

---

## **Migration Processes in Central and Eastern Europe: Unpacking the Diversity.**

By Alice Szczepaniková, Marek Čaněk, Jan Grill (eds). Prague: Multicultural Centre Prague, 2006.

In the world nowadays, more and more people are moving, not only from one country to another, but also from one continent to another. These increasingly long-distance migratory movements are being prompted and facilitated by a wide range of factors, most of them related to the broader process of globalization. Due to this multi-directional nature of migration and the more and more urgent need for effective management of the migration at various levels, migration and asylum policy issues have become one of the top policy issues of the states across Europe.

As we know, it was particularly Western Europe that has been for many decades a major pole of attraction for migrants from much of the rest of the world – not only because of the region's relative prosperity but also for its centuries old tradition of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The introduction of immigration restrictions and control measures may have slowed the inflow into Western Europe, but, generally, has not succeeded in stopping it.

On the other hand, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the former

communist regimes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the consequent introduction of democratization processes which launched new obligations in the area of asylum in these countries, have considerably changed the character of migratory movements and vividly widened the patterns of international migration. With new political and social developments, countries across Central and Eastern Europe have also started to receive asylum seekers as they entered the international regime of refugee protection.

The extraordinarily challenging task – to unveil various, previously unexplored aspects of migration – has inspired a team of authors to create and publish a valuable publication *Migration Processes in Central and Eastern Europe: Unpacking the Diversity*.

The publication is composed of papers presented at the international Workshop on Developments and Patterns of Migration Processes in Central and Eastern Europe organized by the Multicultural Centre Prague, (August 25-27, 2005.) The event was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Open Society Fund Prague within

the framework of the *East Program: Partnership Beyond Borders*. The workshop brought together about a hundred participants to discuss current migration patterns and related social processes in Central and Eastern European countries. With the aim to present a comprehensive review of the core and most interesting issues discussed, the authors made a selection from the papers and focused on the most relevant subjects affecting recent migratory flows, as well as the overall management of migration.

And thus, the publication *Migration Processes In Central and Eastern Europe* brings together various relevant aspects of migration in the context of Central and Eastern Europe and makes them available to all those more deeply involved in this challenging topic.

In general, migration and development present a growing area of interest. This is also due to the fact that migration in the recent years affects all, including new EU states. This is the basic assumption and prerequisite for the authors attempting to shed light on recent and not often discussed developments in the area of migration.

The publication is composed of four sections: The first section addresses the topics of (re)construction of socio-political borders in the context of the expanding EU, internal and international labor migration and forms of semi-formal organization of migrant labor. The nature of borders is also changing the margins of the EU. In addition, irregular migration is escalat-

ing and technological advancements have provided more refined tools for trafficking and smuggling networks. Consequently, as one of the authors notes, stricter regulations have led to the institutionalization of exploitation and sometimes even pushed migrants to the spheres of organized crime.

The second section introduces three studies which examine how categories of gender, ethnicity, age and class play out in different migration contexts. Recent studies at various levels – not only included in this book - demonstrate that migration indeed influences men and women differently. Women's participation in the migration process and the reasons why they migrate are evolving. The aspects of increasing feminization of migration should be seriously examined and taken into consideration.

The authors also provide space for a debate on such complex issues as ethical aspects of Eastern Europe female sex workers or the hardship of the families of the Ukrainian women who left the Ukraine to work in Italy and thus intervened in traditional division of gender roles and responsibilities.

The contributions in the third section discuss various aspects of reception of refugees in the CEE and present the role of NGOs in this field. The institutional and policy developments in the area of migration and asylum have been shaped by the expansion of the European Union towards the East as well as by the dynamics of migration. The overall framework within which the new Community immigration

policy should be framed and managed must reflect not only the interest of the EU but also European values of democracy, human rights and economic and human development

In the fourth section, some articles combine normative political theory and philosophy when looking at questions of citizen laws and more general principles behind the construction of migration and asylum policies in the EU.

All four sections of the publication present a valuable contribution to the overall debate on asylum and migration issues and bring up new facts and data related to the developments in the Central and Eastern European countries. Experts on migration will undoubtedly also be interested in some specific information included in this publication referring to some new or at least rarely discussed areas, such as Bulgaria, Moldova, or the Romanian-Serbian border. The publication also opens a debate on some entirely new issues. Subjects vary from the traditional themes of the job-based migration to issues such as the undisputable economic strength of German retirees who come to spend the rest of their lives in Hungary. The author's description of these increasingly popular movements uncovers the opportunities of the citizens of the wealthier parts of Europe to exploit the economic disparities among EU Member States.

Globalization and migration go hand in hand but while governments welcome economic flows – especially of finance and trade – they are more am-

bivalent about the movement of people and shut their doors to the less skilled migrants and refugees. In this context, for me as the UNHCR worker, the third part of the publication dealing with the refugees in Central and Eastern Europe examining the level of standards and refugee protection in various countries presents undoubtedly the most valuable and important part of the book.

It indirectly reminds the readers of the fact that one of the core objectives should be to preserve and strengthen asylum systems also in the countries that have expanded the European “asylum space”. There is an evident tension between the right of people in need for protection to seek and enjoy asylum in another country and the right of states to control migration by regulating the entry, residence and expulsion of foreign nationals. The challenge is how to manage refugee flows and migratory movements in a way that upholds human rights and humanitarian principles, while addressing the legitimate concerns of States.

The contributions in this chapter summarize various aspects of refugee protection, e.g. already in a kind of historical context, it recalls the issue of the Bosnian refugees seeking refuge in Berlin. The female author – looking back – notes that the large refugee waves in 90-ties found the European – even developed countries – unprepared and unable to handle the crisis. Another author in this chapter focuses on the relationship between the new EU legislation, e.g. the minimum

standards for the reception of asylum seekers laid down by the EU Council in January 2003 and the real reception conditions established for these people in need in different facilities in various European countries. The Czech author contributes with a discourse on social processes in the Czech asylum facilities pointing out the fact that asylum seekers should not be understood and perceived as passive entities but rather as active ones. The Slovak NGO worker expands this debate by a useful and comprehensive review of NGOs' recent contributions and opportunities in assisting asylum seekers and refugees in their integration process. He notifies that due to some gaps in the state integration policy, NGOs often have to explore systematic solutions in the area of social integration of refugees.

It is evident that the EU member states generally acknowledge the posi-

tive value of international migration when it takes place in a regulated and predictable manner. They are alarmed, however, by irregular migratory movements, especially when they involve the arrival of people who come from unfamiliar cultures and who bring little financial capital with them. All these issues, including the expectations on the new reality, related to the period when the new EU member states are expected fully to enter the Schengen system in 2007, are touched and discussed in this new publication.

The book also provides links to several useful websites and additional sources of information.

Mária Čierna  
UNHCR Public Information Officer  
(from 1995 to July 2006)