

Employer-Sponsored Migration: Mechanism of Labour Market Efficiency or Worker Vulnerability?

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‘Demand-driven’ or employer-sponsored visas have become a more common instrument for regulating the selection of migrant workers in many developed economies since the 1990s.

In a development that mirrors broad shifts towards ‘new public management’, employer-sponsorship has resulted in governments ceding some authority over to migration private entities.

- ***Aim:*** to examine the factors underpinning the growth of employer-sponsored visas, and the implications of this development.
- ***Method:*** survey recent policy developments across the OECD (data, secondary sources)
- ***Contribution:*** the paper argues that governments have used these visa schemes to improve the effectiveness of immigration selection processes and also help them to achieve broader labour market policy objectives. However, while the system has some advantages, employer-sponsored visas can also increase the risk of vulnerability for the migrant workers engaged under them, which has potentially negative implications for social and economic cohesion in host countries. As such we suggest various ways that governments can improve the regulation of these schemes to mitigate the potential risks.

- › *“Circular migration today is a different animal. At least conceptually, it is based on a continuing, long-term, and fluid relationship among countries that occupy what is now increasingly recognised as a single economic space. ..The main players have also diversified, and include not only governments, but increasingly, **the private sector**, civil society, the international community, and the migrants themselves. The migrants are not just passive participants but active agents of their own mobility.”*



- › lack of clarity of boundaries of state responsibility vis-à-vis employers in management of migration and settlement/integration process
- › ambiguity in the role played by new agents responsible for migration
- › ambiguity regarding democratic representation of stakeholders involved in migration
- › lack of clarity around the relationship between temporary and permanent migration process





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Thank you!

