

Skills on hold: South Caucasian Labour Migrants Navigating the Polish Labour Market

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The study focused on

- How migrants from Georgia and Azerbaijan navigated the Polish labour market
- What mechanisms shaped their occupational careers in Poland

The study employed

- 36 Biographical Narrative Interviews across multiple Polish cities with migrants employed both in low and highly-skilled jobs

Findings I

- **Capitals** determined career trajectories. Cultural capital (education, prior work experience, language skills) and social capital (networks, referrals) were the strongest predictors of career outcomes.
- Institutional barriers (read: delays in issue of permits) affected **all migrants equally**, regardless of their skills or the industry they were employed in.
- **Outsmarting** institutional mechanisms - "***kombinowanie***" became a strategy esp. for those employed in low-skilled occupations.
- ***Informal intermediaries*** played both facilitating and complicating role in migration and employment of migrants from Georgia and Azerbaijan in Poland

Findings II

- Cultural capital played both **reproductive** and **rupture** roles on the Polish labour market
- Self-funded, non-formal skill acquisition (for ex: investing in a foreign or local language, data programming) became as an **"escape"** from precariousness
- Institutional barriers **"froze"** skill utilisation, leaving migrants immobile, stuck with one employer without potential career move

Policy implications

- **Streamline administrative processes** to unlock migrants' capital - the delays in issue of permit is not solely an administrative issue, but a broader labour market issue, affecting migrants equally regardless of their skills.
- **Development of formal recognition** of qualifications between SC and Poland, EU at large, esp. given the EU's policy of attracting non-EU talent, i.e. launch of EU talent pool.
- **Regularization of the intermediaries** in SC incl. pre-departure orientation, transparency about working conditions, basic language skills, legal rights as such.

Thank you for your attention

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