The nature of A8 migration to the UK
Trends, impacts, outcomes and policies

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1. Introduction

On 1 May 2004 eight Central and Eastern European countries, along with Malta and Cyprus, joined the European Union. The United Kingdom, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland decided to fully open their labour market for Accession state migrants without applying transitional measures to limit the volume of inflows. The next decade has seen the largest wave of immigrants ever seen in British history (Black et al. 2010).

The significance of the issue is shown by the fact that the unprecedented number of migrants have an impact on the UK in several respects. The effects on the labour market, economic performance, the welfare system and the society are inevitable, however, the evaluation of the outcomes is constantly subject of public and academic debate. Given the difficulty of reaching consensus in these questions, it is extremely challenging for the UK Government to apply the most appropriate immigration policy to ensure that migrants are fully beneficial for the country.

I will argue here that A8 migration has provided the UK with significantly more benefits than costs and therefore it is in their best interest to have an immigration policy that sets the most favourable environment for these inflows. Nonetheless, it is also important to have regulations that protect immigrants from exploitation. The access to migrant workforce is a tool for the country to fill labour shortages, to make the labour market more efficient and to gain competitive advantage in terms of economic performance. The implementation of strategies that build on this advantage might prove favourable during a recession or crisis as well.

The debate on evaluating the outcomes of A8 migration is mainly based on the different perception of free movement by Accession nationals and by UK citizens. The former group sees it as the realization of EU principles, a fundamental right that is inevitable and has to be enjoyed by them without limitations (Galgóczy et al. 2009). As opposed to this, the public fear that immigrants reduce the labour market opportunities of natives and come to the UK to live on benefits results in a negative attitude towards A8 migration. It is arguable that the direct advantages are more visible for migrants and also for A8 nationals that were already living in the UK prior to the enlargement, since the Accession
meant a change in the legal status of this group (Anderson et al. 2006). Nonetheless, considering the outcomes for the native population, opinions and policymaking should always be strictly evidence-based.

The aim of this paper is to assess the impact of A8 migration on the UK economy and society and to evaluate the Government’s immigration policy in the light of these findings. It is important to note that the effects on sending countries are not discussed here, although the significance of these is unquestionable. Due to size limitations and the complexity of the issue the emphasis is put on processes, events and tendencies that are located in or derive mainly from the UK. Nonetheless, the density of international ties and connections results in that certain aspects discussed here implicate the impact on A8 states without going into details in the respect of these countries.

1.1 Methods, definitions

The examination of international migration requires an interdisciplinary approach. Economic, social, demographic and political processes are interconnected, and thus one cannot be explained without taking into account its correlation with other aspects. In this paper an economic approach is used to determine the impact of migration flows on the UK labour market and overall economic performance, with respect to employment and unemployment rates, wages, the welfare system and GDP-related effects. After that, a sociological point of view aims to discover the micro level tendencies that influence or constitute macro level patterns. In this section the emphasis is placed on the functioning of social networks, analysing the role of interpersonal ties. Finally, the political aspect of the issue is discussed with respect to policy implications and the Government’s current immigration policy. The findings of this paper are mainly based on secondary analysis of the existing literature on the topic, including books, scholarly journals and studies. Complementing these results, I used primary data sources that provide information on A8 migrants. The description of main sources figures in the following section. The evaluation of the UK immigrant policy is based on the use of David Cameron’s immigration speech as a primary source.

A8 or Accession 8 countries are the Central and Eastern European states that joined the EU on 1 May 2004, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The common point that puts them in the same group is that
they all had GDP per capita rates below the EU average. Cyprus and Malta also joined at the same time but these countries had a stronger economic performance and, more importantly, they already had full access to the UK labour market, meaning that they are irrelevant for this paper. The use of the term ’A8’ was widespread in the first years after enlargement and it is still often used, although different names and categories also occur. Some authors and databases use the term ’EU8’, referring to the same eight countries, as opposed to EU15 countries, that is, the states that were already members before 2004. The A2 countries are Romania and Bulgaria, the two that joined the EU in 2007. Their inflows to the UK are not particularly considered here, although it is sometimes unavoidable since some sources put these countries to the same group with A8 states, referring to this extended group as ’A10’. Throughout this paper I will use the term ’A8’, ’Accession 8’ or Accession states’.

Apart from the unprecedented volume of the inflows, recent migration to the UK offers scientists an opportunity to follow and analyse different migration patterns and trends while the process is still underway. A8 migrants enjoy a legal immigrant status in the UK, and therefore collecting data is feasible and more effective (Black et al. 2010). A wide range of data sources provide information on A8 migration, some of them were directly set to measure certain aspects of the inflows. The following section assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the most important sources.

1.2 Data sources

A variety of data sources offer information on the A8 migrant flows to the UK. The academic research on the topic, however, use main sources that are considered to be the most effective indicators of inflows, sectorial, geographic and other characteristics. It is important to note that since all data sources have weaknesses and flaws, a combined application can lead to the most precise results. The most commonly used sources are the data on Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) registrations, the National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations, the Long Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates based on data from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and the results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS).
1.2.1 The WRS

Between May 2004 and April 2011 A8 citizens were required to register with the WRS to be able to legally work in the UK. This was the only transitional measure applied by the Government towards A8 migrants, and the aim was to have a reliable database on the immigrant flows. WRS was directly set up to measure A8 migration, thus being one of the most important sources of the topic. The UK Home Office Department released the results in Accession Monitoring Reports.

The main strength of WRS compared to other data sources is that it is only focusing on A8 immigration, covering the short-and long-term migrants. Those who wanted to be employed legally or be eligible for social benefits, had to register with the form, meaning that the majority of A8 migrants is covered by the scheme (Gillingham 2010). The self-employed, however, are not included in the database, and therefore it is a common view that WRS tends to underestimate the number of migrants arriving to the UK (Salt 2009). The lack of accuracy can be further strengthened by the fact that the registration of an A8 citizen is not deleted once leaving the country, and for seasonal workers a new registration was required upon return (McCollum et al. 2011). For migrants a WRS registration was necessary to get access to certain social benefits, meaning that a strong incentive element was implemented in the system (Lemos et al. 2008a). Nonetheless, it received criticism from immigrants, mainly due to the relatively high registration fee, which was widely seen as a measure by the UK Government to impose a tax-like burden on the newcomers. Although the registration was obligatory, the prospect of serious consequences was not held out in case of not fulfilling the requirements, resulting in a high number of migrants staying outside of the system (McCollum et al. 2012a).

1.2.2 NINo

The data on National Insurance Number allocations is provided by the UK Department for Work and Pensions. NINo, functioning as a document of personal identification, is of a higher practical importance for immigrants than the WRS, and therefore the number of individuals not included in the database is comparably lower. NINo database includes the self-employed migrants, but excludes dependants; therefore, a perfectly accurate measure of the inflow is not possible. The lack of data on A8 migrants who already returned to their home country makes estimates even more complicated (Gillingham 2010).
1.2.3 LTIM estimates based on the International Passenger Survey

The International Passenger Survey, conducted by the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS), measures both the inflows and outflows of immigrants and provides information on their intentions upon arrival. The Long-Term International Migration estimates by ONS are based on data from the IPS, and are aiming the measure the inflows of those who are planning to stay in the country for at least one year. These databases are more suitable for measuring the volume of inflows and outflows, although on an individual level WRS provides more information.

1.2.4 Labour Force Survey

LFS, also conducted by ONS, is a useful tool in measuring the labour market situation of immigrants. The sample size used for the estimates is considerably large, and this database provides an inner look at some of the most important labour market dynamics with regard to A8 migrants. LFS, however, is unable to draw a perfectly accurate picture of immigrants, given that it is working with sampling, being only able to identify the main trends and patterns (Gillingham 2010).

2. On the move: trends and patterns of A8 migration

2.1 Volume and national characteristics of inflows

Prior to the 2004 EU enlargement it was expected that tens of thousands of A8 migrants would arrive to the UK in the forthcoming years. The numbers, however, exceeded most expectations and the inflow of A8 citizens is often referred to as the largest immigrant flow in the British history. According to the Long-Term International Migration estimates of the ONS, the annual net inflow from the A8 countries was more than 40,000 in the years after 2004, peaking above 80,000 in 2007 (ONS 2014). During the crisis a massive fall was seen in the numbers, with numbers being the lowest in the second half of 2008 and in 2009. From 2010 annual net migration rose, although numbers remain lower compared to the data before the recession. This can be partly explained by that in 2011 all EU15 countries had to end their transitional measures on A8 immigration, and therefore more countries can be attractive for these migrants. Between September 2012 and
September 2013 net A8 migration was 48,000, meaning that the inflows remain significantly high. (ONS 2014)

The high numbers of net inflow resulted in a massive increase in the population of A8 migrants in the UK. According to LTIM, in the period between 2004-2012 713,000 A8 citizens arrived, while the net inflow was 423,000. The massive influx almost doubled the number of A8 nationals in the country, with more than 1 million A8 citizens living in the UK as of 2014 (Vargas-Silva 2014). Poles were the largest immigrant group throughout this period, and this tendency remains unchanged according to the 2013 statistics on NINo allocations: more than 111,000 registrations were by Polish citizens, with Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia occupying the next positions with around 26,000, 25,000 and 13,000 registrations (ONS 2014). Last year’s statistics, however, do not coincide with data from the previous years. Since the enlargement the leading role of the Polish immigrants remained unquestioned, with Lithuania, Slovakia and Latvia following in numbers. Hungary was one of the A8 countries that showed the least mobility, and it is too early to see if there will be a significant change in this tendency in the long run.

2.2 Portraying the typical A8 immigrant

While A8 migrants cannot be seen as a homogeneous group, it can be argued that they have a few key characteristics that determine their impact on the receiving country in terms of labour market effects and social integration. Academic researches highlight the facts that the majority of A8 immigrants are young, well-educated males, mainly from Poland, and they produce high employment rates after arrival, although most of them take up low-paid jobs (Fóti 2009; Black et al. 2010). The temporariness of their stay in the UK is also an important factor in many cases, although migration strategies change quickly and therefore these trends are hard to identify (Cook et al. 2011).

These statements are further supported by data from the 2011 Census, provided by the UK Office for National Statistics. It is important to note here that, since the Census includes the groups that were residents in the country before 2004 with regard to Accession states, pre-accession tendencies might affect the results. Nonetheless, the volume of inflows after 2004 is likely to offset these effects. In the mentioned period the UK had a massive A8 population of almost one million people, with more than half of the group coming from Poland. Out of the more than half million Polish nationals 72,000 fell into the age cohort
between 16-24 years and 383,000 were between 25 and 49. Figures were similar with other A8 immigrants, showing a slightly younger age composition (ONS 2013a). This is suggesting that the vast majority of immigrants are young, working age people that provide the UK with a new source of labour force. The level of qualification is a difficult question due to the differences between the national educational systems and the lack of consensus in evaluating and accepting foreign diplomas. To establish the ground for comparison, the ONS set up a scheme with four levels of qualification and additional categories for the unqualified and for qualifications that cannot be mentioned in the first four groups. According to the data, around one quarter of Accession migrants were in the highest qualification category, with only one sixth reported to have no qualifications (ONS 2013a). As Table 1 shows it, the figures in the highest group are similar in the case of UK and Accession nationals with 25,9 and 24,4%, while the difference is significant in the percentage of people without qualifications (UK: 23,4%, Accession states: 16,2%). This broad picture, however, has to be handled with care: 35,7% of Accession nationals are in the 'other' category, due to the above mentioned problems of evaluation (Table 1). With a more detailed, well-harmonized system this category could be minimized, resulting in more accurate estimates in the other groups.

2.2.1 Occupations

Despite their relatively high level of education, A8 migrants can be found mainly in low-skilled, low-paid occupations. The 2011 Census data shows that almost half of the employed A8 population is in jobs that require only limited skills or no skills at all. Elementary occupations and process, plant and machine operatives were the groups that included the highest number of A8 citizens (ONS 2013a). Table 2 shows the sectorial breakdown of Accession nationals in the UK. According to the data, the distribution, hotels and restaurants and the financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities were the two main sectors (26,6% and 17,6%), with manufacturing following these (15,1%); however, it is important to note here that this might not represent the reality. Those workers who apply for jobs through agencies are often put in administrative categories although their actual position belongs to a different sector (Glorius et al. 2013).

Working with agencies has other disadvantages for A8 migrants. The fees charged by them can reduce take-home salaries by a significant amount. The quality of service
provided by them in many cases does not reflect the volume of these fees (Parutis 2011). In fact, in some cases the labour conditions and the basic rights of workers can be at risk (Anderson 2006). Nonetheless, for some migrants agencies provide the easiest entry to the UK labour market, especially in the case of limited language skills. An increased awareness of their rights and better language skills can be the key for these workers to avoid exploitation.

2.2.2 Geographic characteristics

It is hard to identify clear geographic patterns in the A8 migration flows, since these waves do not follow the tendencies of earlier migrant groups. London is still a popular destination, but its leading role is not evident anymore. South and East England has received a significant amount of the inflows, becoming one of the most popular areas for immigrants (Blanchflower et al. 2007; Galgóczy et al. 2009). One of the main characteristics of A8 migration is that inflows are not concentrated exclusively in the biggest towns and cities, but many migrants explore the countryside and regions not traditionally linked to immigration (Gilpin et al. 2006). It seems evident that the geographic breakdown of migrants is mainly driven by job opportunities and not by pre-migration decisions and personal preferences. It can also be argued that pre-accession immigrant communities are not a significant driving force in this respect, since A8 migrant inflows affect many locations where there is no history of massive immigration. This can be a source of increased tension between different ethnic groups as well (Robinson 2007).

2.3 Migration strategies

The individual decisions on the different aspects of migration are obviously results of certain factors, including personal, economic and political aspects as well. There are certain tendencies, however, which can be identified in relation with A8 migration without engaging in a detailed micro level examination. The majority of the migrants consider they stay in th UK as a temporary destination, with the aim to return to their homeland in a certain timeframe. With time, however, these decisions can change and migrants very often do not set up a strict plan, always adjusting to the currents situation, leaving other options open (Black et al. 2010). Initial ideas can be further affected by personal factors such as family reunion or, in other cases, the establishment of strong personal
relationships in the UK (Cook et al. 2011). This unpredictability and openness of migrant strategies is referred to as the 'liquid' nature of migration by Glorius et al. (2013). Nonetheless, there are certain types of migrants that can be identified. According to Glorius et al. (2013), there is a group which consists of mainly young, educated migrants that wants to gain experiences abroad, with an increased interest in entertainment and leisure activities. This group is not necessarily interested in a systematic advance in their professional career or on the wage scale. Another strategy is related to the transnational ties and a stronger personal link to the country of origin: certain immigrants aim to save a proportion of their salary during the stay to be able to invest it in their homeland. And finally, there are migrants with an intention to stay in the UK in the long run and to build up a professional career there (Glorius et al 2013).

The plans about the duration of the stay and the aim of the migration obviously affect the way individuals approach their possibilities on the labour market. Upon arrival immigrants often face the fact that their options are limited due to language, educational and other issues. But their prospect of a future progress is not necessarily determined by their initial chances. In many cases they are willing to take up any job upon arrival, to stabilize their financial background. While it is possible that, due to the temporary nature of migration, an individual is not keen on making a progress up the wage distribution scale, a progress can be achieved by those who have long-term plans (Parutis 2011).

### 2.3.1 Push and pull factors

The reasons and incentives behind migration can be sorted as the so-called push and pull factors. The push factors are the motives for an individual to leave the country of origin, while the pull factors are the features of another country that can attract foreigners and therefore lead to a decision to migrate. With regard to A8 migration, the initial push and pull factors are obvious: the unfavourable economic situation of the Accession states, the weak labour market performance – low employment and high unemployment rates – contributed to the increasing willingness to leave these countries (McCollum et al. 2012b). In 2004 the UK labour market was performing strongly, and although the difference compared to A8 states has reduced, better employment and unemployment rates act as significant pull factors (Galgóczy et al. 2009). The same thing can be seen about GDP per capita differences: the incentive effect of the stronger economy is still there, however only to a reduced extent due to the convergence in economic performance in the last years.
Wages are also significantly higher in the UK compared to A8 countries, and despite that the difference in purchase power is not as outstanding as it was at the time of the Accession, the effect of this factor is inevitable (Galgóczy et al. 2009).

It is evident that economic factors are the most important drivers of A8 migration, but they are not the exclusive drivers of immigration. The presence of family members, friends, that is, strong interpersonal ties can lead to a decision on migration as well (Blanchflower et al. 2009). Pre-accession migrant communities could also act as pull factors, facilitating the socialization and integration of newcomers, but the data on the geographic distribution of new immigrants does not suggest that this plays a major role in this case. Other factors as political reasons could also appear, but this by itself may not be a powerful effect and in most cases political issues are strongly correlated to economic problems.

2.3.2 Access to information

Upon arrival the access to practical information is vital for migrants to be able to start the process of settling in. In many cases the lack of awareness of their rights prevent them from exploiting the full scale of opportunities offered to them as A8 citizens. A low level of language skills can also be a barrier to have better possibilities while starting their new life. The lack of information can result in serious problems, blocking their access to benefits and health care (Spencer et al. 2007). From 2004, the Trade Union Congress issued a series of leaflets under the name 'Know Your Rights’ and another leaflet from the Government, 'Living and Working in the UK: Rights and Responsibilities of Nationals from the New Member States from 1 May 2004’ was also available. These two documents provided basic information on rights and obligations for A8 citizens in the UK, but such a document cannot be a substitute for personal assistance. However, as the immigrant community is growing and the experience of previous migrants help newcomers, these problems seem to be less significant. In some cases employers provide the necessary support in order to have a staff with a stable and organized background (McCollum et al. 2012a). This can also contribute to the increased efficiency and lower turnover of employees.
2.3.3 Deskilling: highly skilled migrants in low-skilled jobs

The occupations where A8 citizens can be found in most cases do not reflect the level of their qualifications. The danger of 'brain waste' is particularly a problem for the sending countries, although it might mean that the receiving country fails to fully exploit the potential of migrant workforce (Parutis 2011). The tendency, however, is clear: many immigrants take up jobs for which they are overqualified, and therefore the human capital that was created through the process of education seems to be lost (Glorius et al. 2013).

The trend can be explained by several reasons. Language problems have an effect on an individual’s chances to advance in the labour market. In some cases this is the only issue that is preventing migrants from obtaining better positions. Furthermore, the qualifications of A8 nationals are not recognized by UK employers, and therefore prove to be valueless (McCollum et al. 2012a). For migrants that arrive in the UK with no stable financial background it is vital to be able to enter the labour market as soon as possible. This results in an increased propensity of accepting job offers in a short time, without getting information on the full range of opportunities (Nowicka 2012). And finally, the structure of the UK labour market means that A8 migrants have the most opportunities in occupations where they are the most likely to be comparatives for the local workforce. Considering that the willingness of natives to take up low-paid jobs is significantly low, these positions can be easily filled with migrant labour (McCollum et al. 2011).

A8 migrants without language skills are the most affected by deskilling, meaning that an improvement in English proficiency can be the key to upwards labour market mobility. Those who speak English fluently have a greater chance to find jobs with a profile closer to their qualifications. The likelihood of deskilling seems to be at least partly gendered. As Campbell (2013) points out, in relationships where men have a greater decision-making power, the interests and labour market opportunities of the women are not taken into account. This can lead to decisions about finding a location and moving that are unfavourable for them, thus increasing the possibility of being forced to give up on their best job options.
3. Economic impacts

3.1 General and GDP impacts

The public debate on recent A8 migration has been largely focusing on the impacts of the massive influx on the UK economy. Despite anecdotal evidence and public fears of Eastern European migrants arriving to the country as benefit tourists, the available data and literature on the topic suggests that the participation of A8 migrants in the UK labour market resulted in overwhelmingly positive outcomes. In fact, according to employers and the sectorial patterns of migrant workers, in certain sectors A8 migrants give an essential proportion of the workforce.

The unprecedented number of immigrants obviously had consequences for the UK economy in terms of increased pressure on the public service system, and possible labour market outcomes. As Galgóczy et al. (2009) describe it, international migration has effects on both the sending and receiving countries. In the best possible scenario both countries benefit from these cross-border movements, while in the worst case the highly skilled migrant workforce contributes to the increasing numbers of unemployment in the receiving country, as well as causing a massive loss of human capital in their homeland. The case of the UK seems to be a mixture of the two scenarios, with the positive effects being more significant in most aspects.

The net economic impact of migrants can be calculated as the difference of their contribution to the public purse in the form of taxes and the amount of benefits received by them (Vargas-Silva 2013). Evidence shows that their contribution was positive after the 2004 Accession, and it remained beneficial during the years of the recession, when the UK economy performed significantly weaker (Dustmann et al. 2010). This tendency can be explained by considering the main characteristics of migrants: they tend to be young, well-educated people, with less dependants compared to the local population. A8 migrants often find themselves in low-paid, low-skilled jobs which suggests that they provide a smaller tax base, resulting in lower incomes for the state. Nonetheless, this effect is easily counterbalanced by their high labour market participation rates, exceeding those of the natives (Dustmann et al. 2010). Employers have reported that migrant workforce tends to be highly productive, thus making possible expansive production processes with relatively low costs (Georgiev 2010). As Sanchez-Martinez et al. (2013) and Galgóczy et al. (2009)
point out, these positive effects led to an increase in the GDP per capita of the UK in the recent years, compared to calculations where the effect of the immigration flows is offset.

Another way to approach the possible outcomes of the inflows of A8 migrants is by considering the changes in aggregate supply and demand caused by these groups. This can be largely influenced by the different migration strategies that affect the length of stay in the UK and the consumption patterns of migrants. The shorter the time spent in the country the less willingness is shown by them to buy expensive goods that can only be used locally, e.g. household installations, cars etc. Another important factor is that a large number of the migrants send a certain proportion of their salary to their homeland to help the family, and this decreases the amount that is spent in the UK. (Blanchflower et al. 2007). This is suggesting that A8 migration has contributed to an increased supply to a larger extent than it has increased demand, resulting in effects that can reduce inflation (Blanchflower et al. 2007). There is another possible effect of the migrants on the market, however, that can have its impact on the aggregate demand: namely, the increased demand for goods from A8 countries. Considering the large inflows since 2004, this can contribute to an increased volume of import from Central and Eastern Europe, resulting in a positive effect on the UK trade balance (Metykova 2010).

3.2 Impact on the welfare system

The most common argument against A8 migration is that the increasing migrant population puts an additional pressure on the UK welfare system, due to the large number of ’benefit tourists’, that are taking advantage of the easy accessibility of public benefits. This view is currently being echoed in the rhetoric of the UK Government. However, the existing evidence shows that this argument proves to be false from different aspects. Despite the fact that academic literature seems to form concurring opinions on the topic, it is important to understand the roots of the criticism and fears.

The UK provides a relatively easy access to its welfare system, which can be an incentive for immigrants who are aiming to benefit from the migration with the least possible amount of effort (Black et al. 2010). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the access to the system for A8 citizens has never been without certain limitations. Between 2004 and 2011 A8 migrants were required to register with the Worker Registration Scheme and they had full access to public benefits only after 12 consecutive months of employment
(Blanchflower et al. 2007). The Government is planning further restrictions to limit the supposed exploitation of the system by immigrants. The amount of benefits accessible for workers is significantly high in a European comparison, meaning that low incomes in the UK supplemented with allowances and benefits can give an income that is attractive for A8 citizens.

Critics have a point in certain questions. The pressure on public services increased due to the large number of immigrants, and the adjustment of these systems to the changes in population requires additional resources – in financial and other terms. In some cases these conditions are not provided, meaning that the quality of these services cannot be maintained on the pre-accession levels (Robinson 2007). The current welfare system also implicates the danger of being unsustainable in the case of a large number of immigrants becoming unemployed (Black et al. 2010).

Despite all controversy, the system seems to be working well with respect to A8 migrants. Certain characteristics of the migrant population makes it evident that the welfare system does not experience any disadvantage from their presence, in fact, some advantages can be considered. A8 migrants have higher employment and lower unemployment rates compared to natives; they tend to have less dependants and they are less likely to claim benefits than the local population (Dustmann et al. 2010). Another important aspect is related to their age: since the vast majority of the immigrant population are working age adults, therefore they are not participating in the UK public educational system, and – for the time being – they are not a burden to the pension system (Black et al. 2010). This means that from a labour market point of view A8 migrants are a very important workforce, contributing positively to the public purse. All evidence is pointing towards that the main reason for these immigrants to come to the UK is to work, and not to exploit the welfare system (Blanchflower et al. 2007).

Another factor that contributes to the lower likelihood of migrants claiming benefits can be the lack of information. In-depth interviews and surveys have revealed that many migrants have problems with obtaining the necessary information on the public welfare and health care system upon arrival (Spencer et al. 2007). The responsibility of the sending and receiving states, as well as the employers can be considered in these cases. The fact that migrants do not have information about how the system works can affect their chances to access benefits. In many cases they are not aware of their rights and
therefore are unable to claim allowances to which they might be entitled (Holtslag et al. 2013).

Despite the public opinion accusing A8 migrants of abusing the UK welfare system, local employers stated that the high levels of benefits result in many natives not taking up jobs and living at the expense of taxpayers (McCollum et al. 2012a). This can be explained by the similar level of National Minimum Wage and the amount of benefits accessible for them. This means a lack of incentive for domestic workforce to take up low-paid employment and therefore they have to be substituted by immigrant workers. Considering all evidence it seems obvious that A8 migrants are not arriving to the UK to take advantage of the loopholes and the financial possibilities that the welfare system has to offer. It is important to see, however, that certain steps have to be taken by the Government to make sure that access to benefits is not a goal, but a tool of protection for migrants and natives as well.

### 3.3 Labour market outcomes

The labour market impact of A8 migrants is – again – strongly related to some of their key characteristics. They are willing to take up low-paid jobs, to work long hours and – as it was mentioned in the previous section – are not relying on public benefits (Glorius et al. 2013). Academic research on the topic was unable to attribute any negative effects to the large inflows of immigrants, instead, their impact is seen as neutral or even slightly positive (Blanchflower et al. 2007; Reed et al. 2009). The common fear prior to the accession that the new waves of migrants would contribute to the rise of unemployment and the reduction of wages, proved to be false. The origin of these fears is that A8 migrants were seen by the locals as a potential source of competition in the labour market, with the willingness to accept salaries way below the levels that natives would agree on (Reed et al. 2009). Nonetheless, the idea of migrants taking jobs away from locals was not seen in practice. The core of the problem is that migrants cannot be seen as perfect substitutes for native workforce in most cases. They are not applying for the same jobs, and due to the relatively high level of National Minimum Wage, they are not able to lower the wages to an unacceptable extent (Lemos et al. 2008a). It is true, however, that in some cases native and migrant workforce are in direct competition, but in those cases immigrants have no competitive advantage that can result in a massive growth of native unemployment or a fall in wages.
By the time of the EU enlargement in 2004, the UK labour market was performing extremely well (Gilpin et al. 2006). This performance was further supported by the newcomers, who have gave their contribution to these positive processes, by filling vacancies that employers found hard to fill with domestic labour, and by bringing their work ethics and methods that are widely seen as strong and positive (Marangozov 2008).

3.3.1 Effects on employment and unemployment

At the time of the accession of A8 countries, the UK labour market was in a strong position. This was, however, followed by a rise in unemployment in the next years. It was easy to make the assumption that these negative changes were caused by the large inflows of immigrants (Galgóczy et al. 2009). This statement can be contravened by the existing evidence, which shows that migrant workers were not crowding out local workforce. The key to the explanation is in the nature of jobs that the majority of immigrants took up. Migrants filled in positions that employers could not fill with domestic labour despite the fall in employment rates, meaning that migrant workforce complemented the local workers (McCollum et al. 2012b). Instead of causing unemployment, the group of A8 migrants can be seen as a source of labour that is ready to take the low-paid positions even in the times of worsening economic conditions and thus strongly contributing to the economic performance. This is further supported by the findings of Gillingham (2010), showing that in the period between 2001-2009 the inactivity rates of UK citizens were constantly higher than those of A8 migrants. Furthermore, the rapid growth of A8 employment rates after the accession was not compensated by a significant fall in employment among the groups that can be considered as competitors for A8 migrants, e.g. low-skilled local workers and other non-EU migrants (Gilpin et al. 2006). Table 3 shows figures from the 2011 Census that suggest the same patterns: Accession nationals have significantly higher economic activity and employment rates (80,3% and 73,2% as opposed to the 63% and 56,2% of UK nationals), with unemployment rates slightly more favourable in the former group.

As opposed to the expectations and public arguments, to this date no academic study was able to prove the negative correlation between UK employment and unemployment rates and the growing numbers of A8 citizens. In addition to the fact that in most cases local workers and migrants are imperfect substitutes, it is important to see that the UK labour market is not a place where the number of jobs is limited and fixed (Reed et al. 2009).
This could be true for a single moment, but not for a larger period, and definitely not for the afore-mentioned years. If a migrant fills in a vacancy, this act does not reduce automatically the chances of natives of being employed (Lemos et al. 2008b). Furthermore, the large number of migrants can by itself generate employment. Reed et al. (2009) argues that the availability of cheap labour increases the production of labour intensive products, resulting in an increased demand for domestic goods, leading to the creation of employment. Increased immigrant communities, however, can lead to a distortion in the consumption patterns, by increasing the demand for imported product and thus having a negative effect on local production, generating unemployment (Reed et al. 2009). Nonetheless, this scenario is much less likely than the previous one.

Apart from the mainly positive effects of A8 migration on the employment and unemployment rates, it is obvious that on a micro level there can be individuals experiencing disadvantage on the labour market. The most affected groups can be low-skilled natives, who are not showing flexibility when it comes to job opportunities. Non-EU migrants can also find themselves in a more difficult situation after the 2004 enlargement, particularly those with low skills and legal problems with respect to their immigrants status or work permits (Drinkwater et al. 2009).

3.3.2 Effects on wages

Unlike in the case of employment and unemployment effects, the impact of migrants on wage levels is less evident. According to some sources, the effects are mainly positive, while other sources underline the negative impacts; there is a common understanding, however, that A8 migration affected wages only to a limited extent. Since these migrants predominantly take up jobs that belong to the lower section of the wage scale, it seems to be evident that the major impact can be found on lower wages. Nonetheless, this assumption can be overwritten by the existence of the National Minimum Wage, which makes it impossible for migrants to push down wage levels under this limitation (Galgóczy et al. 2009). However, it is clear that immigrants can weaken the position of natives in the wage bargaining process, appearing as a workforce that is ready to take up employment for wages that reach or slightly exceed the national minimum (Blanchflower et al. 2007). In this case the negative effect of immigrants is obvious, but it is important to note that the problem described above involves only a limited number of natives, and the vast majority of local workers is not competing with migrants, thus being exempt from
these impacts. Another negative consequence of the increased presence of immigrants can be the fear of native workers that they might lose their jobs, due to the preference of employers for the cheaper migrant workforce (Blanchflower et al. 2009). This can bring the same results as the previous scenario, leaving local workers with a decreased ability to protect their interests in terms of wages.

Some effect can be attributed to immigrants in the higher sections of the wage distribution as well, in fact, in some cases the impact can be even stronger, since there is a margin for immigrants to lower their reservation wages (Lemos et al. 2008a). However, the number of A8 migrants competing with natives for high-paid, high-skilled occupations is not high, and therefore the aggregate effects are insignificant. Similarly to the unemployment impact of A8 migration, other immigrant groups can be more affected, but since the likelihood of competition between these groups is the highest in the lower end of the wage scale, the National Minimum Wage proves to be beneficial for them (Drinkwater et al. 2009). In the case of non-EU migrants working illegally for wages below the national minimum, the effects can be more significant, since employers might prefer to use legal workforce even if it causes an increase in their expenditures.

Most A8 migrants enter the UK labour market ready to take up employment immediately, finding themselves in the lowest end of the wage distribution. This situation, however, can rapidly change and in the first few years immigrants can experience a wage growth that exceeds the increase in the wages of natives (Dustmann et al. 2010). The fact that these immigrants move up on the wage scale can have a positive effect on the lower sections as well, decreasing the pressure on low-skilled local workers and offering them a stronger position in the bargaining process.

3.3.3 Perception of migrant workforce by employers

As it was argued in the previous sections, there is little evidence of A8 migrants having an effect on the labour market that results in employment or wage disadvantages for natives. There is another aspect of the problem, however, which shows that immigrants do have an advantage in some respect. Employers have been reported to have a preference for A8 workforce in positions where they are likely to be substitutes for local workers. Obviously this is more likely to happen at the lower end of the wage distribution, where the
competition tends to be harder between low-skilled natives and immigrants and therefore affects only a limited number of UK citizens.

It is important to note that this preference is not primarily related to financial concerns, since the protection of the National Minimum Wage offsets these effects. Employers seem to base their opinion on personal experiences with A8 workers. As opposed to natives, immigrants are said to be hard workers, showing strong work ethics and being flexible in terms of working hours and conditions (McCollum et al. 2011). Their productivity, speed and reliability is also underlined by employers, an important factor that can bring direct financial benefits for enterprises (Blanchflower et al. 2007). Their willingness to improve skills and their discipline makes them even more favourable for UK companies (Cook et al. 2011). Obviously these opinions should be understood in the context of competition between local and immigrant workers. The positive image that was formed of A8 migrants by employers is in comparison with the negative view on UK workers. Their lower willingness to take up low-profile jobs is just one of the factors; the actual performance of immigrants in certain positions tends to surpass that of natives (Anderson et al. 2006). An indirect form of discrimination appeared in certain cases, when recruitment agencies sent packages of CVs to companies with A8 migrants being overrepresented in it. This was a result of informal agreements between agencies and employers with strong preference for immigrant workforce, with an intention to avoid all kind of illegal action (McCollum et al. 2012a).

A sectorial difference can be observed in the perception of migrant workforce. After the EU enlargement a new workforce was available for UK employers that was willing to work in areas that were struggling with labour shortages, e.g. the agricultural, food production and food processing sectors (McCollum et al. 2011). The contentment of employers with this new group led to the continuous recruitment of A8 nationals, causing that Central and Eastern European migrants now give an essential part of labour in these areas of the UK economy. However, in sectors which are less reliant on A8 workforce, such as hospitality and catering, this preference is still present, but to a much lesser extent (McCollum et al. 2011).
3.4 Changes during the recession

The economic crisis that started in 2008 has had its effects on the patterns of A8 migration. The global characteristics of the recession were followed by the UK labour market. The construction and real estate sectors were the most affected by the crisis, and the loss of workplaces resulted in a reduced number of newcomers finding employment in this segment of the economy (McCollum et al. 2012b). Despite the increasing rate of unemployment, the relatively stable numbers of new A8 migrants in the agricultural sector suggest that the economic crisis could not change the negative attitude of UK citizens towards low-paid manual jobs. This sector therefore provided an unchanged demand for migrant labour, affecting the geographic distribution of A8 migration, with more people concentrated in the rural areas of UK during the recession (McCollum et al. 2011).

The crisis had an impact on the economic performance of the sending countries as well. Since the accession Poles were the group that gave the majority of new A8 migrants entering the UK. During the recession they maintained their leading position, but due to the considerably good labour market performance of the country, the proportion of other nationalities, particularly those from the Baltic region, increased (Holtslag et al. 2013). This case demonstrates the importance of the push factors of international migration, namely the economic performance of the home country compared to the destination country. As soon as the impact of the crisis resulted in an convergence between the two economies, the push factors weakened, while these factors intensified in relation with countries with poorer performance.

The impact of the recession was not only felt by newcomers, previously arrived groups were affected as well. The decreased demand for labour, the slowing economic growth and the overall unfavourable economic context resulted in less opportunities of labour market mobility for migrants (McCollum et al. 2012a). This might have contributed to the falling numbers of new WRS registrations during the recession, since the pull factors of the UK economy were less intense (McCollum et al. 2012b). Despite the decrease in numbers and the fact that many A8 migrants returned home during this period, the net inflow of A8 citizens remained positive (Salt 2009).
4. Society in the society: The role of tie strength in the social networks of immigrants

The analysis of interpersonal ties provides a sociological approach to the examination of A8 migration patterns. While researches and studies on the topic are mainly operating with the methods of sociology, the results are pointing far beyond this area: economic, social and cultural tendencies can be explained by the findings of these papers, and they offer decision-makers a deeper understanding of the most problematic issues. As Granovetter points out, the significance of social networks and ties is based on the fact that they connect micro and macro level patterns, revealing the origins of outcomes and results (Granovetter 1973).

Weak interpersonal ties play a crucial role in the dynamics of immigrant networks, forming channels of information and support between individuals. Empirical evidence shows that these weak ties are more effective and important mediators than strong ones (Granovetter 1973). While one can assume that strong ties, e.g. close friendships, family bonds have a greater impact on personal decisions and attitudes, the role of weak connections proves to be a key factor in most of the cases (Ryan et al. 2007).

The literature on the topic mainly uses Granovetter’s categories to describe the strength and nature of interpersonal ties. The amount of time spent together, the emotional intensity of the interaction, the level of mutual confiding and reciprocal services are the four elements that can be indicators of tie strength (Granovetter 1973). Researchers can operationalize these categories and optimize them according to the goals of their study. Once the distinction is made between weak and strong ties, the social network of communities can be pictured. Information is one of the key elements that can be traced back to its source, giving a description of the paths and channels used by a certain community. People seek emotional and instrumental support, and these needs are also fulfilled using the networks of ties (Ryan et al. 2009). The high importance of weak ties can be explained by the introduction of the term 'bridging ties’. These are links that provide the only connection between two individuals. Considering that strong ties cannot fit this description, and consulting Granovetter’s forbidden triad-theory¹, we can state that bridging ties are always weak (Granovetter 1973). These channels are instrumental in the

¹ The ‘forbidden triad’: According to Granovetter, if A-B and A-C strong ties exist, then the absence of a B-C tie is more than unlikely. (Granovetter 1973).
immigrant communities to obtain information on jobs, services and to help them find the support needed in all areas of life.

4.1 The characteristics of interpersonal ties among the migrants

Characterizing the existing ties of a migrant community at a certain moment is possible, but we also have to note that these links are of a dynamic nature (Ryan et al. 2007; Liu 2011). New ties are formed quickly upon the arrival to the host country, old ones are maintained in the country of origin, and both types are changing while individuals are going through the process of settling in (Gill 2011; Ryan et al. 2007). During the stay personal objectives may change, and these new goals require different resources, resulting in a change of one’s current social network (Menjivar 2000). The importance of making new interpersonal ties strongly depends on pre-existing relationships: those who are joining family members or close friends, rely much less on new weak ties, having access to information and all kinds of support via these previously established channels. In many cases, however, the absence of these pre-migration relationships means that the only access to vital help is through weak ties formed immediately upon arrival.

Based on the similarities of 20th century history, social structure, economic conditions of the countries of origin and the attitude shown by British citizens towards them, we can assume that the challenge faced by different ethnic groups of A8 migrants in the UK is similar. Most studies choose Polish migrants as a subject of description and further examination, given the fact that Poles have the largest migrant communities of all A8 states, but researches tend to apply main findings for the other nationalities as well.

An experience shared by immigrants is the intention of regaining ’normality’ according to the interpretation of local people (Ryan 2010). This objective is mainly a process of conformation and has an impact on social behavior and personal relations. Weak ties established with local people play an important role in achieving this goal. The network of ties to the British tend to become more dense during the stay, however, in this case other factors, such as language skills, are crucial (Burrell 2010).

There is a significant difference between the nature of weak and strong ties within an immigrant community. Weak ties are formed rapidly and mainly driven by practical reasons. Studies emphasize the temporary characteristic of the connections, outlining that they are used in order to achieve specific goals, and once the importance of these objectives
reduces, the ties can disappear as quickly as they were born. (Gill 2011). These links are established in the close environment of the individuals, and in many cases do not display personal choices, instead they reflect the urgent practical needs of migrants (Gill 2011).

Pre-migration strong ties can be the sources of all kinds of support for the migrants, making it unnecessary for them to seek contacts with locals or with other members of their migrant community (Ryan et al. 2009). There are, however, existing transnational strong ties, linking the migrants to their homeland, which can cause an increased importance of quick settlement. This case typically appears when one of the parents moves to the UK to provide financial support to the family from there, sending home a portion of the salary on a regular basis (Ryan et al. 2007). The responsibility for other family members encourages the establishment of weak ties, through which the process of settling in can be as short and fluent as possible.

While in most cases interpersonal ties seem to be contributing to the evolution and extension of social networks, a deeper analysis shows how these links can work against integration and community integrity. The following part gives a view on both sides, outlining the complexity of outcomes deriving from the dynamics of these ties.

4.2 Elements of fragmentation and cohesion

The cohesive effect of strong ties can be evident at first sight, however, they very often lead to different outcomes. If these links form a dense, closed network, the result can be isolation from other groups and thus deprivation from information owned by them (Gill 2011). New relationships are mainly formed within the group, and as the network extends, the likelihood of forming weak bridging ties reduces, closing down important channels of information (Granovetter 1973). Excluding effects from the outside can result in a negative impact on one’s perspectives, overwriting the primarily positive effects of social networks (Glorius 2013). On a personal level this results in a lower level of mobility and a reduced amount of opportunities. On a group level it means that there are less and less connections formed between these closed networks, making them unable to benefit from each others social capital, and to organize themselves for community interests. This process can cause an advanced level of fragmentation between groups of migrants in the UK, even from the same nationality (Gill 2011).
While weak ties appear to be a cohesive force in relations between groups, they can cause fragmentation for various different reasons. Due to the dynamic nature of weak ties, the process of cutting previous links is not free of conflicts. The need for different forms of support is the strongest right after the arrival, but with time the significance reduces. This leads to individual decisions of rearranging the existing ties, abandoning some and forming new ones (Gill 2011).

Migrant groups tend to be fragmented along different aspects such as age, gender or ethnicity. These elements can be enhanced or reduced by interpersonal ties, with no necessary connection between the outcome and the nature of these links. There is an aspect, however, along which fragmentation can be traced back to ties: social status. People arrive in the host country and occupy a position in the new society. In the case of high-skilled workers with good language skills, weak ties play a less important role (Gill 2011). They can have access to jobs on their own, obtaining reliable first-hand information, and thus having a stronger control over their life. Contrary to this, low-skilled workers or high-skilled workers with poor language skills are more reliant on weak ties. As Black et al. (2010) point out, these ties are vital for them during the signalling process, that is, the way of obtaining information on job opportunities. It seems evident that the increased level of reliance highly determines the labour market outcomes for these groups. Employers tend to benefit from these networks, however, since recruitment of new staff is often faster and more effective using informal channels (Sumption 2009).

Previously we saw evidence on the positive side of weak ties, being sources of useful information; in this case we see that people have no choice in joining these social networks. They are forced into links that they would not maintain in their country of origin, paying a serious social cost for working or language skill problems (Gill 2011). This distinction between the initial situation of higher and lower social groups has an effect on integration and socialization, causing an increasing level of fragmentation and tension within co-ethnic networks. Individuals from high-status groups tend to use direct differentiation between them and low-status people, establishing ties within the host society and refusing to be mediators between their compatriots and the British. (Ryan 2010).

Competition is also a factor of fragmentation. Ethnic groups tend to be locally concentrated and personal interests easily overwrite cohesive forces (Ryan 2010). Trust is
not always a component of rapidly formed weak ties (Gill 2011), and therefore profiting from these links on the short run is more important than enforcing them, and giving them the aspect of confidence. This attitude functions as a permanent source of conflicts between and within ethnic social networks.

In this part a greater emphasis was placed on the dividing effects of interpersonal ties. The main reason for this is that on a macro level, these elements are more visible than the ones enhancing cohesion, which are mainly related to micro level processes. There are, however, institutionalized forms of cohesive movements, aiming to contribute to the cohesion of ethnic groups. National churches and mass services established in the UK play a key role in this activity (Burrell 2010). Obviously the effect is limited to the active religious group of migrants, but the significance goes far beyond religion: churches in these cases function as places to preserve and to experience national traditions, and to enhance and form ties with co-ethnic individuals. Certain clubs, national nurseries and schools can have a similar role. As Burrell (2010) points out, the importance of the service sector is inevitable in forming social networks and cohesion among migrants.

4.3 Social networking and fragmentation within an ethnic group: the Polish example

The Polish population of the UK is in a specific position for historical reasons: large communities were formed after the Second World War, establishing centers, national institutions. The presumption that newcomers can easily settle in, using these institutions, proves to be false due to a number of fractures within the Polish migrant communities (Burrell 2009).

Studies based on qualitative researches among the Poles show that there is a generation barrier dividing co-ethnic groups in the UK (Ryan et al. 2007). The institutions established by previous generations are used by the new waves of immigrants mainly for practical purposes: building new interpersonal ties to have access to crucial information, to find new jobs and to benefit from the social capital of the community (Ryan et al. 2007). This attitude is strongly criticised by older generations, outlining the difference between the initial purposes of the institutions and the approach of younger migrants towards them. Large pre-accession communities can not only be seen as a facilitator for the adaptation process, but it also means that newcomers face a double challenge: it is not enough for
them to integrate into the UK society, they have to find their place among their fellow nationals as well (Parutis 2011).

The relationship of new waves of migrants with these centers is subject of constant change (Burrell 2009). Criticism from the side of newcomers highlights that the problem is not necessarily with the attitude of younger generations: the old institutions are simply not reflecting on their needs, having been established by a different generation, with different background, reasons for migration and preferences (Ryan et al. 2007). A modernization and update of these centers might be needed to form a place of cohesion and bridge between co-ethnic groups and the old and new waves of migrants.

Religion and the Catholic Church is strongly associated with the Polish identity, therefore the role of the religious communities and institutions of migrants is of high importance. These are centers of social networking, birthplaces of new ties and promoters of cohesion (Ryan 2010). This role is inevitable, although evidence shows that another cleavage within Polish groups reduces the effectivity of these institutions: the aspiration of higher social groups to differentiate themselves from low-status co-ethnic groups, as discussed earlier, results in a negative attitude towards Polish religious centers, with many people preferring English mass services and thus avoiding contact with compatriots (Gill 2011). Furthermore, these centers have a considerably strong power to influence community dynamics and public opinion and thus can not only be sources of cohesion but they can reinforce factional effects as well (White 2011).

The problem described in the previous paragraph outlines the main fracture within Polish communities: social differences. Belonging to a different class implicates a different lifestyle that affects everyday decisions and it has an impact on one’s opinion about people from other groups (Spencer et al. 2007). With institutions of cohesion not functioning effectively, the distance between these groups seems to be unbridgeable. Stronger competition within lower groups, mostly driven by weak ties, often results in inappropriate behavior and hostile attitude towards each other (Ryan et al. 2007). This causes embarrassment and further distancing in high-status migrants, leading to a widening social gap (Ryan 2010). The crucial point here is not necessarily the difference between co-ethnic social groups, but the attitude shown by the British towards them. Higher groups intend to avoid being identified by the negative experiences of local people
with their nationality. Enhancing the integration of lower groups to the recipient society might be the solution in this case, and language skills could play the main role.

4.4 Gendered roles and transnational ties

There are elements in the formation of interpersonal ties of migrants which show gendered differences. These are mainly driven by strong ties, e.g. family relationships (Liu 2011). A typical case when the wife joins the husband after the latter managed to complete the settlement process in the host country (Ryan et al. 2007). In this context the motives of migration and the establishment of new ties upon arrival are gendered, showing that strong ties are a more important driving force for female migrants.

Educational institutions, however, often mean a birthplace of new weak ties for mothers. Links established through these places offer a point of contact to the host society, or, in the case of ethnic schools, to the communities of co-ethnic groups (Burrell 2010). These weak ties can improve the speed and depth of the integration of the family, while providing them channels of information and support. Furthermore, migrant women have been reported to voice their opinion on other benefits of migration. The new environment offers an opportunity to reconsider existing gender roles and to establish customs that is more favourable for them, pointing towards a more complete emancipation (Cook et al. 2011).

As Ryan et al. (2007) point out, transnational care also tends to be a highly gendered area. The extended visits of parents and grandparents to the host country or to the country of origin are key elements in transnational social networks, and are driven by strong ties. (Ryan et al. 2009). These relationships provide emotional and physical support to individuals, and although being of a non-material nature, the importance of these links is hardly questionable.

A more direct and statistically measurable impact of transnational ties is the way how they influence decisions to migrate (Ryan et al. 2009). This area also shows gendered elements: according to Liu, in the case of male migrants the influence of weak ties are more important in making the decision about migration, while female migrants tend to rely more on strong ties (Liu 2011). The first flow of migration, caused by economic reasons and driven mainly by weak ties, have a direct impact on the second flow, through strong connections, friendships and family relationships. Unlike the first one, this second
wave does not reflect on the current economic situation but on the importance of personal relations. The presence of first-wave migrants in the destination country reduces the transaction costs for newcomers by providing them with information and support (Galgóczy et al. 2009). This leads to a decreased risk in the migration process, thus making it easier for the second wave to make the decision on moving. The correlation is emphasized in migrant network hypothesis, according to which individuals’ decision to migrate have a direct impact on the likelihood of migration in their social network (Liu 2011).

Transnational ties are not only connections that have tangible benefits and advantages; they are also used to satisfy emotional needs and to maintain the identity and the feeling of belonging to the country of origin (Glorius et al. 2013). Thanks to the wide variety of devices of telecommunication via Internet, maintaining ties with the homeland seems to be easier than ever. Broadband Internet connection is accessible for almost everyone, making everyday communication possible. It is important to note that apart from personal communication, the access to websites, TV channels and news of the homeland plays a significant role in forming individual identities in the new environment (Metykova 2010).

4.5 White racism?

Throughout the history racism was mainly seen as discrimination based on skin colour, which in most cases implicate deep cultural differences. However, recent experiences in the UK might indicate that a new kind of racism is emerging towards Central and Eastern European migrants. The phenomenon can be referred to as 'white racism', and it is characterised by leaving the old definition behind. It is arguable that A8 migrants have brought a cultural background with themselves that is particularly different from 'western' traditions, but not to an extent that can fully explain the core of the problem. The common European consciousness and heritage, if exists, could function as a meeting point between these cultures. While cultural differences might play a role in this case, I argue that the negative attitude of UK citizens towards A8 migrants is mainly due to economic reasons and it is being enhanced by the rhetoric of the press and the Government.

According to Blinder (2011), the nature and the context of interpersonal ties between the members of different groups can determine the attitude towards the other nationality. If contacts are frequent, the outcome is based on personal experiences and not on external
impacts. In these cases it is more likely to have a harmonious, balanced relationship between different ethnic groups. It is important to mention, however, that the context can change the whole pattern. This is likely to be the case for low-skilled UK citizens when competing for jobs with A8 migrants. Evidence shows that a lower position on the wage distribution scale increases the likelihood of having a negative attitude towards immigrants (Blinder 2011). Nonetheless, this does not mean that the problem is nonexistent in the higher segments.

Evidence on the negative impact of immigrant communities on native groups is mainly anecdotal. The UK press has a major role in spreading these views, being an important tool of forming the public opinion. The lack of research on the issue makes it difficult to measure the actual impact of discrimination on A8 migrants. This is partly due to the fact that the phenomenon is hard to define, since it is unprecedented (Spencer et al. 2007). However, ongoing research projects can help by, in many cases, disproving the arguments that give the foundation of tensions. Opinions on A8 migrants having a negative economic impact have been declared false earlier in this paper; furthermore, evidence has shown that the presence of large immigrant communities in local areas is in correlation with a reduced level of property crime, a result that is inconsistent with commonly voiced negative opinions on migrants increasing crime rates (Bell et al. 2011).

The Government’s rhetoric obviously does not help to improve the case, often expressing opinions that resemble that of the majority, regardless of being true or false. The issue, affecting the everyday life and the labour market opportunities of migrants, is something to be taken seriously and definitely not something to be reinforced by decisionmakers.

5. Policy implications

5.1 Language: the main issue

In most studies on A8 migration to the UK the importance of language skills proved to be a key element. Unlike in their country of origin, migrants experience that language knowledge directly influences their social status in the host country, which might not reflect their original social position. Without an improvement in this area, migrants can easily find themselves locked into the network of strong and weak ties within their ethnic community, experiencing a reduced level of mobility and a lack of opportunities (Ryan et
al. 2007). While individuals with poor language skills face these problems, highly skilled migrants experience exactly the opposite: they find their way into the host society without depending on co-ethnic relationships (Ryan et al. 2009). The advantages of this independency have been discussed previously, but the significance of language skills has to be emphasized again. This issue not only has a social aspect: security implications can also be made based on the problem. Individuals with poor language skills are exposed to the exploitation of employers through illegal methods, a dense and non-transparent network of sub-contracting chains and black labor. One can assume that A8 migrants are free of these threats, being able to work legally in the UK since the 2004 accession, but in reality the refusal of employers to register their workers and the vulnerability of migrants with poor language skills result in a dangerous environment for lower social groups (Anderson et al. 2009).

Improving the language skills of migrants should be the focal point of all policies aiming the problems of migration in the UK. A direct investment seems to be necessary in institutions that offer language courses for migrants free of charge or for reasonable prices (Spencer et al. 2007). The existing English as a Second Language (ESL) courses do not seem to take up this role, since the number of places is limited and the schedule is very often unfavourable for workers. Enhanced language skills could result in an increased level of upwards mobility and would facilitate the integration of migrant communities in the host society. While decision-makers tend to focus on quantitative data and legal restrictions, the emphasis should be on an in-depth examination of the current situation, seeking solutions that offer not only symptomatic cure, but a long-term effect. The role of language skills have to be in a leading position in every discussion on the issue.

5.2 The Government’s current immigration policy in the light of David Cameron’s 2014 immigration speech

When in 2004 the UK Government fully opened the labour market for A8 citizens, the country demonstrated its willingness to gain economic boost with the use of migrant workforce, and showed its commitment to EU principles such as the free movement of labour. However, in the next years it became evident that the Government had underestimated the volume of inflows and it did not always seem to be capable of managing the situation. A decreasing trust in the leaders led to central decisions that were
not based on hard evidence but rather anecdotes and a populist tone started to appear in the Government’s rhetoric on immigration (Galgóczy et al. 2009; Black et al. 2010). The public opinion that the situation is not controlled by the political leaders led to the questioning of benefits that A8 migration brought to the UK. During the recession these voices intensified and since 2010 the new Government coalition seems to be even more open to agree with these opinions and to address the issue the way British citizens demand it. In this paper I argued that, despite all difficulties and controversy, A8 migration is inevitably beneficial for the UK in both economic and social terms. In fact, this is what academic literature suggests considering every possible aspects of the problem. However, while recognizing the positive effects in some respect, the current policymaking seems to approach the issue with a less evidence-based attitude, proposing solutions that rather reflect the wishes of natives instead of researchers’ and experts’ suggestions. The immigration speech of the incumbent prime minister, David Cameron, held on the 25th of March 2014, displays this populist tone while highlighting the key points of future UK immigration policy.

In his speech Cameron presents the main elements of the new immigration policy which is primarily aiming to stop the practices of ‘something for nothing’, that is, the exploitation of the British welfare system by immigrants (Cameron 2014). It is important to note here that he does not make a distinction between A8 and other EU and non-EU nationals, instead he simply refers to the European Economic Area, and therefore the extent to which he attributes these problems to A8 migration is not clear. Nonetheless, considering the large number of A8 migrants entering the UK in the last decade, we can make the assumption that problems related to EEA countries are primarily attributed to Accession state citizens.

One of his key points is to reduce the volume of net migration from hundreds of thousand of people to tens of thousands on a yearly basis. This aim has been one of the cornerstones of recent UK immigration policy, however it seems that this number is not based on extensive research on the possible outcomes. In fact, the study and simulation of Sanchez-Martinez et al. (2013) suggest that if this plan becomes reality, the UK economy could experience a massive fall in terms of GDP per capita and productivity, given the fact that migrants tend to have an age distribution and labour market participation that is favourable for the overall economic performance of the country. According to the estimates of Sanchez-Martinez et al. (2013), by 2060 GDP per capita could decrease by
2.7% in the scenario of low migration, compared to the scenario with the current migration patterns.

Cameron mentions the necessity of changing the current welfare system in terms of accessibility and in some respect his opinion resembles that of academic researches. As he underlines it, steps need to be taken to create incentives for natives to take up employment instead of living on benefits, by restricting the access to it (Cameron 2014). This is in accordance with academic researches pointing out that low-paid positions with wages around the National Minimum Wage are not attractive for local people, since the standard of living available by claiming benefits and living only on them is not significantly lower (Lemos et al. 2008b). Where his opinion does not seem to reflect the results of academic literature is the argument that EEA migrants are responsible for exploiting the welfare system and the practice of British people ‘endlessly’ paying for this should be stopped. All academic studies on the issue prove this statement to be false, and during the research to the current paper I was not able to find any hard evidence that supports the idea of A8 immigrants arriving as ‘benefit tourists’. This is one of the points that can raise the fears that the Government’s immigration policy might not be embedded in an extensive system of statistical and empirical research. However, it is true that the high number of immigrants increases the pressure on public services and this might create additional expenditures; nonetheless, these effects seem to be offset by the positive contribution of migrants to the overall economic performance.

Cameron voices his opinion that employers should fill vacancies primarily with natives and the extensive use of immigrant labour is only acceptable in case of labour shortages. To reach this objective he emphasizes the importance of investing in trainings and enhancing the incentives for local people to take up employment (Cameron 2014). His argument seems to be logical, however, as it was argued earlier in this paper, the vast majority of A8 migrants do not compete with locals, being complements to native workforce. Furthermore, his willingness to end employer practices of giving competitive advantage for migrants in the labour market, seems to be based on the assumption that this preference is unfair towards UK citizens. As opposed to this, employers were reported to prefer migrant workers based on their work ethics, attitude and merits, that is, aspects that can be improved by native workers as well. It is possible, however, that his argument implicates economic advantages rather than other aspects, nonetheless, it was argued here that the wage effects of immigrants on the labour market are minimal.
In summary, the current UK immigration policy does not seem to address the issues of the immigrant population, putting more emphasis on common concerns and excluding problems expressed by academic researches and studies. The speech contains elements with regard to worldwide recognized issues such as deskilling and brain waste, but it does not offer a clear solution. It completely ignores problems such as unacceptable agency practices towards migrants and in other cases it seems to misunderstand the core of the issues. It is way too early, however, to predict the possible effects of the planned measures on A8 migration. It is also important to note here that, since the speech was addressed to the public, it might not include details that could further explain the basis of prospective steps. Political aims and motivations can have an effect on the actual delivery and content of the speech as well, especially before an event of high political significance such as the upcoming European Parliament election. Nonetheless, the main characteristics of future immigration policy can be identified. Based on the academic literature available on A8 migration, it is arguable that in its current form the planned policy might not offer a satisfactory solution to the most important immigration issues.

6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to contribute to the debate on the positive and negative impacts of A8 migration on the UK. The initial argument was that due to the highly beneficial nature of migration flows the Government has to apply an immigration policy that seeks to maximize these positive effects for both natives and migrants. In order to find the best solutions a deeper analysis of economic and social patterns is needed.

Evidence on the economic impact has shown that the contribution of A8 migrants to the UK economy was mainly positive. Despite the fears that Central and Eastern European citizens will exploit the British welfare system and thus put a financial burden on the state, A8 migrants are net contributors to the public purse. As far as their labour market impact is concerned, the high employment and low unemployment rates of immigrants demonstrate their willingness to work in the UK and not to live on benefits. The common fear that migrants reduce the labour market opportunities of natives seems to be false due to the fact that migrant and local workforce are in most cases complements to each other. It is important to note that the above mentioned problem can occur occasionally, particularly in the lower section of the wage distribution scale, where low-skilled native
workforce is competing with migrants. The effect of A8 migration on wages proved to be insignificant. Negative effects can be related to individual experiences, but a tendency cannot be identified. Furthermore, employers have an outstandingly positive opinion on A8 migrants, praising their reliability, attitude and effectiveness.

The examination of interpersonal ties and social networks of migrants is an important aspect on its own, however, it has significant consequences and effects on economic processes, and therefore the inclusion of this topic was indispensable. An analysis of weak and strong ties leads to a deeper understanding of how migrant communities work, and how they interact with the British society. This aspect is highly important in setting up measures that aim to solve social issues and to reduce tensions between migrants and natives. The significance of weak interpersonal ties is unquestionable for migrants during the process of labour market entry, settlement and integration. Evidence shows that migrants with lower language skills are more reliant on these ties and this dependance is not always beneficial for them. The lack of bridging ties in an individual’s social network can result in a limited access to information, and, as a consequence, reduced labour market opportunities and increased exposure to external effects. Understanding these connections is essential to be able to fight against discrimination and the occurrence of ‘white racism’.

Language issues proved to be a key element in basically every aspect of the experiences of migrants. It has a determinig force on the process of integration, the formation of social networks and ties, and thus it influences job opportunities and prospects. It has an impact on upwards labour market mobility as well. A8 migrants with good language skills are more likely to have promotions and to experience a massive wage growth in their first years after arrival, which also implicates a higher level of integration and a more favourable status in the UK society. Given the fact that language skills can be improved in a relatively short time, an individual’s investment in human capital can be extremely beneficial in this case.

The main argument of this paper is in accordance with its findings. A8 migration proved to be beneficial for the UK in almost every aspects and thus it has to be managed in a way that it offers the greatest possible advantages to the host country and to immigrants. The measures planned by the Government, however, do not correlate with these arguments. The tightening of the access to the welfare system seems to be one of the exceptions, however, with possible effects that can function as an incentive not only for migrants but
for natives as well. Its beneficial results can include an increased labour market efficiency as well as a decreased pressure on the public purse. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, according to the evidence, these positive effects would mainly derive from the higher activity and employment rates of native people, as opposed to the common view that these incentives are more important for migrants. A8 citizens already have higher employment and lower unemployment rates and a lower likelihood to claim benefits in comparison with natives and these measures could further improve this data. However, attributing the controversy and negative effects on the welfare system to the A8 migration flows is a false approach.

One of the key elements in the proposed UK immigration policy is the aim to reduce net migration from hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands per year. Apart from the questionability of the realization in a given legal framework, this step implicates serious consequences for the UK economy. Estimates on the possible outcomes of a drastic reduction show that while the Government could cut back benefit expenditures with this measure, the loss on the income side would easily exceed this saving. Evidence suggests that A8 migrants are net contributors to the governmental resources and a massive decrease in numbers would result in negative fiscal effects for the UK. Furthermore, this step could lead to labour force shortages in sectors that are outstandingly reliant on migrant workers, such as agriculture and food procession. This sectors can be considered as strategically important parts of the industry and therefore a malfunction in the system would affect the whole society.

One of the most important questions is the legal basis of the planned measures. With regard to non-EU immigrants the UK has a wider authority in terms of regulations and restrictions. In the case of A8 migrants, however, the initial point always has to be the EU membership of the country. The principle of the free movement of labour should remain intact in any case. EU citizens should enjoy equal rights in all member countries in terms of labour market opportunities, access to benefits and residence. In the light of EU norms the enforceability of the reduction in net migration is doubtful. One of the legal ways to achieve this objective is making the country less attractive for potential migrants. This solution is reflected in the measures aiming to restrict the access to the welfare system; however, this by itself might be insufficient. Other ways, such as the application of quotas or forms of positive labour market discrimination in favour of natives are against EU principles and thus should be avoided.
Recent data show that achieving the net migration target will be a challenging task: during the year between September 2012 and September 2013 net migration was 212,000 which marks a significant increase from the 154,000 of the previous year (ONS 2014). Despite these results the Government still insists on reaching the reduced target number. The data mentioned above might suggest two things. First, it seems that previous efforts aiming to reduce net migration proved to be insufficient and the volume of inflows is out of the Government’s control. Second, the failure to meet the preset target implicates the necessity of further restrictions, as it was proposed by David Cameron. After these tightenings are applied, it will be the EU’s duty to keep these measures and their effects under close scrutiny to prevent any situation where the rights of immigrants are curtailed.

The most important question of the future will be to see how the planned restrictions affect economic and social outcomes. As it was shown in the low migration scenario, these reductions can lead to decreasing GDP per capita rates in the long run (Sanchez-Martinez et al. 2013). Nonetheless, at this point short and medium term effects should be in the focal point of examination, since it is hard to imagine an international environment where the major factors remain intact in the next decades. After the 2007 enlargement of the EU the UK decided to impose temporary measures on citizens from the A2 countries, namely Bulgaria and Romania. These measures have expired by the end of 2013, and it is still too early to see what tendencies are appearing in this case, however the increasing numbers of net migration suggest that the task to control these numbers has not become easier. Further enlargements and a changing economic situation can also modify the outcomes and therefore the tools that are necessary to maximalize the advantages for both parts.

In summary it is arguable that despite the fact that the UK benefited from A8 migration, to maintain these good effects flexible and quick answers are needed in terms of policymaking. Creating an efficient, well-functioning immigration policy will always be one of the most difficult challenges in an ever-changing, interconnected Europe.
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List of tables

Table 1: 2011 Census results: Highest level of qualification, Accession and UK citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of qualification</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Accession</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>38 586</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
<td>998 500</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td>9 022 811</td>
<td>23,4%</td>
<td>161 409</td>
<td>16,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1,2,3</td>
<td>16 801</td>
<td>43,5%</td>
<td>226 242</td>
<td>22,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>1 549 934</td>
<td>4,0%</td>
<td>10 295</td>
<td>1,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 or above</td>
<td>9 980 928</td>
<td>25,9%</td>
<td>243 744</td>
<td>24,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualifications</td>
<td>1 230 814</td>
<td>3,2%</td>
<td>356 810</td>
<td>35,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ONS (2013a)
Table 2: 2011 Census results: Industry of Accession citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry of Accession citizens</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All categories: Industry</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>1,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>15,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy and water</td>
<td>1,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>10,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution, hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>26,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communication</td>
<td>9,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial, Real Estate, Professional and Administrative activities</td>
<td>17,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration, education and health</td>
<td>14,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4,5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ONS (2013a)
Table 3: 2011 Census results: Economic activity of Accession and UK citizens

Source: ONS (2013a)
Összefoglaló


A probléma fontosságát jelzi a tény, hogy a rendkívül nagy volumenű bevándorlás több szempontból is jelentős befolyással bírt a szigetországra. A munkaerőpiacra, gazdasági teljesítményre, jóléti intézményekre és a társadalomra gyakorolt hatások vitathatatlan állottak. A következő évtizedben az Egyesült Királyság történetének legnagyobb bevándorlási hullámát tapasztalta meg.

A probléma fontosságát jelzi a tény, hogy a rendkívül nagy volumenű bevándorlás több szempontból is jelentős befolyással bírt a szigetországra. A munkaerőpiacra, gazdasági teljesítményre, jóléti intézményekre és a társadalomra gyakorolt hatások vitathatatlan állottak. Az Egyesült Királyságban vert számos vitája ezekben a kérdésekben, amelyeket az életviselők és közösségek között folytattak.

Dolgozatom tézise szerint az A8 országokból történő migráció túlnyomórészt pozitív hozadékú volt az Egyesült Királyság számára, ezért az ország feladata, hogy egy olyan bevándorlás politikát kövesse, amely a lehető legkedvezőbb körülményeket teremtsön a migránsoknak. Ezen kívül nagy jelentősége van a munkások kizártulnásítása mellettől szabad mértékű alkalmazásának is. A bevándorlás egy eszközt jelent az ország számára, amely az egyetermű és gazdasági versenyelőnyeit teheti szívesen. Egy olyan politika, amely tudatosan épít ezen előnyök kihasználására, egy újabb recesszió esetén is viszonylagosan kedvező helyzetbe hozhatja az országot.

Az A8 migráció hatásait érintő viták elsősorban a szabad munkaerőáramlás eltérő értelmezéseből születnek. Az újonnan csatlakozott országok állampolgárai az Európai Unió alapelvei szerint való átültetéseket értelmezik, egy olyan jogként, amely elidegenítetetlen bármely uniós polgártól. Ezzel szemben az Egyesült Királyságban elterjedt nézet azt sugallja, hogy az A8 országokból bevándorló népesség a helyiek munkaerőpiaci lehetőségeit veszélyezteti és a segélyekhez való hozzáféréssel anyagi
terhet jelent a szigetország számára. Mindezek ellenére fontos kihangsúlyozni, hogy a
valós következtetések levonásának és a politikai stratégiák felállításának mindig szigorúan
bizonyítékokra alapozzottnak kell lennie.

A dolgozat célja az volt, hogy értékelje az A8 migrációnak az Egyesült Királyságra
gyakorolt gazdasági és társadalmi hatásait, és ennek fényében elemezze a kormány
jelenlegi bevándorlási politikáját. A fókuszpontban olyan folyamatok, események és
rendszerek állnak, amelyek az Egyesült Királyság területén mennek végbe vagy ahhoz
szorosan kapcsolódnak. A témát komplexitása és terjedelmi korlátok miatt a folyamatnak a
küldő országokra gyakorlot hatása nem képezi jelen írás tárgyát, bár az eredmények
helyenként egyértelműen utalnak ezekre a hatásokra.

A nemzetközi migráció vizsgálatakor elengedhetetlen az interdicsziplináris megközelítés.
A gazdasági, szociális, demográfiai és politikai folyamatok között számtalan kapocs
található, és egyik sem értelmezhető a másik alapos tanulmányozása nélkül. A
dolgozatban a probléma gazdasági vetülete kerül előterbe az általános gazdasági
teljesítményre, a jóléti rendszerre, a munkaerőpiaci viszonyokra, bérekre és
foglalkoztatottsági adatokra gyakorolt hatások elemzése során. Ezután szociológiai
megközelítésben vizsgáltam a mikroszintű folyamatokat, különös tekintettel az egyének
személyes kapcsolati hálóira, ezeknek a makroszintű tendenciákban megmutatkozó
hatásaira. Végül a probléma politikai aspektusát elemeztem, a szükségesnek itt lépéseket
meghatározásával és ezeknek a jelenlegi kormányzati politikával való összevetésével. A

Dolgozatom eredményei részben a témában elérhető tudományos irodalom
másodlemezésből származnak, ez egész részben az elsődleges források elemzése, amely
statisztikai adatok és politikai beszéd vizsgálatát is tartalmazza.

A dolgozat eredményei alátámasztották tézisem. Az A8 migráció szinte minden
	tekintetben előnyösnek bizonyult az Egyesült Királyság számára, így oly módon kell
kezelni, hogy az a lehető legtöbb hasznot biztosítsa a fogadó ország és a migránsok
számára is. Minden félelem ellenére, amely negatív gazdasági hatásoktól, romló
munkaerőpiaci lehetőségektől, a migránsok jóléti rendszerben tanúsított visszaélésszerű
magatartásától tartott, a bizonyítékok arra utalnak, hogy a bevándorlók nettó hozzájárulást
biztosítanak az államkasszának, köszönhetően magas foglalkoztatottsági és alacsony
munkanélküliségi rátaújuknak. Az esetek nagy részében a migráns munkaerő kiegészíti a
helyi erőforrásokat, nem pedig versenytársa annak; ez a kulcsa a tényeknek, hogy negatív
hatások a bérekre és a foglalkoztatottságra nem vagy csak rendkívül korlátozottan állapíthatóak meg. Ilyen hatások nagyobb számban fordulhatnak elő az alacsony képzetséget igénylő, alacsony fizetési sávba tartozó állásoknál, de az összesített eredményeket nézve ezek jelentéktelennek tekinthetők. Ezen túlmenően a munkáltatók részéről túlnyomórészt pozitív visszajelzések érkeztek az A8 migránsokkal kapcsolatban, kihangsúlyozva, hogy az új munkaerő egy megbízható és hatékony erőforrást jelent számukra.

A személyes kapcsolatok, ismeretségi hálózatok vizsgálata önmagában is nagy jelentőséggel bír, ám gazdasági következményei is vitathatatlanok. Ezen kapcsok elemzése lehetővé teszi, hogy megértseük a migráns közösségek működését és a helyi társadalommal való kölcsönhatását. Ez az aspektus rendkívül fontos a szükséges döntések meghatározásában, amelyek a szociális problémák megoldását és a helyiek és migránsok közötti feszültségek csökkentését célozzák. A bizonyítékok alapján az alacsonyabb szintű nyelvismertettel rendelkező bevándorlók sokkal inkább ráultak ezeknek a hálózatoknak a működésére, mint jobb nyelvtudású társaik, és ez a függőség nem feltétlenül előnyös a számukra. A híd szerepét betöltő személyes kapcsolatok, tehát a bizonyos pontok közötti egyedüli kapcsolatot jelentő ismeretségek kiemelt fontosságúak, mivel ezek biztosítják a minél szélesebb körű információhoz való hozzáférést. Minél zártabb egy egyén ismeretségi hálózata, annál kevesebb ilyen kapocs található benne, és ez hátrányos helyzetbe hozhatja őt munkaerőpiacra, valamint a külső hatásoknak is fokozottabban lesz kitéve. Ezen kötődések vizsgálata a bevándorlók ellen irányuló „féhér rasszizmus” megértésében és leküzdésében is kulcsfontosságú.

A nyelvtudás a migránsok tapasztalatainak minden aspektusában kiemelt fontosságúnak bizonyult. Befolyásolja az integráció folyamatát, a kapcsolati hálók kialakulását és így az egyén munkaerőpiaci kilátásait is. A felfelé irányuló mobilitás egyik egyértelmű előfeltételének tekinthetőjük. A jó nyelvtudással rendelkező A8 migránsoknak sokkal jobb esélyeik vannak magasabb pozíciók megszerzésére és így egy kedvezőbb fizetési sávba való bekerülésre, mindez hatással van az integrációjuk mélységére és sebességére, valamint a társadalmi státuszukra is. Miután a nyelvtudás akár rövid idő alatt is jelentősően fejlesztheti, az ilyen irányú befektetés rendkívül hatékonyan megtérülhet az egyén számára.
A fentebb bemutatott eredményekkel a brit kormány tervezett lépései nem mutatnak tökéletes összhangot. A jóléti intézményekhez, segélyekhez és egyéb juttatásokhoz való hozzáférés szigorítása természetesen önmagában is pozitív hozzáférést lehet, ösztönzőként funkcionálva a munkanélküliek számára, és csökkentve a nyomást az államkasszán. Fontosnak tartom azonban megjegyezni, hogy a bizonyítékok alapján ezek a pozitív hatások főként a helyiek megnövekedett aktivitásából származhatnának, nem pedig az amúgy is kedvezőbb mutatókat produkáló bevándorlók adataiból. Az A8 migránsok magasabb fogyasztók és alacsonyabb munkanélküliség rátákat produkálnak a helyiekkel való összehasonlításban, valamint kisebb valószínűséggel igényelnek segélyeket. Mindezek fényében érthetetlennek tűnik a tervezett változtatásokat a bevándorlók hatásának tulajdonítani, olyan érvek alapján, amelyekre kézzelfogható bizonyíték a mai napig nem áll rendelkezésre.

A Cameron-kormányzat migrációs politikájának egyik kulcseleme a nettó bevándorlási adatokat az évenkénti több százéves csupán több tízezresre szorítani. A változtatásnak, jogi végrehajthatóságán túlmutatóan, komoly gazdasági következmények lennének. A bizonyítékok azt támasztják alá, hogy bár a lépéssel csökkenteni lehetne a jóléti-szociális kiadásokat, ám a bevételi oldalon jelentkező kiesés ezt jelentősen meghaladná. Ezen túlmenően, a lépés munkaerőhiányhoz vezethet azokban a szektorokban, amelyek fokozottan veszik igénybe az A8 migránsok munkáját, így többek között a mezőgazdaságban és az élelmiszeriparban. Ezek a szektorok stratégiai fontosságúnak tekinthetőek, így az esetleges problémák a teljes brit társadalmat érintenék.

Az egyik legfontosabb kérdés a tervezett lépések jogi alapja. Az EU-n kívülről érkező bevándorlás alapelvének minden esetben érintetlenül kell maradnia. Az EU állampolgárainak szélesebb szabályozási és szigorítási jogköré van, ellenben az A8 migráció esetében a kiindulópontnak minden képpen az uniós tagságnak kell lennie. A szabad munkaerőáramlás alapelve lenne. A szabad munkaerőáramlás alapelvének minden esetben érintetlenül kell maradnia. Az EU állampolgárainak egyenlő jogokat kell élvezniük minden tagországból, munkaerőpiaci lehetőségek, szociális jogok és lakhatás tekintetében is. Az Európai Unió normáinak minden esetben legalábbis kétséges. Az egyik jogosuter és járható út az lehet, ha a kormányzat kevésbé vonzó célpontra teszi az országot a bevándorlók számára. Ez a szándék tükrözödik a jóléti intézményekhez való hozzáférés szigorításában, bár ez a módszer önmagában elégtelennek bizonyulhat. Egyéb intézkedések, mint például kvóták bevezetése vagy pozitív diszkrimináció alkalmazása a helyi munkaerő favorizálására mind
olyan lépések, melyek ellentétesek az EU alapelveivel és így kerülendőek. Mindenesetre a tény, hogy a kormányzat egyelőre nem tudta elérni a kitűzött alacsonyabb számokat, egyszerre utal az eddigi intézkedések hatástalanságára és arra, hogy további szigorítások várhatóak a közeljövőben. Miután ezek az intézkedések életbe lépnek, az EU feladata lesz, hogy szoros ellenőrzés alatt tartsa a rendszer működését annak érdekében, hogy megelőzzön minden olyan szituációt, amelyben a bevándorlók jogai csorbulhatnak.

A jövő legfontosabb kérdése az lesz, hogy megvalósulásuk esetén milyen gazdasági és társadalmi hatásai lesznak a tervezett szigorításoknak. Jelen pillanatban mindazonáltal a rövid- és középtávú hatások vizsgálata a legfontosabb, hiszen nehéz azt feltételezni, hogy a nemzetközi környezetet alakító legfontosabb tényezők a következő évtizedekben változatlanok maradnak. Az EU esetleges további bővítése és a változó gazdasági tényezők mind azt eredményezhetik, hogy a migráció jótékony hatásainak kiaknázását célzó eszközök is eltérőek lehetnek a jövőben. Összességében kijelenthető, hogy bár az Egyesült Királyság profitált az A8 migráció hatásaiból, gyors és rugalmas válaszok szükségesek a döntéshozók részéről ahhoz, hogy ezeket a kedvező folyamatokat a továbbiakban is érezhesse az ország. Egy hatékony, jól működő bevándorlási politika megalkotása mindig is az egyik legnagyobb kihívás lesz az egyre több szállal összekötött, örökké változó Európában.