

**MIGRATION PROCESSES  
AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR THE LABOUR  
MARKET IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES –  
SELECTED ASPECTS**

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**Key words:** labour market, migration processes, aging population.

**A b s t r a c t**

This article concerns the demographic problems particularly focusing on the migration processes, population ageing and their consequences for the European labour market. The author also takes into account the problem of unemployment in selected EU countries by appropriate analysis of selected labour markets in Visegrad group countries (to show their diversity and specificity). Hence, the aim of this article is to indicate the impact of the observed demographic processes (migration and changes in the population structure) on the labour market in the Visegrad countries. Applied quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted based on data from Eurostat statistical databases with the use of demographic projections. Absolute increases of dynamics and indicators were the methods used for time series changes. The temporal scope of the analyses was largely determined by data accessibility and the fact that the Visegrad Group countries started the process of system transformation around the same time as joining the European Union in 2004.

**PROCESY MIGRACYJNE I ICH KONSEKWENCJE DLA RYNKU PRACY  
W KRAJACH GRUPY WYSZEHRADZKIEJ – WYBRANE ASPEKTY**

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**Słowa kluczowe:** rynek pracy, procesy migracyjne, starzenie się populacji.

**A b s t r a k t**

Artykuł dotyczy problematyki demograficznej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem procesów migracyjnych, starzenia się ludności oraz ich konsekwencji dla europejskiego rynku pracy. Analiza rynku pracy dotyczy krajów Grupy Wyszehradzkiej. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie wpływu obserwowanych procesów demograficznych (migracji międzynarodowych i zmian w strukturze wieku ludności) na rynek pracy w wybranej grupie krajów UE. Analizy ilościowe i jakościowe przeprowadzono na podstawie danych pochodzących z bazy statystycznej Eurostat oraz z uwzględnieniem prognoz demograficznych. Zastosowano metody zmian szeregu dynamicznego. Zakres czasowy analiz w dużej mierze był wyznaczany dostępnością danych, a także faktem, że kraje Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w podobnym horyzoncie czasowym rozpoczęły proces transformacji systemowej oraz w 2004 roku przystąpiły do Unii Europejskiej.

**Introduction**

There is a view among numerous scientists that the present changes in the global economy and its problems are not easy to understand based on classical economic knowledge alone. They think that at present, the dominant role is played by demographic processes such as increased migration and an increasing process of population ageing resulting from, among other things, a decline in the birth-rate below the replacement threshold and longer life expectancy; especially in European Union countries.

Currently, the dynamics of changes in population figures depends in many countries on the fertility rate, death rate and international migration. In the post-war period, the birth rate was the main factor in population growth in Europe. As a result of a systematic decline in the birth rate and increased international migration, the roles have changed. In the last decades, it is international migration that has determined the dynamics in the change and structure of the population in numerous European countries, but with varying intensity. At the micro level, the changeability and intensity of demographic processes is significantly higher than at the macro level. Thus in the modern world, we can see the growing importance of international migration, which can be examined both at the macro- and micro-economic level. In both these perspectives, they have various consequences. It is however important to stress the existence of feedback in this area, i.e. the flow of the labour force depends on the economic and social situation. Macro-economic effects of migration refer to the situation in the labour market, salary transfer and foreign trade, whereas the micro-scale is directly connected with household incomes and economic activity. Thus in all these aspects, there are also other factors determining the current situation in this area.

This paper is an attempt to assess the impact of international migration on population age structure, and hence on the size of the potential labour force,

using Visegrad Group countries as an example. Moreover, it analyses selected labour market indicators such as unemployment and employment rates, showing relationships between them and migration processes. Due to the wide scope of this subject, this publication will present only the most significant relationships.

### **Methodological information**

Statistics on international migration for European Union countries provide a great deal of information concerning the migration scale, resources and directions. However, the quality of presented quantitative data varies. This is probably due to the existence of numerous information sources in each of the countries which are based on different legal regulations and also due to lack of a unified set of terms used in statistics. Analysis that is based on different statistical data for Visegrad Group countries gives, on the one hand, a more complete picture of examined processes; while on the other hand, it reveals significant differences between them. In view of the above observations, the author of this publication conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis, relying on data published by Eurostat. Absolute increases and dynamic indicators were the methods used for time series changes. The temporal scope of the analyses was largely determined by data accessibility and the fact that the Visegrád Group countries started the process of system transformation around the same time, joining the European Union in 2004. The year 1990 was chosen as the beginning of the period of temporal comparison. The following study periods were selected to indicate the dynamics of changes: (before the EU accession: 1990–2004), (after the EU accession: 2004–2015, 2015–2060 – including demographic projections). For each of the characteristics discussed, spatial comparisons were made, with a country accepted as a comparison unit.

### **Theoretical background**

A review of the literature on the subject shows that the phenomenon of migration is inseparably connected with the process of globalisation and occurs with different intensity in most countries worldwide (MASSEY et al. 1993, p. 431–466, PORTES, BOROCZ 1989, p. 606–630, DIVINSKY 2007, p. 75). In every economy, there are factors that facilitate and limit emigration. The former ones include the state of the economy, demographic pressure, high unemployment rate, higher remuneration in the emigration country, family reunification, etc. (KRITZ, GURAK 2001, p. 133–145). On the other hand, people working

abroad, when considering the decision to return, look at the state of the economy, the prospect of the country's development, the possibility of achieving a desired standard of living, the possibility for a professional career, etc. At this point, it is worth indicating the causes of international migration<sup>1</sup>. A review of the literature on the subject shows that there are cyclic and structural causes (BODNAR, SZABO 2014, p. 10, 11). Cyclic causes include:

- the unemployment rate, as well as differences in employment opportunities in sending and receiving countries. Job opportunities play a key role in migration decisions. Unemployment rises during times of recession which, as a push factor, increases the probability of emigration, while low unemployment rates and high job-finding rates in host countries are perceived as pull factors.

Structural causes are as follows:

- wage differentials – according to neo-classical theories, wage differentials (which reflect the differences between the relative amount of capital and labour and thus their productivity in home and host countries) have a significant impact on migration decisions. The international migration of labour may contribute to the equalisation of wages between countries. However, the wage gap should be high enough to cover the costs of relocation and integration,

- similarities between languages and the number of home country individuals in the destination country: the probability of migration is increased by similarities between the languages of the home and host countries and the number of immigrants in the host country,

- administrative obstacles: the easing of the administrative burdens of migration between countries has a positive effect on international migration,

- differences in welfare expenditures between the home and the host countries, welfare system, education system: the level of welfare expenditures, the generosity of the welfare system and a well-developed education system may be particularly relevant in the case of permanent emigration.

- cultural environment: the general political climate, instability or cultural exclusion may heighten the probability of emigration, while host countries can typically offer better conditions in this regard.

In the context of the impact of international migration on the labour market, BORJAS (1995, p. 3–22) indicates that the impact of immigration on the labour market critically depends on the skills of migrants, the skills of existing workers, and the characteristics of the host economy. They also differ between the short and long run when the economy and labour demand can adjust to the increase in labour supply. The immediate short run effects of immigration on

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<sup>1</sup> The causes of migration have been presented in many theories of migration. For example they take into account: the economical aspect – the theory of dual labour market, neoclassical theories, new economics of migration, the social aspect – the theory of migration networks, institutional theory, the geographical aspect – mobility transition theory.

the wages and employment of existing workers depend particularly on the extent to which migrants have skills that are substitutes or complements to those of existing workers. If the skills of migrants and existing workers are substitutes, immigration can be expected to increase competition in the labour market and drive down wages in the short run. The closer the substitute, the greater the adverse wage effects will be. Whether and to what extent declining wages increase unemployment or inactivity among existing workers depends on their willingness to accept the new lower wages. If, on the other hand, the skills of migrants are complementary to those of existing workers, all workers experience increased productivity which can be expected to lead to a rise in the wages of existing workers (BORJAS 1995, p. 3–22).

On the other hand RUHS, VARGES-SILVA (2015, p. 3–15) indicate that in addition to expanding labour supply, immigration can also increase the demand for labour. Migrants expand consumer demand for goods and services. In the medium to long run, immigration can be expected to lead to more investment. Both effects result in greater demand for labour and thus increased wages and employment in the economy. In other words, the number of jobs in an economy is not fixed (the “lump of labour fallacy”). Immigration can increase competition for existing jobs but it can also create new jobs. The extent to which investment and labour demand respond to immigration depends on the characteristics of the economy. During an economic downturn, labour demand may respond more slowly than during times of economic growth (RUHS, VARGES-SILVA 2015, p. 3–15).

Migration processes can also be examined in the social and economic context. In the social context, migration has a demographic impact, not only by increasing the size of the population but also by changing the age pyramid of receiving countries. Migrants tend to be more concentrated in the younger and economically active age groups compared with natives and therefore contribute to reduce dependency ratios (Migration Policy Debates 2014, p. 1, KRYŃSKA 2000, p. 11). On the other hand, in the economic context, migrants arrive with skills and abilities, and so supplement the stock of human capital of the host country. More specifically, evidence from the United States suggests that skilled immigrants contribute to boosting research and innovation, as well as technological progress (HUNT 2010, p. 251–269).

For example, some early papers by Grossman assume that immigrants are a distinct factor of production, i.e. labour consists of immigrants and natives, and that immigrants and natives are not perfectly substitutable. However, it seems quite difficult to argue that two equally qualified workers, one a native, and the other one an immigrant, are not easily substitutable in production. It seems more reasonable to draw a distinction between different groups of labour inputs along the skill dimension (GROSSMAN 1982, p. 596–603).

Later studies indicate a production technology that distinguishes between skilled and unskilled labour, and assumes that immigrants are perfect substitutes with their corresponding native skill category. How skills are defined in detail varies by study, but typical dimensions are educational attainment and occupation or experience and education (BORJAS 2006, p. 221–258). The relationship between migration and social/professional mobility of the population has been explored by WITKOWSKI (1985, p. 47) and ORGANIŚCIAK-KRZYKOWSKA (2013, p. 11–36). From the perspective of a social policy, the in-flow of migrants can, thanks to rejuvenation of the population age structure, change the structure of demand for educational and medical services as well as social and medical care (ZDROJEWSKI 2003, p. 199–211). Meanwhile, JOŃCZY (2010, p. 17) highlights self-regulation of labour markets in the conditions of economic migration to foreign countries.

Table 1

Self-regulation of labour markets under the conditions of migration to foreign countries

Labour market	
Initial balance	demand and supply balance
Processes upsetting the market balance – departure of part of the labour force – return transfer and redistribution of incomes	decrease of labour supply increase of labour demand
Transitional state of imbalance	demand surplus
Market balancing processes – increase of prices and salaries – increase of imports and economic immigration – substitution of labour and production	increased demand and prices on the product market and limited supply on the labour market implicate an increase in pay higher pay causes an in-flow of the labour force from outside a country, region and reemigration substitution of work for capital
Migration balance	increased share of immigrant labour force in employment and that of capital expenditure in production

Source: JOŃCZY (2010, p. 17).

Summing up, migration processes are examined by a number of scientific disciplines, such as demographics, economics, geography, the political sciences and sociology. Due to the interdisciplinary character of migration analyses as a research subject and the complexity of this phenomenon, there is no one unambiguous research method or a common explanatory approach. For the reasons discussed above, work on migration shows a multitude of approaches to and interpretations of this process.

## The impact of international migration on changes in population figures and structures in the Visegrad Group countries and their consequences

The population figure is a result of natural changes in the number of people (the number of live births decreased by the number of deaths) and net migration (the number of immigrants decreased by the number of emigrants and increased by statistical correction) (OKÓLSKI 2005, p. 82, RAUZIŃSKI 2010, p. 71–76). An increase in population is observed when the result of net migration increased by the number of births and decreased by the number of deaths is positive. From the perspective of the labour market (the size of the potential labour force), it is interesting to evaluate the impact of migration on population figures and structures. According to the literature on the subject, migrations are usually relevant in economic terms, as they modify the regional labour force, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Let's look at some selected demographic indicators presented in table 1 for the Visegrad Group countries.

Table 2

Selected demographic indicators for the Visegrad Group countries taking into account demographic projections for the period 1990–2060

Countires	Total of population [in 1000]					
	Years					
	1990	2004	2009	2015	2030*	2060*
EU 28	475,187.71	492,555.79	502,090.23	508,293.36	508,223.62	522,946.53
Czech Rep.	10,362.10	10,195.34	10,425.78	10,538.27	10,536.04	11,081.33
Hungary	10,374.82	10,116.74	10,030.97	9,855.57	9,679.36	9,165.30
Poland	38,038.40	38,190.60	38,135.88	38,005.61	37,525.74	33,293.80
Slovakia	5,287.66	5,371.87	5,382.40	5,421.35	5,314.02	4,574.33
Natural change of population [in the persons]						
EU 28	927,158	383,171	510,559	-135,183	-724,843	-1,410,446
Czech Rep.	1,398	-9,513	10,927	-409	-26,922	-28,096
Hungary	-19,983	-37,355	-33,972	-39,440	-36,281	-35,676
Poland	157,377	-7,391	32,649	-25,613	-122,044	-179,581
Slovakia	25,370	1,895	8,304	1,776	-19,322	-35,876
Net migration [in the persons]						
EU 28	721,368	1,659,353	714,284	1,897,836	1,244,057	1,036,681
Czech Rep.	-58,893	13,021	25,378	15,977	35,777	21,240
Hungary	18,313	18,162	17,321	14,354	20,936	14,014
Poland	-12,620	-9,382	-1,196	-12,792	-903	11,566
Slovakia	-2,322	-1,085	-295	3,127	2,464	2,403

\* projections data

Source: own calculation based on: Eurostat data, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (access: 23.07.2016).

In the first period of analysis, i.e. 1990–2004, an increase in the total population figure was recorded in Poland and Slovakia, mainly due to a positive birth rate. Meanwhile, the fall in the population figure for the Czech Republic was caused by negative net migration, whereas in Hungary it was caused by a negative birth rate. In the second period of analysis, i.e. 2004–2009, an increase in the population figure was recorded for the Czech Republic, due to positive net migration and a positive birth rate. In the case of Slovakia, the increase resulted mainly from a positive birth rate. Meanwhile, the fall in population in Poland was caused not only by the birth rate, but also by decreasing negative net migration, whereas in Hungary it was mainly due to a negative birth rate. In the third period of analysis, i.e. 2009–2015, the increase in population figures for the Czech Republic and Slovakia was mainly due to positive net migration. The fall in the population figure for Poland was mainly caused by a negative birth rate and net migration. In the case of Hungary, it was due to the birth rate. Based on demographic projections, it can be presumed that an increase in population figures will be recorded in the Czech Republic until 2060, mainly due to positive net migration. In the rest of the Visegrad Group countries, the total population figures are expected to fall, mainly due to negative birth rates. Thus, it can be concluded that in countries where the increase or fall in the total population figure is less affected by migration, the process of increased population ageing will grow compared to countries where net migration is a decisive factor in the change in the population figure. Of importance in this respect is certainly the median age of immigrants arriving in EU countries.

Figure 1 shows that immigrants entering EU Member States in 2015 were, on average, much younger than the total population already resident in their country of destination. In 2015, the median age of the total population of the EU-28 was 42 years. By contrast, the median age of immigrants to the EU-28 in 2014 was 28 years (Eurostat yearbook, 2016). However, considering the median age of immigrants, it is worth presenting this migration by economic age groups in the countries analysed<sup>2</sup>.

The data above shows that the intensity of the impact of migration on population structures and figures depends not only on total net migration but also on net migration by economic age groups. The data indicates an increase in the number of immigrants aged 65+ between 2009 and 2015 in the Visegrad Group countries, except for the Czech Republic. This means that acceleration of the process of population ageing in the countries analysed can also be affected by migrations of population belonging to older age groups. Thus,

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<sup>2</sup> Due to data availability, available Eurostat statistical data for the period 2009–2015 was used for the purpose of analysis. The data contained in table 2 is indicative and refers to total migration.



international migrations are and will be relevant to the dynamics of the ageing of the potential labour force. Table 4 presents changes in population structure by economic age groups.

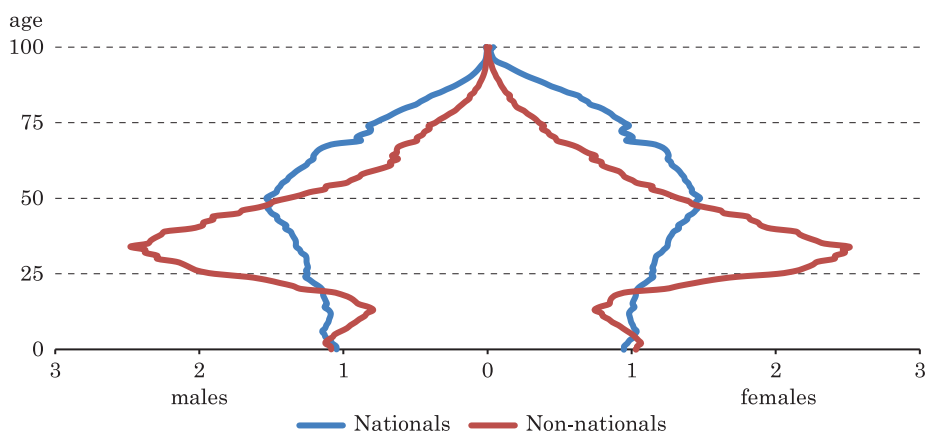


Fig. 1. Age structure of the national and non-national populations, EU-28 in 2015  
Source: Eurostat data base, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (access: 14.08.2016)

Migration figure by economic age group in the Visegrad Group countries

Table 3

Countries	Immigration by economic age group (total)			Emigration by economic age group (total)			Net migration	
	Years		Dynamics indicator	Years		Dynamics indicator	2009	2015
	2009	2015	2009-100	2009	2015	2009-100		
0-15								
Czech Rep.	5,131	4,008	78.1	2,983	2,146	71.9	2,148	1,862
Hungary	4,418	4,817	109.1	1,040	1,005	96.6	3,378	3,812
Poland	15,722	32,247	205.1	30,940	37,749	122.0	-15,218	-5,502
Slovakia	1,416	556	39.3	408	652	159.8	-1,008	-96
15-64								
Czech Rep.	69,551	25,213	36.2	58,340	25,119	43.1	11,211	94
Hungary	22,129	47,671	215.4	9,217	40,140	435.5	12,912	7,531
Poland	168,922	177,125	104.8	190,602	217,856	114.3	-21,680	-40,731
Slovakia	13,773	4,110	29.9	4,267	2,887	67.6	9,506	1,223
65+								
Czech Rep.	538	676	125.6	459	1,203	262.1	79	-527
Hungary	1,347	2,093	155.4	226	1,068	472.6	1,121	1,025
Poland	4,522	12,903	285.3	7,778	12,694	163.2	-3,256	209
Slovakia	454	163	35.9	78	105	134.6	376	58

Source. as in table 2.

Table 4

Changes in the population figures by economic age groups in the Visegrad Group countries taking into account demographic projection

Country	Years						Dynamics indicator	
	1990	2004	2009	2015	2030	2060	2015/1990 1990 – 100	2060/2015 2015 – 100
Percentage of pre-working age people (0–14)								
EU 28	–	16.4	15.7	15.6	14.9	15.0	95.1*	96.1
Czech Rep.	21.7	15.2	14.2	15.2	14.7	15.4	70.0	71.0
Hungary	20.5	15.9	14.9	14.5	14.4	14.4	70.7	99.3
Poland	25.3	17.2	15.3	15.0	13.7	13.0	59.3	86.7
Slovakia	25.5	17.6	15.6	15.3	12.9	11.5	60.0	75.2
Percentage of working-age people (15–64)								
EU 28	–	67.2	67.0	65.5	61.2	56.6	97.4*	86.4
Czech Rep.	65.8	70.8	70.9	67.0	63.1	56.3	101.8	84.0
Hungary	66.3	68.6	68.7	67.6	63.7	56.2	102.0	83.1
Poland	64.7	69.8	71.2	69.6	63.7	54.1	107.6	77.7
Slovakia	64.2	70.8	72.2	70.7	65.7	53.3	110.1	75.4
Percentage of people outside of working age 65+								
EU 28	–	16.4	17.3	18.9	23.9	28.4	115.2*	150.26
Czech Rep.	12.5	14.0	14.9	17.8	22.2	28.3	142.4	158.9
Hungary	13.2	15.5	16.4	17.9	21.9	29.4	135.60	164.2
Poland	10.0	13.0	13.5	15.4	22.6	32.9	154.0	213.6
Slovakia	10.3	11.6	12.2	14.0	21.4	35.1	135.9	250.7

\* for the EU 28 – dynamic indicator (2015/2004)

Source: as in table 2.

A few important detailed conclusions can be drawn by analysing data from table 4. First, in the period between 1990 and 2004, a clear increase in the percentage of working-age people was observed in the Visegrad Group countries. However, the growth rate of this age group varied in the countries analysed. The biggest growth in working-age population was recorded in Slovakia (increase of 11.7%) and in Poland (increase of 7.8%), whereas the lowest one was in Hungary (increase of 0.7%) and in the Czech Republic (increase of 5.8%). Secondly, a different situation was observed between 2004 and 2015. There were clear differences in the dynamics of growth of the working-age population. Each of the countries analysed saw a decrease in the share of working-age population in the total population. Thirdly, trends are expected to continue with further shrinking of the potential labour force but with slightly different dynamics, based on the projection data the presented above. It can thus be concluded that the decrease in the growth rate of the working-age population has become especially evident in these countries since 2004. Direct causes of labour force ageing and a general decrease include, among other things, a decrease in fertility rate and a longer life expectancy; whereas indirect causes are migration processes, as post-accession migration

means, especially in Poland, not only outflow of adults but also a decline in births of a dozen or so thousands annually (e.g. – 37.5 thousand for 2011). On the other hand, for the receiving country migration means an increase in the number of births (more and more children of Polish mothers are born abroad). Thus, it has far-reaching consequences for an emigration country in terms of population processes (decline of the potential labour force), and even if part of the migrants return to their homeland in the future, the impact of EU expansion will be visible for a long time in the age structure of the population, especially in Poland.

### **Labour market and migration processes**

Analysis of relationships between the labour market and migration intensity can be considered in two ways: as the impact of migrations on the labour market and as the impact of the labour market on the scale and intensity of migrations. Following the earlier assumption, the analysis will be narrowed down to impacts of the effects of migrations on labour markets in individual countries of the Visegrad Group.

The downward trend in labour market participation of people aged 55 and over has been present for many years in European countries with a developed market economy, causing concern due to a predicted decrease in the number of working age people and the accelerated ageing of the labour force and the population. After 1989, similar changes have been observed in Central and Eastern European countries. According to KOTOWSKA (2005, p. 117–169) and LERIDON (2005, p. 68–74), various activities undertaken in the 1990s in an increasing number of countries looking for ways to increase labour market participation of older people at working age reflect how important it is for governments to reverse the early retirement trend. Also in the context of migration intensity, governments of the individual countries of the Visegrad Group have undertaken appropriate actions in this respect. In the face of the process of population ageing, the Czech government is attempting to attract especially qualified workers from developing countries. The country does not have any barriers to external labour migration with the exception of illegal migration. Labour migration is supported principally with regard to the future needs of the economy. Czech Government migration policy is relatively liberal and supports legal external immigration and the integration of immigrants. A state supported concept of immigrant integration was adopted in 1999 which emphasizes the integration of foreigners and the stabilization of migration flows. The aim of the migration policy of the Czech government during the economic crisis was to keep new immigration under control (slowdown or stop)

and to retain those labour migrants who had already been living long-term (over 1 year) in the Czech Republic (BRYCHTA 2013, p. 1, DRBOHLAV 2005, p. 1, HORAKOVA, 2000, p. 18–22)

As for Slovakia, the current demographic development shows that the Slovak labour market and the system of social security are significantly dependent on the inflow of human capital from abroad. Therefore in the upcoming years, the economic migration must be based on active and flexible control of receiving aliens who decide to come to that country. The economic migration control must resolutely react to the challenges brought by the global competition for talents and this especially through an active search and creation of preconditions for their arrival in Slovakia. Therefore the Slovak Republic will adopt policies aimed at an active support for economic migrants and employment of migrants from third countries in compliance with the needs of the national economy and labour market with an emphasis on receiving and employment of highly qualified employees, scientific workers, and other qualified migrants as necessary (The Government of the Slovak Republic Resolution No. 574. 2011).

As for Hungary, this country started to become a potential magnet for immigration in the 1990s, i.e. the period of transformation and democratic changes. However, the Hungarian immigration policy is incoherent. Under the policy, immigrants arriving from the European Union, those from outside it and those of Hungarian origin are subject to different treatment, with the latter having all privileges. Generally, the current government has an unfriendly attitude to the phenomenon of immigration of people of non-Hungarian origin, stating that an active pro-immigration policy following Western European models cannot be a remedy for the demographic crisis and the low birth rate. Instead, the government often emphasises an alternative need to pursue a strong family-friendly policy and “national solidarity of all Hungarians”. On the other hand, Hungary leads among European countries in terms of antidiscrimination laws. This shows that the Hungarian immigration policy has both weaknesses and strengths (KWIDZIŃSKI 2014). As for Poland, the country also undertook important activities in the area of migration policy, especially in the context of observed demographic tendencies. Due to the access to EU labour markets and the resulting post-accession mass migrations, the Polish migration policy faced completely new challenges, which include the necessity of increased protection of the interests of Polish citizens staying outside the country, supporting return migrations and maintaining contacts with Polish emigrants (the last emigration wave is mainly temporal mobility of young population with unspecified migration plans) as well as the necessity of filling the gap in the Polish labour market as a result of an increased wave of emigration from Poland (*Polityka migracyjna Polski – stan obecny i postulowane działania* 2012).

Table 5  
Selected characteristics of migration in the Visegrad Group countries

Country	Effects of migration	Migration type	Net migration	Selected causes
Czech Republic	in-flow of immigrants with high qualifications. Mitigation of population ageing effects	dominating economic migration	prevalence of immigrants – increased share of immigrant work force in employment	favourable situation on the labour market. Salary relation Economic situation Liberal migration policy Population policy. Dominant role of attracting factors
Hungary	in-flow of immigrants with different level of education. Selective outflow of highly qualified human capital. Filling the gap in work force in the different sectors of the economy. Mitigation of population ageing effects. Strengthening of the position of immigrants of Hungarian origin Improving the labour market situation and filling in shortages of work force	dominating economic migration Repatriation prevalence of immigrants of Hungarian origin Reemigrations	prevalence of immigrants – increased share of immigrated work force in employment	dominating role of administrative and political pull factors Lack of a coherent migration policy, partly connected with migration crisis Economic situation Salary relation
Poland	In-flow of immigrants to fill in shortages of workers on the labour market in the different sectors of the economy industry, construction, agriculture, medical services. Improving situation on the labour market. Selective outflow of human capital with varied level of skills and education Increasing emigration of medical staff	dominating economic migration, reemigrations	lack of balance – prevalence of emigrants Projected balance through increasing the share of immigrant work force	dominant role of pull factors. Economic situation Unfavourable situation on the labour market. Chronic surplus of labour supply. Salary relation Structural mismatches on the labour market Migration policy
Slovakia	in-flow of immigrants to mitigate effects of population ageing and fill in employee shortages in the different sectors of the economy, industry, agriculture Selective outflow of human capital with varied level of education	dominating economic migration Reemigrations to a lesser degree	approaching the balance Increasing share of immigrant work force	dominant role of pull factors. Economic situation Migration policy Salary relation

Source: own work.

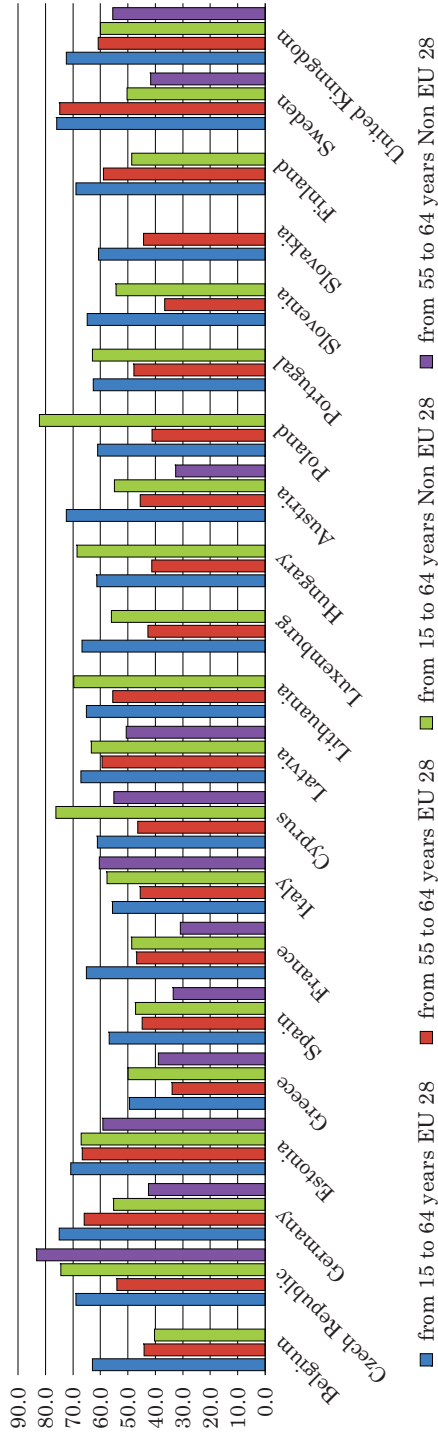


Fig. 2. Immigrant employment rate by age and origin in selected EU countries in 2014 [in %]

Source: as in table 2.

In the context of observed demographic tendencies, the main aim of a migration policy in the different countries from the Visegrad Group is, as mentioned earlier, to take actions to mitigate the effects of population ageing, among other things. Now let's look at the economic activity of immigrants in EU countries.

Analysing labour market participation rates for immigrants, several important detailed conclusions can be drawn. First, in the Visegrad Group countries employment rates for immigrants aged 15–64 from outside the EU were significantly higher than in Western European countries and Scandinavia. The reverse situation can be observed in Western European countries and Scandinavia. Employment rates for immigrants from EU countries were significantly higher in Western European and Scandinavian countries than in the Visegrad Group countries, except for the Czech Republic. It can be thus concluded that incoming foreigners are complementary to the local labour force. This situation is connected, among other things, with migration policies pursued in the Visegrad Group countries in connection with consequences of

Table 6  
Employment rate in the Visegrad Group countries between 2004–2015

Countries	Years			Dynamics of changes 2015/2004 2004 – 100
	2004	2009	2015	
	Employment rate in selected age of group			
15–24				
UE 28	35.6	34.8	35.0	98.3
Czech Rep.	27.7	26.5	28.4	102.5
Hungary	23.3	18.1	25.7	110.3
Poland	21.1	26.8	26.0	123.2
Slovakia	26.3	22.8	23.3	88.6
15–64				
UE 28	62.7	64.5	65.6	104.6
Czech Rep.	64.1	45.4	70.2	109.5
Hungary	56.6	55.0	63.9	112.9
Poland	51.4	59.3	62.9	122.4
Slovakia	56.7	60.2	62.7	110.6
55–64				
UE 28	40.4	45.9	53.3	131.9
Czech Rep.	42.5	46.8	55.3	130.1
Hungary	30.1	31.9	45.3	150.5
Poland	26.1	32.3	44.3	169.7
Slovakia	26.0	39.5	47.6	183.1

Source: as in table 2.

the process of population ageing. As for Western European and Scandinavian countries, immigrants from the EU have the best chances to find employment. Summing up the discussion above, it is impossible to clearly establish to what extent the migration policies of the different countries impact the improvement of their demographic situations, but undoubtedly the inflow of immigrants can only mitigate the effects of population ageing in these countries and fill in shortages of employees with specific qualifications. In the context of observed demographic tendencies, it is worth analysing the basic economic quantities characterising labour market.

In the first period of analysis, i.e. between 2004 and 2009, a decline in employment rates for the 15–24 age group was observed in all the countries of the Visegrad Group, except for Poland. For the 15–64 age group, a decline in employment was recorded in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The other countries saw an increase. Meanwhile, for the 55–64 age group, employment indicators recorded an increase in these countries. The reversal of unfavourable trends in changes in labour market participation, in particular for older people of working age, may have resulted, among other things, from pension system reforms and labour market reforms implemented in several EU countries (SCHERER 2008, p. 61, ZSUZSA 2013, p. 9) Changes of employment indicators were also connected, among other things, with the emergence of a global crisis, but also, indirectly with migrations. In the subsequent period, i.e. between 2009 and 2015, there was an increase in employment rates in all age groups, especially in the age group of 55+, which is very important from the perspective of an ageing labour force. The biggest growth was recorded in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, whereas the lowest growth was recorded in Hungary and Poland, where labour market participation rates, especially for the 55–64 age group, are among the lowest in the European Union. Now let's also look at the changes in unemployment rates for identified age groups.

The data in fig. 3 shows that the impact of migration on the unemployment rate can be observed in a short time horizon. Emigration of population, especially younger age groups, leads to a decrease in the unemployment rate in the short-term. This relationship is particularly visible in the period between 2004 and 2009, especially in Poland and Slovakia. Increased immigration to such countries as the Czech Republic and Hungary may lead to an increase in the unemployment rate. An example of this can be changes in the unemployment rate in the periods between 2009 and 2015 and between 2004 and 2009 in Hungary. Analysis of the 15–64 age group also shows some correlations. Emigration contributed to the fall in the unemployment rate, especially between 2004 and 2009 in Poland and Slovakia.

In the case of the Czech Republic, increased immigration did not cause an increase in the unemployment rate in the time periods analysed. Some



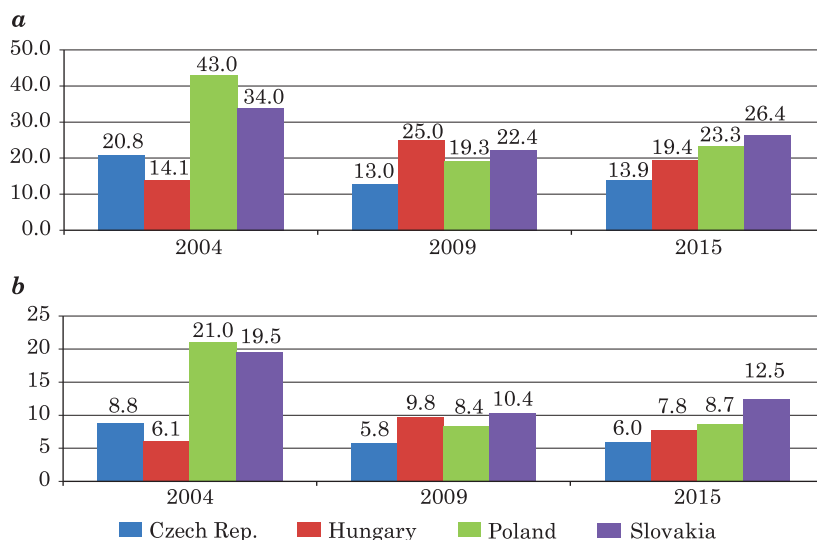


Fig. 3. Unemployment rate by age group in the Visegrad Group countries between 2004 and 2015:  
*a* – 15–24, *b* – 15–64

Source: as in table 2.

patterns can also be identified in the impact of the unemployment rate on migration intensity. Countries with relatively low unemployment rates see increased immigration, observed also in Poland and Slovakia, especially between 2009 and 2015. It should be stressed however that correlations between unemployment rate and migration intensity must be treated with caution. Based on the analyses conducted, it can be concluded that an in-flow of immigrants does not contribute significantly to an increase in the unemployment rate in a given country. Thus, the statement that the level of migration potential depends on the unemployment rate cannot be fully justified, especially in the longer time horizon, as in some countries a high unemployment rate (Italy) did not cause a sharp increase in emigration levels and immigration levels did not decrease. It can be thus concluded that what is important is not the situation in the labour market at a given time, but hope for its improvement in the near future (SITEK 2008, p. 108–111, KACZMARCZYK, OKÓLSKI 2008, p. 599–624). In a longer time horizon, demographic conditions are and will be an important premise for the migration of the labour force. They do not have a negative impact on the labour market, but rather fill in a gap in it.

## Conclusion

The discussion above shows that migration processes have a significant impact on labour markets in the Visegrad Group countries with varying intensity in the form of:

- impact on the age structure of the population, causing population ageing and as a consequence ageing and shrinking of the potential labour force,
- outflow of labour force, in particular the working-age mobile population, especially in Poland and Slovakia,
- in-flow of immigrants to all the Visegrad Group countries, especially in the Czech Republic and Hungary (bigger share of immigrants from outside the EU),
- in the context of the process of population ageing, there is an increase in labour market participation of the population belonging to older age groups of 55+ in all the countries analysed and higher employment rates for immigrants from outside the EU than e.g. in Western European and Scandinavian countries,
- analyses showed a short-term impact of migration processes on the unemployment rate,
- in the Visegrad Group countries, economic migrations dominate, with their causes being mainly the economic situation, the situation in the labour market and migration policy.

Summing up, population mobility is apart from birth rate one of the most important factors impacting the demographic situation of a given country and as a consequence the number of potential employees. In the face of a low birth rate and the related problem of the ageing of European populations, the role of international migration on the state and structure of the population is growing and will probably continue to grow.

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