

Accession 8 migration and the proactive and defensive engagement of social citizenship

YHRMP ID

22

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Aims

The paper aims to shed some light on the impact of A8 migration on employment opportunities and housing provision in the inner-city communities that are host to many new migrant groups.

Methodology

The qualitative data presented in this paper was generated in a study concerned with the needs, perceptions and experiences of A8 migrants and established communities in a northern English city. The study used purposive sampling to recruit 89 respondents. A8 migrants and established community members were recruited through contacts with local community centres. In total, 11 focus groups [6-9 respondents each], and 10 semi-structured interviews with key informants [for example recruitment agencies, employers, community support workers] were conducted. Three focus groups with A8 migrants [Polish men, Polish women and Slovak mixed gender]; one focus group with Roma migrants; 4 parallel focus groups with members of established West Indian, Pakistani and 'white' host communities in neighbourhoods that had experienced significant numbers of recent A8 migrants; and 3 focus groups with agencies involved in the provision and/or administration of local public services, [for example City Council, primary care trusts, housing providers and schools] were conducted.

Key issues

The paper explores the ways in which established communities experience and make sense of the local impact of new migration within their neighbourhoods. The belief that newly arrived migrants are in competition with established communities for local jobs and welfare resources remains a central issue for established communities, most of whom assume A8 migration to have a negative impact. The report identifies 'proactive and defensive citizenship engagement' among A8 migrants and the established communities.

Conclusions

The paper highlights that established communities' concerns, rather than being simply an expression of intolerance, have their basis in how the expansion of the EU facilitates opportunities for the 'proactive engagement' of citizenship status among A8 migrants, whilst often triggering a more 'defensive engagement' among members of local host communities. Overall, it is argued

that A8 migration brought substantial economic gains as well as significant challenges to local communities.

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Migrant Group

EU migrants

Topic

Housing and welfare

Integration

Migrant workers

Public perceptions

Place

Leeds

West Yorkshire

Year

2012

Resource Type

Journal article

Resource

Journal of Social Policy

Publisher

Cambridge University Press

Volume

41

Number

2

Pages

329-347

Source URL: <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/accession-8-migration-and-proactive-and-defensive-engagement-social-citizenship>