

— SPECIAL SECTION —

Introduction: Migration and Mobility in the Context of Post-Communist Transition in Central and Eastern Europe

Agata Górny*, Paweł Kaczmarczyk*

It is already three decades since the political and economic transition in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) began. This period is marked by massive changes in almost all spheres of socio-economic realities in CEE countries, including mobility and migration. At the beginning of the transition period, the majority of countries in the region could be classified as typical emigration countries, with a low (or extremely low) scale of immigration and (relatively) homogenous societies in ethnic terms. Since then, however, a few important shifts have been observed. First, international migration from the region has increased substantially, along with a significant reduction in the importance of barriers to mobility (Górny and Ruspini 2004; Okólski 2004). Second, a remarkable transformation of mobility forms towards more temporary and ‘liquid’ flows has been observed (Engbersen, Snel and de Boom 2010). The crucial context for these changes is the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2006 which set a new framework for mobility into and from the CEE region that resulted in the establishment of ‘new diasporas’ of Central and Eastern Europeans in major Western European countries (Kahanec and Zimmermann 2010; Okólski 2012). Third, as the process of social and economic development progressed – a process also clearly linked to membership in the European Union – a growing group of countries in the CEE region have become migration magnets, with some transformed into net receiving areas. All these developments make CEE a fascinating area of migration research after 1990 and, particularly, after 2004.

This special section opens a two-part collection of articles, to be published in two consecutive issues of CEEMR in 2019, looking at various aspects of migration from and into CEE that address the links between mobility and political and economic transition in the region. Its goal is to discuss, on the one hand, the contribution of the migration research conducted in CEE to the broader migration literature and, on the other, to demonstrate region-specific topics. An important inspiration for the preparation of this issue is the 25th anniversary of the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) at the University of Warsaw; this is accompanied by some reflections on how migration studies have developed in Poland and other CEE countries during these years of

* Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw, Poland. Addresses for correspondence: agata@gorny.edu.pl, p.kaczmarczyk@uw.edu.pl.

© The Author(s) 2019. Open Access. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

transition. Since the very beginning, the idea that guided research conducted in the CMR was to analyse migration in a broad socio-economic context and to develop cooperation with the best international teams of migration scholars. Therefore, for this special collection, we invited contributions which demonstrate the development of scientific collaboration between CMR researchers and outstanding European and non-European scholars, as well as articles by international researchers from all over Europe which focus on specific migration topics intersecting with post-communist transition in the CEE region.

The concept of Central and Eastern Europe is not an unproblematic one, though it is frequently used to refer to all post-communist countries. Some authors differentiate, however, between the Commonwealth of Independent States and Central Europe – the latter comprising the Baltic States, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic (Czechia), Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and former Yugoslav countries (Górny and Ruspini 2004). The accession of most countries from the latter group to the European Union¹ accentuated this division of the region by shaping a distinct development path for new EU members with regard to migration, when compared with non-EU countries – e.g. the ex-USSR countries. Consequently, this division is acknowledged in the contributions included in this special section, where CEE countries are usually given equal treatment to those from the Eastern part of the European Union.

The above approach is echoed in the article by **Russell King** and **Marek Okólski**, *Diverse, Fragile and Fragmented: The New Map of European Migration*, which reviews past and contemporary political events and economic forces shaping migration in Europe. The article provides a rich political and socio-economic context for migration transitions in Europe and the position of the CEE region in these processes. While reconstructing five phases of European migration in 1945–2015, the authors stress the unpredictability of developments in migration flows and patterns. As regards the last distinguished (contemporary) period of 2005–2013, i.e. the post-enlargement period, they identify four main migration channels. Two are directly related to migration from and to the CEE region – namely, migration from ‘new’ EU countries to ‘old’ EU countries and from non-EU European countries with a sub-type such as migration to ‘new’ EU countries (e.g. Ukrainians to Poland and Slovakia). In the conclusion to the article, King and Okólski question the future role of the CEE region as a reservoir for the labour forces of other European countries in the light of the expected Brexit outcome – shrinking economic differences between western and eastern countries of the European Union and demographic dynamics in the CEE countries.

The contribution to this special section by **Anne White** and **Izabela Grabowska**, *Social Remittances and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Embedding Migration in the Study of Society*, takes a closer look at one migration channel identified by King and Okólski – migration from ‘new’ to ‘old’ EU countries. White and Grabowska focus on one of the most important and commonly overlooked aspects of international migration, namely the role of social remittances embedded in these flows in the socio-economic post-communist transition in the CEE region. They argue that freedom of mobility within the EU, as a consequence of EU enlargements, gave CEE citizens a unique opportunity not only for migration but also for the transfer and diffusion of social remittances. Referring to numerous studies relating to CEE migrants, the authors provide a detailed account of the mechanisms governing the transfer of social remittances and argue that it can be particularly effective in the case of familial links and especially important for the inhabitants of small cities when compared to other channels of social and cultural diffusion. They also argue that migrants can be perceived as agents of change in transforming post-communist societies but that the final social outcomes of migration strongly depend on structural conditions at the point of origin.

Similar perception of migrants as potential agents of change can be found in the article by **Iryna Lapshyna**, *Do Diasporas Matter? The Growing Role of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the UK and Poland for the Development of the Homeland at Times of War*. However, she addresses another channel of European migration, namely that from non-EU countries (Ukraine) to both ‘new’ and ‘old’ EU countries. The author argues that,

although the Ukrainian diaspora in the UK and Poland is internally extremely diversified, its willingness and ability to mobilise in order to enhance development in Ukraine as a consequence of political events, particularly the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, can be observed. At the same time, Lapshyna stresses that, in order to translate this mobilisation into a real impact on the development of the Ukrainian economy, the Ukrainian government would have to engage more in relations with the diaspora and to acknowledge this group as an important stakeholder.

The final contribution of the special section, by **Tibor Meszmann** and **Olena Fedyuk**, *Snakes or Ladders? Job Quality Assessment among Temp Workers from Ukraine in Hungarian Electronics*, also addresses Ukrainian migration but, in this case, to a ‘new’ EU country – Hungary. The authors address a topic which becomes increasingly important as a factor reshaping migration to CEE countries: the role of recruitment agencies in shaping and transforming the migration of foreign workers. It can be argued that the growth of their activities in countries like Hungary or Poland contributes to the diminishment of what can be called the ‘unmanaged circularity’ prevalent in temporary labour migration to CEE countries, especially from Ukraine, in the last 20 or 30 years (Górny 2017; Górny and Kindler 2016). Meszmann and Fedyuk focus on the modes of operation of temp agencies, arguing that, while these latter support migrants entering the Hungarian labour market, they also limit their opportunities for professional and social advancement. The authors also claim the existence of universal ‘subcontracting practices in the core capitalist countries – and on the periphery of the EU – involving and connecting temp agencies and migrant workers’. Therefore, this contribution demonstrates an important element of the convergence between ‘new’ and ‘old’ EU countries, as it focuses on the practices and structures of the European labour market(s).

Note

¹ To date, only two former Yugoslav countries have accessed the EU: Slovenia (2004) and Croatia (2011).

Conflict of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID IDs

Agata Górny  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5293-1611>

Paweł Kaczmarczyk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7415-0701>

References

- Engbersen G., Snel E., de Boom J. (2010). A Van Full of Poles: Liquid Migration in Eastern and Central European Countries, in: R. Black, G. Engbersen, M. Okólski, C. Pantjru (eds), *A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 115–140. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Górny A. (2017). All Circular but Different: Variation in Patterns of Ukraine-to-Poland Migration. *Population Space and Place* 23(8): 1–10.
- Górny A., Kindler M. (2016). The Temporary Nature of Ukrainian Migration: Definitions, Determinants and Consequences, in: O. Fedyuk, M. Kindler (eds), *Ukrainian Migration to the European Union. Lessons for Migration Studies*, pp. 91–112. Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer.

- Górny A., Ruspini P. (2004). Introduction, in: A. Górny, P. Ruspini (eds), *Migration in the New Europe. East–West Revisited*, pp. 1–19. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kahanec M., Zimmermann K. F. (2010). *EU Labor Markets after Post-Enlargement Migration*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- Okólski M. (2004). The Effects of Political and Economic Transition on International Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, in: D. S. Massey, J. E. Taylor (eds), *International Migration. Prospects and Policies in a Global Market*, pp. 35–58. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Okólski M. (2012). Transition from Emigration to Immigration. Is It the Destiny of Modern European Societies?, in: M. Okólski (ed.), *European Immigrations. Trends, Structures and Policy Implications*, pp. 23–44. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

How to cite this article: Górny A., Kaczmarczyk P. (2019). Introduction: Migration and Mobility in the Context of Post-Communist Transition in Central and Eastern Europe. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 8(1): 5–8.