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In 2004 a number of former Warsaw Pact states (or the A8 countries) acceded to the European Union. Relaxation of labour laws resulted in over 33,000 migrant workers, mainly from Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, moving to the east of England to find work, often in rural farming areas.

Studies in the field of labour migration have shown that cultural transfer is one key symptom of labour migration. Migrants’ sense of place can be dialectical: they remain part of an imagined community at home, as well as a new community in their destination. This has a considerable effect on migrant identities, including national identities. In turn, the interplay of identity and place impacts upon the acculturation strategies groups of migrants employ as they adapt to or resist their new way of life.

This study investigated the acculturation experiences of a group of Lithuanian labour migrants in a rural county in the east of England through their experiences as members of a basketball community. Basketball is the national sport of Lithuania and is seen among the Diaspora as a significant means for the expression of national identity. In-depth interviews were completed with 12 Lithuanian stakeholders from the Lincolnshire Basketball Association (LBBA) (i.e. players, referees and coaches). The interviews focused on the acculturation experiences of the participants, especially the role that basketball plays in this process. The findings are clustered into three main themes: acculturation experiences; national identity and the imagined community; and established and outsider relations.