

Slovak Care Workers in Austria: How Important Is the Context of the Sending Country?

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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

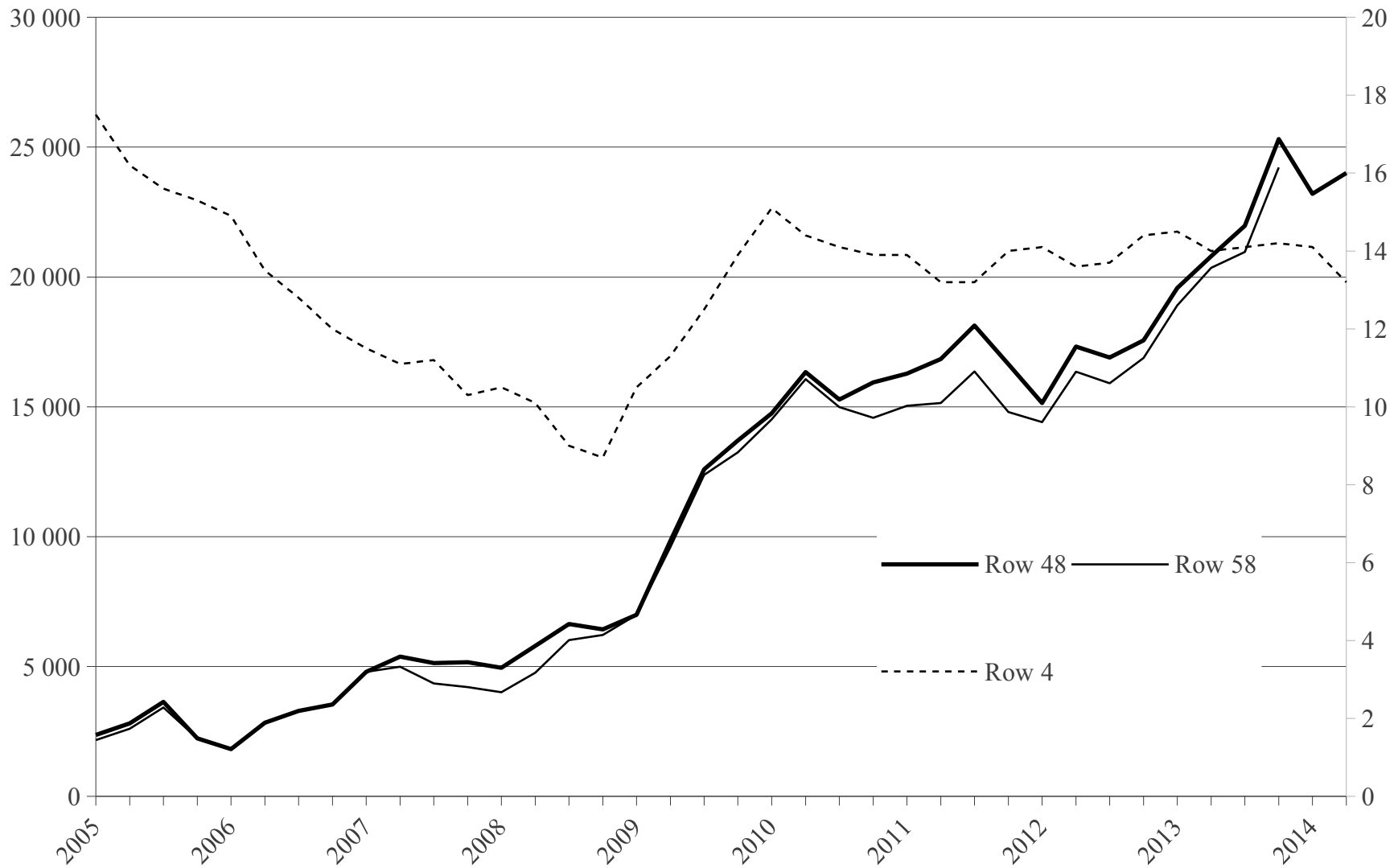
- Qualitative and policy analysis oriented approaches of the current research have downplayed that care workers are primarily labour migrants.
- Important to focus on individual and structural factors in the sending country which have always been part of the classical approaches to labour migration.
- 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

(Legend: thick line = all carers, thin line = female carers, dotted line = unemployment level / right axis)



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 when starting 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.