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The paradox role of migration in the population development. The case of Hungary

Migration and population development

As a result of migration, the number of inhabitants in the sending communities decreases, while receiving societies can enter population increase to their account. As a consequence, the role of migration in the population development is positive in the receiving communities and negative in the sending ones.

However, migration affects positively or negatively not only the number of population, but alters also other demographical indices (gender distribution, age composition etc.). Besides these direct effects, indirect consequences have to be taken also into consideration (it modifies the educational, employment etc. level of the population etc.). The most important indirect effect relates to migrants' fertility, since they decrease or increase the number of population also with their descendants.

The role and effects of the two main types of migration - inner and international migration - are very different. While in case of internal migration the migrant does not directly decrease the total number of inhabitants of a country, migration crossing the country borders affects also this, and generates directly or indirectly other demographical changes. In the first case only the regional distribution of the population is influenced in short-term, but in the second one also the number of population.

The above presented points are considered as general characteristics of the phenomenon. Our presentation will showcase, based on the example of Hungary, how international migration might influence negatively the population development even if the migration rate is positive.

The characteristic feature of the Hungarian population development

Till 1918, the *Hungarian population development* in the Carpathian-basin was determined by two interrelated and interdependent processes. One component of the process is determined by the fertility level of the Hungarian people, modified continuously by mortality. The other element altering and complementing the effects of (Hungarian) fertility and mortality is an external one, namely, the number of assimilated non-Hungarians (local non-Hungarians or migrants) and their descendants.

These developments determined the Hungarian demographical situation till 1918. The collapse of the Hungarian Kingdom and the military and civic casualties of the I. World War

resulted in radical changes also in the Hungarian population development (ISTVÁN HOÓZ). In the territory of Hungary with newly set up boundaries, the principles of the population development before 1918 were scarcely or not at all functioning, and population replacement from non-Hungarians was not working any more. After these changes the inner migration results mainly in territorial reorganization of the population and aims at contributing to the modernization.

In the new social standing the role of international migration in population replacement has also changed: Hungary becomes a target country mainly just for Hungarians leaving outside of its new territory as a result of peace treaties, and this tendency persists up to the present. The present day migrants coming from foreign countries are not increasing the number of the Hungarian population, just enlarge the number of ethnic Hungarians living in the present day territory of Hungary, and increase also the total population number of Hungary.

As a result, there is a speeding up tendency, persisting up to the moment, to be simply characterized by the concentration of Hungarians leaving in the neighbouring countries into the current territory of Hungary. Logically, the decrease in the population number of sending communities has accelerated (undermined further by the surplus in mortality and lack of assimilation of non-Hungarians), causing the shrink of territories inhabited by ethnic Hungarians outside of Hungary, and giving rise to an ethnically more and more homogenous population in the territory of Hungary¹. In long run, this can bring about the demographical weakening of ethnic Hungarians leaving in their ancestral land in eight countries neighbouring Hungary, endangering even their survival.

Data reflected unambiguously the changes and the presented population development tendencies. The number of Hungarians leaving outside of Hungary decreased with 1 million in the last 90 years. In line with the census data from 1910, the number of Hungarians leaving in the detached areas was 3 175 000, and that decreased to 2 667 000 by 1991 (HOÓZ, 1996, 937. pp.). This negative tendency did not stop, because in 2001 new losses can again be witnessed: the number of Hungarians leaving in the neighbouring countries decreased to 2 174 921 by then. The loss of territories inhabited by ethnic Hungarians is even more obvious from the percentages. The proportion of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring

¹ Ágnes Tóth and János Vékás wrote in detail about the demographical characteristics of Hungarian citizens born abroad and declaring an ethnical affiliation during the census conducted in 2001. (TÓTH-VÉKÁS, 2004).

countries and of Hungarians in the Carpathian-basin decreased from 32.1% in 1910 to 20.7% in 1991 and to 17.6% in 2001².

Consequences

The large-scale migration of ethnic Hungarians into Hungary entails the decrease of the fertility and ageing of the population in the sending communities. As a result, diasporization of ethnic Hungarians, their assimilation into the majority population and the shrink of territories inhabited by them becomes accelerated and more and more obvious. Sooner or later disappearance of the indigenous population is inevitable, and even if not at one stroke, values created during centuries by Hungarians living in their native land will become invalid. Therefore, the positive migration indices of Hungary in short- and middle run will devastate the sending Hungarian communities, and in long run will lead to the narrowing of all Hungarians possibilities and chances.

To sum up, the positive migration indices of Hungary have paradoxically a negative effect on the population development of ethnic Hungarians.

Bibliography:

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² According to census data, in the last teen years it is only Austria among the neighbouring countries where the number of Hungarians has increased with 21.2% (2001). In other neighbouring countries it decreased. The proportion of the decrease is 26.2% (2001) in Croatia, 11.7% (2002) in Romania, 8.2% (2001) in Slovakia, 27% (2001) in Slovenia, 14.7% (2001) in Serbia and 4% (2001) in Ukraine. In Hungary it is 6.6% (2001).