

# A Decade of EU Enlargement: A Changing Framework and Patterns of Migration

## Introduction

Migration from Eastern to Western Europe gained greater political prominence and scholarly attention both before and after the 2004 EU enlargement. The EU enlargement process not only contributed to a re-integration of European countries from the former Soviet bloc into the rest of Europe, but also set up a new framework for European mobility. A variety of forecasts and analyses concerning mobility across Europe have since been conducted, sometimes providing contradictory outcomes. This process of eastward enlargement was completed in 2007 by a second round, which brought Romania and Bulgaria into the European polity, and led to unjustified fears of massive flows from the two countries to some Western states in particular, such as the United Kingdom.

Academic discussion concerning the different types of mobility in Europe is, however, far from being exhausted. New issues have been raised by the economic crisis which is still sweeping the continent, by the demographic deficit affecting both Eastern and Western Europe, and by the next steps in the EU enlargement wave which will again involve South-Eastern Europe – especially the Western Balkan countries (other than Croatia which finally acceded in 2013). The aim of this special issue is to explore the variety of unprecedented processes in the field of migration which have emerged across Europe over the last decade. The papers in it seek to make sense of these processes, while trying to capture their evolving nature in the framework of a European migration system which has only been in existence for a relatively short time and which still lacks consolidated and harmonised rules.

In preparing this special issue we have attempted to summarise this array of migratory processes: the substantial migration of Eastern Europeans to Western EU countries; the emergence of new forms of intra-European mobility and transnational migratory patterns; the growth of particular migrant communities and a redefinition of inter-ethnic relations, especially in the main destination countries; and last, but not least, the reconfigurations of the European labour market.

The recent economic crisis has posed additional challenges to economic and social relations between migrants and natives and has resulted in considerable return migration, which has generated positive and negative outcomes for both sending and receiving countries. Empirical research has shown that return migration has not happened to the extent which many predicted in the media. A ‘wait-and-see approach’ has often prevailed in response to difficulties which the countries of origin have experienced during EU integration (Igllicka 2010). Migration flows across the continent have also changed as young, highly skilled migrants from Southern Europe have migrated to Northern European countries. East–West migration has, therefore, been coupled with other types of mobility which only superficially resemble previous migratory patterns such as the ‘guestworker’ influx. Furthermore, they are initiated by more than mere ‘push-and-pull’ factors.

Complexity should be the keyword to any approach to European migration in this regard. Current migratory configurations in Europe require new, more subtle, instruments of analysis which move beyond the mere application of such mutated conceptual features as migration ‘liquidity’ or simple explanations concerning the temporary character of migrant strategies. To explain the supposed temporality and *situatedness* of current migration features, migration theory needs to draw on an analysis of the social and economic factors operating in both source and destination countries. At the policy level, the present multi-directionality of migration patterns in Europe attests to the many implementation gaps in migration management and the overall incompleteness of the European integration process, with its interlocking and still unsolved East–West and North–South dimensions. At the economic level, the current forms of mobility highlight the need to find solutions to the persistent social inequalities between the different regions of the European continent, as well as between the global North and South. In this regard, the dominant neoliberal model contributes substantially to the increase of economic differentials between neighbouring regions by permitting and facilitating various forms of abuse and exploitation connected to migration, and which constitute some of the distinctive challenges lying ahead.

### **The papers**

This issue is a collection of high-quality syntheses concerning the impact of EU enlargement on the field of European migration over the last ten years. It brings together perspectives from both the sending and the receiving countries, as well as contributions covering the changing European migration system as a whole. The articles have been selected on the basis of their interdisciplinary and comparative approach, include both theoretical and empirical work and draw on quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. They have been grouped according to macro and meso levels of analysis and geographical context. Themes at the macro level include East–West post-accession migration, the determinants of migration, and transnational labour migration, while the meso level includes mainly case studies pertaining to labour mobility in the post-EU accession period and the role and function of social networks and employment agencies in initiating and facilitating migration and rural return migration. Finally, the geographical context covers Central and Eastern Europe and the South-Eastern European region in terms of both migrant source and migrant destination countries. Demographic dynamics and regional development are also investigated in this context. The changing and multidirectional character of migration in Europe is a consistent theme amongst all the articles and suggests the direction which future research might take.

The first article, *Polish Emigration to the UK after 2004: Why Did So Many Come?*, by Marek Okólski and John Salt, is a well-constructed and authoritative dialogue between two migration experts and focuses on the structural factors of Polish post-accession migration to the UK. The article builds upon and compares the different datasets either in the UK or Poland and also draws from several periods of fieldwork in suggesting the causes and circumstances of this major intra-European ‘perfect migration storm’ of our times. From a theoretical point of view, the article moves beyond any possible ‘fluid-migration’ perspective to emphasise the full migration determinants of this population movement over an unprecedented short time. Okólski and Salt’s paper may encourage further research which analyses the impact and consequences of Polish/CEE out-migration on the UK social fabric and on migrants themselves.

The second article, *The Re-Emergence of European East–West Migration: The Austrian Example*, by Heinz Fassmann, Josef Kohlbacher and Ursula Reeger, is an attentive analysis of the current unified migration space in Europe, and argues that an explanation of East–West mobility should be sought in terms of a resurgence in ‘push-and-pull’ migration patterns. The article describes different features, including migrant socio-demographic profiles, of these flows in order to propose a typology of the various causal factors which encourage migration from different CEE countries to both Western Europe and Austria. The cost and benefits

of migration are the decisive factors in the decision to migrate or not. Although the authors rely on Lee's theoretical conceptualisation (1966) of the push-and-pull process, it is worth noticing that they also emphasise the ways in which his approach takes for granted historical ties, legal barriers and country-specific (and EU) migration policies. These are clearly all factors which figure substantially in East–West post-accession waves of migration.

Based on some good qualitative work, the third article, *The Labour Market Mobility of Polish Migrants: A Comparative Study of Three Regions in South Wales, UK*, by Julie Knight, John Lever and Andrew Thompson, explores the trajectories of some post-2004 accession Polish migrants in three different Welsh regions. Drawing on Parutis (2014), the article moves on from the concept of 'middling transnationalism' to remind the reader of the rationale choice of highly skilled migrants to take low-skilled jobs. It shows the ascent (or lack thereof) in the local Welsh labour market of Poles with diverse backgrounds and skills across time and from a variety of geographical locations. Looking at employment agencies and social networks, the contribution seeks to engage critically with the literature and empirical findings regarding people's expectations of short-term and circular migration.

The fourth article in this collection is *A Decade of Membership: Hungarian Post-Accession Mobility to the United Kingdom*, by Chris Moreh. This is a very important contribution since Hungarian post-accession migration to the UK has recently gained in momentum. The paper allows for interesting comparative assessments with former flows of different CEE nationalities, particularly Poles, and is built on an elaboration of different datasets and a number of semi-structured interviews carried out in London in 2013. These methods support the wider discussion of 'new mobility' and its features – i.e. the so-called 'fluid' and 'individualistic' nature of these patterns of migration. The socio-economic and political factors which triggered these recent flows are also explored in the light of former waves of migration from Hungary.

Based on the quotation *It's a Free World* by the UK film director Ken Loach, who has been acclaimed for his social realism movies, the fifth article is '*It Was a Whirlwind. A Lot of People Made a Lot of Money*': *The Role of Agencies in Facilitating Migration from Poland into the UK between 2004 and 2008*, by Katharine Jones. She provides an interesting snapshot of the still-understudied role of 'private subcontractors' in migration as well as that played by exploitation within the overall neoliberal model. Her focus is on the development, after the 2004 EU enlargement, of recruitment agencies as migration intermediaries in the UK and Poland in matching labour demand and supply and in creating a demand for Polish migrant workers in the UK. Her conclusions remind the reader of the possible global institutionalisation of the cross-border recruitment of migrant workers and the so-called flexibility of labour, from the 'whirlwind' phenomenon of those pre-crisis years.

The sixth article, *Rural Return Migration: Comparative Analysis between Ireland and Lithuania*, by Maura Farrell, Emilija Kairytė, Birte Nienaber, John McDonagh and Marie Mahon, covers an important topic for migration research – return migration. They emphasise the 'rural return' dimension through a comparison of migrants returning to two counties in Ireland and to Lithuania at different periods of time. From a theoretical point of view, the article relies quite extensively on the work of Cassarino (2004, 2008) and the transnational and social-network theories applied to return migration. Methodologically, a number of semi-structured interviews were carried out, the responses to which help to explain the complexities of present return-migration experiences and the context dependency of return-migrant behaviour, including the shift in value-priority scale from economic to social values.

The last section of the special issue explores convergences and divergences in development and demographic dynamics across South-Eastern Europe by encompassing countries at different stage of their migration experience. It also includes a research report on the development of Bulgarian migration to Germany at different periods of time and the impact of the EU citizenship regime. This section opens up new ground for comparative research in a region where countries are following different paths in their EU accession process and where migration, transnationalism and regional development are key features for investigation.

The seventh article, *Longer-Term Demographic Dynamics in South–East Europe: Convergent, Divergent and Delayed Development*, by Heinz Fassmann, Elisabeth Musil, Ramon Bauer, Attila Meleghe and Kathrin Gruber, provides a synthesis of the main findings of the eight countries analysed in the SEEMIG project – Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Slovakia. Their analysis relies on longer-term national statistics on migration and other macro-statistical time series. The article considers different theoretical models but, in the migration context, it is mainly based on the policy learning process developed in the ‘model of the migration cycle’ by Fassmann and Reeger (2012) and the resulting changes – for example, from an emigration to an immigration country – when new demographic and economic conditions arise and demographic reproduction is not guaranteed. The conclusions stress the diversity in the long-term distribution of growth and decline in the region and thus the authors highlight the need for differentiation and specific explanations. The need for a better quality of data at the different levels of governance is stressed not only as an important pre-requisite for future research but also for evidence-based policy-making.

A research report by Vesela Kovacheva entitled *EU Accession and Migration: Evidence for Bulgarian Migration to Germany* closes this collection of studies for the special issue by keeping the focus on emigration from a South-Eastern European country which joined the EU in 2007. Based on administrative data and some quantitative analysis in the region of Hamburg, the report addresses the extent, direction and composition of Bulgarian migration flows to Germany across different periods of time. It shows the influence of the changing EU citizenship regime in both promoting temporary and diminishing circular migration, thus challenging some well-known assumptions concerning the pre- and post-accession stages in migration. It is interesting in comparative terms, although the German–Bulgarian case study needs to be taken as just one example of contemporary migration across European regions.

## Conclusion

While far from being exhaustive, this special issue has presented a wide range of contemporary research on migration across Europe, with particular reference to EU enlargement processes since 2004. It demonstrates the pressing need to better link sending and receiving countries and to explore more deeply the impact of migration in both geographical contexts, and provides fertile ground for future research. The same applies to the link between the much-investigated determinants of migration, transnational migrant patterns and the resulting incorporation of different migrant cohorts and generations in national and local contexts. Notwithstanding the current difficulties that the EU has been experiencing at the institutional level, its future enlargement agenda provides additional opportunities for investigating the transformation of the European migration system across the South-Eastern European region. This policy agenda might also allow a more comprehensive migration strategy towards the flows taking place across the EU’s eastern and southern borders. It could also seek to solve, or at least to alleviate, the current social inequalities between regions which are pursuing different paths in their migration experience and economic development.

Two book reviews complete the special issue. Teresa Piacentini (University of Glasgow) reviews Raj S. Bhopal (2014), *Migration, Ethnicity, Race, and Health in Multicultural Societies: Foundations for Better Epidemiology, Public Health, and Health Care*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, while Andrew Wilbur (University of Texas at Austin) discusses the book by David Goodhart (2013), *The British Dream*, London: Atlantic Books.

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