

Introduction

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Present volume aims to summarize the research carried out in the framework of EASTmig project. The acronym EASTmig stands for the title „Migration between Visegrad countries and the Eastern Partners (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) – On the Eastern edges of the Schengen Area”. The twenty-months-long research was carried out as a Flagship Project of the International Visegrad Fund Eastern Partnership Programme which is especially designed to enhance international cooperation in fields of strategic importance in the broader Eastern neighbourhood of V4 countries. Undoubtedly, one of the essential issues is migration, which has had a major impact on the overall political, economic and sociological conditions in the broader region (Fig. 1).

In former socialist countries migration used to be strongly controlled by the state, border crossing was limited (and regulated) by strict administrative measures and was even militarized along the “iron curtain”. After 1990 mobility has rapidly increased in the region generating mass (out)migration and intense internal movements. The overall economic downturn following the transformation, in some cases events of war or unfavourable political conditions contributed to the evolvement of new life styles based on the novel freedom of movement. Hundred thousands of Eastern Europeans has left their homeland seeking better opportunities in life beyond their homeland. Although people have been relatively free in making their decisions about migration the state, the administrative bodies and the whole legislative and policy environment have had substantial impact on migratory processes. Laws can regulate who is desired and who is not in terms of work or study, what sort of occupations are there available for migrants, what rights they have and what rules they are to obey. To control and monitor migration is crucial for states of both the sending and the recipient countries. In order to efficiently execute policy towards migration reliable data and in-depth researches are needed on local, country and regional levels. This is the point where geographers can effectively contribute by summarizing available data, presenting the major spatial trends and pointing out the discrepancies as well as the missing information.

EASTmig project was created to reveal major trends of migration between eight former Socialist countries many of them sharing traditional migration linkages. While the main direction of migration from Central and Eastern European countries is towards the

older member states of the EU, V4 countries have also been effected by migratory movements as target (partly due to certain historic and ethnic linkages) and transit countries. EU integration of Visegrad counties, especially the implementation of Schengen border control system has installed new boundaries between the EU member V4 and their Eastern partners, hampering free movement and already existing personal, institutional and economic relations. Moreover, the global crisis has also redrawn the migratory processes in the region, inducing novel movements, some of them difficult to catch by statistics.

In order to get deeper insight in numbers and trends of international migration between Visegrad countries and Eastern Partners, EASTmig project was focusing on three objectives:

1. to estimate, (if it is possible, to measure), the size of migrants in the involved countries applying statistical data;
2. to present the processes and characteristics of migration in the given state applying document analysis with special emphasis on evaluating visa policies and border-crossing procedures along with reintegration policies, if any.
3. to summarize the different states' positions, expectations and policies in relation with migration and migrants.

The research report consists of country reports and three summarizing chapters focusing on available statistical datasets, spatial pattern of regional migration and recommendations for policy makers.

In Chapter 2 authors evaluated a broad range of dataset from each country and made attempts to pinpoint discrepancies, parallelisms or missing data.

Chapter 3 contains the country reports of V4 (countries are arranged in alphabetical order). Among V4 countries Czechia plays the most important role as a recipient country as it is revealed by the report written by Dušan Drbohlav (leader) and Ondřej Valenta (researcher) in Geographic Migration Centre (GEOMIGRACE) Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University in Prague (Chapter 3.1).

In case of Hungary (Chapter 3.2) the migration of ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries is the dominant migration process. The report was written by researchers from two institutes. Béla Soltész and Áron Kincses are researchers in the Hungarian Central Statistical Office while Dávid Karácsonyi and Ágnes Eröss are affiliated with Geographical Institute RCAES Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Poland (Chapter 3.3) attracts immigrants from eastern neighbours in great numbers but at the same time the out migration of Polish working age citizens is also present according to the analysis written by Magdalena Lesińska, Deputy Director in Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw.

The size and effect of migration is very limited in Slovakia where internal migration is much more important than international as it is detailed in the report prepared by Viliam Lauko, Ladislav Tolmáči, František Križan, Anna Mydlová working at Department of Regional Geography, Planning and Environment Comenius University Bratislava (Chapter 3.4).

Country reports of the involved Eastern Partner countries can be found in Chapter 4.

Ekaterina Antipova and Liudmila Fakeyeva, representing the Geography Department, Belarusian State University summarized the trends in migration in case of Belarus, that maintains closer relations to CIS countries, especially to Russia although Poland is also attractive for educated Belarusian migrants (Chapter 4.1).

Among the researched countries Georgia is the only one where IDPs and refugees are present in great numbers. In their chapter Joseph Salukvadze and Giorgi Meladze from Department of Human Geography, Tbilisi State University summarized the demographical trends following 1990 pinpointing the important role of migration in population dynamics (Chapter 4.2).

Moldova is admittedly in a delicate geopolitical situation suffering also from unstable economy. These factors contribute to the great volume of outmigration and general phenomenon of dual or triple citizenship, as it is described in the report written by Andrei Crivenco from Natural and Geographical Faculty of Sevchenko Pridnestrovian State University, Tiraspol (Chapter 4.3).

In Chapter 4.4 migration situation in the Ukraine is presented by Kostyantyn Mezentsev, Grygorii Pidgrushnyi researchers in Human Geography Department of the Institute of Geography of Ukrainian Academy of Science and Kiyv Taras Shevchenko National University. Among the Eastern partner countries Ukraine has the biggest share of migrants in V4 countries and due to the instable political situation and unfavourable economic environment this trend might be developing.

Based on spatial data on migration Dávid Karácsonyi depicted some spatial peculiarities of migration between V4 and Eastern Partner countries (Chapter 5).

Finally, in Chapter 6 Magdalena Lesińska and Dušan Drbohlav drew some important conclusions and emphasized recommendations for policy makers concerning recent problems of migration in V4 and EaPs. Harmonization of datasets both on country and on regional levels seems necessary in order to adjust the regulation and policies in the most effective way. The authors also articulate the possible fields of intervention.

We hope the present volume together with the project information available on the website, will contribute to get an overall picture of migratory movements in the region.

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The editors

