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Migration issues in Poland

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Moravetsky believes that Poland, as a sovereign state, has the right to independently decide what its migration policy will be.

Poland demonstrates “what solidarity is,” and “cares about the security of the eastern border of the European Union,” said Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Moravetsky [1].

According to the Polish Prime Minister, this is the position that the Polish government continues to defend in negotiations with its European partners.

“The assistance we are working on is about \$ 10 million. To finance the construction of modest but decent living conditions for those refugees who, finding a roof over their heads and elementary work, will prefer to stay in their homeland rather than go for It’s their land and their life”, says Mateusz Moravec. Poland cares about security on the eastern flank of the EU. At the same time, he noted that the government is interested in economic cooperation in the field of construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure.

The Prime Minister of Poland, while in Lebanon, promised to allocate an additional 10 million dollars to help refugees in this country.

Earlier, the head of the government Moravetsky declared the “sovereign right” of his country to refuse assistance to migrants from North Africa and the Middle East.

In particular, Moravetsky said in an interview with TVP on January 1 of the current year that Poland accepts Ukrainian refugees, which helps to reduce tension in the east of the European Union.

In early January, Moravetsky also announced that in recent years Poland had hosted more than 1.5 million Ukrainians.

According to the media, for example, in 2016, Ukrainians received 1.2 million visas for entry into Poland, of which 650 thousand were workers. According to the ex-Foreign Minister of Poland Witold Waszczykowski, in 2017, Ukrainians received about 900 thousand working visas, the PAP agency noted in November.

It is significant that when at the EU summit in December last year they discussed the issue of migration policy, the further development of the eurozone and the Brexit process, European Council President Donald Tusk warned about a split of the EU along the North-South and East-West lines.

Last year, the Polish economy grew by 4.6% and is not going to slow down. So, she needs more and more new workers.

The policy of stimulating the birth rate and activating the unemployed is not able to satisfy this demand in the coming years, and therefore Warsaw must invite migrants. If four years ago foreigners had about 140 thousand of various types of residence permits, then in March 2018 this figure exceeded 300 thousand. And the number of permits issued to Ukrainian migrants tripled and today reaches 150 thousand.

Even more citizens of Ukraine are on the territory of Poland on the basis of visas or visa-free regime. Polish officials often emphasize the challenge for them to migrate from a neighboring country, even figures for 2 million Ukrainian migrants are voiced.

However, for more than a year in Poland there is no concept of migration policy, that is, a document that would answer questions about which migrants a country wants to receive, in what quantity, who to encourage to stay, how the integration process will go.

A preliminary concept, on which government and public experts worked for several years, was thrown into the garbage in December 2016 by Interior Minister Mariusz Blaszczak. Then the politician said that the EU immigration crisis and the

increased flow of migrants from Ukraine require creating a new strategy that would allow better care for the safety of Polish citizens.

A year ago, a special group to develop a new migration policy was established under the Ministry of Investment and Development. On March 29, Minister Jerzy Kwiecinski presented her developments, which the Government of Poland approved in the form of the socio-economic priorities of the migration policy. A detailed concept will appear in June, but now we can already say: the ideas of Polish officials do not correspond to the realities of the labor market and the changes introduced in the legislation.

Inviting migrants from the same Ukraine with one hand, the other Polish authorities make it more difficult for them to legalize and discourage them from moving to permanent residence.

The unresolved issue of attracting new workers could be a serious problem for the Polish economy. According to forecasts, by 2030, Polish employers will have problems closing every fifth vacancy. This means that the Polish market will need 4 million additional workers.

The Polish government hopes to solve this problem, by the way, by returning compatriots who left the country after its accession to the EU. The new concept proposes to encourage them to return to Poland and transfer their business here.

In such a situation, Poland is forced to focus on attracting migrants who will not just come to work, but will move and give birth to children here. First of all, we are talking about Ukrainians.

It is difficult to say how many Ukrainian citizens are in Poland today, since Ukrainian migration still has a seasonal and pendulum character. The information presented at the beginning of the article about 150 thousand permits for temporary and permanent residence more or less gives an idea of the core of migration, that is, those who moved to Poland and found legal work for a longer period.

Polish officials, depending on the department, voice figures from 1 to 2 million. They are clearly overstated because they are based on information on the number of declarations issued in 2017 on the intention to employ foreigners, not

taking into account that one person could receive several such documents and who could get and not come at all. Moreover, as the last survey conducted by the Rating group shows, the majority of Ukrainians who have worked in Poland in recent years have not stayed in the country for more than three months.

And most importantly, as the survey from the Polish recruiting company Personnel Service shows, only 11% of Ukrainians working in Poland think about moving forever.

The new priorities of the migration policy of Poland confirm: talks about the need to protect the security of the country were addressed to domestic voters, while the main principle of accepting immigrants will remain to meet the needs of the labor market.

So, the migration policy of Poland will focus on attracting workers from abroad for those industries that are experiencing a special shortage of personnel, and preventing further emigration from Poland. The presented document states that additional tools will be developed that will allow diagnosing the needs of the labor market and formulating the demand for an appropriate number of labor migrants with a certain qualification.

Government support is promised to employers who are looking for workers abroad, and workers who need information about working in Poland.

There is also a mention of the fact that foreigners with certain specialties will be encouraged to stay in Poland for permanent residence. Support was also announced for those who would like to create a company in Poland or move it here from abroad. Relief for unskilled seasonal migrants is not mentioned in priorities, although the government recently quite abstractly announced easing the employment procedure.

Higher education institutions are mentioned separately - they should attract even more foreign students, but better - in specialties in which Polish business is interested. There are scholarships for foreigners, however, primarily for people of Polish origin.

With regard to the integration of new arrivals, it is proposed to focus on learning the Polish language and creating a system of so-called one stop shop - counseling centers where foreigners could receive advice and services on all issues, from issuing a work permit to enrolling children in school. As Kvetsinsky noted at a press conference, the country would cost almost nothing, on the contrary, visitors will help patch a hole in the Social Insurance Fund.

On the one hand, it sounds good - foreigners do travel to Poland, first of all, at work, rather low and intermediately qualified, they lack knowledge of the language and irritate long lines in dozens of instances. So the proposal should attract the same Ukrainians.

But there are a few "but". First, all these ideas in a very similar form were already spelled out in the previous concept in 2012, but so far their implementation has either not begun at all, or has shown the inadequacy of the adopted approaches of the real situation.

Secondly, the text does not mention Ukrainian at all without a visa regime, and it radically affected the dynamics of migration and the possibility of contacts between employees and employers.

A picture emerges: Poland wants to attract more migrants who will pay taxes and social insurance contributions, here it's not even against some of them staying longer, but it will not be easier to do, and the integration of visitors will at best be reduced to help in legal employment and language learning.

"The declared priorities look good on paper, but they contradict the latest changes in Polish legislation and the practice of legalizing the employment and stay of foreigners," said Ksenia Naranovich, chairman of the non-governmental organization Fundacja Rozwoju Oprócz Granic.

The expert recalls: last year in Poland the law "On Employment Assistance" was amended, which regulates, in particular, the access of foreigners to the labor market. The changes should streamline the situation with the issuance of the so-called "oviation" - declarations of intention to employ foreigners who allow citizens of six countries from outside the European Union, including Ukraine, to work legally

without a work permit for up to six months. Only in 2017, such declarations were issued 1.8 million, more than 90% - for Ukrainians.

However, de facto changes have complicated legal access to the labor market. “Previously, such a document was made by hand, now the employer has to fill out a rather long form on the Internet, pay 30 zlotys (about 7 euros) and wait almost a month for the finished papers. Considering that not every employee who receives an order comes to Poland and it works for this particular employer, then an ordinary small entrepreneur must register a dozen or so for exactly someone to come, and therefore pay 300 zlotys (70 euros). If this waiting time and payment is even more or less suitable for construction companies, for the agrarian sector this is unformat”, says Naranovich [2].

“In Poland today, the most liberal among EU countries is legislation on the employment of foreigners. This is the result of a consensus between government, business and workers. However, queues remain a problem”, confirms Andrew Korkus, director of the EastWestLink recruiting agency.

Worse than with the “oskadychenny”, the situation with the issuance of work permits is the case - on the basis of this document a foreigner can work in Poland for up to three years. In Warsaw, the standard queue for them takes three to four months, in Gdansk - six.

“The employee arrives, they and the employer understand that in the next six months there will be no papers. Do not send him back - he starts working illegally. And if this situation lasts a month or two, then it makes no sense for the employer to legalize the employee”, emphasizes Ksenia Naranovich.

In addition, in order to replenish the Social Insurance Fund, the Polish authorities in recent months have made efforts to transfer foreigners from civil law contracts to full-fledged labor contracts, from which taxes, medical insurance and contributions to the fund are deducted.

However, the prospect of rising labor costs and complicated legalization are pushing both Polish employers and their Ukrainian workers into the gray zone.

Of course, the authorities cannot formally accept such a state of affairs. However, they are also not capable of resolutely fighting it - on the cheap labor of Ukrainians there are several branches of the Polish economy.

Queues for work permits are also added to queues for residence permits. The consideration of a single case by officials can last more than six months. At the same time, the law obliges a foreigner to change a complete set of documents every time when the employer changes.

This leads to the fact that the lives of even those migrants, who want to work legally, pay taxes and fees, turn into continuous queues and uncertainty.

Phrases about the emergence of a privileged category of migrants who will be encouraged to move to a permanent place of residence, or simplified for private entrepreneurs, appear in the documents over the years, in 2017, changes were made to the Law on Foreigners. However, they do not entail any specifics: programmers in Poland are waiting for documents as long as cleaners, the conditions for issuing permits for permanent residence have been complicated, and obtaining a residence permit for small business owners brings much more trouble than hired workers.

At the same time, unlike Western European countries, in Poland immigrants from outside the EU cannot count on social assistance, additional payments for housing or benefits. Those whose residence permit has been issued with the mark “access to the labor market” can get help for children, but only if there are two or more of them and they come with their parents.

This situation is not very worried about seasonal migrants, for them the main thing is to earn as much money as possible in a short period of time. But in the case of attracting potential new residents of the country this can be a problem.

However, in Poland they recognize that the Ukrainians alone cannot save the situation. So, Polish businessmen are doomed to attract personnel from more distant countries.

Even today, the number of migrants from India and Indonesia is growing in Poland - almost 4 thousand work permits issued last year, or Bangladesh 2.5 thousand. “Only our company recruited several hundred Indian workers last year.

arrived, they work in the furniture, automotive and shipbuilding industries”, - shares the experience of Andrzej Korkus.

In the case of a positive experience, migrants from Asia will stay on the labor market for longer - seasonal migration is not profitable for them.

The diversity of the Polish migrant community makes the need for integration even more urgent, and there are not enough language courses and legal employment for this. Integration is a two-way process, during which not only "guests" learn the traditions of the “owners”, but also the “owners” get used to a more diverse environment. And this moment in the new priorities of the migration policy of Poland is not stated at all.

At the same time, the number of hate crimes in the country is growing: in the first half of 2017 alone, the prosecutor's office conducted 947 such cases, and even more cases are either not investigated by investigators or are not reported at all.

Public organizations that previously led integration projects today have limited funding. Theoretically, the central government and local governments could delegate some of the responsibilities to them, but so far there is no discussion about this at the official level - the migration policy is positioned as something that should be cheap and only bring dividends.

Hope remains on the Polish business - employers, especially large ones, suffer from queues and bureaucracy no less than their foreign workers. And economic growth rates remain the key argument when Western capitals are increasingly criticizing Warsaw for failing to adhere to democratic standards.

References:

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2. Promises and reality: Poland is preparing a revision of migration policy (April 3, 2018) // <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua>.