

International Migration of Labor Force. Social, Economic and Demographic Implications

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Abstract

During the last years, the phenomenon of migration of labor force developed exceedingly. Starting from difficult situations like having no job, unemployment, having no place to live in, to professional performance and family reunification, Romanian people found a solution to all of these in migrating abroad.

International migration of labor force comes under different shapes and has at its origins several causes. However, the implications have a similar nature: implications of social, economic and demographic nature. As regards the social implications, they develop at the individual level, manifesting themselves by inclusion or exclusion in the destination country at family and community level. There are also economic and demographic implications that have specific directions in family, community and home country.

All these implications of migration have positive connotations on the one hand, by means of participation in improving the material situation of families and contribution to national economy, and negative on the other hand, both at the level of the individual who has suffered certain psychological and social changes, and at the level of family, where most of the times, separation between spouses and children lead to extreme situations. Not last, certain implications at the level of society occur, namely demographic implications where is being identified the decline and massive aging of population.

Keywords: *migration, labor force, implications, individual, family, society, integration, exclusion.*

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has been developing exceedingly during the last years, based on economic, social, political etc factors. Migration stands for an increasingly important component of contemporary society, stimulating factor of

market globalization, instrument of adjustment of imbalances on the regional/local labor markets. International migration for work is presently the most dynamic form of population movement.

The concept of migration reveals two sub-concepts, namely emigration and immigration. Inclusion in one or other of the categories is based on how the destination movement of the person is related to the home country.

Emigration has a permanent character, being associated with the receiving of citizenship of the host country, and therefore, with obeying specific regulations. "Emigration is the process of leaving the country of origin in order to settle in another country, so according to current definition, the final change of domicile."¹

Emigration is characterized by a relatively lower degree of economic development with a higher proportion of young people and working age population from the total population, as a result of a long period of high birth rates, lack of opportunities to use available labor force at the national level, the absence of economic investment efforts and of creation of new jobs. Migration is quite selective in what concerns certain aspects such as age, marital status, sex, education, etc. In this sense, adults are the ones who emigrate constantly, and children and the elderly migrate more rarely.

A second sub-concept is immigration. The term "immigration" is defined each international migratory movement, individual or mass-related, due to economic reasons, or family, work, study reasons or dictated by various situations with a negative impact – natural disasters, persecution, conflict, revolutionary events. "Immigration is the process of entry and settlement within a country, other than the origin country or previous adoptive country."²

Beside the two sub-concepts, another concept occurs, which highlights better the phenomenon of migration, the movement of labor force respectively.

Labor force movement is a narrower concept and represents the movement of people of working age, who have the age and physical condition necessary to perform various types of work in the international area. Every citizen of the country, according to the Constitution of Romania, has the right to free movement within the country and abroad, the guaranteed right to establish his residence in any locality in the country, to emigrate and to return in the country at any time. Exercising this right seeks protection of economic and social values, of fundamental rights and freedoms and good relations between countries. Also,

¹ Valentina Vasile and Gheorghe Zaman (coord.), *Migrația forței de muncă și dezvoltarea durabilă a României* (Labor Force Migration and Romanian Sustainable Development), Expert Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 108.

² *Ibidem.*

exercising this right may be conditioned in certain situations, in order to prevent certain risks. “The right to free movement should not be understood in an absolute sense. The state may adopt a series of measures in order to restrict the conditions clearly set by this right, as it can enforce one to obey a number of conditions when leaving the country.”³

International movement of labor force is actually the movement of labor force across borders in economic activities, due to technical and scientific cooperation on the international level. Labor force movement promotes the dissemination of technical knowledge and modern methods of work among the States affected by migration. Also, within the European Union, free movement of persons determines the achievement of a European way of thinking. “In theory, free movement of labor force, without interventions from the country of origin or the host country, has positive effects, balancing benefits.”⁴

Referring to a national territory, a distinction is being made between internal migration, where the movement is within this country and external or international migration. International migration is a complex global phenomenon that has great influence on relations between states and, to a certain extent, is influenced by the policies embodied in specific rules in relation to migration and especially to immigration. International migration today takes place under several major forms: labor force migration, migration of family members of workers already settled abroad, migration forced by natural disasters, by political or religious persecution, wars, etc.

“International migration of work force means, in general, movements of single people or groups, families across national borders, in the hope of finding better living conditions.”⁵ Basically, international migration of labor force is the process of labor force crossing from one country to another, with the purpose of finding employment abroad; later on the migrants are to be remunerated by individuals, legal persons or other bodies for whom they carry out those activities. One feature of international migration of labor force is that it is closely linked to international capital flows. The trend of concentration of capital in service in

³ Monica Șerban and Melinda Stoica, *Politici și instituții în migrația internațională: migrație pentru muncă din România 1990-2006* (Politics and Institutions in international migration: Work Migration in Romania 1990-2006), Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 14.

⁴ Golinowska Stanisława, *Economic Migration. Free Movement of Labor Force and Regulation*, Poland, 2002.

⁵ Alexandru Albu and Ion Roșu Hamzescu, *Migrația internațională a forței de muncă* (International Migration of Labor Force), Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 11.

developed countries causes a part of labor force from underdeveloped countries and developing countries to migrate in these countries. Related to the international migration of labor force particularly dramatic events take place, caused not only by changing the country of origin, but in most situations language, customs, cultural heritage, friends and concerns, etc.

International migration, from the viewpoint of the duration of movement, can be classified as long-term migration, where migrants remain in the country of migration for a longer period of time, temporary migration, where migrants seek work and remain for a short period time (1-2 years) and seasonal migration, where migrants move regularly to work, between the home country and the country of emigration. Another type of classification of international migration, according to the same criterion, is final migration, where migrants settle permanently and legally in the country of migration and circular migration, a migration of a “go-come” type, between the village or city in Romania and a foreign country.

International circular migration has currently in Romania the status of social innovation. A number of relatively new behavioral patterns, in given community and regional contexts, come to be diffused as social innovation. “Circular migration, unlike the final one, involves an ambivalent valorization, both positive and negative for the same place of departure or arrival, of permanent residence or temporary residence. The locality of permanent domicile related to the circular migration is dominant in Romania, positively valued in terms of socio-cultural aspect and negatively valued in terms of economic aspect.”⁶

Dumitru Sandu sees in the circular migration a life strategy, which considers not so much an action, but a kind of perspective on the action, this perspective being found in the sustainable report between the goals taken and the means to reach them. A great majority of immigrants have transformed this type of “go-come” migration, a fashion and lifestyle, a way to earn a living and improve economic and social situation, a way to live together and relate to others. Many of them come to depend on this lifestyle, to indulge in living like this, finding it increasingly difficult to return to the lifestyle they had before emigrating.

International migration, this complex phenomenon of our days, has been suffering various modifications. This type of migration, for most immigrants, has become a way of life, so that those who were working abroad tend to seek new opportunities and possibilities for leaving again.

⁶ Dumitru Sandu, “Migrația circulatorie ca strategie de viață” (Circulatory migration as Life Strategy), in *Sociologie Românească*, no. 2, Bucharest, 2000, p. 9.

International migration of labor force

Forms of Migration

International migration presently takes place under several forms:

- Migration of ethnic minorities to countries of origin;
- Migration of labor force;
- Family migration (migration of families of previously migrated workers) under the family reunification law as guaranteed by international law;
- Forced migration, caused by natural disasters, political or religious persecution, wars, etc.
- Moreover, these types of migration can also be classified according to the following criteria:
 - Lawfulness: legal (that is achieved through compliance with given norms) and illegal (achieved by violation of rules, making it difficult to assess);
 - Motivation: voluntary and involuntary, forced;
 - Time spent in the country of destination: temporary, long-term, permanent.
 - Other types of international migration are:
 - Migration based on ethnicity. Theoretically, the state has the right to decide which one of the immigrants enters and receives right of residence in its territory;
 - Postcolonial migration, referring to colonizing countries that have established strict rules for immigrants from former colonies;
 - Economic migration, which is one of the most common forms in recent decades. It is motivated by differences between countries regarding access to resources and jobs, as well as crisis of certain specialties. Thus, many developed countries have “recruited” immigrants assiduously and continue to encourage highly skilled labor force migration from underdeveloped countries;
 - Asylum seekers and refugees, which is the second biggest group of legal immigrants, after the one of labor force. As family migration, this category is protected by international law; those people have the right to remain in a State, even if they are not national citizens of that state, only if their only alternative is to return to a place where they fear of inhuman or degrading treatment or sanctions on well defined bases.

International migrants are divided into two main categories: those who migrate for pleasure and forced migrants.

“The first group consists of migrants who go abroad to work, study, and find there their family, or for other personal problems. The second group includes many people who leave the country to escape persecution, conflict, repression,

natural disasters or disasters caused by people, damages to the environment or other circumstances that endanger the life, liberty and means of survival.”⁷

Although a grouping of international migrants has been done, still it is very difficult to distinguish between migrants who leave voluntarily and those that leave in a forced manner. The first ones may feel compelled to seek another home, because they have problems at home; forced migrants may choose a particular place of refuge, taking into consideration family or community ties or of economic opportunity. Migrants that leave voluntarily may consider themselves injured by the evolution of situations in their home country, and given that return is impossible, this makes them become forced migrants.

Referring to the present situation, and focusing on migrants that go to work abroad, we can say that although most of them seem happy to migrate, a significant part of them are constrained by the economic situation of their country of origin, by the difficult situations they face in the country, seeking thus solutions in this migration for employment abroad. All these have effects and implications at familial, economical and demographical level.

Causes, effects and implications of labor force migration

The general causes of migratory movements are manifold. They are attributed to overpopulation processes taking place in a huge range of so called secondary conditions, which reside in the economic, cultural, and health situation. When the natural growth of population is not followed by a corresponding increase in the level of labor use, in the growth of income, this phenomenon of migration for work can occur.

“Underlying causes of international migration of labor force stand whether on the economic conditions of that country, or on the general conditions of political, religious, national, geographical or other nature.”⁸

The economic factor has always been considered the main cause of emigration. Lately this simplified view has been replaced by the acceptance of the idea of a plurality of factors, the most frequently cited in professional studies being: demographic pressure, deterioration of living conditions, political instability, environmental issues, cultural factors and influence of communication environments.

⁷ Octavian Floricel, *Migrația internațională Cauze, efecte, tendințe* (International Migration. Causes, Effects, Tendency), Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2003, p. 10.

⁸ A. Albu and H. Roșu, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

If we dwell on the economic factor, we can mention one of the major causes of population migration for employment, namely poverty.

“Poverty is a state of permanent lack of resources necessary to ensure a decent lifestyle considered acceptable in a given collectivity.”⁹

In what concerns the concept of poverty, the emphasis is on the lack of resources. It’s about lack of economic resources, as a general resource essential for the most activities of everyone’s life. Being poor is equivalent to being deprived of economic and material resources.

The level of resources that settle the boundaries of poverty is the one that stops the implementation of a lifestyle considered to be acceptable to the community. Poverty is thus not simply a particular lifestyle, lower than the one considered acceptable by most of the community members, but the character of such a lifestyle, induced by lack of resources. Poverty occurs due to the lack in resources necessary to achieve a lifestyle considered normal by society, but also by a certain person.

“Poverty affects political values, inducing if not a sense of discouragement, then at least the state of indifference to community issues and decisions concerning it. Lack of income or their scarcity affects climate and family relations, position in society, cultural and educational status of people, and between ethnic groups a competition occurs for domination of resources.”¹⁰

Thus, a large proportion of the population of the country, lacking the resources necessary for decent living, given this context of poverty, they sought a solution for getting out of the crisis, thus migrating to work abroad.

Also, population migration has effects and consequences.

Current sociological theory examines the effects of migration from the perspective of three areas: the effects of migration on countries of origin, on the destination country’s population and on the migrants themselves. We also believe it appropriate to investigate small communities abandoned by immigrants, namely those in which migrants come.

Economic effects of international migrations depend largely on the participation of migrants in the economy of the destination country. When they have a job, they generally contribute to the national economy.

⁹ Zamfir Elena and Zamfir Cătălin (coord.), *Politici sociale. România în context european* (Social Politics. Romania in European Context), Alternative Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 34.

¹⁰ M. Ciobanu-Băcanu, “O perspectivă socio-culturală asupra tranziției în România” (An socio-cultural perspective on Transition in Romania), in *Sociologia Românească* (Romanian Sociology), Nr.2/1993, Academiei Române Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993.

“The gains of national economy come from several sources. On the production plan, immigration allows the use of indigenous workers in a more productive way, by specializing them in a production of goods for which they are relatively more efficient. Specialization in consumption is also an attribute of profit.”¹¹

Demographically, international migration is an important part of population growth or decline during the coming decades. This phenomenon takes place in two ways: firstly migrants join the base population; then those who come from developing countries generally have higher fertility rates. Thus, demographically, the departure country suffers from this point of view.

We can also mention some of the effects and consequences on the family level of a family members leaving abroad. On one hand it helps to maintain family welfare and on the other hand children and the other remaining member are affected from the socio-emotional and educational perspective. It has been observed a role loading in such families, and one of the most frequent consequences of a family member’s migration abroad is the phenomenon of divorce.

Thus we could say that international labor migration can have positive effects on economic side, but are not always the same positive effects on social and family side.

Integration and exclusion of migrants working abroad

Migration is accompanied by numerous contradictions, which manifest themselves with varying intensity from country to country and from period to period.

One of the contradictions is between integration and exclusion.

A great number of immigrants are integrated into the new society, but others cannot adapt and hardly withstand in a world they consider hostile. The most difficult period is that of integration in that society, to acquire the habits, culture, laws, to learn the language and to accept certain stereotypes and desires of people from the country of migration. Not always those who migrate are also accepted, but they confront many times with the phenomenon of social exclusion.

The real problem is the management of this process of labor force migration, ensuring achievement of objectives such as meeting the requirements of the labor market in European countries, areas where major imbalances appear, both at quantitative and qualitative level. When demand of labor is unmet, a modified

¹¹ Octavian Floricel, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

circuit is being created, between collapsed economy, the use of temporary migrants and creation of conditions for the arrival of other migrants.

Professionals with high education should benefit from a preferential way of emigration by satisfying requirements for the integration of immigrants, from family reunification to a policy adequate for work, school and home, and finally to an effective policy for obtaining residence and citizenship. “The marginalization of immigrants and the creation of ghettos is an unjustified punishment, it is contrary to the nature of European democracy and may become a threat to a country’s democratic life. Massive influx of relatives may create conflicts from the moment when relatives do not meet professional requirements specific to the labor market.”¹²

Difficulty of integration consists in the fact that whatever the model be, the integration process has quite different rhythms and intensities: integration in work is sufficiently rapid and appropriate, while for social, cultural and psychological integration, a longer period time is needed.

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¹² Octavian Floricel, *Migrația și criminalitatea* (Migration and Criminality), Bibliotheca Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2006, p. 40.

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