

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion of Immigrants and Refugees in Hungary

The historical evolution of minorities and migration in Hungary

Hungary was established as an independent state by the Treaty of Trianon a peace agreement between the Allies and the Kingdom of Hungary that ended World War I, in 1920. The treaty also defined the new borders of Hungary, which thus lost more than 2/3 of its territory, and more than half of its population. These "lost" areas possessed a majority of non-Hungarian population, but a considerable number of Hungarians were also left outside the border under a foreign authority (around 30%)⁷. Within the old borders numerous ethnic minorities were present: 16% Romanians, 10% Slovaks, 10% Germans, 2,5% Ruthenians, 2,5% Serbs and 8% others. Although the 1910 census, which produced a record of these minorities was criticised, because native people were classified as such on the basis of language and religion, it provided proof of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

The peace treaty had numerous political, economic, social consequences. After the border changes, the percentage and number of non-Hungarians declined sharply. According to the 1920 census, 10% of the population belonged to a minority group, (mostly Germans, but also Slovaks, Croatians, Romanians, Serbians, Slovenians). In the next decade, the percentage -and absolute numbers- of all non-Hungarian nationals decreased even further, reaching 8% in 1930 and 7% in 1940.

Thus, Hungary became quite a homogenous nation after World War I and the peace treaty. After World War II, during the communist regime, the borders of Hungary were closed and there was not an issue of migration in prac-

tical terms. After decades of introspection, the borders of Hungary were opened after 1990, and a new period of migration was experienced in the country. The immigration processes after the democratic transition can be divided into four periods or waves. The first wave was the immigration of Hungarians from Romania, who spoke the same language, and had the same culture and religion. The second wave was triggered by the Balkan war, but most of the refugees returned to their countries after the war. The third wave consisted of economic immigrants from, mainly, western European countries. The fourth wave can be referred to as "real" migration, motivated by the prospect of a better life, escaping from wars or political harassment. However, Hungary basically remained a homogenous nation, as ethnic minorities still form a fraction of 7-8% of the country's population, according to the last census of 2011, with the biggest minority group being Roma, and Germans being the second.

The integration process and the role of NGOs

The case studies that follow this chapter present two different instances of migrants' relations with the host communities. The conclusions from these instances are that the attitudes of the host communities are of vital importance for the integration of the newcomers, as well as the local inhabitants' perception of the benefits the newcomers bring to the community. The intention of the migrants to settle to the host community for good is a significant factor for their integration, but alone it is not enough. The sharing of the local life and the use of local facilities, especially education, seem to be an important factor.

Therefore, it is important to examine how the relationship between the newcomers and the local residents develops, whether the newcomers want to be integrated in the local

⁷ Kocsis – Kocsis-Hodosi, 1998.

society and how such integration can take place, so that the community's cohesion is maintained and strengthened. Being integrated in a local society means more than just knowing each other's values and adapting to the community's norms: it means establishing interaction, cooperation, trust and solidarity between the indigenous members of the community and the newcomers.

When integration is achieved, the newcomer wins a place in the community and its future becomes important for the newcomer. The newcomers take part in the life of the community and become included in it. We can also talk in this case about empathy with the community and the formulation of local identity. This process cannot be realised within a short period; developing a local identity can take many years. Factors that determine this process are the will to be integrated from the side of the newcomers, and the readiness to include them in the community from the side of local residents. There are many aspects that can influence the social integration process and make it faster or slower, such as:

- the size of the local community (population)
- the ratio of immigrants vis-a-vis the local population
- the "social distance" between immigrants and locals
- the presence of family relations and friends of immigrants
- the structure of the local community
- the use of the social infrastructure and services of the community by the immigrants (education, health services, etc.)
- the reticence or openness of the local community
- the differences in culture, languages, ethnicity
- the existence of former stereotypes and preconceptions among the members of the local community.

Local NGOs can play a particular role in the identity-building and integration process, as a community-organising force, capable of bringing together people who share common values, aims and goals. They can also play a significant role in building the civil society, by mobilising and activating people; by strengthening the ties amongst the community members, emphasising civic responsibility, solidarity and trust.

To encourage integration, local NGOs usually embark in two types of activities:

- Firstly, they organise cultural events and social activities which mobilise and bring together the members of the community (locals and newcomers too). These activities help to raise the awareness of the community members, regarding the responsibilities they all have to share; and give the community space to meet, to get to know each other, build trust, and formulate relations and cooperation.
- Secondly, NGOs can provide a starting point for identity building. Inviting newcomers to join them as members or volunteers can strengthen social bonding between the old and new members of the community and create an opportunity for becoming involved in issues that concern the community.⁸

⁸ *Nárai, 2012.*

Case Study 2.3.1:

A particular example: the extended suburban zone of Bratislava in Hungary

The existence of urban agglomeration zones near big cities, and the suburbanisation process is not a new phenomenon. However, it is rare for a large city's agglomeration zone to cross a border as well. In this example, we are going to examine the case of the capital city of Slovakia, Bratislava, the agglomeration zone of which crosses the Hungarian-Slovak border. As a consequence, many Slovaks have settled in Hungarian villages and smaller cities, being literally immigrants. This case study focuses on how the Slovaks (as incoming immigrants) have (or have not) been integrated in the life of the Hungarian settlements⁹.

The suburbanization of Bratislava started in the late 1990s, but the nearby Hungarian settlements only became a migration target after 2004, when the two countries joined the EU, and the borders between the countries opened. Most migrants moved to Hungarian settlements during the years 2007-2009. The main motivation why Slovaks chose these settlements is very simple: the reasonable, more affordable prices of real estate (mainly family houses), and the cheaper life, as well as the attractive environment and the proximity to nature.

The results of a survey carried out in 2010 in the cross-border zone of Bratislava's urban sprawl appear below.

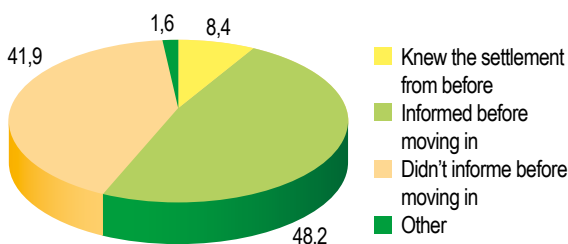


Figure 1: Inquiries made by the newcomers about their new place of residence,

Source: Nárai, 2012

The figure above shows limited knowledge of the migrants about their new place of residence, thus refuting a common belief that a decision to move to another country is based on conscious and planned decisions. The majority of the newcomers are Slovak, and half of them, who moved to Hungary, did not even speak the language. However the immigrants did not see the language as an obstacle, and about 60%

did not state any communication problems. It is also interesting to note how they felt about their integration in the local communities, and the reaction of the host community: 80% stated that they were positively received in their new environment, and only 5% had negative experiences in this regard. 13% of the newcomers do not have any contacts with the local residents. (Figure 2)

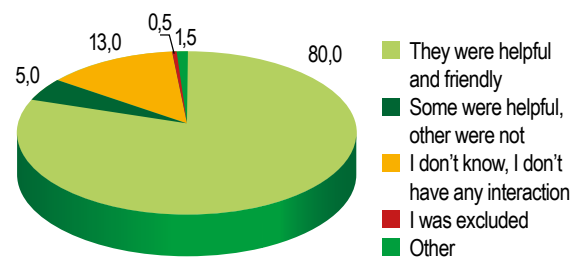


Figure 2: The reaction of local inhabitants

Source: Nárai, 2012

According to the opinions of mayors of the host settlements, most immigrants do not really want to be integrated. Some of them, who enrolled their children in the Hungarian nursery or school system, have made the first big step towards integration. However, most of them still go to work in Bratislava, and take their children to Slovak educational institutions, or use the Slovak healthcare system.

The above show that the integration process has been partially successful. Those who still work and use the services of Bratislava/Slovakia, do not really take part in the life of their new community. Those who use the local school system, have made a significant step towards integration. However, it also needs to be stressed that, for the integration process to show results, several years are needed.

⁹ This example is based on the study of Márta Nárai: *Inclusion – Social integration of newcomers settling in suburban settlements*, 2012. Original title: "Beilleszkedés, befogadás – A szuburbán településekre beköltözők társadalmi integrációja".

Case Study 2.3.2:***A refugee centre in Hungary – an example of lack of trust from the local community***

Since the emergence of the European refugee crisis, Hungary has had to face a large flow of immigrants. Although, in most cases, the immigrants do not want to stay in Hungary, the country had to prepare for and handle the situation. As thousands of people arrived to Hungary, waiting for the onward journey to Western Europe (mainly to Germany or Sweden), the government designated “transit zones” at the big railway stations in Budapest, as well as established 12 refugee centres. One of the refugee centres is in Vámoszabadi. The following case study is based on an interview made with the mayor of the settlement.

The village is located in the suburban zone of Győr, and lies close to the Slovak border. The village currently has 1600 inhabitants, and during the last 20 years the population has grown three-fold. There was a military camp outside the village used by border guards before 1990, but after the democratic transition and the opening of the borders it was abandoned. Five years ago, the Ministry of the Interior decided to establish a refugee camp in the village using this building. Before making the decision, there was no communication between the ministry and the local government or the citizens. Demonstrations started against the refugee camp: the mayor collected 1300 signatures, and protested against the camp. Despite all these actions, the camp opened five years ago.

The refugee camp can host 216 people. However, it has become overcrowded, and nowadays there are more than 700 people living in the camp. The centre is open, and refugees can move without any restrictions. The refugees arriving to Vámoszabadi do not want to stay in Hungary, and generally they stay in the camp for 3-5 days. As a consequence, they do not want to be integrated in the community. The local residents constantly protest against the camp, and they do not want the centre and the refugees in their neighbourhood. They do not want any communication or any connection with the refugees and they also are afraid of them. The local inhabitants are mainly afraid of unknown diseases and they are worried for their children.

As the mayor of the village declared, the local government does not build any connections with the refugees, although they do feel



sympathy for them, especially for the families. There are several civil organisations operating in the village. However, they have never looked for any opportunities to cooperate. The situation can be described by the lack of confidence, from both sides, and this prevents any kind of approach or integration process.

Regarding the operation of the refugee camp, one negative and several positive outcomes can be established from the viewpoint of the village. It is a negative fact that community transport is overcrowded due to the many people living in the camp. Although, the number of crimes, burglaries, and robberies did not increase in the examined period, the mayor sees the growth of the refugees' number as a potential threat. Positive outcomes also occurred for the village: the police station was strengthened, a security camera system was installed, and the village received more financial support.

There is another side to the integration, as the mayor of the village said: “we are an inclusive community. Several Ukrainians, Slovaks live in our village, who have been integrated in the community, and they also participate in the events organised by the village. They speak Hungarian, and some of them are members of civil organisations. They live here, they have their job and their home here.”

As the case study of Vámoszabadi shows, the lack of confidence between the immigrants and the local community can be the main obstacle of the integration process. As long as the local society is not open, there are very little opportunities for communication between the two groups. The confidence should be increased, and rural civil organisations could play a decisive role in this regard.