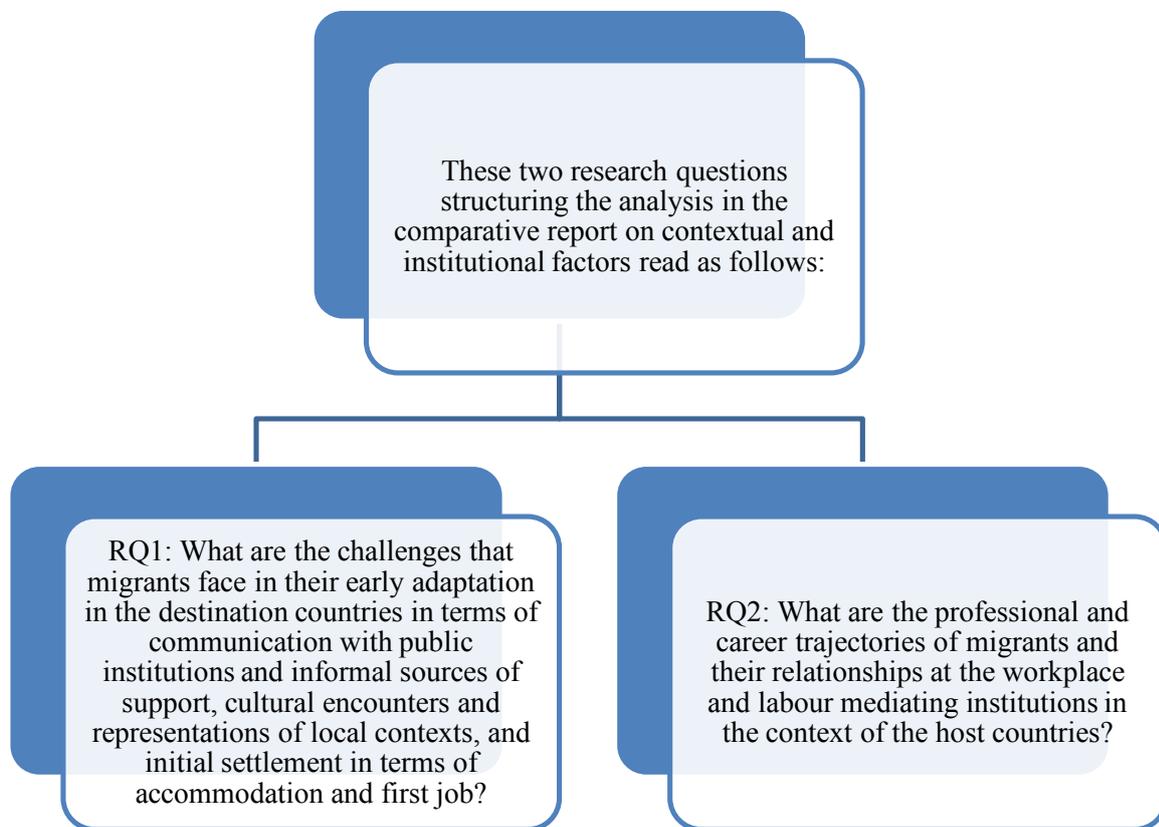


The roles of contextual and institutional factors of migration

Siyka Kovacheva, Ionela Sufaru & Octav Marcovici

INTRODUCTION

This briefing presents the main findings through four (4) research questions (RQ) of the comparative analysis of the contextual and institutional factors of migration as revealed by the qualitative interviews with migrants conducted within the framework of WP4 ‘The lived experiences of migration’ of the Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration and Markets (GEMM) Project. This briefing deals with the challenges that migrants face in their early adaptation in the destination countries (RQ1) and the professional and career trajectories of migrants (RQ2).



FINDINGS

RQ1: In general, migrants, regardless of their qualifications, tend to rely much more on non-state or informal sources of support upon arrival in the destination countries than on official institutional assistance.

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Public agencies created by the host countries are more often seen as posing barriers to early adaptation rather than offering support.



The Embassies and Cultural Centres from the countries of departure are more often perceived as neutral and disinterested to ease the process of settlement, in the evaluation of migrants, rather than offering information and help.



The sources of support that migrants make use of most often are, on the one hand, family, friends and former colleagues; on the other hand, social media and professional networks.



Last but not least, non-governmental actors such as charity, religious, welfare organizations or mutual help associations, usually working with people with the same national/regional origin or native language also serve as sources of support for migrants.

“In the three years that I’ve been living here, I’ve accumulated more file-folders packed with administrative papers than I accumulated over the thirty years I was living in Galicia!”
(SP.DE.AC.21.M.36)

The day I arrived here, the agency called me and told me what I had to do [...] (with respect to) open a bank account, that I should find a general physician, [...] to contact what we call council tax, so I had to sign up to the council tax register [...] all the bureaucratic procedures were actually handled by them who gave me directions. (IT.UK.AC.11.F.28)



Finding accommodation poses a significant challenge and migrants have to develop concerted strategies in this regard. Initially, migrants are looking for any kind of housing (often shared with co-nationals) leaving aside any considerations of comfort before gradually orienting themselves to more appropriate places paying attention to the specificity of the neighbourhood. Examples of employers providing or assisting with housing (mostly in the health sector) are infrequent but seem to greatly encourage the first steps of adaptation.

At that moment I had a brother who lived here and was my point of support; it’s very difficult to leave, to walk on the streets, to sleep where you can, and it’s difficult and the point of support meant very much (to me). I had a place where I could sleep, I had somebody helping me with money for a while as to be able to eat and not have to live on the streets; this means very much ... At the beginning the housing conditions were hard; there were eight of us living in two rooms. (RO.IT.AC.1.M.40)

The comparative advantages of investing more time in the migration preparation period were clear in the different ‘success rates’ in the first job search period, highlighting the necessity of more accessible and widely propagated information about the European labour market contexts. This would benefit both migrants and separate institutions.

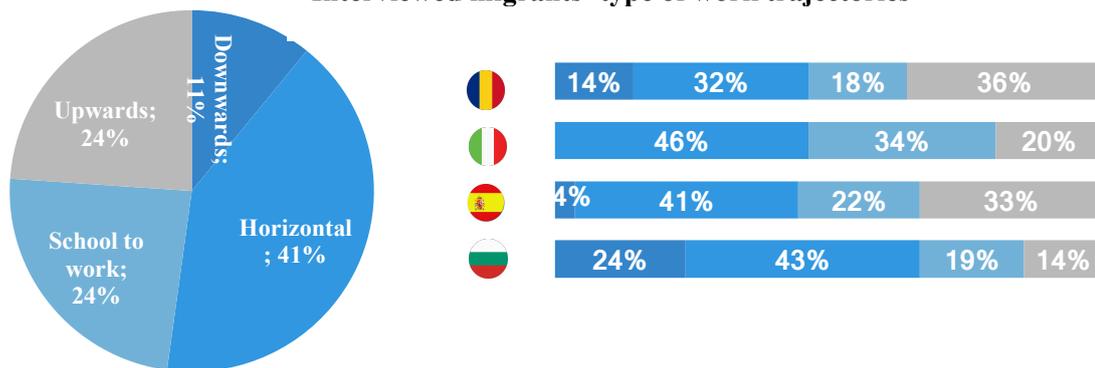
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RQ2: School-to-work, upward, downward and horizontal work trajectories which were observed during the study suggest the importance of the sources of support for migrants' work careers. The particular direction of professional and career development relies much on them. Being in possession of a job-offer prior to departure, opportunities for additional education and training in the host country, access to local language courses, stable integration into professional and social networks, in short, high levels of human capital are undoubtedly beneficial to migrants in the context of the countries of reception.

Interviewed migrants' type of work trajectories



“... the third year, which was the last but one for me, was so conceived as to have the first two trimesters for learning and the third trimester along with the summer holiday combined into 6 months practice, and everybody was doing this, and when I finished I also received an offer; I also had some interviews at the end and I received an offer to start working next year, and so I got it.” (RO.UK.AC.1.M.25)

“In fact, already in my third year of work, I worked on some crazy things, with incredible budgets, having contacts with extra-specialized professionals, who put at the disposal of incredible means.” (IT.UK.AC.12.M.29)

“Two weeks after having arrived, I went around all the Italian restaurants in the area [...] I did different things (jobs) Maybe four jobs; one, in particular, (I worked) for a long time in a pizzeria, as a pizza maker assistant; the first, as dishwasher in a restaurant.” (IT.DE.AC.4.M.30)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building an integrated network between travel and work abroad agencies with a common database would ease prospective and actual migrants' insertion on the new labour market.
- Embassies and consular offices could have a resident member of administration trained in and tasked with supporting migrants with all sorts of documentation needed for facilitating the adaptation process – social security numbers, bank accounts and other permits and with translation of such documents.
- Policy measures to assist migrants in their labour-market integration should be developed not only by the institutions in the receiving countries, where there is a high demand for advisory and guidance services for immigrants, but also by those in the sending countries, where advisory services for potential emigrants do exist.
- More funding for the EU educational initiatives such as the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ should be provided given the significance of such experience for the work satisfaction and career growth of migrants.
- Institutions which act as labour market mediators should develop more targeted approaches when assisting individuals with international job searches. Finally, the role of trade unions in educating and integrating migrants' in the local work cultures and defending their rights seems underdeveloped and should be encouraged.