision to return had already been made.

The urban–rural divide and specific circumstances affecting urban and rural areas have an impact on how the social needs of the returnees will be met. In urban areas, the provision of services for such needs is more formalised, whereas in rural areas reliance on networks is of central importance. Social networks are crucial in providing information about the possibilities abroad and at home. In smaller towns strongly affected by migration, the entire population may feel 'on the move', and those who remain in their home town feel uncertainty about their situation, when many friends and family have left. Migrant workers considering return also feel uncertain whether the networks left behind will still be there, as their classmates, friends and relatives are increasingly dispersed. According to one study, 'In communities where migration is almost the norm, individuals can be prone to feel that in certain crisis situations there is no alternative to migration' (White and Ryan, 2008).

Overall, social factors attracting and deterring mobile workers are strongly dependent on regional characteristics, public service needs and migrants' decisions whether to return to their native place or one of the major cities (if the two do not coincide). In this light, Polish initiatives to provide information about opportunities in multiple regional centres (such as 'The 12 cities. Going back, but where to?' regional-level initiatives in Opolskie and Warsaw) are likely to facilitate the return of those migrants who perceive opportunities in Poland to be available only in the main urban centres.

Cultural factors: In the broadest sense, cultural factors identified as relevant in this study are the perception of emigration and return. Public perception of return migration is particularly negative in Romania. There it is mostly seen as a sign of failure:

The image of those who come back is a negative image, no one really understands why they'd come back.

(26-year-old Romanian woman who spent 1.5 years in the United Kingdom)

In Latvia, most respondents of a recent survey (DnB Nord, 2011) support emigration, and nearly a quarter felt sorry for those who leave. Emigration is often perceived as a loss for the country, thus contributing to a better perception of those who return with new skills and self-confidence.

There is a gap between the trend discussed above and the returnees' self-perception. Returnees themselves believe that, even if they worked below their qualification level, it is valuable that they saved money for investment or learned a new organisational culture and intercultural skills. The positive perception and reception of such skills in the labour market is particularly common in Poland, where some returnees were able to secure competitive jobs due to the value of such skills. Highly educated returnees also gained social prestige in their local communities in Romania, but this was not the case with low-skilled workers.

The perception of the jobs and qualifications of returnees tends to be rather negative – there is a stereotype that they work in low-skilled jobs and experience deskilling in their original qualifications in most countries. Hungary appears to be an exception, as mass migration did not take place. In the eyes of the returnees, labour mobility as a career choice for young people is publicly perceived as motivated by professional improvement, the wish to learn a new language and look for better opportunities. In this context, return is perceived as ‘stupid’, according to some returnees:

Many people said that it was a stupid thing to return, that the opportunities in Hungary are so much worse.

(34-year-old Hungarian man who spent five years in Belgium)

Gender roles may be an important deterring factor. If gender stereotypes are unfavourable for women migrant workers, they may be hesitant to both emigrate and return (due to negative stereotypes associated with the types of jobs women migrants get abroad). On the other hand, if enough women disregard these norms and decide to migrate, the perception of migrant workers and their environments changes (White and Ryan, 2008, p. 1471). Yet no country differences in the reflections on the public perception of men and women who returned were observed in the case studies.

As for the perceptions of the returnees themselves, mobile workers from Poland argue that the higher standard of living and experience of a different, less stressful working environment is more valuable than remaining in Poland. Research on internet forums where Polish residents and workers abroad discuss various topics related to work revealed that the notion of normality is central to the perceptions of the home and host country. Working life was idealised in the UK and heavily criticised in Poland. Many Poles framed their working environment in the broader context of a post-communist transformation, where life abroad is presented as ‘normal’ and standard, while life in Poland is viewed as somehow abnormal (‘hostile’, ‘incompetent’, ‘living museum’). In one example, a migrant worker juxtaposes missing his home country and ‘missing normality’ (Galasinska, 2010). In the words of a returnee from the UK,

There an employee knows his rights and duties, there is no such stress and tension as there is here, employers are also aware of it. If someone feels sick he will take a day off instead of going to work because of fear that he will be fired ... In Poland, people still treat work as a punishment.

(28-year-old Polish man who spent five years in the UK)

In deciding whether to remain or to return, mobile workers are often more worried about insecurity and the stressful working environment than about qualifications and employment (White and Ryan, 2008).

The overall public perception is rather negative in most countries: the decision to return is perceived as sign of failure, and migrant workers are perceived as having wasted their qualifications. In the experience of one returnee,

If you have returned with a lot of money, you are a positive hero, but if you have no money, the attitude is negative. There are very stereotypic views.

(44-year-old Latvian woman who spent one year in the UK)

The returnees themselves try to negotiate recognition for their decisions and qualifications, pointing to the experience they have gained in a more transparent and less stressful working environment.

Summary

There are two main categories of factors deterring return migration: those that shape the workers' perception of the situation in their home countries (unemployment, salaries, general trends) and those that constitute disappointment upon return (relating to the quality of public services, lack of improvement in the quality of life in native regions, people's negative perceptions of migrants). Cross-country differences were observed in the perception of migration – in Poland employers and the general public were more prepared to welcome mobile workers. Although home ownership with mortgages is more widespread in Hungary, labour mobility to repay such loans is much more widely considered in Latvia. As both earlier literature and this research show, the 'objective' factors are mediated by personal experience and perception, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Motivations to return 5

Comparative studies on the motivation of returning CEE workers are lacking, and existing research is usually nationally focused. To bridge this gap, this study maps the main patterns of decision-making across the four selected countries. This chapter also aims to establish whether there is a cyclical pattern in mobility. The main methods informing this chapter were analysis of secondary sources and, most importantly, empirical data collected during the case study analysis.

The previous chapter identified the macro factors that encourage or deter return migration. Mobile workers take these circumstances into consideration, but in the individual decision to return they are mediated by personal expectations, values and opportunity structures. Theoretical and empirical studies on migration have identified several intersecting factors affecting returnees' motivation: the length of migration experience, expectations associated with migration (such as temporary or permanent and having a well-defined objective or no particular objective), and preparedness for return (Gmelch, 1980; Cassarino, 2004). While these are analytically identified factors affecting the motivation to return and the categories of returnees, mobile workers themselves may cite different reasons for their return as they tell their stories to interviewers. For example, the activities that returnees take up are often not the reason for their return (Cerase, 1974).

Regarding voluntary return, several broad categories of motivation to return have been identified from relevant literature (for example, Ghosh, 2000), adapted for CEE migrants and tested in the empirical part of this research:

- family reasons (change in the family structure, care needs, children's education, partner's career);
- social reasons (social status, growing anti-immigration sentiment in the host countries, welfare needs, quality of life, existence or absence of social and professional networks, etc.);
- economic reasons (real and perceived employability, changes in one's employment status and/or wages, economic 'buffers' in the home country and, particularly importantly, plans and expectations (planned personal and career development, match between expected and actual financial gains in the host country, objectives of migration));
- political reasons: policies that promote return migration in sending and receiving countries;
- emotional reasons (homesickness, loneliness in the host country, feeling unwelcome).

Migration is often analysed as a product of push and pull factors, which result from interplay between economic, social and political characteristics of home and host countries of migrant workers. Some of these factors are consciously reflected upon and rationally weighted. Others can be identified only by macro analysis. Returnees may highlight some push and pull factors in order to give meaning to their experience. In addition, when some of the strongest push or pull factors diminish, mobile workers may 'notice' other factors. In Poland, according to interviewed experts from the private sector, returnees accept lower income as a trade-off in exchange for closer contact with their families, Polish culture and higher professional positions. The main push and pull factors are discussed below. There follows a description of the ways in which the success and failure of (re)integration, coupled with other push and pull factors, translate into cyclical mobility patterns. The findings of the empirical research carried out for this study confirm the patterns identified in earlier migration literature (for example, Ghosh, 2000): mobile workers try to maximise their social status, social inclusion and certainty in social and economic terms.

Reasons for return: Pull factors

As our case studies showed, it is often a mix of several reasons from different categories that facilitates the decision to return. Family reasons were identified in the narratives as the most important pull factor across all the selected countries. Yet our experts identified that the arguments in the narratives are not always consistent with each other, as the returnees try to create a favourable image of themselves and their mobility choices. For example, some Hungarian returnees, when asked, listed negative characteristics of their job abroad, but showed a willingness to endure them during migration and

believe that the situation is still worse in their home country. Therefore, wherever possible, the team searched for supplementary data sources or explanations from migration theory.

Family reasons: Family appears in all narratives as a significant pull factor, but research shows that the link between family and return is not always causal. In a web survey, Polish migrants in the UK and Ireland highlighted family reasons as the main motivator to return (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 155). The Romanian case study found that family and networks in the home country are used as a buffer ('hinterland') in the face of economic uncertainty in the host countries. Family reasons were important in deciding to return for 73% Romanian returnees. The same level of importance of family factors is confirmed by research in Latvia. Although family was mentioned in combination with other factors, it was always the first or second main factor. Family reasons tend to fall into two categories: returning to join family in the home country or returning with family to the home country.

More specifically, decisions to return are often related to predicted or unpredicted changes in the family structure or needs. Among such reasons returnees mention newly born children, or children starting education or transferring to the next education cycle: 'As it was our first child we were concerned how we will manage everything; here in Latvia we have a grandmother who would always help' (27-year-old Latvian man who spent three years in the UK). In some cases illness or death of parents and additional care needs also prompted return. In Latvia, research identified that new relationships with people from Latvia, family formation and additional care needs were important reasons for return. In Hungary, a difference was observed between high-skilled and low-skilled workers: the former tended to migrate with families, whereas the latter migrated alone and often missed family members particularly badly while abroad.

Regarding the pattern of return with one's whole family, the Romanian case study showed that parents are often concerned about their children's performance if they return to their home country school: 'if I wanted to speak Hungarian with my grandchildren, I had to come back now ... or better put, it's not the Hungarian [language]... I just want to live in the same city with them' (34-year-old man who spent five years in Belgium). Yet the changes and concerns are often a pretext to return, while the underlying motivation, as research shows, can be different. In Hungary, where mass migration of workers did not occur, family reasons are also mentioned by the returnees as influencing their decisions to return; for example, when the push and pull factors affect not the individual concerned, but their partner: he or she finds a job in Hungary or cannot integrate in the host society. In the words of a returnee from Belgium:

My job was quite interesting and the colleagues were nice, so if my wife didn't want to come home so much, I would have probably stayed. ... But she didn't like her job, she didn't like the fact that it was raining all the time, she didn't like the people, who she found unfriendly ... she had problems with everything.

(34-year-old Hungarian man who spent five years in Belgium)

Tied movement tends to follow gendered patterns and is very likely to be cited as a standalone reason for returns. According to researchers Hazans and Philips (2011) Latvian female migrants were less likely to leave family behind (that is, they are more likely to be tied movers or to live alone before moving). Some interviewees suggested that following their partner was among the main reasons for return.

Family serves as a suitable reason to reduce eventual cognitive dissonance or mixed feelings about the return. The discrepancy can be seen from the fact that, despite mentioning family reasons for return, many returnees would re-migrate if given the chance (see Stoiciu et al, 2011 on intention to stay permanently). Family, however, is the reason given for the decision to return (Vlase, 2011) and to help deal with the negative perception of returnees.

Social reasons: Overall, social reasons were never identified as a standalone pull factor. However, when making a mobility decision influenced by social reasons, mobile workers weight various factors, such as public services, future prospects and integration. As they compare different aspects of quality of life between home and host countries, they

often find that cultural life and educational opportunities offered in their home countries are richer (or at least more accessible). Many migrant workers expect that the standard of living they got used to in emigration will be sustainable, at least for some time, with their savings and the lower cost of living. Yet many were disappointed that the cost of many basic goods is similar in their home and host countries, and the status markers they expected (a big house, higher-class consumption habits) were not as affordable as initially thought. In the words of a Hungarian returnee from Germany, 'having a car, buying fuel ... or buying food is cheaper [abroad] than in Hungary ... yes, that is outrageous'.

Economic reasons: Returnees were split in two categories relating to economic reasons: those who accomplished their goals and those who returned earlier than they expected. In Poland, accumulating sufficient money was cited as the fourth main reason for return among those who returned as planned. The achievement of objectives (not necessarily financial, but also including new experience and qualification) was a common reason to return among Latvian workers. The 'mission accomplished' motivation was also cited in Hungary, when migrants looked at their experience retrospectively. As for workers returning prematurely, Iglicka (2010b) suggested that losing a job was the main motivation for those who return earlier than expected. According to recent surveys in Poland, the main reasons for return were planned termination of the stay abroad (20% of the returnees did not plan to stay in the host country any longer) or expiry of their contract. Similarly, a survey in Romania showed that achievement of pre-migratory economic goals was a very significant motivation to return (40% of returnees indicated it (Stoiciu et al, 2011)). This motivation was also identified in Latvia (SolidData, 2011).

Earlier research has found that many CEE workers are employed in jobs below their qualification, creating a potential to return for job-related reasons (better career prospects). Having accumulated the planned financial resources, some migrant workers indeed opted for more prestigious positions in their home countries, if they had access to them. This was particularly the case in Poland. Research on Latvian workers has shown that those who considered returning found it important to have a good job offer in Latvia. This motivation was also prominent in Hungary, including cases when families returned with one partner receiving a competitive job offer.

Yet the views of mobile workers on their employability in their home countries are mostly negative, and the economic pull factors are downplayed in most cases (except among some Hungarian interviewees, who returned when they or their partners received a competitive job offer, and some Polish professionals who found that their skills had a higher competitive advantage in their home country). Romanian workers in particular did not see the labour market in their country as an appealing factor – they were sceptical about the likelihood of employment or the sustainability of the businesses they were planning to establish. According to a recent survey in Poland, economic improvement or other economic reasons relating to the home country were marginal; they accounted for just over 5% of returns (Central Statistical Office (Poland), 2008) and were considered secondary (Koehler et al, 2010).

Political reasons: Only one mobile worker who returned because of an attractive policy for highly qualified return migrants has been identified and interviewed in Hungary. For this individual, the policy was an important pull factor in deciding to return. Yet, as mentioned above, there was a general distrust in political initiatives and most returnees interviewed explicitly downplay the significance of political initiatives. The words of a young Polish returnee summarise the most common opinion: 'I don't know anyone who would return because of the Prime Minister's calls...' (30-year-old Polish man who spent three years in the UK). A Latvian returnee had a similar opinion: 'Not even for a moment did I feel that the state of Latvia cares for me' (27-year-old Latvian woman who spent six years in Ireland).

Emotional reasons: Emotional motivations were often mentioned retrospectively, when reflecting on one's experience in the home and host countries. Integration, an important determinant of migration decisions, is typically approached from multiple perspectives, as suggested by Cerase. One perspective views integration as adoption of the values and patterns of the host society by the immigrant, whereas the other approach involves immigrants understanding that their situation is a product of certain actions by others and themselves (Cerase, 1974). The expectations of the host society

and the migrants themselves are translated into the way returnees frame and present their emotional reasons of return. Loneliness and difficulties in adapting to the host country were cited by Romanian returnees – one young worker even reports having panic attacks when feeling lonely and torn between the wish to be in a familiar environment and unwillingness to return. Speaking in one's own language and communicating with friends at home, as well as co-nationals left behind in one's home country, were very important in mitigating loneliness and stress in the host country.

The empirical research on Hungarian returnees found that emotional pull factors differ according to the qualifications held by the worker. More educated workers tended to migrate with their families. If one of the partners did not know the language or missed family members at home, they both returned. Longing for family members and their home environment was even more typical, for other reasons, among less educated workers, who could not afford to take their family along or to visit them frequently.

Workers who experienced occupational downgrading (having to take up jobs far below their qualifications) felt dissatisfied and returned to their home countries once their financial goals had been accomplished. In Hungary, this was particularly typical for those who left just for financial reasons – they experienced more pressing adaptation issues.

Summary

Most migrants interviewed cite family and emotional reasons as the main pull factors to return. Earlier research (Central Statistical Office (Poland), 2008; Frelak and Roguska, 2008; Grabowska-Lusińska et al, 2009; Gmaj and Małek, 2010; Hazans and Philips, 2011) underlines the importance of the returnees' initial plans and expectations: they returned when their goals had been accomplished, particularly if they had worked in low-skilled jobs below their qualification. According to Gmaj and Małek (2010), the fact that many migrant workers treated their mobility as a temporary state influenced their integration patterns. Social and political reasons for return were not mentioned, considered secondary or stated as deterring factors for return.

Reasons for return: Push factors

Clearly, the configuration of push factors by category of motivation is very different from that of pull factors. Economic and emotional reasons play an important role. Return is mostly a result of plans and expectations. Earlier research suggested that economic reasons had pushed some migrant workers to change their plans for return. The change mostly related to job loss, but it could also have been prompted by lower wages and the gap between income and living costs.

Family reasons: As in the previous sub-section, these reasons can be grouped to joining family and leaving with family. Joining one's family takes place when the migrant workers are not able to support their family by working abroad.

Regarding relocation with one's family, partners' career or children's education play a role in deciding to return even in the case of some well-established migrant workers. One Hungarian returnee made the decision together with his partner, who did not like the host country and her job. Difficulties in being a single parent in the host country were also mentioned. It was also frequently observed that education of children was an important factor pushing the workers to reconsider their priorities, as in the following evidence from Poland:

[I]f their children are in pre-school then perhaps they are more comfortable speaking English than Polish and they may have to take the decision that we don't want to stay here and accept that our children will grow up predominantly as English children, or we go back to Poland. So there is this cultural decision to be made in some cases.

(Co-owner, AERInternational, Poland)

Emotional reasons: As in the case of pull factors, emotional reasons usually relate to integration and perception of the migrant's place in the host country. The Romanian case study found that even well-integrated migrants lacked 'adherence' to the new culture and missed their country. The Polish case study also found some evidence that migrant workers felt they were 'consumers' and passive recipients of their host country's culture. Feeling like a stranger in a new culture could be overshadowed by other factors for Latvian migrants, but resurfaced when these other factors diminished. Hungarian returnees reported giving high importance to emotional reasons, although they mostly felt sufficiently integrated in the host societies.

Social reasons: One Polish woman with extensive work experience in the UK appreciated social services there, but did not want her child to grow up with the lifestyle and values of the host country:

Well, we got together when we were abroad, now we had a baby, and we really couldn't imagine our son growing up there, in that society, I mean you have good social services there, but I think the people have a different lifestyle and different values. We didn't want our son to grow up in this environment, and also our parents missed the little one.

(32-year-old Polish woman who spent seven years in the UK)

Discrimination and disadvantage in the host labour market was cited as a reason in several interviews in Hungary and Latvia, but it was among the reasons to return for only two Hungarian workers. One interviewee reported experiencing discrimination and prejudice as a young Eastern European woman. The pay gap between another interviewee and an Austrian man in a similar position also bothered the migrant worker, but she accepted the situation (presumably because it was nonetheless more favourable than in her home country). This awareness of discrimination probably reflects the fact that, as there was no 'mass' mobility of Hungarian workers after EU accession, they were not driven by networks, made more individualised choices and hence were more aware of the opportunities available.

Economic reasons: As research by Gmaj and Małek (2010) showed, most Polish return migrants regarded migration as a temporary state. Therefore a change in the economic gain they received was likely to push them to return earlier. Even if many returnees did not lose their jobs immediately when the crisis started, the economic downturn had a negative impact on their wages, standard of living and psychological climate at work. A survey of Polish migrants in the UK found that most of them had not felt the impact of the economic crisis themselves, but had to reduce their standard of living and change their daily lives. Yet the weakening of the financial pull factor did not change their motivation to remain abroad (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 11). A significant decrease in salary and standard of living motivated some workers, particularly those who had stayed abroad for a shorter time, to return, as in the case of a young Romanian worker who immediately felt the impact of the crisis at his job:

The moment when the decision to come back was taken: I think that's when the crisis started. The employer had already told us 'I can't pay you this much, I'll only give you this.' And then I didn't agree and I left. From €1,100 (what I got in the first month), I got to €500 something.

(32-year-old Romanian man who spent one year each in Spain and Belgium)

Iglicka (2009, 2010a) and Grabowska-Lusińska et al (2009) showed that not only is completion of a migration plan an important reason behind most returns, but disappointment with the real benefit of migration was also among the most important motives. For example, one in four Polish migrant workers did not save the planned amount of money while working abroad (Gmaj and Małek, 2010).

Just as the economic boom in some CEE countries reduced the importance of such push factors as low wages and unemployment, the economic downturn in the EU15 weakened economic pull factors (in the words of one Romanian returnee, the ratio between wages and the cost of living was not favourable anymore). In this context, migrant workers

weighted other factors: discrimination and inequality, social protection, professional development and others. For example, a Hungarian returnee says that ‘there is a higher expectation [from migrants compared to local workers]: Hungarian workers have to work more, and have a smaller salary than German workers’. On the other hand, it is clear from the interviews that they did not consider their decisions final and would consider migrating again.

Summary

Overall, it is an interesting trend that a certain threshold pattern reoccurred in the returnees’ narratives. They were willing to put up with various push factors (such as a sense of alienation, lack of integration, socioeconomic disadvantage and worries about their children’s educational performance and integration) to a certain extent. When these factors accumulated, a decision to return was made. However, many migrant workers were prepared to tolerate stress, loneliness, lack of social and medical services, and family issues as long as the economic factor pulled them to remain in their host country. When this factor diminished, others become more important. Economic push factors can be strong enough to independently affect the decision to return (particularly when the initial plan is completed). Yet, in the case of return migration they seem to act mostly in conjunction with other factors. Most decisions are made on an ad-hoc basis, weighting all the factors individually (for example, the level of medical services in the host country is important for those with pressing needs if they cannot visit the home country for medical treatment often).

Cyclical pattern of mobility

Some evidence was obtained of existing cyclical patterns of mobility in CEE, yet it is difficult to predict to what extent cyclical mobility is actually going to take place. This type of mobility is, according to the empirical evidence collected, fuelled by several factors: first, a mixture of emotional, family and economic factors behind mobility, as discussed above; second, the interplay between expectations and real-life situations in the host and home countries; and third, economic uncertainty in Europe.

As mentioned in the Latvian case study, the rate of potential labour migration was three times higher among those with prior experience abroad. On the other hand, about half of the returnees surveyed did not plan to leave again (Krišjāne et al, 2007). By contrast, in Romania just over one in five returnees planned to stay in their home country permanently (Stoiciu et al, 2011), and over half were planning to emigrate again within a year. A very telling fact is that a third of the returnees surveyed were actively looking for a job, but not able to find one, and those who planned to start their own businesses expected to earn money abroad to sustain it. Some returnees in Poland also regarded their return as temporary.

As discussed earlier, multiple push and pull factors affected emigration and return. The mix of different social, economic and psychological (for example, feeling unwelcome in the host country) factors can shape returnees’ future plans. For example, some of them returned in order to spend time with their family or start new professional activities (as in the example of a middle-aged Romanian man who returned because of encouragement by his brother):

My brother used to say ‘come back home, there’s enough work here’. He had been in the country for about seven years; he had a job, most of the time he’d tell me he had too much on his hands, that we should get a truck together. I wanted to build a house or refurbish the one I already had. In the end, I decided to come back home, since every time we talked on the phone he kept repeating the same thing. So it was more him insisting that brought me back – and it was a bad decision to make, since I came back exactly when the crisis started and there is no more work – I regret coming back.

(47-year-old Romanian man who spent 11 years in Italy and 1 year in France)

Economic circumstances changed their perception of return and showed that social and psychological reasons were not enough to keep potential migrants in their home country. As the qualitative analysis for the case studies revealed, narratives of disappointment were rather typical in Poland and Romania, the larger countries of the sample. Some returnees found that the situation had not improved since their emigration, particularly in more disadvantaged regions. This disappointment was, however, also felt in other countries in the sample. This disappointment can turn into a 'migration loop' trap.

Some returnees were upset to find that living costs were not as low as expected and some everyday items (such as fuel or food) were as expensive as in their host countries:

It is easier to live abroad ... some things are more expensive than in Hungary, like the housing ... but having a car, buying fuel ... or buying food is cheaper than in Hungary ... yes, that is outrageous.

(54-year-old Hungarian man who spent four years in Germany)

Some returnees expected to sustain a comparable standard of living upon return, but realised that this would be difficult in the home country, and therefore may consider leaving again. By contrast, those who returned for family reasons (worried about the reintegration of their children in home country schools, taking care of elderly parents or giving birth to a baby and hence relying on extended family for help) have weighed the advantages of staying in their home country carefully and consider reintegration in their home country a value in itself (for example, children receiving education in their national language and acquiring the identity of the home country). In addition, our empirical research strongly supports the argument that returnees' preparedness is of key importance in their reintegration: those who did not have high expectations were more prepared to face difficult situations in their home country, of which low salaries, different bureaucratic approaches and limited availability of services were the most frequently mentioned across the sample.

Some returnees had a specific plan for their return, just as some returnees had a specific idea of what they wanted to achieve by working abroad. For example, one of the Polish interviewees pursued her studies, which are free in Poland but expensive in the host country. The more specific the expectations, the less disappointment returnees face. Some of the complex interconnections of planning and spontaneity are reflected in the narrative of this Latvian returnee:

If I have an opportunity, I would like to go the USA. My reasons would be exploring the country, improving my financial situation; but also the surrounding feeling of hopelessness here in Latvia as the economic situation here would not improve. But I would go only for a certain period and afterwards return.

(27-year-old Latvian man who spent three years in the UK)

When returnees were interviewed only upon their resettlement in their home country, they looked back at their mobility experience and framed it with their impressions and expectations. For example, negative elements of past labour migration (long working hours, unfair wages, and an inferior healthcare system) were downplayed in the narratives of Hungarian returnees, as they realised that life was not really easier in Hungary.

Research has shown that cyclical mobility depends strongly on the host country. It is assumed that geographical proximity and accessible infrastructure for travel (for example, cheap flights) are very important in affecting emigration and return. When travel between home and host countries is accessible, migration tends to be more cyclical and short-term. This affects, for example, Polish migration to Germany. Networks and infrastructure also channelled migration of Polish workers from various regions. A third of Polish returnees from Germany had migrated repeatedly, but Polish workers returning from the UK or Italy were considerably less likely to be cyclical migrants (16% and 12% respectively) (Koehler et al, 2010). Economic conditions affected the return from the UK to a large extent, coupled with family factors and 'satisfactory completion of the "migration experience"' (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 24). If push factors dominated and

the home country was still perceived as unattractive to work, while the first host country lost its attractiveness, migration to another country could still occur. Nonetheless, while economic factors facilitated onward migration (or remigration), cultural factors constrained the choice of the next host country. For example, Hungarian returnees from English-speaking countries saw the language and culture factor as very important in their migration choices in the future: they would go to the same country if they were to emigrate again.

Finally, economic uncertainty in home and host countries pushed returnees to consider remigration. Research by the International Organization for Migration found that migrant workers from CEE were highly responsive to labour market fluctuations, expecting to move back to the previous host countries once the economic situation there improved (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 11). Migrant workers who remain in the host countries compare employment conditions and social protection in their home and host countries and, if the second appears far more favourable, adopt a wait-and-see strategy even if their employment in the host country is threatened. For example, they may take up jobs in the informal economy (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 24). On the other hand, those who were unable to handle the costs of living and returned have developed a wait-and-see strategy at home: they use their family and networks to balance out the loss of income and look for new opportunities for employment abroad. While evidence from the Romanian interviews showed that the home country acted as a safe 'second option' ('hinterland') for mobile workers, they were uncertain about employment prospects both at home and abroad and may therefore try their luck again in another country. For example, one middle-aged worker believed she could not find employment at her age in Romania and was thus willing to leave again, even though she had accumulated enough money for the plans she wanted to finance by working abroad. Evidence from all the four countries selected for case study analysis showed that most mobile workers did not exclude the possibility of repeated emigration; particularly if their reasons for mobility are mainly economic (they may have considered their mission abroad accomplished, but found very limited prospects for reintegration in their home countries).

Therefore we may observe here some patterns of circularity such as:

- seasonal migration, common across the selected countries;
- returning to one's home country and planning to leave for another country or back to the country of previous migration after failure to reintegrate (falling into a 'migration loop trap' (Iglicka, 2010, p. 86) – their career development upon migration makes them disadvantaged in both labour markets and 'stuck' between countries);
- 'rational intentional unpredictability' strategy (keeping several options open) (Grabowska-Lusińska et al, 2009).

It can thus be concluded that the mobility of workers will remain high in the selected countries, and returnees are likely to consider cyclical migration. Their opinions remain split regarding the destinations of their new migration: some would not like to face resettlement costs in a new country, whereas others, who find the situation in their home and host countries discouraging, are prepared to try new destinations.

To conclude on who is affected by which motivations, this is highly dependent on ad-hoc circumstances and certain categories of returnees. Time spent abroad and the level of education were often decisive factors. Among Latvians, those who spent up to two years abroad were more likely to return. In addition, the likelihood of return increased with negative labour market situation during the first months of the stay abroad. In Hungary, most workers in general preferred seasonal work abroad or leave for one to two years. This was particularly the case for less skilled migrants. Education and qualifications influenced the opportunities in home and host countries and therefore affected migrant workers' motivation. In the case of overqualified Hungarian workers abroad, emotional difficulties in coping with the new position prompted them to return, whereas workers with more opportunities, seeking professional accomplishment and new experience, were satisfied with their integration in the host country and thus less likely to return for emotional reasons. Less educated Hungarian migrants tended to migrate alone and thus experience integration and emotional difficulties, as mentioned above.

In some cases, gender and age mattered as well. In Romania, patterns of return were affected by occupational gender segregation. Research shows that unemployment rates in the host countries had less impact on women, as the employment niches they find in those countries were less affected by the economic downturn. Many migrant men, who formerly worked in construction and similar sectors, were less likely to find a job and sustain a preferable standard of living and tended to return.

Retiring migrants and those of pre-retirement age are also a significant group, but the sample in this study is too small to make conclusions about them. According to early research, such migrants feel secure about their economic situation and decide that it is time to pay more attention to their health, identity and cultural factors (Cerese, 1974). These findings were confirmed with the limited cases of older CEE workers, who returned home to consume the financial capital accumulated (for example, a 61-year-old Hungarian woman who spent 13 years in Germany).

As the analysis shows, many workers who overcame the initial barriers to mobility and migrated for work feel rather confident about the possibility of cyclical migration. To what extent they will migrate again will depend on their preparedness to migrate and the relative importance they attribute to various factors (for example, those who returned for family reasons may reconsider their motivation if they are unable to support the family). The returnees' perception depends strongly on their experience in the host country. For example, in France, Hungarian returnees found it was easier to transfer from a full-time to a part-time job during the crisis and to benefit from more generous unemployment allowances, but at the same time, the so-called 'bureaucratic culture' was also viewed negatively.

Labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees 6

This chapter aims to outline labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees and to identify cross-country differences analysed from the point of view of both migrants and employers. The data used for analysis included secondary sources as well as empirical data collected during the case study analysis.

Advantages and disadvantages of return

The potential of return migrants to gain an advantage in labour markets and become engaged in the economic development and institutional changes of their countries of origin depends on social, economic and cultural capital acquired on emigration. Contributions and investments should not be understood here only in terms of finances but also of new values, education, culture, skills and know-how brought to the country of origin.

Country-related factors: The economic situation back home depends also on the local labour market situation; that is to say unemployment rates, salary levels, labour/skills shortages, and whether or not there is a ‘business-friendly’ atmosphere. Economies can be ranked, for example, on their ease of doing business, on a scale from 1 to 183.² A high ranking on the ‘ease of doing business’ index means the regulatory environment is very favourable for starting up and running a business. In such a ranking created by the World Bank, for 2011 Latvia was in 21st place, Poland 62 and Hungary and Romania on 51 and 72 respectively.

From the country reports it seems that as far as the labour market integration after return is concerned there are rather more disadvantages than advantages for returnees in their native countries.

First of all, it is important to stress here that majority of labour migrants from CEE countries find employment in the secondary sector³ in the host countries that is below their level of qualifications and does not work in their favour when it comes to looking for employment in their native countries.

It is often argued that lack of insider knowledge affects the chances of emigrants getting jobs which fit their qualifications. Returnees also complain about losing their bearings on the labour market in home countries. A special case pertains to those returnees who left their countries after school or university without gaining any experience on the home country labour markets. Having experienced working abroad, and getting accustomed to the level of pay in the receiving countries, they might be disappointed with the wages offered them on the domestic labour market.

Personal factors: It is assumed from the country reports (with the exception of the Hungarian report) that migratory experience may be a strategy that brings immediate benefits in financial terms but may negatively contribute to human-capital investment and career development in the long run.

² For more details, see <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>

³ A number of economists have noted the segmentation of the labour market into primary and secondary sectors in advanced industrial economies (Gordon, 1972; Piore, 1979; Portes, 1981). The labour-intensive secondary sector recruits workers for jobs which do not need prior training, have few mobility opportunities and are at the bottom of the wage scale. Low wages, unstable conditions and the lack of reasonable prospects for promotion in this sector make it difficult to attract native workers.

Emigration was a chance to make life easier, earn more money, acquire new skills and learn another language. For many reasons these kinds of motives for migration, prevalent among young people from the countries under study, resemble the phenomenon of the ‘gap year’, which is a well-established pattern among young Western Europeans and Americans. The danger, however, lies in the fact that the gap year must end at some point and the open-endedness of some respondents’ migration might actually be a migration trap.

Because of newly discovered financial independence and the chance to support their families in their home countries it is possible that many migrants postpone their earlier plans for gaining higher/better education. Having a break in education and professional life might be a widespread phenomenon with potentially serious consequences for the future of young émigrés, either abroad or in their native countries, as it corresponds with the phenomenon of a ‘migration-loop trap’, as pointed out in the Polish report. Not only have such young emigrants potentially hampered their personal development, but they have also seriously limited their job opportunities back home due to the gap in their career development. Many returnees mention that emigration, especially when someone works in a deskilling job, brings the risk of a gap in their career.

Research conducted in Poland stresses the problems with integration to the local labour markets by return migrants, which may be compared to the problems faced by immigrants in Poland.

Returnees differ in terms of their educational attainment, skills and qualifications, prior to departure and upon return. Respondents in the majority of countries generally answered that, although they had an advantage in terms of better language skills and other ‘soft’ skills, this was not an argument for a pay rise in their home countries. From the Romanian report, however, it was evident that returnees earn higher wages than non-migrants and the wage differential increases with the educational level.

Mobility experience is valued on the labour market in different ways for the low qualified and the highly qualified returnees. Mobility experience seems to matter more – even in the current economic context – for the more qualified, while those with low qualifications experience difficulties in using their new skills on local labour markets. This finding has been confirmed by all country reports.

Entrepreneurship: As far as self-employment is concerned, even though it is thought to be one of the main strategies for migrants after return, there are many emigrants who left their countries to earn abroad and are not able to create self-employment upon their return.

The Latvian report stressed that, although self-employment can be a crucial tool for sustainable economic development, it is very important to realise that not all people, even those who had the courage and inclination to work abroad, can be self-employed back in their countries because of a lack of the so-called entrepreneurial spirit.

However, according to the Romanian country report, returnees with a low level of qualifications show a greater desire to change their occupational status than highly qualified returnees, and are more willing to venture into entrepreneurship projects. Returning men are particularly oriented towards self-employment whereas women are less likely to become self-employed or to start their own business after return. Men who return to Romania from Italy invest on average €90,000 in their home country (especially in building their own home and setting up a business in agriculture, construction or transport) while women more often become unemployed or inactive (for example, housewives), especially those with low skills. Men tend to prefer self-employment over other forms of employment because of a lack of jobs on the local labour market and because of low wages (in Romania the average wage was around €300 /month at the beginning of 2011, but 73% of active workers earned wages lower than this).

In the Polish and Hungarian cases, there was no clear evidence that self-employment is a popular strategy among returnees. Some respondents stressed that self-employment could be a feasible strategy especially when the service provided is in high demand; however, during the crisis it has been very difficult to set up businesses that are successful for more than a year. This finding is also significant from the point of view of the regional dimension. Some regions are more favourable for innovation and business, whereas in others, the only possibility to set up a business is still a small car-repair shop with its owner struggling to survive.

Employers' perceptions: Among employers, on the other hand, there is often a stereotypical image of returnees as people with huge expectations and few skills, who failed abroad and therefore had to return, or else as liable to go abroad again as soon as they get the chance. Currently in the emigration countries' labour markets, unless an employer requires people with foreign experience, there is no evidence of significant benefits for return migrants compared to non-migrants. It is also true that being used to higher wages abroad they aim higher and value wages relatively higher than non-migrants in their respective home countries.

Table 2 summarises the country reports' findings on the value of the mobility experience in each country under study.

Table 2: *Value of the mobility experience in countries under study*

Country	Evidence from the case study analysis
Hungary	Mobility experience is usually beneficial; new skills, knowledge are acquired together with a foreign language that helps returnees to find a job. However, these experiences are not necessarily remunerated with a wage premium.
Latvia	It has been found that return migrants show a higher propensity for self-employment than non-migrants. This indicates that international experience, languages and specific skills are important for individuals as well as giving higher self-confidence after return. However, currently in the labour market unless an employer requires people with foreign experience there is no evidence of significant benefits for return migrants compared to non-migrants.
Poland	Returnees are overall convinced that the mobility experience was an important step forward in their personal development ('soft' skills are good example of this); however, they mention that employers do not always see that as an advantage. Value of mobility is probably higher in case of highly skilled migrants, who could then work on more advanced equipment, learn new technologies, acquire specialised knowledge, etc. However, for young people without much experience on the domestic labour market, return might be difficult. If they worked only in the so-called 'secondary labour market' in unskilled positions, the gap either in education or career development might be difficult to fill and this may cause remigration in the future.
Romania	Mobility experience is valued on the labour market in different ways for low qualified and highly qualified returnees. Mobility experience seems to matter more – even in the current economic context – for the more qualified, while those with low qualifications experience difficulties in using their new skills on the Romanian (local) labour market. However, it is noticeable that low qualified returnees (compared to the highly qualified) show a greater desire to change their occupational status and are more willing to risk entrepreneurship.

Source: *Case study reports*

Skills acquired abroad

Returnees in all country reports point out that emigration taught them independence and gave them strength to deal with life problems.

Main transferable skills: Language skills acquired abroad are of great advantage in the domestic labour market, which was stressed by the Hungarian, Latvian and Polish reports.

Multicultural international working experience has proved to be useful for highly skilled returnees, as they are more likely to be employed in positions requiring such experience. It enriched migrants' CVs, and made them more assertive and open. Returnees also referred to less tangible effects of their emigration such as learning 'soft' skills, observing a

different work culture, openness towards other ideas, a new culture of work, a different ethos, which they consider useful for their work.

However, as observed in the Latvian report, even though experience obtained was greatly valued on a personal level, these skills did not always help returnees perform better in the local labour market, nor were they particularly welcomed by employers. The Hungarian, Latvian and Polish reports did not mention how the skills acquired abroad were applied directly, though in all of the cases it was stressed that returned migrants hoped that the skills would be very useful or believed they would help them in the future. Only the Romanian report mentioned the case of construction workers who returned before 2008 (the time when real estate and the construction industry were booming) and found opportunities for using their acquired skills on the local market for a while (before the economic crisis showed its effects on the local labour markets).

In this respect the case of Romanian migrants seems to resemble the return of innovation according to the typology of Cerase (1974), when returns are associated with success in the receiving society and ‘innovation’ on return. This type of return was observed in Hungary, Latvia and Poland at the beginning of the 1990s when people with skills, foreign languages and knowledge gained from working abroad helped to transform post-communist economies in the transition period.

Main transferable resources: As far as resources are concerned, only the Romanian report stressed at this point the importance of remittances – because ‘they are used for opening up a business in the home country when possible (savings also help survive the current lack of other economic opportunities)’.

The Polish report mentioned the importance of savings in a slightly different context: ‘Experiencing difficulties with finding jobs after return, due to their savings from working abroad, return migrants can search longer for new employment which is a kind of an advantage.’

None of the country reports mentioned the role of the network acquired by returnees. This may be explained by the fact that CEE labour migrants work abroad mainly among their own ethnic groups or among other immigrants, and their life abroad is devoted mainly to work and earning or saving. There is not enough time to socialise and develop a network which might be useful after coming back.

There is also another important problem that should be borne in mind when analysing possibilities of applying skills acquired abroad, namely that much depends on the region or local community to which migrants return. Some regions are more open to innovation, new technology and skills than others, with rural and less developed areas tending to be more closed than urban areas. In the latter case innovative returns might be very traumatic and push return migrants to re-emigration (see the section on cyclical migration patterns).

Summary

This section identified how and whether returnees apply their skills acquired abroad. It also analysed how they use resources, savings and networks acquired. The main conclusion is not very encouraging. Although returnees in all country reports pointed out that emigration taught them independence and gave them strength to deal with life problems, these skills did not always help them perform better in the local labour market; nor were they particularly valued by employers. The usefulness of the savings and skills also depends to a considerable extent on the local and regional context.

Background and experience

Employment patterns differ across genders, educational attainments and occupational levels of the emigrants and returnees. There are also some other differences by geographical experience of migrants as well – in the sense that some countries attract certain kinds of migrants. The southern European countries, attracting, for example, Romanians, offer opportunities for low-skilled workers, while countries like the UK and Germany offer more opportunities for high-skilled workers.

In other words, what is important to stress here is the fact that different host countries with different labour force demands already impose differences among returnees in terms of occupation, sector, and certain demographic characteristics that can further affect their reintegration on the home country labour market.

When it comes to the countries of emigration, it is likely that if the profile of emigrants to a particular country differs from the general population, then so does the profile of returnees. The example of Germany and seasonal workers from Poland is a good illustration of this. As mentioned in the Polish country report, seasonal migration to Germany has been popular for at least two decades. Working there does not imply learning special skills which could be used in Poland, because German labour markets used to need mainly low-skilled seasonal workers or caretakers (similarly to emigrants going to Italy, where they often work in comparable labour market sectors) and these tend to be people in their thirties and forties, with secondary and vocational education.

However, with the exception of seasonal workers, Germany closed its labour market for Polish citizens until May 2011. In view of this, the majority of new Polish migrants (the generation of the baby boom from the early 1980s which was quite well educated in Poland due to the possibilities created by the transformation of the educational system in the country after the collapse of the communism) after 2004 headed towards the UK and Ireland. According to the Polish, British and Irish data these were often young, educated people who took jobs there below their educational levels.

Not only have these young emigrants potentially hampered their personal development, but they are also seriously limited in their job opportunities back home because of the gap in their career development. Many returnees mention that emigration, especially when someone works in a deskilling job, brings the risk of a gap in their careers.

In the Polish case study a few returnees started looking for a job while still abroad, though for the most part they did this through networks existing in the home country, less frequently through employment agencies and as a last resort by registering in job centres. Currently seven of them have found employment and two remain unemployed. One woman (28 years old) decided not to enter the labour market after return and enrolled in studies. The two unemployed respondents have tertiary or secondary education (see chapter 3 on the sociodemographic characteristics of returnees).

As far as Romania is concerned most of the returnees interviewed did not agree on or look for a job before coming back to Romania. However, once in Romania and on the labour market they all mentioned a lack of opportunities for employment. Currently, the returnees with low qualifications who were interviewed for the purpose of this research are either self-employed (they opened up their own businesses, whether related or not to their working experience abroad) or unemployed. The highly qualified returnees interviewed are all employed.

Latvian male return migrants were most commonly not looking for employment before their return. In most cases they found jobs straight after returning or within a few months. In contrast to male returnees, women returnees seem to be more thoughtful and plan their labour market performance ahead: some come to Latvia for holidays and look for employment opportunities during that time, and some also look at advertisements on job search websites and the State Employment Agency's website. However, those who left to earn money for a specific aim – to pay a mortgage or debts

– and return with some financial and human capital are not sure about their position or which sector they should apply for.

The Latvian State Employment Agency's experience was that in the labour market everything is determined by the employer and their specific requirement for the position. If having international work experience is important for the employer, then the returnees are in better position, but otherwise this is not the case. Given that the wage level in Latvia is well below the average for the EU/EEA countries and Switzerland, it is possible that in some cases it might even be a drawback. It is generally believed that people who are accustomed to a higher salary are unlikely to be ready to build a long-term employment relationship with an employer since the rewards are well below an equivalent post abroad (see Chapter 4 on cultural factors).

Hungarian returnees followed different strategies to find a job. Some of them already had work when they returned; others started to look for a job once they were back in their home country. In certain cases, they were already economically inactive or became inactive, for example because they were pensioners, unemployed or students. Those who already had a job by the time of the return often went back to their previous workplace. In some cases this was a good strategy, but in other cases it did not turn out well – in the latter case returnees felt undervalued, deprived of promotion and looked for another job. Those who had to find a position after returning generally did so in a relatively short period of time, from a few weeks to a few months.

According to the Hungarian report, there is no difference in the strategy followed by people of different education levels. But in the Latvian, Polish and Romanian cases, most of the returnees with higher education are employed after return, whereas among those with vocational training, who are likely to engage in seasonal migration, many face problems with finding a job.

However, in Hungary it was only female interviewees who took up a position below their skills after their return; moreover, the two attempts at self-employment were both made by men. These trends might show some gender differences in the employment pattern following return. As pointed out in some reports, gender biases may play an especially important role in smaller towns and villages where, on account of gender stereotypes, women have traditionally experienced difficulties in finding a job, particularly since the restructuring of the economy in the 1990s.

Summary

Comparative studies on differences among selected countries in relation to labour market outcomes for returnees of different backgrounds and experience are lacking. While this research targeted a diversity of workers whose experiences are difficult to generalise, there are some cross-country differences visible even from small samples. Furthermore, the role of receiving countries with different labour force demands that can further affect return migrants' reintegration on the home country labour market has been highlighted as quite crucial.

A common characteristic for all country case studies with the exception of the Hungarian one is that better educated or skilled returnees integrate relatively easily into labour markets of the home countries whereas people with vocational qualifications encounter some difficulties finding jobs.

Policies for reintegrating returnees into the labour market 7

Initiatives for returnees

There are various different initiatives for returnees in countries studied in this project.

Poland

Poland has a long history of governmental programmes stimulating return. In the interwar period appropriate legislation as well as a developed institutional structure were put in place. Depending on the country's economic situation, the policy measures aimed either at diminishing or encouraging return migration. In 1933 a special guide for potential returnees was published, which provided them with practical advice, as well as detailed information on the social, economic and political dimensions of life in Poland, and the legal aspects of return. More recently, the need to create a policy stimulating return migration was expressed in 2003, in a report prepared by the Governmental Population Council. The initiative gained momentum in 2007, when the parliamentary elections took place. The Polish case study analysed the public debate that took place at the time, and revealed that all stakeholders, namely the administration, political parties and social partners, expressed the need for effective policies to address return migration.

The need to meet the challenges posed by migration, which could be characterised as 'migration panic', pushed Polish politicians to include it in their campaigns and the bureaucrats to account for it in programme documents for European structural funds and other sources of funding. There were several programmes and campaigns at government level. The municipalities, non-governmental organisations and the private sector were also active in this field, responding to the challenge of skills shortages.

The intervention in the field of return migration to Poland received a firm institutional structure in February 2008. The high priority given to the work of this group was indicated by the fact that it was led by the head of the team of strategic advisers to the Prime Minister. In April 2008 the Working Group on Return Migration formulated a programme based on several assumptions, of which the most important were the following: returns are an inevitable consequence of mass emigration, but they should not take the form of mass mobility; the government should not try to influence individual migrants' decisions to return, but should rather provide migrants with a tool enabling them to make a rational choice.

It should be stressed, however, that in spite of declarations made at the time of the election campaign, the authorities were not planning to encourage return migration. This can be explained by the changing economic context – the onset of the economic crisis, which inclined politicians to consider 'massive' returns as a possible disaster for Polish labour markets in uncertain economic conditions.

Latvia

According to the Latvian report, the situation in Latvia in this respect can be described as shaped by innovative ideas, but suffering from a lack of practical actions, political priorities and funding. Politicians in Latvia realise that one of the key solutions to labour shortages and raising productivity in workplaces is to encourage recently returned Latvian emigrants to become active in the labour market. Despite this, there are no particular initiatives, schemes or services available for return migrants in order to facilitate their labour market (re)integration. As long ago as 2007 a government task force submitted a report on proposals for a return migration policy. The key elements in this policy report were permanent monitoring of the labour mobility process in Latvia, promoting business initiatives in Latvia, improvement of social and labour rights, promoting information exchange, and communication with Latvians abroad.

However, currently this is a low governmental priority and there is a lack of finances and resources to promote the idea. But there are forthcoming promotional initiatives planned to encourage a positive dialogue with Latvian residents abroad and promote Latvian language, culture and identity as a catalyst for return.

Hungary

As far as Hungary is concerned, neither the emigration nor the return of migrant workers is considered to be an important problem. Experts and politicians do not see it as a significant issue, the subject is barely touched upon in the public discourse, and the media do not pay much attention to it. On the other hand, what triggers the public interest and is widely covered in the media is the emigration of doctors and nurses. There is a discussion in progress between the government and representatives of the health sector such as doctors' associations on how to solve these issues, yet the whole sector suffers from structural and financing problems which make an overall reform of the sector necessary.

Romania

There are two public policy initiatives attracting Romanian migrants back home. One is the governmental decision issued in November 2007 to approve a plan regarding the support of Romanian citizens in Italy. This decision was adopted under pressure from Italian authorities following the implementation of new regulations aiming at the removal of Romanian migrants from Italy.

The other governmental decision that can be considered to be a component of a policy concerning return migration in Romania is that issued in February 2008 regarding a plan to encourage the return of Romanian citizens working abroad. This decision was adopted as a consequence of labour shortages that occurred in the Romanian market between 2006 and 2008, and was thus aimed at attracting workers back to Romania. Of all the measures described in this decision, only a few were undertaken, partly because, as in the Polish case, the economic crisis no longer justified a strategy for attracting Romanian migrants home. However, some measures are now implemented on a permanent basis (jobs fairs are still organised in the countries with large numbers of Romanian emigrants), as part of a response to the economic hardships Romanians face in their country of immigration, complemented by new measures in response to the new needs expressed by Romanian emigrants (special bilateral agreements on the recognition of skills and expertise acquired abroad are now to be adopted). Even though they were mentioned in the initial plan as a way of attracting Romanians back home, nowadays they are seen as a measure for easing returnees' integration on the Romanian labour market. These measures are to be adapted in the communities where Romanians are most numerous, such as Spain and Italy.

Good practice examples

Initiatives in the countries under study differ because of the varying perceptions of emigration that politicians and societies have, different emigration histories and traditions among the countries, and the size and dynamics of post-accession migration in each country.

Poland

Because of the important position the issue of return holds on Poland's political agenda, there are many initiatives aiming at fostering return migration and reintegration into the Polish labour market. However, it is extremely difficult to single out any that could serve as a good practice example because, by definition, good or best practice should be effective and universal and show results superior to those achieved by other means. Therefore we list here some practices that may be universal; however, due to the lack of an evaluation procedure, it is hard to say whether they have actually been effective.

Firstly, there is the government information programme 'Have you got a PPlan to return?' and its official website (<http://www.powroty.gov.pl>). The portal provides internet users with up-to-date information about issues related to return and work in Poland, as well as practical and specific answers to questions. The answers are prepared by members

of the editing team in cooperation with experts from government ministries and selected state agencies, and responses are given within 14 days. In order to expand the portal's features, in July 2011 it became part of the Polish Public Employment Services website (<http://www.zielonalinia.gov.pl>), granting its users easy access to job offers from all employment offices in Poland, as well as the opportunity to obtain information by phone.

Another project worth mentioning was called 'Become your own boss – in Poland' (Zostań w Polsce – swoim szefem), which was introduced by the Warsaw municipality together with the Higher School of Finance and Management in Warsaw. The idea behind this project was to convince migrants returning to Poland – or those who are thinking of return – to establish a company in the Mazovia region. The participants received training and afterwards prepared their own business plans. The best ones were given a grant as well as coverage of maintenance costs for their company for six months. However, although the project's leaders were looking for innovative ideas, only one business plan had potential.

Another relevant project is run by the Barka Foundation, a Polish non-governmental organisation based in London, with the objective of helping Poles in very difficult situations to return to Poland. Among its main target groups are homeless people and addicts. Barka provides them with transportation to Poland, to one of its centres, where they go through a reintegration programme. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning here various private sector initiatives attracting highly skilled professionals (such as scientists, doctors and IT specialists) to return.

Latvia

As far as Latvia is concerned, there have been a few initiatives from the State Employment Agency, such as an information event in Dublin targeted at possible return migrants. However, there has been no state funding for events like this since the beginning of the economic crisis. European Employment Service (EURES) advisors regularly participate in international events and inform potential returnees about job opportunities in Latvia.

Another ongoing programme, 'My own little corner' (Savs kaktiņš, savs zemes stūrītiņš), a European Social Fund (ESF) project, aims to attract highly skilled academic staff, and it can be credited with helping four to five people return to the country. It offers them work opportunities and an adequate salary in Latvia.

Potential returnees can take advantage of two other policy initiatives. The ESF support programme 'Support to self-employment and business start-ups', which is managed by Hipoteku Bank and the Investment and Development Agency, provides business start-ups and newly established companies with all-embracing support, such as consultations, training and financing with loans and grants for starting a business. Here again there is no evidence of people with foreign experience applying to this programme. However, in the last four months of 2009, 39 people used it. In 2010 it was used by 231 people, and in the first nine months of 2011, 274 people used the support to become self-employed and start businesses. Even though there is no direct indication of return migrants participating in this programme, it could be one of the positive indications that people with some capital and foreign experience are using it.

Hungary

In the Hungarian case, when it is not a question of implementing measures to retain migrants but attracting them back, there is a lack of any initiatives. One of the experts from the Ministry for National Economy interviewed for this research did not know about any policies addressing returnees' reintegration, and said she did not believe there was a need for any such policies.

Despite the secondary importance of attracting migrant workers back or helping them with reintegration into the labour market, two initiatives were identified. One of them is the Momentum programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which aims to retain scientists in Hungary or to attract them back from abroad in a 'reverse brain drain'. The other initiative is the 'Come Home!' web page of the Young Christian Democrats, which is trying to raise awareness among Hungarians.

Romania

In the Romanian case, like the Hungarian and Latvian ones, it is hard to identify any special services or initiatives assisting returnees. However, the authors of the Romanian report mention the initiative ‘Support to migrant entrepreneurship’ of the Italian employment agency from the region of Veneto (Veneto Lavoro) in partnership with the People’s Development Foundation from Romania and other stakeholders, funded by the UN programme the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Its goal was to assist Romanian emigrants in Italy intending to return to Romania to use their savings for opening a business upon return. New financial instruments were explored and set up as ways to support entrepreneurship in the country of origin, such as bilateral bank accounts and transnational bank loans. The Veneto Lavoro agency also set up an information point in the region providing information on Romania to the 90,000 Romanians living in the region. Veneto Lavoro’s project targeted Romanians who had savings and the desire to invest in a business venture back in Romania. The project was operational between January 2009 and April 2011. The beneficiaries were eight Romanian emigrants (of whom two are women).

Jobs fairs were organised in Spain and Italy with the main goal of attracting Romanian migrants back home and informing them about their rights to social security on returning to Romania. The measure targets Romanian citizens in need of help in finding a job in Romania – if they wish to return – and even in finding a job in another Member State through EURES – the European Job Mobility Portal. Jobs fairs started in 2007 and they still take place. The National Employment Agency (NEA) reports that 3,000 workers attended four of them in 2008. The authors of the Romanian report do not have any further information on the fairs that followed, especially the more recent ones.

The officials interviewed at the NEA declared that new bilateral agreements are to be adopted in order to facilitate recognition of the new skills and qualifications of Romanian returnees.

However, regarding the awareness level of Romanian returnees interviewed about the measures mentioned above, only one of them mentioned hearing about the jobs fairs organised by the Romanian government in Italy, but dismissed this information as ‘a lie’.

Could a particular initiative be adopted in other countries?

It has been recognised by several experts in the country reports (from Poland and Latvia) that there cannot be any particular support schemes with economic aspects if they discriminate against those who have never emigrated, as this indirectly motivates people to emigrate. It was also stressed, in the Latvian report for example, that those who emigrated are treated in their local communities as ‘traitors’; therefore some social and cultural obstacles towards reintegration have been observed, and such obstacles probably vary between countries as well. More regional studies should be carried out to investigate this factor.

The other point pertains to the issue of trust of any political action taken by government agencies in the analysed region. Even in a country such as Poland, where the massive outflow caused considerable demographic, social and economic consequences, the ‘Have you got a PPlan to return?’ programme prompted negative comments among the Polish diaspora and the media because of suspicions that the programme was mainly politically driven, in order to help the leading party win an election. Also, in the Romanian case, one of the respondents expressed complete disbelief that the Romanian government had organised job fairs in Italy.

Furthermore, both Polish and Romanian government initiatives have been halted by the changing economic context; the economic crisis no longer justifies government strategies for attracting migrants back home. This might make some potential return migrants feel manipulated. Therefore, if any initiatives are developed in other countries for return migration, it would be advisable to involve NGOs or private sector agencies instead of or in addition to governments.

It is also worth mentioning that irrespective of the efforts undertaken by some governments and many private initiatives, data stemming from this project indicate that the general initiatives are not reaching prospective returning migrants, as many of them have not heard about them. Moreover the limited trust in politicians makes it hard for migrants to believe that initiatives fostering returns are likely to help them reintegrate in the local labour market:

I know that such campaigns took place during my stay in the UK, but at that time I had not heard about them, I had not seen any billboards or anything.

(28-year-old Polish woman who spent five years abroad, last stay in Belgium)

Well, yes, I heard something about it in the press or something like that, but I don't know anything more. Well, now they make all this fuss about returns, do you believe that? I don't know anyone who would return because of the Prime Minister's calls ...

(30-year-old Polish man who spent three years in the United Kingdom)

Conclusion

Because of the different approaches towards emigration, the four countries show various approaches towards return migration and the reintegration of return migrants. Perceptions about emigration, and as a consequence return migration, depend on the scale of the outflow, the demographic situation in a given country and the labour market situation. As stressed above, even in the four countries under study we can see very different approaches towards emigration and how it is perceived by politicians, media and society at large – ranging from a ‘migration panic’ (Poland) to a ‘no problem’ approach (Hungary). There are some limits in adopting particular initiatives, but lessons could be learned in those countries that are interested in getting migrants to return. Furthermore, better evaluation procedures of some initiatives are required.

However, it is highly recommended that countries that are trying to get migrants to return adopt good practices in this regard. Also, as proposed by the Latvian report, a dialogue should be developed between emigration countries and their diasporas.

Conclusions and recommendations

As a relatively new mobility pattern within the EU, the post-accession return migration of workers from CEE countries has recently begun to generate increasing interest among academics, experts and practitioners. The return migration of these workers grew in importance in the context of the global economic crisis (which started in mid-2007 but gained momentum in late 2008), as it was believed that economic fluctuations across Europe might induce return migration of EU8+2 nationals from the EU15 countries.

This research aimed to contribute to a better understanding of return migration to CEE countries by generating new empirical evidence through an analysis of statistical data and literature and also through interviews with returnees, policymakers and experts on migration in the following four CEE countries: Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. The four country case studies provided rich qualitative data on returnees' motivations to return home as well as circumstances in their home countries encouraging or, on the contrary, deterring return migration. Interview material also provided new insights into labour market outcomes of mobility for returnees, as well as existing policies to help returnees with reintegration into the labour market. Little study of these topics has been done, as a comprehensive literature review conducted for this research showed. The greatest advantage of the research in collecting new evidence on return migration was a new methodological approach that allowed 'mapping' of cross-country similarities and differences.

Did the economic crisis encourage returns?

No mass return took place. At the onset of the global economic crisis, it was anticipated that the economic downturn would trigger the return migration of EU8+2 nationals from the EU15 countries. These expectations were based primarily on the fact that the recession affected migrant workers more than nationals in most EU15 countries, as most of the migrants worked in the sectors that were most affected by the crisis: manufacturing, construction and the tourist industry. However, there is emerging agreement among researchers that, contrary to popular belief and expectations, mass return migration of CEE nationals did not occur during the economic recession. The anticipated mass return was diminished by the two following factors:

- A wait-and-see strategy: The country case studies revealed that because of the economic downturn, migrants were more likely to change their strategies while abroad and to wait for the end of the crisis, accepting lower wages, working part-time or, when unemployed, comparing social services and available benefits in the home and host countries. One of the most important factors deterring return migration was the greater possibility of finding a job and earning more money abroad than at home, despite the adverse economic conditions.
- Onward migration: Although data from destination countries indeed showed an increased outflow of nationals of the countries in question starting in 2007, it is very likely that at least some of the migrants chose onward migration to other destination countries. Moreover, the increase in return migration was offset by a growth in the emigration rate from the EU8+2 countries.

The economic crisis accelerated foreseen returns. Despite the low impact on overall returns, it seems that the economic crisis accelerated the process of return for some emigrants who initially intended to return one day to their home country. Worsening economic conditions in the host country may have been a strong supplementary factor to personal or family reasons when considering return. Because of these conditions, some returns took place earlier than emigrants had planned.

A circular pattern of migration is arising. Many returnees did not rule out the possibility of repeated emigration, particularly if their reasons for mobility were mainly economic. Many of them believed that their activities in the future would depend on periodic financial 'injections' from work abroad. Therefore, it is likely that one of the consequences of the economic crisis may be more intense circular migration within the EU15 by citizens from the EU8+2 countries, including the four countries under consideration.

The patterns of return migration differed among the four CEE countries selected. For Poland (and to some extent Romania), the economic crisis led to the freezing of emigration, a rise in the number of returns that would have probably happened later anyway, and an increase of circularity followed by a later rise in emigration. The recession affected the migration of Latvians somewhat differently. Once the global economic downturn started, the emigration of Latvians increased and returns, which had accelerated in the economic growth years (2006 and 2007) when there were substantial wage increases in many sectors, subsequently decreased.

Comparable data on return migration are lacking. It is a challenge to estimate the extent of return migration to the CEE countries as well as to assess how extensively the economic crisis influenced return migration as no quality data are available for returns. With only a few exceptions, the EU Member States do not collect comprehensive data on return migration. If they do, they generally use different definitions of ‘return migrants’. In general, it is becoming increasingly challenging to define the very concept of return migration in a meaningful way, given that migration today means ‘people constantly on the move’, especially those living in the area of free movement of persons (workers) within the EU. Therefore, the data available are often fragmented, not readily comparable, and more readily available on return after short-term rather than long-term migration.

Profile of returnees

Mobile age: In general people of mobile age (20–44 years) dominate among returnees, while people above 45 are underrepresented in comparison with the non-mobile population. Yet returnees appear to be a little older on average than emigrants: the latter migrate mostly in their twenties, whereas migrants tend to return in their thirties. Only Polish returnees seem to be generally young; people under the age of 30 dominate among them.

Single rather than married: Generally migrants, including returnees, are more likely to be single. However, family status affects migration decisions of married people, especially women. Some case studies stress that women are less likely to leave family behind; therefore they are more likely to be tied movers (move in the interest of their family) or to live alone before moving.

Men rather than women: The trend that returning men outnumber women may be linked to the types of jobs taken by men abroad, in which seasonality and circularity are the main characteristics. Also, men tend to work in the sectors that were hardest hit by the economic crisis (construction, manufacturing and tourism), while women more often take social care jobs or provide other daily services that are less sensitive to economic fluctuations.

Many worked in deskilling jobs abroad: Returnees have most often been employed in various low-skilled manual jobs abroad. This is true for emigrants with both low and high levels of education. Hence, the ‘brain waste’ problem seems to be quite common among mobile workers from the CEE countries.

Return to ‘their villages’: Emigrants tend to return to the same regions where they departed from, possibly because of the strength of local social networks and the important role such networks play in reintegration. Based on the Polish case study, it may also be concluded that returnees from villages and small towns are overrepresented among returned migrants when compared to the total population.

Circumstances that encourage or deter return migration

First and foremost, the returnees consider the comparative economic advantage of living in the home country. If this condition is favourable, it is a sufficient factor for return, according to several interviewees. They calculate the difference between salaries and cost of living, and assess factors relating to employability. However, it should be noted

that mobile workers tend to follow the situation in their regions rather than the general macro-economic outlook of their home country. After return, returnees expect that the standard of living they became accustomed to in the host country will be sustainable, at least for some time, with their savings and the lower costs of living in the home country. Yet some are disappointed that the cost of many basic goods is similar in their home and host countries, and status markers they expected (a big house, higher-class consumption habits) are not as affordable as initially thought. This can lead to repeated emigration.

The economic situation influences return migration. Both the economic boom and the crisis made some workers reconsider the comparative economic advantage of their home countries. During the economic boom, competitive offers in the home countries were available for some skill sets (for example, in the construction sector and transnational companies); therefore, those who returned then found reintegration rather easy (for instance, in Latvia). For some migrants, the home country became a safe place to wait until the situation improved as the economic recession began (there is evidence for this in Romania).

Extensive social networks at home facilitate the return. When the host countries were affected by the economic downturn, migrants who had large networks often adopted a wait-and-see strategy. With the help of others, some migrants found employment in the informal economy, while others changed sectors, for example seeking employment in agriculture and services. On the other hand, if networks that could facilitate job search were more extensive in the home country, migrants tended to return once they felt the effects of the economic crisis.

Comparatively better opportunities for professional career development encourage workers to return, especially those of middle-range skills. Better opportunities for professional development in the home countries were mentioned as an attracting factor, as mobile workers were expecting to use their language and intercultural skills and to have a competitive advantage in the home country's labour market. This is highly characteristic of middle-range employees in 'brain waste' situations abroad (working below their qualification) who want to return to their profession, which often implies a return to their home country.

Public perception of migration matters for returnees. Society-wide acceptability of migration as a strategy to improve one's economic situation facilitates return migration. The attitude of employers in the home country to returnees was relevant in making decisions to return or to stay abroad. General public perception of migration was considered by returnees, but it influenced the way migrant workers portrayed their decisions rather than the decisions themselves.

Policy factors are of negligible importance for return migration. In some very specific situations, migrant workers stated that social policies and targeted initiatives encouraged their return. However, bureaucracy and corruption were cited as factors deterring return for those who considered entrepreneurship. In any case, the significance of policy factors for return migration seems to be very limited.

Motivations to return

Mobile workers try to maximise their social status, social inclusion and security in social and economic terms. Further specific factors mentioned by returning migrants should be considered in the light of these key influences. For example, when return is perceived as a failed migration project, stressing family reasons for the return legitimises it in the eyes of the community and maximises the returnee's social status. The research came up with the two following groups of specific factors motivating people to return to CEE:

- **Family reasons:** Family reasons were the most commonly mentioned. They tended to follow two categories: returning to join family in the home country or returning with family to the home country. In the first case, the stay abroad was considered temporary from the beginning, or a changed situation prompted an earlier return (for example, new care needs). In the second case, a partner's employment or child's transition to another education cycle made the migrants concerned 'tied movers'. Tied movement tends to follow gendered patterns and is very likely to be cited as a standalone reason for returns. In Hungary there were also clear socioeconomic patterns. Highly skilled migrants tended to be tied movers, whereas low-skilled migrants migrated alone and missed their family greatly while living abroad.
- **Achieved aims or failure to achieve them:** Accomplishment of plans or its converse, disappointment with the actual benefits of migration, was also among the most important motives. Some workers stayed longer than planned because they failed to earn the planned amount of money. Time spent abroad is often a decisive factor behind returns. Among Latvians, those who spent up to two years abroad were more likely to return. Some workers also stayed longer than planned due to high earnings for their labour, but as soon as those earnings diminished, there was nothing to keep them in the host countries anymore.

Circular migration is prominent. Evidence from all four countries selected for case study analysis shows that most mobile workers do not exclude the possibility of repeated emigration – particularly if their reasons for mobility are mainly economic. Many believe that their activities in the future, such as improving the living environment, operating a business or repaying a mortgage will depend on periodical financial injections from work abroad, which could take the form of seasonal migration, repeated migration to the same or a different host country, or 'rational intentional unpredictability' – keeping several options open.

Do returnee workers gain an advantage over non-mobile workers?

Returnees are often disadvantaged back home. As far as labour market integration after return is concerned, it seems that there are rather more disadvantages than advantages for returnees in their native countries. The Poland case study stressed the problems with integration into the local labour markets for return migrants, which may be compared to the problems faced by immigrants in Poland. The research identified the following issues hindering the reintegration of returnees:

- **Deskilling and gaps in professional development:** Young and educated people with no experience or with very limited experience of work in their native countries who took jobs in host countries below their education levels are especially likely to have difficulty reintegrating successfully into the labour market after return. Not only have they potentially hampered their personal development, but they have also seriously limited their job opportunities back home due to the gap in their career development. Returnees mention that emigration, especially when someone works in a deskilling job, brings a risk of a gap in their careers. Having experienced working abroad and getting accustomed to the level of pay in the receiving countries, they might also be disappointed with the wages offered to them in the domestic labour market.

- **Negative image:** Employers often have a stereotypical image of returnees as people with huge expectations and few skills who failed abroad. Therefore, if having international work experience is important for the employer, then the returnees are in a better position, but otherwise this is not the case. It was also stressed that in some countries those who emigrate are treated in their local communities as ‘traitors’; thus, some social and cultural obstacles towards reintegration have been observed as well, but they probably vary between countries.
- **Underestimation of new soft skills:** Interviewees generally stated that, although they had an advantage in terms of better language skills and other soft skills, this was not an argument for increased pay in their home countries.
- **Lack of entrepreneurial capacity:** Returnees are often seen in their home countries as potential innovators, capable of engaging in self-employment. Yet many emigrants who left their countries to earn abroad are not able to create self-employment upon their return. It is very important to realise that not all people, even those who had the courage and inclination to work abroad, can be self-employed back in their countries.

However, returnees are quite diverse, as are the labour market outcomes for them. When discussing the labour market reintegration of returnees, the following four differences among them should be taken into account:

- **Host country:** The host countries all have different labour force demands, which means that there are already differences among returnees in terms of occupation, economic sector, and certain demographic characteristics that can further affect their reintegration into the home labour market.
- **Qualifications:** Mobility experience is valued in the labour market in different ways for the low-qualified and highly qualified returnees. Mobility experience seems to matter more – even in the current economic context – for the more qualified, while low-qualified workers experience difficulties in using their new skills in local labour markets.
- **Gender:** Female returnees in some countries and in some regions may face special difficulties with the reintegration into labour markets because, on account of gender stereotypes, women generally experience difficulties with finding a job, particularly since the restructuring of the CEE economies in the 1990s.
- **Regional dimension:** The economic situation of the returnees depends on the local labour market situation, which usually differs significantly among regions of the home countries. Some regions are open to innovation and more business-friendly, and therefore they provide more opportunities for self-employment than others.

Policies for reintegration of returnees

Policies targeting returnees were triggered by diverse circumstances in different CEE countries. In Poland and Latvia, such policies were developed due to the massive outflow of people and the labour market shortages observed as a consequence. In Romania, policies were created under pressure from the authorities in receiving countries to manage the flow of emigrants.

Not all policy initiatives were equally effective in helping returnees to reintegrate. The following three explanations emerged from this research:

- **Unimplemented policies:** Some countries, for example Latvia, suffer from a lack of practical actions, services, political priorities and funding available for return migrants.
- **Policies going unnoticed:** Irrespective of the efforts undertaken by some governments and plenty of private initiatives, according to the data stemming from this research, it seems that the general (especially the public) initiatives are not reaching the prospective returning migrants, as many of them have not heard of them.

- **Disbelief in benefits of policies:** The limited trust in politicians, which is fairly typical of the CEE countries, makes it hard for migrants to believe that initiatives fostering returns are likely to help them reintegrate into the local labour markets.

There is high uncertainty over the successful transfer of policies among different countries. It is hard to determine whether policy initiatives implemented in one country could be adopted in other countries and whether they would work in different national contexts. The main reason for this is the considerable diversity of the countries, as even in the four countries under study, we can see very different approaches to emigration and its perception by politicians, the media and the public at large. Attitudes range from the ‘migration panic’ (Poland) to the ‘no-problem’ approach (Hungary).

However, because of the limited trust in politicians observed in the region, if any practices were to be implemented in other countries they would need to involve NGOs or private sector agencies rather than governments. In countries such as Poland, which has a long history of emigration and a long history of governmental programmes stimulating returns, policies and programmes have been developed not only at the governmental level but also by municipalities, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Policy pointers

The policy recommendations below suggest actions that would help improve understanding of return migration to CEE countries and tackle the issues that currently make it difficult for CEE migrants and returnees to take full advantage of their human capital and opportunities offered by the free movement of labour in the EU.

- **Improving data on return migration for a better evidence base**

First of all, efforts should be made to agree on a common definition of ‘return migration’ across the EU to make at least the official statistics comparable across countries. Second, EU Member States should take action to improve official statistics both on outflow and on return migration. For example, they could consider including questions on return migration in population-wide surveys (censuses and other surveys) or creating incentives for mobile workers to officially declare their emigration (for example, in Latvia and Lithuania people who declare emigration do not have to pay some of the residents’ taxes). In addition, more specific research is needed on certain relevant areas, such as returnee entrepreneurship, as data on the participation of return migrants in various government programmes promoting entrepreneurship are lacking.

- **Assisting returnees who took deskilling jobs abroad – measures against ‘brain waste’**

Intra-EU mobility causes difficulties with integration to labour markets after return, especially for young and educated people who took jobs below their qualification levels in the receiving countries. Their potential is squandered in both receiving and sending countries. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the deskilling phenomenon, and measures to overcome it should be discussed in both sending and receiving countries (for example, a system of recognising vocational qualifications by detailing their content could be elaborated).

- **Encouraging acknowledgement of returnees’ mobility experience**

There should be stronger engagement of various NGOs, trade unions and other agents in the dialogue with employers to draw their attention to the soft skills, multicultural work experience, openness towards innovation and other competencies gained abroad, which should be treated as advantages rather than disadvantages in the home countries’ labour markets.

- **Facilitating circular migration**

Many migrant workers see their work abroad as a temporary state and often prefer it to take the form of repeated stays abroad to obtain financial injections for their daily life or business – this is particularly true for low-skilled workers who cannot afford to take their families with them. These workers would benefit from easier administrative transfers between countries. Social security systems should be better tuned to meet the needs of these workers. Guarantees for tied movers should also be strengthened.

- **Enhancing cooperation between public and private initiatives as well as with NGOs and exploring the necessary synergies**

Due to the limited trust in politicians observed in the region, any policy initiatives targeting returnees should involve NGOs or private sector entities rather than governments alone. A dialogue should also be developed between emigration countries and their diasporas.

- **Providing good-quality services for returnees that do not discriminate against the non-mobile population**

Good-quality services and sufficient information would facilitate the reintegration of returnees – particularly those who do not have social networks to help them. However, it has been widely recognised that any particular support schemes involving financial incentives should be implemented strictly on a temporary basis or avoided altogether, to lower the risk of discrimination against non-emigrants.

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Annex: Estimation of return migration

This annex provides a synthesis of various estimates relating to the return migration of workers from EU15 countries to the four selected EU8+2 countries (Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania) since 2004. This section combines data from the country case studies with data from other sources discussing the extent of return migration to the EU8+2 countries. However, it is advisable to be very cautious in using the figures provided in this annex as they are based on rather fragmented datasets and a number of assumptions about return migration patterns. The main challenges in estimating numbers of return migrants precisely are presented in section 1 of this annex. Furthermore, it should be noted that various data sources cited in this annex use concepts of return migration and returned migrant that do not match the definitions of return migration and returned migrant that are used throughout this research. Most of the estimates of numbers of return migrants provided by other data sources include short-term and circular migrants in figures for returned migrants. Therefore, we use *italics* to indicate when specific points refer to return migration which is defined differently than in this research.

There are many ways to measure the extent of return migration. First of all, a distinction should be made between measurements of stock and flow of return migrants. In the first case, researchers estimate how many returnees are living in a country at a given moment, whereas in the second case it is estimated how many people have returned during a given period of time (sometimes data are provided year by year). The extent of return migration estimated in absolute numbers is not always informative enough, however, especially from a comparative perspective. Therefore many researchers use relative units of measurements as well. The most popular among such units are ratios of the return migration to the size of population in the country under consideration, its labour force size, and the extent of emigration from it (both stock and flow). Section 2 below presents various estimates of the stock and flow of return migration to the four selected CEE countries. Because different sources provide different estimates on return migration that are difficult to compare, we tried to derive from them the following two estimates of the return migration: 1) the flow of returnees to the selected countries between 2004 and 2010; 2) the stock of returnees in the selected countries by 2010. Our assessment of the relative size of the return migration to the countries considered is given in sections 3 and 4.

1. Challenges in estimating figures for return migration

There is widespread consensus among migration researchers that it is incredibly difficult, or even impossible, to estimate precisely the extent of return migration to the CEE from the EU15 countries (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 150). The main reasons are as follows. First, with only a few exceptions, the EU Member States do not collect comprehensive data on return migration (Iglicka and Ziolk-Skrzypczak, 2010). If they do, they generally use different definitions of return migrants; therefore data from different sources are not readily comparable. Second, it becomes increasingly challenging to define meaningfully the very concept of ‘return migration’, given that migration today means ‘people constantly on the move’, especially those living in the area of free movement of persons (workers) within the EU (Koehler et al, 2010, p. 150).

Giving an accurate figure for the exact number of returnees requires high-quality data, yet the data available are often fragmented, not easily comparable between countries, and do not reflect the very dynamic and complex nature of the migration process. The biggest challenge arises when it comes to comparing different statistics, as they are based on different definitions of returnees. The definition of returned migrants which has been agreed upon within this project’s framework is as follows: ‘returnees or returning migrants are persons who lived abroad for at least one year, but returned to their home country and who intend to stay in their home country one year or more’. It follows the Eurostat definition, according to which a migrant is a person who establishes their usual place of residence in the destination country for 12 months or more (Herm, 2008). As for intentions to stay in the home country at least one year, that was included as a criterion for defining returned migrant in order to distinguish between return migration and circular migration (also known as shuttle migration, commuter migration). This refers to repeated migration often taking place within less than a year. On the other hand, we tried to avoid assuming that return migration should be ‘for good’ as in the era of

international mobility and formation of transnational communities it is extremely difficult to state that such a dynamic social process as emigration or return migration may be ‘forever’. Therefore, we took one year abroad and one year at home as a base for our definition of returnees.

Unfortunately, none of the data sources on return migration to the four selected countries fit our definition of returned migrants exactly (see Table A1). First of all, it appears that measuring ‘intentions’ is both difficult and not widely practised among statistical institutes or other researchers. Therefore, we had to assume migrants’ intentions to stay by the fact of their presence in the home country at the time of data collection. Secondly, not many definitions of returnees used by other research restrict the time that returnees spent abroad (see Table A1). Actually, only one estimate was based on a definition that includes only those returnees with at least one year’s migratory experience. Therefore, most of the estimates of return migration include short-term migrants as well.

Probably the best way to improve the statistics on return migration in the future would be to agree on a common definition of ‘return migration’ across the EU and include questions on return migration in population-wide surveys such as population censuses. In 2011 population and housing censuses were held across the EU. Unfortunately they did not include questions relevant to return migration. For example, according to the very recent (and preliminary) estimates by the population census of 2011 in Poland, among 1,990,000 Polish migrants 1,170,000 remained abroad longer than a year. Thus, they should be treated in receiving countries statistics as residents. The remaining 820,000 were engaged in labour migration lasting between three months and a year. There is some potential among them to be either return migrants or engaged in circularity, or to become foreign residents; however, there are no data on return migration stemming from the census.

Table A1: *Definitions of returned migrants used in different sources in comparison with definition used in this report*

Source of definition	Age	Host countries	Time spent abroad	Employment abroad	Based on official declaration of return?	Time of return	Employment after return	Intentions to stay in the home country	Impact on estimates of return migration in comparison to the likely estimates based on the definition used in this research (weaknesses of definition/data)
This research	Working age (between 15 and 65 years)	EU15	At least one year	Yes (economically active person who has worked or has been looking for job)	No	Not earlier than four years ago (during the period 2007–2011)*	–	For one year or more	–
PL: Polish Central Statistical Office (CSO), population census 2002	–	–	–	–	Yes	1989–2002	–	–	Strong overestimate (no restriction on time spent abroad; based on declaration of return therefore excludes many returnees; old data)
PL: CSO, special module of Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2008	15 years and over	–	At least three months	–	–	Until 2008	–	–	Overestimate (only loose restriction on time spent abroad)

Source of definition	Age	Host countries	Time spent abroad	Employment abroad	Based on official declaration of return?	Time of return	Employment after return	Intentions to stay in the home country	Impact on estimates of return migration in comparison to the likely estimates based on the definition used in this research (weaknesses of definition/data)
PL: CSO, special module of Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2008 – own calculations (returnees with at least one year's migratory experience)	15 years and over	–	At least one year	–	–	Until 2008	–	–	Quite accurate estimates (but no data for 2009-2010)
PL: CSO, population register	–	–	–	–	Yes	2009–2010 (estimates for 2004–2008)	–	–	Underestimate (based on declaration of return therefore exclude the majority of returnees)
PL: Public Opinion Research Centre (PORC) survey	–	–	–	Yes	–	–	–	–	Strong overestimate (no restriction on time spent abroad)
RO: Stoiciu et al, 2011	18 years and over	–	–	Yes	–	September 2009–August 2010	–	For three months or more	Strong overestimate (no restriction on time spent abroad)
RO: Martin and Radu (2009)	Aged 24–65	–	At least six months over the last 10 years	Yes	–	–	–	–	Overestimate (loose restriction on time spent abroad, no data for 2008–2010)
RO: Ambrosini et al, 2011	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	No information on definition
RO: Schima (2010) based on the survey of World Bank, 2005	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	No information on definition
LV: Central Statistical Bureau (CSP)	–	–	–	–	Yes	–	–	–	Underestimate (based on declaration of return, therefore excludes the majority of returnees)
LV: Krišjāne et al, 2007	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Strong overestimate (no restriction on time spent abroad)
LV: Hazans and Philips, 2011	–	–	–	Yes	–	–	–	–	Strong overestimate (no restriction on time abroad)
HU: Hárs (2011) based on Hungarian Labour Force Survey	–	EU	–	Yes	–	2007–2011	No (only unemployed people included)	–	Strong underestimate (includes only returnees who became unemployed after return)
HU: Hárs (2011) based on the register of Form E 301	–	EU/EEA + CH	–	Yes	–	2004–2011	No (only unemployed people included)	–	Strong underestimate (includes only returnees who became unemployed after return)

Notes:* This criterion defining return migrants was applied only when selecting returnees for interviewing.

Source: *Own elaboration based on the country case studies*

2. Stock and flow of returnees

Poland

To begin with the highest estimates of the extent of the return migration to Poland, the survey of the Public Opinion Research Centre carried out in 2008 should be mentioned first. According to that survey, almost 3 million adult Poles (over 9.4% of the adult population) took up a job abroad during the decade preceding the survey. This survey, though, tends to overestimate return migration to Poland since it does not apply any constraints on the time returnees spent abroad. Consequently, the estimate provided includes people with any kind of migratory experience, including circular and short-term migrants (but not commuters). If at least a loose restriction of, for example, six months abroad is applied, as was the case in the research by Martin and Radu (2009), the estimate of *return migration* decreases by almost half. Martin and Radu (2009) calculated that almost 8% of the active population (aged 24–65) in Poland had migratory experience of working abroad for at least six months between 1997 and 2007. That means that there were more than 1.7 million *returned migrants* in Poland in 2007. Still, because of the definition used, this estimate also includes a large proportion of short-term migrants. Moreover, it does not distinguish between pre-accession and post-accession return migration, which is important for this research.

According to a very recent study on mobility in Europe (Fuller et al, 2011, p. 71), nearly every second migrant who left Poland, mostly after EU accession, had returned to Poland by 2010 either to stay permanently or only temporarily before returning abroad. It is estimated that nearly 1 million Poles emigrated to the EU15 between 2004 and 2009 (Holland et al, 2011, p. 61). Hence, there had to be around half a million *returnees* in Poland in 2010. This estimate coincides roughly with the data of the Polish Central Statistical Office (CSO) indicating that more than 500,000 Poles who were present in Poland in 2008 had a migratory experience of at least three months. However, these data are overestimates of return migration as they include temporary and short-term migration (that is, they include people who stayed abroad for only three months) as well as circular migration (no indication of how long those people stayed in Poland before migrating again).

When the definition of return migrants is restricted to returnees having migratory experience of at least one year, the estimates of return migration to Poland fall. The stock of such returnees, who came back to Poland from other EU countries between 2004 and 2008, may be estimated at around 180,000 (Central Statistical Office (Poland), 2008) or 45,000 on average per year. This estimate is basically in line with one produced by the Office for National Statistics (2011), where the number of returning Poles in 2007 was as high as 54,000.

Similar estimates are arrived at when calculations are based on the data of the most popular destination country for Polish migrants since Polish accession to the EU in May 2004 – the United Kingdom. Because of the popularity of the UK among Polish migrants it has been plausible to expect that most returnees will be coming from the UK, especially at the time of the economic crisis. According to estimates by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), about 110,000 EU8 country citizens left the UK (on average, per year) within the period of almost four years after the EU enlargement (Pollard et al, 2008). It may be reasonably assumed that the share of Poles among EU8 citizens was about two-thirds (which is the share of Poles' applications to the Worker Registration Scheme until September 2008; Accession Monitoring Report, 2008, p. 8). Thus, around 70,000 Poles left the UK each year between 2004 and 2008. However, it is highly possible that not all of them returned to Poland since return migration might also have been substituted by other mobility strategies investigated recently, for example 'shuffling' between countries of emigration (see for example Iglicka, 2010b; Gmaj and Małek, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that on average approximately 50,000 Poles return to Poland every year.

Under the assumption that around 50,000 Poles who lived abroad for at least one year have returned every year to their home country since Poland became a member of the EU, the total number of Polish returnees during the period 2004 to

2010 should be about 350,000. However, it is still advisable to be cautious in interpreting this estimate, for the following reasons. First, only very preliminary data on migration are available for 2010, therefore the estimate is based on the extrapolation of data from 2004–2008 to the period of 2009–2010. Yet the flow of migrants may be shifting every year, especially in a time of economic hardship. Second, it should not be forgotten that the estimate shows the *flow* not the *stock* of people returning to Poland. There is no doubt that some of those 350,000 emigrated once again.

Research on return migration in various CEE countries has revealed that more than a half of returnees would like to emigrate repeatedly (see for example data for Romania in Stoiciu et al, 2011) and for Lithuania in Barcevičius and Žvalionytė (2012). Certainly not all of them implement their plans; therefore we can assume that approximately 40–50% of returnees eventually leave their home country once again. Based on that assumption we can conclude that around 175,000–210,000 returnees lived in Poland in 2010.

Romania

In Romania almost 8% of the working population, or one million workers, were engaged in international mobility between 1997 and 2007 (own calculations based on Martin and Radu, 2009). Stoiciu et al (2011, p. 37) state that another 500,000 Romanians *returned* between September 2009 and August 2010. However, both studies define *returnees* quite broadly – as persons who worked abroad for at least six months (Martin and Radu) or even less (Stoiciu et al). Therefore the given figures seem to be overestimates of return migration according to the definition used in this research (at least one year spent abroad). They indicate rather the extent of circular migration, which includes short-term mobility as well. The circular pattern of migration seems to be very characteristic of Romanians since only a small share of *returnees* (around 22%) want to remain in Romania for good and just 6% want to stay home for more than a year. Another 20% are not decided, but more than a half (52%) want to go back to work abroad again within 3 to 36 months (Stoiciu et al, 2011, p. 115).

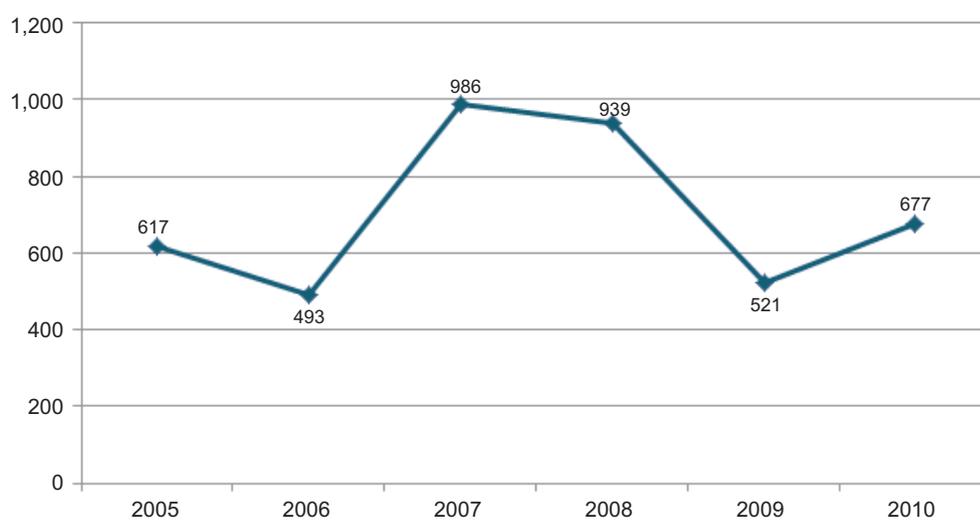
According to the national experts' assessment based on data provided by different sources from home and host countries, most likely around 6% of emigrants returned to Romania. Between 2.8 and three million Romanians are known to live abroad (about 14% of the country's population), according to different estimates by Eurostat. Based on that, it may be expected that between 168,000 and 180,000 returnees are currently in Romania. The flow of return migration had to be much higher than this, however. If we assume that between 40% and 50% of returned migrants emigrated once more then the flow of returning Romanians could have been between 280,000 (low estimate) and 360,000 (high estimate) between 2004 and 2010. However, it should be noted that these estimates are very likely to include not only returnees who spent one year or more abroad but also at least some short-term migrants.

Latvia

According to Hazans (2011a) between 34,000 and 44,000 Latvians actually *returned* from abroad between 2004 and 2010. Hazans's estimates are based on a combination of datasets including the following: Latvian LFS data (2002–2007), DnB Nord Latvijas Barometrs (1,000 respondents), and the National identity survey, 2010 (1,009 Latvian residents). *Return migration* to Latvia accelerated in 2006 and 2007, when there was rapid economic growth in the Baltic States and there were substantial wage increases in many sectors. In late 2008, however, the economy started to collapse, with a fall in GDP of 18% and a major increase in unemployment (CSP, 2010). This led to another period of outward migration (Krišjāne et al, 2011). Therefore the *return migration* during 2009–2010 was lower than between 2004 and 2008 (Hazans, 2011).

Official statistics of *return migration* that rely on declaration of migration⁴ are likely to reflect quite accurately the dynamics (a change in trend) of *return migration* to Latvia. According to these statistics, the number of *return migrants* was rather low in 2005 and 2006, increased slightly in the boom year of 2007 and 2008, and in the crisis year, 2009, the number of *returnees* dropped significantly (see Figure A1). However, official statistics do not reflect the real extent of return migration because only a small fraction of Latvians who move to another country declare a change in their permanent place of residence, regardless of how long they are away. Therefore the estimate of around 40,000 returnees provided by Hazans (2011a) should be considered as the most reliable. Hence, the number would be lower if we were to include only those returnees who were abroad for a year or more, since the definition of returnee used by Hazans is rather broad: ‘people with foreign work experience’.

Figure A1: *Latvian nationals returning to Latvia between 2005 and 2010 (declared migration only)*



Note: This figure shows only official data based on declaration of migration; a step that is quite unpopular among migrants. Nevertheless, it is likely to show quite accurately the dynamics (a change in trend) of return migration to Latvia.

Source: *Central Statistical Bureau, Latvia, 2011*

Hungary

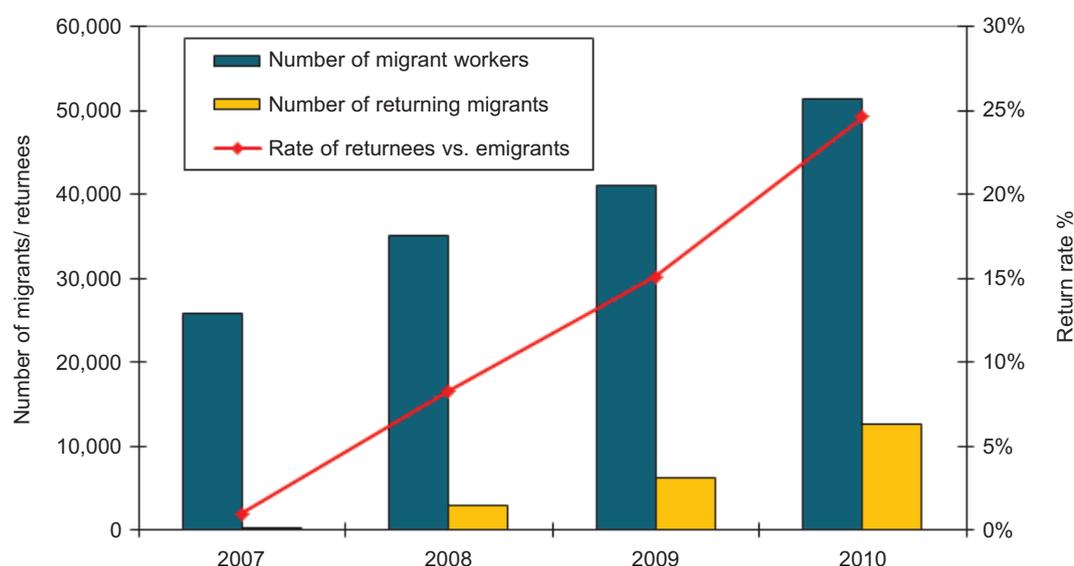
Labour migration from Hungary, as well as return migration to the country, can be considered low to moderate compared to the rest of the selected countries. Martin and Radu (2009, data from ESS 3rd round: 2006/07) found that in 2007 only 2.61% of economically active Hungarians (aged 24–65) had experience working abroad over the previous decade, compared with 7–8% in other countries considered. Nevertheless, this means that there were at least 150,000 Hungarians who had worked abroad but returned before 2007. However, the study tends to overestimate the return migration of Hungarians since it defines returned migrants as workers who spent at least six months abroad, and consequently includes short-term migrants among returnees. Unfortunately there are no data available on the returned Hungarians who lived for at least one year abroad.

⁴ Latvians leaving the country should officially declare a change in their permanent place of residence. Most of them do not do so, because labour migration from Latvia to the other EU countries largely does not involve a permanent change in place of residence and most Latvians working abroad retain their declared place of residence in Latvia.

There are two other useful data sources on returned Hungarian migrants – the Hungarian LFS and data from the E301 form (a certificate showing periods of social insurance for the purpose of claiming unemployment benefit in another country covered by EC Regulations). Both data sources were used by Hárs (2011) to estimate return migration to Hungary.

According to LFS data, approximately 22,000 Hungarians returned to their home country between 2007 and 2010. Before 2007 the number of returnees was so low that, according to Hárs (2011), Hungarian LFS estimates of return migration are unreliable due to the low number of returnees in the survey. The estimate of 22,000 indicates the *flow* of returnees not the *stock*, since there is no information how many of them emigrated once again. As for the flow, there is a clear trend that the number of Hungarian emigrants and returnees increased year by year over the period 2007–2010, with an increasing return rate. As Figure A2 shows, there were 12,000 returnees in 2010 compared with only 6,000 in 2009 and even fewer in the previous years.

Figure A2: Number and ratio of Hungarian emigrants and (unemployed) returnees * per year, 2007–2010



Notes: * The data source uses the concepts of ‘return migration’ and ‘returned migrant’, but they do not match the definitions used throughout this study, as the former include short-term and circular migrants.

The numbers represent the number of migrant workers and returnees that year as measured in the Hungarian Labour Force Survey and not the stock data. Returnees were identified as those persons whose last employment was in a foreign country who became unemployed after the return.

Source: *HU LFS (Hárs, 2011)*

The LFS data clearly underestimate the number of returnees as they include only those Hungarians whose last employment was in a foreign country and who became unemployed after their return. Similarly, data on E301 form issuances show that there were around 23,000 Hungarians whose last employment was in a foreign country and who applied for unemployment benefit in Hungary between 2004 and the beginning of 2011. None of these data take into account those returnees who found jobs immediately after returning, who did not want to be employed and became inactive or after a while went back to their earlier host country or to a new one. According to one recent study, in Hungary some 63% of *returnees* aged 25–49 were employed in 2009 and 33% were unemployed, with most of the remainder recorded as being inactive but reporting that they would like to work (Fuller et al, 2010). Knowing that around 22,000–23,000 unemployed/inactive returnees make up about 37% of all returned Hungarians, we can arrive at the estimate of about 60,000 Hungarian returnees during the period 2004 to 2010.

If we were to restrict the definition of returned migrants to returnees having migratory experience of at least one year, the scale of return migration to Hungary would drop by up to a half. There is some evidence that generally post-accession migration from the EU8+2 countries to EU15 is of a temporary nature, with only around 40% of emigrants staying longer than one year abroad. If we assume that the same would be true for Hungarian returned migrants then about 24,000 of them would be returnees with over one year’s migratory experience.

Table A2 summarises calculations on the stock and flow of returnees to the four countries considered.

Table A2: *Flow and stock of returnees (in thousands)*

	Poland	Romania	Latvia	Hungary
Flow of returnees between 2004 and 2010	350	280–360 (112–144#)	280–360 (112–144#)	60 (24#)
Stock of returnees in 2010	175–210*	168–180 (67–72*)	17–26 (7–11*)	24–36 (10–15*)

Notes: # Estimates are lower if the definition of returned migrants is restricted to persons who lived abroad at least one year, assuming that they constitute up to 40% of all returnees (circular migrants).

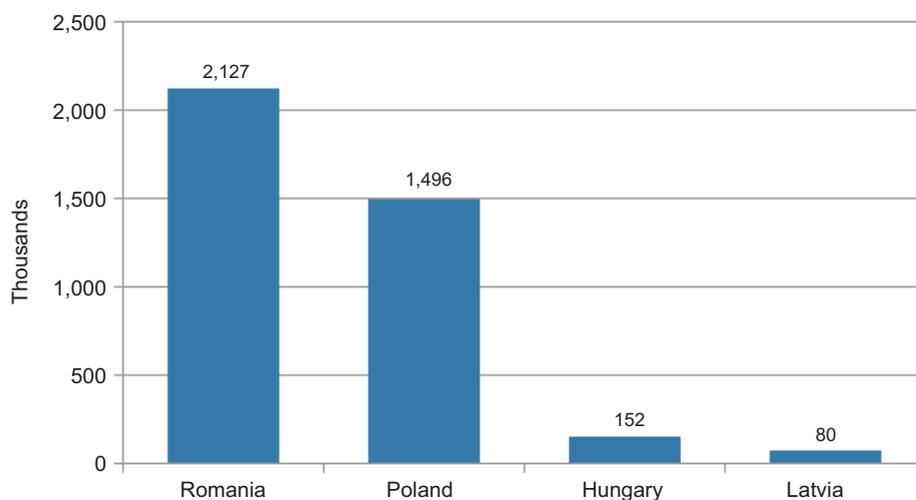
* Estimates are lower if we assume that just around 50–60% of all returnees who lived abroad at least one year and returned between 2004 and 2010 still lived in their home country by 2010.

Source: *Own calculations based on the country case studies and various other data sources*

3. Ratio between return migration and emigration

The newest estimations of emigration from the four selected countries to EU15 are provided by Holland et al (2011) who estimated stocks of EU8+2 countries citizens in EU15 countries in the period of 1997–2009 on the basis of Eurostat’s Population statistics, data from OECD International Migration Database, and Eurostat LFS. According to them, there were more than 2 million Romanians and almost 1.5 million Polish residing in EU15 countries in 2009. The number of Hungarians and Latvians was much smaller – 152,000 and 80,000 respectively (see Figure A3).

Figure A3: *Numbers of study country nationals residing in EU15 in 2009*



Source: *Holland et al, 2011*

Table A3 provides estimates of the ratio between the number of returnees who lived in their home country in 2010 and the number of people from the same countries who lived abroad in 2009. The highest ratio was found to be in Poland and Latvia, slightly lower in Hungary and the lowest in Romania, which has the biggest diaspora abroad.

Table A3: *Ratio of the number of returnees to the number of emigrants*

	Poland	Romania	Latvia	Hungary
Ratio of the stock of returnees in 2010 to the stock of population abroad in 2009	12–14%	~3%	9–14%	7–10%

Note: The definition of returned migrants is restricted to persons who lived abroad at least one year.

Source: *Own calculations based on Table A2 (triangulation of different data sources) and Figure A3 (data source: Holland et al, 2011)*

4. Ratio of return migration to the population and to the labour force

Estimates that we arrived at during this research allow us to calculate the ratio between the number of returnees and the number of inhabitants, the ratio between the number of returnees and the labour force in 2010 (see Table A4). In general, the returnees so far constitute a very small proportion of all inhabitants or the overall labour force in all countries considered. It should be noted, though, that we included in our calculations only those returnees who are likely to have spent more than one year abroad. Together with short-term or circular migrants, returnees would make up a bigger part of the working population as well as of all inhabitants.

Table A4: *Ratio of returnees to inhabitants and to the labour force in 2010*

	Poland	Romania	Latvia	Hungary
Number of returnees (in thousands)	175–210	67–72	7–11	10–15
Number of inhabitants (in thousands)	38,167	21,462	2,248	10,031
Ratio of returnees to inhabitants (%)	0.46–0.55%	0.31–0.34%	0.31–0.49%	0.1–0.15%
Number of labour force (in thousands)	17,660	8,998	1,485	4,203
Ratio of returnees to the labour force (%)	0.99–1.19%	0.74–0.8%	0.47–0.74%	0.24–0.36%

Note: The definition of returned migrants is restricted to persons who lived abroad at least one year.

Source: *Own calculations based on Table A2 (triangulation of different data sources) and data from country case studies*

If we compare our results with the insights provided by Martin and Radu (2009), we see quite similar trends. According to Martin and Radu, by 2006/2007 between 7% and 8% of the working population (aged 24–65) had spent at least six months working abroad between 1997 and 2007 and subsequently returned to one of the selected countries, the only exception being Hungary with the return rate of 2.61% (see Table A5). Based on our estimates, we can conclude that the ratio of returnees to all inhabitants and to workers remains highest in Poland and lowest in Hungary. Latvia and Romania experience a medium to high return in comparison to the other selected countries.

Table A5: *Rate of return migration in the active population (aged 24–65)*

	Poland	Romania	Latvia	Hungary
% returnees	12–14%	~3%	9–14%	7–10%

Notes: Returnees were identified as those persons born in the country who spent at least six months working abroad over the last 10 years and returned. Estimates by Martin and Radu, data from ESS 3rd round, 2006/2007.

Source: *Martin and Radu (2009)*