

Migration cycles and transitions in South-East Europe: from emigration to immigration countries?

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International migration flows from and to South-East European countries have undergone in recent years a number of changes, both in intensities as well as directions. While this development can be seen in light of the gradual accession and integration into the greater European economic space and a common area of free movement, it seems relevant to place these developments also in a longer-term perspective. It is in this context that the paper seeks to look at migration processes in six South-East European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Slovakia), comparing them with trends and developments in Austria and Italy, not only in a short-term (recent rounds of EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 and the onset of the economic and financial crisis in 2008) but also medium (fall of the Iron Curtain) and longer-term perspective reaching back to the 1950s. As conceptual understanding, the model of migration cycles developed by Fassmann (2009) that describes the transition from countries of emigration to countries of immigration by various stages is employed. Within this framework, historical and recent socio-demographic developments are considered in this heterogeneous region. The paper will however also refer to other conceptual approaches such as the linkage of migration and macro-structural changes as related to global and regional positions of countries as possible interpretative frameworks for migration in the region. The quantitative part of the analysis is not restricted to migration stocks and net migration rates, but will also take into account the developments of in-flows and out-flows separately (based on new global migration estimates by Abel and Sander, 2013). The findings of the analysis will contribute new insights on changing migration patterns and trends in six South-East European countries (and Austria and Italy) and will facilitate the assessment of these changes in a demographic, economic and political context.