



CMR Working Papers

92/150

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Effects of the Ukrainian Crisis in Transcarpathia: the Hungarian Perspective

November 2016
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Abstract

Ukraine's turbulent recent history has had serious economic and social effects in its westernmost region, Transcarpathia. The East Ukrainian armed conflict, accompanied by a serious economic downturn, resulted in major modifications in individual and family life strategies determined by emigration and the policies of the neighbouring V4 states. The main focus of the present research was to study how recent political events (Euromaidan, the Russian takeover in Crimea, the Donbas conflict) affected Transcarpathia and its ethnic Hungarian population; furthermore, how patterns of individual and family life and migration strategies have been influenced by Hungary's kin-state politics. The study is based on analysis of statistical data and policy documents, complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted in spring 2016.

We found that the dynamics of emigration from Transcarpathia in the past few years are fuelled by the unrest in Eastern Ukraine (including the military drafts) and Hungary's kin-state politics, especially the preferential (re)naturalisation simplifying the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship. Individual and family livelihood strategies, migration patterns and cross-border connections are influenced by the regional geopolitics of V4 countries. We argue that the western neighbours of the weakening Ukraine have unobtrusively made attempts to take advantage of the changing geopolitical circumstances in order to increase their influence and attract human resources.

Keywords: Transcarpathia, kin-state politics, migration, Hungary, cross-border relations, Ukraine crisis

Abstrakt

Ostatnie wydarzenia na Ukrainie miały poważne skutki gospodarcze i społeczne także dla najbardziej na zachód wysuniętego regionu kraju - Zakarpacia. Konfliktowi z Rosją towarzyszy poważne spowolnienie gospodarcze, które z kolei przyczyniło się do modyfikacji indywidualnych i rodzinnych strategii uwarunkowanych procesami migracyjnymi oraz polityką prowadzoną przez państwa ościenne (członków Grupy Wyszehradzkiej). Głównym celem niniejszej pracy jest zbadanie, jak ostatnie wydarzenia polityczne (Euromajdan, zajęcie Krymu przez Rosję oraz konflikt w Donbasie) mają wpływ na funkcjonowanie rdzennej ludności węgierskiej na Zakarpaciu. Ponadto, jak na indywidualne i rodzinne strategie oraz wzorce migracyjne wpłynęła polityka Węgier jako zagranicznej ojczyzny. Badanie opiera się na analizie danych statystycznych i dokumentów, źródłem uzupełniającym są wywiady przeprowadzone wiosną 2016 roku.

Badanie pokazało, że dynamika emigracji z Zakarpacia w ciągu ostatnich kilku lat jest związana z sytuacją polityczną we wschodniej Ukrainie (w tym z poborem do wojska), oraz polityką Węgier, szczególnie z polityką naturalizacji, która preferuje osoby węgierskiego pochodzenia, ułatwiając im nabycie węgierskiego. Strategie życiowe (indywidualne i rodzinne), wzorce migracji i relacje transgraniczne pozostają pod wpływem regionalnej polityki prowadzonej przez państwa wyszehradzkiej czwórki. Autorzy twierdzą, że zachodni sąsiedzi osłabionego państwa ukraińskiego podejmowali dyskretne próby wykorzystania zmieniających się warunków geopolitycznych w celu zwiększenia swojego wpływu politycznego w regionie oraz pozyskania kapitału ludzkiego w postaci imigrantów.

Słowa kluczowe: Zakarpacie, polityka zagranicznej ojczyzny, migracja, Węgry, stosunki transgraniczne, kryzys na Ukrainie

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1. Introduction¹

News covering the Ukrainian crisis occupied the editorials of leading newspapers worldwide in 2014. The pro-European Euromaidan protest heightened the tension dividing Ukraine to its breaking point. Following the deadly clashes, the Russian-friendly president left the country. The new government not only had to manage the devastating economic situation, but soon had to tackle the loss of Crimea and the war in Donbas. Two years have passed since the beginning of the armed conflict in Donbas, but shootings still claim victims on a daily basis, the seventh wave of mobilisation is in progress in the country, and two non-recognised puppet states have been established in Eastern Ukraine with centres in Luhansk and Donetsk. The main goals of Euromaidan, namely cleaning up corruption and putting the country's economy back on a fast track, seem to have fallen behind, while the devaluation of the hryvna, unleashed inflation, and a seven-fold increase in gas prices have laid an extreme burden on the population.

The main interest of the present research was to study how recent political events (Euromaidan, the Russian takeover in Crimea, the Donbas conflict) affected Transcarpathia² and its ethnic Hungarian population; furthermore, how patterns of individual and family life and migration strategies have been influenced especially in terms of Hungarian-Ukrainian cross-border relations. However, the fieldwork clearly proved that the above issues are inseparable from Hungary's kin-state and neighbourhood politics, thus we attempted to reveal the political and policy measures by which Hungary wished to answer the freshly imposed challenges. Finally, our research aims to offer a first reflection on the presumed shifts in the regional power position and status of Hungary in Transcarpathia as they appear in interviews and the cityscape.

We made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. We sought to confirm migratory processes statistically, although the available sources are inaccurate and their interpretation requires thorough analysis. Although the kin-state policy document was also analysed, the majority of our results derive from interviews conducted in spring 2016 in three towns in Transcarpathia (Uzhhorod, Berehove, Tyachiv) with local stakeholders, teachers and journalists. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in Budapest with policy makers and experts in kin-state politics.

Since kin-state and migration policy in Hungary – extremely relevant in the present article – have been intermingled, it was necessary to introduce these and their complex relations. At first we

¹ The research was supported by the IVF Standard Grant titled “Cross-border cooperation at the time of crisis on neighbor's soil” (No. 21510578) and in the framework of the bilateral agreement on scientific co-operation between the Ukrainian and Hungarian Academy of Sciences, titled: “Regional processes and global challenges following the 2008 crisis in Ukraine and Hungary” (No. 2326/2016).

² Transcarpathia, the westernmost district of Ukraine (belonged to Hungary before 1919 and between 1939 and 1944), sharing a border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, is a traditional sphere of interest of Hungary owing to its history and ethnic composition.

wish to briefly outline the political context which influenced the Hungarian government's steps and communication following the escalation of the conflict. This will be followed by description of cross-border movements and enumeration of migratory processes highlighting the recent trends and novel features. Finally, we attempt to structure the evolving conglomerate of migration, kin-state politics and individual/family livelihood strategies, which forms the everyday reality of ethnic Hungarians (and Ukrainians) in Transcarpathia.

2. The political context of the Ukrainian crisis from Hungary's point of view

To understand how the Ukrainian crises affected Hungary and its reactions, one should familiarise oneself with the multidimensional context in which the Hungarian state tried to maintain a fragile balance between its numerous – sometimes conflicting – aims and interests. The main variables in the equation are partly related to the country's actual preferences in foreign politics, but cannot be separated from domestic and kin-state politics, which also played an important role in decisions and their communications.

The Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in Donbas region caused a serious conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which soon developed into a dangerous international problem between Euroatlantic powers (namely the EU and the USA) and Russia. With the Euromaidan protests, it became clear that one dominant part of Ukraine would choose EU integration over Russian orientation, which contravened the Putin-ruled Eurasian power's recently revived imperial dreams. The already existing divisions and centripetal forces gained powerful external support from Russia in terms of political propaganda and military presence. Western politicians criticised Russia's aggression, and after the annexation of Crimea the EU imposed financial, economic and trade sanctions, which – together with low energy prices – hit the Russian economy quite hard (Secrieru 2015).

While Europe gave "Russia the cold shoulder over its intervention in Ukraine" (Soldatkin and Than 2015), President Putin paid a short visit to Budapest in February 2015. This episode – drawing uncomfortable international attention – shed light on the ambiguous strategy in foreign politics pursued by the Hungarian government after coming to power in 2010. The new direction in Hungarian foreign politics was at first more of an economic strategy, but it later developed into a political one (Stark 2015). Based on – sometimes putative – economic interests, it favoured and was primarily looking for new partners in eastern directions, namely China, the Gulf states or post-Soviet countries, but first of all Russia. Hungary has been highly dependent on Russian gas. Securing the country's energy supply has become the major argument supposed to verify the pro-Russia statements of the government, for instance in its support for the South Stream gas pipeline over the EU's Nabucco in 2013-2014 (Stark 2015), or the development of the Paks II nuclear power

plant, which would be entrusted to Russia's Rosatom and almost completely financed by a loan granted by the Russian state-controlled bank in 2014 (Sadecki 2015; Kozloff 2015).

Under such circumstances, the events of Euromaidan and the Donbas conflict put Hungarian leaders in a challenging situation: as a NATO, EU and V4 member state, Hungary was expected to synchronise its reactions with its allies' statements, while at the same time it wished to avoid any tension with Russia. Such "political tiptoeing" (Józwiak and Lugosi 2016: 128) can explain the Putin visit and the relative late reactions to the Donbas events from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. In his first commentary (March 2014), he stated that Hungary's priority is to secure the safety of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community; however, he also mentioned the issue of autonomy and collective rights as "due" to the minorities of Ukraine, including Hungarians, and criticised the Ukrainian policy concerning ethnic minorities (Sadecki 2014; Józwiak and Lugosi 2016). His statement instantly brought a reaction from Ukrainian politicians. The fact that for two years prior to May 2016 there was no ambassador appointed to Budapest can also be understood as an indicator for the reserved Ukrainian attitude. However, one must not forget that only a few weeks ahead of the 2014 parliamentary elections in Hungary such a communication would rather be targeting Hungarian right-wing voters to secure the governing Fidesz party's leading position over the far-right party Jobbik,³ which openly stood up for the autonomy of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia.⁴

Beyond actual international and inland political interests, the most important, defining factor determining Hungary's foreign (and often internal) politics is the existence of large transboundary Hungarian communities in the neighbouring countries. Consequently, Ukraine, with its approx. 150,000 Hungarians, mainly living along the state border in the Transcarpathia region, is not an exception. Following the eruption and escalation of the Eastern Ukrainian armed conflict, the Hungarian government therefore stood up for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and for the protection and safety of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community, at the level of both political statements and policy actions. The interconnectedness between foreign politics, migration politics, kin-state and diaspora politics has been studied exhaustively (Brubaker 1996; Csergő and Goldgeier 2004; Kántor 2006; Fox 2007; Çağlar and Gereöffy 2008; Fesichmidt and Zakariás 2010; Bárdi 2011), thus the present article will rather focus on the new elements in kin-state politics and the current activities initiated by the Hungarian government in Transcarpathia.

³ <http://www.ceeidentity.eu/news/ukraine-crisis>.

⁴ http://jobbik.com/jobbik_condemns_anti_hungarian_provocation_in_transcarpathia.

3. Brief overview of the new paradigm of Hungarian kin-state and diaspora politics

Due to the change of government and the accompanying paradigm shift in kin-state politics in 2010, kin-state and diaspora issues in Hungary are handled by a novel policy document (MPAJ 2011) (Kántor 2015a). The document is meant to open a new horizon in kin-state politics. It highlights the importance of transboundary Hungarian communities for Hungary, considering them “valuable for Hungary” (MPAJ 2011: 12), and establishes two major goals: prosperity of Hungarian communities in their homeland and the enhancement of a well-functioning, organic Carpathian basin region. The document envisions Hungary as an active agent: even though it admits that Hungary and the whole region “cannot and does not intend to resist international trends of increasing mobility (...) Hungary and the neighbouring countries have to strive to achieve positive economic developments in the region, which will motivate both younger and older generations to stay and work in their homelands” (MPAJ 2011: 13). This sentence echoes the long-standing dilemma of Hungarian kin-state politics: whether to help transboundary Hungarian communities to stay in their homeland or enhance their migration to Hungary to satisfy the country’s demographic and labour needs.

In the last 25 years all political forces in Hungary have explicitly supported the first goal; however, some of the measures implemented implicitly served the second aim. As this is a very hot topic in Hungarian society, it is not surprising that no government or political party wanted to take on the burden of such a decision. With kin-state politics lacking a clear, one-way road, policies serving both directions instead exist in parallel. As Çağlar and Gereöffy rightly noted, “it is the controversies in Hungarian diaspora politics which impeded the development and the implementation of a comprehensive migration policy in Hungary” (Çağlar and Gereöffy 2008, 333). The policy document discussed here is not without such controversies, although it clearly communicates welfare in the homeland as a final goal together with collective rights and autonomy. According to the document these aims can be achieved by inducing economic development with different policy measures, while strong, active, self-sufficient local (Hungarian) communities can be evolved that will be able to grow later on in terms of population, education, economic power and finally gain more community (i.e. minority) rights (MPAJ 2011: 14-15).

Hungarian kin-state policies have been subject to ongoing academic and political debates, especially since the amendment to the Act on Electoral Procedure (adopted in 2012), which allows Hungarian citizens living abroad to participate in Hungarian parliamentary elections. As studies (in keeping with our recent field experiences) have pointed out, this might be seen as a mere export of home affairs to the transborder Hungarian communities (Pogonyi 2013). Naturally, the aforementioned tools of kin-state politics are in operation throughout Europe. What makes the

“Hungarian model” slightly different is the level of activity of state policies, complexity of programmes, and high level of institutionalisation (Kántor 2015b).

As the most important policy measure, the amendment of the Hungarian Citizenship Law resulted in a simplified naturalisation procedure coming into force in January 2011. This made it possible for people residing in the former territory of the Kingdom of Hungary (i.e. the Carpathian basin) to acquire Hungarian citizenship without residing in Hungary. Anybody is eligible for preferential (re)naturalisation who, or whose ancestors, held Hungarian citizenship once, and who proves his/her knowledge of the Hungarian language – thus the Law does not exclude individuals with non-Hungarian ethnic background from the benefits if they are able to speak Hungarian. Even though Ukraine does not recognise dual citizenship, gaining Hungarian citizenship and passport, as we will see in Chapter 4, has become a common strategy not only for Hungarians, but Ukrainians as well, owing particular importance to the novel regulation.

Not surprisingly, the Ukrainian crisis seriously challenged the envisioned plan and enforced instant actions. In the following, before describing the newly installed policy measures, we attempt to provide an overview of the effects of the current Ukrainian geopolitical events (Euromaidan, Crimea, Donbas conflict) on the migratory relations between Hungary and Ukraine/Transcarpathia and how it is influenced by the kin-state politics of Hungary.

4. Migration patterns between Ukraine and Hungary after the Euromaidan

Migration from Ukraine to Hungary displays special characteristics which are rather unique among the V4 countries. This movement is influenced by geopolitical (e.g. EU enlargement, military conflict in Eastern Ukraine) and global economic (crisis in 2008) processes and is defined by the changing Hungarian (and EU) migration regimes and politics. Nevertheless, the most powerful factor in the background is the presence of the large Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia. As a consequence of Transcarpathia’s location within Ukraine and its ethnic composition, migration from Ukraine to Hungary is geographically concentrated,⁵ and since 70% of the migrants have ethnic Hungarian background and 97% are able to speak Hungarian (Kincses 2015), ethnic migration is an essential characteristic of human mobility between Ukraine and Hungary (see Feischmidt and Zakariás 2010). Furthermore, Hungary is the only non-Slavic speaking country among Ukraine’s Western neighbours, thus it attracts fewer Ukrainians than the other V4 countries, especially the Czech Republic and Poland.

⁵ 90% of the migrants come from Transcarpathia and 74% originate from the four raions (Uzhhorod, Mukacheve, Berehove and Vinohradiv) adjacent to the Hungarian border, where 90% of Transcarpathian Hungarians live. The destination of migration is also concentrated: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, sharing a border with Ukraine and the Central Region (including Budapest), attracts 80% of immigrants from Ukraine (Kincses and Karácsonyi 2011).

As a result, the volume of the migration from Ukraine to Hungary cannot be compared to the flows towards Poland and the Czech Republic, although from the Hungarian point of view Ukrainian citizens are the fourth largest foreign resident group in Hungary, comprising 5% of all non-nationals as of 1 January 2015.

As official statistics show, all Ukrainian migration activities geared towards residence in Hungary (migration flow and stock, the number of issued residence permits and work permits) have decreased since 2009. However, one would expect that (at least) the unrest in Eastern Ukraine certainly resulted in increasing migration/refugee waves. Understanding the figures shown in Table 1 is a complex task. Migration figures started to fall back as a consequence of the economic crisis when unemployment in both countries increased and a significant proportion of the Ukrainian citizens working in Hungary (mostly in the bottom segment of the labour market) were forced to go back to Ukraine (Çağlar 2013). By contrast, post-crisis statistical decrease is traced back not to declining mobility but to the effects of preferential (re)naturalisation from 2011. Due to this regulation, the subsequent demand for Hungarian citizenship (basically by ethnic Hungarians in the Carpathian basin) and the mass naturalisation process, Hungarian migration statistics are no longer appropriate for tracing migration trends and figures from the neighbouring countries since 2011, as most of the statistics are based on citizenship criteria. Thus, the effects of the Euromaidan events and the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine on migration processes should be investigated by indirect tools.

According to the figures, the crisis in Donbas has not triggered a substantial refugee/migrant wave toward Hungary and the European Union; approximately 400,000 people, however, applied for refugee status in Russia according to data of the Federal Migration Service.⁶ Although the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Hungary increased from 7 in 2013 to 37 in 2014, this magnitude is still less than that of the mid-2000s (Table 1).

Official statistics show a decline in the number of migrants from Ukraine since 2009, and this trend was barely broken by the events in Eastern Ukraine. The number of Ukrainian citizens immigrating to Hungary increased by 30% between 2013 and 2014 and another 60% between 2014 and 2015. On the one hand, the value for 2015 still lags behind the previous years, and on the other, the number of Ukrainian citizens residing in Hungary further decreased (Table 1). The same trend is reflected by the number of first residence permits issued to Ukrainian citizens: a significant decline from 2008 was turned into a slight increase in 2014.

⁶ The number of asylum seekers in the EU was approximately 1,000 in 2013, which rose to 14,000 and 21,000 in 2014 and 2015 respectively (UNHCR 2015).

Table 1: Ukrainian citizens in Hungary

| Year | Immigrants (flow) | Immigrants (stock) | Asylum seekers | First residence permit | Valid work permit |
|------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004 | 3,615 | 13,096 | 45 | .. | 8,823 |
| 2005 | 2,069 | 13,933 | 26 | .. | 7,567 |
| 2006 | 3,699 | 15,337 | 38 | .. | 7,664 |
| 2007 | 2,916 | 15,866 | 19 | .. | 7,985 |
| 2008 | 4,071 | 17,289 | 4 | 10,203 | 7,189 |
| 2009 | 1,887 | 17,610 | 9 | 2,829 | 7,477 |
| 2010 | 1,619 | 17,241 | 9 | 2,681 | 5,581 |
| 2011 | 1,280 | 16,537 | 5 | 2,104 | 4,525 |
| 2012 | 859 | 11,894 | 2 | 1,119 | 3,234 |
| 2013 | 558 | 10,849 | 7 | 930 | 2,080 |
| 2014 | 717 | 8,317 | 37 | 1,164 | 1,145 |
| 2015 | 1,143 | 6,906 | 28 | .. | 1,079 |
| 2016 | | 6,749 | | | |

Sources: Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO), Office of Immigration and Nationality, National Employment Service

Official migration statistics, described in the previous paragraphs, show decreasing flows between 2008 and 2014 and stagnation of Ukrainian immigrants in recent years. At the same time, migration patterns seem to be the opposite from a different perspective. Based on the statistics on birthplace, one can see a doubling in the number of people born in Ukraine in the last five years, from around 20,000 in 2011 to 40,000 in 2014.⁷ This increase can be explained only by the migration of Hungarian citizens from Ukraine, as the number of Ukrainian citizens in Hungary did

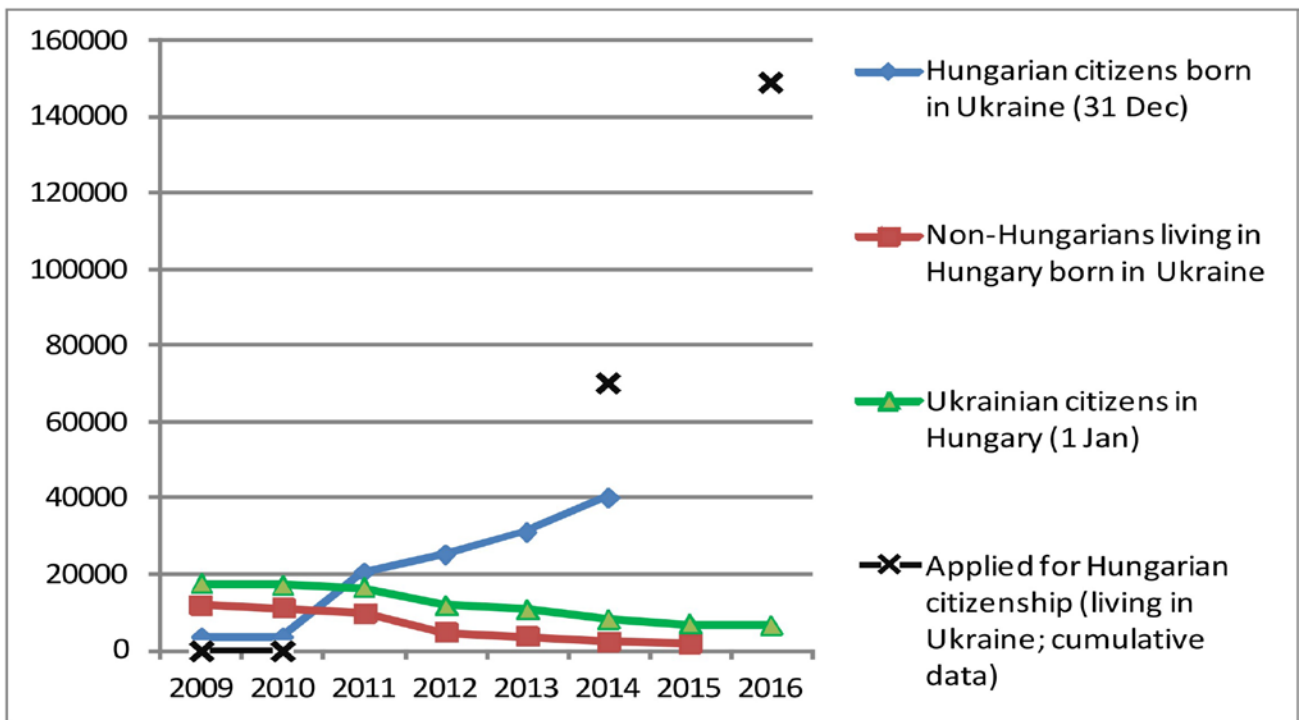
⁷ It should be noted that the figures quote above published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) differ markedly from the figures of the 2011 Census (i.e. 20,635 vs. 35,354). EUROSTAT data on birthplace reflects the same trend but provides a somewhat lower increase (from 25,485 to 41,990 during the same period).

not reach this rate before 2011 (when the simplified naturalisation procedure came into force).⁸ The already cited amendment of the Hungarian Citizenship Law made it possible to apply for Hungarian citizenship without living in Hungary. As a result, approximately 70,000 new citizenships were granted to Ukrainian citizens between January 2011 and April 2014 (Soltész and Zimmerer 2014: 125); moreover, another 79,000 applications were submitted by June 2016. This means that application for Hungarian citizenship from Ukraine reached 149,000 (Kántor 2016), approximately the same number as that of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine according to the 2001 census. This implies two conclusions: (1) as the number of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine is estimated to have fallen to 140,000 by 2011 due to the high rate of emigration, Hungarian citizenship must have been applied for by several non-Hungarians; and (2) more applications were submitted in the two years between April 2014 and June 2016 than in the previous three years. This probably shows that gaining Hungarian citizenship became a general strategy (mostly in Transcarpathia) to avoid the military draft⁹ and economic crisis triggered by the unrest in Eastern Ukraine. All in all, the armed conflict in Donbas region could have a severe impact on migration trends, reflected by statistics on birthplace and new citizenship (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migration from Ukraine to Hungary by birthplace and acquired Hungarian citizenship

⁸ The number of Ukrainian citizens living in Hungary who gained Hungarian citizenship accounts for only 5,700 people between 2011 and 2014.

⁹ The ratio of men among Hungarian citizens living in Hungary born in Ukraine rose from 38 per cent in 2011 to 46 per cent in 2014, which can also be explained as a result of military drafts.



Sources: HCSO, Soltész and Zimmerer 2014; Kántor 2016

Recent events in the Donbas shaped not only the volume but the characteristics of international migration. Before the economic crisis in 2008, most Ukrainian migrants arrived in Hungary to perform remunerated activities as an employee or entrepreneur. Although the extent of such activities has decreased slightly, it is still the dominant reason for coming; especially if we count illegal working activities, which made up about 40-45% of total employees (Juhász et al. 2010; Çağlar et al. 2011). During the crisis and up to now, family and educational reasons also became important pull factors for migrants.

Educational migration is a prevailing strategy for Transcarpathian Hungarian youth, who can study in Hungary in their mother tongue. Both an inadequate command of the Ukrainian language and the better opportunities provided by the Hungarian education system contribute to educational migration. Educational migration is fuelled by Hungarian state policies providing grants and accommodation for transborder Hungarian minorities. Figures show that Ukrainian students are mostly involved in higher education. Contrary to suppositions, the number of students with Ukrainian citizenship has not grown in the last years, owing to the increasing number of students with dual (Ukrainian and Hungarian) citizenship registered as Hungarians in the statistics. Nonetheless, data on students applying for Hungarian state grants in Ukraine reflects the growing demand for Hungarian higher education, which may be a consequence of the crisis in Ukraine (Table 2).

Table 2: Educational migration from Ukraine to Hungary

| Year | Ukrainian citizens studying in Hungary | | Applications for Hungarian state grant | | |
|------|--|------------------|--|-----|-------|
| | Total | Higher education | BA, BSc, MA, MSc | PhD | Total |
| 2011 | 2,127 | 1,391 | 90 | 16 | 106 |
| 2012 | 2,064 | 1,328 | 86 | 16 | 102 |
| 2013 | 1,961 | 1,269 | 85 | 23 | 108 |
| 2014 | 1,749 | 1,169 | 122 | 13 | 135 |
| 2015 | .. | .. | 152 | 16 | 168 |

Sources: MHC 2015; Agora Information Agency, Berehove

Ukraine's and Transcarpathia's deep economic crisis as well as the growing poverty in recent years have resulted in changing patterns and strategies of international migration. Before the Euromaidan, labour migrants, the most populous group of Ukrainian migrants, generally did not separate from their country of origin; they visit their home every one or two months, and remit their earnings to their family, which often stayed at home (see: Mezentsev and Pidgrushnyi 2014). Thus, such migrants can be seen as transnational migrants who simultaneously live in two countries, and whose relations link them to two countries, albeit in different ways and intensities (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Çağlar and Gereöffy 2008). After the Euromaidan and the outbreak of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, new life (and surviving) strategies also emerged: due to the deepened economic crisis and military drafts, men have left and many of them bring their family with them, planning a long-term foreign stay; thus the intensity of relations with their mother country has weakened.

In Transcarpathia, thousands of men, especially Transcarpathian Hungarians, escaped to Hungary to avoid the military draft. This kind of migration shows similar patterns to that of the Vojvodina Hungarians in the early 1990s after the outbreak of the Yugoslav war, because these men were often separated from their family and clung to the hope that the war would soon end and they could return home (Váradi et al. 2013). However, owing to long-established migrant networks, most of the young men from Transcarpathia easily integrated to the Hungarian society or migrated further to Western Europe. The significant gender aspect of the migration caused by the military conflict is proved by statistics: the proportion of immigrant males increased from 37% in 2013 to

58% in 2014 and 62% in 2015; however, we should note that Ukrainian immigration to Hungary was characterised by a strong surplus of men before 2012.

Circular migration is a special but rather significant form of cross-border connections between Ukraine and Hungary; however, circular migrants made up only 16% of total Ukrainian migrants before the crisis (Rédei and Karácsonyi 2011). Çağlar (2013: 161) argues that due to the EU-enlargement, the implementation of the Schengen border regime, the global economic crisis and Hungarian ethnic and migration policies, circular migrants from Ukraine “follow a multidirectional migratory pattern rather than a bidirectional circular pattern.” Circular migration is thought to be an effective tool to resolve the traditional dilemma of the Hungarian kin-state politics, too. The Hungarian government envisions that cross-border commuting can simultaneously ensure the welfare of the Hungarian transborder community in their homeland and solve the shortage of the Hungarian labour market. Regarding Hungarians living in Ukraine, this governmental policy is hampered by the weak permeability of the Ukrainian-Hungarian border, which is inadequate for mass daily commuting.

The migration destinations for Transcarpathians somewhat differs from that of Ukraine as a whole,¹⁰ and ethnolinguistic differences highly influence the scope of destinations: the primary destination of Transcarpathian Hungarians is still Hungary, albeit to a decreasing extent, followed by the Czech Republic and Germany. According to our interviewees, Ukrainians from Transcarpathia prefer to move to the Czech Republic, Poland, and less often to Slovakia and Portugal. Russia, previously a major destination for all ethnic groups in Transcarpathia, ceased to be among the current top destinations due to the crisis in Eastern Ukraine. Thus emigration from Transcarpathia is facilitated by ethnic-based (and transborder) migrant networks; however, emerging interethnic co-operation in multiethnic neighbourhoods in recent years has blurred the sharp differences among ethnic-based migratory flows.¹¹

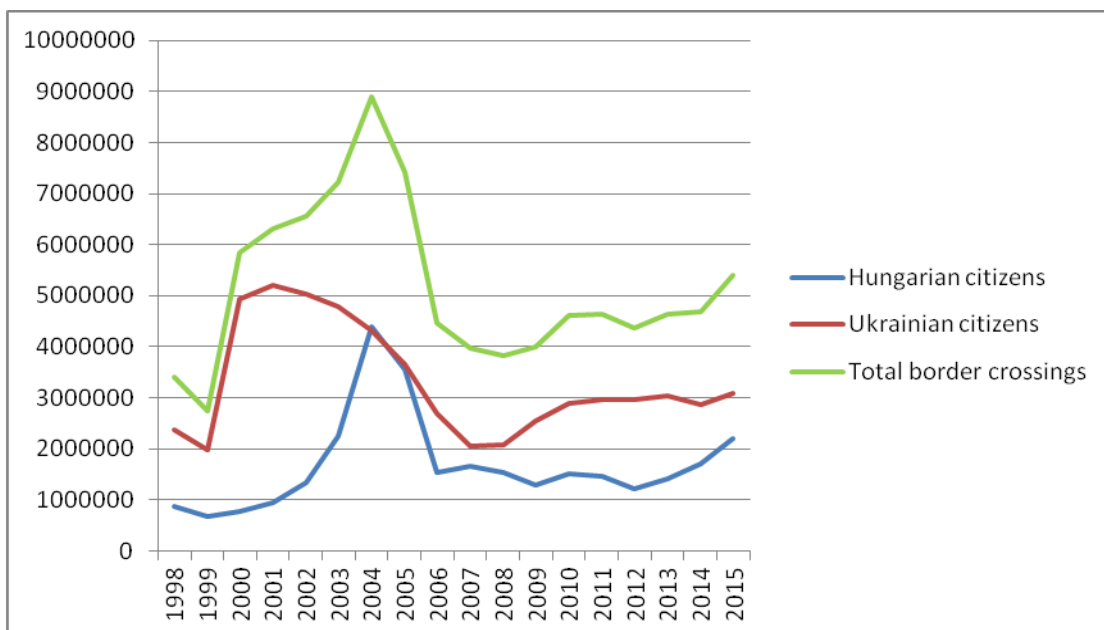
Migration potential has continuously been middle to high among Transcarpathian Hungarians during recent decades. Approximately 20% of ethnic Hungarians planned to resettle in 2009 (mostly in Hungary and Germany) (Sik 2015), while a recent empirical study has shown that about a third of Hungarian youth (below 30) plan to emigrate from Ukraine (GeneZYs 2015). Seeking better life-circumstances is the most important reason for leaving (67%), while the second most frequent reason is the military conflict in the Donbas (18%), with significant gender inequalities (19.1% for men, 16.7% for women) (GeneZYs 2015).

¹⁰ The top migration destination countries for the Ukrainian population in 2011 were Russia (53.3%), Italy (9.5%), Germany (7.6%), Spain (7%), the Czech Republic (6.2%), USA (3.9%), Poland (3.3%) and Portugal (2.1%) (Małynowska 2011).

¹¹ See for example the case of multi-ethnic Sototvinovo (Józwiak 2014).

In 2015, the number of people crossing the Hungarian-Ukrainian border legally amounted to 5.4 million, of which 98 per cent were Ukrainian and Hungarian citizens. The number of border crossings was slightly increased compared to the early 2010s, when approximately 4.6 million border crossings were recorded on a yearly average; however, this is hard to interpret as an impact of the Ukrainian crisis, since the figures did not change considerably between 2013 and 2014 (Figure 2). The number of border crossings of Hungarian citizens has risen in the last years, contrary to that of Ukrainians, which may be a consequence of the citizenship issues described above.

Figure 2: Number of persons crossing the Ukrainian-Hungarian border



Source: HCSO

The number of visas to Ukrainian citizens issued by Hungary has fluctuated in recent years. The visa liberalisation in 2013 resulted in a record high number of visa applications (150,000), followed by a sharp drop in 2014. In 2015, only 116,000 visas were issued by the three Hungarian consulates; however, some 10,000 additional visas should be accounted for, granted for local border traffic. The number of visas issued in the consulates in Transcarpathia (Uzhhorod, Berehove) is quite stable, reaching two-thirds of the total number of granted visas in 2015, while visas issued in Kiev fluctuate highly, ranging between 79,000 in 2013 and 38,000 in 2015. Between 2010 and 2015 on average only 1.3 per cent of visa applications were refused.

5. Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border co-operation and mobility

Transcarpathia borders several countries of the European Union (Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania), thus – through its cross-border co-operations – it serves as an especially important connection between Ukraine and the countries of Western Europe (Skiba 2010). As previous research shows (Sik and Surányi 2015), Transcarpathia has the most intensive cross-border relations with Hungary: in terms of both goods turnover and passenger traffic the most intensive exchange takes place on the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area, so the analysis of these cross-border co-operations and connections is of the highest priority.

The incorporation of Hungary into the European Union (1 May 2004) meant a new challenge for cross-border co-operation, because the 136.7 km-long Ukrainian–Hungarian border became the external border of the EU, soon to be controlled according to the high standards of the Schengen border regime (Eróss et al. 2011). In the case of regions, restricted by different border control systems, like the Ukrainian–Hungarian border, state borders definitely influence the development of cross-border co-operation (Baranyi 2007). The different legal and administrative regulations, the dissimilarity of available financial resources and the overall unequal situation between the two sides of the border (EU and non-EU) represent a further complicating factor of the co-operation. At the same time it should be noted that with Hungary's accession to the European Union, new opportunities were opened to the sources of the EU dedicated to development of frontier areas. In this respect, Hungary's activity must be emphasised: series of actions and projects have been implemented aiming at both supporting the 150,000 ethnic Hungarians living in Transcarpathia and developing the whole region. All the efforts became particularly important in Ukraine, following the outbreak of the Eastern Ukrainian armed conflict.

Currently, five border crossing points are operating in the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area, creating relatively favourable opportunities for border crossing (Kovály 2010). However, the outdated infrastructure of the border control systems, the complicated customs processes, and the strict visa requirements on Ukrainian citizens entering the EU all result in an extremely slow border crossing procedure meaning serious limitations in the evolution of Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border co-operation. In order to present a complex overview of these activities, first the formal then the informal types of cross-border relations and mobility will be presented.

5.1. The formal frameworks of Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border co-operation

After the 1990s, institutionalised Hungarian–Ukrainian cross-border relations – being initiated in the field of culture at first, based on earlier relationships and existing institutional frameworks, like county siblings and twin towns – were significantly reduced. In recent years they again seem to have intensified. Nowadays the relationships among twin towns can be considered as the most intensive form of cross-border co-operations, which mostly exist among settlements located along

both sides of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border. These relationships are mainly concentrated in the fields of culture and education, while economic links are rather rare. Diplomatic relations are also very intensive between Transcarpathia region and Hungary: mutual visits of high-level politicians are frequent. In fact, Hungary operates two consulates in Transcarpathia (in Uzhhorod and Berehove). The kin-state politics (see details in Chapter 6) recently initiated by the Hungarian government also strengthen Hungarian–Ukrainian institutionalised (and non-institutionalised) cross-border co-operation. However, the Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border co-operation is obstructed by the long and complicated border crossing procedures, general backwardness of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border region and the unstable economic and political conditions, weak financial system, and high level of corruption and bureaucracy in Ukraine.

In the framework of the Ukrainian–Hungarian institutionalised cross-border co-operation, joint projects mostly focus on environmental, education and cultural issues. The Ukrainian–Hungarian Water Management Collaboration should be mentioned as one of the successful examples. It was launched two decades ago, with its main goal being to work out a common flood prevention conception, and it has been implemented within the Danube Region Strategy. The next common project, the Danube Transnational Programme (2014–2020), was set up as a consequence of the Danube Region Strategy with participation of the four western regions of Ukraine (including Transcarpathia). In addition, within the framework of the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007–2013, common environmental and flood prevention programmes, “good neighbourhood” festivals and conferences were organised. Furthermore, Transcarpathia is also a member of the Carpathian Euroregion and Interregion (Balayan 2005). Although these do not play an important role in Transcarpathia’s social-economic life, these co-operations exist mostly formally. In fact, meeting the requirements of different European Union funds (especially regional development and structural funds) seems to be the major driving factor behind the co-operations, which might otherwise be insignificant. This perception might be supported by the observation that political or economic shifts do not induce novel initiatives or more intensive collaboration.

The next type of formal co-operations, the academic cross-border relations existing between the educational institutions of Hungary and Ukraine, are also significant (student exchange programmes, conferences, common publications etc.). Within this co-operation, numerous Transcarpathian schools have an international partnership with Hungarian schools. In the field of higher education and research, numerous initiations have been brought forth targeting intensified co-operation in academic life and supporting Transcarpathian Hungarian education. From Ukraine, this is mostly the college called Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute (in short:

Transcarpathian Hungarian College, hereafter: THC) in Berehove and the Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences with the Hungarian Language of Teaching, Uzhhorod National University (in short: Hungarian Department, hereafter: HDNUU) that take part in it. For example, the THC's founder and supporter is the Foundation for Transcarpathian Hungarian College, which operates entirely through the financial support of the Hungarian state. HDNUU also received financial support from Hungary (see in detail in Chapter 6).

Besides the co-operations mentioned above, several economic initiations have recently been generated by the Hungarian government, and there are plans for projects helping to vitalise the economy of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area. For example, the Tisza European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation Limited Liability was recently founded. This is the only territorial association linking EU-member countries and Ukraine. The main goal of the Tisza European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation Limited Liability is to foster cross-border co-operation.

5.2. Informal Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border relations

The proximity of the frontier has always played a great role in the everyday lives of the people living in the border zone (Zhurzhenko 2010; Borbély 2015). In our case this especially goes for members of the Hungarian minority living along the Ukrainian–Hungarian border. The introduction of simplified (re)naturalisation opened a new period in the history of Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border co-operation, as a Hungarian passport and citizenship not only help (mainly) Transcarpathians to cross the border without a visa, but make job opportunities in the countries of the European Union legally accessible.

When analysing the main purposes of border-crossing in the Ukrainian–Hungarian border zone, typically three major aims can be highlighted: (a) shopping, (b) activities related to livelihood, meaning mostly some small-scale trade business or transportation services, and (c) visiting relatives or friends. While the first two are mostly typical of Transcarpathians, the third process is characteristic of people living in Hungary, who in most cases are Transcarpathians who resettled in the 1990s. Ukrainian–Hungarian shopping tourism was asymmetrical till the end of the 2000s: a much higher proportion of Hungarians travelled to do shopping in Ukraine (three-quarters of the journeys) than Ukrainians to Hungary, caused by the margin between the products of the two countries and the exchange rate between HUF and UAH (Berghauer 2011; Michalkó et al. 2014). Interviews conducted since April 2016 show that Hungarian shopping tourism has recently been decreasing; on the contrary, its Ukrainian counterpart seems to be strengthening. This can be explained by the fact that in the last two years – owing to the collapse of the Ukrainian economy and the continuous inflation of the national currency, the hryvna – we are witnessing a novel business phenomenon among Ukrainians, namely VAT reclaiming. This means that private Ukrainian retailers, after crossing the border, can claim the return of value-added tax on food or

technical items from the store, where the goods were bought in Hungary. Afterwards, they sell these products in Ukraine to get more profit.

Our interviewees pointed out that livelihood trade and shuttle trade are still a significant phenomenon carried out mostly by Transcarpathians, while the involvement of Hungarians has declined compared to the 1990s, when it was a widely accepted earning strategy among Hungarians, too. Hungarians crossing the Ukrainian border with the purpose of small-scale business purchase mainly fuel, tobacco, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, confectionery and dairy products; while clothes, food, electronics, and detergents are shipped to Transcarpathia from Hungary.

Besides the trade activities, the border means job opportunities for inhabitants of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area, especially Transcarpathian Hungarians. Daily or weekly commuting (circular migration) is a widespread phenomenon across the border: during summertime in the mornings and evenings small groups of bikers appear on the border, who work as seasonal agricultural manpower in the nearby villages in Hungary. The qualified workforce also have this kind of circular mobility strategy; East Hungarian schools in small, depopulating villages, usually with a high proportion of Roma, prefer to employ Hungarian teachers educated in Transcarpathia, who then work in Hungary and spend their weekends in Ukraine. Transportation (between Berehove and Nyíregyháza, Fehérgyarmat, Vásárosnamény or Budapest) and illegal money exchange offer another earning opportunity for the Transcarpathians. The border functions as a means of livelihood on the Hungarian side as well, but here it is primarily the number of employees of state administration that must be mentioned (workers of the Hungarian National Railway, police, customs officers, border guards, etc.) (Sik and Surányi 2015). As a recent tendency in cross-border mobility, we must also mention thriving health tourism. Transcarpathians frequently avail themselves of the services of Hungarian health institutions (usually in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county), where they can be treated at higher standards than in Ukraine (Szilágyi 2015). Crossing the border for cultural, recreational or spa purposes is not too significant.

All in all, nowadays the Ukrainian–Hungarian cross-border connections are becoming more intensive. The co-operation mainly involves the fields of culture and education, but the economic relations are also strengthened by the initiation of the Hungarian government and owing to the available European Union funds. The border provides income from legal and illegal remuneration activities for the local population. Cross-border connections and mobility are heavily influenced by Hungary's kin-state politics: preferential (re)naturalisation and thus the easily accessible Hungarian passport facilitated both visa-free border crossing and legal employment in the EU for Transcarpathians (mostly ethnic Hungarians), accelerated by the outbreak of the Donbas conflict.

6. Hungarian policy measures in Transcarpathia

Due to the devastating economic breakdown and the ongoing war in Donbas, the everyday living circumstances deteriorated rapidly in Transcarpathia, affecting the Hungarian community and non-Hungarians equally. As one of the key elements of Hungary's kin-state politics is to foster the well-being and safety of transboundary Hungarian communities (MPAJ 2011), the Hungarian government intensified its activity in Ukraine, which can be divided into two categories: aid and policy measures.

In harmony with other V4 and EU countries from the beginning of the Euromaidan and Donbas conflict, the Hungarian state, different Hungarian churches and NGOs arranged humanitarian aid and rehabilitation programmes for victims and survivors. The aid was not dedicated only to the Transcarpathian Hungarian community, and reached beyond the boundaries of Transcarpathia: for instance the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade offered 100 million HUF for Donbas refugees resettled in different regions in Ukraine (Józwiak and Lugosi 2016: 128). Furthermore, numerous Hungarian municipalities organised charity balls, collecting food, detergents, medications, clothes etc., and shipped it to their Transcarpathian twin town.

The second group of action contains a great variety of policy instruments. Interestingly enough, while the Donbas conflict and its consequences (most of all the rapidly decreasing Hungarian population) seriously threatened the dedicated goal of the prosperous Hungarian community in the homeland, at the same time it also meant an opportunity for Hungary to strengthen its power position in Transcarpathia. Even though it is quite difficult to separate, we try to structure the policy tools according to their proposed target groups.

One part of the policy measure is designed for individuals, including scholarships for higher education in Hungary and in the homeland, trainee programmes, and student exchange. The majority of such measures already existed, but the interviews showed that since 2014 applicants from Transcarpathia have been favoured. One of the novel elements worth mentioning is a salary supplement. This procedure was introduced in the 2015/2016 school year, and at first it was granted to those teachers and other administrative staff who work with Hungarian classes in Transcarpathia.¹² Individual applications for this grant are collected in dedicated offices of Hungarian ethnic party foundations. The aim of the salary supplement is to offer better living circumstances for those who work in Hungarian schools, and it sought to reduce the emigration of teachers, now a common problem in Transcarpathian schools.

Later on, a series of government declarations were accepted to offer similar individual financial aid for doctors, nurses, and art teachers who visibly indicate offering patient care, courses

¹² <http://www.kmkszalap.org/oktatasi-dolgozok-tamogatasa/palyazati-felhivas>.

etc. in Hungarian. Given the fact that neither Hungarian citizenship nor any statement of belonging to the Hungarian community is a precondition, the subsidy cannot be considered as ethnically exclusionary. Rather it mirrors the double endeavour to look after the co-ethnic community in need, while at the same time, next to the quite easily accessible Hungarian citizenship, it offers a tempting additional reason for non-Hungarians to establish links with the local Hungarian community. In a sense, this policy seems to be quite a good fit for the aforementioned goal of making local communities prosperous, and might attract non-Hungarians as well.

The other group of policy actions serves the needs of the community as a whole even in a greater perspective. Since 2014, but especially since 2015, numerous renovation projects have been launched that were exclusively financed by the Hungarian state. As Sándor Spenik (Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences with the Hungarian Language of Teaching, Uzhhorod National University) explained in an interview, “Last year we were able to make a big leap thanks to Hungarian support (...) students can study here in much better conditions now.” To offer one example: in 2015 the dormitory in which mainly students enrolled in the Hungarian faculty reside was thoroughly renovated with the financial support of Hungary. Since the renovation (cost approx. 1 million EUR), the dormitory also hosts students from Ukrainian faculties. Thanks to further Hungarian support, the physics laboratory is now, according to Spenik, more up-to-date than many similar laboratories in Hungary. Furthermore, students pursuing studies in the Hungarian faculty have considerably more possibilities to travel in Europe or to participate in student exchange programmes than their peers in Ukrainian faculties. Regarding the future, he sees an opportunity in advertising Uzhhorod University in the eastern part of Hungary, because the tuition fee and living costs are lower, and thus it is probably more affordable for many families in the less wealthy region of Hungary. Independently of the future realisation of this plan, the idea points to the notion of the Carpathian basin as a more integrated space envisioned in the new Hungarian kin-state policy document introduced in Chapter 3.

Alongside the development of the Hungarian Department of Uzhhorod National University, and the Transcarpathian Hungarian College in Berehove, numerous schools, kindergartens and small health care units have been refurbished. Due to the fact that Ukraine’s economy is in a critical condition and regional funds and other support are very limited, especially since the events of the Euromaidan, such developments are highly appreciated by the local inhabitants, regardless of ethnicity.

Furthermore, we should mention one more group of actions, called gesture politics. As Dr István Grezsa, government commissioner for cross-border connections between Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county and Transcarpathia region, explained, as part of gesture politics Hungary financially

covers such tasks and projects which would normally be the responsibility of the Ukrainian central or regional government/administration. Among the examples, he mentioned installation of commemorative plaques or a statue of Taras Shevchenko, the Ukrainian national poet, in Berehove. As he emphasised, “We wish to retain the diversity so typical feature of Transcarpathia, because the region’s real strength lies in its social heterogeneity.” This statement might sound like typical political rhetoric, but on the one hand the active initiative role that Hungary takes on in Transcarpathia, and on the other the financial subsidy, have contributed to a situation in which “Today Hungarians in Transcarpathia are unavoidable political factors” (interview with Dr István Grezsa).

Hungary’s influence has not only been emerging in political fields: as described in Chapter 4, Hungarian citizenship has become a golden ticket to avoiding the military draft and finding an easier way to emigrate. Similarly to other V4 countries, Hungary, due to heavy emigration, is also facing a shortage in the labour force, which calls for instant action.¹³ The missing labour force could be substituted with migrants and refugees who have been arriving in the EU in the last couple of years, but the government consistently refuses to accept non-European immigrants.¹⁴ Under such circumstances Transcarpathian Ukrainians, physically and culturally closer to Hungarians, have become valuable assets. While in the case of Hungarians it has become a pure formality to acquire Hungarian citizenship, for non-Hungarian-speaking Transcarpathians proving the minimal necessary language proficiency entails the only impediment. In recognition of this, in 2015-2016 free-of-charge (students are asked to cover the costs of study materials only) language courses were organised by Hungary in 105 sites throughout the region, with 30 participants in each class. The increasing interest in the Hungarian language has aroused business interest as well: Hungarian language courses are mushrooming in private language schools all around Transcarpathia (see Figure 3). We assume that the motivation of Hungary is quite clear: to attract a desperately needed labour force. Before the simplified naturalisation, Hungary was more of a blind spot on the map of Ukrainians seeking a job abroad due to the serious linguistic barrier (Hungarian is not a Slavic language, while Polish, Czech or Slovak are not very difficult to comprehend for a Ukrainian speaker). In the quest for a Ukrainian labour force by the Visegrad countries, Hungary, with easily accessible citizenship, might be able to counterbalance its previous disadvantageous position.

The examples listed above might illustrate that the financial and political support invested by Hungary directly buys influence and effectively contributes to the implementation of certain parts

¹³ <http://dailynewshungary.com/labour-shortages-approach-critical-level-hungary/>. The Hungarian standpoint is that the labour shortage can be tackled with 1) reorientation of students, or workers “to obtain certain shortage qualifications”, 2) reorganisation of vocational programmes offering scholarships; 3) brain gain (EMN 2015).

¹⁴ <http://www.euronews.com/2016/07/19/hungary-resists-foreign-workers-amid-labour-shortages>.

of the country's kin-state policies. Moreover, via diversified gesture politics, the country is not merely nurturing good neighbourly and interethnic relations but – after the weakening of Ukraine owing to the post-Maidan events – taking actions in order to recruit a fresh active labour force among Transcarpathian Hungarians and Ukrainians.

Figure 3: Poster advertising a Hungarian language course in Mukacheve (May 2016)



Photo by Pál Popovics

7. Conclusion

The present study aimed at exploring the complex social-economical-political situation (mainly in the Ukrainian-Hungarian context) which emerged as a consequence of the recent geopolitical events in Ukraine. All interviewees agreed that the present unfavourable processes are rooted not in the events of Euromaidan but in the outbreak of the armed conflict in Donbas region. The armed conflict, military mobilisation, and deep economic recession resulted in social trauma (lack of physical and financial security, hopelessness), which led to changing livelihood strategies of Transcarpathians (including the Hungarian minority).

Triggered by the unrest in Eastern Ukraine, the intensification of – already high – emigration is one of the most spectacular processes, regardless of ethnic belonging. Beyond the magnitude of migration its patterns have also transformed. On the one hand, recently, contrary to the former prevailing strategies, whole families leave, and on the other hand, new, mostly Western European countries appeared as a target for Transcarpathians. In the Ukrainian-Hungarian context, circular migration became a flourishing phenomenon, mostly between Transcarpathia and its neighbouring

territories in Hungary; furthermore, institutionalised cross-border co-operations have also revived in the last two-three years. Regarding the informal cross-border connections, the border still functions as a resource of livelihood; however such a connection has become asymmetrical with the predominance of Transcarpathian actors.

The dynamics of migration in the past few years are maintained and fuelled by two factors: the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine (including the military drafts) and Hungary's kin-state politics, especially the preferential (re)naturalisation simplifying the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship. The latter focuses attention on the role of policies implemented by Hungary, which fundamentally influence regional geopolitics and social processes, thereby affecting individual and family livelihood strategies, migration, cross-border strategies, and other regional powers' migration and kin-state politics. The migration processes of present-day Ukraine are influenced by both intensive labour recruitment performed by the V4 countries and the recently introduced administrative and legal preferences (e.g. *Karta Polaka* in Poland, preferential naturalisation in Hungary). Hence we argue that, despite the rotund statements (mainly by Poland) supporting Ukraine, the western neighbours of the weakening Ukraine have unobtrusively made attempts to take advantage of the changing geopolitical circumstances in order to increase their influence and attract human resources.

Hungary's kin-state politics and the amendment of the citizenship law radically changed the possibilities of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community. The availability of a Hungarian passport increased their emigration towards Hungary and opened the door to free employment in Western Europe; therefore the traditional dilemma of Hungarian kin-state politics again came to the surface: the main goal is to foster transborder Hungarian communities' welfare in their homeland, while their migration to Hungary would easily satisfy the country's demographic and labour needs. The Hungarian governments have elaborated several economic and cultural programmes and projects for the Transcarpathian Hungarians, mostly in the past three years. Nevertheless, agreeing with Bárdi's (2016) conclusions, since migration is the new norm due to the changing social and economic conditions, the above projects supporting staying at home are no longer appropriate for fulfilling their goal; moreover, the preferential naturalisation generated extensive emigration from Transcarpathia.

The numerous projects, measures, occasionally the takeover of some of the Ukrainian state functions – favouring not only the Hungarians but the whole population of Transcarpathia – simultaneously serve Hungarian kin-state politics, the expansion of Hungary's positions in Ukraine and the enticement of the Ukrainian workforce to Hungary. All these factors suggest that the western peripheries of the weakened Ukrainian state serve as a “training ground” for the political

expansion of the Visegrad countries. Thus we argue that rivalry among V4 countries emerged mostly to drain a qualified workforce and students (i.e. human resources). Consequently, the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine – besides its several other geopolitical effects – directly influences regional power relations among the V4 countries.

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