

Migrant carers for the elderly: Lessons from the case of Slovak care workers in Austria

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Care workers in the context of migration from Slovakia

- *Since 1989 a latent component of migration to the „West“*
- Slovakia part of the EU (May 2004) and Schengen area (Dec 2007)
- Legalisation of around the clock care work in Austria (between 2006 - 2008)
- *Until the 2008 crisis in the shadow of post-2004 migration from Slovakia to the UK and Ireland*
- Full labour market access for Slovak citizens in Austria (May 2011)
- *Currently – the rich neighbour (Austria) is (finally) becoming a top destination*

Approaches to female migration

- Migration of (mostly) female care workers is in the current migration research part of the broader topic of female migration which is usually thematized in two ways:
 - **Gender perspective:** focus on transnational or global care chains (Hochschild 2000; Yeates 2009; Garey and Hansen 2011; Nordberg 2012), transnational care spaces (Gendera 2007, 2011), how migrant carers enable the (mostly female) relatives of the cared for person to proceed in their work life (e.g. Näre 2013), care drain (e.g. Piperno 2012), the general peculiarity of domestic employment, its ambiguous employer–employee relationships and the use of power in the often semi-formal employment settings (Anderson 2000; Lutz 2004, 2008).
 - **Demand side perspective:** domestic care work as a product of dual labour market (Piore 1979), recruitment of workers into sectors unattractive to nationals, policies in the receiving country that enable or support such types of employment (e.g. various cash for care schemes).

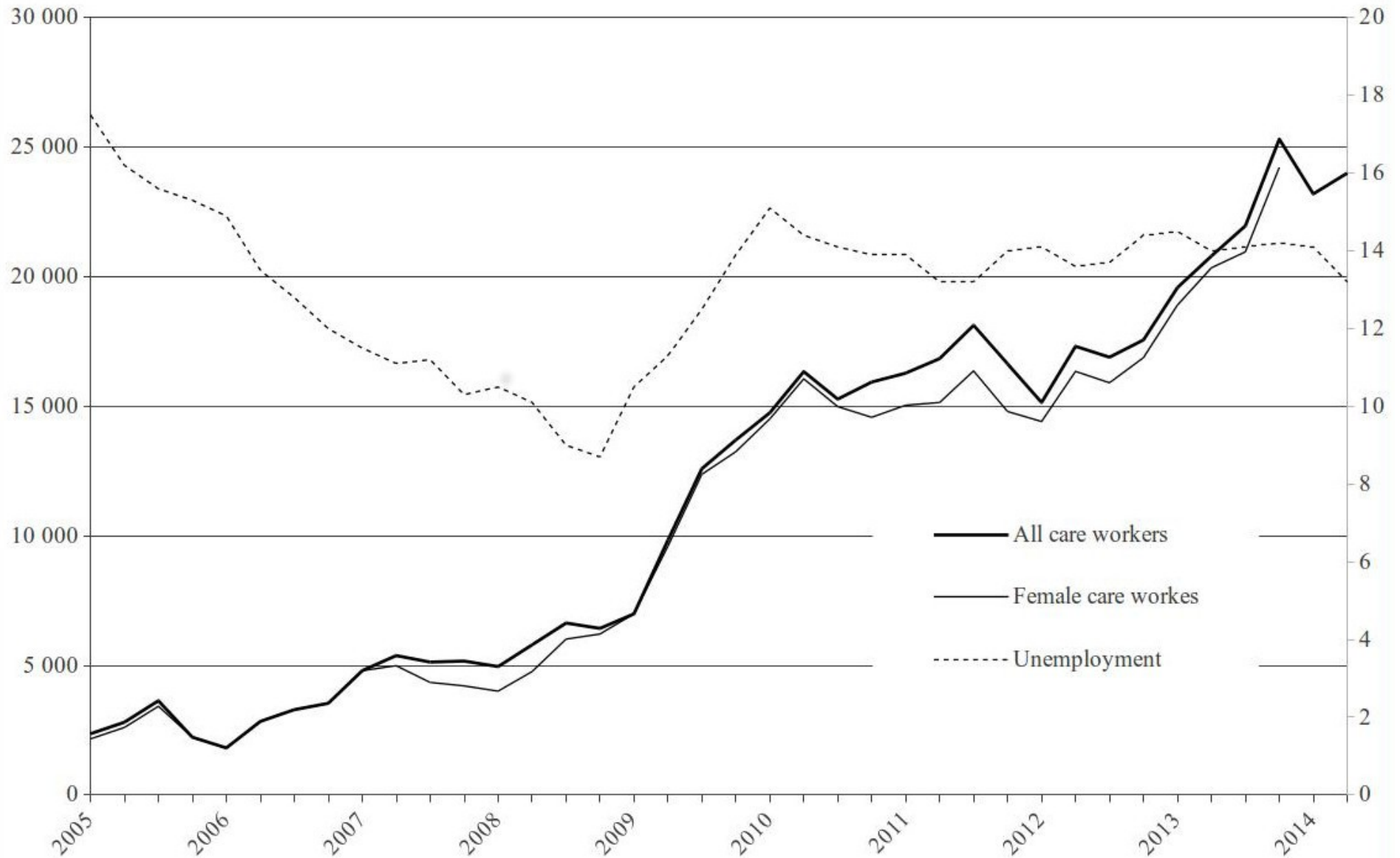
Current approach

- Qualitative and policy analysis oriented approaches of the current research have downplayed that care workers are primarily labour migrants.
- Important to focus on individual and structural factors in the sending country which have always been part of the classical approaches to labour migration.
- The explanatory power demonstrated in two related examples:
 - The popularity of care work in Austria in recent years is better explained by the crisis induced unemployment level rise in Slovakia than by the legalization and care policies in Austria.
 - The importance of Slovakia-related employment characteristics of the care workers in explaining their earnings in Austria.

The data - three sources

- cAreworkers 2011 survey, cca 60 questions focusing on the work situation, tasks carried out and overall satisfaction in Austria as well as on prior employment, care obligations and family background in Slovakia. N= 151, fieldwork in November 2011.
- Slovak Labour Force Survey (also pre-2008 data)
- Austrian data on registered trade licenses and social security contributions of the legal care workers (since 2008)

Slovak care workers in Austria and unemployment in Slovakia, Slovak LFS



Changes after 2008

- Unemployment rise in 2009 followed by a rise in numbers of care workers in Austria
- Decreasing importance of the wider Bratislava region
- Changes in the composition of Slovak care workers in Austria

The three generations of carers in the cAreworkers 2011 survey

- Pre legalisation (1991 - 2006)
- Pre crisis (2007 – 2008)
- Crisis (2009 - 2011)

Employment situation in Slovakia before starting care work in Austria

| | 1991 – 2006 | 2007 – 2008 | 2009 - 2011 | Total |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| employed / self-employed | 52 | 52 | 41 | 48 |
| maternal / parental leave | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| unemployed | 37 | 39 | 48 | 42 |
| retired | 9 | 9 | 7 | 8 |

Immediate reason for doing carework in Austria

| | 1991 – 2006 | 2007 – 2008 | 2009 - 2011 | Total |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| job loss / unemployment | 24 | 31 | 38 | 32 |
| earnings / finances | 65 | 56 | 58 | 60 |
| non economic reasons | 9 | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| unclear | 2 | 7 | 0 | 3 |

Qualification for carework

| | 1991 – 2006 | 2007 – 2008 | 2009 - 2011 | Total |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| health care education with work experience | 30 | 22 | 10 | 20 |
| health care education without work experience | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 |

Command of German

| | 1991 – 2006 | 2007 – 2008 | 2009 - 2011 | Total |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| only basics | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| I manage a basic conversation | 26 | 38 | 47 | 38 |
| I manage to have a complex conversation | 46 | 47 | 32 | 40 |
| my command of German is very good | 26 | 16 | 18 | 20 |

Means of transport when commuting

| | 1991 – 2006 | 2007 – 2008 | 2009 - 2011 | Total |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| own car | 22 | 16 | 7 | 14 |
| public transport | 20 | 33 | 23 | 25 |
| „taxi“ provided by the agency | 30 | 20 | 35 | 29 |
| „taxi“ organized individually | 20 | 22 | 28 | 24 |
| combination (public transport + taxi) | 7 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| other | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

What explains the income level of the carers in Austria?

- Socio-demographic variables (age, education, command of German, International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI) of prior employment, work experience as a qualified nurse)
- Migrant networks and social capital
- Workload and tasks
- Personal unemployment experience and regional unemployment level in Slovakia

Income of Slovak female carers in Austria, standardised OLS regression coefficients

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|---|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Beta | Sig. | Beta | Sig. |
| Age | 0,013 | 0,893 | | |
| Education | 0,015 | 0,884 | | |
| Command of German | 0,237 | 0,015 | 0.209 | 0.015 |
| ISEI | -0,192 | 0,039 | -0.197 | 0.018 |
| Nurse with employment experience | 0,004 | 0,970 | | |
| Years working in Austria | -0,025 | 0,788 | | |
| Employed via informal networks | 0,096 | 0,270 | | |
| Total weekly workload (in hours) | -0,055 | 0,526 | | |
| Tasks | -0,078 | 0,353 | | |
| Caring for a couple | 0,042 | 0,627 | | |
| Health situation of patient | -0,023 | 0,786 | | |
| Providing only care work (no nursing) | -0,226 | 0,011 | -0.219 | 0.007 |
| Unemployed before work in Austria | -0,251 | 0,008 | -0.264 | 0.002 |
| Regional unemployment level in Slovakia in 2009 | -0,238 | 0,008 | -0.263 | 0.002 |
| R ² | 0,333 | | 0,312 | |
| N | 118 | | 118 | |

What explains the income level of the carers in Austria?

- Variables from the ‘unemployment’ group are the strongest predictors. Having been unemployed before taking up care work in Austria generally means accepting a significantly lower income from care work. Also: The higher the regional unemployment level, the lower are the wages the carers are willing to accept.
 - Level of income a care worker is willing to accept is better explained by her situation on the sending country’s labour market than by the actual tasks performed in the Austrian household
- No returns to education, however, command of German significant for achieving higher income.
- Finding work through personal networks does not influence earnings. This could point to limits of the ‘quality’ or usefulness of personal networks in this regard.
- Neither the total weekly workload, the performed tasks, providing care to a couple, nor the health situation of the patient had a significant impact on the income. The only exception is the ‘Providing only care work’ dummy variable. Care workers who stated that they only provide care work and no nursing earned less.

Conclusion: The importance of the Slovak context

- Factors in the sending country important in shaping the size, composition and labour market outcomes of current care worker migration from Slovakia to Austria.
- Main increase occurred a year after the legalisation in Austria = ‘crisis hypothesis’. Changes in the composition of Slovak care workers - care workers who came to Austria after 2008 were more often previously unemployed and from regions of Slovakia with high unemployment. At the same time there was a decline in the share of qualified nurses and workers coming from the more affluent parts of Slovakia bordering with Austria (shift from search for better pay to an escape from unemployment).

Conclusion II.

- Personal and contextual variables in Slovakia are important. Experience with unemployment and average unemployment level in the region of Slovakia shape income in Austria. Neither the total workload, nor the health situation of the patient influences the care worker's income (i.e. secondary labour market).
- The generally high level of unemployment in Slovakia could be an explanation for the popularity of elder care in Austria compared to the economically similarly well off Austrian and Slovak neighbours – Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Future scenarios ...

- Share of carers from Slovakia in Austria is declining (from 83% / 79% in 2008 to 60% / 53% in 2013).
- Slovak care workers in Austria face competition from carers from “cheaper” countries – e.g. the share of Romanian carers in Austria is rising (from 7% in 2008 to 31% / 25% in 12 / 2012).
- Will the ageing East of Slovakia be cared for by unemployed Ukrainian women?
 - Visa free travel is a necessary precondition.
 - Current old age pension in Slovakia (average net pensions over 400 Euro) is on par with the Czech republic and a multiple of the average wage in the Ukraine.