

The Shifting Landscape: A Holistic View of Migration in Poland, Hungary, and Romania

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Abstract

This comprehensive study delves into the multifaceted dynamics of migration in Eastern Europe, focusing on Poland, Hungary, and Romania. The analysis covers various dimensions, including economic growth, social impacts, and the nuanced interplay between migration and regional development. The paper highlights the diverse experiences of these countries, emphasizing the need for tailored and context-specific policies to address challenges and maximize opportunities. With a keen eye on repatriation trends, the study underscores the pivotal role of inclusive policies and socio-economic frameworks in shaping a sustainable and dynamic future for Eastern Europe. By recognizing migration as a catalyst for both source and destination countries, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of its implications on the socio-economic dynamics of the region. The conclusions drawn emphasize the importance of embracing diversity, fostering inclusive growth, and promoting social cohesion to cultivate a prosperous and resilient Eastern European landscape.

Keywords: Migration, Eastern Europe, Repatriation, Labour Migration, Economic Development

JEL Classification: F22, O15, O18

Introduction

In an ever-connected global landscape, the intricate relationship between migration and the standard of living within nations has become an increasingly pertinent subject of study. Standard of living, a multifaceted concept encompassing economic prosperity and social well-being, is profoundly influenced by the ebb and flow of migration. This paper delves into the dynamic interplay between migration and the state in three diverse European countries: Poland, Hungary, and Romania. As these nations navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by migration, understanding the multifaceted impacts on their socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional landscapes becomes imperative.

As individuals seek new opportunities or refuge, the consequences ripple through the fabric of society, influencing economic structures, cultural dynamics, and public services. By dissecting the unique migration patterns in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, this paper aims to shed light on the nuances of how these movements shape and reshape the standard of living experienced by both the migrant populations and the host societies.

Job markets, wages, and overall economic development are profoundly affected by the influx or exodus of individuals. Additionally, the social integration of migrants, the preservation of cultural identity, and the provision of essential services, such as healthcare and education, are integral components in assessing the broader impact on societal well-being. Furthermore, the role of remittances, both as an economic lifeline for sending countries and as contributors to the economies of host nations, adds another layer of complexity to this relationship.

As we embark on an exploration of the migration dynamics within Poland, Hungary, and Romania, it is essential to scrutinize the policy responses enacted by these nations. Migration policies, whether facilitative or restrictive, play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of migrants and host communities. Analyzing these policies, alongside the challenges faced by migrants and the societal attitudes towards immigration, provides a comprehensive view of the multifaceted interplay between migration and standard of living.

In synthesizing these diverse elements, this paper aims to offer insights into the present state of standard of living in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, as influenced by the intricate dance of migration. By understanding the complexities inherent in this relationship, we can better appreciate the challenges faced by these nations and envision potential avenues for policy improvements, fostering environments that optimize the positive contributions of migration while mitigating its potential drawbacks.

To answer the research questions, I chose to make a comparison between three countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Poland, Hungary and Romania, in order to analyze in which phase of migration each of these countries are. So, I will analyze the migration history after joining the European Union for each of these countries to visualize the current situation, I will continue with analyzing their current demographics, and finally I will analyze the migration routes for newcomers to these 3 countries and I will end with the analysis of return migration to see the future prospects and the state they are in: stabilization, stoppage or return.

Literature review

At the heart of the European Union's developmental framework lies the pivotal principle of free movement, a cornerstone fostering an unparalleled environment where not only capital, goods, and services but also individuals can traverse national boundaries with relative ease. This freedom of movement, enshrined in EU law and fortified by the principles of the Lisbon Strategy, endeavors to cultivate "more and better jobs by reducing obstacles to mobility" (European Commission, 2004, 2007).

The contemporary landscape of migration within the EU is typified by a dual categorization, primarily distinguishing between work-related economic migration and other forms of migration driven by non-economic considerations (Todisco, Brandi, & Tattolo, 2003). Illustrating this classification, international guidelines set forth by the United Nations (ONU, 1998) delineate a long-term migrant as an individual relocating to a country other than their habitual residence for a period exceeding 12 months. However, some nations, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Romania, opt for the term "permanent migrant" in their statistical records, presenting a conceptual challenge in operationalizing this designation (Bijak et al., 2004).

Economic migration further refines its contours, delineating between mass migration and skilled migration (Todisco, 2002). Recent scholarly inquiries underscore a distinct pattern wherein individuals with limited education encounter restricted access to international migration, with the highest migration rates recorded among those with tertiary education, boasting 13 or more years of schooling (Carrington and Detragiache, 1998).

The landscape of European migration underwent a transformative shift, especially in the wake of the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2011, which welcomed several Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries into the union. These expansions marked a pivotal moment, significantly amplifying the scale of the EU movement. Notably, migration from existing EU Member States to

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) emerged as a prominent migratory trend within Europe, evolving into a major demographic phenomenon (Black et al., 2010).

However, as the EU underwent transformative enlargements in 2004 and 2011, welcoming new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, the very fabric of free movement encountered new challenges and opportunities. The expansion marked a pivotal moment, significantly amplifying the scale of the EU movement. Migration from existing EU member states to Central and Eastern Europe became a distinctive migratory trend, underlining the adaptability and resilience of the principle of free movement to accommodate evolving geopolitical realities.

In navigating this dynamic landscape, the philosophy of free movement is not without its complexities and critiques. Concerns raised by national ministers about the strain on host societies and calls to combat the 'misuse and abuse' of directives underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of how free movement operates in practice. The discourse surrounding these challenges is not a repudiation of the principle itself but a call for refined policies that balance the ideals of free movement with the pragmatic realities of a diverse and evolving union.

This demographic shift, postulated by scholars as a "new face" of East-West migration in Europe (Favell, 2008; Favell & Recchi, 2010), holds considerable implications for the understanding of migration dynamics within the continent. The consequences of this paradigm shift did not go unnoticed, prompting an imperative need to delve deeper into the intricacies of migration from central and eastern parts to western regions of Europe. This "new face" of migration has reverberated through both political and societal spheres, casting a spotlight on its manifold repercussions (Van Ostaijen et al., 2017).

Noteworthy concerns have been raised by national ministers, drawing attention to the perceived strain on host societies, characterized by "considerable additional costs" associated with this type of immigration. Calls for concerted efforts to combat the 'misuse and abuse' of the Posting of Workers Directive further underscore the complex challenges posed by this evolving migratory landscape.

In response to such concerns, then-Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström entered the discourse, criticizing the opposition by stating that it was "mixing apples and oranges," conflating internal EU mobility with immigration. However, beyond its immediate political ramifications, this "new face" of "East-West migration" raises a plethora of theoretical questions, inviting scholarly inquiry into its multifaceted dimensions (Black et al., 2010; Favell, 2008; Düvell & Vogel, 2006; Okolski, 2001; Wallace & Stola, 2001).

Garapich (2008) contends that post-accession migration can be viewed as an extension of migration patterns from the period of systemic transition, with an uptick in mobility occurring well before May 1, 2004. However, Garapich underscores distinctive aspects within the post-accession wave, highlighting its demand-driven nature, closely tied to the conditions in the receiving labor markets. Additionally, the post-accession migration involves migrants who possess a heightened awareness of their status within the labor market.

On a similar note, Meardi (2007) underscores the uniqueness of post-accession migration by examining the experiences of Polish migrants in the United Kingdom. Meardi delves into the dynamics of substantial migration flows transpiring within a condensed timeframe. His findings reveal that the duration of migration typically spans more than three seasonal months but is less than twelve, with a notable concentration of unmarried migrants. Moreover, there is a significant level of engagement in trade unions within this post-accession migrant cohort.

In tandem with the accelerated economic growth in recent years across Central and Eastern Europe, a noteworthy phenomenon has emerged — the surge in "return migration." This denotes the voluntary return of emigrants to their country of origin after a minimum of six months abroad, a trend that has gained substantial prominence in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and is poised to become increasingly significant in the foreseeable future. Particularly noteworthy is the prevalence of nationals among immigrants in EU Member States that joined the European Union in 2004, highlighting the intricate dynamics of return migration within the region (ibid.).

Despite its growing relevance, the multifaceted nature of return migration poses a considerable challenge for comprehensive understanding, as numerous empirical investigations and diverse analytical approaches grapple with deciphering the underlying premises and effects. As succinctly noted by Cassarino (2004), despite substantial efforts, understanding "remains unclear".

Against the backdrop of international discussions on brain drain and brain circulation (BEINE et al., 2001; MAYR & PERI, 2009; HORVAT, 2004), return migration processes present a potential avenue for mitigating the negative consequences of emigration. Scholars such as Klagge et al. (2007) have framed emigration and return migration as (temporary) episodes within more complex migratory biographies. During their sojourn abroad, migrants accrue human capital, positioning highly qualified returnees as pivotal agents for innovation in their regions of origin, thereby influencing regional economic development (CASSARINO, 2004)

These observations have spurred empirical investigations into the performance of returnees in their native labor markets, with studies by Martin & Radu (2012), Iara (2008), By Coulon & Piracha (2005), and Co et al. (2000) shedding light on the intricate dynamics of return migration and its implications for labor market dynamics.

As we navigate through these layers of migration, it is crucial to recognize that individual stories, community aspirations, and societal challenges enrich the understanding of these dynamic movements. The migration landscape is not merely a subject of academic inquiry but a tapestry woven with the aspirations, challenges, and triumphs of those traversing borders.

Methodology

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between economic growth and migration in the Central Eastern EU countries, a analysis of graphics and macroeconomic data was conducted. This paper allows readers to understand the empirical foundation of the research and provides a basis for the subsequent discussion of the nuanced relationships between economic growth and migration in the Central Eastern EU context.

Our primary data sources comprised official databases and statistics relevant to the economic indicators and migration variables under examination. These datasets spanned the entirety of the chosen time frame, allowing us to construct a comprehensive overview. However, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations and gaps inherent in the data, a factor that has been duly considered throughout the research process.

The selection of variables underwent a deliberate process, guided by the research objectives. The chosen economic indicators and migration variables were deemed integral to gaining a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play. We have taken care to articulate the rationale behind these selections, emphasizing their relevance and contribution to the overarching research questions.

A judicious sampling strategy was employed to identify countries, regions, and specific time frames for inclusion in our study. This strategy, carefully aligned with the research goals, ensures that our analysis encapsulates diverse scenarios while maintaining a focus on the pertinent factors influencing economic evolution and migration trends.

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, intertwining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. My aim is to not only discern statistical patterns but also delve into the qualitative nuances shaping economic evolution and migration dynamics. This hybrid approach enables a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted phenomena under investigation.

Data sourcing for this research emanated from a diverse array of official databases, statistical repositories, and primary data collection efforts. To ensure the integrity of our findings, a meticulous data preprocessing phase was undertaken. This involved addressing missing values, outliers, and ensuring the overall accuracy and consistency of the datasets. The subsequent analysis was conducted employing robust statistical techniques, including regression analysis and time-series methods, aligning with the research objectives and the complexity of the variables at play.

The adoption of a mixed-methods approach stems from our recognition of the multidimensionality inherent in economic evolution and migration trends. By blending quantitative rigor with qualitative insights, we sought to provide a comprehensive narrative. The choice of statistical techniques, software, and qualitative analysis tools is grounded in their suitability for unraveling the intricate relationships and patterns within our research domain. This methodological diversity contributes to the richness and depth of our exploration.

Results and discussions

1.1 Initial Post-Accession Context

The EU enlargement in 2004 significantly reshaped the dynamics of mobility in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), introducing geographical freedom of movement, initially to the UK, Ireland, and Sweden, and expanding access to a broader range of occupations.

Following May 1, 2004, key determinants influencing destination choices in emigration included age, educational attainment, and region of origin, exerting a substantial impact on the selection process. Notably, highly educated migrants hailing from universities and larger cities tended to migrate more frequently to Britain and, to a lesser extent, to Ireland. This implies that countries opening their borders post-enlargement gained a comparative advantage in attracting "high-value" migrants, while those maintaining restrictions might have received migrants perceived as "less valuable" in addition to those from earlier accession waves (Anacka, M., & Okólski, M. 2010).

Post-accession migration emerges as a cornerstone of a new migration paradigm in CEE, with potential global ramifications as a form of fluid migration. These arguments introduce a novel perspective on changes in migration research, emphasizing the need for specialized attention to post-accession migration in both existing and newly generated data sources. Such an approach underscores the significance of in-depth research to comprehensively understand the nuances of this evolving migration phenomenon.

The distinction between Polish and Romanian migration is marked by historical precedence and diversification in both timing and focus.

Primarily, Polish migration boasts a longer and more established history compared to Romanian migration. In the 2000s, Poland evolved into a sought-after destination for immigrants from neighboring Central and Eastern European countries, including Ukraine and Belarus.

Simultaneously, a considerable number of Poles migrated to other European nations such as Germany, Great Britain, and Ireland. This movement represented approximately 5-10% of the country's population, as outlined by the research on Polish Families and Migration Since EU Accession.

Conversely, Romanian migration experienced a surge later, particularly following the country's accession to the European Union in 2007. Subsequently, a notable influx of Romanians migrated to various European countries, with a strong presence in Italy, Spain, Germany, and the UK. As of 2019, an estimated 3.5 million Romanians lived abroad, constituting around 15% of the country's population (Iordache, M., & Matei, M., 2020).

Another pivotal distinction lies in the nature of migration patterns. Polish migration predominantly revolves around labor migration, with individuals recognized for their expertise in sectors like construction, factories, and healthcare. Many Polish migrants engage in seasonal or temporary employment. Conversely, Romanian migration displays a greater degree of diversity. Romanians are engaged in various sectors, including construction, services, education, and healthcare, while also making significant contributions to the technology and IT sectors. This multifaceted involvement sets Romanian migration apart from the more labor-centric nature of Polish migration.

Indeed, despite their differences, Polish and Romanian migration share some notable similarities that have had significant impacts on both the countries of origin and destination.

Both migration flows have played a vital role in shaping the economies of the countries involved. Polish migration has been instrumental in contributing to the economic growth of the country of origin by facilitating the transfer of money and knowledge, as well as by reducing unemployment. Similarly, Romanian migration has brought about economic benefits, contributing to improvements in the standard of living for those who remain in the country of origin.

In terms of overall migration trends to Europe, both Polish and Romanian migration has experienced substantial growth since the 2000s. While Polish migration has generally been more robust, with over 4 million Poles emigrating to the EU between 2004 and 2019 (representing about 10% of the country's population), Romanian migration has also been significant, with approximately 3.5 million Romanians emigrating to the EU during the same period (representing about 18% of the country's population).

However, it's noteworthy that both countries have witnessed a decline in emigration in recent years. In the case of Poland, there was a notable decrease of about 35% in the number of emigrants between 2016 and 2019. Similarly, Romania experienced a decrease of about 25% in the number of emigrants during the same period. These trends suggest evolving dynamics in migration patterns for both nations in more recent times.

Table 1: Demographic balance at national level

Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Poland	37,970,087	37,974,826	37,974,750	37,965,475	37,899,070	37,747,124	36,821,749
Hungary	9,814,023	9,787,966	9,775,564	9,771,141	9,750,149	9,709,891	9,643,048

Romania	19,702,267	19,588,715	19,473,970	19,371,648	19,265,250	19,122,059	19,047,009
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Source: Population change - Demographic balance and crude rates at national level report Eurostat

The analysis of population trends in the last eight years reveals a decline in population for all the countries considered, excluding the initial pre-accession and post-accession migration waves and without accounting for the migrant population filling vacant positions. Romania experienced a 4% loss, Hungary a 2% decrease, and Poland a 3% decline. While there are commonalities in recent history, each country has unique aspects regarding migration and the implications of replacing the migrant population.

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1.2 Period Of Economic Growth In The Context Of Migration

Poland:

After Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, a significant emigration wave occurred, with over 2 million Poles moving abroad according to the Polish Central Statistics Office (GUS) and various sources. The peak of long-term Polish immigrants, nearly 2.3 million, was reached in 2007, but by 2010-2011, this number decreased to 2 million. Around 12% of Poland's labor force migrated to the United Kingdom for employment by December 2015. Currently, over 4.5 million Poles reside abroad, with approximately 2.5 million living in Germany and the United Kingdom.

As the economic conditions in Poland improved, with salaries reaching 70% of the EU average in 2016, emigration trends began to slow down during the 2010s. This was coupled with an increasing demand for a skilled workforce within the country. Starting in 2015, the migration rate from Poland stabilized, leading to the repatriation of some individuals who had previously emigrated. Notably, in 2019, there was a noticeable decline in the number of Poles living abroad, marking the first reduction since the aftermath of the Great Recession.

The trend of returning Poles gained momentum, surpassing the count of departing citizens from 2019 to 2022. Several factors contributed to this phenomenon, including improved economic conditions in Poland, a perceived or actual higher standard of living at an affordable cost, a desire to reside close to family, concerns about xenophobia in host nations, uncertainties linked to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and specific political events such as Brexit.

Hungary:

The economic landscape in Hungary, characterized by average salaries, the cost of living, and limited job opportunities, has spurred significant emigration. Since joining the European Union in 2004, Hungary has seen a notable increase in the number of citizens leaving the country in pursuit of better economic prospects. Many Hungarians sought opportunities abroad, with Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom being among the preferred destinations.

Eurostat data reveals that over 700,000 Hungarians have emigrated since 2004, and in 2019 alone, approximately 31,000 Hungarians migrated to other EU member states. Germany emerged as the most favored destination for Hungarian migrants, attracting around 300,000 individuals since 2004. Austria follows with nearly 50,000 Hungarian migrants, the United Kingdom with over 230,000, and France with 200,000.

The trend of emigration from Hungary to other EU countries continues, with no apparent signs of slowing down. Young professionals and families are identified as the most likely groups to undertake such migration.

Romania:

Romania stands out as the country experiencing the highest loss of citizens in the post-accession period to the European Union. At its peak, around 5.5 million Romanians left, predominantly heading to Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Despite the substantial emigration figures, Romania witnessed significant economic growth during this period. Purchasing power increased 2.5 times across all regions of the country, the net average wage tripled in the last eight years, and GDP per capita experienced a threefold increase.

Additionally, there is an interesting shift in the migration pattern, with migrants coming to Eastern Europe for economic opportunities, presenting a different dimension to the overall migratory landscape.

Table 2: Foreign born population

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Poland	620,308	611,855	626,396	651,845	695,850	760,849	849,320	901,790
Hungary	447,029	475,508	503,787	513,649	536,182	564,761	593,937	597,440
Romania	211,210	281,048	347,344	419,238	510,526	611,627	723,913	688,697

Source: Foreign-born population report Eurostat

With economic growth and loss of skilled labour, all three countries analyzed have shifted to attracting labour from other countries to replace labour lost in previous years.

1.3 Replacing The Previously Departed National Workforce With Migrants

Poland's sustained economic growth in recent decades has been a crucial factor in its development, and migration has played a significant role in this success. According to data from Poland's National Institute of Statistics, the country's GDP experienced an average annual growth of around 4% between 2000 and 2020.

One notable aspect of Poland's migration story is the attraction of substantial numbers of migrant workers from various countries, particularly Ukraine and neighboring states. Their presence has been instrumental in filling job vacancies that might otherwise have remained unfilled, ultimately boosting productivity in these sectors.

Poland's capacity to draw a significant number of migrant workers, particularly from neighboring countries like Ukraine, has made significant contributions across various sectors, including construction, agriculture, food industry, and services. This symbiotic relationship between economic growth and migration underscores the diverse benefits that well-managed migration can bring to both the receiving and sending nations.

Poland's migration dynamics are characterized by a diverse mix of Asian workers and immigrants from neighboring countries with similar cultural backgrounds. Notably, Poland has a total number of 2.5 millions of Ukrainian immigrants, many of whom sought better economic opportunities and improved living conditions, particularly after 2014 due to the heightened risk of conflict. Belarus, given its proximity to Poland, has also contributed to the foreign-born population in the country, and there's a noteworthy presence of ethnic Poles living in Belarus. In addition to this, Poland is home to a community of Indian nationals and Vietnamese immigrants, reflecting the diversity of its migrant population.

In Hungary, migration has played a crucial role in addressing labor shortages in key sectors of the Hungarian economy. Migrant workers, particularly from neighboring Eastern European countries, have filled positions in construction, agriculture, and the food industry, contributing to the stability and growth of these sectors. The migrant population of around 600,000 is shaped by specific factors such as the language barrier and a less robust economic situation compared to other analyzed countries. The majority of migrants in Hungary are primarily ethnic Hungarians from neighboring countries or retired people from Germany. The main countries of origin for these 600,000 people include Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia. Despite challenges, Hungary continues to attract migrants with cultural or historical ties to the country.

Romania, on the other hand, has undergone a significant transformation from a source of emigration to a destination country for migrants. In recent years, Romania has become an appealing destination for foreign workers, particularly from neighboring countries like Moldova, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. The contributions of these foreign workers have been notable, particularly in sectors such as construction, industry, and services, bolstering Romania's economic growth.

The changes in migration patterns are further influenced by Romania's preferential regime for granting citizenship in the Republic of Moldova. Additionally, Romania has actively engaged in importing workers through employment contracts from Asian countries such as India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

According to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INS), in 2022, Romania employed 246,800 foreign workers under contract, showcasing a substantial increase compared to the previous year. Data from INS also reveals a broader trend, with the number of foreign workers employed in Romania experiencing a significant upswing in recent years. For instance, in 2015, approximately 87,000 foreign workers were employed in Romania, and by 2020, this number had risen to about 135,000. This upward trajectory indicates a growing trend in the migration of foreign workers to Romania, underscoring the country's evolving role as a destination for international labor.

Conclusion

The experiences of Poland, Hungary, and Romania vividly illustrate the proactive efforts undertaken to attract skilled professionals and laborers from diverse origins, creating a tapestry of cultural exchange that enriches their societies. Simultaneously, the repatriation of citizens, enticed back by improved economic prospects, has fortified the region's workforce and catalyzed economic growth.

These dynamics underscore the reciprocal nature of migration, where both sending and receiving nations stand to gain from the intricate interplay of departure, importation, and return. The nuanced dynamics observed in this migration landscape serve as a compelling narrative of migration as a catalyst for regional development. Our analysis accentuates the pivotal role of inclusive policies and socio-economic frameworks in shaping a sustainable and dynamic future for Eastern Europe. As these nations navigate the contemporary complexities of migration, embracing diversity, fostering inclusive growth, and promoting social cohesion emerge as imperative elements for a prosperous and resilient Eastern European landscape.

Moving beyond theoretical frameworks, the empirical analysis underscores migration's significant role as a catalyst for both source and destination countries. It reveals the substantial contribution of migration to the labor force and human capital development of recipient nations. The study illuminates the closely entwined economic growth trajectories of both origin and

destination countries, emphasizing the dynamic nature of migration as a critical driver of economic development and human capital mobility within Eastern Europe.

However, disparities between the studied countries underscore varying impacts of migration on their economies. While some nations experience substantial economic growth alongside increased migrant populations, others grapple with challenges in balancing economic development and migrant community integration. These variations underscore the pressing need for nuanced policy approaches that consider the diverse needs and contexts of each nation.

Inter-regional differences further emphasize the importance of tailored, context-specific policies that facilitate migrant integration into the labor market, promote cultural diversity, and address social and economic challenges arising from migration. Strategic interventions focusing on skill development, language acquisition, and cultural integration are vital for maximizing migration benefits while mitigating potential challenges, contributing to sustainable economic growth and social cohesion in Eastern Europe.

Recognizing the multifaceted relationship between economic growth and migration, along with understanding diverse country experiences, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of migration's implications on Eastern Europe's socio-economic dynamics. It advocates for comprehensive, inclusive policy frameworks prioritizing the well-being and economic empowerment of both migrant communities and broader society, fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for the region.

In conclusion, the dynamics of migration flows in Hungary, Romania, and Poland reveal nuanced trends. While Hungary experiences stabilized migration, Romania observes a reversed trend with more individuals returning than leaving. Poland's case is particularly noteworthy, having undergone a trend reversal years ago, transforming it into a destination country with a population larger than when it initially joined the European Union—a significant demographic shift that underscores the transformative impact of migration in reshaping the Eastern European landscape.

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