The posting of third country nationals via EU Member States

Training module 3 - EU labour mobility regulatory framework (FMW, PoW)
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By Sonila Danaj
European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
Introducing the Presenter

Sonila Danaj, Researcher, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
danaj@euro.centre.org

Sonila Danaj has for sixteen years of experience as a researcher and been involved in projects related to labour mobility and labour migrants working life for eight years. I have been managing and acting as researcher for four projects on labour mobility and posted work with two new projects starting in January 2021. Her thematic expertise includes labour mobility, including posted work and temporary agency work; migrant workers’ labour and social rights, working conditions, occupational health and safety, third country nationals labour mobility and posting; monitoring and enforcement of labour standards for mobile workers; social partners engagement with labour mobility policy and migrant workers; national and transnational stakeholder cooperation practices and enforcement challenges.
Question 1

Have you come across posted workers from third countries in your work?

Yes
No
The posting of third country nationals (TCN) through different flows is developing:
- directly from EU candidate countries (Serbia and North Macedonia)
- but mostly from one EU country where they are formally residing to another EU country (e.g. Slovenia, Poland, Italy)
- the development of the ‘posting industry’
Incomplete data on TCN posting

- Data still **not systematically collected**: some MSs do, though indicating that TCN posting is approximately 10.5% of total posting (2017).

- More recent figures reported by AT 15,296 (receiving) and Slovenia (sending) 25,172 in 2019

- More systematic data collection is necessary!

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**Percentage of non-EU nationality posted workers registered in national declaration tools by receiving country, 2017**

Source: Data provided by the Austrian Financial Police, 2020

**Figure 1: Nationality of workers posted to Austria (submitted ZN03 forms)**

Source: de Wispelaere & Pacolet, 2018
Mapping TCN Posting 2

- The main flows for TCN posting are via EU countries that are *bordering or close* with the countries of origin,
- countries among which there are *consolidated historical migration pathways*,
- and *bilateral agreements* for facilitated migration procedures have been set in place.
- It is therefore relatively common to find TCN posted workers from the Western Balkans being posted from Slovenia, or Ukrainian workers being posted from Poland, or non-EU Eastern European, Western Balkan and Northern African workers being posted from Italy.
Why do TCN workers move to the EU sending countries?

**Push factors**
- existing conflict/post-conflict
- politico-economic instability
  - Wage differences and availability of jobs
  - informal and/or irregular employment practices
  - unpaid and/or irregular contributions and health insurance
  - poor social dialogue mechanisms/weak worker organizations
  - Dysfunctional juridical system

**Pull factors**
- consolidated historical migration pathways
- geographical proximity
- relatively simpler migration procedures
- informal and formal recruiters of TCN workers (incl. gangmasters)
Why do TCN workers agree to be posted?

- Direct migration to the receiving countries is long, bureaucratic and with an uncertain outcome.
- Earnings increase compared to home and sending country, even if paid less than local workers.
- Posting presents a more certain and hassle-free option than regular migration as employers take care of everything from finding the job to paperwork to travel and lodging, also because
- There is a growing numbers of consultants, law firms and letterbox companies which specialise in facilitating the posting of workers – so-called ‘posting industry’.
Question 2

What is the most common employment/contractual irregularity you have encountered when inspecting companies that employ TCN posted workers?
1. Irregular posting (e.g. fake posting/Letterbox companies/no A1)
2. Misreport of job/profession or skills-level
3. Un/under-reported worked hours
4. Sending-country pay rates
Employment Vulnerabilities of TCN posted workers

- **Recruitment channels**
  - informal/gangmasters
  - posting industry, esp. when facilitating fake posting or letterbox companies

- **Contractual irregularities**
  - job/profession, skills-level, sector

- **Renumeration and social protection irregularities**
  - un/under-reported hours,
  - sending-country rates,
  - unpaid social contributions,
  - no (proper) health insurance
Question 3

What is the most problematic OSH irregularity you have encountered when inspecting workplaces where there were TCN posted workers?

1. No OSH training
2. No proper protective equipment
3. Language barriers (e.g. no signs in workers’ languages)
4. Unreported work accidents
Social Welfare and OSH Vulnerabilities of TCN posted workers

Unguaranteed social rights
- Unpaid/irregular social contributions
- Unpaid/irregular health care coverage

Exposure to high OSH risks
- No/on paper OSH training
- Cheap or fast medical examinations
- No or self-funded protective equipment
- Language barriers

Abandonment in case of injury and illness
- Coverup of workplace accidents
- Return of incapacitated workers to their country of origin
Challenges to the protection of TCN posted workers

- Lack of systematic information on rights and worker protection mechanisms
- Hesitation/distrust/fear of public authorities and/or worker organizations due to
  - Home/sending country system of reference (e.g. antagonizing enforcement agencies or weak/corrupt unions in the home country)
  - The double dependence on the direct posting employer for work permits and employment
  - Lack of information
- Caveats to national worker organizations’ support
  - e.g. in AT to become union member you need to work in the country for six months, Chamber of Labour can provide support in legal matters, but only when workers make a formal claim
- Language barriers
Challenges of Enforcement Agencies dealing with TCN posted workers

- Challenges deriving from the combination of migration status as third country nationals and their employment via posting
  - confusion on the applicable rules: posting or migration regulation
  - complex work permit systems for TCNs that sometimes allow for these workers to be posted, e.g. Poland or Slovakia.
  - ambiguities of posting from candidate countries to EU member states.

- Human resources challenges
  - insufficient personnel
  - TCN language barriers

- Cross-border collaboration challenges
  - In different countries enforcement authorities have different structures, mandates and legal frameworks
  - No joint databases or access to national databases between EU and non-EU countries
  - Online tools sometimes rigid in their categorizations, i.e. they do not help distinguish ambiguous cases or cases that involve more than two countries
  - No consolidated channels of information exchange and collaboration between EU and non-EU authorities
Conclusions

✔ The posting of third country nationals (TCN) through different flows is growing.
✔ The combination of the TCN migration status and their employment via posting results in TCN posted workers not being properly protected.
✔ Irregular and exploitative employment relations practices are transferred from the country of origin to the sending and the receiving EU countries despite the mechanisms for control and enforcement of national/EU standards,
✔ which is also destabilizing the fragile stability reached via the partially successful re-regulation of posted work.
✔ The solution could be to find a way to re-regulate or restrict TCN posting.
Sources

Project pages

• Occupational safety and health of posted workers (POOSH): www.poosh.eu
• Posting of workers in Eastern Europe (EEPOW): https://www.euro.centre.org/projects/detail/1673
• Posting of third country nationals: Mapping the trend in the construction sector (Con3Post): https://www.euro.centre.org/projects/detail/3346
• Bridging the gap between legislation and practice in the posting of workers (POW-BRIDGE): https://www.euro.centre.org/projects/detail/3633

Research reports

Cillo, R. (2020). Regional Case Study: From Morocco and Tunisia to Belgium via Italy: migration and posting of third country nationals. Venice: Ca’ Foscari University of Venice.