

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS AT THE FAMILY LEVEL

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Abstract: *Migration is an important topic worldwide, representing an important part of a broad transformation that the world economy and society are currently experiencing. It must be understood as part of a process of social transformation that concerns economic, social, political, legislative, demographic conditions, but also actions designed to facilitate the correct understanding of what a migrant represents. A contemporary challenge is generated by the misperception of the natives regarding migrants and their families. In Romania, the phenomenon of immigration has started to be more and more known with the entry into our society of a considerable number of immigrants. The aim of this study is to analyse specific aspects of migrant status and to highlight the implications of migration on the family. We used quantitative methods, especially secondary data analysis. We found that immigrants are misperceived for reasons such as: fear, misinformation, cultural differences, language spoken, and the family undergoes major changes being directly involved in international migration.*

Keywords: migration, international, immigrant, emigrant, family

1. Introduction

Migration is a contemporary reality that continues to be a topic of interest due to the challenges it poses at national, European or global level. It should be a common social phenomenon that people perceive as part of their daily lives. Globalization processes, technological progress, diversification of communication technologies, and the evolution of the economy influence the increase in migration, which worldwide reaches more than 3% of the world's population (IOM, 2022). Seen as a phenomenon, we see that "Migration is a phenomenon in the same sense in which the events of death and birth, for example, by aggregation define the phenomena of mortality and fertility, respectively" (Otovescu, 2016; Sandu, 1984).

The term migrant brings to the fore an angry reality because it is not fully understood and continues to arouse great controversy. So, most often people see the migrant as a person who leaves the country where he or she was born, a refugee, a person looking for a job, a poor person, a person who comes from a developing country or a person who crosses the Mediterranean in a boat. The international media today promotes the idea that migration is always at high levels and is increasing at a rapid pace. Often, the metaphors used by them "a tsunami of people, waves of people" have the role of creating a threatening image of migration, perceived as such by the population around the world. The migrant is not just that, but much more. In general, people see the term migrant as designating a bad person, without qualities and who wants something that is not due to him. In the context of migration involving the crossing of a border, we speak of international migration. In this case, migration involves both the term "migrant" and "immigrant".

The European Commission (2023) establishes that "international migration" means "the event by which a person establishes his habitual residence in the territory of a Member State or a third country, after having previously had his habitual residence in another Member State or in a third country; 'immigrant' means a person who has been subject to international migration during the reference period in order to establish his or her new habitual residence in the reporting country; 'emigrant' means a person who has been subject to international migration during the reference period in order to establish his or her new habitual residence outside the reporting country, who previously had his or her habitual residence in the reporting country. The disappearance of the individual for a certain period of time generates effects that allow a certain type of approach, "In approaching the effects of international migration, the greatest difficulty starts from the current complexity of the phenomenon, given by the multitude of forms and characteristics that are associated with them and by their accentuated dynamics" (Constantinescu, 2003a). The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) defines a migrant as "any person who moves or has moved across an international border or within a state, outside the place

of habitual residence regardless of the person's legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, what are the causes of the displacement, what is the duration of stay".

2. Problem statement

Migration must be seen as a normal phenomenon through which migrants from all corners of the world exercise a human right (for more details see Otovescu-Frăsie, Motoi, Păsătoiu, Otovescu, 2010). Each of us knows at least one story of a migrant either among close friends or between acquaintances or distant relatives. To see the migrant as a normal person, his voice must be heard. In support of this, IOM has launched a campaign called "I am a migrant" that shows the stories of several migrants from all over the world. The University of Maastricht has joined this initiative by creating the blog "Stories about migrants".

The challenges felt by the natives in relation to immigrants start from a negative vision, either from certain personal frustrations, or from the lack of adequate information or from the major differences "that exist between the countries of the contemporary world, in terms of the level of efficiency of economic activity and material endowment" (Otovescu, 2006). This study aims to demonstrate that immigrants need to be perceived correctly in order to allow them to use their potential in a positive way, beneficial to both themselves and their families, and to the prosperity of the host society.

3. Research Questions

A significant question related to people's misconception of immigrants, is whether poverty is the main cause of migration, or there are many more important causes for people's migration. It must be taken into account in discussions about immigrants that they are first and foremost people and depending on the desire of each of them, we can talk about voluntary migration (family, education, retirement, job change or environmental causes, maybe lifestyle) and forced migration (conflict, violence, war, persecution). Taking into account the way the International Organization for Migration defines it, the migration phenomenon – "the movement of a person or a group of people, either crossing an international border or within a state. It is a movement of the population, regardless of size, composition or causes; includes the migration of refugees, displaced populations, people migrating for economic reasons or for other purposes, including family reunification" - the question arises whether the voice of immigrants is sufficiently heard or the channels that transmit it are sufficiently promoted.

4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to highlight the fact that the people involved in the immigration process must be assimilated as a contemporary reality, and the impact generated by their immigration is manifested, especially at the family level. Whether we are talking about the families in the immigrants' country of origin or about the families that assimilate them in the host country (employers or newly formed families), economic, social, cultural, demographic changes are noticeable at their level.

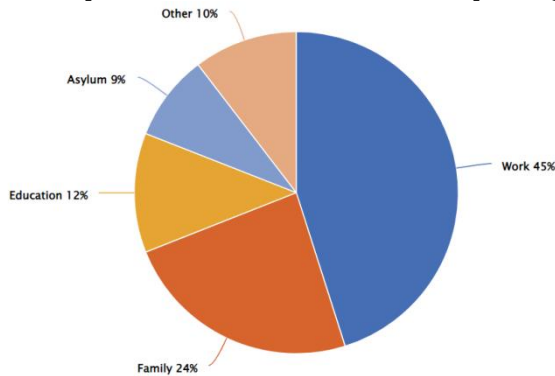
5. Research methods

The research undertaken in this project is largely quantitative in nature and highlights the main reasons for immigrants and the implications of this immigration approach on the family. The research was based on secondary analysis, which "applies directly to the quantified data that are already collected" (Constantinescu, 2003a) and made available to researchers by the European Commission, the Ministry of National Education, the Index of Immigrant Integration in Romania, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, articles, newspapers and specialized magazines. The relations between immigrants and the family in the modern era have a complex structure due to the change in relations between generations, the reorganization of the dimensions and structures of the family. The European Commission (2023) defines the term "family" as "a group of two or more people living in the same household and who are related by filiation or by marriage, registered partnership or non-marital union". The family is also involved in international travel for work purposes referred to in the definition of international migration - "movements of individuals or groups, families outside national borders, in the hope of better living conditions" (Albu, Roșu-Hamzescu, 1987).

5. Immigrants and the family

Although it may seem surprising, family is one of the main motivations of immigrants, whether it is to follow a family member who works abroad, or we are talking about the immigration of young people to form a family (migration for love), family being the second big reason why people migrate nowadays

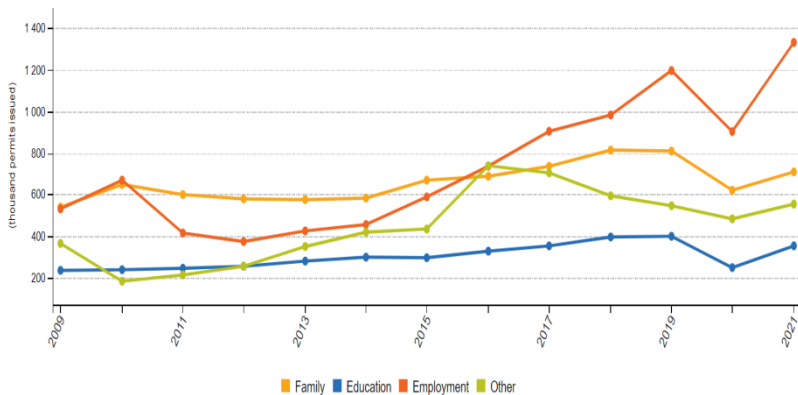
Figure 1. All residence permits valid at the end of 2021, depending on the reason



Source: Eurostat

Immigrants' tendency to consider work as their primary purpose has fluctuated over time, but since 2009, it has seen a continuous increase, as can be seen in Figure 2, compared to immigration for family reunification, education or other reasons.

Figure 2. Number of first residence permits issued by reason, EU, 2009- 2021



Source: Eurostat

A residence permit is „an authorisation issued by the competent national authority allowing a national of a non-member (non-EU) country (also known as a third country national) to stay for at least three months on its territory. Data on residence permits are collected together with information on the reasons for issuing such permits. The main reasons include: employment, family reunification and education, with a residual category for other 'reasons'”.

A hundred years after the mention among the first migration laws (E.G. Ravenstein 1889) that distance departure is made by married men, there is a change in this law in the sense that there is more and more talk about an international movement of women (migration after 1989). The westward movement of women to care for the elderly is a current example of international migration of women for work. Another example is the migration of caregivers, i.e. those women who migrate to take care of other women's children (especially from the Philippines). This has a worrying effect on their families. In this context, it is interesting what happens to children whose mothers migrate. Here we can think of a negative effect on the family and on the dynamics of relationships. An eloquent example of international migration of women is also provided by Professor Stephen Castles (1998), the founder of the International Institute for Migration. In his research, he brings to the fore North Korea where the government has implemented

a program to help farmers through which they are offered subsidies for organizing trips for marriage purposes. Farmers use these subsidies within agencies that offer them trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, Kazakhstan to find a wife. Women who want a better life, for themselves and their families, agree to marry Korean farmers.

Family, the main reason for immigrants to the UK, has led to immigration of half a million people. "In 2022, approximately 136,000 visas were issued to people in the care of foreign students, up from 16,000 in 2019, according to government figures" (Bratu, 2023). This created discontent, and the government limited visas for students. After the beginning of the recession of 1973, an attempt was made in Germany to stop the immigration phenomenon, but only the migratory flow was changed, with migrants for work attracting migrants for family reunification, thus increasing the number of the migrant population.

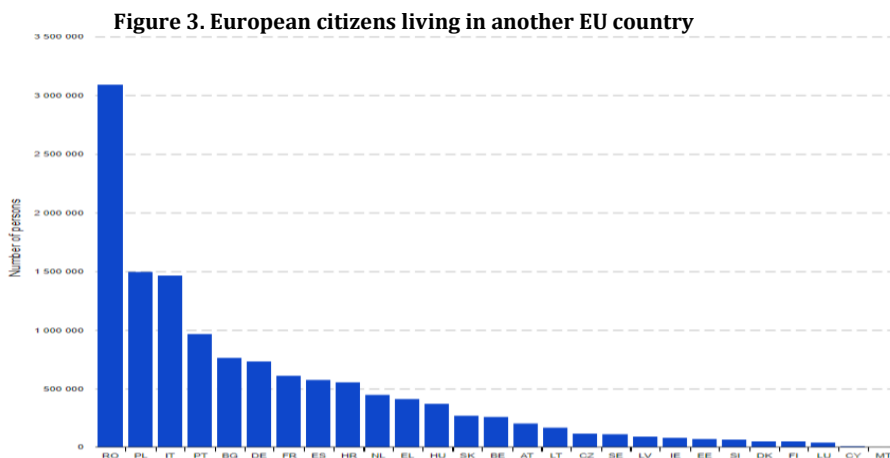
A research conducted in Romania on the influence that the family's departure to work abroad has on children's school performance shows that most subjects understand the need for parents to leave to work abroad and consider that they have a duty to maintain the level of school performance. This is proven by 60% of research participants who say they perform as well as they did before their parents left. 30% of respondents say they have better results after their parents leave abroad, but there is also a percentage of 10% who have registered a regression in school results, the departure of parents destabilizing them emotionally (Constantinescu & Constantinescu, 2008).

7. Findings

The family is, in the theories of the new migration economy (NEM), the group that designs the risk management strategy, because leaving involves providing resources for the home.

"As a connexion between individual and society, between public space and private space, family is the place where different tensions are tendencies of society, met"(Constantinescu & Constantinescu, 2008).

A phenomenon similar to the one in Germany is currently happening in Romania, with immigrants who initially came for work attracting members of their families, either for family reunification or for studies. Although this country is the first in the top of EU countries with a predominantly emigrant population (Eurostat, 2023), it tends to change its status, proving a great capacity to attract especially citizens from outside the European Union, but also for those from the EU.

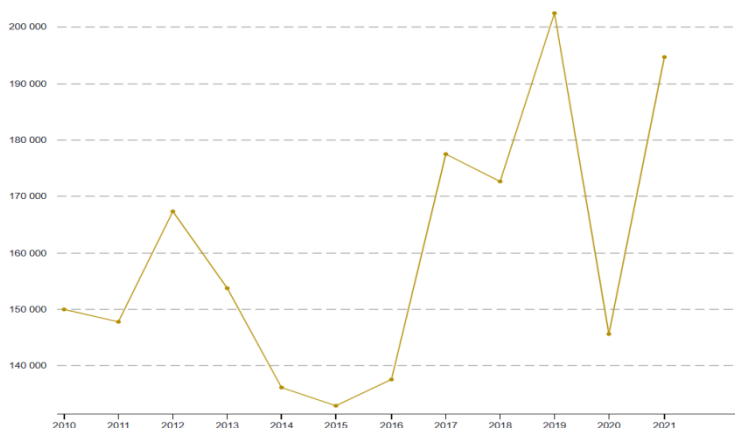


Source: Eurostat

A number of immigrant workers have entered the Romanian labor market, most of them from outside the EU borders (Nigeria, India, Syria Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, Bangladesh). This phenomenon will increase the number of immigrants because most of these international workers will attract people from families left in their country of origin. This is based on economic growth (4.7% in 2022), but also on the need for labor generated by the emigration of Romanians abroad for better-paid jobs. Based on predictions made by construction specialists, this sector alone will need 100,000 workers by the end of 2024. So, to cover this need "foreign workers are the solution when there is no other solution" (The Economist, 2023).

According to the General Inspectorate for Immigration, in 2021, over 148,000 immigrants arrived in Romania, of which over 96,000 are from third countries (Moldova, Turkey, Syria, Nepal) and over 52,000 are citizens of the European Union (mostly from Italy, Germany, France). Three years ago, the number of immigrants in Romania reached the threshold of 2% of the total population. In 2018, 4% of immigrants came to Romania with the aim of studying (IIR, 2019). It is understood that "the motivation of young people to emigrate to a country aiming for studies is born for various reasons" (Cîrstea, Constantinescu, 2022: 584- 594) and taking into account the following fact "the more people have a profession with a higher social prestige, the greater the social trust" (Constantinescu, 2004).

Figure 3 Total number of immigrants in Romania



Source: Eurostat

8. Conclusions

Immigration is still a sensitive topic worldwide, representing an important source of the dissension that anti-migration bodies are creating at the moment. The immigrant is the person who must be understood as part of a process of transformation that leaves its mark on his life experience, affects his family and has an impact on the societies of origin and host. The challenge of anti-migration actions generates the erroneous perception of the natives regarding immigrants and their families because it perpetuates ideas according to which immigrants are responsible for the loss of jobs, the decrease in wages, the decrease in social comfort. In Romania, immigrants are increasingly visible in all social environments, especially on the labor market or in academic environments. They are assimilated quite well at the moment, but tensions continue to arise as long as there is interest from some anti-immigration organizations to put them in a negative light.

The interest in attracting immigrants has increased in Romania because they, in addition to bringing profit to the labor market, are true ambassadors of our country abroad. The challenges related to migration with its two sides, emigration and immigration will continue to arise, but the opening of society to global civilization will manage them effectively. The fact that they are increasingly interested in reuniting their families can be a considerable gain for Romania both from a demographic point of view and from a social and economic point of view.

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