Chapter 2

Eastern European Migrations

1. Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is to present an overview of the migrations from and within Central and Eastern Europe in relation to the factors causing migration flows during the past hundred years. Similar to other regions of the world, the population movements originating in Central and Eastern Europe directed towards the West or neighboring countries have been shaped by economic and political factors. What makes the migration responses from CEE distinct from the rest of the world is the political transition from totalitarian regimes towards democracy and the replacement of a centrally planned economy with a market economy, both of which took place during the late 1980s. The fall of the communist regimes will be used as a benchmark for dividing the East-West migrations in Europe into two distinct periods, during which the migratory responses of Central and Eastern Europeans as well as the possibilities for obtaining long- or short-term legal residence in host countries differed significantly. Comparing population mobility before and after the disintegration of the former Soviet Block will reveal that new and unexpected forms of migration developed as a result of political changes begun from the late 1980s onwards and of the subsequent economic crises and the response of Western Europe to the new political realities in countries in transition. Phenomena such as undocumented migrations, various practices of undeclared work abroad and human trafficking are among the major new forms of migration originating in CEE and replacing the traditional previous long-term and permanent migrations. The employment of these new paths of migration, unanimously perceived as undesirable by all states, could be viewed as the natural response of potential immigrants to the lack of channels for legal migration, the limited provisions for economic migration, and the no longer existing opportunity for

migration through the asylum system. The fall of the former Eastern European regimes is also the direct cause of a significant decrease in the proportion of predominant types of migration during the totalitarian period, such as ethnic migrations (e.g. migrations of ethnic Germans to Germany, Jews to Israel, Turks to Turkey, etc.), refugee movements, and long-term migrations before the 1980s, and the rapid increase in shuttle migration directed towards the West but also to newly liberated countries.

2. Migrations before the fall of the Iron Curtain

Population movements from CEE before the fall of the Iron Curtain can be understood as a direct response to economic and political circumstances during three main historical periods in Europe: 1) the Industrial Revolution, or the years between 1850 and the 1920s; 2) the years after the Second World War, or between 1945 and 1950; 3) the Cold War period between 1950 and 1989. The radical changes of economic and political conditions during each of those periods brought about specific migratory responses such as economic migrations, ethnic migrations, refugee movements, and internal displacements.

During the *Industrial Revolution,* migrations from CEE were driven mainly by economic factors in the countries of origin and by the emergence of democracies in Western Europe, which offered protection for certain civil rights and liberties in comparison with the still largely feudal countries in CEE. Even though no strict migration record is available,[1] some estimates suggest that a hundred thousand Polish and Ukrainian persons migrated to France, Germany, and England to be employed in the charcoal, iron, and steel industries. The total number of people who left Europe to resettle in North or South America reaches approximately 30 million (Fassman & Münz, 1994).

[1] All of the reported statistics on East-West migrations as well as population movements within CEE should be read with caution and viewed as providing only rough approximations of actual migrations that took place, since migration statistics from both countries of origin and destination are neither well recorded nor complete. The problems of recording international migration and cross-country data comparability are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

The five year *post-war period* from 1945 to 1950 is characterized by internal displacements, forced migrations, and ethnic migrations, which total 30 million people. In addition to post-war territorial agreements, a major factor for population movements was the deportation of ethnic Germans from the territory of Poland (around 7 million persons), former Czechoslovakia (around 3,2 million persons), Hungary (around 225,000 persons) and former Yugoslavia (around 360,000 persons) (Fassman & Münz, 1994). Due to reshaped national boundaries, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and had to seek new countries of residence or had to resettle on a new territory in their home countries. Under these circumstances, around one and a half million Poles and Polish Jews had to resettle because their homes were on Lithuanian, Belarusian or Ukrainian territory after the war. The same fate was shared by 115,000 Czechs and Slovaks remaining on Hungarian and Ukrainian land; 50,000 Ukrainians in former Czechoslovakia; half a million Ukrainians, Belarussian, and Lithuanians in Poland; and 315,000 Hungarians in Romania and Serbia (Dövényi & Vukovich, 1994).

During the *Cold War period*, or before the liberalization of the former Eastern Block, free travel out of the region was virtually impossible. Traveling was allowed only between Eastern European countries, and this fact, in addition to the severe border control and the prosecution and imprisonment of people caught in their attempt to cross the national border "illegally", kept immigration levels from the communist block rather low. The total number of emigrants from CEE for the period 1950-1992 is around 14 million people (Fassman & Münz, 1994). Due to the imposed exit restrictions the major migration flows from CEE were either ethnic migrations regulated by bilateral agreements and actively supported by the receiving countries, or refugee movements towards the West, both resulting in long-term settlement and non-return.

Ethnic migrations comprise around 75% of the East-West migration during the Cold War period. The two major groups resettling via the national provisions for preferential treatment of people from the same ethnic origin were ethnic Germans migrating from Poland, Romania, the former USSR, and the former German Democratic Republic to Western Germany (in total around 8 million Germans resettled in Western Germany by

1992) as well as Soviet Jews who migrated to Israel (around 1 million persons by 1991). Other massive ethnic flows include the migration of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria[2] and the former Yugoslavia to Turkey (around 1 million people by 1992). Less pronounced were the migrations of ethnic Hungarians from the former Yugoslavia and Romania towards Hungary (124,000 people in the period 1988-1993) (Dövényi & Vukovich, 1994) and ethnic Armenians and Greeks from the former USSR migrating to Greece, France, and the United States.

Political refugees constitute another 10% of the migration flow from CEE during the same period. Those who did not qualify as ethnic migrants and who managed to escape from their home country easily obtained refugee status in any Western country no matter what their actual motives for migration were. The absolute recognition rate for asylum seekers from the former totalitarian countries in CEE was one demonstration of the Cold War ideology upheld by Western countries.

Some of the major flows of asylum seekers from CEE include the migration of 194,000 Hungarians in 1956-1957 before the reestablishment of the Iron Curtain with the support of Russian military forces; the migration of 160,000 Czechs in 1968-1969 during the "Prague Spring"; and the migration of 250,000 Poles in 1980-1981 during the imposition of martial law and persecution of the Solidarnosc Movement (Fassman & Münz, 1994).

The political regimes of CEE, with the exception of the former Yugoslavia, in the period 1950-1989 did not allow for any labor migration. Migration for work was therefore kept to low levels and could be summed up in the half million Yugoslavs recruited by Germany, Austria, and Belgium between the 1960s and 1970s.

To summarize, the main immigrant-sending countries during the existence of the Soviet Block were the former German Democratic Republic, Poland, the former USSR, and the former Yugoslavia, followed by Bulgaria and Romania. The former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic countries displayed insignificant migration levels. In the late 1980s, when ethnic migrations diminished, the major sending countries became Poland,

[2] The migratory movements of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Bulgaria, and Romania with 25,000 to 60,000 immigrants per country between 1985 and 1990 (Okólski, 1999b).

3. Migrations after the fall of the Iron Curtain

The patterns of population movement, which started with the disintegration of the Soviet Block and continue today, are an outcome of two main factors: a) the possibility for free travel, translated into open borders and passports for all, after 40 - 45 years of forceful restriction of mobility in CEE and b) the consequent closure of the Western countries towards new immigrants. Setting aside refugee movements during the wars in Yugoslavia, the specific push factors promoting migration from CEE were the economic backwardness in the region, the high unemployment rate after the collapse of the communist regimes, and the general poverty level resulting from the process of political and economic transition.

With the country borders finally open, many people had a chance to travel abroad for the first time. The East-West migrations augmented only for a few years immediately after the beginning of the transition period (1990-1992/1993) while Western European countries were still formulating their migration policies to correspond with the new political reality (UN, 2002b). The Western European response was, however, not very delayed and the enthusiasm of potential immigrants was quickly extinguished. The early period of transition in CEE transformed the former positive and welcoming attitude towards asylum seekers from CEE to one of complete rejection, especially after 1992 when the EU introduced a visa regime for the citizens of all newly created states after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia (except for Slovenians). The Cold War was over and the former communist countries became “safe countries of origin”; thus the option of an asylum request based on political reasons, with only some exceptional cases, was eliminated at once. The closure of the asylum channel, the introduction of strict visa regimes for Central and Eastern Europeans, together with the practically non-existent opportunities for legal economic migration did not stop immigrants, but simply redirected their moves (Morokvasic, 2002). Potential migrants were forced to employ alternative ways of migration such as entering as students or trainees, through marriage (false or genuine),

using the services of smugglers, or falling into the networks of traffickers. Undocumented migration was the natural response to the sudden lack of provisions for legal migration. Other new forms of migration, such as pendular migration, using the tourist visa for gaining entry abroad and later on working without documents (usually overstaying the allowed period as a tourist), and petty trade across the border developed rapidly and became the prevailing migratory pattern from CEE. Generally speaking, after 1990 the previous permanent migrations gave way to temporary movements both regular and clandestine. What makes temporary migration such a popular strategy is its safety and higher profitability in comparison with long-term migration, especially if the latter is illegal. For example, short-term trips to the West significantly reduce the risk of being discovered and deported, and thus holding open the way to Western Europe for the future. Costs of housing and food are also reduced to minimum since pendular migrants' main motivation is earning money and not investing in quality housing abroad.

The shift to new migration patterns has not completely replaced migration forms of the past, such as ethnic migration, family reunification, and asylum seeking, but it has reduced them to significantly lower proportions. One exception is the refugee movement generated by the military conflicts in former Yugoslavia, e.g. the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the oppression of ethnic minorities in Vojvodina, Serbia and Kosovo. In only the two-year period from 1991 to 1992, 2,5 million refugees and displaced people sought international protection outside Yugoslavia (Arditis, 1994). Such a massive rate of out-migration was not witnessed anywhere else in the world during this period. In 1993 asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia constituted one third of the total number of refugees in Western Europe.

The fall of totalitarian regimes in CEE and the observed ethnic migrations created pronounced worries in the West that the newly liberated Eastern European countries would become a source of a massive and uncontrollable migration towards European welfare states. Moreover, the political restriction of free movement of people in CEE during the Cold War and the lack of a stable pattern of migration from the region in the past made it

impossible to predict the level of migration from the region. Thus, only time could prove whether the fear of enormous waves of Eastern European immigrants overflowing the West were justified. Indeed, there was a rise in the flow of migrants from CEE, reaching a peak in 1990-1991. Not surprisingly, the largest migrations were from countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, where the consequences of the Soviet regime were most pronounced and where the economic crisis was gravest. Countries like Hungary and the Czech Republic, on the other hand, experienced insignificant emigration levels and instead, became receiving countries. Shortly after this, the number of migrants from CEE declined and no massive flows towards Western Europe have been observed since the early 1990s. Despite the large number of Eastern Europeans moving internationally, Western Europe was not overwhelmed by Eastern European immigrants as expected and the actual numbers of EEI has never been viewed as alarming. Several factors could explain the overall moderate levels of CEE migration towards Western Europe even though, in the beginning of the 1990s, emigrations in the region reached the millions.

Firstly, the many people seeking protection in the West during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia could not settle permanently in European destination countries. In 1993, EU countries adopted a policy of "temporary protection" for refugees according to which the refugees have no social rights, the right to family reunification, or working rights. The lack of access to refugee status under the provisions of the Geneva Convention (Convention Related to the Status of Refugees, 1951) resulted in a mass voluntary or forced returns of Yugoslav asylum seekers after the conflict was over.

Secondly, ethnic migration did not disappear from the European migration scene and large proportions of migrants originating in CEE, who enjoyed provisions for freedom of travel, resettled in the countries of their ethnic origins instead of migrating to Western Europe.

A third factor restricting the level of migrations from CEE towards Western Europe could be named "a lack of migration know-how". Potential immigrants from CEE could not rely on the help of kin or families settled abroad, on the support of social networks, or on any receiving structure in the destination country since EEI were a relatively new

phenomenon and all the elements that could stimulate or facilitate mass migration flows were in rudimentary stages of development. Even though emigration from CEE existed previously, no stable links promoting further migration were established between successful migrants and family/relatives in the homeland. The major reason for this was that, until the late 1980s, both return migration and any form of contact between separated family members were prosecuted by totalitarian states. All successful emigrants who settled in non-communist countries were proclaimed "enemies of the state" and the remaining family members were constantly threatened by the state's punishment measures and surveillance practices. Under these circumstances, it is easy to understand why immigrants who fled from Eastern Europe before the fall of the Iron Curtain avoided any contact (via regular mail or telephone) with their relatives in the country of origin, fearing that such contacts could be detrimental to the contacted people. Once the regimes in CEE changed, contact between separated family members was again possible but the development of family-based social networks between sending and receiving countries had to be initiated. By the time chain migration was possible via established systems, such as information circulation, job networks, and adequate reception and financial support structures, Western Europe had already introduced measures restricting practically all legal channels of migration, leaving the door open only for immigrants entering under family reunification provisions and for genuine asylum seekers. As already pointed out, both of the remaining ways for entering Western Europe were closed for potential EEI because they could no longer qualify for political refugee status and at the same did not have strong family ties with previously settled immigrants.

Another factor keeping the migration level from Eastern Europe rather low is the lack of sufficient financial means for initiating a migratory movement. Beyond a doubt, wage differentials and poverty are the major causes of economic migration, but at the same time, extreme poverty along with a lack of information about existing migration options and a lack of networks abroad constitutes one of the main hindrances for potential immigrants leaving their countries of origin. For example, in 1990 the average wage per hour in Eastern Europe was 0.90 USD (the highest being the wage in the former Yugoslavia

– 1.10 USD per hour – and lowest in Bulgaria at 0.20 USD per hour in comparison with 10 USD per hour in Western Europe (Layard *et al*., 1992). In theory, this wage differential is supposed to generate massive migratory movements from the East to the West but in practice, this is not the case. A natural barrier is posed to the potential migrant not only by the extremely low salary level but also by the very low purchasing power of the earned money. Until today, in some Eastern European countries an airplane ticket to any Western European countries could hardly be bought with one average salary[3] while in the 1990s even the average annual income was hardly sufficient for allowing a trip abroad[4]. This single fact explains the moderate migration levels from Eastern Europe, especially in light of the overall poverty level and inflation rate in all former Eastern Block countries[5].

The moderate migrations from CEE are finally considered a result of the existing and continuously developing Western European programs aimed at stimulating and financially supporting political stability and economic development in Eastern Europe. These are believed to control, to a certain degree, the immigration level from the region and some more optimistic voices say that they do, in fact, diminish them (Korcelli, 1991; Layard *et al*., 1994). Such propositions have to be viewed with caution given that no empirical studies have been conducted to prove the impact of those programs on emigration and return rates in CEE.

[3] See, for example, the average salary levels in Bulgaria for 2004, as presented in Chapter 9.

[4] For example, in 1992, the average annual household income per capita in Bulgaria was 710 USD and 20% of the people lived below the poverty line (Hassan & Peters, 1995).

[5] E.g. in 1990, growth in Bulgarian GDP was negative (-10%) while the inflation rate was 70% (Solimano, 1991). By the end of 1992, GDP growth fell by another 20% (Hassan & Peters, 1995). In 1999 in all former Eastern Block countries, except for the Czech Republic, between 11% and 18% of the population lived below the poverty line (Dennis & Guio, 2003).

4. New characteristics of East-West migration

Even though the proportions of East-West migration have not reached alarming levels, the change in migration patterns have resulted in new elements, which, in the long run, will have a negative impact on both individual migrants and receiving societies. These include social and psychological responses such as a lack of integration or the motivation to integrate, marginalization as a result of pendular movements, as well as a proliferation of illegal activities related to immigrant smuggling and kidnapping and selling woman and children for the sex industry or domestic slavery.

The predominantly temporary character of migration from CEE to Western Europe, resulting from both geographical proximity between sending and receiving countries as well as political factors, such as the impossibility of legal economic migration, also has a specific impact on the migrating population. The most direct outcome of the temporary character of contemporary East-West migration is the growing irrelevance of social integration for many immigrants (Okólski, 2000a). Integration into the host culture is often not important for short-term migrants, such as trainees or visiting scholars, as well as for longer-term migrants who are not settled in the host country nor have the right to do so. In the latter group fall diplomatic personnel, foreign students, highly skilled employees of transnational or multinational companies whose residence arises from their professions, but does not allow for permanent settlement, for obtaining unlimited rights to work, or for nationality acquisition. The basic purpose of migration for those categories of people precludes integration and makes it a matter of low priority especially in light of the insecure prospects for permanent migration.

A similar phenomenon is observed among temporary or pendular migrants who work clandestinely in Western Europe. Referred to as "incomplete migration" it is the outcome of an unfinished mobility transition (Okólski, 2001; Kaczmarczyk & Okólski, 2005) because of restrictions imposed by the receiving country and/or by the immigrant's self-definition – "I am not an immigrant". The term "incomplete migration" was originally used to describe rural-urban migration in Poland when people who worked in the agricultural sector lived in urban centers, commuting daily to the fields or the farms where

they were employed. With the reduced demand for unskilled seasonal workers in the 1970s, the occupational possibilities in agriculture naturally decreased, and the majority of those commuters had no other choice but to look for additional income in neighboring countries on an irregular basis. The process of incomplete migration is therefore characterized by entering the foreign country as a tourist and then trading or working informally until the tourist visa expires or all trading items are sold, and some money is earned. The people involved in this process do not consider themselves as immigrants but perceive their activities only as supplementary income sources although they spend most of the year working out of the home, especially if no threat of apprehension or deportation exists. Under these circumstances, incomplete migration is believed to result in commuter marginalization both in the host and home countries: on the one hand, because of their illegal status, incomplete immigrants avoid contact with social and cultural institutions in the host country while at the same time, due to their repeated and often long-lasting trips they cannot fully participate in the home country's society and become gradually excluded from it.

The second type of phenomena related to the new trend in East-West population movement is the increased irregularity of the migration. The most troubling phenomenon is, however, the increased professionalism of transnational crime networks controlling undocumented migration (Morokvasic, 2002). With the risk of repeating a fact continuously highlighted throughout the text, it should be stressed that the substantial reduction or closure of channels for legal migration does not stop migration but reinforces instead a billion dollar business of trafficking immigrants for the purposes of prostitution, and for domestic and agricultural work. Trafficking operations expand continuously and currently include 30% of the flow of third country nationals towards the EU and, according to some estimates yields a profit of 7 billion USD per year world wide (Morokvasic, 2002). Trafficking of South-East Asian and African woman into Europe has existed for a long time but the liberalization of CEE, along with the lower transportation costs to Western Europe, has resulted in transforming Eastern Europe and the former USSR into a major pool for recruiting victims of trafficking. The deteriorated economic and living conditions, the high

unemployment rate, and the lack of a positive outlook regarding future developments in the former Soviet Block countries has pushed many women, especially those from the least developed rural areas, to rely on the services of recruiters who promise to arrange well-paid and decent work in Western Europe, but instead force the women into prostitution.

The underground nature of human trafficking, the reluctance or the impossibility of victims to report themselves to the authorities, and the lack of government priority to research trafficking, make the numerical estimation of this phenomenon difficult. A general idea about the enormous proportions of human trafficking could be gathered from the data collected by the main actors in studying the phenomenon and offering assistance to the victims of trafficking[6]. The voluntary return assistance programs of the IOM reveal that the main victims of trafficking nowadays are women from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine trafficked to Western Europe as well as to other countries in the Balkans and from Thailand to Cambodia (IOM, 2001). An example of the gravity of trafficking is the estimate of 400,000 women trafficked from Ukraine during the period of 1988-1998. Other Eastern European countries with significant numbers of women being recruited include Lithuania, Russia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Latvia. The principal destination countries are Germany, Belgium, Holland, Turkey, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (IOM, 2001). Estimates of prostitutes present in Germany by 1999 vary between 200,000 and 400,000 and at least one quarter of them are from Eastern European countries (Omelaniuk & Baerten, 1999).

Trafficking does not affect only women recruited under false promises for a good job abroad but is also a knowingly employed channel for many men seeking work in Western Europe. The Albanians and Kosovars smuggled into Italy for a price ranging between 500€ and 700€, depending on the migration pressure in the country of origin, are only the visible tip of the iceberg and speak for the inefficiency of the stricter border

[6] Some of the major bodies studying and combating trafficking include the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), the UK Refugee Council, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), UNICEF, Interpol, as well as many academic units at universities all around the world.

control measures and the expulsion practices for managing undocumented migrations[7]. Until forceful push factors in the countries of origin exist and no ways for legal migrations remain open, traffickers and criminal organizations will benefit from the needs of potential migrants to leave their countries. Finally, those who are willing to leave their countries but do not qualify for the few forms of legal migration and cannot pay or are reluctant to use the services of traffickers still migrate clandestinely with or without the help of other people.

5. Central and Eastern Europe as a migratory scene

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the position of CEE on the international migration scene gradually changes from a region "producing" migrants to a region attracting significant numbers of migrants. Since the early 1990s, all former totalitarian countries have become popular migration destinations for regular, undocumented, and transit immigrants from neighboring countries and for non-Eastern Europeans, particularly for Asians, mostly from China and Vietnam.

The prevailing types of migration flows in CEE tend to originate in other former totalitarian countries. The most pronounced intra-regional movement of people took place between the countries that emerged from the former USSR. From 1990 to 1997 around 5,7 million ex-Soviet citizens migrated to and from of Russia (Okólski, 2000a). Those migrations reached a peak in 1994 when over one million people entered and a quarter of a million left Russia (Okólski, 2000a).

Migrations of people in need of protection between former totalitarian countries became also increasingly pronounced and culminated in Hungary where 80,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia and 60,000 Romanian asylum seekers found protection during the military conflict situations in their respective countries (Okólski, 2000a). The importance of other CEE countries receiving ex-Yugoslavs should not be underestimated

[7] Other popular destination countries include the UK and Ireland but the price an undocumented immigrant from Albania or the former Yugoslavia has to pay to reach these countries goes up to £2,000 (IOM, 1999).

since Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary were among the 25 major host countries (Okólski, 2000a).

Some of the most massive non-refugee migration flows originating from CEE and especially from the former USSR were witnessed on the territory of Poland. The numbers of ex-Soviet citizens who were traveling to Poland for trading on the black market or working clandestinely rose from 1,7 million in 1988 to 3 million in 1989, and reached a peak of 14 million in 1997 (Korcelli, 1991; Iglicka, 1999). A further increase in the numbers of ex-USSR immigrants was prevented by strictly controlling visitor compliance of regulations for entering Poland, such as holding a genuine invitation from a Polish citizen having a minimal amount of money per day of intended stay. A second largely represented group of clandestine workers in Poland come from Lithuania and 1995 estimates suggest that their number is around half a million (Stola, 2000).

A new phenomenon witnessed by the CEE countries is also the westbound transit migration. With the recently opened borders, a lack of experience in managing irregular migration, a convenient geographic situation, and a vast network of trafficking organizations, the countries in transition offer an excellent waiting room for transferring people to Western Europe. The countries mostly influenced by this new migration type are Poland, the Czech Republic, and Russia. Estimates of irregular non-European migrants preparing for further migration to the West on the territories of Eastern Europe indicate that the numbers of the transit migrants range between 100,000 to 300,000 people (IOM, 1994).

False tourist migrations were also not an exclusively Western phenomenon. The intra-regional mobility within CEE also included people with flexible employment situations or a lack of employment and relatively low social status migrating to the neighboring post-communist countries to take simple jobs (in most of the cases, illegally) in renovation and construction services, fruit picking or agricultural assistance, petty trade, or sewing. Other popular clandestine activities within the region were petty cross border trading such as weekend migrations for commercial purposes between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, Macedonia, and Romania; the petroleum trade on the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian border during the embargo; commerce with sugar and flour run by Bulgarians in Albania

and Macedonia, and so on. With its big open markets, Poland was attractive for many other Eastern European "suitcase merchants" whose only option for increasing the family budget was retailing goods on the Polish markets. The paramount importance of the market as an income increasing source during the middle 1990s is clearly visible in the case of the Warsaw Bazaar located at a football stadium in the suburbs of the city where half of the six thousand petty traders were foreigners from other CEE countries and Asia (Iglicka, 1999).

The preference for staying within the region rather than moving somewhere else could be explained by the geographical proximity, which allows for lower travel expenses, faster transportation, and the possibility to undertake more and shorter migrations. Moreover, the possibility for short-term visa free travel reduces both the financial cost of the trip and the risk of being deported due to irregular entry. Finally, migrations within the region could be explained by the common cultural and historical background of many of the Central and Eastern European countries, in addition to the facilitated communication by the moderate to high similarity between the Eastern European languages. If not because of linguistic similarities, communication between nationals from CEE was possible due to the common knowledge of Russian (varying from rudimentary to advanced), Russian language being a compulsory subject for at least three to five years in all former Soviet Block countries.

To conclude, the migratory flows from and within CEE differ significantly before and after the political transition in the former Soviet Block. From the late 1980s and the early 1990s ethnic migration has decreased, political asylum requests of the West were no longer possible, and interregional migration became an increasingly visible phenomenon. The open borders and the lifted restrictions on free traveling abroad did not produce the massive emigration levels feared by Western Europe. The fall of the Iron Curtain and the respective closure of Western Europe towards potential migrations from CEE did, however, result in unexpected outcomes such as the tendency of temporary, circular, and irregular migrations, which are difficult to control and prevent in the presence of functional trafficking and smuggling networks. CEE countries have been transformed from

immigrant-sending to immigrant-receiving countries and are a waiting room for transit migrants to the West. All former totalitarian states are currently hosting large numbers of irregular migrants while maintaining supplier status for undocumented workers for Western Europe.

EU pressure on candidate countries to improve their migration management and border controls as a condition for accession has not resulted in a decrease of irregular flows from CEE. Even though many CEE countries have experienced economic growth, the unemployment rate as well as economic imbalances and the income gap between East and West still exist and act as powerful push factors. The existence of irregular migration flows to Western Europe will not cease to exist until channels for legal migration (long term or seasonal) are open (IOM, 1999; Okólski, 2000a). Simultaneously, Southern European countries have experienced a need for low-skilled workers and older EU member states recognized that highly qualified personnel in certain sectors is also necessary to maintain countries' competitiveness in the global market, but the legal channels for employing the needed working forces do not exist (EC, 2004). This necessity to regulate economic migration was finally and reluctantly recognized by some EU member states and bilateral programs for legal migration were created. For example, in January 2002 the United Kingdom established a Highly Skilled Migrant Programme to allow individual entry for highly skilled professionals who have the skills and experience needed for the United Kingdom's further development as a global economic power. Similarly, in August 2000 Germany introduced a Green Card system for recruiting twenty thousand IT specialists between 2000 and 2005.

Bilateral agreements for the admission of seasonal workers for the agriculture, construction, tourism, and catering sectors were signed between Spain and the origin countries of Spain's largest undocumented worker flows, e.g. Romania, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Morocco. Italy, on the other hand, has a well-developed quota system for admitting economic migrants depending on sectors of employment where the work force is needed. Quotas are also offered to third countries,

which agree to cooperate in the process of readmission of undocumented migrants and thus participate in the efforts for reducing illegal migration flows.

The question that remains open is to what degree will irregular migration decrease as an outcome of these bilateral agreements? One related concern is that, in a situation with a lack of provisions for permanent settlement of the quota migrants or the recruits under bilateral agreements, eventually the contractual period will end and the migrants will have to return to their home counties. As the European experience shows, this is highly unlikely to happen and then at least some proportion of the previously documented migrants will be again pushed into illegality.