

Vulnerability of Migrants in the Working Environment

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“Vulnerability”

Probability to encounter a negative effect

Lack of resources or capacities to avoid it or cope with it

** e.g. withheld wage and lack of awareness about the legal rights*



“Vulnerability to...”

Violence

Trafficking

Slavery

Forced labour

Exploitative labour

Precarious labour

Maldevelopment

Disadvantage

“Migrants”

Diverse backgrounds,
circumstances, resources

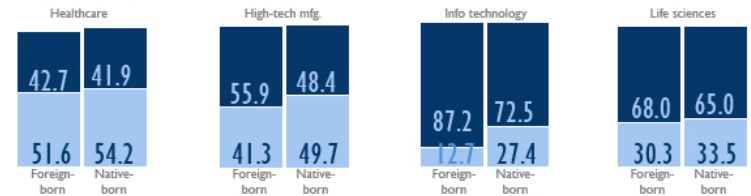
Common or particular
factors of risk?

5. In high-skill industries, immigrant education keeps pace

In some of the high-skilled industries most closely associated with immigrant workers, immigrants are more highly educated than native born.

Educational attainment among immigrants and natives in selected industries, 2010

● HS to some college ● BA or higher
% middle and high-skilled, in...



Source: 2010 Current Population Survey data accessed via IPUMS.org



“Vulnerability of Migrants in the Working Environment?”

Attentiveness to diversity (in analysis, policy and practice)

Acknowledgment of common factors and solutions

Need for a base of evidence

Example: Morecambe Bay, 2004

Night-time cockle harvesters

23 irregular migrants drowned or died of hypothermia

Snakehead gang victims

Trigger of changes to legislation, policy and practice



Example: Bratislava, 2001

Simon – language teacher from Canada, job at a private high-school

Contract in the Slovak language, employer paying cash, providing accommodation, health care

Pressure, blackmail, withheld wages

Realisation of being “illegal”, had to leave the country

Context in Slovakia

“Migrants’ Experiences with Violence, Abuse and Exploitation in Slovakia”: IOM-conducted study funded by the EIF, 2012-2013

National scale, all groups of regular migrants

Focus on work-related abuse and exploitation among others

Risk & protective factor, policy & practice dimensions

Context of Slovakia – migrants and work

Almost ½ of migrants come primarily for work

Over 70% of migrants have experience with work in the country

Overqualified and underpaid

Some of the main groups of migrants (Ukraine, China, Vietnam)
– numbers even larger

Context of Slovakia – migrant workers and abuse/exploitation (key findings)

1 in 9 migrants likely to have experienced forced labour (1 in 4 migrants from Ukraine)

Wide range of practices, including withholding of wages, workplace confinement, debt bondage or threats

Widespread (illegal) practices of exploitative labour – leading to further disadvantage and abuse

Links between workplace abuse/exploitation and domestic abuse

Vulnerability factors (I)

Legal status and legislation

Law implementation (*immigration, labour, welfare and criminal justice system*)

Severe financial shortage and strong economic motivation (*including homeland links and remittance*)

Vulnerability factors (II)

Cultural capital – language, skills, formal qualifications, cultural awareness, recognition of rights

Social capital – both negative (*lack of resources*) and positive (“*trapped in the environment*”)

Cohesion and host society relations

Vulnerability factors (III)

Personal experience and cultural values

Community

Domestic condition, links between the household and the workplace

Vulnerability factors (IV)

Disadvantaged *employers* – “chained” exploitation

Health

Further disadvantage outside the workplace

Vulnerability factors (V)

Concentration in high-risk industries (*agriculture, food manufacturing, domestic workers, grey economy*)

Illegal work

Absent supporting institutions – trade unions, community workers, trust and bond with mainstream institutions

(Some) conclusions

Need for a critical and differentiated base of evidence

Key protective factors include:

- * awareness and understanding of rights and duties
- * bonds/trust with the host society
- * outreach programmes
- * pooled resources of communities, individuals and statutory/non-statutory institutions
- * stabilised legal status

(Some) conclusions

Context of Slovakia:

- * Need for a better understanding of the most isolated groups of migrant workers
- * Legal and practical conceptualisation of forced labour and its relation to trafficking and labour exploitation/precarious labour (“continuum”)
- * Multi-agency strategies
- * Outreach and pro-active agenda of relevant institutions