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# WORKING PAPERS

November 2014

Developing scenarios  
of migratory and labour market  
processes in South-Eastern Europe:  
foresight findings

Jointly for our common future

**No.5**

Lucia Mýtna Kureková

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Lucia Mýtna Kureková

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## SEEMIG WORKING PAPERS SERIES

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## Contents

1. Introduction.....	9
2. Objectives .....	10
3. SEEMIG foresight methodology .....	12
A. Foresight as a method .....	12
B. SEEMIG approach .....	13
4. Key Findings of national foresights.....	15
A. Key drivers of migration.....	15
B. Scenario themes .....	17
1. Migration as an opportunity versus as a challenge .....	17
2. Human capital as a resource and the threat of brain drain .....	18
3. Education systems as an (intervening) factor in positive migration dynamics .....	18
4. Regional disparities are a pressing concern.....	18
5. Ageing and demographic decline .....	19
6. Immigration inevitable, but not always desirable.....	19
7. Migration affected by broader international processes .....	20
8. Improved quality and stability of national institutions and policies as a key aspect of positive migration futures .....	20
9. Ambivalent perception of (free mobility in) the EU.....	20
10. New forms of labour mobility and communication .....	21
5. Areas of policy focus emerging from foresights.....	22
1. Managing immigration and its effects.....	22
2. Managing emigration and its effects.....	23
3. Incentivizing return migration and integration .....	23
4. Demography.....	23
6. SEEMIG policy recommendations in an international context.....	24
7. Recommendations for the enhancement and use of foresight methodology.....	25
8. Conclusion .....	27
References.....	29
List of SEEMIG Working Papers .....	31



## 1. Introduction

This report synthesizes foresight exercises conducted in eight countries of the SEEMIG project partner countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania – to highlight key themes being discussed across the region of Southern and Eastern Europe with respect to future migratory, demographic and labour market trends. The foresight exercises were organized by national teams in the respective countries through November 2013 – January 2014 following a common methodological guideline developed by Infostat (Toth 2013). Foresights in each country involved three types of stakeholders: decision-makers, experts, and migrants or civil society representatives who were brought together to discuss migration futures in a series of workshops resulting in scenario development.

The aim of national foresights was to discuss and identify the main drivers of labour migration processes, to develop two scenarios – positive and negative - of likely future pathways by 2025 along these key drivers, and to imagine how the life-histories of hypothetical individuals living within these scenarios would evolve.<sup>1</sup> The general focus of the foresight has been on labour migration and workforce mobility, rather than on other forms of migration (e.g. asylum seeking), which reflects the overall analytical and conceptual approach of the SEEMIG project which defines migration as a social phenomenon closely interlinked with labour market and other demographic processes. The ultimate goal of the foresight exercises was to classify key challenges and opportunities stemming from envisaged scenarios of migration and labour market developments, and to outline key areas of policy implications or recommendations in the individual countries. While policy focus was originally not envisaged as a strong part of the foresight exercise by methodological guidelines prepared by Toth (2013), it was implicitly present throughout the foresight discussions and was brought forward by authors of the national foresight reports at the analytical stage of the data collected during the foresight workshops.

The SEEMIG foresight approach was organized as a qualitative exploratory approach based on creativity methods (brain mapping and brainstorming) and scenario building on two levels: macro and micro (Toth 2013) and focused on outlining reasonable pathways leading to the future in migration and demographic trends by 2025, based on current perceptions, contemporary trends as well as possible dramatic events.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the country teams, two teams deviated from the two scenario framework proposed in the methodological guidelines: Austria and Hungary. The Austrian foresight developed six scenarios (Fassmann, Gruber, and Musil 2014), while the Hungarian foresight worked with four scenarios. For justification please refer to the national foresight reports. Advantages and disadvantages of more versus fewer scenarios is discussed in Section V of this report.

## 2. Objectives

Key objectives of the SEEMIG foresight exercise conducted as part of WP5 have been several. First, given a predominant focus of the SEEMIG project on labour migration and labour market data quality and improvement, the foresight exercise serves as a complementary approach to historical analysis and quantitatively focused parts of the SEEMIG effort (forecasts, online survey, population projections, and comparative national and regional database). Second, with the exception of Austria, the foresight method so far has been relatively unknown in the SEEMIG countries. Hence, it introduces a relatively unknown, yet promising field of qualitative futures studies to the partnership of SEEMIG, consisting of statistical offices, local governments and research institutions; and seeks to enhance the applications of the method in Southern and Eastern European countries. Third, its participatory nature, future-oriented focus and policy-rich elements provide tools which contribute well to the general objectives of the SEEMIG project, which aims to prepare a set of strategic documents and to inform policy change. In particular, incorporating the views of civic groups, experts and decision makers leads to diverse but specific policy areas which the various participants see as key fields with regard to future developments. These can be seen as areas for data collection improvement. Fourth, given that SEEMIG project partners cover a range of countries and regions, foresight synthesis helps us to see how migration and its implications are perceived across the region of South-Eastern Europe, what the challenges are and opportunities stemming from these processes and which policy implications and interventions stakeholders envisage as important or even necessary for a prosperous future for their countries and regions.

This comparative synthesis report reinforces variation in historical trajectories of migration, demographic and labour market trends identified in earlier project outputs (Fassmann, Musil, and Gruber 2014) and reflects different stages of the migration cycle and types of migration status (old immigration countries, new immigration countries and emigration countries) which characterize the SEEMIG partner countries.

The key findings of foresights' synthesis based on input from the participants of the foresight exercises can be summarized as follows:

- While demographic development with declining fertility levels and population ageing is taken as given, migration represents an area where effective policy intervention can shape the future.
- Migration is inevitable, but its precise contours will depend on policies implemented and societal attitudes formed and shaped.
- Economic factors are considered a key driver of future migratory flows across the SEEMIG partner countries.
- In most SEEMIG countries, immigration is perceived as an opportunity from a labour market perspective. It is seen as a 'trademark' of prosperity (Slovenia, Italy, Austria) and can address the issues of labour shortages (Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia) and counterbalance demographic decline. A further opportunity ensues from student immigration which should be encouraged (Serbia, Hungary).

- Emigration, if unmanaged, is often perceived as a threat to prosperous future development, especially in the countries which can be considered “emigration countries” (Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia). This challenges the EU vision in which the free mobility of labour represents one of the key cornerstones of the European Union and is envisaged to provide benefits to the whole EU community. The current emigration patterns seem to be permanent, rather than circular, falling short of the EU policy goals.
- Lack of good governance, corruption and political instability are in many countries perceived as key factors encouraging emigration and discouraging return migration. Discontent with current politics and policy-making came through the foresight discussions in several countries.
- Negative scenarios of the future were often conceptualized as being the “status quo”, that is situations described as existing in the respective countries.
- With migration being a complex social and cross-cutting phenomenon, areas for policy intervention are seen to necessitate to go well beyond migration policy focus alone.

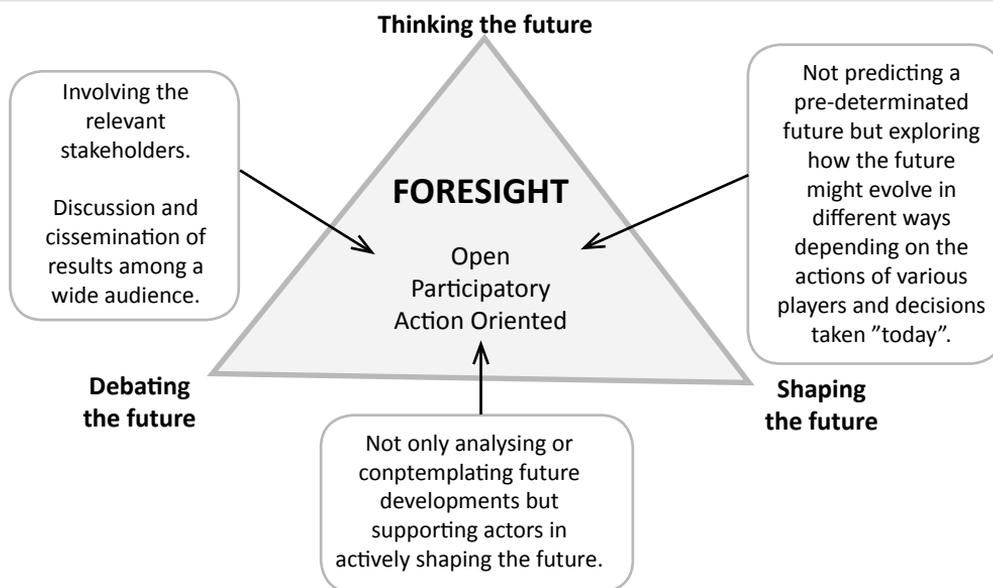
This report is structured as follows: Section II defines the foresight method in general and describes its specific features applied in the SEEMIG project. Section III presents key findings of national foresights and presents themes occurring across national foresights. Section IV synthesizes areas for policy focus based on foresight exercises with reference to immigration, emigration, return migration and integration, and demography. The final section discusses difficulties faced during implementation of foresight exercises by national foresight teams and focuses on methodological recommendations with respect to foresight methodology.

### 3. SEEMIG foresight methodology

#### A. Foresight as a method

Foresight as a methodological approach converges policy analysis, strategic planning and futures studies. It can be conducted on a range of topics (scientific, industrial, social, political, cultural) and has been applied in different disciplines (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001). It emerged in a decision-making context following WWII within military strategic planning and then in the 1960s it was used by large corporations as part of business strategic planning with respect to technological change and progress (Georghiou 2008). Since the 1990s it has been increasingly applied in public policy and policy analysis, also at the EU level. While several definitions of what foresight is (and is not) can be found, it can, in brief, be defined as **“a systematic, participatory, future-intelligence-gathering and medium-to-long-term vision-building process aimed at present day decisions and mobilizing common actions”** (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001, 5). Figure 1 visualizes well these characteristics of foresight.

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of foresight methodology



Source: European Commission: Joint Research Centre. <http://forera.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.html>

Common features of foresight include: a long-term orientation, the examination of a wide range of factors affecting the phenomenon under investigation, drawing on pre-existing and widely-distributed knowledge, creation of networks, the use of formal methods and formation of strategy and implications for present day decisions and actions (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001; Georghiou 2008). These features distinguish it from forecasts, which are quantitative estimation

based on past trends. Foresight formal techniques and methodologies – i.e. the specific tools it uses to discuss future pathways of the phenomenon under study – are diverse and their choice is typically defined based on the problem in focus, resources available, political context or general data limitations (Giaoutzi and Sapio 2012; Gavigan and Scapolo 2001). Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used. Quantitative approaches concentrate on the ability to weigh the importance or probability of factors, and to examine rates and scales of change (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001). Examples of quantitative techniques include Delphi surveys, modelling and simulation, or structural analysis, while widely used qualitative techniques are scenario building, creativity methods (brainstorming, brain mapping), SWOT analysis or expert panels.<sup>2</sup>

## B. SEEMIG approach

The methodology for SEEMIG foresight exercises has been chosen with the aim of complementing the quantitative focus of the project overall. It was built as a qualitative exploratory approach based on creativity methods (brain mapping and brainstorming) and scenario building on two levels: macro and micro (Toth 2013) (Figure 2). Following the overall analytical and conceptual approach of the SEEMIG project, also the foresight approach defined migration as a social phenomenon closely interlinked with labour market and other demographic processes. The professional background of stakeholders invited to participate in the exercise took this diverse determination of relevant expertise into consideration. Given its strong participatory design, the following diverse stakeholder groups were invited to participate in foresight development in each of the partner countries:

- *Experts* including sociologists, economists, statisticians, historians, demographers, etc.
- *Public authorities, decision makers* at local, regional and national levels: mayors, politicians at local, regional and national level, policy makers, public officials, etc.
- *Migrants and activists*, including in- and out-migrants, return migrants, cross-border commuters, refugees, prospective migrants (e.g. students), etc.

This set-up contributed to the triangulation of different sources of expertise (experts, decision makers, migrants) and experience (practitioners, researchers, migrants), facilitated building foresight on pre-existing knowledge and experience (practical or more formal/academic) and in this way to achieve (to the extent possible) a consensual understanding of the issues of migration within the given country's context. The proposed methodology was calibrated based on the foresight conducted by INFOSTAT in Slovakia. In principle, this foresight was a pilot foresight, and based on its practicalities methodology and instructions for other national teams were more closely specified.

The participatory part of foresight was organized in the following way (Figure 2). The first pillar consisted of three brainstorming and brain mapping workshops organized separately with each group of stakeholders. The goal was to encourage free thinking and idea sharing. Participants were invited to share their views and opinions about **key drivers, i.e. key factors, which, in their opinion, influence their and their country's present and future in relation to migration and the labour market.** The second pillar of the exercise joined the three groups in a fourth workshop where common drivers were presented by each group and the most important drivers were consensually selected. These are summarized in Table 1.

Two scenarios (negative and positive) were elaborated along the selected drivers, after which a narrative of heroes' profiles and life stories was prepared to work with the microlevel

<sup>2</sup> [http://forlearn.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guide/4\\_methodology/methods.htm](http://forlearn.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guide/4_methodology/methods.htm)

implication of the imagined futures.<sup>3</sup> A recent foresight study organized by Bertelsmann Stiftung with the focus on increasing intra-EU mobility defines scenarios as: “A story that describes a specific future connected to the present through a series of causal links that demonstrate the consequences of decisions or series of decisions. It describes events and trends as they could evolve. A scenario should be vivid enough that a planner can clearly see and comprehend challenges and opportunities presented by a given environment. Scenarios can also alert decision-makers to ways in which policy interventions might make an undesirable outcome less likely.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014, 33)

**Figure 2: SEEMIG foresight steps**



The following set of related or similar questions were posed in each country to stimulate the workshop discussions:

- *How would you describe the current state of migration in your country?*
- *What are the most important push and pull factors?*
- *Which positive and negative features of migration do you perceive?*
- *How might these factors/drivers change in the future? What can we expect?*
- *Now imagine a specific person living in the scenario you have described – how would his/her life evolve? What are the implications of systemic processes on the hero’s (his family’s) life trajectory?*

The whole process was supervised and steered by workshop facilitators whose role was defined as rather non-interventionist. Their task was to guide the discussions without projecting their own perceptions and beliefs on the participants. These included allowing the participants to define the contours of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ scenarios in a joint discussion, without the mediation and value imposition of the facilitators. The workshop facilitators were typically also the persons who analysed the empirical material and authored the national foresight reports.

The analytical stage consisted of preparation of a detailed description of the results of brainstorming sessions, key drivers, and scenarios as envisaged on the systemic level and then elaborated from the perspective of individual heroes. Following the descriptions, foresight facilitators evaluated the results in light of the findings of other work packages and assessed the implications of foresight scenarios in relation to migration and the labour market at different levels (national and regional), highlighting strategies, challenges and policy priorities.

<sup>3</sup> *The Austrian foresight deviated from the proposed methodological approach and conducted only a joined workshop of three stakeholder groups (without prior separate brainmapping sessions). The team also omitted elaboration of micro-level heroes’ life stories contextualized in the scenarios (Fassmann, Gruber, and Musil 2014). For justification please see the Austrian foresight report.*

## 4. Key findings of national foresights

National foresight reports cover the diversity of perceptions about migration and offer a rich interpretation of expected future migration and labour market development in each country. This reflects the diversity embodied in the SEEMIG partner countries shaped by their particular historical trajectories, experiences with closed borders, EU accession landmarks, geographical positions and levels of economic development. It is beyond the scope of this report to cover this richness in its diversity. It in turn focuses on highlighting the key similarities and differences across national foresights and on summarizing key themes which dominated foresight workshop discussions in the respective countries. Key drivers of migration identified based on the joint stakeholder discussions are presented first, after which scenario themes are elaborated.

The details about the key drivers and scenario formulation at the micro and macro-levels in the national foresights as well as the process on how it was implemented in each country can be found in the national reports: Austria (Fassmann, Gruber, and Musil 2014), Bulgaria (Deneva 2014), Italy (Piovesan 2014), Hungary (Geambaşu and Sik 2014), Serbia (Lukić-Bošnjak, Nikitović, and Rašević 2014), Slovakia (Mýtina Kureková 2014), Slovenia (Toplak et al. 2014), and Romania (Kiss and Barna 2014).<sup>4</sup> These provide rich material the details of which cannot be covered by this report.

### A. Key drivers of migration

The first key output of the foresight exercises were the identification of key drivers or key factors, which in the opinion of the participants influence their and their country's present and future in relation to migration and the labour market. These were narrowed down from a broader set of factors on the basis of joint stakeholder discussions. Table 1 schematically summarizes the key drivers identified as important in shaping current and future migration trends in the SEEMIG partner countries.

Several observations can be made on the basis of Table 1. Firstly, economic conditions are the single most important factor envisaged to affect future migration in the SEEMIG region. It was identified uniformly across the countries and conceptualized primarily as labour market conditions – levels of employment and economic activity, but also included broader conceptualization of the levels of development and integration into global production networks. However, other aspects related to the quality of life, such as life perspectives, wage levels and labour market conditions were also considered important aspects of economic conditions (see also Melegh et al. 2013). Overall, across the SEEMIG countries, labour market conditions and migration – emigration, immigration, return migration and even student migration – are perceived as closely interconnected. Future migration flows, their intensity, structure, quality and eventual benefits and costs for respective countries are to be determined by economic factors.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> National reports are available at the SEEMIG project website: <http://www.seemig.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> This general finding is similar to a recent foresight about intra-EU mobility organized by Bertelsmann Stiftung. *Economic growth axis and regulation axis interact to produce five scenarios of future mobility by 2025: Marketised Europe, Polarized Europe, Regulated Europe, Fragmented Europe and Paralyzed Europe* (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014). *Global economic growth features as one of key drivers/axis in a foresight organized by the UK government about migration and environmental change* (Government Office for Science 2011).

**Table 1: Summary of key drivers across in SEEMIG countries**

	Austria	Bulgaria	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia
Economic development/ prosperity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political stability / political context		✓		✓		✓		
Migration policy								✓
Demographic change	✓							✓
Climate								✓
(Higher) Education system	✓	✓			✓			
Human capital as a resource						✓		
System of values/bonds to home				✓	✓	✓		
Inequalities					✓			
International legal context			✓					
Legal and administrative framework							✓	
Social and cultural framework	✓			✓				
Generational change (attitudes)							✓	

Source: Author on the basis of the national foresight reports.

Note: For conceptualization and detailed description of the drivers please refer to the national foresight reports.

Second, additional sets of key drivers differed across the countries. Political stability and political context more generally were critically discussed in Bulgaria, Serbia as well as Italy, where they were considered from the EU perspective as well. Policies such as legal and administrative framework were defined as important in Slovakia, while migration policy was a migration driver in Slovenia. International context was considered more broadly in Hungary, and included policy aspects on the operationalization of the driver. Austria and Slovenia considered demographic change as a key driver of future migration which will in particular shape the demand for labour in these labour markets. The importance of climate change was only considered in Slovenia.<sup>6</sup> Education systems and their quality had a strong presence in discourses in Romania and Bulgaria where these were defined as important determinants of high outflows of educated youth

<sup>6</sup> Climate-change-related disasters were considered probable in the set time frame and were discussed in the context of possible large-scale internal mobility due to flooding or drought.

likely to continue if no change takes place at policy level. The last set of drivers were “soft” factors generally referring to societal attitudes and the system of values towards homeland or family; different terms were used to denote such factors: social and cultural framework (Italy), generational change (Slovakia), bonds to home and the system of values (Slovakia, Romania, Serbia).

Third, in several countries, discontent with current politics and policy-making came through the foresight discussions. Negative scenarios were often conceptualized as being the “status quo”, that is situations described as existing in the respective countries. This highlights scope for policy change across the range of areas which is needed if migration – emigration and immigration – is to bring benefits to the examined societies. This perspective was particularly strong in Serbia, Romania and Hungary.

Finally, foresight discussions were quite strongly ‘inward-focused’. International factors or actors, such as the EU, were not identified as the key drivers (with the exception of Hungary where international legal context was among the key drivers), although they formed the context of the discussions more broadly in several of the countries. This often was in relation to the economic crisis which has been international and in smaller states the solutions to it are seen to stem from European and world economic developments. At the same time, such strong national focus also seems to suggest that participants saw a key scope for change and action in the national, regional and local arenas, which indeed hold competences in the areas of migration policy as well in other non-migration fields identified as crucial for policy intervention (e.g. welfare, health care or education; see Section IV).

## **B. Scenario themes**

For a precise formation and formulation of scenarios in the respective countries the original national reports can be consulted. In this section, we present themes which have occurred across the foresights. These themes help to highlight similarities and also differences in perceptions of future migration developments as well as more general fears and opportunities envisaged by 2025. Importantly, the earlier findings of the SEEMIG project based on the synthesis of the SEEMIG historical analysis (Fassmann, Musil, and Gruber 2014) which concluded that the SEEMIG countries are positioned at different migration statuses has been generally reflected in the national foresights. The fact that a relatively sharp divide exists between countries which have become immigration countries and those that continue to be emigration countries was present in how migration was discussed. In some countries immigration prevailed in discussions (Italy, Austria), in others (Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary) emigration gained prevalent focus and shaped the selection of drivers, development of scenarios and description of heroes’ life paths. A third set of countries were those in which immigration and emigration were considered in a more balanced way (Slovakia, Slovenia). This is likely to reflect the climate in the given country and salience of perceptions and concerns about different aspects of migration. Across the foresights, several overarching themes were discussed in the formulated scenarios and are now discussed in more detail.

### ***1. Migration as an opportunity versus as a challenge***

Foresight discussions differed in how migration was discussed and whether it was perceived as an opportunity or a challenge. A more positive attitude to immigration and its perception as a phenomenon which can bring benefits to the respective countries was attained in Italy, Austria,

Slovakia and Slovenia. Emigration as well as potential increased flows of immigrants as asylum seekers formed rather negative discourse in Bulgaria. In Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary, a negative perception of emigration of national workforce, uncertainty of return migration and doubts about the ability to attract migrants from outside the EU was strongly present. Return migration and successful integration into home markets, often in the form of entrepreneurial capital, was often conceptualized as an important aspect of the future envisaged in positive scenarios through heroes' life trajectories. Foresight participants in Slovakia, Serbia, Slovenia, Italy, and to some extent in Hungary, could more easily imagine a future where multicultural societies are able to co-exist in a peaceful and productive way.

## ***2. Human capital as a resource and the threat of brain drain***

A common theme across the countries was a strong awareness and perception of human capital as a resource. Relatedly, the threat of brain drain ensuing from free intra-EU mobility was strongly present in the discourses in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and to some extent in Slovakia, especially in negative scenarios. In Hungary, the improving economic conditions were expected to transform at least a part of out-migration into circular migration, decreasing thus the probability of long term 'losses of human capital'. In Serbia, a positive scenario was one where young emigrants enriched with working experience and new knowledge from developed economies returned back to Serbia. In Italy, Slovakia and Austria, immigrants, on the other hand, were clearly seen as an asset – economically as well as culturally. Immigration as the counterbalancing factor for labour shortages in different sectors, some of which had arisen due to emigration of the national labour force (e.g. Slovakia), was identified as one of the clear advantages of increased immigrant inflows.

## ***3. Education systems as an (intervening) factor in positive migration dynamics***

Education systems in Bulgaria and Romania were identified as one of the key drivers of future migrations in these countries. An explicit link was made between outflows of youth and the lack of a match between work opportunities and their qualifications. If emigration and brain drain is to slow-down, education systems need to adapt to the needs of the labour market in the countries of origin. Higher education does not guarantee employment in these countries and pushes many university graduates to emigrate for work abroad. In Hungary, an opportunity created by the positive migration scenario was the internationalisation and improvement of the quality of higher education, especially as a result of the attraction of fee-paying Asian students, who were envisaged to bring additional resources. On the other hand, a lack of 'inclusive education', which in turn exacerbates regional disparities and contributes to emigration from poorer regions, was identified as one of the key concerns in Hungary resulting in a socially disintegrated society. Similarly, a lack of education and other opportunities in rural areas was seen as a factor contributing to negative migration outcomes in Romania and Bulgaria as well where the young are forced to leave due to poor life prospects, making a better future for these localities even less likely due to excessive brain drain. In contrast, in Austria, higher education is a key driver for immigration of international students, whose potential needs to be better utilized.

## ***4. Regional disparities are a pressing concern***

Regional disparities within the countries were, in several of them, viewed as a factor that has significantly contributed to emigration decisions and, unless addressed with urgency, will

continue to create unequal societies with pockets of poverty and destitution. Several national teams (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary) included calls for more effective allocation of resources to peripheral regions as economic prosperity does not necessarily imply better opportunities for all citizens within these countries. In Romania, integration was closely linked to efforts to reduce territorial inequalities, because Roma people are concentrated in economically peripheral rural areas. The worsening situation of Roma communities was at the heart of concern of discussions in Hungary and Romania, while the issue was negatively perceived in Bulgaria where the Roma were discussed in a context of giving negative image about Bulgaria abroad. The need to address the situation for its demographic and labour market implications was however acknowledged. In Italy, explicit marginalization resulting in inequalities in access to education, social services and labour market of immigrants were seen as harmful to the benefits of the region overall.

### ***5. Ageing and demographic decline***

Ageing and demographic decline were in several countries accentuated as a strong fear which brings challenges to the medical sector, elderly care system, and pension systems as well as depopulation and social deterioration. In some countries, ageing stemmed from natural population decline (Austria), but in several countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia) it was seen as accentuated by large outflows of the national labour force. In addition to systemic challenges, hero life trajectories highlighted multiple implications of settling abroad on elderly parents who stayed in home states and are or will be in need of care which poor welfare systems might not be able to provide. Low fertility rates affected by poor economic conditions as well as changes in value systems were contributing to poor demographic growth. In SEEMIG countries with a large share of Roma (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria), demographic tensions which might arise from the higher fertility rates of Roma were included in discussions.

### ***6. Immigration inevitable, but not always desirable***

SEEMIG countries which already attract higher shares of immigrants saw continued inflows of immigrants also in their future scenarios. In Austria, the foreign workforce was seen as needed to satisfy domestic labour market demands, often in specific labour market segments. Regardless of economic conditions and demographic development, certain types of migration – student migration, family reunification and asylum migration – were seen to continue in Austria. Similarly in Italy, immigration was not only perceived as inevitable but also as profitable and desirable. In these countries, immigration was to be continued due to established networks and historical and cultural ties with specific countries of origin. The Austrian foresight identified future labour migration potential from the South-East European area which was envisaged to constitute an important region of origin of migration towards Austria, because of the geographical proximity and social networks. In Slovenia, a direct link was made between demographic growth and immigration where “the final positive consequence of immigration would be a richer, more diverse, numerous and therefore stronger society with a higher standard of well-being in 2025” (Toplak et al. 2014). Slovak foresight imagined migrants from third-countries also integrated following the introduction of stronger integration policies. In Hungary, due to massive out-migration of the low skilled labour force and Hungarian companies’ search for a cheaper labour force abroad, immigration was seen as inevitable, also because wages were envisaged to grow and thus make the country more attractive to foreigners.

However, not all SEEMIG countries perceived migration as inevitable or desirable. The Serbian participants did not see Serbia as an immigration destination for foreigners in the medium-

term future; the sole opportunity in the positive country scenario in regards to migration and labour market might be the return of emigrants who have recently left the country. Similarly, immigration was not part of the future expectations of the Romanians. Foresight discussions had similar features in Bulgaria, where moreover immigration was perceived negatively, and from the perspective of asylum seekers alone.

### ***7. Migration affected by broader international processes***

While in the selection of key drivers focus on domestic factors prevailed, in several countries, future migration trends were seen as being affected by wider international processes of an economic and political nature. Hungarian foresight, which considered international factors as an explicit driver, conceptualized the international context quite broadly to include: “globalisation processes, technological advancement resulting in lowered costs of transport and communication, regional political conflicts both nearer and further abroad as well as economic and financial crises.” In Hungary as well as Serbia, it was acknowledged that the policies of key receiving countries (e.g. Germany) are going to determine the composition and rate of outflows. Serbian participants identified accession to the EU as an important factor likely to affect migration dynamics in Serbia. Emigration was expected to ensue, following patterns seen after 2004 and 2007 enlargements. The Austrian report emphasized that the future extent of transnational migration as well as daily cross-border commuting is likely to depend on the relative economic and demographic positioning of regions of origin compared to potential regions of destination, highlighting the interdependent nature of migration flows across Europe.

### ***8. Improved quality and stability of national institutions and policies as a key aspect of positive migration futures***

Across countries, political stability, national legal and administrative framework and its capacity to create incentives and opportunities were seen as factors likely to shape migration futures in a positive way. Good governance, opportunities for self-realization under equal conditions and societal attitudes open to diversity are likely to lead to a decline in emigration of educated nationals, to a rise in return migration and in immigration which brings benefits to host societies (Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Austria). Erratic policy-making and lack of societal consensus about future development were highlighted as factors that bring in uncertainty and incentivize emigration (Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Italy). In Slovenia, Serbia and Romania, local governance structures and regional self-governance institutions were identified as bodies that can effectively deal with problems at lower governance levels.

### ***9. Ambivalent perception of (free mobility in) the EU***

The free mobility of labour in the European Union represents one of its key cornerstones which is to provide benefits to the whole community. Perceptions of this process from the perspective of the SEEMIG migration sending countries were rather negative. As already outlined, emigration of the labour force has been in some countries perceived as a threat to the prosperous future development of these countries with an explicit link to brain drain (Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Hungary). Given that foresight took place at the time of full liberalization of EU labour markets to Romania and Bulgaria, this has affected discussions among participants in these countries. Open welfare systems of Western European states were believed to easily incorporate migrants with the healthcare and social benefit systems, supporting ‘welfare tourism’ viewed critically at

home as well as abroad for creating the image of 'poverty migration' (Bulgaria). Furthermore, the lack of highly skilled workers, such as engineers, medical personnel, and teachers, was also attributed to the free labour mobility within the EU and the unequal pay between older EU member states (Bulgaria). In other countries (Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Italy), free mobility was discussed as an opportunity and as a tool to deal with labour shortages and to respond to shifts in economic demand.

### ***10. New forms of labour mobility and communication***

Forward-looking aspects of discussions in Romania and Bulgaria were contextualized into changed mobility and communication realities due to technological progress and ICT growth. Bulgarian participants discussed "mobility without migration"<sup>7</sup> as a new form of remote work (e.g. teleworking) which might entail continued physical presence in the home country, but economic engagement and employment abroad. Such a type of 'mobility' likely to grow in the future has important implications for the organization of social security and benefits, regulations and reach of national labour codes and regulation of transnational activities. In Romania, the new forms of communication were seen as an opportunity to develop transnational ties and to maintain links with emigrant communities.

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<sup>7</sup> For conceptual development of this new phenomenon see for example (Aneesh 2006; Benner 2002).

## 5. Areas of policy focus emerging from foresights

Foresight exercise by design seeks to analyse social phenomena as a complex issue and from diverse perspectives. SEEMIG national foresights confirm this well. While SEEMIG foresights focused on future migration trends in the respective countries, issues which were identified as drivers, opportunities and threats ensuing from envisaged processes, and areas for policy intervention go well beyond migration policy focus. This highlights that migration is a complex process which crosses national borders and its causes and effects transcend many issue areas and policy fields, e.g. health, the welfare system, education, or regional policy.

Foresight methodology can make an important contribution to various policy areas, as it can assist relevant entities to think in a broad, disciplined way about the future when making policy decisions. Based on the workshop discussions, areas of desired policy focus can be identified across fields and sectors as well as with respect to managing labour migration in its different forms: emigration, immigration and return migration. They generally point to *interventions needed in order for positive scenarios discussed in individual countries to materialize* and have been assembled from the synthetic policy sections of the national foresight reports.

The areas of policy focus should not be seen as comprehensive or elaborated in detail, but rather as points for consideration in the formation of action plans related to migration data and migration management in the respective countries. Unless attached to a specific country, these areas of policy focus can be seen as generally relevant to most countries in the SEEMIG project.

### 1. Managing immigration and its effects

- In light of increasing immigration likely to ensue, **integration policies** were highlighted as necessary across the SEEMIG countries
- Relatedly, supporting **measures tackling racial and ethnic discrimination** of domestic minorities (mainly Roma) and of immigrants, supporting diversity policies, and nurturing diversity discourse were seen as important in order to prevent further negative impact of increased immigration and of social disintegration (Hungary, Romania). Such measures are relevant from the perspectives of immigration envisaged to grow (Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary) as well as given the diverse ethnic background of most of the SEEMIG countries given historically (Roma minority, ethnic Hungarians, mixed ethnic and religious composition of former Yugoslavian countries)
- **Anti-discrimination and enforcement of equal opportunities** measures in access to the labour market of immigrants can contribute to the better matching of migrants to existing work opportunities (Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia)
- **Regulation of migrant recruitment and employment agencies** is needed to avoid excessive benefits of intermediaries at the cost of migrants (across SEEMIG)
- **Local level investment in social infrastructure** in areas with high levels of immigration (public investment in housing, education, social and healthcare policies)
- **Improving national and international frameworks for student mobility** (recognition of credits, experience abroad, etc.) (Austria, Hungary)
- **Evidence-based policy making** about migration and effectiveness of measures focused on migration governance (across SEEMIG)

## 2. Managing emigration and its effects

- **Political stability and good governance** seen as important in providing good living and working opportunities in the countries of origin (Serbia, Romania)
- **Reforms of education systems** envisaged to decrease the gap between provided skills and labour market demand (Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia) and to enable more social inclusion and social mobility (Hungary)
- Focus on **pension and welfare systems and their sustainability**, specific interventions include postponing retirement age and reforming medical care systems; with respect to migration, **transferability and coordination of social rights**, should be further streamlined and simplified, including areas such as unemployment benefits or sickness benefits, and with respect to pension rights of short-term and circular migrants (across SEEMIG)
- Measures aimed at the **reduction of territorial inequalities within countries** (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary)
- Further efforts on dealing with overall **economic inequalities across the EU** member states (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy)
- Strengthening the **financial and human capacities of local governance levels** in local socio-economic development and social integration (investment in health and education infrastructures in rural areas, in economically deprived areas, for Roma, for immigrants) (Romania, Hungary, Italy)

## 3. Incentivizing return migration and integration

- Elaborate **policies to pull young professionals with foreign university degrees** back to home countries (Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria)
- **Support reintegration of return migrants**, e.g. by creating conditions for the establishment of small businesses (Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary)
- Continue efforts in the **integration of internally displaced persons** (Serbia)
- Develop and **nurture links and transnational network with emigrant communities** with the use of modern technologies (Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia)
- Support **data collection and strategic planning at lower levels of governance** (local, regional) (across SEEMIG)

## 4. Demography

- Better **integration of Roma communities** is desirable to **tap the demographic potential of this ethnic group** and to develop its labour market opportunities (Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary)
- Focus on **family policies for the young** to shape demographic decline (e.g. housing policies) (Slovenia)

## 6. SEEMIG policy recommendations in an international context

In parallel to SEEMIG foresights on migration and labour market developments, foresight analysis focused on “Harnessing European Labour Mobility” (HELM) was recently organized by Bertelsmann Stiftung (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014). Given that the focus of SEEMIG and HELM foresights is very similar, it is interesting to compare policy recommendations from the two foresights. While the HELM project focused specifically on intra-EU migration, the focus of SEEMIG was on understanding national or sub-national perceptions and expectations about migration in the medium-term future. Many policy recommendations from the HELM project focused on EU-level mechanisms in how free mobility can be fostered and governed in a manner beneficial across the EU member states. Below are presented selected recommendations which are similar to SEEMIG foresight themes and areas of policy focus. This partly helps us to validate the key messages of SEEMIG foresights and indeed shows overlapping issues that have been identified by these various foresight exercises across the EU.

- Foster a European fair deal on talent by establishing a mechanism to compensate talent-sending countries for their investments in mobile workers’ education and training.
- Help localities deal with social burdens created by mobility by dedicating parts of EU structural and cohesion funds to the uneven territorial effects of mobility.
- Promote and simplify the recognition of professional qualifications as well as skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning by developing speedy, cost-effective and simple procedures and frameworks for recognition and assessment.
- Encourage return migration through targeted policies in sending countries to facilitate return and professional re-integration.
- Promote free movement and oppose nationalism by emphasising the benefits of mobility, improving the monitoring of mobility flows as well as engaging stakeholders in a campaign for labour mobility.
- Finish and simplify coordination of social security systems by closing remaining legal gaps in the area of unemployment and long-term care benefits as well as by making social-security coordination more transparent and accessible for citizens.
- Support mobility-oriented mindsets by continually investing in language training and opportunities for inter-cultural experiences for students and youth.
- Sustain support for free movement by limiting opportunities for fraud and abuse.
- Support initiatives to foster mobility at a regional and bilateral level by establishing a European platform for sharing best practices in the area of cross-border recruitment processes.

## 7. Recommendations for the enhancement and use of foresight methodology

SEEMIG national foresight reports have provided a very rich description of envisaged future trends of migration and labour market processes in the respective countries by 2025. Their synthesis shows several overarching themes which transpired from national or regional discussions and generates areas which require policy focus. In the following subsections, we would like to discuss some of the difficulties encountered in the process of organization of foresights and at the analytical stage and to provide methodological recommendations for further usage of the foresight method and existing foresight reports.

During the implementation, national foresight teams faced several obstacles. SEEMIG foresights were organized with fewer resources and in a shorter time-frame than are typically allocated to foresights and their different stages: initial preparatory phase, processing of information gained during the workshops, validation of results (e.g. scenarios), and “wind-tunnelling” of policy recommendations (cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014).<sup>8</sup> While common guidelines were provided and foresight facilitators participated in training workshops to simulate how the exercise should proceed, during organization and implementation some issues pertained and deviations occurred. These are partly a result of the fact that all foresight facilitators applied this method for the first time, but also were a reaction to at times specific organizational and logistic decisions and conditions.

A common problem faced by several project teams was an unexpected decline in participation of invited people<sup>9</sup>. This resulted in low participant numbers or an unequal number of participants across the three stakeholder groups. The most frequent difficulty lay in securing the participation of decision-makers who were unable to come or dedicate their time for the whole duration of foresights (effectively two workshops often on two different days for each participant). A possible remedy for this difficulty could be the hiring of a market research institution to assist in the organization of workshops; this strategy was tried by the Romanian team and worked very well in securing balanced and committed participants.

A further issue faced by several teams was a lack of common terminology and dissimilar understanding of concepts. This was caused by bringing together different stakeholder groups. While this is a key advantage of foresight as a method, it also adds additional challenges to organizing fruitful discussions among participants with different backgrounds (as well as mother tongues with respect to immigrants taking part in the exercise in several countries), experiences and perceptions. This challenge could be overcome by allowing more time for workshops and conducting them over a longer time span to allow for the creation of a common vocabulary among participants.

Several other weaknesses could be pointed out with respect to the initial guidelines provided to national teams. First, the methodology for deriving the key drivers across three stakeholder

<sup>8</sup> For example, HELM Foresight Project lasted over 10 months and consisted of 4 workshops which lasted half-a-day to a day each. Considerable input was provided by the team facilitating the foresight at the initial stage (framing key themes along which the drivers were selected for elaboration of scenarios) and then throughout the exercise when processing the expert input provided in response to the materials prepared by foresight facilitators (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014). Another recent foresight conducted on behalf of the UK government about migration and global environmental change was based on 70 background studies underlying the foresight (Government Office for Science 2011).

<sup>9</sup> For details about participant numbers see national foresight reports.

groups was not clearly identified. Joined stakeholder groups typically reached consensus through a discussion, but more 'quantified methods' could be used (voting, weighting, etc.). Second, focus on defining only two scenarios resulted in some of the foresight reports having rather idealized positive scenarios and negatively perceived negative scenarios. As an outcome, scenario descriptions were often too linear and the interaction of drivers/factors was not sufficiently elaborated. On the other hand, having fewer scenarios (two rather than four or more) made the exercise more manageable within the time frame and budget available for this exercise, and also given the relatively limited experience of workshop facilitators with the foresight method and scenario development in particular. Furthermore, areas of policy focus were perhaps formulated more sharply.

Lastly, in the implementation of the proposed joint methodology (Toth 2013), some deviations occurred. The Austrian team did not carry out the brain mapping exercise in separate stakeholder groups and also did not develop hero life stories. It concentrated its efforts on developing a wider range of scenarios in a discussion in a joint stakeholder workshop. Likewise, the Hungarian team facilitated the foresight towards selection of two drivers only and development of four scenarios based on the interplay of the factors. This allowed for more nuanced set of scenarios, but typically resulted in a more difficult synthesis. In spite of these deviations, many similarities and general common features important for the synthesis of the foresight results to the regional level remained (general focus of foresights on the future labour market and migration developments, the inclusion of varied stakeholder groups, or the analytical strategy focused on challenges and opportunities and policy implications). This allows a comparison of findings across the countries involved in the project and synthesizing the areas for policy focus.

## 8. Conclusion

Foresight methodology introduced a qualitative approach to studying processes which can be in principle quantified, such as migration, to the SEEMIG partnership consisting primarily of statistical offices, local governments and research institutions with the view of enhancing the applications of the method in a set of Southern and Eastern European countries. In view of conclusion we now address three sets of questions to highlight its usage and contribution of foresights to the project more generally.

- ***Why is the foresight useful and what are its constraints?***  
The usefulness of foresight methodology lies in its participatory and action-oriented approach. It aims to encourage thinking about future developments, to raise awareness of phenomena and to foster strategic planning. National foresight reports have framed existing dilemmas and contradictions well with respect to managing migration and its future contours, and in several countries they have contributed to building dialogue across different stakeholder groups. Integration of experts/academics, decision-makers/policy-makers and migrants/civil society organizations into a joint foresight exercise is, to the best of our knowledge, rather unique and serves well the general purpose of the foresight approach. These are the key contributions of foresights to the SEEMIG project, which can be further utilized in the next stages of the project, the preparation of strategic documents and their dissemination in particular. Given the limited time frame of SEEMIG foresights, national reports have not been able to elaborate areas of policy focus into more specific policy recommendations.
- ***How the foresight method can be utilized in the SEEMIG local/regional and national strategies?***  
The findings and conclusions of national foresights reports can be directly incorporated into strategies in the SEEMIG project as a complementary input to frame the national context. While strategies will be focused on data management systems about migration in particular, foresight quite clearly identifies areas where data collection needs to focus (according to engaged stakeholders) and so confirms and justifies focus on a specific set of issues within the given countries. Among these issues, some are pertaining to all SEEMIG countries and provide cause for a transnational action (e.g. better measures for capturing the magnitude and different forms of outmigration), while others are more country specific and suggest focusing strategic documents on particular areas of interest (e.g. improving knowledge about return migration and integration of migrants). This can also be used for prioritizing areas of data collection or data system reforms in the respective countries. Specific data needs of each SEEMIG partner are identified and elaborated in national action plans and strategies posted on the SEEMIG website.
- ***How the foresight methodology can be combined with long-term developmental patterns, how it can be interlinked with data usage and data system reform, projections?***  
The foresight method was incorporated into the SEEMIG project as a complementary method to historical analysis and quantitatively focused parts of the SEEMIG project

(projections, transnational database). In principle, foresight reports which have been produced by SEEMIG partner countries can be used to inform underlying hypotheses used in migration projections. More often, however, quantitative inputs, such as existing projections and forecasts, are being used to inform thinking and discussions of foresight participants.

To conclude, the participatory nature, future-oriented focus and policy-rich elements which are characteristic of the foresight as a method provide tools which contribute well to the general objectives of the SEEMIG project, which aims to prepare a set of strategic documents and to stimulate improvement in data management and data sharing systems in a medium-to-long-term perspective.

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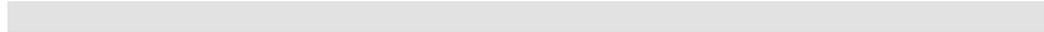
## List of SEEMIG Working Papers

Heinz Fassmann, Elisabeth Musil: Conceptual framework for modelling longer term migratory, labour market and human capital processes

Éva Gárdos, Irén Gödri: Analysis of existing migratory data production systems and major data sources in eight South-East European countries

Heinz Fassmann, Elisabeth Musil, Kathrin Gruber: Dynamic historical analysis of longer term migratory, labour market and human capital processes in the SEEMIG region

Zsuzsa Blaskó: Surveying the Absentees – Surveying the Emigrants. A methodological paper on the SEEMIG pilot study to survey emigrants from Hungary and Serbia



**Notes:**