

COPA-COGECA (agriculture sector) (last update 4 May)

Overall approach and state of play

Below is an outline of feedback from certain countries relating to the sectoral specificities:

In Finland, in 2021 90-95% of all seasonal workers came from Ukraine. In comparison with all foreign workers, 60 % come from Ukraine.

In Austria, around 3,000 Ukrainians were employed in agriculture and forestry in 2021. These are about 50% of the seasonal workers from third countries. In Austria, however, a large number of EU citizens (Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, etc.) are employed in agriculture and forestry. The number of workers from third-countries has increased in recent years.

In the forestry and agriculture sector in Sweden there are around 1,200 people from Ukraine who have applied for working permission in Sweden for the coming season. It used to be around 1,000-1,200 coming from Ukraine every season. While most of the workers in forestry are men, we realize that they will not be able to travel and come here this year, they are all between 18-60 years old.

There are also seasonal workers from Thailand, some from Belarus and some African countries, but most of the seasonal workers are from Ukraine and EU (Poland, the Baltic states, Slovaks and Czechs).

Finland will start implementing the Temporary Protection directive next week. This means that people apply for protection at the boarder or at the police (a lot are here already because they can enter with their passport, but stay only for 3 months) and get the residence AND work permit for one year. Maybe extension after that, depending on what happens... Under-age children are included in one permit. No need to separately apply for the seasonal work permit (by Finnish law) because of this.

Accommodation capacities are already filling up in the Czech Republic, especially for families with children. Czech agriculture had a special visa program for Ukrainian workers (Qualified Employee and Extraordinary Work Visa - incl. 1500 persons per year), unfortunately on 24 February a situation arose where the embassy suspended the program - because of this program there has been a huge increase of foreign workers in agriculture and forestry. In 2010 4% of the workforce in the agri-forest sector were foreigners and now it's around 17%).

There are up to 200,000 Ukrainians who have a long-term residence in Czech Republic. There are about 6,000 of those who have a short-term stay, i.e. a permit for only 90 days. The outflow awaits not only agriculture, but also food and forestry. Men are leaving Czech Republic and women with kids are coming from Slovakia and Poland borders. So if Ukrainian citizens have a wife, children or parents at home, these family members can come to the Czech Republic in visa-free travel only with a passport (A valid biometric passport is required for a trip to the Czech Republic).

The Czech Republic also has workers from Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Belarus. The Ministry of Agriculture will launch a website where refugees from Ukraine will find information on job opportunities in agriculture, food and forestry.

Company impact

The overall assessment of the Geopa membership is that the lack of seasonal workers coming from Ukraine will severely affect employers' capabilities to produce, given the dependency on third-country seasonal workers.