

## **Social networks and social capital in the immigration process into Hungary**

(Provisional abstract)

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Ethnic and social networks act as important catalysts of international migration throughout the world. Over the past decades a number of studies have been emphasised the role of social networks in maintaining migration flows and in integration of migrants in different countries.

In Hungary, highly regulated and suppressed migration processes were replaced after the 1989 transition by a powerful immigration that was determined by the inflow of migrants from neighbouring countries, primarily Romania. Beyond political and economic factors, an important determining role in this process was played by the social networks which existed between Hungary and the ethnic Hungarian communities of the neighbouring countries as a consequence of the shared historical background, ethnicity and mother tongue. These social networks, emerging along ties of the family, kinships and friendships (yet always on an ethnic basis), developed further with the ongoing migration and continued to play an important part in sustaining and expanding the migration movement. Today, when the dominant patterns of immigration are secondary migration in the form of family reunification, and chain migration which works through kinship and friendship ties, it is becoming apparent that immigration into Hungary has started to become a self-perpetuating process.

The effect of social networks may be captured at three stages: in the pre-migration phase, during the migration itself and in the post-migratory phase. In all three of these phases the key concept is the social capital provided by these social networks.

Before migration actually takes place, the network of relationships influences the decision-making process: the attitude of the micro-level social environment and the model of

migration by the contact persons who had moved earlier, are just as determining as the presence of other, non-immigrant contact people in the target country. Interpersonal ties also play a part in the selection of migrants: these ties, and the information and resources that flow through them, determine who makes the decision about migration and when, and also the point in time when the move is actually carried out.

The social networks which are active during migration, i.e. the persons who move together from one country to the other, as well as the help received directly after the migration, play an important part in assisting the initial adaptation of migrants. Long-term integration, however, is also defined by the type of new relationships the migrants develop in the receiving society. Newcomers often make use of the experiences of earlier immigrants and the social networks they had developed.

The aim of the poster is to present, on the basis of a survey carried out in 2002 among immigrants in Hungary, the differences between various socio-demographic groups in terms of social resources and social capital during the various phases of the migration process. Further, through this poster we aim to reveal how far the social network of migrants, and thus their successful social integration in host society, is determined in their post-migratory phase (beyond by their socio-demographic characteristics and human capital) by their pre-migration social capital.