Final Report Summary - EURA-NET (Transnational Migration in Transition: Transformative Characteristics of Temporary Mobility of People)

Executive Summary:
The objective of the EURA-NET project was to gather information on the current characteristics and related policy impacts of temporary migration between Europe and Asia. Besides uncovering how politics structure transnational movement issues, EURA-NET sought to make visible the lived experiences of individual temporary migrants. To this end, interviews were conducted with EU policy-makers, national policy-makers (n=395) in eleven European and Asian countries and individual temporary migrants (n=883). The findings suggest that security concerns, labour market needs and demographic aspects are central in the design and implementation of policies on temporary migration, both at national and EU levels. The policies on temporary forms of migration appeared to be still somewhat different in the
European and Asian contexts. In general, Asian countries tend to have relatively open admission policies towards European migrants (as indicated by visa-free policies), but policies concerning residence, employment and settlement are not well-established.

In Europe, growing anti-immigration sentiment and security concerns are reflected in increasingly restrictive and selective immigration regulations. These national policies are not always consonant with the reality of labour and skills shortage in key sectors, a situation which is exacerbated by the aging of economically developed European societies. There are also other unfavourable consequences of strict policy regulations, such as increasing irregular migration. The slow response of European states to the sudden increase in refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 has created and continues to create an unprecedented number of undocumented migrants in Europe. While the sense of ‘crisis’ is shared among European countries, there is little consensus on finding a common solution. The national policies are increasingly inward looking and little effort is paid to seeing the situation as a common issue. Both the EU and national migration policies follow a utilitarian and economic rationale. All participating European and Asian countries prefer highly-skilled and qualified migrants to lower-skilled ones. Highly-skilled migrants find it easier to obtain residence and work permits, to bring their family members with them, and to feel welcome in the destination country than do lower-skilled individuals. In addition to general inequalities between highly-skilled and lower-skilled migrants, lower-skilled workers are also more susceptible to human trafficking and labour rights abuse.

A common challenge for temporary migrants is adaptation to the host society. The EURA-NET study revealed that the very idea of temporariness negates the need for integration not only in policy-makers’ minds but also among migrants. In practice, both Asian and European countries face serious problems in their integration incentives, and both Asian and European migrants face a common obstacle in their adaptation process, namely the language barrier.

Policy-makers generally recognise the value of returnee migrants for promoting international collaboration and development, but in Europe the policies promoting return migration and the reintegration of European returnees have been less successful. Instead, China and India have a high level return migration of students and highly-skilled professionals, which is seen to have a positive effect on these countries’ economic development processes. This is encouraged by job markets that appreciate returnees from abroad.

Project Context and Objectives:
Temporary migration between Europe and Asia is a topical subject for several reasons: First, the number of international students has increased significantly in recent decades. It is estimated that currently about five million students are enrolled in higher education institutions outside their home countries, a figure which has more than doubled from 2.1 million in 2000, and almost quadrupled in comparison to 1.3 million in 1990. International student mobility between Europe and Asia plays an important role in this trend, predominantly with respect to students moving from countries such as China and India to European countries, but also students moving in the opposite direction.

Second, a large proportion of highly-skilled migrants in Europe originate from Asian countries, and migrants from Asia in Europe are often more highly educated than migrants from other regions of origin. In
the currently ongoing debates in many European countries about the need to attract highly-skilled labour, Asia is often discussed as a source region of well-educated professionals. In addition, economic growth in several Asian countries, including China, India, Thailand and the Philippines, has contributed to their attractiveness for temporary highly-skilled migrants from the OECD countries, including the countries of Europe.

Third, while Asia is not the most important region of origin for low-skilled migrants in Europe, there are also migration channels for low-skilled workers. One important example is seasonal work as berry-pickers in Finland and Sweden. Fourth, Asian countries, for instance India and Thailand, are important destinations for European lifestyle migrants who, sometimes on a temporary basis, seek a different life away from their daily routines in their countries of origin. Fifth, the recent humanitarian crisis from Western Asian countries to Europe brought large numbers of humanitarian migrants who are usually granted temporary residence permits. A total of 1.3 million people, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, applied for political asylum in European countries in 2015 alone.

It is clear that the volumes of migratory movements from Asia to the EU and from the EU to Asia are not symmetrical. Nevertheless, temporary migration of European intra-company transferees, scientists and other experts, tertiary level students, family-based movers and lifestyle migrants to Asian countries is an emerging phenomenon, although still relatively low in numbers. Return migration is another type of temporary migration which is relevant in both directions.

Objectives
The purpose of the EURA-NET project was to help national, European and international policy-makers to address existing and potential issues of temporary migration. This was done by investigating how policies structure temporary migration in sending, transit and receiving societies and by making known the experiences and views of individual migrants, as well as local, national, European and international policy-makers.

While major attention has been paid by researchers to the characteristics and impact of permanent migration, there is a considerable lack of an analysis of the transformative characteristics of temporary migration across regions. Little is understood about its complexity and the ways in which it affects individuals and also receiving and sending communities. There is moreover little consensus on the management of temporary migration at national and international levels. To achieve a better understanding of these issues, EURA-NET investigated how temporary migration is addressed at EU level and conducted an eleven-country comparison of temporary migration in Asia and Europe. Some of the countries taking part in the study are predominantly migrant receiving societies (Finland, Germany, the Netherlands) while others typify migrant sending societies (China, India, the Philippines, Thailand) and some are so-called transit countries (Turkey, Greece, Hungary, Ukraine). It was nevertheless taken into account that, in practice, all the participating countries actually send and receive migrants, and that the aspect of transit migration is likewise to some extent relevant for all of them.

Our initial assumption was that transnationally mobile people are active agents of transformations on local, national and transnational scales and that temporary migration entails transformative characteristics which manifest in political, legal, economic, social and cultural spheres. The project therefore focused on the
transformative potential of different forms of temporary mobility of people, including highly-skilled and low-skilled labour migration, student mobility, humanitarian migration, lifestyle migration and migration for family-related reasons. The fluid nature of the above classification was taken into account, as transnational mobility often includes several motivations, and legal categories may change during the migration process and during migrants’ sojourns in destination countries. Yet, by including a wide range of migrants engaging in different forms of temporary migration, and related policies at different levels, we aimed in our analysis to obtain a comprehensive picture of the motivations, perceptions and experiences of migrants, return migrants and their family members.

It was also borne in mind that transnational migration may impact both those who migrate and those who ‘stay behind’, and that transnational movements are not merely one-way flows from ‘source’ to ‘destination’ but rather constitute dynamic process consisting of a sequence of events across time and space, and that the migratory flows involve people not commonly understood as migrants (e.g. degree students, lifestyle migrants). Thus the target groups of respondents included both migrants and non-migrants, not just movers but also former movers (returnees) and non-movers (those who have not left home, e.g. migrants’ family members still living in the country of origin).

Types of temporary migration
Significant changes are discernible in recent migration between Europe and Asia. These changes are attributable to several factors such as rapid economic development in Asia, ageing population and skills shortage in Europe, and the humanitarian crisis in Europe, to name a few.

Many European companies actively promote businesses in Asia, especially in China, and Chinese companies are keen to invest in Europe. In the context of emerging global markets and the growing internationalization of companies, Asia plays an important role as a destination for European intra-company transferees, and vice versa.

People’s border-crossing movements are not confined to flows between two countries but also include repeat migration and onward migration to other destinations. Indian and Chinese high-tech professionals are often cited as examples of temporary migrants whose main objective is to pursue career opportunities that will enable them to maximise their earnings and savings, while temporary migratory movements are also discernible among other national and professional groups. In some cases border-crossing mobility between Europe and Asia is periodic. For example, a number of seasonal workers from Thailand and Ukraine move back and forth on a regular basis between their home countries and Europe to work in the agriculture, services and construction industries. In the case of Filipino domestic workers, those who were able to acquire a legal status became permanent residents (and citizens) and brought their family members to join them. Their temporary migration thus became permanent migration.

International recruitment practices play a central role in temporary migration in the European-Asian context. Countries previously largely unaffected by migration are drawn into the global labour market. Besides highly-skilled professionals, this also concerns lower-skilled workers and tertiary level students. The mobility of university students between Europe and Asia is currently on the increase – not merely because Asian students are studying in European universities but also because Asian countries, China in particular, are becoming increasingly attractive destinations to European university students.
As a consequence of people’s transnationally mobile lifestyles, wider social patterns are also changing, such as the growing role of transnational familial ties and networks. Family movers form a very heterogeneous group of people whereby the temporariness of residence typically depends on the stay and departure of the spouse and other family members. Family reunification regulations play a vital role in transnational family migration. When family reunification is denied, the situation causes temporary forms of migration and separation from the family.

Lifestyle migration – people seeking a better quality of life abroad in countries with warm climates and cheaper living costs – appears to be another emerging social pattern in the European-Asian context. Although the phenomenon is so far on a relatively small scale as far as numbers are concerned, lifestyle migration has wider social and economic implications and thus concerns tens of thousands of people.

Wider societal impacts are also obvious in humanitarian migration. Numerous refugees and asylum seekers are crossing Asian and European borders (almost exclusively from Asia to the EU) to escape persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaiting decisions on their asylum applications. Humanitarian migration may not be recognised as such or may not be the actual migratory motive; when an application is rejected, the former asylum seeker is from that point onwards a migrant obliged to leave the host county. Return to one’s country of origin may also be voluntary. Migrants may take a personal decision to return, e.g. for family reasons or because of having better economic prospects in the home country. Generally speaking, return migration describes a situation where migrants, after a period abroad, return to their home country either permanently or temporarily. Migratory movements may also take place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit or receiving countries. Despite a lack of adequate statistics, it can be estimated that irregular cross-border mobility of people is on the increase. A growing number of people stay or work abroad without the necessary authorisation or documents required under immigration regulations, or cross an international boundary without a valid passport or other travel documents.

The EURA-NET research
The research was carried out in two phases: desk research and interviews with temporary migrants and policy-makers in Europe and Asia. In the first phase an inventory of the available research, statistics and policy documents, related to temporary migration in general and migration between Europe and Asia in particular, was compiled at national, European, Asian and international levels. Desk research on policies on temporary migration was conducted in the respective case countries. At the EU level, desk research involved the identification, collection and in-depth analysis of relevant policy documents, legislation, case law, academic literature, ‘grey’ literature, and specialised media articles. The investigation also involved the collection, collation and analysis of official statistics on visas, residence permits, and enforcement of immigration legislation across the EU.

Besides uncovering how politics structures transnational movement issues, EURA-NET sought to make the transnational practices and lived experiences of individual temporary migrants visible. Information on the experiences and conceptions of individual migrants was collected via semi-structured interviews. A total of 883 interviews were conducted with highly-skilled professionals, low-skilled workers, university students, lifestyle migrants, family migrants, humanitarian migrants (refugees, asylum seekers), irregular
migrants, returnees and migrants’ family members. The number of respondents in each country was about 80. The interviews were conducted during winter 2014/15 and spring 2015, just before the massive increase in humanitarian migration flows from Western Asia to European countries.

In selecting participants for the interviews, people were considered to be temporary migrants if they had resided in a particular country for more than three months but less than five years, but there were some exceptions depending on people’s intentions and circumstances. The interviewees included men and women, representing diverse national, social, educational and religious backgrounds. Interviewees were gathered using ‘snowball methods’, with the help of social media, migrant organizations and relevant NGOs. The interview questions concerned the respondents’ experiences of transnational migration and political, economic, social and cultural participation.

We moreover investigated how people’s temporary transnational movements, ties and activities are perceived and portrayed by national and local (in some cases also international) institutions and policy-makers, authorities, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders. At the beginning of the project, policy-informing workshops were organised in all participating countries to involve policy-makers, practitioners and NGOs in the project work. In autumn 2015 and spring 2016, a total of 395 policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders were interviewed in eleven countries. The interview questions covered experiences, practices and prospective forecasts of both institutional affiliations and the respondents themselves as regards issues and challenges related to temporary migration. The respondents were sampled with the help of national ministries, NGOs and officials in the respective countries.

At the EU level, a series of semi-structured interviews were undertaken, face-to-face and/or by telephone, with:
- Commission representatives (i.e. DG HOME; DG DEVCO; DG NEAR; DG TRADE; DG EMPL; and the General Secretariat);
- Officials and political advisers at the Secretariat of the European Parliament (i.e. LIBE; AFET);
- EEAS officials and seconded national experts;
- Attachés working at the EU delegations;
- Officials working at the Secretariat of the Council of the European Union;
- Representatives of international organizations (i.e. IOM; UNHCR; ILO; ICMPD);
- Diplomatic officers of third countries (i.e. China and India delegations to the EU)

The interviews were conducted to complement publicly available information, to test and validate research findings obtained through desk research and the statistical analysis, and to critically develop a legal and policy assessment. The data gathered by desk research and by interviews with individual migrants and policy-makers were analysed (by means of cross-tabulation) to assess the transformative characteristics and development impact of temporary migration. The focus was on the nexus between different forms of temporary migration, political, economic and social transformation processes, and potential outcomes for development. In these analyses we addressed the drivers of and/or the obstacles to temporary migration, and the transformation and development outcomes they engender. In order to answer the research questions, we (1) mapped the current characteristics of temporary transnational migration between Europe and Asia, (2) analysed the interrelations between temporary migration, processes of transformation and development in sending, transit and receiving countries, and (3) identified the most
important implications of these results for policies at the local, national, European and international levels. Public and closed-door events including two policy meetings, one final conference, and a practical workshop for the exchange of knowledge were organised to disseminate research findings and to maximise the scientific and policy impact of the project through the direct involvement of academics, policy-makers, practitioners and representatives of civil society.

Project Results:
Temporalities in transnational migration

Temporary migration is understood and practised differently across regions and countries. The EURA-NET research on the EU, international and Asian standards of ‘temporary migration’ and the national reports show that there is a general lack of consensus on what constitutes temporary migration and who qualifies as a temporary migrant. The concepts and target groups employed are typically dependent on national specificities regarding historical, political, economic and societal backgrounds as well as on different national interests in terms of priorities and the formulation of migration policies.

Although there are no shared definitions in European or international standards, some (equally artificial) features exist which may provide indications related to some time-bound conceptions of migration. The EU legal framework on migration uses the period between three months and five years in what could be designated as ‘temporary’ (for up to three months third country nationals holding a Schengen visa may travel freely within the Schengen area), and after five years corresponding to permanent residence as outlined in Directive 2003/109. The UN also operates with specific categories referring to temporariness; short-term migration (between three months and one year) and long-term migration (longer than a year), yet both of these may in practice be ‘temporary’ in nature and subject to similar methodological limitations.

The EURA-NET research revealed that ‘time’ is not the only component which matters: there are a number of characteristic variables which play a role in framing a phenomenon as ‘temporary migration’. In addition to time, changing intentions/expectations of the individual, migrants’ qualifications and legal status, rights/benefits, and the security of the state need to be taken into account.

The research revealed that there is a lack of statistical data and literature on the temporary characteristics of transnational migration flows. In many cases no statistical data was available. When there was, the categories of existing statistics did not match the temporary forms of migration. Obtaining statistical data which are comparable between nation-states proved particularly difficult as the definitions and registration procedures for (temporary) migrants differ across countries.

The lack of knowledge about the quality and extent of temporary transnational migration and its relation to time-bound policies constitutes a serious hindrance to policy-making. It is difficult to distinguish between permanent and temporary migration and statistical data on the related phenomena tell a very partial truth. The statistics are compiled differently in different countries, and even within one country the statistical data on a particular phenomenon do not necessarily cover longer time periods, and different authorities may compile statistics on the same phenomenon in different ways.
In the European context, the period for which a residence permit is valid is often used as an indicator of the permanent or temporary nature of the holder’s migration. This is, however, somewhat misleading. The statistics usually refer to first residence permits, but these are granted for different durations, depending on the specificities of the legal framework of the issuing Member State. Furthermore, we cannot know whether these permits are later renewed and if so, for how long. People’s reasons for their stay may also change over years or the officially stated reasons do not tell the whole truth about their intentions. There are also several phenomena related to temporary migration where a significant number of individuals do not register with the appropriate authorities, as a consequence of which their migrations do not show up in statistics. Due to a lack of official disaggregated data, it is likewise impossible to distinguish the specific purpose (e.g. tourism, business, etc.) for which Schengen visas are requested by, and issued to, third country nationals travelling to Europe.

Categorisation of countries

One of the questions we were interested in was how temporary migration manifests in sending countries, transition countries and receiving countries. As we looked into the realities of migration in the participating countries, it became clear that these categories did not necessarily represent the characteristics of migration situation in the respective countries. All eleven countries proved to have various types of migrants with different levels of mobility. For instance, the Asian countries we looked at may be considered a sending country region in relation to Europe, but they are also receiving countries for European migrants and indeed for many other migrants from neighbouring countries. The Asian countries also differed in many respects including their economic situation, migration policies, the level and volume of migratory mobility of people, and the overall impact of migration. Similarly, transition countries and receiving countries also had significant levels of immigration and emigration. This indicates that, while the categories may be useful in some way, their application in policy-making as well as in research requires great care to avoid misconceptions.

Migrants’ experiences

The research revealed that migrants’ experiences of temporary migration vary and are affected by various factors; there is no single model to describe them fully. Temporariness is viewed either positively or negatively, depending on the migrants’ job situations, life circumstances, family responsibilities and numerous other factors. While lifestyle migrants celebrate temporary migration as long as their resources last and make all they can out of it, humanitarian migrants are concerned with their transnational mobility and are in search of a place to settle down as soon as possible. Migrants’ socio-economic and professional status also affect their migration experiences: university students, highly-skilled migrants and ‘lifestyle seekers’ may perceive temporariness as an opportunity, while low-skilled migrants may perceive it as a necessity and prefer a permanent stay (seasonal workers are an exception in this respect).

The findings of EURA-NET indicate that there is a trend among the young and well-educated to become temporary transnational migrants. As travelling has become easier and more accessible, a growing number of relatively well-off young people in both Europe and Asia seek new experiences and opportunities across state borders, often without any intention of staying permanently in one country. Typical examples of such cases are international university students. The research illustrated how
students in their early twenties travel actively within Europe, Asia and beyond. This concerns European and Asian students alike.

Differences in the motivations to emigrate are discernible among European and Asian migrants. This seems to concern greater differences among Asian migrants than among European migrants regarding their demands, backgrounds and resources. Economic and professional factors were highlighted by most Asian respondents: the lower-skilled migrants, especially seasonal workers, had moved to Europe first and foremost to earn money and send remittances home, while university students and highly-skilled professionals claimed that their decisions were mostly influenced by educational and professional advancement. Among Europeans, the motivations to migrate varied from professional, economic and family reasons to personal aspirations, such as the quest for new experiences. Elderly Europeans, in particular pensioners, were motivated by cheap living costs and warm climate, while the younger Europeans were usually motivated to explore new lifestyles and pursue their interest in Asian cultures. All these findings demonstrate that temporary migrants' motivations with respect to their choice of destination, as well as transnational ties that transcend national borders and social practices, may be carried out distinctly and cross-border commitments may have different outcomes than in the much studied cases of permanent South-North migration.

It became evident that people's motives for temporary mobility are manifold and may change during the migration trajectories. Those who move primarily for educational reasons may also escape social constraints or flee political oppression, and may become labour or lifestyle migrants. It was also noted that temporariness was not always based on a person's own choice or decision: legal and policy frameworks in the recipient countries made it difficult for many migrants to sojourn permanently. Particularly in the cases of Asian lower-skilled migrants and humanitarian migrants, temporariness was a matter of necessity.

Generally speaking, it can be claimed that university students, highly-skilled migrants and lifestyle migrants aspire to be transnationally mobile and often reside abroad on a temporary basis, whereas numerous low-skilled migrants had moved abroad intending to remain there permanently but, due to the laws and regulations in the receiving societies, their residence ended up being temporary. Consequently, temporariness was experienced very differently: while most of the highly-skilled were satisfied with their temporary stays, low-skilled migrants were forced into temporariness even when they wished for a more permanent stay.

Migrants in both Asia and Europe found the bureaucracy of immigration systems unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming. Given that temporary migrants often need to renew their permits after relatively short periods of time, this caused a number of difficulties. It was particularly inconvenient when the rules and regulations migrants were expected to follow were not meaningful and when the permits they were granted did not satisfy their needs or demands. There was a general lack of guidance regarding the immigration system, responsibilities and basic rights during their stay in a destination country. The way immigration rules are organised rarely caters for migrants' personal needs, such as family reunification and the spouse's right to work, and this results in additional hardships for the migrants.

In addition to general inequalities between highly-skilled and lower-skilled migrants, lower-skilled workers are also more susceptible to human trafficking and labour rights abuse. However, the research revealed
that despite their precarious positions, temporary migrants are typically not politically active, and are sometimes not even aware of their rights and entitlements. Both Asian and European interviewees reported only very little political engagement either in their host country or in the country of origin. Being temporary residents seems to make people less interested in participating in the activities of political parties or trade unions. Lack of interest in politics may also be related to the migrants’ previous experiences. In some countries being politically active in public or at the work-place may have negative connotations or may even be considered a dangerous activity.

Refugees and asylum seekers claimed that the long waiting time for decisions on their applications for asylum was a serious obstacle. In Turkey, interviewees who were seeking political asylum and expecting to be resettled in a third country repeatedly reported feeling that they were in limbo because of the slowness of the application system. Syrian refugees in Turkey are subjected to a temporary protection regime that places their legal status outside of the Geneva Convention (1951). According to the Geneva Convention’s geographical limitation, only Europeans can apply for asylum in Turkey, and Syrians have thus been received as ‘temporary guests’. Due to the official understanding of Syrian refugees as ‘guests’ they can easily fall into the trap of irregularity. Consequently, the number of irregular migrants in Turkey has increased rapidly and is generating a humanitarian crisis. As the Turkish government has reached its capacity to manage the crisis, many Syrian respondents stated that they wished to leave Turkey and cross into Europe – which was not easy to realise in practice.

The legal situation of humanitarian migrants is also difficult in Greece. The refugees often enter Greece with the help of irregular actors profiting from human smuggling, and stay in the country longer than planned, if eligible for relocation and family reunification. If they are not eligible, their only legal option is to apply for asylum in Greece. Given that Greece is rarely chosen as destination country, many fall prey to human smuggling networks. Consequently, the number of former asylum seekers whose applications were rejected increased very rapidly. Many of them remain totally marginalised and face serious social uncertainty.

Hungary, as a Schengen country, has also gained growing importance as a transit region for regular and irregular migrants from Asia to Europe, typically through Turkey or the West Balkans. The Hungarian policies on migration and asylum are very restrictive, and the policy orientation is based on the notion that immigration as a rule is dangerous and threatening. This state of affairs was apparent in the interviews conducted in Hungary. Experiences of unwelcoming attitudes were common among both regular and irregular migrants, causing many of them to decide to give up and leave the country. Similarly, Ukraine is a part of the Eurasian corridor for regular and irregular migration from Asia to Europe. A number of low-skilled workers, humanitarian movers and irregular migrants from different regions of Asia enter Ukraine via Russia intending to continue to the EU countries. They often consider Ukraine as only a temporary stop on their move to the West, or as a place where they could save enough money to move forward.

National policies on temporary migration
The research findings show that the way temporary migration is managed on a national level reflects each country’s assessment of its labour market needs, the demographic projection and security concerns. A primary question concerns the migrants’ rights and conditions for entry and sojourn in the country of destination. The findings also indicate that the national policies on temporary migration involve multiple
governmental departments and institutions of often opposing interests and different capacities, and this exacerbates the complexity of the policies. In some cases, this could result in inefficiency in policy implementation, and tensions between the institutions concerned.

The policies on temporary forms of migration appeared to be partly different in the European and Asian contexts. Asian governments and policy-makers generally perceive European migrants as economically and politically less risky, and allow them to enter easily but not necessarily to live, work and settle permanently. For instance, Thailand attracts European tourists but allows a long-term residence and work permit to only a limited number of Europeans.

In Europe, growing anti-immigration sentiment and security concerns are reflected in the increasingly restrictive and selective immigration rules. These national policies are not always in consonant with the labour needs caused by an ageing society and the prevailing skills shortage. There are also other unfavourable consequences, such as various types of irregular ‘migration industry’ and growing irregular migration. The slow response of European states to the sudden increase in refugees and asylum seekers has created and continues to create unprecedented numbers of undocumented migrants in Europe. While the sense of ‘crisis’ is shared among European countries, there is little consensus on finding a common solution. The national policies are increasingly inward looking and little effort is invested in seeking the situation as a common issue. Consequently a few countries are left with an overwhelmingly large share of responsibility for the on-going crisis.

All participating European and Asian countries have a preference for highly-skilled and well-qualified migrants over lower-skilled migrants, but the way this is realised varies from country to country. Skilled migrants have more economic value and are seen by policy-makers as a low risk group compared to the lower-skilled migrants. The latter are considered to be potentially a greater burden on public services and a threat to the native population, especially to those local low-skilled workers already concerned about their wages and job security. These perceptions create a situation where highly-skilled migrants find it easier to obtain residence and work permits, bring their family members with them, and feel welcomed in the destination country than do lower-skilled workers.

Lower-skilled migrants tend to suffer from exploitation and abuse at work. Due to their responsibility for remittances and debts incurred prior to migration, Asian low-skilled migrants may fear losing their job and are thus not politically active in the host country. Such migrants consequently continue to endure discrimination. NGOs offer support to these migrants but, in the European destination countries, there is a need for better regulation and protection of foreign workers. The research revealed that even being highly-skilled does not necessarily guarantee job security, especially for those migrants requiring a guarantor in order to obtain a work permit. In some cases, skilled migrants also have a tendency to be more submissive at work and not participate in labour unions.

Policy-makers generally recognise the value of returnee migrants for international business collaboration and future development, but in Europe the policies promoting the reintegration of European returnees have not been successful. By contrast, China has a high level of return migration of students and highly-skilled professionals which is seen to have a positive effect on these countries’ economic development processes. This is encouraged by job markets that welcome returnees from abroad. The development
prospects in origin countries are also likely to attract return migrants, especially the highly-skilled, as is the case in China, and India to some extent.

EU policies on temporary migration

The research involved an inventory of existing EU legal/policy instruments, institutional actors and strategic priorities that frame and give shape to temporary migration. This inventory shows that, while the element of temporariness is well incorporated in both the internal and external dimension of EU migration law and policies, no commonly agreed conceptual, legal and policy frameworks exist as regards the featuring components and substantive characteristics of temporary migration.

Internally, the EU has adopted different pieces of legislation (Directives) that qualify students, au pairs, seasonal workers, service providers and intra-corporate transferees as ‘temporary migrants’. At the same time, the various Directives set out specific rules of entry and residence for reasons related to the employment, self-employment and education/research of third country nationals. This has led to the development of a sectoral (worker-by-worker) legal framework. In substance, each of the Directives provides for a specific and selective labour immigration scheme and status in the EU, with a correspondingly prescribed degree of access to social benefits, sets of rights, and access to income thresholds. A third-country national qualifies as a ‘permanent resident’ after five years of legal and continuous residence in the EU (Long-Term Residence Directive). However, when it comes to regulations and conditions for stays for employment-related purposes, a decidedly diversified picture emerges in each EU Member State. This fragmented normative landscape produces a high level of obscurity and lack of transparency, and renders access to information difficult for individuals.

What becomes clear is that the EU’s labour migration policy follows a utilitarian and economic rationale. Preference is given to highly-skilled workers, or those expected to fill labour market gaps. A case in point is the EU Directive 2009/50 (the EU Blue Card Directive), which offers a common fast-track procedure, but only for the admission of well-paid third-country workers qualified as ‘highly qualified employees’ and their family members. The same selective approach is also reflected in the way in which EU visa policy is designed and implemented in practice. The examination of the rules and procedures applying to third country nationals wishing to obtain a Schengen visa in Asian countries including China, India, the Philippines and Thailand, revealed that entry into the EU is facilitated only for highly specific categories of individuals. In particular, direct or indirect visa facilitations mainly target those considered ‘economically advantageous’ for the EU, namely: business people, intra-corporate transferees, and tourists with ‘high purchasing power’.

Under the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, and in a post-Lisbon Treaty framework, the development of the external dimension of the EU policies on temporary migration depends on a highly fragmented and heterogeneous set of tools and institutional actors. Legally binding instruments (i.e. international agreements) are often used in parallel or replaced with non-legally binding policy tools (e.g. Mobility Partnerships), but so are political dialogues conducted at both multilateral and bilateral levels (e.g. EU-ACP Migration Dialogue; EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility), in policy processes (e.g. the Prague and Budapest Processes), as well as in accompanying policy tools, projects and programmes (including various EU funding schemes). Not only is the distinction between legally binding and non-legally
binding tools no longer clear-cut, but an increasing number of informal instruments is used for the
development of external cooperation on irregular migration issues. An obvious example in this respect is
that provided by the adoption of the so-called ‘Joint Way Forward’ with Afghanistan. Furthermore, the in-
depth analysis conducted on some of the instruments that currently foster EU priorities in the field of
migration, namely the Mobility Partnership and the EU Readmission Agreements, showed how the
dynamics of formal and informal EU external cooperation are currently converging towards a Eurocentric,
border control-based and security-oriented approach. As a consequence, the rights of individuals are too
often relegated or subsumed into inter-state or inter-actor interests and priorities.

A series of critical challenges has also been identified in relation to the substantive features of the EU
framework for cooperation with China, India, the Philippines and Thailand. Although none of these Asian
partners constitutes a significant source of irregular migration to the Europe, their inclusion on the so-
called Schengen black visa list reflects the persistence of the EU’s irregular migration concerns. The
development of cooperation on irregular migration issues emerges as the main objective pursued by the
EU in the framework of the Dialogues on Migration and Mobility established respectively with China and
India. These security considerations risk jeopardizing the EU goal of maximizing the positive impact of
economic migration originating from densely populated and rapidly industrializing strategic partners such
as China and India, as well as from developing Asian countries such as the Philippines and Thailand.
Fostering human mobility, including temporary migration, is clearly not among the priorities of the bilateral
cooperation agreements regulating the EU’s relations with these countries. Existing legal migration
channels tend to favour short-term mobility trajectories over longer-term migratory schemes. This confirms
how normative temporariness remains a distinctive feature of the framing of cross-border mobility between
Asia and Europe. At the same time, very little consideration is given to EU citizens’ mobility toward Asia.

Developmental impact of temporary migration: Challenges and opportunities

Transnational mobility of people could potentially yield benefits for both sending and receiving societies, as
well as for migrants themselves. These benefits are most obvious in labour migration. Migrants can fill
critical labour needs in the economies of receiving countries and enhance economic and social
development in origin countries. This scenario assumes that individual migrants improve their skills and
earnings during their migration, regularly send money home, and eventually return to their home countries.
The study illustrated that the reality is much more complex.

Many highly-skilled migrants and students consider their migration experience to be a stepping stone to a
better job in the future, but the findings suggest that temporary migration does not necessarily guarantee
career advancement. Temporary migrants, low- and highly-skilled alike, often experience
underemployment or unemployment in the recipient countries. This may be caused by restrictive visa
conditions (e.g. student migrants, asylum seekers, family reunification applicants), lack of recognition of
their overseas qualifications, or migrants’ lack of language skills. Particularly for the spouses of highly-
skilled migrants, moving abroad tends to result in a clear downward trend in their careers.

Sending remittances home is conventionally seen as an integral part of Asian migration. India, China and
the Philippines continue to be the top remittance recipient countries in the world, and sending remittances
continues to be an important obligation for Thai migrants in Europe. In addition to meeting the economic
needs of their families, it appears that sending remittances among Asian migrants also reflects a highly cultural practice and an expression of love and care for family members. Such an analogy was used to illustrate one of the differences between Asia and Europe. However, the findings of EURA-NET may suggest that this pattern may be in a state of change. With sustained economic growth and more people with higher education, the number of highly-skilled migrants from financially stable families may increase; such migrants may not necessarily send remittances to their families in their home countries. In some cases, Asian temporary migrants living in Europe did not remit because they did not earn enough money to do so.

Nevertheless, remittances continue to play an important role in many Asian countries. Most of the remittances are spent on migrants’ families’ welfare: education, health, housing and daily living expenses. There are commercial services available to migrants, especially those from countries with large emigrant populations that help them to transfer remittances across national borders. Family obligation is one of the most significant motivations for migration. However, such responsibility can be a factor that inclines migrants to stay in abusive and exploitative jobs and to endure de-skilling and underemployment, which negatively affects their career advancement and personal development.

Seasonal work is a type of temporary migration where the positive economic impacts on the source and destination regions are most apparent. For instance, in Finland, Thai and Ukrainian seasonal workers in the wild berry and gardening industries are a significant asset. In their countries of origin seasonal workers spend their earnings on housing and daily expenses, or for paying off their debts. Thai berry-pickers usually travel to Finland on Schengen visas that are valid for up to three months, allowing them to work in berry picking with limited rights. Ukrainians working on Finnish farms during the harvest season typically receive a monthly salary but the position of Thai wild-berry pickers, who are on piecework, is more precarious. Thus, the positive impact for individual seasonal migrants themselves is uncertain.

The development impacts of temporary migration are in general rather doubtful. This is mainly due to the limited employment opportunities and restrictive immigration policies in the destination countries. Problems also arise when a country faces instability and political unrest. Development in such situations is much harder to achieve. Even when there is stability in a country, development requires a foundation to realise the potentials. Moreover, without a reasonable level of development (e.g. education, institutional structure, organisational capabilities), infrastructure and the support of the central decision-making bodies and governments, it is not feasible to take a significant step at the local level and make the best use of migrants’ remittances or returnees’ knowledge and resources.

Another challenge for a temporary migrant is to adapt to the host society. The EURA-NET study revealed that the very idea of temporariness negates the need for integration in the minds not only of policy-makers but also of migrants. In practice, Asian and European countries face serious challenges in their integration incentives, and both Asian and European migrants face a common obstacle in their adaptation process, namely the language barrier. The temporary migrants interviewed had many reasons for not making enough effort to learn the local language, such as anticipated short stay in the host country, lack of time, lack of motivation to learn a little spoken language, the good level of English spoken in their living/working environment, the difficulty of learning the local language, and the cost of language courses.
Not knowing the local language can affect both migrants and the host country. It can prevent migrants from accessing relevant information on their rights and obligations in the host country, and also from communicating with colleagues and the local population. With English being the lingua franca of international business, non-English speaking countries are at a disadvantage in recruiting skilled migrant workers. Some of these countries, such as Finland, Germany and the Netherlands, have recently become active in attracting more skilled and talented individuals from the international market, but they must struggle to compete with the English-speaking countries.

The research identified cases of unwelcoming attitudes towards foreigners in both Europe and Asia. Low-skilled migrants in particular suffer from isolation, exclusion and discrimination as they have fewer resources to help themselves and are more likely to be targeted by anti-immigration sentiment.

Social exclusion and isolation have adverse consequences not only for temporary migrants but also for local communities. This was stated by many of the policy-makers interviewed, yet little was done in the destination countries to promote the socio-economic and socio-cultural integration of temporary migrants. The more isolated migrants are, the less communication and understanding exists between them and the local population. This would exacerbate existing anti-immigration sentiment. Given that temporary migration often becomes long-term and permanent migration, integration programmes should to be better implemented to prevent isolation.

The current ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe affects transit and destination countries to varying degrees. The number of irregular migrants has increased in Turkey and Greece so rapidly that the situation has developed into a humanitarian crisis. Without sufficient infrastructure, resources and international collaboration, there is little chance of improvement. Refugees often enter the countries with the help of irregular agents profiting from smuggling and human trafficking. In many cases, the migrants stay in a country longer than planned as they cannot go further into the EU. In the recipient European countries, the integration of asylum seekers and refugees is argued to be important but this idea is not well implemented. This is largely due to factors such as assumed temporariness of their stay and lack of long-term vision and infrastructure to implement the idea.

KEY FINDINGS IN SUMMARY

- Both European and Asian countries try to offer more incentives to attract investors and highly-skilled workers from abroad by offering them privileged entry and residence arrangements, and rights to family reunification and permanent stay.
- In Europe, growing concerns about security issues greatly influence policies on temporary migration.
- National policies on temporary migration tend to neglect the longer-term needs of the labour market, employers, migrants and local communities which may affect development potentials at multiple levels.
- The selective and restrictive policy frameworks and bureaucratic procedures exacerbate the de-skilling and underemployment of temporary migrants, increase migrants’ vulnerability, and may lead to increases in irregular migration.
- Higher earnings are not the sole incentive for temporary migration. Other factors such as career development and quality of life are equally important. In practice, however, career development not always happens.
Language barriers and coercive integration policies are key factors for exclusion and isolation among temporary migrants.

Policy implications

Most of the policy-makers interviewed acknowledged the potentially positive impact of temporary and return migration on national development. However, such potentials can be only pursued with well-planned management of migration policies and integration of temporary migrants and returnees into the society they live in. The implications of the research for better management of temporary forms of migration are the following:

A shortsighted policy on temporary migration is not necessarily the best way to pursue development.

The involvement of multiple agencies and departments with disparate interests in policy-making results in inconsistency and unnecessary bureaucracy in migration-governance. There needs to be a more organised, coordinated and coherent system that provides accurate information accessible to all interest groups. Particularly in the European countries, the policies on temporary migration are increasingly restrictive as a consequence of these countries’ immediate security concerns. The stricter, more formal and selective policies do not necessarily guarantee better managed migration but may cause an increase in irregular migration and a growth of informal markets. Similarly, not allowing migrants to extend or convert their visas may cause a short-term supply of labour and loss of better integrated workers.

Policies need to be adjusted to create a fairer system for both highly-skilled and low-skilled migrants.

In European countries population ageing is a cause of concern. The EURA-NET study revealed a mismatch between long-term labour market needs and the ways in which the European states frame temporary migration. While both highly-skilled and low-skilled migrants are in demand, there is a considerable inequality between the two in the way they are treated. This includes entry requirements, entitlements, family reunification and integration. The restrictive and complex policies and application procedures do not serve the needs of the European labour market in the long term.

Integration should be an integral part of temporary migration policy.

The lack of integration measures may result in the isolation and exclusion of temporary migrants. The findings suggest that temporary migration may result in a much longer stay in a host country than initially anticipated. This implies a need for targeted integration measures for temporary migrants and their family members. Family reunification migrants and spouses should be considered for work permits and allowed to use their skills in the destination country. Additional support measures should be developed to facilitate the employment and retention of international students in the host country after graduation. However, concerns about brain drain in the countries of origin countries should also be considered. Services in English and other languages should be encouraged, and language courses should be accessible to all migrants. Similarly, access to social services and support programmes should be included in integration measures.

Targeted integration policies for asylum seekers and refugees should be developed and implemented in
cooperation with local, national and European stakeholders.

Concerning the recent humanitarian migratory movements to Europe, targeted integration programmes should be developed and carried out in cooperation with local, national and European policy-makers and civil society actors. Access to health and education services should be ensured for asylum seekers. The EU can do more to compel Member States to comply with the current EU asylum and human rights legal standards. Socio-cultural as well as economic integration should be considered with utmost urgency. This includes the right to work for all asylum seekers and refugees.

There is a need to improve return migration policies and develop better reintegration schemes for returnees.

EU Member States need to acknowledge that Europe is not just a destination but also a source region of migrants, and properly facilitate return migration. This entails improving policies on return migration and data systems to actually know how much emigration/return migration there is, developing better reintegration schemes for returnees, and recognizing and utilizing the skills, qualifications, and work experiences acquired abroad.

There is a need to create new channels for regular migration.

Security concerns are still central in the design and implementation of the EU migration and mobility policies. Both the GAMM and the EU Agenda on Migration EU contribute to the development of the so-called ‘home affairs diplomacy’ which is primarily driven by migration control priorities. On the other hand, the EU does not appear to make full use of its external potential to promote cross-border mobility. Under the current normative and policy framework, national immigration laws and policies remain the main (yet rather limited) channel for regular entry and residence in the EU. Instead, very little consideration is given by the EU to compliance with labour standards and avoiding exploitation of migrant workers. The EU should envisage the development of more meaningful and comprehensive people-to-people contacts, and the creation of new channels for regular migration. This would be consonant with the United Nations Declaration on Refugees and Migrants of September 2016, which highlighted the need to develop regular and fair channels (legal pathways) for access to international protection and labour migration at all levels.

Potential Impact:
While major attention has been paid by researchers to the characteristics and impact of permanent patterns of migration, the transformative characteristics of temporary transnational migration have been analysed to a lesser extent. This research gap is of special relevance, because transnational mobility affects not only those who move but also those who do not move. By shedding light on the practices and experiences of temporary migrants and their family members, EURA-NET provides information about why people migrate on a temporary basis and not permanently, how their migration trajectories are shaped, and what the implications of temporary moves are for migrants and non-migrants. The case studies conducted in five Asian countries (China, India, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey) and five European countries (Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands and Ukraine) illustrated the diverse nature of recent forms of temporary migration and the interrelated changes in emigration, immigration and
integration policies.

The empirically-based information on people’s experiences of temporary movements between Asia and Europe will help policy-makers and other stakeholders to better understand the challenges arising in today’s increasingly interconnected and mobile world. The findings indicate that temporary migratory movements have become the lifestyle of the day, and carry multiple political, legal, economic, social and cultural implications. Among these implications there is the emergence of novel irregular activities and transnational networks which need to be taken into account in national and European policymaking.

The findings imply that temporary migration is a dynamic, complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. The research revealed that transnationally mobile people are active agents of transformations on local, national and transnational scales and that temporary migration entails transformative characteristics which manifest in political, legal, economic, social and cultural aspects. Other agents engaged in contemporary transformation processes include multiple local, national and transnational actors and stakeholders.

In order to attain a better understanding of the role temporary migration plays in the European-Asian context, EURA-NET addressed the characteristics of different forms of temporary migration and their potential for transformation and development outcomes. The development impacts were investigated both from the perspectives of developing countries, transformation countries (emerging economies, transition countries) and highly industrialised societies, from the point of view of destination, origin and transit countries, as well as from the perspectives of local communities and individual migrants.

To sum up, the potential impact of the EURA-NET project includes increasing the understanding of the current characteristics of temporary transnational migration, especially between Europe and Asia. The project findings will help to understand how temporary migration is experienced by individual migrants and interrelated with processes of transformation and development in sending, transit and receiving regions.

Dissemination and exploitation of project results
To strengthen the dissemination of the research outcomes to the widest possible audience the EURA-NET project has made use of the world-wide networks of contacts that the members of the consortium have established in the course of their research and societal activities. These include policy-makers, academics, practitioners and NGO representatives in all regions of the world. There were three main target groups for the dissemination of the project outcomes: European, Asian, national and local policy-makers and other stakeholders; the scientific community; and the general public.
Throughout the project, the project staff developed engagement with a relevant policy audience. In order to address national and local politicians, authorities, NGOs and other local actors (e.g. migrants and diasporic groups), policy informing workshops were organised in eleven participating countries at the beginning of the project. These workshops were topical for delivering information of the study and planning future collaboration with relevant stakeholders. In each participating country, a national advisory board was established (including policy-makers, authorities and representatives of relevant NGOs). Throughout the project, the research work was conducted in close collaboration with theses national advisory boards. Further, three policy meetings were organised at the EU level. The first meeting took place in Geneva, and was designed as a side-event during the Human Rights Council meeting of 13 June 2016. It was jointly organised by the CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies), University of Tampere, the Faculty of Law of Maastricht University (The Netherlands), PICUM, and the Migrant Forum in Asia, and included the
participation of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Prof. François Crépeau. This policy meeting focused on examining the challenges of new modalities of temporary labour migration to workers’ rights and international labour standards. It aimed at comparing and exchanging experiences and public policy perspectives between Asian countries and the European Union. It facilitated an enhanced dialogue and mutual understanding on the dilemmas of temporary mobility to the inclusion, rights and protection of temporary migrant workers and their families. Mr. William Gois (Migrant Forum in Asia) chaired the meeting, the speakers were EURA-NET project researchers and the discussants were from the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, ILO and UNHCR. The issues discussed in the meeting covered questions like: What do new modalities and regulations on temporary migration mean for international human rights instruments and standards covering workers’ rights and standards? What are the challenges to the notion of ‘progressive adherence’ to the realisation of workers’ rights in the current context of mass movements of migrants and refugees? How can all workers – including migrant workers, and especially those with irregular status - be included without losing what has been established in human rights instruments on labour?

The second policy meeting took place on Oct 17th 2016, on the premises of the European Parliament, in Brussels. In the first place, the meeting served as an occasion to disseminate key legal and policy research findings related to the instruments, actors and priorities currently governing the external dimension of the EU migration policies. Secondly, it involved the presentation of the empirical and statistical analyses conducted by the EURANET researchers on contemporary trends and patterns in human mobility and migratory flows between Europe and Asia. Thus, the event gave relevant stakeholders the occasion to specifically reflect on the challenges and opportunities currently underlying EU-Asia cooperation on migration-related matters. EU policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, and civil society representatives were invited to actively engage in an evidence-based discussion on the role played by human mobility and migration policies in the development of the EU-Asian transnational socio-economic space, and brought their own contribution to a topic which is often overlooked in the current EU public debate. Participants at the event included: DG DEVCO, DG Research and Innovation and DG HOME officials; several members and political advisers working on the European Parliament’s LIBE and AFET Committees; an IOM regional policy and programme analyst; a diplomatic representative from India to the EU; MEP assistants; scholars from the EURANET Project. The main questions under discussion were: How is the objective to tackle the so-called ‘migration and refugee crisis’ shaping external cooperation with Asian countries of origin and transit? What are the consequences for the fundamental rights of people on the move? Ms. Elly Schlein (MEP) was the keynote speaker and the discussants were from the European Commission, DG Home, Directorate A, PICUM and from the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe.

The third policy event took place at the CEPS on the 27th of January 2017, and was organised in collaboration with DG HOME Legal Migration Unit. It took the form of an interactive closed-door meeting which involved policy-makers from the Commission (DG HOME, DG TRADE, DG Research), the European Parliament, the EEAS, the European Research Council Executive Agency, and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as researchers and academics from ten European Universities and three prominent migration think tanks (CEPS, MPI, MPC). Participants engaged in different round table discussions focusing upon three interrelated challenges: (1) EU Legal Migration Package: Taking Stock and Main Challenges; (2) Migration and Cooperation with Third Countries; (3) Migration and Trade; and (4) Assessing the Role of Social Sciences Research in EU Migration Policy. The round-table discussion aimed at identifying challenges, inconsistencies, and gaps in the standing EU internal and
external policies and legislation in the areas of legal and economic immigration, including temporary migration and integration policies. The event was an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge between scholars, experts and EU officials – who provided inputs which could contribute to the assessment of the existing EU legal migration acquis. The inputs will feed into the Evaluation and 'Fitness Check' (FC) that the Commission launched in the field of legal and labour migration.

Beside the policy seminar a web-based discussion via the project website gathered a broader audience of researcher, policy-makers and other stakeholders. Four (4) policy briefs were produced during the project. The policy briefs were published on the project website and delivered to wider policy audiences in all EURA-NET countries and at the EU level. The project’s Final Conference in Brussels jointly organised by the CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies), the University of Tampere, the Faculty of Law of Maastricht University (the Netherlands) focused on the policy impact of temporary transnational migration and mobility. The conference gathered around 40 participants.

The research results have also been delivered for the use of academics and other professionals. The project researchers have presented their findings at national and international conferences and workshops and by including the main findings in journal articles. In addition to that, all consortium members have been encouraged to publish articles after the project using high-quality and high-visibility national and international journals. Four Scientific Compilations have been prepared collaborative within the project staff: Transnational Migration in Transition: A State of the Art Report on Temporary Migration (published on the project website); Characteristics of Temporary Migration (published on the project website); Characteristics of Temporary Migration in European-Asian Transnational Social Space (Springer; accepted); and Temporary Migration, Transformation and Development: evidence from Europe and Asia (Routledge; submitted).

Finally, several articles have been published in the popular press, and the project researchers have presented the project work and main findings on TV, radio, and using other channels available to a wider audience.

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Related documents

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