Title: Labour Market Discrimination in New Immigrant Destination Country: A Mixed Methods Approach

Context

In less than a decade, Poland changed from being an emigration to an immigration country. With one of the EU's lowest unemployment rates of 2.9% in 2024, it has become an attractive destination for international migration, including labour migration. Although by far the largest group of migrants is from Ukraine, which was a source of labour for Poland already before the 2022 Russian aggression, there are also growing numbers of citizens of Belarus, Georgia, India, and Moldova. Recently, the labour migration landscape has become even more diverse – between June 2023 and June 2024, the number of work permits issued was the highest for citizens of Colombia, the Philippines and Nepal. Given these circumstances, Poland is a compelling case for the study of discrimination in the labour market, as it offers the chance to investigate discriminatory practices as they are being shaped. Research from other European countries suggests that non-EU migrants and those of black skin colour have significantly unequal positions in the labour market and lower incomes than natives.

Aims

The issue of discrimination, which is deeply embedded in social structures, should be addressed through the perspectives of various actors involved (employers, HR representatives) and those affected by the discriminatory practices (employees). This project aims to critically assess employers' preferences related to the characteristics of an employee in various industries in Poland and the mechanisms that drive recruitment choices. It enriches current knowledge by adding the perspective of intermediaries, whose role is crucial in Poland. It will also investigate migrants' strategies to navigate discriminatory practices. Its focus will be particularly on the stage of hiring. It will test the following hypotheses:

H1: The employers' and intermediaries' hiring strategies reflect their preferences for migrant workers in various Polish labour market sectors based on gender and ethnicity.

H2: Intersectional discrimination (e.g., based on both gender and ethnicity) has a more severe impact on employment outcomes compared to single-axis discrimination (e.g., gender alone or ethnicity alone).

H3: In certain sectors, individuals from minority ethnic groups face fewer chances of being hired than their Polish counterparts.

H4: Migrants, to overcome hiring discrimination in the labour market, resort to many informal solutions, particularly reliance on their social networks to secure employment.

H5: To secure employment and navigate through discriminatory practices at the stage of recruitment, migrants adopt various strategies to reduce the visibility of ethnic differences.

Given the differences between sectors, the project will look at several: sales, ICT, middle management, transport and logistics and (institutional) adult care – across three different cities in Poland.

Methods

This project applies a novel research design, combining an experiment – which will involve the creation of fictitious job applicants of various ethnicities, nationalities and genders, who will respond to job ads via e-mail – as well as interviews with employers, HR representatives and intermediaries' combined with an analysis of companies' reports and data from public institutions such as ZUS (Social Insurance Institution). To learn about potential discrimination and strategies to overcome it, interviews will also be conducted with migrants of various ethnic backgrounds, who will be asked about their labour market trajectories and experiences during the process of securing employment.