

South East Europe and Hungary – migratory trends

South East Europe is the reserve army of Europe and Russia?

According to World Bank figures, more than 17 million South East European citizens were living abroad in 2010. The region is the main sending region for European, North-American and Russian migratory systems which migration has serious impacts on the demographic, economic situation as well as the labour-markets of the sending countries. The region with relatively low fertility rate is more and more dependent on remittances of migrants: in case of Albania and Moldova, 10% of the GDP is provided by money sent home by migrants. At the same time, many ageing societies of Europe rely on the work force provided by labour migrants.

While countries of the EU have shown various efforts to harmonise their statistical data production systems, many countries of the South East European region can provide little comparative data on migratory processes. Because countries of the region have varying dynamic historical profiles, data would be vital for the detailed analysis of these processes.

SEEMIG is a strategic project – with the participation of statistical offices, research institutes and local governments – aiming to explore migratory trends of South East, in order to contribute to evidence-based strategy building to handle the effects of migratory, demographic and labour market processes of the region.

Is Hungary becoming an emigrant country?

Public opinion has shown increasing interest in emigration from Hungary. Various – and very much different – estimations about the number emigrants appeared in the media which is simply because of one reason: we do not have precise, unified data sources about emigrant population. Since it is a group outside the country and also one scattered around different countries, collecting data about out-migrants is not an easy task.

Based on the so called mirror statistics, that is the number of Hungarian citizens registered as immigrants in the host countries this, emigration – that has been increasing since the late 2000s – has speeded up over the last few years. According to European mirror statistics, 147 327 Hungarian citizens live abroad. This Eurostat database, however, does not include data about some major target countries. If we summarise provided by the Eurostat and data provided by the most important target countries (Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom) we can say that an estimated 230 000 – officially registered – Hungarian citizens were residing in European countries in 2012: one third of them in Germany, one fifth of them in the United Kingdom and 13% of them in Austria. Beside traditional host countries, the increase was significant in a number of new target countries (the United Kingdom, Spain, Russia and the Netherlands).

According to the 2011 census, 143 000 Hungarian citizens stayed abroad for a period of more than a year on 1 October 2011 (another 70 059 person stayed abroad for less than a year). However, this can only be considered the 'minimum number of Hungarians living abroad' (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2013).

How could we learn more about emigrants?

The above mentioned data sources provide more or less precise information about the number of out-migrants, but information is often outdated and even studying these data, we do not get to answer a number of questions. We have for example no or very limited information about the composition of emigrant population by sex, age, educational level, their motivations to migrate, and their intentions to move back home. The pilot research of SEEMIG sets out to fill these data gaps. In the first stage of the study researchers used a large, nationally representative sample, the Labour Force Survey (nearly 27 000 households interviewed with 50 000 respondents aged between 15 and 74) to find out information about the number of emigrants. In the second stage of the research – if contact details to migrants were successfully received in the first stage – migrants themselves will be interviewed online and via telephone, to learn about their reasons to move abroad, the experiences they gathered and their intentions to come back home.

Further details about the above will be provided at the press conference organised on **22 May 2013**, at **8.45 am** (venue: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1024 Budapest, Keleti Károly utca 5-7.)

For more information about the project please visit the www.seemig.eu where you can subscribe to our newsletter.

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