

THE LABOUR MARKET PERFORMANCE OF EAST EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS: Contrasts between the UK and Northern European neighbours

Immigrants from the Central and Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 are less likely to be employed than natives in Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. In the UK, new member state immigrants' likelihood of employment is even higher than that of natives.

These are the central findings of research by **Mari Kangasniemi** and **Merja Kauhanen**, to be presented to the NORFACE migration conference at University College London this week. Their study compares new EU member state immigrants' composition and labour market performance across four old EU member states.

Research coordinator Merja Kauhanen, one of the authors, says:

'We detect interesting differences among the host countries in how much new member state immigrants' labour market position deviates from that of the similar natives and other immigrant groups.'

'These differences can partly be explained by the level of these immigrants' host-country-specific skills including language skills and the institutional differences among these countries'.

'In the design of future immigration and integration policies, more attention should be paid to the causes of the relative disadvantages of new member state immigrants in the host countries and whether these disadvantages persist in the long term.'

The study finds that the new member state immigrants' average employment disadvantage varies substantially across the four host countries. Compared with similar natives, immigrants from the new member states are 5.7 percentage points less likely to be employed in Finland, whereas in the Netherlands their likelihood of employment is 16.1 percentage points lower. In the UK, the employment gap in favour of new member state immigrants is around seven percentage points.

With the time spent in the host country, the employment gap between new member state immigrants and natives narrows.

The study also shows that the new member state immigrants seem not only to suffer from lower employment (except in the UK), but the disadvantage these immigrants have in the labour market also shows itself in the type of employment and occupations they hold. They work more often as self-employed (except in Finland) and in temporary jobs that are often combined with poorer job quality than regular jobs.

In addition, new member state immigrants' likelihood of working in low skill occupations is higher in all four countries. But the difference in the likelihood of working in low skill occupations is smallest in Finland, which has the lowest incidence of low pay, and highest in the UK, which together with Germany has the highest incidence of low pay.

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This study by the Labour Institute of Economic Research in Helsinki, Finland, is part of the project 'Migrant Diversity and Regional Disparity in Europe', funded by NORFACE.