

## Workshop on migration to V4 countries

Supported by the Visegrad Fund and organised by three academic institutions of Budapest: the hosting Strategic and Defense Studies Center of Zrinyi Miklós National Defense University (ZMNDU), Institute of Geography of Eötvös Loránd University (FI ELTE) and Geographical Research Institute (GRI) HAS, an international workshop entitled *Migration Challenge to the Visegrad Countries from Eastern Europe* was held on October 19, 2009. The meeting was particularly timely as following the change of regimes in CEE countries having occurred twenty years ago, two distinct periods could be identified. The 1990s were years of institutionalization of migration and refugee affairs based on laying the legal foundations, whereas the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought EU membership for V4 countries and their subsequent accession to the Schengen zone, with all the consequences.

Migration is typically an interdisciplinary subject and when demographers, geographers, lawyers, statisticians, police persons and representatives of state administration or political science get together, each of them has a genuine approach of his/her own to entertain the partners. This time it was M. LESIŃSKA (Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw) who outlined the binding *EU targets*:

- To shape an internal labour market;
- To achieve limited migration from third countries;
- To form welfare system for new members;
- To establish migration policy;
- To draw soft and hard borders.

A persistent problem with migration is the *reliability of data*. M. RÉDEI (FI ELTE, Budapest) mentioned the official number of foreign citizens staying in Hungary in early 2008 (altogether ca 180 thousand, including 40% Romanian and somewhat less than 10% Ukrainian citizens /90% of the latter are ethnic Hungarians/, thousands of Slovakian and Polish citizens etc.) Red card is shown to negatively selected foreigners (mainly unskilled persons), whereas red carpet is spread out to the positively selected people. K. MEZENTSEV (Taras Shevchenko University, Kyiv) listed the official figure of the Ukrainian citizens staying abroad (72 thousand), added the western estimations ranging between 1 and 7 millions, and those of his own (1.5 to 2 millions). Real dimensions can be assessed through transfers by Ukrainians to the homeland estimated at 3 billion USD annually, roughly the sum total of the wages and salaries in Ukraine. The following speaker, V. Anderson (University of Odesa) cited the expertise carried out at Canon Law Institute, Washington: 8 billion USD was transferred home by 5 million Ukrainian labour migrants (GDP in Ukraine is around 30 billion USD). D. KARÁCSONYI (GRI HAS, Budapest, lecturing jointly with Á. KINCSES Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest) referred to the difference between the last Soviet census (1989) and the first Ukrainian all-national one (2001) accounting for a 4 million people in minus, 1 million of which they evaluated as migration loss. L. JENEY (Corvinus University, Budapest) mentioned that 40% of the Ukrainian migrants to V4 countries headed for the Czech Republic.

Anybody may ask: what do *migration challenges* actually mean? According to A. Szabó (ZMNDU) international migration is a natural phenomenon of globalisation which poses a serious threat to security and he presented maps showing the primary itineraries of human trafficking: leading from Ukraine, Romania and ex-Yugoslavia via Bratislava–Czechia to Germany; via Vienna to Germany and via Hungary–Slovenia to Italy. A Stummer from the National Bureau of Investigation (Budapest) added routes of illegal migration with a special reference to those via Turkey and the Balkans.



The administrative and service centre of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Budapest

The *new chronology of migration* started just twenty years ago, and the workshop recalled the history of these two decades sometimes full of dramatic events. In Hungary the new style began on January 1 1990 very much under the pressure of the massive influx of Hungarians from Transylvania, citizens of Romania (M. RÉDEI). In the following years there emerged institutions dealing with migration and refuge affairs, aliens policing act was adopted in 1993 (at the time of Yugoslav War), act on asylum seeking was passed in 1997. The start of EU accession negotiations in 1998 differentiated between the relation to the citizens of member states and to nationals of third countries. The EU accession of the V4, Slovenia and of three Baltic countries (May 2004) has led to 1.4 million labour migrants from the region. The amalgamation of Hungary into the Schengen zone (December 2007) was also essential and followed by organisational reforms i.e. passing of control from the border guard to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (January 2008). But the scenario varied from country to country within CEE.

The above statement was demonstrated by M. LESIŃSKA on the *example* of the Poles' flow into the EU and of Polish-Ukrainian relations. Labour migration to the west of Europe had a relatively long tradition (1960s through 80s) in Poland and it became accentuated by the political turn in the country and its accession to the EU. UK, Ireland and Sweden have been the primary destinations due to their policy of adoption of unrestricted flow of labour migrants from member states. For the Ukrainians migration to Poland was visa free up to 2003 then it fell under visa regime (2003–2007) until Schengen borders were established. Work permission regime was adopted simultaneously and employers had to

issue a declaration on the intent to hire a foreigner furnished with his/her data. A black market of permit issue emerged immediately. In 2008 there were 300 thousand migrants from Ukraine; in the same year 3 thousand work permits were issued officially. The current aphorism is: legal presence with illegal labour.

A huge area of the Balkans and East Europe can easily be called *Absurdistan* as regards illegal migration. Macedonians *en mass* have been trying to obtain Bulgarian citizenship since 2007, and then to escape to the west (A. STUMMER). A ca four million population of Moldova have dwindled virtually due to the outflow primarily of males seeking labour in CIS and EU countries. The latter itinerary leads across Romania and Hungary, with Moldavians usually hiding in containers. Numerous young ethnic Moldavians (Ukrainian nationals) living in Budjak, Odesa oblast make attempt to receive high education in Chişinau for language reasons then to get to Romania. By contrast, many people commute from Transnistria (Transdnestr) to Odesa and environs with high demand on unskilled workforce (V. ANDERSON). Most of them have all kinds of documents, i.e. Russian, Moldavian, Ukrainian passports. But perhaps the most shocking slide was shown by V. BENC (Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Prešov) about the highly massive five-zone screening system on the 90 km long Slovakian–Ukrainian border to contain illegal migration. With closing the local markets the number of pending petit traders predominantly selling cigarettes dropped considerably both in Poland and Slovakia.

*Epilogue.* One week after this workshop on migration I had an occasion to listen to a lecture by Z. Boross (National Bureau of Investigation) on illegal migration. Beside the stories about Vietnamese and Somali workers escaping from the construction works of the forthcoming European football championship heard during a recent official visit to Kyiv, he made an attempt to press out some useful information from the Ukrainian colleagues about illegal migration. The highly ranked official said: “If I furnished you with them I would commit high treason and you might easily become a spy.” These were the words of consolation offered instead of active collaboration.

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