

**Integration with a double attachment:
Immigrants into Hungary from the neighbouring countries**

(extended abstract)

The migration of certain ethnic minorities into their mother country constitutes a special case of the migration processes within Europe. This type of international migration is often classified as ethnic migration, despite the fact that its emergence is influenced by economic factors and existence of networks alike. The immigration experienced in Hungary is a typical example as two thirds of the immigrants of the last decade and a half came from neighbouring countries (chiefly from Romania, the Ukraine and the ex-Yugoslavia), and the majority of these people were Hungarians living in these areas as an ethnic minority.

In summer 2002 the Demographic Research Institute of Budapest conducted a questionnaire survey using a representative sample of 1015 persons over 18 who had immigrated to Hungary and gained an immigrant status in 2001.

The results of the survey show that although a considerable segment, almost one third, of the immigration under question was constituted by secondary immigration (i.e. the unification of families), the economic hardship experienced in the sending countries and the higher living standard and better conditions of Hungary also played an important part in people deciding to migrate. Added to this was the effect of a Hungarian identity: the rejection of minority status and the cultural attraction of Hungary considered their mother country. As a result of contacts between the Hungarian communities of the sending regions and Hungary itself, ethnicity appears as an important form of social capital and cultural capital in the migration process¹ and this makes it easier not only the process of migration but also the process of integration.

The aim of the poster is to illustrate some of the dimensions of the complex process of immigration and to display some of the background factors, which determine the extent of integration within these dimensions.

However, taking into account the above considerations, immigration can in many ways be interpreted differently in the case of the group in question when it is seen in the

¹ For more detail on this, see: Brubaker, R.: Migrations of ethnic unmixing in the „New Europe”. In: *International Migration Review*, 1998, Vol 32. No. 4; Gödri I.: A special case of international migration: ethnic Hungarians migrating from Transylvania to Hungary. In: *Yearbook of Population Research in Finland*, 2004.

context of other groups of foreigners whose mother tongue, culture or religion differs from that of the receiving country. Adaptation in terms of language and culture cannot be viewed as a clear indicator of the degree of integration in the way in which it can in most cases of international migration. In terms of language and culture, the immigrants arrive not in an alien environment but in what is seen as a mother country. For the migration is a means of gaining the opportunity to use their mother tongue (in the public and official sphere as well as privately), as well as the free practice of their cultural habits and also the freedom to experience their national identity.

Thus we cannot talk of *cultural integration* in the customary sense of the phrase, nevertheless our results reflect that there still exists a relatively implausible ‘tissue’ of cultural difference which arises mainly from a difference between the rather more individualistic character of the receiving country and the rather more traditionalist attitudes of the sending countries. Although this entails differences which are easier to bridge than, for instance, a language barrier or a wide discrepancy in religious habits, yet, the presence of absence of these differences determines the extent to which the immigrant becomes embedded in the new environment, and how well they can orient themselves in a culture which is similar in its overall aspect but different in a great many details.

As far as *structural integration* is concerned, we examined the position of immigrants in the labour market, their occupational mobility and their housing conditions. With regard to the overall position of the group we can state that they do not become marginalized in the Hungarian labour market, in fact migration brought positive changes to their situation (e. g. their unemployment rate went down). At the same time, changes in employment and occupation on the individual level also indicate that a great deal of mobility has taken place, the nature of which differed within different occupational groups.

In order to examine the *social integration* of immigrants we looked at the extent to which they managed to formulate new social ties with members of the receiving society and the type of organisations and social bodies they tend to belong to. The former question was approached by exploring their egocentric networks, paying attention to the type of social and demographic filters which interact with their emergence and checking whether a shared country of origin acted as a selection criterion. Results show that despite the fact that their social ties are quite rich, members of this group rely mainly on networks of people from the same country of origin to provide them with solidarity and mutual assistance. Their integration in civil society is negligible.

Beside the objective factors listed above, the subjective side of integration is equally important. As indicators of *psychological integration* we attempted to survey the satisfaction of immigrants, the extent to which they feel at home and their attachment to their original home. At the same time we also surveyed the elements of *identificational integration*, namely their own judgement regarding the extent to which they have become integrated, their identity and their feeling of belong to the receiving society.

Their satisfaction levels both in terms of the various aspects of their life and of their future prospects show that immigration brought a positive change in the lives of these immigrants. Their statements regarding 'feeling at home' and the extent of their integration are also in line with this. The identity that characterises these people in their post-migratory phase and their self-image as immigrants shows, however, that although immigrants coming from the surrounding countries have become successfully integrated, they are not characterised by giving up ties with their country of birth or the unique identity that their region of origin provides them with. New ties emerge while the old ones persist.

Our poster is also intended to show how the various dimensions of integration are interrelated, how they mutually influence each other and the role that the receiving country's attitude plays in this process.