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## **The Role of Migration in the Development of Hungarian Demography**

(Migration as a means of population increase)

### **Abstract**

*The article explains that all through recorded history, Hungarian population has had two main sources the internal one, depending on the productivity of Hungarian nationals and external, provided by those non-Hungarians and their descendants who joined the Hungarians and eventually assimilated to them. After WW1 the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the creation of new states around Hungary with a considerable Hungarian population in them changed the age old pattern: the external increase of Hungarians in Hungary was mainly represented by Hungarians migration into Hungary from the neighbouring states, thus, though the proportion of Hungarians within Hungary has increased, the number of them in the Carpathian Basin has remained the same, only their regional distribution having been changed.*

### **Migration and demographic development**

It is obvious that the process of migration movements play an important role in demographic developments. This role can be positive or negative – viewed from the sending or the receiving sides. The result of migration is a decrease in the population of the sending community and an increase in the receiving one. The ensuing result is not simply growth or decline of the population but will also modify other demographic specifications.

It is well known that in its history in modern times – from the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> c to the 1990s – The major participants in the classical processes of migration were young males who not only amended the men – women ratio of the receiving community, but also turned the relations of the age group composition in favour of the younger generation. In the sending communities developments counter act. In addition to the above direct demographic effects indirect ones (e.g. change in the rate of occupation, that of educated people, etc.) must also be taken into account. Of the indirect effects of migration the present study is especially focusing on the

question of productivity of the migrants. It is important to understand that it is not only his self the migrant adds to the new community or distracts from the old one but also his progeny appears as addition or lack in the new and old domicile respectively.<sup>1</sup>

When analysing the role of migration in demographic developments it should not be forgotten that the two major forms of migration – internal and external – play entirely different roles in demographic developments. In the case of external migration the effect is not restricted to the given sending community, to the direct and indirect influence over its population, but it effects the whole population of the country the sending community is a part. In the case of internal migration, though the migrants decrease the number of the local population, their movement do not influence the number of that of the country. On the long run, however, the migrant coming from an area with a higher productive rate usually takes up the lower productivity rate pattern of his new domicile and thus inside migration can lead to the demographic decline of the whole country.

The above scenario is unambiguously supported by experience as well as the findings of international research into international migration, namely that its role has proved to be positive in the population growth of the receiving countries while it is negative from the point of view of the sending ones. Apparently if a country's population is decreasing and at the same time growing older, moreover the tendency cannot be stopped, changed or reversed by any methods of population policy, the demographic increase could be attempted at by involving migration processes.

Keeping the basic contexts discussed above in mind, it has to be analysed what role has been played by the processes of international migration in the Hungarian demographic developments to increase the declining population of Hungary.

### **Historical flashback**

There have been two interdependent processes to model the development of the Hungarian population since the time of the Hungarian settlement (end of the 9<sup>th</sup> c.). One element is demographic growth determined by the productivity of the Hungarian people themselves modified by the rate of

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<sup>1</sup> The particulars of international migration have gradually changed since the 1990s. It most apparent in the tendencies of the composition of migrants according to gender , age, education and occupation. The composition of gender was the first to change, with the proportion of women gradually increasing. It was accompanied by the change of rates of education, occupation and age of the migrant. However, the more frequent participation of the older generation is new. It is closely connected to the migrations during the 1970s – 1980s to unify families.

death as well as the composition according to age and gender. The second element is represented by external factors, i.e. foreign elements assimilated to the Hungarian people adding to the result of the processes of the first factor by its own demographic growth.

This second element is not homogeneous being composed of three layers. To the first one belong those non-Hungarian groups which arrived together with the Hungarians to the Carpathian Basin; to the second belong the non-Hungarian people who had already lived in the territory before the arrival of the Hungarians; the third group consists of foreign, non-Hungarian groups and their descendants who were invited or accepted into the country by the Hungarians. Most of the members of all these groups became assimilated to the Hungarians in the course of their living together, and they and also their descendants continuously added to the productivity of the Hungarians. The complementing role played by non-Hungarian people in the population counts as a characteristic feature of the Hungarian demographic developments.

The results of the historical and historical demographic research have proved that by the time of the Hungarian settlement the majority of the non-Hungarian companions (and their descendants) had already changed their own ethnic identity and became Hungarians. Thus from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> cc their role in the demographic development was no longer additional and complementary but became an integral part of it.

The members of the people living in the Carpathian Basin not yet assimilated to the Hungarians together with the with the foreigners migrating there at later periods reproduced and kept alive the mechanism by which themselves and their progeny provided the population growth with a continuous reproductive source.

The Hungarian Kingdom and the territorial distribution of its people ensured suitable frame, background and conditions to keep up this complementary role and the process of assimilation too. The majority of the Hungarians occupied the central areas of the Carpathian Basin and by necessity this was the area where the central military, political, economic, cultural and administrative functions were concentrated. This means that this was the area where Magyarization of part of the non-Hungarian population and that of the foreigners migrating internally from the periphery toward the centre also was more dynamic.<sup>2</sup>

In agreement with the above explanation, it can be declared that in the centuries after the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom till the end of

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<sup>2</sup> There was also a parallel migration of Hungarian nationals toward the centre which reinforced considerably the assimilatory role of those areas.

World War I (WW1), the growth of the Hungarian population was ensured by the natural productivity of the Hungarian people complemented by the descendants of those non-Hungarian people who either had already lived in the Carpathian Basin or migrated there and became assimilated in the course of the centuries.

### **A break in the Hungarian demographic developments**

The disruption of the unity of the Hungarian Kingdom as well as the military and civilian losses during WW1 caused serious changes in the Hungarian demographic developments. The state compressed within its new borders lost the important principle defining its population growth till 1918, namely the demographic contribution of the non-Hungarian people living in the outermost regions who, when migrating to the mainly Hungarian populated central areas, played an important role in the Hungarian demographic processes as they represented an additional source of the increase of the Hungarian population. Since then inner migration meant only regional rearrangements of the inhabitants according to the requirements of modernizing processes (as has been its function ever since). However, not only the role of inside migration has changed but also that of outside migration. With the new borders the attraction of Hungary as a migratory target changed and after the peace treaty became mainly important for Hungarian nationals who became the citizens of the newly defined neighbouring states. The result was that with their migration Hungarian nationals living outside Hungary did not increase the number of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin any more, but only the population of Hungary (though this is still preferable than their assimilation or migration to a third country; thus the number of Hungarians does not decrease in the Carpathian Basin for the short and middle term).

As the consequences of the above discussed developments since 1918, the migration toward Hungary have accelerated the processes which can be summed up as the concentration of Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin within the territory of Hungary causing obvious negative results in the demographic developments both in Hungary and among the Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries. As a necessary outcome of the changes – increased loss due to death, assimilation or emigration – the decline of the size, productivity and age-composition of the sending Hungarian communities in the neighbouring countries has been accelerated; in consequence the fragmentation of Hungarian nationals have become more pronounced just as the processes of their assimilation and the diminishing of their territories. Sooner or later population substitution would be the result

outside of Hungary slowly destroying those values created by Hungarians living there throughout the centuries.

Thanks to the continuous migration into Hungary its population is still above 10 million and the homogeneity of the inhabitants has become more pronounced.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the basic problem, namely the decrease of the number of the Hungarian population, its tendency to grow old, or the reversal of the processes, will not be solved.

### 1. The population of Hungary between 1870 and 2006

Year	Persons
1870	12 996 653
1880	13 749 603
1890	15 231 527
1900	16 838 255
1910	18 264 533
	<i>7 612 114</i>
1920	7 986 879
1930	8 685 109
1941	14 668 496
	<i>9 316 074</i>
1949	9 204 799
1960	9 961 044
1970	10 300 996
1980	10 709 463
1990	10 374 823
2001	10 195 513
2006	10 067 000

*Note:* the first five census show the number of inhabitants of Hungary as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy without Croatia. In order to represent the major relationships, the data for 1914 and 1941 given in italics are calculated to refer to the present territory of Hungary. From 1949 on the data represent the situation after WW2.<sup>4</sup>

The outcome of a possible official assistance, silent acknowledgement of Hungarian nationals migrating from the neighbouring countries to Hungary would prove to be disastrous on the long run. The dysfunctional influence of the described processes would *render the decrease of the*

<sup>3</sup> For the 2004 census data about the demographic characteristics of national-ethnic attachments declared by those born abroad cf. Tóth – Vékás 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Népszámlálás 2001. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Budapest, 2001. és a szerző számítása a KSH népmozgalmi adatokból (Demográfiai lekérdező). [Census 2001. Central Statistic Office. Demographic Questionnaire].

*Hungarian population in the Carpathian Basin (Hungary included<sup>5</sup>), and especially the increase of the old age group of the population irreversible.* While the migration to Hungary from the neighbouring countries would not stop the population decrease and senescence in Hungary, it would result in the weakening and eventual disappearance of the demographic background of the Hungarian population in their present domicile.

The ensuing changes and demographic tendencies are clearly shown by the data below.

The number of the Hungarian population who became citizens of the neighbouring states decreased by a million in the last 90 years. The data of the 1910 census registered 3 175 000 people Hungarian nationals in the territories annexed after WW1; in 1991 the number was 2 667 000 (Hoóz 1996:937); and the process did not stop: in 2001 there were only 2 174 921 people who claimed to be Hungarian nationals living in the neighbouring countries. Percentage rates reflect the demographic losses of Hungarians even stronger. The proportion of Hungarians living in areas now belonging to neighbouring states has sunk from 32,1% in 1910 to 20,7% by 1991 and to 17,6 % in 2001, compared with the total of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin.<sup>6</sup> The population of Hungary attained the figures shown in Table 1 in 1920 and 1949 through the hundred thousands of Hungarians settled over the areas given to the new states.

Though on the short run the migration of those Hungarian nationals and their descendants who became minority inhabitants after 1918 to the once central territory increased the population of Hungary, it challenges even the restricted system of long-term conditions of the Hungarian demographic developments. It must be recognized that the result of the movements toward Hungary will endanger first the conditions of life of the sending communities and later that of the whole Hungarian population, eventually even liquidating it.

The loss of the migrants in the sending community not only decreases the number of the Hungarian population and their productivity and increases the proportion of old people but it also means that the territory will continuously be smaller too where now Hungarians are still living. Thus the migrants – unintentionally – further the fragmentation of those

<sup>5</sup> In 2003 the number of the Hungarian population, together with those Hungarian citizens who declared belonging to national minorities, was 26 474 persons more than 10 million; in 2004 it was 9 986 633, in 2005: 9 963 775. Thanks to 130 109 foreign citizens in 2004, 142 153 in 2005, the number of the inhabitants remained above 10 million.

<sup>6</sup> According to the latest census data the number of Hungarians living in the neighbouring states has increased only in Austria by 21,2%. In the other countries there has been a decrease: in Croatia 26,2%, in Hungary 6,6%, in Slovakia 8,2%, Slovenia 27% %, in Serbia 14,7%, in Ukraina 4% in 2001 and in Romania 11,7% in 2002.

staying behind on the one hand and quicken their assimilation to the majority people on the other.

It can be stated that since 1918 the role played by international migration in the demographic developments of Hungary, if regarded not only from the point of view of Hungary but the whole area of the Carpathian Basin, has been contrary to its earlier effects.

### **Future possibilities**

It is very complicated to modify the factors which define demographic processes, especially to change the rate the older persons. Due to their characteristics it is impossible to influence even the short-term rate of decrease. On the middle term, on the other hand, in the next 15-20 years there may still be certain chances if aided by adequate demographic policy. The conception of the future Hungarian demographic developments can only be successful if the long term tasks are not restricted to the population of Hungary but – notwithstanding their fragmentation – all Hungarians are considered to be a unity.

It has been already mentioned that after 1990 the number of the inhabitants remained over 10 million, thanks to the immigrants who compensated for the decrease caused by natural loss and emigration. It would logically mean that the future population increase through migrants would still represent an important part of the Hungarian demographic processes. It could be true indeed if only the majority of the new settlers in Hungary had not come from the Hungarian communities of Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. It has been explained too how the silently accepting or deliberately supporting attitude toward the migration of Hungarian nationals from the neighbouring countries to Hungary does not solve the population decrease in Hungary but by its dysfunctional consequences renders forever impossible the long term possibilities of the Hungarian demographic developments still existing in the Carpathian Basin. Since there is little chance for important changes in the ethnic composition of the immigrants at present it would be advisable to choose other ways and means to increase the population.

### **What to do?**

Due to a decline in the number of marriages, increase of divorces, the tendency toward partnership, deliberate childlessness, postponing child-bearing to a more mature age – as well as to other demographic factors no radical changes can be expected in the coming years. According to

international experience, however, it is possible to positively influence the willingness to raise children in the countries where there is an active and complex family policy complete with financial aid and services in kind complemented with a many-sided employment system. (Tárkányi 2001) If there is a mutual will, the rate of natural population loss and the seniliscence accompanying it, can be slowed down. The data of Table 2 show the major changes in the population movements between 1960 and 2006.

## 2. Major figures of natural demographic movements, 1960–2006

Year	Marriage	Births	Deaths	Natural growth, Loss (-)	Per 1000 people			
					Marriage	Births	Deaths	Natural growth loss (-)
1960	88 566	146 461	101 525	44 936	8,9	14,7	10,2	4,5
1970	96 612	151 819	120 197	31 622	9,3	14,7	11,6	3,1
1980	80 331	148 673	145 355	3 318	7,5	13,9	13,6	0,3
1990	66 405	125 679	145 660	-19 981	6,4	12,1	14,0	-1,9
2001	43 583	97 047	132 183	-35 136	4,3	9,5	13,0	-3,4
2002	46 008	96 804	132 833	-36 029	4,5	9,5	13,1	-3,5
2003	45 398	94 647	135 823	-41 176	4,5	9,3	13,4	-4,1
2004	43 791	95 137	132 492	-37 355	4,3	9,4	13,1	-3,7
2005	44 234	97 496	135 732	-38 236	4,4	9,7	13,5	-3,8
2006	44 528	99 871	131 603	-31732	4,4	9,9	13,1	-3,2

*Note:* life expectancy was 68,59 years by men, 76,91 years by women in 2004. The netto reproduction index was 0,618 (based on the death rate of the year) in 2004. The number of the inhabitants of Hungary was 10 066 158 persons on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, i.e. 10428 less than a year earlier.<sup>7</sup>

The family is the basis, it is the oldest voluntary community, the fundamental unit of society with its most important functions of raising its progeny. Since nowadays every newborn threatens the household with poverty, the marginalization of families must be stopped (Spéder 2002). Material goods should be distributed more justly for everyone to have an equal share of the socially accepted expenditure serving the raising of the new generation. Raising children is a long term investment for the family, only stable conditions have a favourable influence upon it. Thus

<sup>7</sup> Gyorstájékoztató. Népmozgalom 2005. január–december. Közzététel: 2006. február 27., illetve Gyorstájékoztató. Népmozgalom 2006. január–november. Közzététel: 2007. február 22. [www.ksh.hu](http://www.ksh.hu).

what is necessary is the realisation of a family subsidy system based on the consensus of the parties in the parliament spanning election cycles that takes into account the preferences and changed economic circumstances of the population.<sup>8</sup> It would also be necessary to transform public thinking where children will appear as the most important and natural gift of life who are not a burden, not a 'disaster' hindering or even ruining the career of the parents and especially that of the mother. Contrary to a practice favouring short-term financial balance, demographic policy should prefer families and family-like communities to aim at improvements in productivity, increase in the number of birth and decrease in the mortality rate.

Considering what dysfunctional consequences migration can have population increase in the Hungarian demographic developments, the existing people should be offered the possibility necessary for them to become active members of the society and successful in the labour market, till the necessary concepts required by the hoped-for changes of the demographic processes are formed and through practical measures realised.

Population decrease can be slowed down if the infants can grow up to have equal opportunities in social life. It is not only a question of decreasing infant and child mortality but every infant must be given a chance to grow up into adulthood in good health and in possession of the necessary education. There is no research to tell what a percentage of infants are without any prospect, when growing up, to participate in the social, economic etc. life of the country. Their estimated percentage could be around 20%. If normal conditions were realised a considerable number of children could start their path of life as well prepared Hungarian citizens, yearly about 18-20 thousand of them and already from 2025 or 2030.

There are reserves in the area of mortality too.<sup>9</sup> In the past fifteen years there were 500 thousand more death than birth. Though there was some decrease in the past years the death rate has remained high and is lastingly influencing the Hungarian demographic processes. Nevertheless it seems encouraging that this improvement concerned males and it can be supposed that under the advanced state in Hungary the unjustifiably high mortality will decrease in the decades to come. If this tendency wins and we shall be able to talk about a change in the mortality pattern we will be able to recognise the tendencies in the reduction of population loss too.

At present, however, there are still too many of the deceased belonging to the age group whose work would have been needed by the society for

<sup>8</sup> The experience of the last decade points out the direction since any negative change in the family policy had a negative influence upon child bearing decisions. It is also noteworthy that even if the abolished bonuses were reinstalled they could not fulfil their earlier role.

<sup>9</sup> In Hungary men's mortality per year is 1,5 greater than in the EU countries in general.

a longer time.<sup>10</sup> In case it could be achieved to diminish the mortality of those under 60 at least by 10% and later by 20% by mobilizing the ‘reserves’, it would be a great step forward in slowing down the rate of population loss.

*Generally speaking, if all the infants growing up will be able to start their adult life in health and in possession of all the necessary knowledge and in addition the mortality rate of those prematurely deceased would be decreased, it would be a progress in the reservation of the size of the population and the slowing down the rate of its growing old without needing a considerable contribution of the Hungarians immigrating from the neighbouring countries. This would mean the first important step in reorganising the population development and preservation of the number of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin.*

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<sup>10</sup> In 2004 8,4% of the deceased belonged to the age group 15 – 49 years, and 9.9 % to the one of 60-65. If the supposition is right, there could have been about 2400 Hungarians still with us.