Chapter 1

Migration Movements in Europe: A Preamble

International migration has been continuously one of the major phenomena shaping the global population map. Migration movements have been part of human history from earliest times but the significance and the volume of international migrations have augmented visibly since 1945, particularly since the mid 1980s (Castles & Miller, 1998). This tendency is exemplified by the fact that during the last 15 years the population of international migrants has been increasing at a faster rate than the global population (Morokvasic, 2002). In only the ten years from 1990 to 2000, the migrant stock population increased to 21 million people worldwide and by 2002 the total number of people living outside of their countries of birth reached 175 million (UN, 2002a). This number comprises about 3% of the world's population but it does not, by any means, include all the people who migrate temporarily, undocumented people, victims of trafficking, business and political expatriates, people who changed nationality, foreign students, rejected asylum seekers who have not left the country where an application for asylum has been submitted, people in process of regularization, and so on.

In the context of this global migration increase, significant changes are also observable in the patterns of territorial spread of migrant populations, most significantly in the predominant role that Europe has played as an immigrant-receiving continent since the Second World War.

By the middle of the 20th century, Europe was an immigrant-sending continent and a territory where primarily internal migration, such as refugee movements, population displacements, and deportations took place as a reaction to the Second World War. During those years, Europe had only a minor importance as a destination for international tourists, contractual workers, or business travelers. This reality changed after the War when many European countries began to actively recruit a foreign working force – mainly from Spain,

Italy, Turkey, Morocco, and what is now the former Yugoslavia – for their heavy industries. By the mid 1970s Western Europe[1] became a host for almost fifteen million migrants, a number that did not change significantly until 1991, at which point the number of legally residing foreigners in Western Europe was 15,4 million people (Power, 1976; Salt *et al*., 1994). The largest migration waves were curbed after 1973 because of the economic depression, which led European countries to terminate the official recruitment of a foreign labor force in order to cope with their national unemployment and the depletion of public finance funds. However, the migration flows towards Europe did not cease even after the introduction of tighter border control measures and restricted entry possibilities for long-term settlers in European industrialized countries. The reasons for this continuation of migrant flows are multiple. In the first place, European countries recruiting a foreign work force have never defined themselves as immigration countries and have not foreseen the social and political consequences of migrant populations remaining on their territories. While foreign migrants were initially recruited for seasonal work or only for several years of contractual work in a certain industry and were supposed to return to their home countries after their contracts terminated, return migration did in fact not take place as expected. On the contrary, a great majority of the immigrants overstayed the contractual period, collecting unemployment compensations to which they were entitled, or looking for other employment possibilities. European countries, at the same time, have not adjusted their existing legal, political, and social structures to reflect long-term settlement or non-

[1] In the literature, it is rarely specified which countries are considered to be Western Europe. Usually the term is used to refer to the countries to the West of the former Communist Block or the so-called countries lying behind the Iron Curtain. The self-definition of Europe was and is still grounded upon the dichotomy East–West. In the current research, the term Western Europe denotes the countries to the West of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Russian Federation, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, and Albania. Western Europe should not be understood as the European Union, insofar as the geopolitical structure of the EU changes over time, and because, research data may not include all member states (for example, Greece was not previously included in migration statistics for Western Europe) or respectively not only member states (e.g. Switzerland is often included in research data, but it is not an EU member state).

return of the foreign working force. Given this lack of migration management policies, a massive family reunification process occurred and it contributed to the immigrants' population growth.

A second factor leading to a substantial increase in the migrant population in Europe is the flow of people seeking asylum or humanitarian protection. The total number of asylum applications submitted in Europe in the period 1955-1979 is 629,185. However, during the next nineteen years Europe became a destination for ten times more asylum seekers in comparison with the previous 24 years, for a total of 6,361,590 asylum applications (592,027 in the period 1980-1984; 1,125,172 in the period 1985-1989; 2,650,991 in the period 1990-1994; 1,993,400 in the period 1995-1999). On the other hand, for the same time span Northern America received three times fewer applications (2,017,075)[2] (UNHCR, 2001). The average recognition rate of between 5 and 15 percent for a variety of countries and time periods leaves large numbers of asylum seekers without legal ground for remaining in Western Europe and it is widely recognized that many failed asylum seekers have remained in the destination countries clandestinely.

A third factor, in a way related to the aforementioned one, is the historical development in Central and Eastern Europe. During the totalitarian regimes in the region, free emigration was made impossible for regular citizens and many were forced to seek migration through the asylum system. With the collapse of the Eastern block in the late 1980s and the opening of national borders, Central and Eastern Europe[3] became a major player in the international migration scene. The CEE countries experienced both increased

[2] 201,162 in the period 1980-1984; 368,967 in the period 1985-1989; 673,673 in the period 1990-1994; and 773,273 in the period 1995-1999.

[3] The term Central and Eastern Europe is used to refer to the countries which are geographically positioned in Eastern Europe and are not EU member states. Quite often, in order to denote the countries under discussion, one applies only the term Eastern Europe. If applied, the term Central Europe refers to Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro are Southeastern European countries, but in the literature, they are predominantly referred to as Eastern Europe. In strict geographical terms, Eastern Europe includes Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and the European territories of the Russian Federation.

migratory movements and resettlement of ethnic groups within the region, as well as significant out-migration directed to Western Europe and some transcontinental destinations.

Finally, with more and more stringent immigration conditions continuously introduced in Europe (e.g. the Schengen system, the Dublin agreement and Eurodac) the potential migrants who could no longer freely enter and settle in EU countries were forced to exploit either new migration channels or pre-existing ones that were not pronounced in the past – e.g. trafficking, smuggling, commuting for working clandestinely under the provisions of tourist visas or legally allowed short term periods of residence without a visa, to mention just a few examples.

All of the described amplified migration movements towards Europe testify to the gradual increase of the importance of Europe as an immigrant-receiving continent to transform it by 2002 into the territory where the largest mass of international migrants reside. Hosting 56 million migrants, in comparison with 50 million in Asia and 41 million in Northern America (UN, 2002a), European countries can no longer define themselves or be defined as non-immigration countries especially in the light of the fact that only for the ten year period between 1990 and 2000 the net number of immigrants represented 89% of the population increase in Europe. Examining the country-by-country distribution of the foreign population in Europe reveals that currently the Russian Federation (with a migrant population of 13,259 million) and Germany (with 7,349 million immigrants) host the biggest migrant stocks in Europe. Other European countries with large migrant populations are Ukraine (6,947 million), France (6,277 million), the United Kingdom (4,029 million), Poland (2,088 million), Switzerland (1,801 million), and Italy (1,634 million). The European countries hosting the highest percentage of foreigners by population are Estonia (26.2%), Latvia (25.3%), Switzerland (25.1%), Austria (24.6%), Ukraine (14%) and Belarus (12.6%)[4] (UN, 2002a)[5].

[4] Only countries with a population of at least 1 million inhabitants are presented.

Considering past developments in the international migration flows and the current factors facilitating or provoking migratory movements, it could be expected that migration is likely to continue increasing in the future. The current levels of migration and the predictions for future state population movements put the issue of immigration on the top of the political agenda of many countries. In the past 25 years, for example, the percentage of countries adopting policies to reduce immigration rose from 6% to 40% (UN, 2002a), since migration is increasingly triggering concerns about the political, social and economic impacts in countries of destination.

To conclude, the reality of immigration in Europe can no longer be ignored or underestimated and the fact that new forms of migration and more diversified flows are prevailing on the continent gradually attracts increased scientific and political attention.

[5] The proportion of migrants in comparison with the total population is highest in Asian countries, with the United Arab Emirates (73.8%), Kuwait (57.9%), Jordan (39.6%), Israel (37.4%), Singapore (33.6%) and Oman (26.9%) in the top seven positions.