Based on the "Czech Report" (by Dusan Drbohlav with the Czech team)

The Czech Republic now represents one of the most important immigration target countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, compared to the immigration target countries of Western Europe the current migration situation in the Czech Republic can be characterized as an immature stage of the migration cycle. This country report will further substantiate this claim.

The fact that the country has become an immigration target is a relatively new situation since the Czech lands have traditionally been an area of emigration. However, due to an increase in immigration flows, the character of international migration movements has significantly changed. The change was mainly brought about by the following events: the Velvet Revolution and the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, accession to the European Union in 2004 and, finally, membership in the Schengen group of countries in 2007.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the number of immigrants has been gradually growing while little attention has been paid to it by the state. Over the last several years, the numbers of immigrants mushroomed and, accordingly, more concern was raised among the government and the general public. Likewise, there is more interest within the academic sphere and research circles dedicated to both basic and applied research activities in migration. Despite the interest and research, many questions remain unanswered and many topics are still to be touched upon.

The IDEA country report on the Czech Republic tries to shed light on many important aspects of the given issue while respecting the methodological and conceptual guidelines of the IDEA project. The report outlines patterns of migration and social and economic development between the mid-19th century and 1989; however, it focuses on current trends of the migratory reality facing the Czech Republic. Characteristics of immigrant population, their integration as well as immigration’s effects on Czech society are discussed according to the suggested IDEA template. Moreover, selected topical migration issues of Central and Eastern Europe (namely the role of the capital city in legal and irregular migration, the perception of foreigners by the majority population and the position of Vietnamese and Chinese within these countries' immigrant populations) are specifically addressed in the report. Finally, the position of the Czech Republic within the migration cycle is analysed and important determinants of the current migration regime are identified.

**Basic migratory patterns in the current Czech Republic**

While at the beginning of the new migration era in 1990 the percentage of foreign nationals in the total population was rather negligible, by 2007 it had already reached 3.7% (in absolute figures, there were 392,087 foreigners legally staying in the country).

Since 1993, a long-term increase in the number of foreigners has been recorded. The five largest immigrant groups have remained the same since the mid-1990s – namely citizens of Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam, Russia, Poland. The basic demographic characteristics of foreigners mostly match the generally accepted regularities of international migration. Female representation among all foreigners was stable in the period of 2001-2007 at about 40%. The age structure of foreigners was again typical of the prevailing employment-oriented migration. More than a half of immigrants fell within the age...
category of 20 to 39 years, while the shares of children and persons over 60 years of age were rather low. There are significant differences in the age structure depending on the nationality of immigrants.

Generally, two purposes of residence - settlement and family reunion/creation - were the most important purposes cited by permanent residence permit-holders. With respect to foreigners holding long-term permits, the dominant purposes of residence were employment (as an employee) and business activities (carried out on the basis of a trade licence). The number of economically-active foreigners grew fast in the first half of the 1990s – from about 30,000 people in 1990 to some 309,000 in 2007. Some major economic activities performed by immigrants are manufacturing, construction, real estate/renting and wholesale and retail. Asylum seekers do not represent an important population segment in quantitative terms in the Czech Republic (e.g. in 2007, 1,878 foreigners applied for asylum and 191 foreigners were granted asylum).

Prague and its surroundings represents the most attractive region for immigrants (about 33% of the total number reside there as compared to 11% of native population).

Besides legal immigrants, the Czech Republic represents an important destination for illegal/irregular migrants. Leaving aside illegal transit migrants, the irregular labour migrants come from economically less-developed countries (e.g. Ukraine, Vietnam, Moldova etc.) and take mostly labour intensive, demanding and poorly-paid jobs that are unattractive to Czechs.

All in all, immigrants’ most important impacts upon society are by far in the economic sphere. It seems that immigrants significantly contribute to economic development because they fill gaps on the Czech labour market. Impacts on other societal structures have so far been rather marginal.

Czech migration policy, in general, is not based on in-depth or detailed socio-economic analyses of current or future trends. In the course of time, however, a clear shift from a passive to a more active and systematic approach to migration policy and practice has become apparent. Czech migration policy is highlyapolitical. One might distinguish four different stages of the Czech migration policy since 1990: 1) 1990 – 1992, 2) 1993 – 1998, 3) 1999 – 2002, 4) 2003 – to the present (2008). Concerning migrants’ integration, it seems that successful inclusion in Czech society is associated with the assimilation mode of integration, according to migrants’ own subjective declarations. This is in harmony with what the public expects from immigrants.

Moreover, the report introduces a methodological attempt as to how to estimate the size of the irregular migrant population in the case of the capital city, Prague. The main philosophy of this approach is to juxtapose the real number of foreigners (excluding tourists) residing in selected localities to official statistics of inhabitants.

Conclusions

In the long-term historical perspective (since the mid-19th century), the development of the migratory situation inside the Czech lands/Czech Republic can be divided into three distinctive periods: a) until 1939, b) 1945 – 1989, c) since 1990. These periods do differ from one another in many aspects – including key demographic, socio-economic, political and geopolitical factors that shaped the migratory picture of each period.

One of the principal differences among the given periods is the country’s net migration status. Whereas in the first two periods Czech lands were an emigration area, after the 1989 revolution the migration situation in the Czech Republic quickly changed and the country became a transit and immigration area. Moreover, the second period significantly interrupted the continuity of the complex development of the country’s migration flows by its specific and distinctive political features (e.g. the communist regime’s centrally planned economy and closed-border policy). However, it is worth mentioning that certain attributes survived or recently intensively re-appeared (for example, some features of migration policy approaches, relations with Czech compatriot communities abroad, dealing with ethnic minorities).

The current migration reality (since 1990) can be characterized as an immature immigration stage of the migration cycle. However, there is a very limited possibility to study the transition from the emigration to the immigration stage as the emigration era was shaped by an unnatural migration regime artificially created by the former communist government.

The post-1989 migration era features a gradually increasing immigration of foreigners to Czech Republic along with the rather low and stable emigration of natives. As well, inflows of immigrants of Czech origin have been rather low. All in all, the net positive migration has been growing even more intensively during the last several years. Besides legally staying immigrants we have to take into account that there are many illegal/irregular migrants in the country, most of whom are active on the Czech labour market.
The above-described development of migration is conditioned by many external and internal factors. Involvement in globalization processes, in general, and joining the democratic and free-market economic area of Europe, in particular, represent the main external factors contributing to growing migration inflows to the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, several internal factors are at least of equal importance in terms of shaping current migration processes.

The demand for foreign workers on the Czech labour market seems to be crucial. The demand side has two different faces – a positive and a negative. Both of them do lure immigrants into the country. On the positive side, the demand is evidence of very good economic performance, high foreign investment inflows and increasing numbers of work opportunities. On the other hand, the demand is also stimulated by several negative features, such as a mismatch between labour demand and supply within the Czech native population, low geographical mobility of the domestic population, the small difference between the minimum wage and income from various social benefits/subsidies, high costs of labour (high taxes) and finally a persisting tolerance and use of irregular/informal business and employment practices.

Migration policy can be considered as another important internal factor influencing immigration flows. The Czech migration policy, however, lacks not only a clearly stipulated, robust and consistent “philosophy” (except for mandatory harmonization with the EU rules), but also interest and support from governmental bodies and political parties. Nevertheless, despite so far rather ad hoc measures, recently we can see some shift towards a bit more of a systematic and pro-active policy. Concerning the relation of migration policy to labour force demand, migration policy should be a tool positively reacting to the needs of the labour market. However, the effects of migration policy in relation to the demand for labour apparent on the Czech labour market are rather ambiguous (intended outcomes are often very different from final results, e.g. the “The Selection of Qualified Foreign Workers” program) and migration policy potential is still underexploited. Furthermore, the demographic reality of low birth rates and increasing life expectancy are leading to an aging population. Consequences of this now represent an internal immigration stimulus and may one day take on greater importance. Another possible factor that might attract immigrants in general into a country is its welfare system (various forms of social subsidies and benefits). In the Czech Republic this factor seems to be unimportant for now (e.g. foreigners’ low use of the social system and the strict work permit regime).

Obviously, economic impacts of immigration upon Czech society are by far the most important ones due to the overwhelmingly economic and circulatory character of migration and the short time period that has elapsed since the migration process has been normalized. It has been shown that immigrants´ role on the labour market has been of a complementary character rather than a competitive one. The influence of immigration upon other, non-economic structures has so far been marginal.

In line with the aforementioned facts, it is rather difficult to draw any conclusions concerning immigrants´ integration. In any case, what was indicated in several surveys is that immigrants who chose an assimilation mode of adaptation were more satisfied with their lives within the Czech host society than others. Moreover, this “assimilation philosophy” corresponds to the perceived and proclaimed nature of the Czech majority’s attitude towards immigrants (a strong preference for immigrants´ full adjustment to Czech culture).

The whole issue of public perception of immigrants is a complicated and complex matter with some internal discrepancies. Overall, it seems that immigrants´ standing in the eyes of the Czech majority is not good, albeit gradually and slightly improving though there are significant differences regarding the perception of individual ethnic/immigrant groups. We think that in the case of the Czech Republic, the importance of public opinion polls concerning immigrant issues should not be overestimated since so far their influence on the Czech migration policy has been negligible.

When assessing interconnected relationships among immigration, economic development, migration policy and public perception of immigrants in the Czech Republic, we found a clear interrelation among them that specifically became visible at the end of the 20th century when the Czech economy was hit by a recession. At that time, the economic problems were closely followed by more restrictive migration regulations; both led to a decrease in numbers of immigrants. Consequently, the “popularity” of immigrants within Czech society declined. We can learn important lessons from this finding. First, it has been again proved that Czech migratory patterns do follow those that are known from many western developed immigration countries. Second, future possible economic problems can result in tensions over immigrant issues within the Czech society.

To sum up, within the last 18 years the Czech Republic has gone through a transformation from an emigration country to an immature immigration country. Accordingly, we can consider the Czech Republic to be a country of immature integration of immigrants as the large numbers of immigrants “have not yet been transposed” to spheres of society other than the economic one.
Based on the "Hungarian Report" (by Ágnes Hárs with the Hungarian team)

**Introductory historical background**

In the early 20th century, Hungary as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a multi-ethnic country. As a result of the peace treaties concluding World War I, the territory and population of Hungary was reduced considerably, as a consequence its ethnic character has changed. In addition, WWII was followed by forced resettlements and refugee flows. As a result of all these changes, the territory of present-day Hungary was left with a highly ethnically homogeneous population. On the other hand, an ethnically mixed population with considerable Hungarian minorities emerged in the adjacent countries. That continues to have a substantial effect on Hungary’s migration history.

**Turning point from emigration to immigration**

Migration trends in democratic Hungary have considerably changed from what they were during the four decades of rigorously controlled borders under Communism; strict border control at frontiers turned into free border crossings. The modest net emigration of the decades before the transition resulted in a stagnation of mobility: neither emigration nor immigration took place at a significant level (except in the aftermath of the failed revolution in 1956). The late 1980s and early 1990s obviously represented a turning point for Hungarian migration; the country turned into a net immigration country, which has proven to be permanent. While emigration from Hungary was moderate during and following the democratic transition, immigration jumped suddenly (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Main migration flows – transition into net immigration**

![Figure 1](image)


**Flows and stock of immigrants***

The pattern of the overwhelmingly ethnicity-based migration was evident and due to the nation’s history. Instead of a conceptually "pure" labour migration, ethnicity plays a crucial role in engendering, patterning and regulating migration flows, as stressed by Brubaker (1998: 1049). The slowly increasing flows got a sudden push in the transition period, especially following the Romanian revolution in 1989. Most of the early immigrants were Romanian citizens; in the following years migration emerged from Yugoslavia as well due to the war in the region and from Ukraine. Although most immigrants were ethnic Hungarians, the statistics register them by citizenship, and so they appear statistically as

* Based on Central Alien Registry data; the administrative data of the foreign register based on various forms of immigration vs. resident permits are the source of immigration statistics.
‘foreign citizens.’ No official registration on the ethnicity is available*. Nevertheless, unlike ethnic Germans scattered over vast areas far from Germany, ethnic Hungarians are concentrated in states adjoining Hungary, a uniquely Hungarian phenomenon in European migration patterns (Brubaker 1998: 1054).

The early immigration of the 1980s was refugee-driven. The immigrants were ‘quasi-refugees’ (categorised in the statistics as ‘others’) who were neither recognised as refugees nor defined as immigrants. Having entered the country in various ways, they either managed to regularise their status to become legal immigrants or residents in the following years or left again for a third country. The first wave of immigration of the ‘quasi-refugees’, with a peak in 1990, was replaced by a wave of ‘immigrants’. Later it in turn was overtaken by ‘foreign residents’. While the former was a long term permit for immigration, the latter represents a shorter-duration permit for residence. The replacement of the various flows and the stabilization of the process are evident by the late 1990s.

Some immigrants applied for citizenship and left the stock of foreigners by acquiring citizenship. Naturalization followed the inflow of immigration and peaked in 1992 (with the naturalization of 20 thousand applicants) and remained considerable in the following half decade (around 10 thousand naturalizations per year), the share of Romanian citizens is conspicuous in the naturalisation process, especially in the early 1990s both numerically and proportionally. Naturalized persons are, in fact, part of the immigrants who arrived as immigrants and applied for citizenship yet no longer appear statistically as part of Hungary’s foreign population.

Following the early massive inflow of immigration, the legal immigration to Hungary based on resident permits has continuously increased. The share of foreign citizens in the total population increased in the period of 1995-2007 from 1.1% to 1.9%. The ethnic composition of the immigrant population is rather stable. Romanian citizens far outnumber all the other foreign communities and the number is still increasing. Most of the foreign communities stabilized in the 1990s and not much increase has come about since that time. In addition to the communities from adjacent source countries, a strong Chinese one shaped itself and created some economic significance (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Stock of migrant foreign citizens by main source countries**

![Graph showing the stock of migrant foreign citizens by main source countries](image)

Data refer to the 1st of January. Due to data revision, there appears a drop in data between 2000 and 2001 (invalid permits were eliminated from the database).


The immigration pattern of men is mobile whereas women typically follow a more settlement type of immigration. The stock of the (legal) foreign population is aging: the share of prime-age immigrants

* On the principle of neutrality, ethnic characteristics are not registered.
of 30-39 and 40-49 is more or less constant, around 25% and 15% respectively, whereas the share of 50+ age groups is increasing, especially in the case of women, while the proportions of youth below 19 and the immigrant cohort of age 20-29 are decreasing.

**Labour market participation of immigrants**

The main motivation of immigration is to work. Resident permits are increasingly given for employment-related purposes, (nearly 60% in 2006). In addition, family reasons (18%) and study (11%) are important reasons to immigrate and stay*. According to 2001 Census data, over 40% of the (legal and settled) immigrant foreign population was employed, somewhat over the national average; furthermore, they were less likely to be unemployed than nationals were. Foreign citizens’ primary occupations indicate a qualified immigrant population, with qualifications much above the native population’s.

**Dynamics of the labour migration according to work permits**

Somewhat different from the above data and more relevant from the labour market point-of-view are the work permit statistics. In the early 1990s, the main source of labour migration was the huge and sudden inflow of ethnic Hungarians. Quasi-refugees could legalise their stay by acquiring work permits, as a precondition of both the resident permit and naturalization was legal employment (Tóth 1995). However, the later deterioration of the labour market during the politico-economic transformation resulted in decreasing labour migration until the better economic and labour market climate at the end of the 1990s (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Dynamics of immigrant labour in Hungary by source countries, 1990-2007**

![Graph showing dynamics of immigrant labour in Hungary by source countries, 1990-2007.](image)


The number of work permits increased along with some changes in the structure of foreign workers. Employment increased in manufacturing, construction and service branches like trade or hotel and catering. The educational level of the work permit holders is low on average with considerable differences among countries of origin (by citizenship). Romanian and Ukrainian citizens typically have completed apprentice school or less. EU-15 citizens employed on work permit basis, on the contrary, are rather highly qualified. Other migrant groups are internally educationally diverse. An increasing number of semi-skilled Slovak workers are employed but cross-border commute between their home communities and work. In contrast to settled immigrants holding residence permits and the census data norm, people who hold only work permits tend to be ‘low-quality’ immigrant workers employed in low-quality, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. At the end of 2007, 42% of the work permits were issued for non-agricultural occupations requiring only an elementary education, of which over ¾ went to Ro-

* As a general rule, the basis for employment was the work permit in Hungary, as regulated by its Employment Law. Some foreigners (immigration permit holders, refugees, etc.) were not obliged to possess a work permit. In addition, exceptions regulated by the Employment Law were numerous and extensive for particular professions or aims of employment. Nevertheless, the main principle was to hold a residence permit for the purpose of work (labour visa). (Prior to EU accession, legal employment was possible on the basis of residence permits for employment as a precondition for a work permit; following the Union’s enlargement the work permit regulations were abolished for all but 3rd country nationals).
Irregular labour migration

Legal labour immigration is only part of total labour migration. According to everyday observation and “expert estimates” based on labour inspectorates and research (Juhász 2007), there exists a considerable presence of irregular migrant labour in construction, in agriculture and domestic services (domestic servant, maid, or caregiver for children or the elderly). However, no quantitative estimates on irregular employment exist. Nevertheless, the main issue is the irregular employment of natives. The extended irregular native labour market is an evident magnet for irregular migration (Reyneri 1998).

The characteristics of the labour market: pull factors and impediments to migration

The sudden increase of immigration did not accelerate. The continuous inflow of labour migration regulated by work permits has never exceeded the upper limit set by the minister of labour. Following the transitional economic shock, GDP and industrial output were increasing, unemployment was decreasing but employment levels were stagnating. Capital investment resulted mostly in unskilled labour redundancy, and younger and older skilled workers proved to be functionally interchangeable although young people often enjoyed an advantage over their older labour market competitors. In sum, Hungary was characterized by jobless economic growth. In addition the Hungarian economy is in a way ‘overmodernized’, that is its job structure mirrors that of a more productive economy. In contrast to job creation in Mediterranean countries, where the extensive sector of small and micro enterprises attracts large numbers of migrants*, low-wage, small enterprises and self-employment jobs are lacking or have the character of providious, non-increasing family base. Other job creation is highly dependent on multinational firms and feature limited freedom of activity (Laki 1998, GKM 2007).

The relevance of ethnic and transnational migration

The Hungarian reality of ethnic return migration is not unique. Despite international non-discrimination norms, preferential ethnic return policies are common in Europe and also in Asian trans-national communities (Skrentny et al 2007). Hungary has both an Eastern European strong co-ethnic return migrant population originating from its neighbouring countries and an Asian – i.e. Chinese – trans-national migrant community. The differences in the basic migration pattern of the two

immigrant populations are evident and strongly influence their migration routes, effects and outcomes in Hungary. The circular character of both the ethnic and the trans-national Chinese migration patterns is also essential in explaining migratory phenomena. Migrants’ integration and the developing (and measured) maturity of the strongly circular migration flows challenge immigration, integration and migration policies as well.

Migration Policy

The first period between 1988 and 1992 was characterised by the birth of its legal and institutional framework, starting with a Constitutional amendment and ending before the drafting of the first Acts on Immigration and Citizenship. In the early years of immigration, authorities were busy coping with the everyday needs of managing a system-in-the-making and tailoring it properly. Migration had suddenly become sizeable and it was hoped that a migration policy would emerge and deal with the new circumstances. A mixture of concern and also rejection, organizational improvisation and imitation, postponement and quasi-solutions were the result of these efforts. The status of ethnic Hungarians living in countries adjacent to Hungary has always been part of the discussion on immigration legislation. The Hungarian immigration and naturalisation system has often been criticised for being indifferent towards ethnic Hungarians. The Hungarian governments maintained that they wanted to encourage ethnic Hungarians to remain in the lands of their birth, and initiated no active immigration or resettlement policy of co-ethnics (Tóth 2000).

The second period between 1993 and 2000 represented the years of consolidation and stabilisation of the migration regime following the 1993 drafting of the core legal texts and the development of an institutional system to cover immigration regulations. This period started with the establishment of the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs and the drafting and passing of the Acts on Immigration and Citizenship. The drafting of these legal texts lacked any substantial preliminary policy debate and the professional discussions around it were restricted to technicalities. When the Minister of the Interior presented the draft law of the Aliens Act* to Parliament in 1993, migration was first and foremost considered and dealt with as a security issue. The policy position regarding labour migration was first articulated at the presentation of the draft Aliens Act in the Parliament. According to it, “in order to protect the Hungarian labour market, certain provisions were amended [namely] restricting the employment conditions of foreigners and imposing visa requirements for such entries”**. In 1997, the Parliament adopted a Law on Asylum***, which entered into force in the spring of 1998. Even if the asylum regulation had underlying humanitarian principles, policy makers still expressed security requirements, narrowing the room for interpreting and implementing the legislation.

The third period, from 2001 to the present, has been about the legal and institutional harmonisation with (or adjustment to) the existing or assumed standards of the Common European Migration and Asylum Systems. The regulations were changed in 2001 in accordance with preparation for EU membership (the so-called “alliance policing package”). The thorough amendment of the Aliens Act in 2001 clearly emphasised reducing illegal immigration in the context of combating organised crime. As for the position towards labour migration, there is only one paragraph dealing with the connection between migration and the labour market, and that pertains to fighting illegal immigration and illegal employment. In the autumn of 2006, there was again a thorough legislative overhaul due to the transposition deadlines of several EU Directives (on Family Unification, Long-term Residence, Asylum Procedure), resulting in two brand new Immigration Acts in early 2007, and changes to the Asylum Act in mid-2007.

There is still no migration policy in Hungary; however, its creation is still ongoing but with less enthusiasm than in earlier times. Bits and pieces of such a policy appear from time to time. Despite the apparent demand for labour migration, any sign of change in migration regime incites rejection. Despite the state’s lack of policy responses to facilitate labour migration into Hungary, the government presented a surprisingly rigid and defensive position when it came to EU states imposing restrictions on the free movement of labour during the enlargement process.

Outlook

Forecasting the trend of the Hungarian migration regime is hard. National migration policy, in fact, corresponds to the premature stage of immigration. No definite preference for ethnic migration has been formulated. The same approach is evident towards the emerging and economically significant Chinese migration. Migration policy is considerably defensive towards all groups of current and pro-


** Parliamentary Logbook, 20th April, 1993, presentation of Péter Boross (Minister of the Interior)

spective immigrants. The reason behind the ambiguous policy is uncertainty about the economic role of immigrants. Fears of migration recurrently arise even though migration levels do not reach official limits. Migration levels correspond likely to the push-and-pull effects of the labour market. The early migration stimuli have stagnated or vanished. The push factors of emigration from Romania crucially changed over time. Especially given the ambiguous and underwhelming pull effects of the Hungarian labour market, potential immigrants to Hungary have other options: (i) the growing Romanian economy may offer alternatives and (ii) the more attractive destination countries of southern Europe. Meanwhile, the attractiveness of migration to Hungary is diminishing (Csata-Kiss (2003), Bodó-Bíró 2006, Kiss 2007). As for another important segment of immigrants, the ambiguous or rather negative and unsupportive policy strongly hindered the integration of the Chinese, leaving the Hungarian Chinese community stagnating and with an uncertain future. They exist in their transnational ways and spaces (Nyíri 2005). No new sources of migration emerged in the past decade or so and a supportive migration policy is lacking. That said, growth and maturity in immigration is possible through changing economic and labour market circumstances and a supportive migration policy. These have the potential to transform Hungary’s emerging immigration regime from prematurity to a mature phase.

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Based on the “Polish Report” (by The Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw)

Poland - a latecomer in becoming a net immigration country?

Poland’s past and present have being marked by emigration. Even the most recent statistics indicate that - a full 18 months after Poland’s accession to the EU - for every 50 Poles that left their homeland, only one incoming foreigner has arrived in their place.

Does that mean that Poland can still be described as a net emigration country and that immigration to Poland is still very limited? According to the most recent population census taken in 2002, foreign nationals residing in Poland constituted merely 0.2 percent of the total population – an amount far lower than that observed in western European countries and in many other European countries still in transition. Six years later, the situation is no different.

Obviously, Poland still belongs to a group of “latecomers” with regard to becoming a country of net immigration. Why is that?

Poland’s modernisation began only in the final decades of the 19th century, and was interrupted or derailed as a result of the complete devastation brought by WWI and WWII, as well as the nationalization of almost all economic assets and the imposition of central planning in the late 1940s. Poland only began resuming modern economic reforms as late as 1989. An accelerating and consistently high population growth had also appeared by the end of 19th century but, due to substantial demographic losses during WW II, only reappeared in the late 1940s. Mass emigration also began relatively recently, just a few decades before the outbreak of WW I. But it, too, was abruptly stopped shortly after the end of WW II and re-emerged only in the 1980s. No wonder, then, that at present, Poland – unlike most countries of western, northern and southern Europe – still has to complete basic modern transformations, including transferring its population and workforce from underdeveloped regions, characterised by their semi-traditional sectors and semi-subsistence economies, to hubs of modernity, be they inside Poland or abroad.

Inflows by type and home country

When did inflow to Poland start? According to official statistics, in 1946-1948 nearly 1.5 million people immigrated to Poland; about as many as had emigrated in 1945. Almost all of them, however, were Polish nationals. Some of them included former emigrants who, before WWII, resided mainly in France, Belgium and Germany, and in some cases married foreign spouses. However, most returnees were either persons who had been (usually forcibly) displaced (deported) during the war or those who resettled from what had been, pre-war, Polish territory, but annexed into the USSR according to the terms of the Yalta conference and subsequently subjected to ethnic cleansing by the Soviets.

The onset of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain in 1948 made immigration to Poland practically impossible. Between 1949 and 1990, only two to three thousand new immigrants, on average, were recorded in Poland each year. A majority of these were Polish nationals. Most of the handful of foreigners recorded were citizens of the USSR and other former communist countries who married Polish nationals outside of Poland (usually in the Soviet Union), where they had been posted to get a degree in one of several prestigious socialist academic institutions.

The year 1989 brought significant changes in the Polish migration scene. Since then, Poland has been systematically penetrated by various flows of migrants arriving for diverse purposes and originating from a variety of different countries.

In 1989 foreign entries into Poland (including transit visitors) increased by 40 percent as compared to the preceding year. In 1990 they amounted to as many as 19 million and in 1991 to 37 million: these were, respectively, nearly three-fold and more than five-fold the figure recorded in 1988. The number of border crossings by incoming foreign citizens continued to rise until 1999, when the annual inflow reached a ceiling of 90 million.

This numerical increase has been accompanied by diversification of the purpose of visits and visitors’ countries of origin. Although initially most foreigners visited Poland for only a few days and generally for reasons other than tourism, e.g. so-called “false tourists” (petty traders mostly from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia), for brief family reunions, for company business (mostly from France, UK and Germany) or to begin their own business as in the case of the Vietnamese (a phenomenon in the Polish migration landscape). One cannot omit the inflow of asylum seekers (with a recent predominance of Chechens).

Since 1990, yet another source of continuous foreign inflow has been labour migration, whose legality
hinges on specific work permits that must be obtained prior to entering Poland. The inflow has been mostly coming from two groups of countries. The first group comprises three important countries of Eastern Europe: Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. The second group includes five important Western countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Italy. A smaller and final group is made up of five major Asian countries: Vietnam, China, Turkey, India and South Korea. Around the year 2000, permits granted to citizens of these 13 countries accounted for more than 70 percent of the total number of permits (the share of Ukrainians alone was 13-14 percent).

**Stock of foreigners**

Immigrants are hardly visible in the Polish statistics.

The last population census – probably the most reliable statistical source on the numbers and characteristics of the resident population – found that, as of 20 May 2002, only 40,661 foreign citizens were recorded as members of Poland’s resident population. Of these, fewer than 30,000 were born abroad. According to the same source, just 14,457 foreigners living in Poland on the census date had arrived between 1989 and 2002.

This implies that, over the more than 13-year period of Poland’s post-communist transition, the contribution of immigration to the total stock of Poland’s population was just 0.04 percent. How is this possible, given that official sources recorded almost as many new immigrants – 14,000 – in just the two years immediately preceding the census year? There appear to be at least three explanatory factors. First, a considerable proportion of those who show up as immigrants in Polish statistics continue to be, in fact citizens of Poland, e.g. return migrants. Second, many foreigners who immigrated between 1989 and 2002 had been naturalised before the census date. Third, the quality of census data on citizenship (and not only this) is inadequate.

Statistics on the composition of the foreign/immigrant population by country of origin tend to underestimate the inflow of foreigners from non-western countries and to overestimate the immigration of Germans. Germany’s high ranking as a source foreign population, especially as far as permanent residents was concerned, was not owed to immigration but mainly rather to the existence of a specific group of return migrants. These are people (or their descendents) who were not deported to Germany after WWII despite having been *Third Reich* citizens, but who, on the basis of some German ancestry, were able to emigrate to Germany during the Communist era and were awarded German citizenship upon renouncing their Polish one.

**Immigrants’ inclusion into the Polish labour market**

According to the Census of 2002, among all foreigners residing in Poland (non-Polish citizens) whose reason of immigration could be determined approximately 30 percent stated to have migrated for work-related reasons, and another 20 percent for educational matters (of the remaining part, the most – 40 percent– migrated for family reasons). This means that labour migration forms a significant portion of all immigration flows to Poland, and that therefore, the labour market may be considered a driver of migrant inflow into Poland.

Registered employment of foreigners with work permits remained stable throughout the course of 1989-2007, when roughly 15,000-20,000 work permits were issued per year. Foreign workers who are seasonally employed on the basis of declarations of employment are exempt from the requirement to hold a work permit due to a new policy introduced in 2006 for the agricultural sector and extended to other sectors in 2007, granting citizens of neighbouring countries more extensive access to the Polish labour market. As many as 15,000 to 20,000 declarations of employment of foreigners were issued per month, meaning that numbers may top 200,000 annually. Various estimates point to an increasing number of undocumented migrant workers since early last decade, but the estimates vary as to the number of said workers, and especially to the flow during particular time periods of time since the early 1990s.

Bearing all this in mind, the estimated share of documented foreign workers within the Polish labour market differs seasonally and across data sources (Table 1).

The estimates for undocumented workers are a bit higher and oscillate between 0.4 to 3.5 percent. Still, the estimates mentioned above put Poland’s economy among those with the lowest shares of migrant worker participation in the labour markets in Europe.

A foreign presence in the grey economy is clearly evident even though official statistics show foreigners involved mostly in prestigious positions in the “legitimate” economy. The picture of registered foreign employment on the Polish labour market, as seen through the lens of official statistics, shows a predominance of executive officers, experts, specialists and skilled workers (Figures 1 a & b). Fur-
Table 1. Percentage of documented foreign workers within the total amount of workers employed in the Polish labour market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Foreigners</th>
<th>of total employed (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census (2002)</td>
<td>21,415</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in national economy (2006)</td>
<td>6,940</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work permits (2007)</td>
<td>12,153</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPLM project estimates (2007)</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>0.550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own calculations based on various sources.

thermore, the proportion of highly-skilled individuals among those officially employed follows an increasing trend. A CMR representative employers’ survey also confirms the leading role of highly-qualified foreign workers in Poland.

Figure 1. Composition of work permits issued to foreigners in Poland across occupations, 1993-1999 and 2000-2002*

* Data is presented into two time sets due to the changes introduced in 2000 on categorising work permit holders

Source: Own elaboration based on National Labour Office & Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

When one excludes chief executive officers from the analysis of official statistics on work permits, the structure of the employed-foreigners time series changes (no peak observable). This finding leads to the conclusion that the predominance of executive officers in the overall registered employment of immigrants – given the policy changes affecting this group of migrant workers – distorts the picture of migrant inclusion into the Polish labour market. On the basis of registered employment data, one might conclude that foreigners, regardless of nationality, are employed in specialist positions and therefore located almost exclusively in the primary sector of the labour market. However, this is in contrast to what is evident to an observer, who can see low-skilled foreign labourers working mostly in the shadow economy or foreigners coming into Poland anticipating employment, given the potential growing demand for low-skilled workers.

Integration: a driver of institutionalized immigration?

Various types and groups of immigrants (Table 2) in Poland considerably differ in terms of the extent of their integration into Polish society; most of them have already developed some ties to Poland.
### Table 2. Types of migrants according to place of their living

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poland as a place of living</th>
<th>Number of countries in which a migrant lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigrant (connected with Poland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Circular migrant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own elaboration.

“Circular migrants” constitute the most notable example since they represent the most prevalent migrant flow to Poland in the 1990s and 2000s. Their social ties in Poland are relegated mainly to other migrants, and contacts are usually limited to the work sphere. They have, however, a relatively high propensity to attract new migrants, usually of the same type, to be employed in the same sector. This propensity differs across sectors, but recruitment of new migrants via social and personal ties maintained with the home country has been observed in most, if not all, sectors employing “circular migrants” in Poland. It seems that there are two aspects of the durability of circular migration to Poland. On the one hand, the transformation of circular migration into immigration seems very unlikely – circular migration, as a pattern of migration to Poland – appears here to stay rather than as a mere prelude to settlement migration. On the other hand, circular migration is very sensitive to changes in migration legislation and/or economic opportunities within Poland and therefore the size of such flows are quite variable. This was observed quite recently, just after Polish accession to the Schengen zone: some “circular migrants” decided to overstay illegally in Poland, while some decided to return to their countries of origin for good.

One immigrant group, the Vietnamese, constitutes a distinct case in the Polish migratory scene. In contrast to other migrants, the share of Vietnamese migrants married to Poles is relatively low, even among settled migrants. The settlement process takes on, in their case, a classical form, including family reunion and marriage migration. Moreover, the Vietnamese are eager to establish social relations with both Poles and Vietnamese, although social ties with co-ethnics are more numerous and, arguably, more important. In addition, sectors where Vietnamese predominate – trade and gastronomy – seem to be particularly likely to grow by attracting Vietnamese newcomers to work, usually by offering them some avenues for professional mobility. All in all, it can be argued that the Vietnamese make up a group that has a potential to grow, especially with the help of intra-group dynamics, and with continued social ties between migrants and their home country.

Foreigners married to Polish citizens constitute a distinct group, simultaneously predominating among settled migrants in Poland. Their social ties are relatively numerous as compared to other migrants, and mainly comprise Poles – thereby suggesting a pattern of migration that involves incorporating oneself into Polish society. However, despite their integration, these immigrants can and do still attract new migrants to Poland. It should be stressed that this group can attract various types of migrants since they are likely to possess adequate resources to sponsor the migration of relatives and friends.

**Migration policy: a breaker of massive immigration?**

Poland still lacks a long-term, consistent and well-constructed migration policy. These shortcomings are reflected not only in its legal and institutional framework, but also in state authorities’ piecemeal planning and incomplete understanding of migration processes. At this stage of development, migra-
tion policy in Poland can be characterized as a set of *ad hoc* decisions and reactive measures undertaken as a response to various internal and external stimuli. The politicisation of immigration is ingrained in the state administration and can be described as highly bureaucratic. Although immigration is a topic gradually attracting more and more administrative attention, it is not a matter of particular interest to any political party and figures only in a very limited way in discourse within labour unions, the media or even within the general public.

The EU has become an important actor, exerting a strong creative influence that helped encourage the development of migration policy at its normative (migration doctrine) and functional (legal and institutional framework) levels. It provoked public and political debate on migration in general. Poland’s commitment to harmonize its national law with EU legislation was a clear push factor that compelled national policymakers to take legislative and political action. EU initiatives have caused them to better define national viewpoints on immigration and to enforce the implementation of the EU law in this field.

There are noticeable divergences between the anticipated outcome of initiatives and their actual consequences. In changing the rules of access to the labour market for particular foreigners, Polish migration policy also earned the description of ‘clienteleist’, according to which a segment of migration policy is shaped by special interest groups.

**Concluding remarks**

Poland - traditionally a migrant-exporting country - cannot yet solidify its status as a destination country, either statistically or in terms of migration’s importance in public discourse. As such, Poland lags behind other EU countries, both in terms of its transformation into a net-immigration country and a country wherein migration is a matter of public debate or concern.

Poland’s foreign population is still marginal (0.2 percent of total population) and only anticipated factors such as: demographic factors (mostly available labour force), macroeconomic factors (business cycle, skill and labour shortages, employers’ behaviours); opportunities for integration (mostly social ties) and migration policy (mostly connected to the labour market) can accelerate the country’s change of migration status to a net immigration country.

In general, the picture of present-day migrant inclusion into the Polish labour market does not foretell a massive and institutionalised inflow of immigrant labour. However, current immigration levels may be sustained and indeed a massive, institutionalised influx may occur due to employers’ behaviours, namely growing demand for foreign labour in the secondary labour market and by the fact that, given rising labour costs, the complementary employment of foreigners may soon be replaced with foreigners used as a substitute for domestic labour (lower wages, higher flexibility). This means that, in the very near future, Poland may experience the institutionalisation of migration, complete with the emergence of ethnic enclaves and continued segmentation of the labour market, along with dense migration levels in secondary sectors. As a consequence, in the near future, the employment of foreigners may not be a matter of choice – rather one of necessity in some economic sectors.

There exists the potential to attract new migrants to join the group of foreigners already present in Poland. It is, however, relegated to a few, specific ethnic groups that are not very numerous in Poland - for example, the Vietnamese - and to a small fraction of “immigrants,” constituting as a whole a relatively small group in Poland. The ability of current “circular migrants” to attract new ones, considering the two different natures of “circular migration’s” durability in Poland’s context, is, as yet, untested. This is especially so as far as their long-term influence on stimulating further inflow to Poland is concerned. Further inflows of newcomers, based on present-day migrants’ social relations or, more broadly, on their integration patterns into Polish society, can only bring about a slow growth of the immigrant population in Poland.

Taking into account its legal and conceptual framework, the existing migration policy in Poland may be described as restrictive and not particularly attractive towards foreign migrants. A set of policies focused on controlling and limiting immigrant inflows is firmly in place – even though in practice, many loopholes endure that allow immigrants to illegally find work in or gain illegal entry into Poland. The instruments within migration policy that favour immigrant inflow are related to the liberalisation of the work permit system for citizens of Eastern neighbouring countries. The most powerful factors acting as barriers to the development of migration policy as well as to the stimulation of migrant inflows are the lack of a solidly-constructed and clearly-elaborated migration doctrine and the enduring, prevailing perceptions of immigration as a problematic and undesirable phenomenon.

All of these indicate that Poland is still in the ‘embryonic’ stage of its transformation into a net immigration country, stuck in a latecomer position and unlikely to change unless under specific conditions.