



# Should I stay or should I go? What we can learn from working patterns of Central and Eastern European labour migrants about the nature of present-day migration

Anita Strockmeijer, Paul de Beer & Jaco Dagevos

To cite this article: Anita Strockmeijer, Paul de Beer & Jaco Dagevos (2019) Should I stay or should I go? What we can learn from working patterns of Central and Eastern European labour migrants about the nature of present-day migration, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45:13, 2430-2446, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2018.1562326](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1562326)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1562326>



© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 06 Jan 2019.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 819



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 2 [View citing articles](#)

# Should I stay or should I go? What we can learn from working patterns of Central and Eastern European labour migrants about the nature of present-day migration

Anita Strockmeijer<sup>a</sup>, Paul de Beer<sup>a</sup> and Jaco Dagevos<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands;

<sup>b</sup>Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the extent to which the employment histories of Central and Eastern EU (CEE) labour migrants exhibit patterns of temporary, circular or settlement migration. We expect to find these diverse and changeable patterns following the phenomenon of ‘New European Migration’. By distinguishing between working patterns we are able to describe actual migration behaviour to the destination country more accurately. We use wage data to track a cohort of all employees who worked in the Netherlands in June 2010, for a period of five years. Our findings show that the majority of CEE labour migrants stopped working as employees in the Netherlands within five years, mostly after an uninterrupted single period of employment. In addition, a third of CEE labour migrants engage in settlement migration, working continuously in the Netherlands for a long period. Only a very small proportion can be considered as circular migrants. This contradicts our expectations regarding New European Migration, that there would be fewer labour migrants with uninterrupted periods of work and more labour migrants working for shorter periods.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 23 February 2018  
Accepted 7 December 2018

## KEYWORDS

Labour migrants; migration patterns; New European Migration; Central and Eastern EU countries; the Netherlands

## 1. Introduction

One of the main consequences of the enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007 was the opening up of the labour market to new Member States. Employers welcomed the opportunity to recruit new labour migrants, and many residents of the new Member States made use of the opportunity to work in Western Europe in order to earn higher wages.

Large numbers of labour migrants from the new Central and Eastern Member States (CEE) have come to work in the Netherlands in the last ten years, and forecasts for the coming decade suggest no let-up in this labour migration. Labour migrants who are residents of Member States of the European Union do not need a work permit to work in the Netherlands, making it relatively easy for Dutch employers to employ this new group of

**CONTACT** Anita Strockmeijer  [a.w.strockmeijer@uva.nl](mailto:a.w.strockmeijer@uva.nl)

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

workers (Berkhout, Bisschop, and Volkerink 2014) who want to work under Dutch working conditions and terms of employment (Heyma, Bisschop, and Biesenbeek 2018).

The arrival of large numbers of CEE migrants has awakened a debate among researchers and policymakers about the nature of this migration. When they became eligible for free movement of workers in 2007, 63,020 CEE migrants were in paid employment in the Netherlands; 10 years later their number had increased to 277,020 (Statistics Netherlands 2018). For a long time the dominant image – or perhaps we should say, hope – was the migration to the Netherlands would mainly involve circular migration, whereby labour migrants return to their country of origin once their employment in the Netherlands comes to an end, and come back to the Netherlands when they are needed again (Dagevos 2011; Weltevrede et al. 2009). The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 led to migration flows which were more diverse and variable than the ‘old’ migration flows (Favell 2008). The various migration typologies used in scientific studies mainly focus on the countries of origin and destination as indicators for the changed migration patterns. In this article, we differentiate between working patterns, which can be mapped to migration patterns. Using this approach, our study provides interesting insights into the differences between indirect measurements and actual migration behaviour in the destination country. In this study, we attempt to answer the question: To what extent do the working patterns of labour migrants from Central and Eastern EU countries indicate patterns of temporary, circular and settlement migration?

## 2. Growing variation in migration?

EU enlargement and the related labour mobility prompted a debate on whether present-day migration is different in nature from the earlier waves of post-colonial migration, asylum migration and migration of guest workers and their families (Favell 2008; Fermin 2016; Glorius, Grabowska, and Kuvik 2013). The ‘new’ forms of migration that are currently manifesting themselves in Europe are posited to be more diverse and changeable than the ‘old’ migration (Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006) and characterised by temporary and return migration (Engbersen and Snel 2013). A new system of European migration is being forged (Favell 2008). Migration of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s was often a one-off decision, with migrants either returning to their country of origin after a short or longer period or remaining in the host country. Today, workers from Central and Eastern Member States can come and go as they please. This would suggest a reduction in settlement migration and more temporary and/or circular migration. Circular migration is sometimes described as ‘temporary movements of a repetitive character either formally or informally across borders, usually for work, involving the *same* migrants’ (Wickramasekara 2011, 1). A characteristic of circular migration is thus the repetitive pattern of periods of temporary work in the destination country by a migrant.

Temporary (one-time) migration and circular migration are made easier by the short distances within Europe, making it unnecessary to settle permanently in the destination country (Weltevrede et al. 2009). CEE migrants can spend a few weeks or months working continuously in the host country before returning to their country of origin for a shorter or longer period. The physical proximity combined with cheap air and bus

tickets make it easier to travel back and forth between the country of destination and the country of origin (Engbersen et al. 2013).

The preference of employers to accommodate peaks in the work or seasonal work using temporary workers also contributes to the more temporary and circular nature of present-day migration, it is argued. This would moreover fit in with the preference of CEE workers for temporary work (Berkhout, Bisschop, and Volkerink 2014; SER 2014). Employers do not need to apply for work permits for employees from within the EU. According to Ruhs and Anderson (2010), there is a dynamic and reciprocal matching of supply and demand: what employers look for is heavily influenced by what they think they can obtain from the labour supply. A quarter of CEE labour migrants come to the Netherlands via temporary employment agencies (Strockmeijer, De Beer, and Dagevos 2017). The agency arranges the practical aspects such as the contract, travel, workplace supervision and if possible accommodation. This gives labour migrants flexibility because they do not have to seek work in the destination country themselves and are also able to spend time in their home country.

The migration flows from Central and Eastern to Western Europe have prompted several researchers to investigate the migration strategies of these migrants (Nijhoff and Gordano 2016; Drinkwater and Garapich 2015; Engbersen et al. 2013; Grabowska 2013; Engbersen et al. 2011; Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007; Düvell and Vogel 2006). The underlying question in many cases is to what extent the mobility is temporary – how likely it is that Central and Eastern European labour migrants will settle in the destination country for an extended period or permanently – and to what extent ‘new’ forms of migration are emerging. The studies differentiate between migration patterns and types which differ from each other slightly in terms of nomenclature and focus, but which also exhibit major similarities. The studies cited below differentiate between settlement migration, migration focused on return to the home country, such as circular and seasonal migration, and ‘uncertain’ migration where migrants do not know how long they will stay.

In the Netherlands, Engbersen et al. (2011, 2013) used data on Bulgarian, Romanian and Polish labour migrants to differentiate between four migration patterns based on the ties with the destination country and ties with the home country. Ties with the destination country are measured using aspects such as knowledge of the Dutch language, contacts with the Dutch population and being entered in the population register. The financial and social obligations in the home country and having a partner and children in the home country help determine the ties with the country of origin. Weak or strong ties with the home country and the destination country lie at the basis of the different migration patterns identified: circular and seasonal migration, transnational migration, settlement migration and footloose migration. Circular and seasonal migrants are not tied to the destination country, but maintain close links with their home country. The four migration patterns do not occur to an equal extent; circular and seasonal migration accounts for 23% of migrants. Transnational migrants have strong ties with the home country as well as with the destination country; they account for 13% of migrants. Settlement migrants (22%) are not attached to their home country, but have developed strong ties with the destination country; the fourth group, footloose migrants, are not attached to either country. This group accounts for 41% of labour migrants from Bulgaria, Romania and Poland.

Düvell and Vogel (2006) also produce a typology of four migrant types based on ties with the family in the home country in combination with duration of stay in the destination country; they use the terms returners, settlers, transnationals and global nomads.

Returners and global nomads show similarities with the circular and seasonal migration (returners) and footloose migration of Engbersen et al. (2011). Duration of stay in the host country is also an important aspect in the classification applied by Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich (2007). The position that migrants themselves believe they occupy in relation to their migration strategy leads to four migration types according to these authors: storks, hamsters, stayers and searchers. Storks are found mostly in low-paid occupations and spend part of each year abroad. Hamsters are labour migrants who migrate once or a few times a year and try to earn as much money as possible during that time. Stayers intend to remain for a long period, like settlement migrants, while searchers, akin to footloose migrants and global nomads, do not know how long they plan to stay.

Migration patterns not only differ from each other: individual migrants can also change their minds over time about how long they propose to stay, making individual migration patterns dynamic (Burrell 2010; Engbersen et al. 2011). The uncertainty of migrants about how long they will stay in the destination country is characteristic of intra-EU mobility (Bygnes and Erdal 2017; Kleinepier, De Valk, and Van Gaalen 2015; Nijhoff and Gordano 2016; Drinkwater and Garapich 2015; Wolf 2015). Migrants find it difficult to plan their future and have doubts about whether they will remain, return home or move on to another country (Nijhoff and Gordano 2016). This uncertainty about how long they will remain continues during their stay in the destination country. ‘They (Polish labour migrants) initially intended to stay (in the Netherlands) for a short period, but continually extended their stay. Before they know it, they have been here for a long time (...). Yet many of them still have doubts and suffer homesickness’ (Wolf 2015, 8). The longer migrants stay in the destination country, the less likely it is that they will leave (Pronk 2015).

For many, the decision of whether to remain or return is dictated by economic factors (Wolf 2015). It is not the income in itself, but satisfaction with that income which weighs in the balance of whether to stay for a long(er) period in the destination country; socio-economic factors play a very limited role (Drinkwater and Garapich 2015). Migrants from Central and Eastern EU countries are generally young, not (yet) married and less fixed in their ideas about the duration of their migration. Many have changeable and open ideas about their future and consequently, their migration plans are not worked out in detail (Glorius, Grabowska, and Kuvik 2013). As regards the likelihood of return migration, men are more likely to leave the Netherlands, while women more often tend to stay (Kleinepier, De Valk, and Van Gaalen 2015).

Earlier research thus shows that temporary and circular forms of migration are relatively common, while settlement migration is declining. Earlier research also reveals that migration patterns change as the duration of stay lengthens. We test whether these findings are confirmed using an alternative method for measuring migration patterns based on actual working patterns in the destination country.

### 3. Data and methods

#### 3.1. Data

This article is based on an administrative database that includes all employees working in the Netherlands. The data files are published by Statistics Netherlands. We took the number of months worked in a specific calendar year as an indicator for the work

pattern of an employee. We have information from the employee database that includes registered and non-registered employees. It is therefore a unique database of employees in the Netherlands, who are registered in the population administration as well as those who are not registered in the population administration. People from the EU Member States have to register if they stay for more than 4 months in the Netherlands and we knew that only half of the CEE labour migrants are registered in the population register (Statistics Netherlands 2018). We use their registration as an indicator for their intention to stay in the Netherlands.

This study concerns migrants who are foreign-born and work in the Netherlands, irrespective of the reason why they came to the Netherlands and regardless of the moment of migration. We know from registered Polish migrants that half of them are family migration and half are labour migration. Of the non-registered migrants, their migration motive is unknown. However, because this study only focuses on employees the share that can be classified as 'labour migrant' is probably considerable high.

While the focus of this article is on labour migrants from Central and Eastern EU countries, we also differentiate migrants originating from the rest of the EU (Member States, including countries in the EEA and Switzerland which are covered by the arrangements on free movement of workers), Western and non-Western migrants (based on the social and economic classification of origin used by Statistics Netherlands).<sup>1</sup> Workers of Turkish or Moroccan origin, the largest group of (former) labour migrants in the Netherlands, are treated as a separate category. Comparison with other migrant groups does convey a sense of the exceptional nature of the CEE migration patterns.

The analysis work file contains all employees in the Netherlands, both registered and non-registered in the population register. A large-scale file, but we also miss a number of categories; self-employed workers posted migrant workers and informal employment. Posted migrant workers are excluded due to lack of accurate data on the number of these workers within the EU (Berntsen 2015); there is no information about their monthly residence and income in the host country. In 2011 a third of posted workers in the Netherlands came from CEE Member States (just under 34,000 workers) of which 18,500 originated from Poland (Berntsen 2015). The number of income declarations from CEE self-employed workers was just under 13,000 in 2013 (Statistics Netherlands 2018). The number of Central and Eastern Europeans working from home in the Netherlands as self-employed is unknown. Information on workers on the black market is by definition (almost) unknown in registration data.

As stated, our focus is on migrant employees from Central and Eastern EU countries. Most of them (85.7%) originate from Poland; 5.2% have a Hungarian background, 5.1% originate from the (former) Czech Republic and Slovakia, 2.1% from Lithuania, 1.6% from Latvia, 0.3% from Estonia and 0.1% from Slovenia. Migrants from Bulgaria and Romania are left out of the CEE category in this analysis because they only obtained free access to the Dutch labour market in 2014, while our observations cover the period 2010-2015.

### **3.2. Cohort study**

To obtain a picture of the working patterns, we track a cohort of employees over a period of more than five years, with monthly observations of their employment. The cohort

consists of the total population of employees employed in the Netherlands in June 2010. The number of labour migrants peaks in June, and choosing this month therefore enables us to track the largest possible group of labour migrants. The working patterns for 2010 are based on the entire calendar year. Tracking the cohort over a period of five years enables us to analyse the trend in working patterns. This shows whether the working patterns are relatively stable or subject to change. After between five and six years, the probability of returning to the home country has fallen to around 5% (Pronk 2015). As we base the working patterns on the most recent wage data available, the tracking period extends from January 2010 to December 2015 inclusive. We are able to determine for each month whether or not someone is in paid employment in the Netherlands.

If labour migrants have no income from employment in a given month, it is plausible that they will leave the Dutch labour market to return to their home country, since unemployment is a key trigger for return migration (Kleinepier, De Valk, and Van Gaalen 2015). However, it is also possible that they have stopped working or have become self-employed and are still living in the Netherlands or have gone to work in another (EU) country. We have no data on return migration, but our analyses are based on the assumption that labour migrants return to their home country if they are not in paid employment in the Netherlands. Although EU migrants have the opportunity to move freely within the EU Member States, it appears that the majority of the Polish migrants leaving the Netherlands go back to their country of origin; 97% of Polish workers come to the Netherlands from Poland and 88% of them return there after leaving the Netherlands (Gijssberts et al. 2018). There seems no reason to assume that the figures would be different for the other CEE Member States. When interpreting the results, however, allowance should be made for the possibility that people may continue to stay in the Netherlands without being in paid employment.

The employment history of the cohort in the Netherlands varies. Some employees have been employed for some time at the start of our period of study, while others have a shorter employment history or began working in the Netherlands in June 2010. A possible selection effect caused by the fact that a proportion of the (temporary) labour migrants have left the Dutch labour market, leading to an overrepresentation of settlement migrants with a longer employment history in the cohort, is compensated for by the fact that the cohort was compiled in a period when the number of CEE labour migrants was at a peak. Consequently, the cohort contains both labour migrants with a longer employment history and labour migrants with a shorter employment history in the Netherlands.

### **3.3. Working pattern types**

The typology of migration patterns we expect to see in the New European Migration includes temporary, circular and settlement migration. We differentiate the working patterns which map onto these migration patterns by the number of months that they have worked during a calendar year and whether or not the migrant is registered in the population register. We use the number of months worked in a calendar year to differentiate between short-term work (1–6 months per year) and long-term work (7–12 months). Setting the dividing line between short-term and long-term work at six months is an arbitrary choice. We performed a sensitivity analysis at different cut-off points relating to the

number of months employed CEE migrants were receiving wage income in the Netherlands. Choosing a different cut-off did not change the tenor of the findings.

We use registration in the population register as an indicator for the intention to settle for a long period in the Netherlands, while non-registration suggests the absence of such an intention. Because the data files used the only state whether there is registration in the population register, but do not contain a registration date, registration in the population register in this analysis is a static variable (ie equal for all years). Files that do contain the date of registration are not complete because there is under-registration of departure in the population register. We can therefore not determine the changes in registration over time.

The combination of short-term or long-term work in the Netherlands on the one hand and registered/not registered on the other leads to a typology of four different working patterns: (1) registered and short-term work; (2) registered and long-term work; (3) not registered and short-term work; and (4) not registered and long-term work. The empirical classification was mapped onto migration patterns. Being registered and working long-term in the Netherlands suggests settlement migration. Not being registered and/or working in the Netherlands for a short period indicates more temporary forms of migration; a repeating pattern of short-term work by a migrant is an indication of circular migration.

### **3.4. Multinomial logistic regression analysis**

Earlier research has shown that CEE migrants are generally young and that (single) men more often return to their home country, while (cohabiting) women tend to stay in the destination country.. We used multinomial logistic regression analysis to examine the relationship between working pattern types and a number of background characteristics of migrants. The reason for using this analysis method is that working patterns can take four nominal values.

We do not know the family situation of the labour migrants in our study, nor how satisfied they are with their income from employment. Nonetheless, we expect temporary migration (i.e. the working patterns ‘not registered combined and short-term/long-term work’ and ‘registered and short-term work’) to occur more among young people, men and migrants on low wages, while settlement migration (‘registered and long-term work’) is likely to occur more among older people, women and better-paid migrants.

Sex, age and wages were included in the model as explanatory variables. Wages are the (log) hourly pay rate in the month of June 2010. The sector and employment contract type was included in the model as control variables because they can influence the working pattern type.

The multinomial logistic regression analysis was performed on the entire population of Central and Eastern European labour migrants who were employed in the Netherlands in June 2010. All reported relationships are statistically significant.

## **4. Results**

In June 2010, 7.4 million employees were working in the Netherlands. Of this total, 12% were of foreign origin. 144,000 employees came from Central and Eastern EU countries, 2% of the total number of employees in June 2010. As [Table 1](#) shows, CEE labour migrants



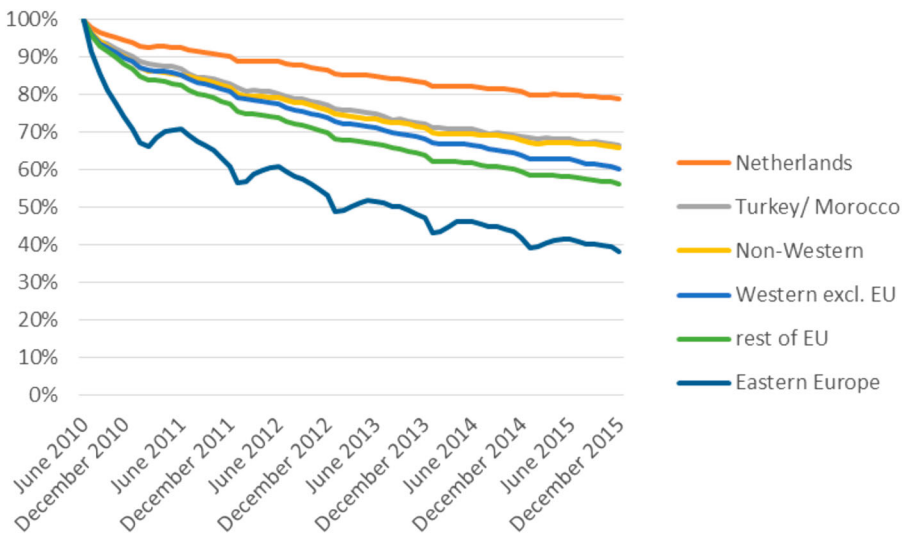
**Table 1.** Numbers and background characteristics by origin, cohort June 2010.

Origin	Number (× 1000)	Share (%)	Average age	Share men (%)	Share temporary contract (%)	Hourly pay (€)
Eastern Europe	144	1.9	33	60	71	10.38
Rest of EU	180	2.4	40	57	36	18.65
Western excl. EU	104	1.4	43	49	32	17.56
Non-Western	323	4.4	40	53	37	14.43
Turkey/ Morocco	148	2.0	38	63	32	13.51
Netherlands	6470	87.6	39	53	27	16.88
Total	7386	100.0				

are predominantly young, often employed on temporary contracts and in low-paid occupations compared with other migrant groups and native Dutch employees.

During the five years that we tracked our cohort, a high proportion of CEE labour migrants (at least compared with other migrant groups) ended their employment in the Netherlands. In December 2015, 61.8% of the CEE labour migrants from the cohort were no longer employed in the Netherlands. This compares with two out of ten native Dutch employees. The other migrant groups occupy a position midway between the two.

Figure 1 also shows that a proportion of Central and Eastern European labour migrants evidently return to the Dutch labour market each year after having left it. This return pattern covers the period from the spring to a peak in June, after which it declines again. This pattern runs in parallel with the availability of seasonal work in the agricultural sector and thus suggests a seasonal migration pattern, or a circular migration pattern when it involves the same migrant. This pattern is found much less among employees from the other European countries.



**Figure 1.** Share of employees employed in the months June 2010 – December 2015 (monthly observations) June 2010 cohort.

#### 4.1. Working hours and working patterns of Central and Eastern European labour migrants

Figure 2 shows the number of months worked by the labour migrants from the June 2010 cohort in each calendar year. This number differs from Figure 1, which looked at the specific month within which labour migrants were working or not working. Only a small proportion of CEE labour migrants from the cohort worked short-term in the Netherlands, i.e. for less than six months; averaged out over the years, the figure is around 10%. The months that migrants receive income from employment can be either continuous or interrupted. In 2010, 68.8% of migrants who worked for six months received income from employment over a continuous period. A slightly higher proportion of the group was in paid employment for between seven and eleven months per year; in 2010 this applied for 36.0% of the group, falling to 11.4% after five years. A working period of seven months was uninterrupted in 77.4% of cases in 2010.

Most of the CEE labour migrants from the cohort were in paid employment for the full year. This applied for almost half in the first two years of the period studied, reducing to a third after five years. Finally, a growing share of the labour migrants from the cohort stopped receiving income from employment in the Netherlands over the period studied; half the Central and Eastern European labour migrants were no longer in paid employment after five years.

If we look at registration in the population register, we see that 45.8% of the CEE labour migrants from the cohort registered (Table 2). In other words, more than half the June 2010 cohort did not register; there may be several reasons for not registering, including the expectation of a short stay.

Dividing employees who are registered and not registered in the population register with short and long-term work in 2010 produces a picture of the extent to which the four working pattern types occur. This typology provides an indication of the occurrence

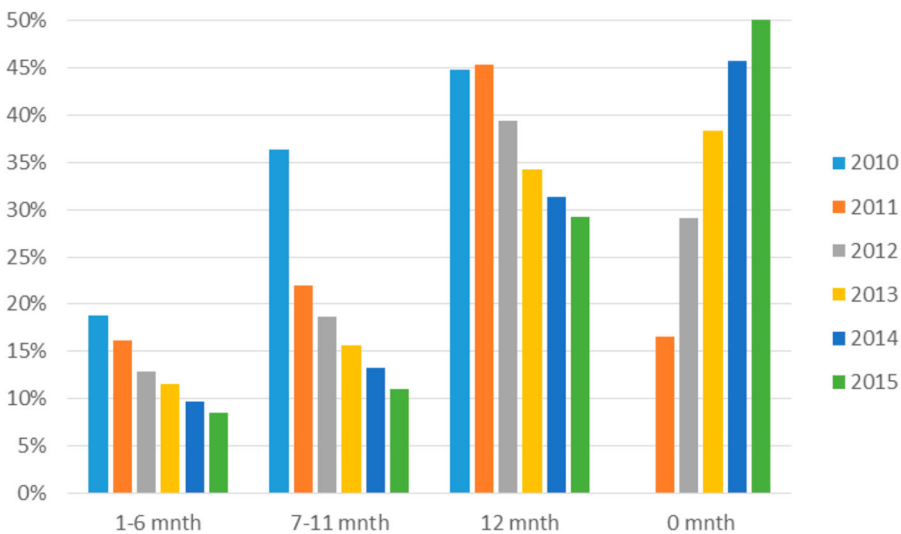


Figure 2. Number of months worked in a calendar year, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort.

**Table 2.** Numbers and background characteristics by working pattern type in 2010, June 2010 cohort of labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe.

Working pattern type	Number (× 1000)	Share (%)	Average age	Share men (%)	Share temporary contract (%)	Hourly pay (€)
<i>Registered</i>						
Short-term work	3	2.4	30	52	75	10.33
Long-term work	62	43.4	34	48	62	11.66
<i>Not registered</i>						
Short-term work	24	16.4	30	63	80	8.88
Long-term work	54	37.7	33	72	78	9.56

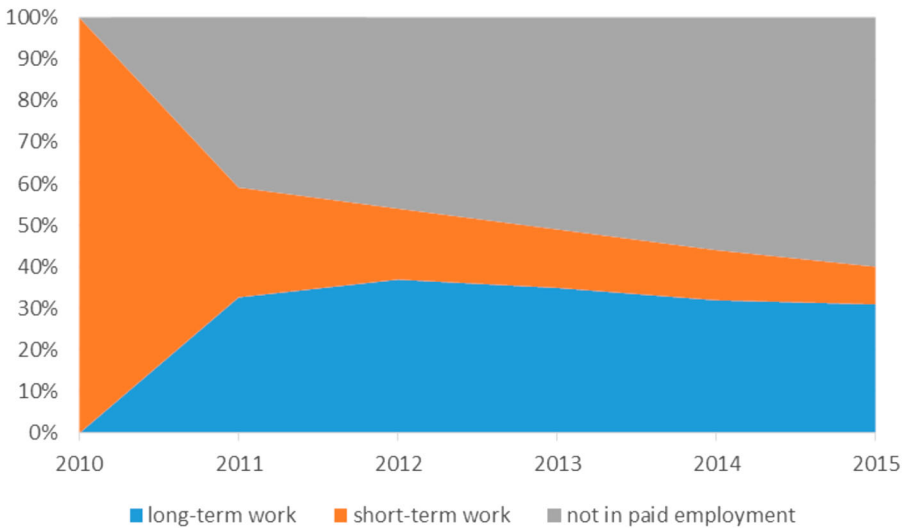
of patterns of temporary, circular or settlement migration. Long-term work combined with being registered, the working pattern type which suggests settlement migration, is the most common, accounting for 43.4% of migrants from the cohort, as shown in Table 2. Compared with the other working patterns, this type contains more women, the average age is higher, the wages are higher and the share of temporary contracts is slightly lower. These characteristics fit in with what we would expect of migrants who (intend to) settle in the Netherlands for an extended period. Not being registered, or short-term work and being registered in the Netherlands, reflect more temporary forms of migration (56.5%). The patterns 'short-term work' combined with both registered and non-registered contain strikingly small numbers of migrants (18.8%). So, it is mainly temporary and settlement migration patterns, actually the traditional migration categories of the 1960s and 1970s. By looking at repeated patterns of short-term work in the subsequent period, we obtain a picture of the extent of circular migration.

#### 4.2. Trend in each working pattern type in the period studied

The above description reflects the different forms of migration by CEE labour migrants; the settlement pattern dominates, while at the same time temporary forms of migration such as those we are considering in this article are in the majority. The extent to which individuals continued their 2010 working pattern in the period 2011–2015 is discussed below. Since (not) being registered in the population register is a constant, the trends in working patterns are based on changes in short and long-term work.

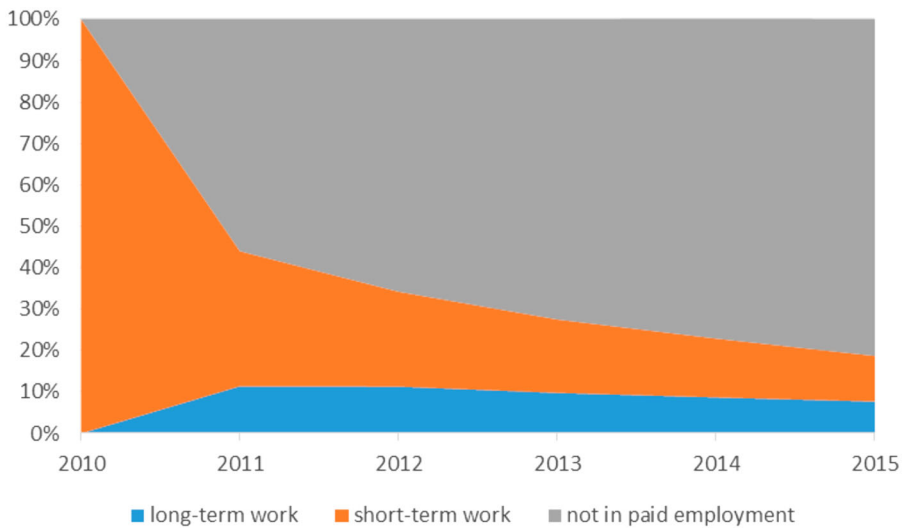
Only 2.4% of all CEE labour migrants combine short-term work with being registered in 2010. In the following year, a quarter of them repeats this pattern. A third work more months in the second year, and the remaining 40% are no longer in paid employment (Figure 3). This distribution does not change in the subsequent years.

The pattern of working for a maximum of six months in the Netherlands and mostly returning to the home country, followed by a new short period spent working in the Netherlands in the next year is thus found in only a very small group of CEE labour migrants who are registered in the Netherlands; there are an estimated 850 persons who combine short-term work with being registered, equivalent to just 0.5% of the total number of CEE labour migrants in the June 2010 cohort. The assumption that many labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe have a circular working pattern in any event does not apply to migrants who are entered in the population register, for whom working for a few months in the Netherlands, returning home and coming back to the Netherlands to work for a short period is the exception.



**Figure 3.** ‘Short-term work and registered’ working pattern in 2010 and trend in the subsequent period 2011–2015, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort ( $N = 3399$ ).

Only 16.4% of the Central and Eastern European labour migrants from the June 2010 cohort spent up to six months working in the Netherlands without being entered in the population register. Some of them probably also did not envisage a long stay in the Netherlands, because Figure 4 shows that more than half of them are no longer in paid employment in the Netherlands a year later; after five years, this applies for 81.3%. The 32.3% who also worked in the Netherlands for up to six months in the second year can be regarded as



**Figure 4.** ‘Short-term work and not registered’ working pattern type in 2010 and trend in the subsequent period 2011–2015, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort ( $N = 23,632$ ).

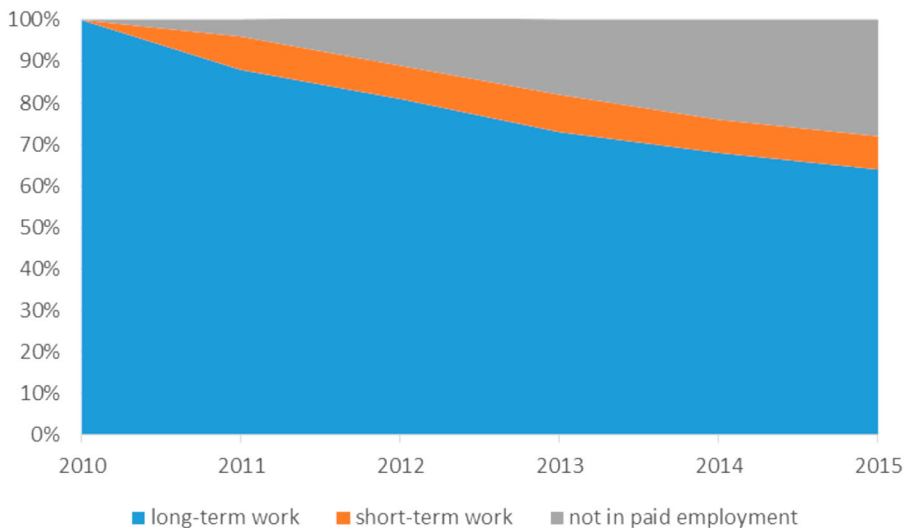
circular migrants. There are around 18,000 of them, or approximately 5% of all CEE labour migrants from the June 2010 cohort. 10% of this cohort switch to a different working pattern by working more months than in 2010. They spend most of the year working in the Netherlands and probably envisage settling (permanently) in the Netherlands.

43.4% of CEE labour migrants in the cohort are entered in the population register and worked between seven and twelve months in 2010. After five years, 72.0% of them are still in employment (Figure 5). 40,000 labour migrants, or a quarter of all CEE labour migrants from the June 2010 cohort, are still working long-term in the Netherlands after five years. This group can therefore be largely characterised as settlement migrants; they are entered in the population register and are working long-term in the Netherlands in each year of the study.

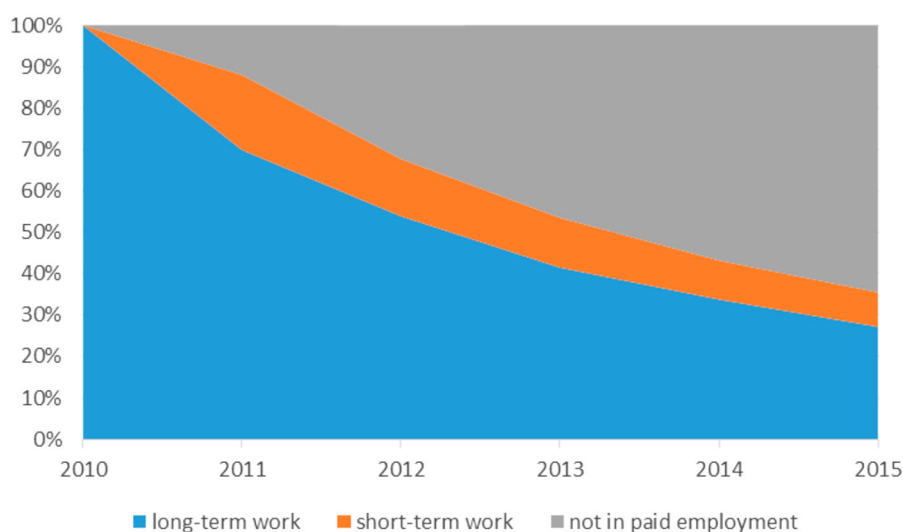
37.7% of the cohort population worked for seven or more months in 2010 without being entered in the population register; 69.9% of them had the same working pattern in 2011 as in 2010 and this applied for almost 30% after five years (Figure 6). The majority of this group do not appear to intend settling in the Netherlands for the longer term, although a minority ultimately do stay for five years or longer. The share of unregistered labour migrants who are still working in the Netherlands after five years is around 11% of the total cohort of CEE labour migrants from June 2010. The share who are no longer in paid employment is low in the second year (2011), but rises steadily thereafter to reach 60.0% in 2015.

### 4.3. Background characteristics of Central and Eastern European labour migrants

Settlement migrants will spend most of the year working in the Netherlands and will be entered in the population register. The background characteristics we expect from



**Figure 5.** 'Long-term work and registered' working pattern type in 2010 and trend in the subsequent period 2011–2015, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort ( $N = 62,452$ ).



**Figure 6.** 'Long-term work and not registered' working pattern type in 2010 and trend in the subsequent period 2011–2015, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort 2010 ( $N = 54,220$ ).

settlement migrants are that they will more often be female, earn relatively high wages and be older. Table 3 shows the results of the multinomial regression analysis. It shows that women are indeed more often settlement migrants than men, or at least are more often entered in the population register. The hourly pay rate of settlement migrants is relatively high, though unregistered labour migrants who work long-term are also relatively highly

**Table 3.** Results of multinomial logistic regression analysis: relationship between background characteristics and working pattern type in 2010, Central and Eastern European labour migrants, June 2010 cohort.

	Long-term work and registered		Short-term work and registered		Short-term work and not registered	
	Exp. (B)	St. Err.	Exp. (B)	St. Err.	Exp. (B)	St. Err.
<i>Age (log)</i>						
Age	0.766	0.023	0.410	0.065	0.373	0.029
<i>Sex (reference = male)</i>						
Female	2.361	0.014	2.042	0.037	1.343	0.017
<i>Hourly pay June 2010 (log)</i>						
Hourly pay	3.407	0.025	0.555	0.051	0.445	0.029
<i>Contract (reference = permanent)</i>						
Temporary	0.685	0.015	0.913	0.043	1.083	0.021
<i>Sector (reference = industry)</i>						
Agriculture	0.278	0.037	0.502	0.104	2.898	0.064
Temporary agency	0.343	0.034	0.549	0.094	1.191	0.063
Construction	0.718	0.070	1.956	0.107	0.914	0.136
Retail	0.714	0.038	0.653	0.109	1.147	0.070
Transport	0.220	0.038	0.166	0.135	0.774	0.069
Financial services	1.556	0.054	2.467	0.126	1.429	0.096
Healthcare	29.902	0.233	26.615	0.277	2.057	0.358
Education	21.054	0.320	38.060	0.377	0.426	1.052
Other, of which cleaning	1.318	0.045	2.382	0.149	1.134	0.082

Note: Reference category is 'long-term work and unregistered'.

paid. It should be borne in mind that these relationships do not necessarily indicate a causal connection. For example, a higher hourly pay rate could lead to an intention to stay longer, but it is for example also possible that the intention to stay longer results in a higher hourly wage rate because people are then eligible for better jobs or spend longer looking for a well-paid job.

Labour migrants with the working pattern type 'long-term work and not registered', suggesting a temporary form of migration, are older than settlement migrants, contrary to our expectations. We have no explanation for this. Labour migrants with a settlement pattern are more often employed in sectors such as the government sector, education and healthcare and less often have temporary employment contracts. Since virtually everyone who works in the government sector is also entered in the population register, this created estimation problems, and this sector was therefore left out of the analysis.

CEE labour migrants who work short-term and are not registered are younger, more often employed in the agricultural sector, more often have a temporary employment contract and are less well-paid than migrants with the other working pattern types. These background characteristics could indicate that they migrate for the adventure and could perhaps be regarded as footloose migrants, global nomads or searchers. CEE labour migrants in the construction sector often have a working pattern type of short-term work and registered or long-term work but not registered. The results support the expectation that CEE labour migrants who are young, male and in lower-paid occupations are characterised by a temporary migration pattern, whereas being female and being better paid are more characteristic of settlement migration. With the caveat that greater age is not a differentiating factor for the settlement migration pattern, our results confirm the findings of earlier research.

## 5. Conclusions and discussion

According to many authors, the forms of migration that have accompanied the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, referred to as 'New European Migration', can be characterised as more diverse and changeable compared with post-colonial migration, asylum migration and migration of guest workers and their families. The open borders within the EU, relatively short distances, employer preferences, mediation of employment agencies and cheap modes of transport generate the expectation that temporary and circular migration are becoming more significant and could even be a dominant pattern, and that there is less need for settlement migration.

By carrying out an exploratory study of actual migration behaviour in the destination country, we have sought in this article to extend the knowledge of the nature of present-day intra-European migration. This is the first time that actual patterns of work in the destination country have been considered in a longitudinal perspective. An alternative indicator was used for the intention to remain in the destination country, namely entry in the population register.

The majority of CEE labour migrants are found no longer to be in paid employment in the Netherlands after five years: a substantial proportion of New European Migration were no longer employed. It is possible that labour migrants who are no longer in paid employment in the Netherlands have become self-employed or are not working, but it is more

likely that a high proportion have left the Dutch labour market and returned to their country of origin.

A circular migration pattern, involving a succession of separate short periods by the same migrants spent working in the Netherlands, does occur among CEE labour migrants, but only to a very limited extent. In the agricultural sector, particularly, this suggests that employers have no difficulty in finding labour migrants to work for several months during the peak season each year, and that they actually employ them. This applies for around 6% of labour migrants in our study. This small number of CEE labour migrants working short-term for several years in succession begs the question of whether circular migration can actually be regarded as a major new phenomenon.

Our findings also suggest that a third of the labour migrants from Central and Eastern Member States can be characterised as settlement migrants after being in the Netherlands for more than five years. They spend most of the year working in the Netherlands and continue to do so in the subsequent years. The settlement migrants who stay in the Netherlands with the intention of remaining for a long period, and who have registered in the local authority population register, are relatively often female and have a higher hourly pay rate. In addition, there are CEE labour migrants, often older, working continuously for five years or longer but who do not appear to intend settling in the Netherlands.

The new forms of European migration thus do not so much suggest circular migration as one-off migration for a longer period in the Netherlands, in addition to a high degree of settlement migration. These conclusions put the image of New European Migration into perspective, because we would then expect fewer labour migrants with uninterrupted periods of work and more labour migrants who work in the Netherlands for a limited number of months in the year.

Our findings may have been influenced by the fact that our database consists only of employees. Self-employed workers, employees of a foreign employer (posted migrant workers) and informal (black market) employment are left out of consideration. Self-employed workers who continue living in their home country and declare their income there, employees of a foreign employer who are still required to pay tax and social insurance contributions in their home country and people who work on the informal market are more likely to exhibit a temporary, possibly circular migration pattern, which means that the prevalence of short periods of employment and circular migration may be underestimated in our study.

One possible explanation for the low occurrence of circular migration is that the costs of migration are higher than labour migrants expected. Labour migrants initially underestimate the costs – material and non-material – of migrating. Once they are confronted with these costs, they stay longer than planned in the destination country and avoid a repeated pattern of travelling back and forth because of the associated costs. An explanation from a labour market perspective could be that the demand for circular labour, outside the agricultural sector with its highly seasonal pattern, is low. More research is needed on explanations such as these.

This article shows evidence of substantial settlement migration by CEE labour migrants, who work for long periods. The main conclusion which politicians and policy-makers need to take into account is that a substantial proportion of these migrants will settle for the longer term. In addition to policy to combat exploitation and poor housing, therefore, policy also needs to focus on the long-term integration of CEE



migrants. This will involve investments in housing for longer periods of residence. Partly because they often live in temporary housing, labour migrants move around a lot, and this is not conducive to developing a sense of belonging. Migrants from Central and Eastern Member States are not required to undergo a civic integration programme, but they do have problems with the (Dutch) language. More attention could be given to ways of addressing this language disadvantage with the aim of fostering their more enduring integration in society.

## Note

1. Persons with a western migration background originating from a country in North America and Oceania, or from Indonesia or Japan. Person with a non-western migration background originating from a country in Africa, South America or Asia (excl. Indonesia and Japan).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## References

- Berkhout, E., P. Bisschop, and M. Volkerink. 2014. *Grensoverschrijdend aanbod van personeel*. Amsterdam: SEO Economisch Onderzoek.
- Berntsen, L. 2015. "Precarious Posted Worlds: Posted Migrant Workers in the Dutch Construction and Meat Processing Industries." *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations* 31 (4): 371–390.
- Burrell, K. 2010. "Staying, Returning, Working and Living: Key Themes in Current Academic Research Undertaken in the UK on Migration Movements From Eastern Europe." *Social Identities* 16 (3): 297–308.
- Bygnes, S., and M. Erdal. 2017. "Liquid Migration, Grounded Lives: Considerations About Future Mobility and Settlement among Polish and Spanish Migrants in Norway." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43 (1): 102–118.
- Dagevos, J. 2011. *Poolse migranten. De positie van Polen die vanaf 2004 in Nederland zijn komen wonen*. The Hague: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Drinkwater, S., and M. Garapich. 2015. "Migration Strategies of Polish Migrants: Do They Have any at all?" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41 (12): 1909–1931.
- Düvell, F., and D. Vogel. 2006. "Polish Migrants: Tensions Between Sociological Typologies and State Categories." In *Contemporary Polish Migration in Europe: Complex Patterns of Movements and Settlements*, edited by A. Triandafyllidou, 267–289. Lewiston: The Edwin Millen Press.
- Eade, J., S. Drinkwater, and M. Garapich. 2007. *Class and Ethnicity: Polish Migrant Workers in London*. Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council.
- Engbersen, G., M. Ilies, A. Leerkes, E. Snel, and R. Van de Meij. 2011. *Arbeidsmigratie in Vieren. Bulgaren en Roemenen Vergeleken met Polen*. Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.
- Engbersen, G., A. Leerkes, I. Grabowska, E. Snel, and J. Burgers. 2013. "On the Differential Attachments of Migrants From Central and Eastern Europe: A Typology of Labour Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39 (6): 959–981.
- Engbersen, G., and E. Snel. 2013. "Liquid Migration. Dynamic and Fluid Patterns of Post-Accession Migration Flows." In *Mobility in Transition. Migration Patterns After EU Enlargement*, edited by B. Glorius, 21–40. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Favell, A. 2008. "The new Face of East-West Migration in Europe." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34 (5): 701–716.

- Fermin, A. 2016. *Handbook of Urban Governance of Free Movement in the EU. Facts, Implications and Policies*. The Hague: European Urban Knowledge Network.
- Gijsberts, M., I. Andriessen, H. Nicolaas, and W. Huijnk. 2018. *Bouwend aan een toekomst in Nederland. De leefsituatie van Poolse migranten die zich na 2004 hebben ingeschreven*. The Hague: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Glorius, B., I. Grabowska, and A. Kuvik. 2013. *Mobility in Transition. Migration Patterns After EU Enlargement*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Grabowska, I. 2013. "Anatomy of Post-Accession Migration. How to Measure 'Liquidity' and Other Patterns of Post-Accession Migration Flows." In *Mobility in Transition. Migration Patterns After EU Enlargement*, edited by B. Glorius, 41–64. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Heyma, A., P. Bisschop, and C. Biesenbeek. 2018. *De Economische waarde van arbeidsmigranten uit Midden- en Oost-Europa voor Nederland*. Amsterdam: SEO Economisch Onderzoek.
- Kleinepier, T., H. De Valk, and R. Van Gaalen. 2015. "Life Paths of Migrants: A Sequence Analysis of Polish Migrants' Family Life Trajectories." *European Journal of Population* 31 (2): 155–179.
- Nijhoff, K., and M. Gordano. 2016. "Looking at Intra-European Mobilities Through Migrant Types: Young Spanish and Polish Migrants in London and The Hague." *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 30 (2): 182–203.
- Pronk, S. 2015. "Haagse Oost-Europeaanen Blijvers of Niet?" *Demos* 31 (7): 1–4.
- Ruhs, M., and B. Anderson. 2010. *Who Needs Migrant Workers? Labour Shortage, Immigration and Public Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- SER. 2014. *Arbeidsmigratie*. The Hague: Sociaal-Economische Raad.
- Snel, E., G. Engbersen, and A. Leerkes. 2006. "Transnational Involvement and Social Integration." *Global Networks* 6 (3): 285–308.
- Statistics Netherlands. 2018. *Dashboard Migrantenmonitor*. The Hague: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Strockmeijer, A., P. De Beer, and J. Dagevos. 2017. "Mobiliteit binnen de perken. Zeer geringe positieverbetering van werknemers uit Oost-Europa bij een langer werkverleden." *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken* 33 (4): 384–400.
- Weltevrede, A., J. De Boom, S. Rezai, L. Zuiderwijk, and G. Engbersen. 2009. *Arbeidsmigranten uit Midden- en Oost-Europa: Een profielschets van recente arbeidsmigranten uit de MOE-landen*. Rotterdam: Risbo.
- Wickramasekara, P. 2011. *Circular Migration: A Triple Win or a Dead End? (No. 15 GURN Discussion Paper)*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Wolf, S. 2015. *Poolse arbeidsmigranten in Nederland en hun behoefte aan informatie en hulp*. Utrecht: Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving.