



Migration Trends in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic Similarities and Differences

Based on the IDEA Synthesis Report for the Central and Eastern European Countries prepared by the teams of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (D. Drbohlav, A. Hárs, and I. Grabowska-Lusińska editors, 2009)

During the 1990s, all three countries have undergone deep systemic transition/transformation processes from communist system with centrally planned economy towards prosperous democratic systems based on free-market economies and were successfully incorporated into western political, economic and military institutional structures. These changes were accompanied by transformations of migratory patterns that evolved from 'closed borders' regimes with minimal levels of international movements into diversified migration modes. The Czech Republic is by far the most attractive migration destination country within the CEE context with high immigration and low emigration of natives. Also Hungary experiences positive net migration, although with a low intensity and low ethnic diversification. Poland represents an important exception, having high emigration of natives and rather low long-term immigration. This means that all countries in question have an initial chance to undergo 'migration cycle' (as conceptually proposed within the IDEA project) and experience its various stages.

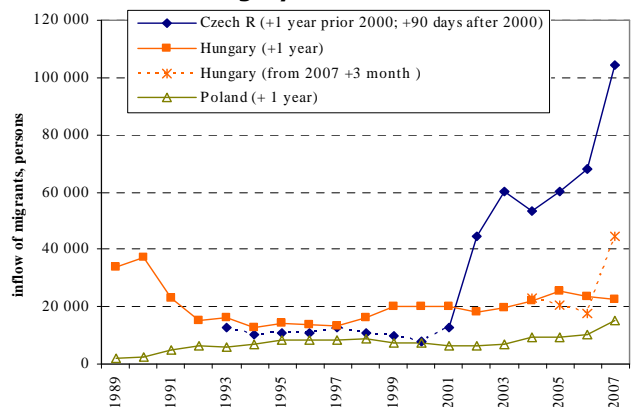
International migration in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is by no means a new phenomenon. In many respects, however, it can be regarded as a novelty worth a deep insight on the part of researchers. It is so if the perspective of countries relieved from communism thralldom would be adopted. From the view-point of objectives of the synthesis report of CEE countries migration deserves studying also from the perspective of IDEA conceptual framework and its key concept of the European 'migration cycle' which assumes that the main drivers of the change in migration status might relate to the demographic and economic developments (in both sending and receiving countries) and paradigms of migration and control policies (Fassmann, Reeger 2008).

CEE countries are the least developed in Europe in terms of the transition from emigration to immigration status. The background synthesis report has proved that although all three countries are in early stages of the 'migration cycle', they differ significantly. Whereas Poland and Hungary still seem to be in a preliminary stage, although in different sub-stages - an embryonic preliminary (as is the case of Poland), and a proper preliminary (the case of Hungary), the Czech Republic has probably already entered so called take-off stage of the migration cycle. The differences have their groundings both in the past (and presence), mainly in the process of the systemic transitions and their outcomes, namely the socio-economic structures of the labour markets which also translates the predomination of labour-type migrants in all three countries in question.

In order to illustrate these differences let us mention that in early years of the 21st century Poland still remains a net emigration country whereas Hungary records a small but slowly growing net immigration and net immigration in the Czech Republic has reached high level*. We can see the differences via looking at immigration patterns (see figure 1).

* However, due to the deficiency of the emigration statistics, it is better to show the differences between countries via immigration inflow data.

Figure 1. Migration inflows to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland

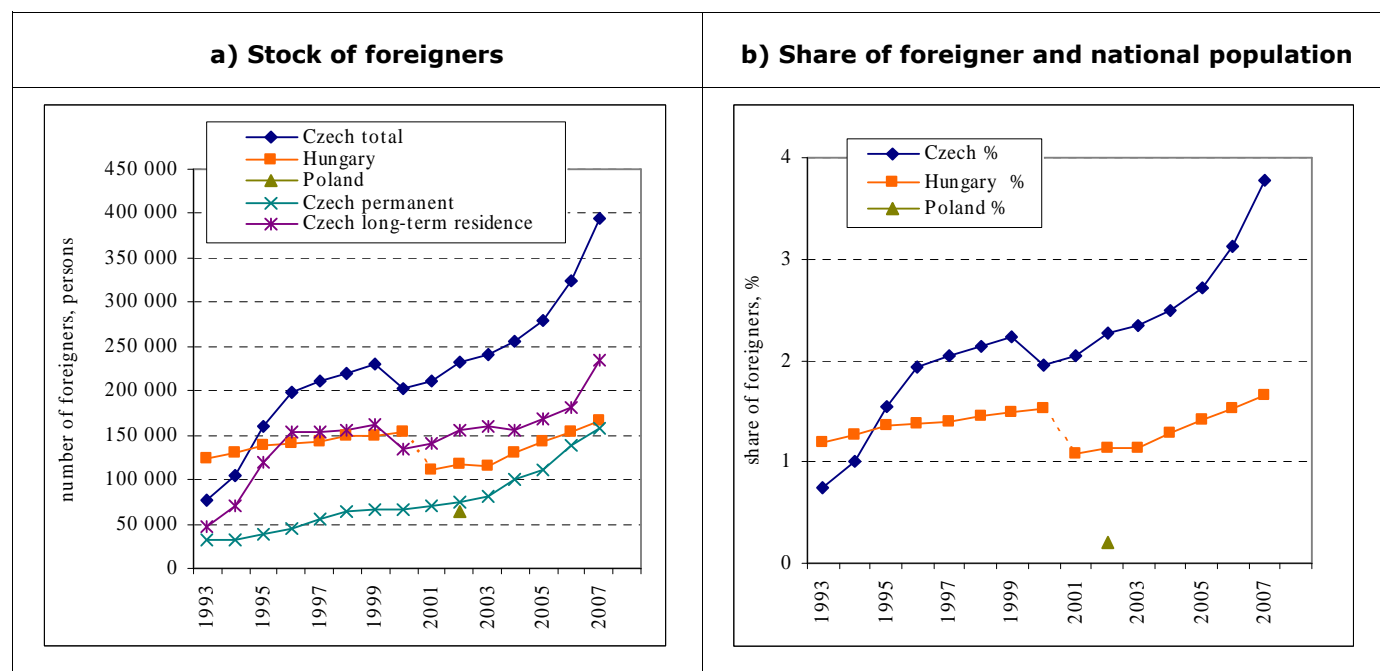


Source: Drbohlav, Hárs, Grabowska-Lusińska 2009

Notes: *Czech Republic*: Until 2000, Czech data covers Czech nationals and foreigners changing permanent residence – in the case of foreigners who got a permanent residence permit were included. From 2001 on, foreigners were counted as immigrants already after 1 year of residence. *Hungary*: Data include foreigners holding a long-term residence permit (valid for up to 1 year), foreigners who have been residing in the country for at least a year and who currently hold a long-term permit, data are presented by actual year of entry (whatever the type when entering the country). For the reason of comparisons comparably data will be shown for Hungary: since mid- 2007 (half a year only!) in Hungary data based on population register includes also foreigners staying over 90 days. *Poland*: Number of permanent and "fixed-time" residence permits issued.

Also, the stock and share of foreign citizens in the total resident population vary significantly among the given countries (see figure 2) with the Czech Republic leading the group, whilst the size of registered migrant population is rather marginal in Poland.

Figure 2. Migration stock in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, 1993-2007



Source: Drbohlav, Hárs, Grabowska-Lusińska 2009.

Notes: *Czech Republic*: Foreigners with permanent residence permits (until 2006: permanent residence gained after 10 years of residence, however shorter for family members; since 2006 after **5 years**). Foreigners with long-term residence (prior to 2000 it means foreigners with permits for a stay longer than 180 days, since 2000 it generally means foreigners with visas for the period exceeding 90 days and with long-term residence permits-issued after 1 year). *Hungary*: Settlement permit: prior 2002 after 5 years, following 2002 after 3 years of stay (with residence and subsistence, shorter for family reason) and for up to 1 year (Drop in Hungarian data between 2000 and 2001 due to data correction). *Poland*: census data of 2002 only.

Historical experience is one of the most important factors determining current migration situation in the three countries. All of them used to be emigration countries before WWII. Ethnic homogenization of population after the WWII took place in CEE countries and it was even strengthened by the insulation policy of the communist era. The resulting effect was that there was almost no experience of immigration in this region before the 1990s. Regarding the Czech Republic (at that time Czechoslovakia) and Hungary one rather specific exception can be found – due to international aid among socialist countries these two countries hosted not negligible numbers of trainees, workers and students from far-away developing socialist countries. Some of these migrant groups (mainly Vietnamese in the Czech Republic) re-appeared after 1990s and established new immigrant communities there.

Current immigration to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland has been triggered mostly by pull factors, namely mismatches between demand and supply of domestic labour, low motivation to work of natives, high labour costs, low internal spatial mobility and, importantly, tolerated practices of undeclared work. However, only in the Czech case the demand side matched with the foreign supply side, which is the precondition of robust immigration. In Poland this occurred only very recently and to some extent it could be attributed to continuous intensive emigration of Poles abroad, which has increased demand for foreign labour force. In Hungary due to specific economic structure the demand for labour has been rather low. Despite a different level of labour demand among the countries in question, its structure seems to be very similar in all three countries. Labour shortages touched mainly construction sector, services, manufacturing and agriculture (not in the Czech Republic, however). Just these branches are typical areas where regular as well as irregular immigrants operate in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Moreover, there is also a rather small but important segment of labour migrants - professionals coming from other developed countries (mainly EU15) who are chiefly involved in more intellectually demanding jobs. By contrast, legal migrants in Poland are mostly concentrated just in this sector. All in all, it seems that foreign labour is complementary rather than competitive vis-à-vis domestic workers in all three countries. However, this can be related to the

still small shares of immigrants in the labour forces (although the shares varying across three countries) in all countries in question. One can assume that with the growing size of immigrant population, the complementary effect may squeeze and foreign workers could start pushing natives out of their workplaces more extensively (competitive effect) as we can observe it in more mature, as regarding immigration, countries.

Clearly, labour motivated immigration along with more or less the same migratory source countries (countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Post-Soviet countries, Vietnam and China) are among others important common features of countries in question. On the other hand, there are important differences in terms of length of stay in individual countries with significant numbers of migrants who stay for a long-time (several months) or permanently in the Czech Republic and Hungary, whereas in Poland short-term stays (accompanied by so called petty trade activities) are dominant. It is worth mentioning that there is an important difference in Hungarian migration pattern since their immigration is mostly composed of ethnic Hungarians coming from Romania.

One of the most important determinants of migration is the existence of shadow economy. This phenomenon, as regarding its size, is a heritage coming from the communist era. Anyways, its extent and impacts much resemble realities that one can find in Southern European societies. It has to be pointed out that foreign irregular labour represents only a marginal segment of the shadow economy, which is mainly constituted by native population.

All the analysed countries share similar demographic characteristics (e.g., very low fertility, growing life expectancy) inevitably leading to population ageing process with immigration as one of the alternatives (not solutions, however) as to how to reduce negative effects of this population burden.

Not only from the geopolitical perspective, the most important moment for all three countries was the accession to the EU in 2004. Within the existing migration patterns one can find (for logical historical and political reasons) unique geopolitical interests being exhibited. Poles have special ties to neighboring former post-soviet countries, Hungary to Romanian compatriots, and the Czech Republic towards Slovakia.

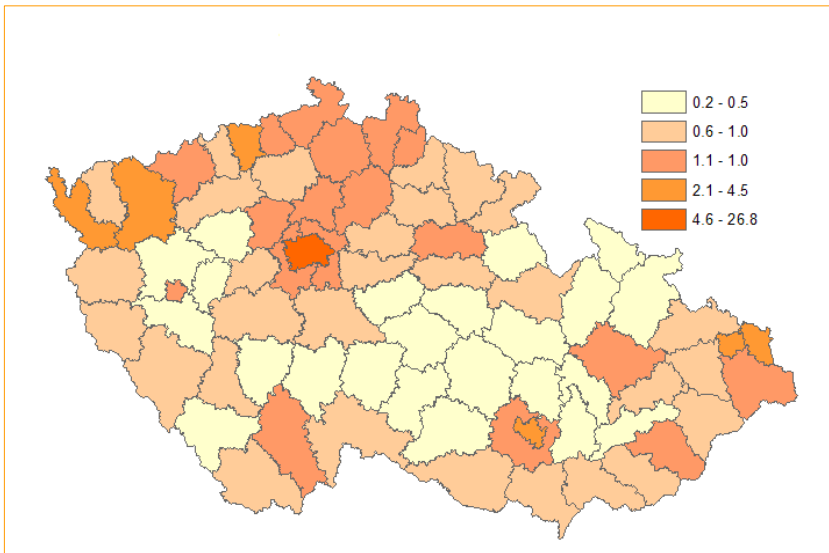
It has not been proved yet (there are no sufficient analyses) that attitudes of the majority population towards foreigners/migrants serve as an important migration determinant. On the other hand, migration policies (or rather "non-policies" in the CEE context of the 1990s) play an important role in shaping migration patterns. Like it has been documented in other migration aspects, the Czech Republic, as compared to Poland and Hungary, has already established more mature migration policy framework in terms of legal regulations, practices as well as institutional setting. Also the involvement of NGOs into migration and integration issues seems to be much more intense than in the other two countries. Similarities among the countries are based on the dominant role of the EU in migration policy design, as well as on the centralization of migration policy management with very limited involvement of regional and local institutions. Migration issues are still not an issue for any important political party. Across the given countries, pro-active and more systematic approaches within creating migration policies have recently emerged.

Because of a relatively short time that has elapsed since the establishment of new migration era and also due to prevalence of temporary migration movements, the impacts of immigration on the countries in question have so far been visible mostly in economic sphere of society. Immigrants have generally higher economic activity rates along with lower unemployment rates, as compared to domestic population. This confirms the predominating type of immigrants, namely for job-related reasons.

Clearly, integration outcomes have not been significant yet, though for example thousands of foreigners are being naturalized every year. Within naturalization policies, Hungary represents a distinctive model while many ethnic Hungarians have made use of preferential naturalization regime. As far as a spatial distribution is concerned, capital cities of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are the major immigration hubs of the countries (see figure 3), however, only Prague can be considered as a real immigrant city.

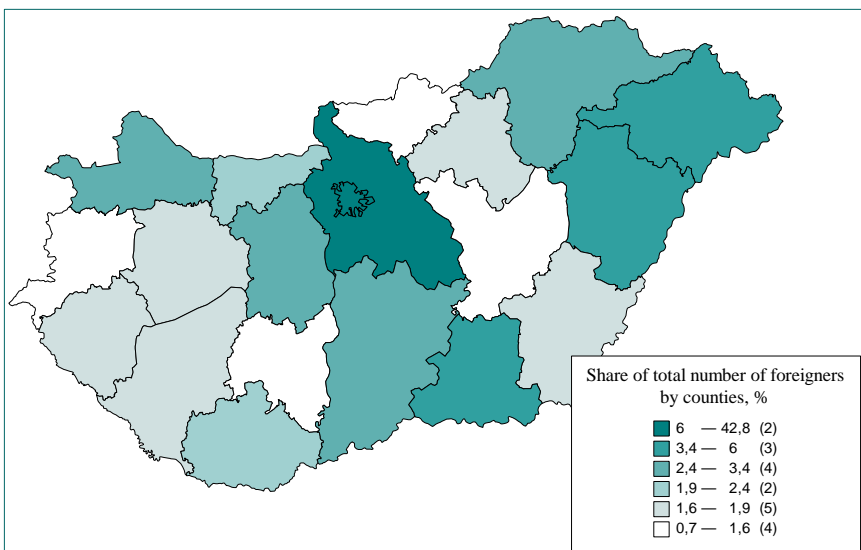
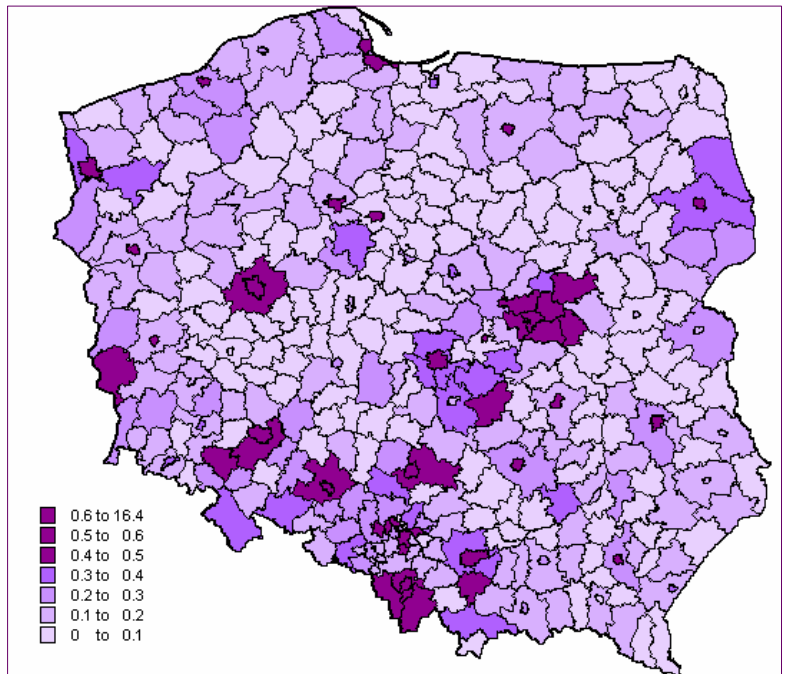
Taking into account the conceptual framework prepared within the IDEA project it seems that, although there are many similarities among the CEE countries analysed here, the countries do not follow the same stage of the migration cycle. It may be that Polish migration patterns resemble those of the preliminary, even embryonic migration stage, while Hungary is in the proper preliminary stage. The Czech Republic has shifted further on this track within the take-off stage. One of the symptoms of the 'migratory underdevelopment' of Poland might lie in the fact that Poland, in contrast to the Czech Republic and to some extent Hungary, has only rather limited number of long-term and permanent immigrants. Just these categories might create an important 'middle class' which the whole migration system of a developed immigration country might be based on.

Figure 3. Spatial distribution of foreign permanent residents in the Czech Republic (2007), Poland (2002) and Hungary (2006)



Note: Share of foreigners with permanent residence (%) in total number of foreigners with permanent residence permits in The Czech Republic.

Note: Share of foreigners-permanent residents (%) in total number of foreigners-permanent residents in Poland.



Note: Share of foreigners permanent residents (%) in total number of foreigners-permanent residents in Hungary.

Source: Drbohlav, Hárs, Grabowska-Lusińska 2009.