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The interplay between family and emigration from Romania

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Abstract
East European migration became a significant feature in the post 1990 Europe. Although migration based on family connections is the most frequently used form of legal entry into the European Union, and family structure influences (and it is influenced by) migration, in the European literature more attention has been paid to individual (labour) migration rather than family migration. This paper intends to be a review of studies on family migration from Romania. Through this study, 'family migration' is used to understand not only the migration of the whole family unit but also migration of individuals within the context of family.

Keywords: Migration; family; Eastern Europe; Romania; children

Introduction

The fall of the Berlin wall, followed later by the integration of several East-European into the European Union has added an East-West (as opposed to South-North) dimension to European migration. Although the number of migrants was not as high as expected, the phenomenon is significant. While at the beginning of the 1990s, the East-European emigration was dominated by the waves of refugees leaving former Yugoslavia and minorities (Germans going to Germany or Roma claiming refugee status), the 2000s decade saw an increasing number of economic emigrants going West. The post 2000 border agreements between Schengen countries and several East European countries and the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements facilitated this population movement. Among the East-European countries, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland stand out in terms of the number of emigrants and emigration rate. Romanians are currently the second and Poles the fourth largest immigrant community within European Union; it is estimated that 19% of the working-age Romanians and 10% of the Bulgarians live currently abroad.

In the European literature, more attention has been paid to individual (labour) migration rather than family migration. However, migration based on family connections is the most often used form of legal entry into EU coun-

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tries (Kofmann, 2004) and family structure influences (Mincer, 1978) and it is influenced by migration. Generally, family migration is a topic that started to receive increasing attention in the past decade. Researchers have investigated topics such as how marriage influences the likelihood of migrating (Mincer, 1978), who initiates migration in a family and what the influences of migration are on fertility (Kulu, 2005; Singley & Landale, 1998), union dissolution (Frank et al., 2005; Boyle et al., 2008) and spouse income and career (Boyle et al., 2001; Cooke, 2003; Cooke et al., 2009). The large variety of 'family' types (cohabiting and same sex couples, single parent families) further complicates the topic of family migration.

This article focuses on migration as a demographic phenomenon influenced by, and influencing, family structure in Romania within the general East-European context. In an attempt to delimitate the reciprocal influences between family and migration in the context of Romanian emigration, I will approach 'family migration' broadly so as to include individual migration events within the general context of family rather than the migration of the whole family unit (Cooke, 2008).

Characteristics of the East European emigration

Emigration from East-European countries has certain demographic and spatial characteristics, which make it unique among other types of migration. In terms of spatiality, although some East-Europeans migrate to Canada and the US, most of the East-European emigration is currently directed toward European Union countries (Anghel, 2013, Manfras, 1992; Kaczmarczyk & Okólski, 2008, Sandu, 2010) . This is mainly due to the travel facilities offered by citizenship and border regime in certain European countries, such as European Union and Schengen area. European Union has been built as an economic community promoting free trade and labour force circulation between member states. A citizen of a European country who wants to live and work in any other EU country is free to do so. Thus, EU countries have had to define special immigration rules and regulations for EU citizens as opposed to non-EU citizens. Schengen area, where borders between countries are only symbolic, includes most of the European countries (with the exception of Ireland, UK, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus) as well as non EU countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway). The absence of legal barriers between hosts and origin countries leads to a larger circulatory component in migration since people can go back and forth between countries.

A special feature of the East-European emigration is its unique relationship with fertility in the country of origin. Generally large emigration originates in countries with high fertility, with a young median age. Eastern Europe, however, has one of the lowest levels of fertility in the world - 1.3 to 1.6 children per woman in 2009 (Eurostat, 2009). This 'lowest low' fertility makes large emigration unsustainable on long term: if fertility continues to stay low, the working-age population in East-European countries will decrease dramati-

cally, reducing the pool of potential migrants both in terms of numbers but also in terms of incentives to move, because it will be easier for young people find jobs in the country of origin.

Other characteristics – larger proportion of divorced/separated women (versus men) among emigrants, significant number of children left home in the care of relatives or in state care and increasing proportion of emigrating couples – suggest that there is a connection between emigration and family structure in Eastern Europe, in Romania in particular. Family migration is in particular relevant for the East-European context because of the traditional low age at marriage and at first child (Monnier & Rychtarikova, 1992), which pushes potential emigrants to face the problem of marriage, childbearing *and* migration at the same time or to choose between them.

Emigration from Romania

Romania has the largest rate of emigration among East European countries and there are estimated to be between two to three million Romanian emigrants from a country that had 19 million people in 2011 (Romanian National Institute for Statistics). As most of the Romanian emigrants go to European Union countries, Romanians are the second largest migrant community in the EU (after Turks) (Vasileva, 2011). Immediately after 1990, Romanians migrated toward Germany, Hungary, Turkey, Israel and Italy while later on, especially after 2001, Romanian migration concentrated toward South-European countries (Sandu, 2010). The ethnic structure of these emigration waves differs as well: in early 1990s, most emigrants were German, Hungarian or Roma while recent waves have been formed mainly by ethnic Romanians. Although Romania is not yet a member of the Schengen area and various European countries still impose restrictions toward the hiring of Romanians, since 2002 Romanian citizens can travel and stay up to three months legally in any Schengen and European Union country. Data for 2007-2008 show that currently 27% of all Romanian emigrants lived in Spain and 38% lived in Italy. It is difficult to have a good estimation of general emigration trends from Romania, but Table 1 gives information on Romanian emigration trends to Spain and Italy in particular:

Romania's accession to the EU is often blamed for the large number of Romanian immigrants to Italy and Spain. However, the large size of the Romanian community in these countries represents the cumulative effect of several factors such as the economic restructuration of the Romanian economy after 1990, strong commercial connections between the host and origin countries, similarity in language (Romance languages), guest-worker programs implemented by both Italy and Spain after the 1990s and a general *laissez faire* policy toward illegal immigrants (Bradatan and Sandu, 2012; Stanek, 2009). After the 1990s, Italy became Romania's most important trading partner. Italian investments in Romania were six times higher in 2000 than in 1995 as many Italian companies moved to Romania because of the cheap labour. Ital-

ian firms put pressure on their government to allow Romanian immigrants to work and get trained in Italy, leading to an increasing flux of Romanian immigrants (Martin and Straubhaar, 2002).

Table 1. Stock of Romanian immigrants, Spain and Italy

	Spain	Italy
1999	5,082	33,777*
2000	10,983	61,212*
2001	24,856	69,999*
2002	33,705	95,039
2003	54,688	177,812
2004	83,372	248,849
2005	192,134	297,570
2006	211,325	342,200
2007	603,889	625,278
2008	718,844	796,477
2009	751,688	887,763
2010	840,682	-

Source: Istat, Italy; Secretaria de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración, Spain
** Migration Policy Institute Data Hub*

The economic recession during the1997-1999 affected significantly an already weak Romanian economy and, in particular, the construction sector as the number of people working in this sector decreased by almost 30% (INSEE website). During this period of time, Spain needed more and more workers for its buoyant construction sector, an opportunity which Romanian workers did not miss. The Spanish government also encouraged the immigration of Romanians by offering temporary work contracts to Romanians willing to work in agriculture. About 20% of emigrants who left Romania for Spain during 1996-2000 did so through placement companies (Serban & Mihai, 2008). Once started, the emigration built on networks and Romanians became the largest immigrant community in Italy (after 2004) and Spain (after 2009).

Migration and family issues

Many migration sending countries tend to have high fertility, strong gender inequalities, low woman-labour force participation and level of education (World Bank, 2010). This is not the Romania's case, however, where fertility is well below replacement level and women are fully integrated in the labour force. Due to the Marxist ideology and the lack of economic boom (as recorded by the US and Western European countries) after WWII, women in East-European countries were pushed toward getting educated and participating in the labour force. After Stalin's death, they also had access to contraceptive methods and abortion in most of the East-European countries, which likely contributed to a low fertility and increased their labour force participa-

tion. Even in countries with strong pro-natalist policies such as Romania, the 'stay-home mother' was never promoted as an ideal (Bradatan & Firebaugh, 2007), because the lack of economic development made it impossible for a couple to survive on only one salary.

In Romania, women represented in 2009 56.3% of all population involved in tertiary education while the occupation rate (population age 15-64) was 52% for women and 65.7% for men (Eurostat, 2011). The difference between women and men occupation rate is explained by the earlier age at retirement for women (57-59). Migrants, both men and women, have a also high labour force participation but while the level of education is similar for migrant men and women, there is a statistically significant difference between their wages (Table 2). The occupation sector plays an important role in this difference: most women tend to work in household care and services while men work in construction where salaries tend to be higher (Bradatan & Sandu, 2012).

Table 2. Economic and educational characteristics of Romanian immigrants

	Total	Men	Women
Spain			
Labour force participation rate (age 16-64)	89.40%	95.40%	82.50%
Income (Euros per hour)	5.84	6.38	5.1
Education attainment			
Primary and less	17.30%	16.20%	18.70%
Secondary	73.70%	76.60%	70.50%
Tertiary	8.90%	7.30%	10.80%
Italy			
Labour force participation rate (age 18-64)	90.20%	94.50%	84.50%
Education attainment			
Primary and less	12.90%	14.00%	11.50%
Secondary	79.50%	78.90%	80.40%
Tertiary	7.50%	7.10%	8.10%

Source: Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, 2007; Romanian Community in Italy survey, 2007

It is expected that high levels of women labour force participation would deter family migration (Mincer, 1978) but this does not seem to happen in the Romanian case. The permeable borders between Romania and (other) EU countries facilitate circular migration and it might be one of the reasons why migration is high despite a high level of women labour force participation. Family reunification is a relatively important reason for Romanians, especially women (Stanek, 2009) as 25.3% of Romanian migrants in Spain identify 'family reunification' as an important reason for migrating. One characteristic of the Romanian emigration, especially toward Spain, is a large percentage of couples moving together from the country of origin (Table 3):

The majority of migrants as well as stayers are married but, as Table 3 shows, a characteristic of Romanian migration is a larger proportion of divorced women among emigrants in comparison with the stayers' population.

Controlling for age structure, divorced/separated women seem to be two times more numerous among emigrants than among Romanian residents, while the percentage of divorced men is similar among stayers and migrants (results not shown). While the current available data do not include information on the timing of divorce versus migration, divorce might be an important trigger for women emigration, although it does not play any role in the emigration of men. Probably divorced women try to make up for the lost (husband's) income by migrating to countries with higher incomes than Romania, in an attempt to keep the standard of life at the levels recorded before divorce. As children are usually left in the care of mothers, this trend of high rates of emigration for divorced women might explain the large number of children left in Romania in the care of relatives other than parents.

Table 3. Romanian immigrants' family structure information

	Men	Women
% married /cohabiting		
Italy (2007)	49.50%	59.30%
Spain(2007)	55.10%	53.40%
Spain(2008)	51.90%	58.70%
% married /cohabiting living with spouse		
Italy (2007)	62.20%	60%
Spain(2007)	86.20%	92.50%
Spain(2008)	66.40%	72%
% divorced /separated/widow(er)		
Italy (2007)	6.60%	11.20%
Spain(2007)	3.00%	10.80%
Spain(2008)	8.10%	12.10%

Source: Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, 2007; Romanian Community in Italy survey, 2007; Romanian Community in Spain survey, 2008

Children are another relevant topic within the context of family migration. Children might accompany their parents through migration, just as they might be left home in the care of the other parent or other relatives. A study done in 2007 (by Gallup Romania, at the request of UNICEF and the organization Alternative from Iasi) estimated that there are 350,000 children in Romania with one or both parents working abroad[1] and about a third of them had both parents working abroad. Although their families have more economic resources and fewer children than the families with non-emigrant parents, children of emigrants tend to have poorer educational outcomes. The study referred above shows that children grades 5th to 8th with at least one emigrant parent have a GPA significantly lower than those with non-immigrant parents. However, for children with only one parent working abroad, family characteristics fully explained the poorer academic achievement: children with

[1] Evenimentul Zilei, 04/17/2008, http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/euronavetistii-romani-au-lasat-in-urma-350000-de-copii-800139.html, accessed on 08/24/2013.

emigrant parents come more often from divorced or separated couples, with lower educational level and occupational prestige. If both parents work abroad, the child's educational outcomes are significantly poorer, and the difference is not explained by any other factors (Tufis, 2008).

Although there are a significant number of children left in Romania, some families – especially if they are intact – migrate together with their children. Table 4 offers some details on Romanian migrant families in Italy who have children with them and Romanian migrant families in Spain who have children with them or they left them home.

Table 4. Children of Romanian immigrants

	Men	Women
% having at least one child with them		
Italy (2007)	21.10%	29.60%
Spain(2007)	40.40%	48.20%
Spain(2008)	24.10%	39.80%
% with at least one child left home		
Spain(2007)	17.10%	16.20%

Source: Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, 2007; Romanian Community in Italy survey, 2007; Romanian Community in Spain survey, 2008

Table 4 shows that a significant percentage of children moved to or were born in the host country. In Spain, in 2006 there were estimated to be 54,741 Romanian children (age 0-14). The existence of this group poses problems especially for circular migrants: if the parents move back and forth between origin and destination countries, children will have to get integrated into two different school systems and peer-groups. This might bring advantages (bilingualism, high level of adaptability), but it might also create psychological problems and schooling issues.

Conclusions

After 1990, there was a continuous increase in the number of East-European emigrants, Romanians in particular, with many of them moving toward EU countries. The direction of this emigration is influenced by the origin country's ethnic structure, economic and cultural factors as well as policies in host countries. While many migrants move together with or follow their spouses/partners, there is a larger proportion of divorced/separated women than men migrating. Unlike other migration streams, Romanian migrant women and men have comparable high rates of labour force participation and education level, but women tend to have lower incomes than men. Although fertility is low in Romania, a significant number of children are involved in these migration movements: some of them are left home, in the care of relatives or of the state, while others join their parents. As the literature shows, the effects of parents' emigration on children are mixed: while emigra-

tion leads to economic improvement in the households, children left home might suffer from a lack of supervision and have academically poor outcomes.

The 2008 economic crisis led to a high rate of unemployment in both origin and host countries. In Spain, for example, rate of unemployment reached 25% and above, with immigrants and youth having the highest levels. Most immigrants come from developing regions and they have little, if any, protection from their origin state. In the host country, as non-citizens, they enjoy little protection as well, especially if they are illegal. For those who have residency, in many cases their residency is tied in with employment – if they lose their jobs, they risk losing their residency as well and to either return home or become illegal (Arango, 2009). However, people who already developed social networks, have their families with them and are better adjusted to the environment will be more likely to stay. As Breen (1997) mentioned, family is one of the institutions that can offer support during times of crisis, so we can expect that, when an economic crisis hits, those who are married and living together with their spouses would be able to resist better than those who do not have this type of support.

The rates of emigration from Eastern Europe, and in particular Romania, will most probably decrease in the future if current demographic and economic trends continue. Low fertility rates make this wave of emigration unsustainable on long term because the strong decrease in the number of children born after 1990 shrunk the working-age population in Romania. As the Romanian economy gets out of the economic depression, more and more of these people may find jobs at home and will be less pressured to leave. Moreover, as the experience of Spain and Italy show, when the origin country's economy bounces, some emigrants return. As time goes by and if the economy improves, Romania might become itself a country of immigration because of the old age-structure as well as its geographical position as a border country for the European Union.

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