THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL INSURANCE AND SOCIAL SECURITY FOR UKRAINIAN LABOR MIGRANTS IN POLAND

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This article demonstrates the need for medical insurance and social protection for Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland, including cases of disability and pregnancy of Ukrainian labor migrants. It also highlights racial discrimination and xenophobic behavior towards Ukrainians in Poland during 2017-2018. Data for analysis has been taken from publicly available Polish data sources, such as Gazeta.pl, Gazeta Olsztyńska, Wyborcza.pl, Fakt.pl, SputnikNews, SuperExpress.pl, the Polish Radio External Service (Polskie Radio S.A.), Telewizja Polska S.A., Grupa ZPR Media, Dispatch News Desk (DND), Gazeta Wrocławska, Supermedia, Finanse etc. The article covers the following topics: what prospective migrants need to know before they emigrate to Poland, problems experienced by Ukrainians in Poland during 2017-2018, details of racial discrimination that has occurred and the difficulties some Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland have experienced in obtaining residence permits. The article aims to show the problems for Ukrainian labor migrants who have neither social protection nor medical insurance. It also cites the racial discrimination and xenophobia shown towards Ukrainians in Poland during 2017-2018. The methodology consisted of research to compare the experiences in cases of disability and pregnancy among Ukrainians. It also highlights cases of racial discrimination and xenophobia met by labor migrants in Poland and uses qualitative data analysis methods.The article reaches the ***conclusion*** *that the Polish State and Polish employers are interested in Ukrainian labor migrants as a means of maintaining the level of the Polish economy at 4% increase of the Gross domestic product (GDP) every year. However, the question "Why do Ukrainian labor migrants still have great problems in obtaining residence permits and social security in Poland?" remains unanswered.*

Keywords: Ukrainian Labor Migrants, Poland, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobic Behaviors, Social Security

Acest articol demonstrează necesitatea asigurării medicale și a protecției sociale pentru migranții ucraineni care muncesc în Polonia, incluzând cazurile de invaliditate și sarcină a migranților de muncă din Ucraina. De asemenea, ia în considerare discriminarea rasială și comportamentul xenofob față de ucraineni în Polonia în perioada 2017-2018. Datele pentru analiză au fost preluate din surse de date poloneze disponibile în mod public, cum ar fi Gazeta.pl, Gazeta Olsztyńska, Wyborcza.pl, Fakt.pl, SputnikNews, SuperExpress.pl, Polish Radio External Service (Polskie Radio S.A.), Telewizja Polska S.A., Grupa ZPR Media, Dispatch News Desk (DND), Gazeta Wrocławska, Supermedia, Finanse etc. Articolul cuprinde următoarele subiecte: ce trebuie să știe migranții potențiali înainte de a emigra în Polonia, problemele cu care se confruntă ucrainenii în Polonia în perioada 2017-2018, detaliile discriminării rasiale care au avut loc și dificultățile întâmpinate de unii migranți de muncă ucraineni în Polonia în obținerea permiselor de ședere. Articolul urmărește să arate problemele migranților de muncă ucraineni care nu au nici protecție socială, nici asigurare medicală. Se evidențiază, de asemenea, discriminarea rasială și xenofobia față de ucraineni în Polonia în perioada 2017-2018. Metodologia a constat în cercetarea pentru a compara experiențele în caz de dizabilitate și sarcină în rândul ucrainenilor. De asemenea, se subliniază cazurile de discriminare rasială și xenofobie întâlnite de migranții de muncă în Polonia și se utilizează metode calitative de analiză a datelor. Articolul concluzionează că statul polonez și angajatorii polonezi sunt interesați de migranții de muncă ucraineni ca mijloc de menținere a nivelului economiei poloneze la o creștere de 4% a produsului intern brut (PIB) în fiecare an. Cu toate acestea, întrebarea "De ce migranții de muncă ucraineni continuă să aibă probleme mari în obținerea permiselor de ședere și asigurărilor sociale în Polonia?" rămâne fără răspuns.

Cuvinte-cheie: migranții de muncă ucraineni, Polonia, discriminare rasială, comportamente xenofobe, securitatea socială

JEL Classification: F2, F22, J6, J61, R2, R23.

Introduction

Ukrainian labor migration is a modern phenomenon in Poland. Several million Ukrainians currently work in Poland because of economic and political difficulties in their own country, including poverty and the war that has destroyed part of the basic economic infrastructure of the country.

In the paper 'The role of Ukrainians in the economic growth of Poland' that was published in the International Scientific Journal 'World Scientific News,' [1] the situation of Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland was analyzed, as well as in the papers "Research into the dilemmas concerning the employment of immigrants in their professions

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abroad and the depreciation or restoration of their human capital" [2]; "The Value of Life and Labor of Ukrainian Migrants Abroad" [3]; as well as "Migranci zarobkowi z Ukrainy u małych i średnich przedsiębiorców w Polsce" [4]; "Znaczenie migracji zarobkowej z Ukrainy dla gospodarki, przedsiębiorców i rynku pracy w Polsce" [5]; "Problemy polskich przedsiębiorców związane z zatrudnianiem migrantów z Ukrainy" [6]; "Wpływ imigracji zarobkowej na rozwój gospodarczy kraju i regionów" [7]; and "Funkcja ekonomiczna migracji zarobkowej z Ukrainy do Polski" [8], etc.

This paper considers the issues for those Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland who have neither social protection nor medical insurance. It also cites cases of racial discrimination and xenophobia occurring towards Ukrainians in Poland during 2017-2018 and notes that Ukrainian labor migrants still encounter problems when applying for residence permits and social security in that country.

Research Methods

The methodology consisted of research aimed at comparing different cases of disability and pregnancy among Ukrainians and looking at racial discrimination and xenophobia shown towards the labor migrants in Poland, as well as qualitative data analysis methods.

Current migration flows of Ukrainians to Poland: what prospective migrants need to know before they emigrate.

In recent years, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian labor migrants have travelled Poland seeking better salaries, opportunities and conditions of life. Some them work illegally in Poland while others, who have legal status there, do not know their rights and obligations.

According to data from Dispatch News Desk (DND), there are currently more than 2 million Ukrainian labor migrants - *'2 million Ukrainians seeking jobs in Poland due to economic meltdown'* [9].

1. What do Ukrainians need to know before they emigrate to the E.U., in particular to Poland?

Firstly, Ukrainians cannot work illegally abroad. If they do so, they violate both the laws of their own country and those of their host country and can be deported.

Secondly, Ukrainian labor migrants cannot work without health insurance in any host country because at any time they may suffer ill-health or accidents, which can range from minor problems to fatalities.

2. What sources of information should they be aware of and study before they travel abroad to work?

In Poland, the website of the Office of the Chief Labour Inspectorate [10] has a wealth of information for foreigners considering work in Poland.

3. What are the consequences for Ukrainian labor migrants working without protection and health insurance in businesses and factories in Poland?

All kinds of problems can arise for these immigrants, ranging from illnesses, disability or pregnancy right up to unexpected death.

Cases incurred by Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland during 2017-2018

During 2017-2018, there were several tragic situations for Ukrainian labor migrants Poland.

These cases are shown here in order to -

- understand how these Ukrainians found themselves in this position and so avoid it happening again to other immigrants;
- warn other labor migrants about these and situations;
- warn the migrants to make themselves aware of, and to understand, the migration policy and laws, as well as knowing their human and women's rights and their obligations in their new country before emigrating to the E.U.

The first case is Alona, a 29-year old female Ukrainian working in a laundry factory in the city of Lubon in December 2017 [11]. She lost her hand in an accident in the laundry. She did have official status as a worker, but she worked only four days a week at this factory.

The second case is Oksana, a female immigrant working in the city of Poznan in February 2018. She suffered a stroke but her employer would not help her. He merely abandoned her in a local park and called the Police to say that he had found a homeless woman in the park [12-13]. This female immigrant was working unofficially and she did not have any right of residence in Poland. This enabled the unscrupulous employer to use the situation and leave her to die.

The third case is 36-year old Nadia, a Ukrainian female immigrant, working in the city Lublin in July 2018. Nadia gave birth to a baby girl during the course of her work at a factory. She put the baby in a trash bin in a toilette at the factory. Thanks to other fellow-workers the baby's life was saved but Nadia has been arrested and may be imprisoned for life [14].

The fourth case is as 52-year old Ukrainian male immigrant working on the building site of a supermarket in the city of Szamotuly in July 2018. He fell down from a height on the building site and was killed instantly [15].

The fifth case is a 59-year old male Ukranian migrant working in the city of Olsztyn in August 2018. During the course of his work in the agricultural sector, he suffered a pelvic trauma [16]. He was taken to hospital but he had neither health insurance nor the money to pay for treatment there. He was so afraid of being deported to Ukraine that he hanged himself in the Olsztyn city hospital.

These cases show the dangers of the lack of medical insurance and social protection for Ukrainian labor migrants in the Polish labor market. The situation is exacerbated by lack of knowledge about where to get information, help and support for themselves in Poland.

Racial discrimination towards Ukrainians in Poland

At the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, the Polish site 'Finanse,' and the Polish newspaper Wyborcza.pl wrote about racial discrimination against Ukrainians in Poland.

According to data from 'Finanse' [17], at the end of 2017 in the city Barlinek an act of racial discrimination and xenophobia was perpetrated against Ukrainians. In the grocery store 'Bimex' a notice on the information board stated "Citizens of Ukraine will be subjecteed to verification."

At the start of 2018 according to data in the newspaper Wyborcza.pl, Ukrainian workers at the enterprise 'Lindab' near Warsaw were given uniforms of a different colour from the other workers. They were given blue and yellow uniform as the colors of the Ukrainian flag [18].

The Center for the Monitoring of Racist and Xenophobic Behaviors (in Polish: Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych) checked these and other cases of racial discrimination in Poland, aiming to stop them and prevent further case in the future [19].

According to data from 'SputnikNews' [20], Ukrainians generally feel that that there is racial discrimination against them in Poland. The conclusions have been drawn up on the basis of the Report 'Mniejszość ukraińska i migranci z Ukrainy w Polsce' (Ukrainian minority and migrants from Ukraine in Poland) issued by the Union of Ukrainians in Poland (Raport Związku Ukraińców w Polsce) [21] in which the collected and analysed facts show a deep level of racial discrimination against Ukrainians in Poland.

Existing problems of racial discrimination and xenophobic behavior and such cases that occur for Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland.

All the cases concerning racial discrimination and xenophobic behaviors, as well as the tragic cases of accident and ill-health, are the consequence of a lack of medical and social protection for Ukrainians in Poland. Ukrainians have neither a basic knowledge about their human and women's rights nor any knowledge of their obligations in their new country before leaving their homeland.

How can such migrants be helped to create an effective mechanism of protection in order to prevent similar situations in the future? There is an urgent need to raise their level of education and literacy through various official institutions, such as the Office of the Chief Labour Inspectorate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland and the Consulates of Ukraine in Gdansk and Krakow [22].

In addition, the Agreement on social security between Ukraine and Poland, signed in 2012, can be used to help Ukrainians in Poland. The title of the agreement is 'Act of 10 October 2012 on the ratification of Agreement between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on social security, signed in Kiev on 18 May 2012' (in Polish: Ustawa z dnia 10 października 2012 r. o ratyfikacji Umowy miedzy Rzecząpospolitą Polska a Ukraina o zabezpieczeniu społecznym, sporządzonej w Kijowie dnia 18 maja 2012 r.) [23]. However, this agreement can only be effective in helping Ukrainian labor migrants who are working legally in Poland.

Procedure for obtaining residence permits for Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland

The procedure for obtaining a residence permit for Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland is difficult and lengthy, which leaves Ukrainians defenseless and vulnerable without a residence permit or medical insurance and social protection for months and even years.

They come to Poland at first with a 6-month working visa. When in Poland they apply for a residence permit. Unfortunately, the procedure to obtain this residence permit for Ukrainian labor migrants is long and difficult and these delays leave Ukrainians as a defenseless and vulnerable group of workers, without a medical insurance and social protection in Poland.

According to data from the newspaper 'Gazeta Wrocławska' [24] and OTTO Work Force Polska [25], Polish employers do want to employ Ukrainian labor migrants and so the simplification the procedure for receiving residence permits in Poland would benefit both the employers and the migrant workers.

Conclusion

The article has examined cases that occurred for Ukrainians in Poland during 2017-2018, acts of racial discrimination against them and problems with the procedure for obtaining residence permits for Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland.

The Polish State and Polish employers want to employ Ukrainian labor migrants to help maintain the level of 4% annual increase in the Gross domestic product (GDP) in the Polish economy. This begs the question why Ukrainian labor migrants are still experiencing problems in obtaining residence permits in Poland and are left defenseless and vulnerable without the residence permit, medical insurance and social protection for months and even years.

The procedure to obtain a residence permit for a Ukrainian labor migrant in Poland should be simplified for the benefit of all.

The cases of lack of medical insurance and social protection of Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland shown in this article, together with the cases of problems caused by disability and pregnancy, are the direct consequences of delay in receiving residence permits and their lack of rights to social security in Poland for Ukrainians.

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