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Labour Market Disadvantages Faced by Migrant Workers from Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia in Britain

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Abstract

Britain saw, between 2004 and 2014, a large number of movers arriving from the new member states of the European Union in Eastern Europe. Polish movers, being the largest national group, received much attention from academia, media and the wider public. Nevertheless, the movers from smaller nations, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, the A3 countries, have been overlooked. This article explores the labour market outcomes in relation to qualifications for migrant workers from these three countries in Britain. Our analysis is based on the 2012 Annual Population Survey data. Findings show that there were significant differences indicating possible disadvantages and discrimination faced by these migrant workers. Over-qualification was relatively high among the movers from the three selected countries.

Keywords: Movers; migrant workers; labour market; over-qualification; Hungary; Slovakia; Czech Republic.

Introduction

When individuals' qualifications and/or level of educational attainments are above those required for their jobs, it is called over-qualification and/or over-education (Alpin *et al.*, 1998; Battu and Sloane, 2004; Johnston *et al.*, 2010; Rafferty, 2012). It can result in wage penalties (Mavromaras and McGuinness, 2012) and underutilisation of skills or talent (Johnston *et al.*, 2015: 197; Rafferty, 2012: 989). Abundant research touches upon the migrant workers' disadvantage status versus native workers in the labour market in destination countries (e.g. Eade, 2007; Johnston *et al.*, 2010 and 2015; Brynin and Guveli, 2012; Sirkeci *et al.*, 2014 and 2018).

Migrants' home country qualifications and work experience might often not be fully transferable to the destination country. Knowledge belongs to host country labour market conditions, language skills, skills that are specific to particular occupations, legal or licensing barriers, and cultural and technological differences all hinder smooth transferability of human capital between countries (Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Danaj *et al.*, 2018). Over-qualification is considered to be a transitory phenomenon (Sanroma *et al.*, 2008; Chiswick and Miller, 2009). As workers improve their positions and abilities within a firm and then move into higher skilled occupations such disadvantages decrease (McGuinness, 2006).

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Despite a burgeoning literature on Eastern European movers in the United Kingdom with a focus on Polish movers, particularly in the last decade, comparative studies on movers from smaller nations are rare. In this article, we focus on migrant workers in Britain who are nationals of Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia (A3 hereafter). Our aim is to examine the mismatch between skills required for occupations held and skills acquired through formal education as an indicator of disadvantages and discrimination in the labour market (Blinder and Jeannet, 2018; Czaika and Di Lillo, 2018).

Discrimination means differential treatment of a class of persons based on race, ethnicity, religion, political opinion and so on. Modood (2005) and Khattab *et al.* (2011) drew attention to cultural racism and discrimination against Muslims in Britain (Kakaš, 2017; Kelly and Hedman, 2016). Discrimination and disadvantages are examined with various focuses, for example, role of social capital, human capital, wages, job search methods were investigated for Czech, Hungarian and Slovak transnational workers Verwiebe *et al.* (2017). While many studies on migrant workers from Eastern European members of the European Union (EU) highlighted persistent discrimination patterns (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2014; Johnston *et al.*, 2015; Sirkeci *et al.*, 2018), others pointed out that many also deny discrimination (Fox *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, without bias, we refer to discrimination and disadvantages in this case.

On the other hand, these studies, often due to data availability (i.e. small cell numbers on movers from smaller countries) focused on movers from eight or ten new EU members in Eastern Europe altogether⁴. In this article, we aim to break this down to understand patterns specific to the migrant workers from the selected three smaller member countries. Both regarding non-white minorities and white groups, there were significant ethnic differences in labour market participation and performance in the UK (Eade, 2007; Brynin and Guveli, 2012; Johnston *et al.*, 2015). Eastern Europeans are found to have faced discrimination (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2018) and receive lower pay (Johnston *et al.*, 2015: 196; Strielkowski *et al.*, 2018) and these penalties are shown to persist over time (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2014; Johnston *et al.*, 2015). One aspect of the discrimination and disadvantages is expressed through a mismatch between skill levels acquired through education and occupational skill levels (Johnston *et al.*, 2010).

To what extent do movers from these three countries encounter discrimination and/or disadvantages in the labour market, when compared to other groups in Britain? More specifically, our aim is to examine the mismatch between skills required for occupations held and skills acquired through formal education as an indicator of disadvantages and discrimination in the labour market in Britain. Using the UK Annual Population Survey (APS) data from 2012 (ONS, 2013), patterns of disadvantages experienced by these movers in finding jobs commensurate with their qualifications in the UK labour market were found. In the forthcoming sections, firstly, we provide a brief over migration from the three countries to the UK in the recent past, and then, deal with socio-economic characteristics of A3 migrant workers in the UK's labour market (also see Džankić, 2015, 2018). After focusing on the data and methodology of this study, we present the findings, the descriptive statistics, derived from our analysis regarding A3 migrant workers and discuss their over-qualification and (thus) disadvantaged statuses in Britain.

⁴ The A8 or Accession countries are Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Later, Romania and Bulgaria have joined this list to make it A10.



Overview of the Recent Labour Migrations from Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia to Britain

Sizeable migration flows have been prevalent to Western members of the European Union from the new members in the East including strong streams from some smaller countries such as Lithuania (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2016). “Due to data availability, most studies considered EU8 (or A8) movers as an aggregate category” (Kahanec and Kurekova, 2014: 24). In this study, we attempt to break down the national categories within the A8 movers group. Movers from Poland (579,121) dominated this group of 12 nationalities totalling 1,114,368 by the 2011 UK Census⁵. According to the 2011 UK Census, there were 48,308 Hungarian nationals; 57,824 Slovak nationals; 38,778 Czech nationals in England and Wales (ONS, 2013). About 80% of them arrived in between 2004 and 2011 (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2018). The number of immigrants from the three eastern European countries seemingly has remained sizeable since 2004 (McCollum and Finlay, 2011: 83).

During the 2008-2011 economic crisis, emigration from the Czech Republic has increased mainly towards Germany and Poland followed by Slovakia, Austria, USA, Canada and the UK as favoured destinations. Their numbers in the UK increased from 12,077 in 2001 to 38,778 in 2011 (ONS, 2013).

Hungary’s unattractive job market worsened by the economic crisis paved the way for an increasing out-migration to western EU countries, particularly to Germany, Austria, and the UK after 2011, when temporary restrictions lifted according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office / Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH). The number of Hungarians working in the UK increased by 57% to reach 55,000 in 2014. Total number of Hungarians working abroad is estimated to be 528,000. KSH also reports that the number of Hungarians planning to emigrate reached alarming levels of 45%.

Prior to joining the EU, Slovaks were particularly attracted by work in the UK. After the accession, about third of all Slovak emigrants were destined to the UK (Moreh, 2014: 81). In 2004, there were only about 8,000 Slovaks living in the UK (Lášticová, 2014: 409). In 2009, there were 82,132 Slovak immigrants in the UK, however, in 2011, these numbers declined to 64,166 possibly due to the global financial crisis. Nevertheless, Slovakian migration to the UK remained strong: by March 2014, there were 11,780 National Insurance Number registrations by Slovak nationals in the UK (Lášticová, 2014: 410). Migration from Slovakia largely targeted the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria and Hungary. The Czech Republic is the traditional destination of Slovaks due to their common historical, linguistic, cultural and geographic proximity and favourable regulatory policies among the countries. The number of Slovaks working in Hungary is also estimated to be around 20,000, with more than 13,000 workers commuting to work from Slovakia to Hungary daily (Bolečeková *et al.*, 2018; Šprocha *et al.*, 2018; Vasylieva and Samusevych, 2018).

OECD estimates indicated that between 2004 and 2010, on average about 10,000 Czech nationals returned home compared to 13,000 Slovaks and 22,000 Hungarians (Zaiceva and Zimmermann, 2016). These trends are supported by the strong return intentions among Hungarians, for example (Kováts and Papp, 2016: 103). Overall trends show that A3 nationals’ annual flows to the UK had exponentially grown after 2004 and slowed down after 2008 (i.e. financial crisis) and yet remained strong and grew during the 2010s (Moreh, 2014: 86).

⁵ Data obtained from ONS; ONS Crown Copyright Reserved from Nomis on 8 June 2017.



Post-accession migration from A8 countries in general were marked by a persistent feature of mismatch between the level of educational qualifications and the jobs they hold (Kahanec and Kurekova, 2014: 24; Sirkeci *et al.*, 2014; Sirkeci *et al.*, 2018), in other words, “penalised in the UK labour market relative to their human capital” (Johnston *et al.*, 2015: 200). Over-qualification can be seen as a reflection of disadvantages and discrimination in the labour market leading to the inequalities between ethnic, religious and minority or migrant groups (Crespo Cuaresma *et al.*, 2014; Danaj *et al.*, 2018; Hudcovský *et al.*, 2017).

According to the 2011 UK Census, among 1,114,368 from A8 countries, 84% were of working age with a relatively young age structure. They were concentrated mainly in the South East and London (650,000; 58%), whereas small proportions living in the North West (1.5%), Wales (2.6%) and Scotland (1.5%) (ONS, 2013; SC, 2013)⁶.

Between the years of 2004 and 2011, A3 movers were allowed to enter the UK without a visa, however, they were required to register with the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) within a month of taking up employment in the country. A3 migrants’ access to social benefits were only allowed upon continuous employment for 12 months in the UK (Home Office, 2016). Employment rate among A3 migrants in the UK was higher than anybody else in the UK (Moreh, 2014: 91), probably due to the fact that their right to remain in the UK was dependent on their ability to find work (Clark and Drinkwater, 2008; Blanchflower and Shadforth, 2009;).

Furthermore, according to the 2011 UK Census, about two-thirds of migrant workers from accession countries were employed in skilled trades (15%), as process, plant and machine operatives (16%), and in elementary operations (33%) (Moreh, 2014: 91). According to the APS data, the majority of A8 migrant workers were employed in manufacturing (about 30%) along with distribution, hotels and restaurants (about 25%) (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2014). They tend to have jobs offering low wages, limited career opportunities and of seasonal and/or temporary nature (Booth *et al.*, 2012: 17; Findlay *et al.*, 2013). A3 migrants in the UK also face constraints the labour market structure possibly due to limited knowledge of the market conditions and opportunities, and relatively low English proficiency.

Data and Method

The data in this paper are derived from the APS in 2012 (ONS, 2013). As an annual cross-sectional sample survey both at household and individual levels, it contains 12-month of data and covers some of the information about socio-economic characteristics of the sample population, such as education, employment, health, and ethnicity. Our analysis is restricted to the working-age population (men aged from 16 to 64 and women aged from 16 to 59).

As stated by Johnston *et al.* (2010) over-qualification defined as “educational-occupational mismatch”, is derived by extracting the respondent’s highest educational qualification (determined using International Labour Organisation’s two-digit standard classification of occupations) from the modal qualification level for all individuals in that occupation. Qualification level (LQ) was measured by using the Office for National Statistics’ classification (ONS, 2013) and the corresponding required qualification for the occupation (QO), as provided by ISCED-97 (UNESCO, 2006). To obtain a qualification level distance score (QLD_{*i*}) for each individual *i*, the individual’s qualification score (LQ_{*i*}) is subtracted from their occupational qualification level (QO_{*i*}) as follows:

$$QLD_i = QO_i - LQ_i$$

⁶ All Census data used in this article have been obtained from the ONS (2013) SC (2013).



Our analysis here has focused to highlight the disadvantages/discrimination among individuals with high-level qualifications (A Levels⁷ or equivalent, or Higher Education degree or equivalent). Using the formula, we have calculated the levels of mismatch (i.e. over-education or over-qualification as well as under-qualification) among the various nationality groups in Britain. Our measurement method has two components: First, level of educational qualifications referring to skill levels (1: Entry level, basic level of education; 2: Secondary school education or equivalent 3: A levels or equivalent, including high school, and 4: University degree or equivalent or higher) gained through education. Secondly, occupational skill levels (1: elementary occupations; 2: Clerks, service, shop and sales, skilled agricultural, crafts and trades, plant and machine operators, assemblers; 3: Technicians and associate professionals, and 4: Managers, professionals, legislators, senior officials) required for certain categories of jobs. The difference or subtraction between the two dimension’s levels indicates QLD scores.

If the QLD score was zero, this indicated a “*match*” between the two dimensions regarding the qualification. If the QLD scores were other than zero we classified the qualification levels as follows: -3: “*highly over-qualified*” (e.g. those in elementary jobs but with university degrees); -1 or -2: “*over-qualified*” (e.g. those with university degrees but in technical positions); 1 or 2: “*under-qualified*” (e.g. those in managerial positions without a secondary school diploma or with no education) and 3: “*highly under-qualified*” (e.g. those in professional/managerial positions but without a degree or with basic education.) (Table 3).

To compare and contrast the A3 migrants with other social groups, ethnicity and nationality variables in the APS were used. A3 migrants and EU15 migrants have identified themselves predominantly as belonging to the white ethnic group. Using the variable nationality and ethnicity, two additional ethnic categories were created for the purpose of the analysis: white EU group, which includes EU migrants from the 15 former EU countries (excluding UK nationals); and A3 migrants identifying themselves as white.

The A3 Migrant workers’ Position in the Labour Market in Britain

The A3 born movers represented only 0.3% (674 individuals) of the total sample in the APS, within which females are slightly more overrepresented in the sample compared to the UK-born people (Table 1).

Table 1: Country of birth of movers by sex in the UK in 2012

Country of birth	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
UK	145146	93.9	156413	93.3	301559	93.6
EU15	1729	1.1	2155	1.3	3884	1.2
Hungary	101	0.1	116	0.1	217	0.1
Czech Republic	74	0.0	89	0.1	163	0.1
Slovakia	133	0.1	161	0.1	294	0.1
Other	7363	4.8	8798	5.2	16161	5.0
<i>Total</i>	154546	48.0	167732	52.0	322278	100.0

Source: Data from ONS (2013).

⁷ Advanced level qualifications (known as A levels) are subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work, offered as part of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) in the United Kingdom (UCAS, 2019).



As shown in Table 2, along with very small number of people with other beliefs, majority of Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks were either reported to be part of Christian faith, 72.1%, 56.7%, and 83.3% and those with no religion represented 24.5%, 40.1%, and 15.3%, respectively (Table 2). However, one should note that there were significant differences between the nationals of these three Central European countries. Czech nationals being almost equally split between Christian and no religion whilst the other two dominated by Christian groups.

Table 2: Religious groups of movers by nationality in the UK in 2012

Nationality / Religion		%					Total (N/%)
		Christian	Muslim	Hindu/Sikh	Other religion	No religion	
UK	Within Nationality	63.3	3.3	1.4	1.8	30.2	294723
	Within Religion	94.0	76.7	72.7	84.8	96.7	93.6%
EU15	Within Nationality	69.3	6.9	1.4	2.8	19.5	3742
	Within Religion	1.3	2.0	1.0	1.7	0.8	1.2%
Hungary	Within Nationality	72.1	0.5	0.0	2.9	24.5	208
	Within Religion	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1%
Czech Republic	Within Nationality	56.7	0.0	0.0	3.2	40.1	157
	Within Religion	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0%
Slovakia	Within Nationality	83.3	1.4	0.0	0.0	15.3	287
	Within Religion	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1%
Other	Within Nationality	55.2	17.3	9.1	5.2	13.3	15871
	Within Religion	4.4	21.3	26.3	13.3	2.3	5.0%
Total	N	198491	12864	5489	6154	91990	314988
	Within Religion	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0%

Source: Data from ONS (2013).

Regarding the over- or under-qualification patterns of UK and EU15 nationals and Hungarian, Czech, Slovak migrant workers and others in Britain, there are clear irregularities by QLD scores (Table 3). Working-age population with the highest qualification (Level 4: university degrees, higher education etc.) represents 57.0 per cent of the total and presented by nationality in Table 3. The corresponding figure was 61.0 per cent for the EU15 migrants whereas Hungarian (49.2%), Czech (35.8%), and Slovakian (28.6%) movers were less represented at this level. These three countries nationals were concentrated on Levels 1 and 2 (i.e. no qualification or unrecognised/less than A level qualifications). As suggested by the literature, some qualifications may not be recognised in Britain or these movers may not have identified a matching qualification for their home country qualifications (De La Peña Esteban and Peña-Miguel, 2018; Deskar-Škrbić, Drezgić, and Šimović, 2018; Klamár and Gaval'ová, 2018; Rehák and Dudová, 2018; Škuflić and Vučković, 2018). Another plausible reason can be self-selectivity –i.e. people with higher qualifications from these countries may not have targeted Britain as a destination. Significant concentration in other qualifications (Level 2) may also indicate a similar selectivity as certain trade certificates can be particularly relevant and useful in construction, services and agricultural sectors.

Nationals of the three Central EU countries were dominantly employed in elementary positions and Level 2 skilled positions such as sales and tradespeople (Table 3). Reflecting the differences in qualification patterns, Slovaks' concentration in elementary posts were larger than others. For instance, the EU15 migrants were concentrated on (39.9%) Level 4 occupations. About 10 per cent in elementary positions (Level 1) and 45.7 per cent concentrated in Level 2 positions among the UK nationals. The corresponding figures among the nationals of the three selected countries were from 31.2 to 40.4 per cent in elementary positions and from 39.0 to 48.7 per cent in Level 2 positions. Three countries' nationals were largely concentrated in occupational skill Levels 1 and 2, while



being thinly represented in the upper levels (Level 3 and 4). It is argued in the literature that those movers with a time restriction on their stay looking for a job were likely to accept positions which were below their level of qualification (Sirkeci *et al.*, 2018).

Table 3: Percentages of migrant workers (A3 nationals and others) by their level of educational attainment, occupations, and over- or under-qualification by nationality in 2012

Education, occupation, and over- or under-qualification	Nationality / Percentage						
	UK	EU15	HU	Czech	Slovakia	Other	Total
<i>Level of Educational attainment</i>							
(1) Level 1: Entry level: Basic level of education	9.9	10.8	8.6	18.5	18.9	11.4	10.0
(2) Level 2: Secondary school education or equivalent	8.4	12.9	33.8	35.0	33.3	22.6	9.6
(3) Level 3: A levels or equivalent, including high school	24.5	15.2	8.4	10.7	19.2	12.0	23.3
(4) Level 4 and higher: University degree or equivalent or higher	57.3	61.0	49.2	35.8	28.6	54.0	57.0
<i>Occupational levels</i>							
(1) Level 1: Elementary occupations	9.9	11.5	31.2	36.1	40.4	21.9	10.9
(2) Level 2: Clerks, service, shop and sales, skilled agricultural, crafts and trades, plant and machine operators, assemblers	45.7	31.8	40.3	48.7	39.0	42.6	45.3
(3) Level 3: Technicians and associate professionals	14.5	16.9	11.5	8.0	9.9	10.4	14.2
(4) Level 4: Managers, professionals, legislators, senior officials	29.8	39.9	17.0	7.1	10.7	25.1	29.6
<i>Over- or under-qualification</i>							
Highly over-qualified (QLD score: -3)	4.4	2.8	6.2	3.3	7.1	7.3	4.6
Over-qualified (QLD score: -1, -2)	50.5	37.7	37.7	43.8	35.3	37.7	49.3
Match (QLD score: 0)	29.9	40.1	27.7	23.9	34.4	31.2	30.1
Under-qualified (QLD score: 1, 2)	13.8	16.3	25.0	25.2	21.9	21.4	14.4
Highly under-qualified (QLD score: 3)	1.4	3.1	3.4	3.8	1.3	2.4	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Data from ONS (2013).

The third section of Table 3 is particularly interesting as overall 70 per cent of the employed population have experienced skills level mismatch. Even the mainstream UK nationals group had only less than 30 per cent where qualifications match the required skill levels of the jobs. In fact, if one may interpret the “under-qualification” (last two advantageous categories indicated with the QLD scores as 1, 2, and 3 in Table 3) as a privilege, all EU nationals were overrepresented in these levels. For example, about 14 per cent of UK nationals were reported in under-qualified (1 or 2 levels mismatch) whereas from 21.9 per cent to 25.2 per cent of A3 nationals were identified in this level of under-qualification. In other words, many A3 migrants were employed in positions requiring skills at a higher level than what their qualifications may represent (Blazkova and Dvoulety, 2017; Posta, 2018).

It is clear that the A3 nationals share some of the characteristics with the A8 overall. However, in terms of over-qualification at the highest level, Hungarians and Slovaks seem to be more disadvantaged compared to the UK and EU15 nationals. 6.2 per cent of Hungarians and 7.1 per cent of Slovaks were highly over-qualified compared to 4.4 per cent of the UK nationals.



Conclusion

This article aimed at presenting preliminary analysis of the UK APS data regarding the labour market outcomes in terms of skill level mismatch among the nationals of the three Central European EU member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia). This study shows that A3 migrant workers' disadvantage is related to their positions in the labour market in Britain. A3 migrant workers' distribution to religion patterns does not dramatically differ from the UK and EU15 nationals. Furthermore, there is evidence that several characteristics of these immigrant groups are very similar to the A8 (Eastern EU member states) nationals. Thus it is possible to claim that they may have faced similar discrimination and disadvantages in the labour market in Britain. These findings show clear need for further analysis of these three country nationals in terms of labour market outcome patterns in Britain and elsewhere in the EU.

Our particular finding of the higher level of representation in the under-qualified category - despite the opposite trend for the whole A8 group- is interesting and needs to be further investigated. However, it is another important find as it indicates that disadvantages and inequalities in the labour market are not linear and one dimensional. Clearly some A3 nationals may have enjoyed a privileged position regarding this particular aspect of mismatch of skill levels. This is not to say there may not be other dimensions imposing larger or smaller penalties such as regarding pay scales.

The highest end of the skills level mismatch is largely in line with what the literature suggested so far. These patterns regarding A8 nationals have been persistent over time and it can be interesting to understand further differences within this group. It is, however, also important to look at the broader context of education and qualifications as the vast majority of Britain or foreign nationals were reported to have qualifications not matching the skill levels required in the sectors of employment.

In this study, we analysed the data in 2012 and the recent developments and future prospects regarding Britain's exit from (or revised membership in) the EU will probably have an impact on these patterns. Imposing borders between Britain and the EU may lead to an increase the size and re-distribution of A3 migrant workers in Europe and change their resettlement patterns in the long term. Therefore, these possibilities need to be investigated.

Policy makers in the UK and the EU need to pay attention to these irregularities regarding skill levels highlighted in the literature. It is argued that over-qualification may indicate a waste of valuable human resources (OECD, 2011). Undoubtedly, recognition of qualifications need to be a priority area.

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