

TRANSCRIPT

Programme(s)	Newsnight BBC 2
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Subject / interviewee	<i>The EU and Eastern Europe – Magdalena Tredota, Adam Ringer, Hanns Eberhard Schleyer & Peter Claussen</i>
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“Gavin Esler: *Now what’s wrong with Europe? It’s obvious what’s right with Europe after centuries of killing each other we are as a continent more or less at peace but we are certainly not at ease. Whether you are a committed European or precisely the opposite we all know that something about Europe just isn’t working. Newsnight has sent Michael Crick on what used to be called a Grand European Tour, here’s the first in his series of films.*

Michael Crick: *With the European Union in its current state of crisis it may seem a little perverse to come to Poland for of all the twenty five members of the EU the Poles are probably the most satisfied at the moment looking upon the problems elsewhere with a mixture of bewilderment and anxiety for the first twelve months of membership have been remarkably successful for the Poles, both in selling their produce to the rest of the Union and their people.*

Magdalena Tredota, a Warsaw dentist, is looking for new openings in Britain. Next month she joins an NHS practice in the West Country.

So what’s made you decide to go to England?

Magdalena Tredota (Polish Dentist) *It’s, it’s difficult question because there are a lot of reasons for that. But I’m young person and I and my boyfriend decided to, to change something, to do something new, to, to try something else.*

MC: *You will make a lot more money in England will you?*

MT: *Yeah, that’s, that’s another reason for that too of course.*

MC: *She’s not alone, and East European dentists no doubt will give a new meaning to having a check and polish. Special classes prepare them for the hazards of life in the NHS.*

Anonymous Teacher: *What do you think an undertaker is?*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 1: *(Indistinct) person who deals with funerals.*

MC: *This scheme plans to shift two hundred and thirty dentists to Britain, enough for almost half a million patients.*

Sorry to interrupt you, I wonder if you could just tell me briefly where in Britain you’re all going to?

Anonymous Polish Dentist 2: *Bradford, Yorkshire.*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 3: *Dalton Pharmacy in Cumbria.*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 4: *Bradford, Yorkshire.*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 5: *Ramsgate, Kent.*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 6: *Somerset.*

Anonymous Polish Dentist 7: Somerset.

Anonymous Polish Dentist 8: Essex.

Anonymous Polish Dentist 9: Huntingdon.

MC: *The man who runs the scheme is Adam Ringer.*

So how does the pay compare? What would a dentist get in Poland compared with Britain?

Adam Ringer (Paragona Recruitment): If they are working for the public sector on the countryside they would probably get four, four hundred pounds a month which is four, four thousand eight hundred a year.

MC: *And in Britain?*

AR: Forty eight thousand, ten times more.

MC: *So nearly ten times as much in Britain as in Poland?*

AR: Yes.

MC: *Quite apart from the high pay most are glad of work at a time when Poland has a surplus of twenty thousand dentists and many can't get jobs.*

So you're not just going to England out of kindness for the, for the state of, the shortage of dentists in England? There are too many dentists in Poland are there?

Anonymous Polish Dentist 10: Yes, I think so.

MC: *The same programme now plans to meet Britain's severe shortage of lorry drivers as the Warsaw skyline shows how Poland is booming. The Stalinist Palace of Culture which once dominated this city is quickly being joined by the skyscrapers of capitalism. Fears by Polish farmers that the EU would flood the country with cheap food have proved unfounded, on the contrary Poland has exported a lot more of its produce, its exports rose more than a third over the first year of EU membership.*

The night train to Berlin, once a lifeline to freedom, now just another link to prosperity. So while many Poles may be delighted by membership of the European Union and the possibilities that it presents, how do they feel about it next door in the former East Germany?

Officially Poles can't yet simply hop on a train and go and work in Germany as they please as they can in Britain but they and other workers from the new states to the East have exploited EU laws which let Polish businesses operate in Germany.

I arrived in a Berlin where the Schroeder Government faces defeat this autumn thanks to an ailing economy, five million unemployed and wide fears about this competition from Poland and other new EU members. German workers are particularly being undercut unfairly in construction says the head of the Confederation of Crafts and Small Businesses.

Hanns Eberhard Schleyer (Secretary General, Small Business Confederation): If you take for example a Polish tiler, he would normally earn four to five Euros per hour and take a German tiler who would normally make between thirty to thirty five ...

MC: *Six or seven times as much?*

HES: ... six or seven times as much including the costs of social security which you have to include, certain additional taxes et cetera. So this is really quite a difference and you can not compete under these circumstances and that is the basis of our problem here.

MC: *From Berlin to one of a few tropical islands in the European Union, unfortunately it's not the real thing but an extraordinary new tourist attraction built just forty miles South of the German capital in what was once a hangar for Zeppelin airships. It's one of the few bright spots in this part of Eastern Germany, an area where unemployment is more than twenty per cent.*

The resort is set to meet its target of one and a half million Germans placing their towels on these loungers in its first year despite the particularly troubled nature of the regional economy.

What about people from Poland and the Czech Republic do you, do you worry about them competing with ...

Anonymous East German Undertaker: Yeah.

MC: ... with Germany?

Anonymous East German Undertaker: Yeah that's accepted because they come in our land and our town and they work for three or, or five Euro and with that, what I can do?

MC: *So you can not afford to work for ...*

Anonymous East German Undertaker: Yeah ...

MC: ... three or five Euro ...

Anonymous East German Undertaker: ... no.

MC: ... what, what do you do?

Anonymous East German Undertaker: I'm a (indistinct) undertaker.

MC: *An undertaker?*

Anonymous East German Undertaker: Yeah.

MC: *Are you worried about the, the competition that there will be for German jobs?*

Anonymous East German 1: They come and work for one, two, three Euros per hour.

MC: *One, one, two, two or three Euros?*

Anonymous East German 1: Yeah, per hour.

MC: Yes.

Anonymous East German 2: I think we are Germans and we are world championships in crying.

MC: *World championships in crying?*

Anonymous East German 2: Crying yes, yeah. We, we, if I ask a colleague or my neighbour how are you doing? And he is not answering well, fine, great, he is answering oh I'm sick and (indistinct) and the economy is bad and that's what I (indistinct) crying.

MC: *Outside in the real world the job centre in the Saxon city of Leipzig is crowded each day with the unemployed seeking work. When a major car firm announced a big factory nearby a hundred and thirty five thousand applied for jobs there.*

BMW boasts Leipzig now has the most modern car plant in the world. It's clean, quiet and has the astonishing feature of production lines passing through offices. Even in the company canteen it's impossible for the workers here not to be constantly reminded what this place is all about with the products of their labour meandering round above their heads.

The plant was opened last month by Chancellor Schroeder as a beacon of German labour flexibility. BMW bosses had used the threat of going elsewhere, particularly to the Czech Republic, to persuade the car workers' union to take contracts with much less overtime and variable rotas.

Peter Claussen (Plant Director, BMW, Leipzig): The workers have to be more flexible.

MC: *In what ways?*

PC: We, the payment is fixed on a monthly base but working time changes depending on market demand. So when we start (indistinct) with a new model demand is really high, so we work longer times and in the end of a cycle, life cycle of a model we work short hours.

MC: *As Europe debates the so called Anglo Saxon free market model one could call this the Saxon model. It's not just BMW, other big German firms have forced pay cuts and more flexibility all to compete with the East.*

Germany and old Europe know they can no longer be like the tropical islands resort, luxuriating in the EU sun cocooned from the fierce East winds.

Gavin Esler: *Michael Crick having a hard time in Germany."*

Ends