

The role of migration in tourism of Hungary: an interdisciplinary reinterpretation

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Since the change of the political regime (1990), there have been 23–39 million records of border crossing on the territory of Hungary. Taking into account the spatial size and population number of the country, this is a significant number even in a global comparison. Scant information is available, however, on the relationship of the entering foreigners with tourism and migration. As a consequence of liberalisation measures affecting the inflow of foreigners, their shopping behaviour, employment, and property acquisition and due to the process of convergence between work and leisure time activities, it has been increasingly difficult to distinguish between tourists and international migrants. After accession to the European Union in 2004 Hungary is to face problems stemming from its long borderline with the non-member states: Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Ukraine. Lower living standards in these countries have generated migratory movements: shopping tourism taking place on informal markets, illegal employment of persons entering the country and staying there are considered everyday phenomena. Some ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbour countries (ca 3.5 million people) intend to settle in Hungary; their impressions during visits to relatives in the motherland (statistically registered as tourist trips) may trigger resettlement. Hungary also attracts tourists from the EU or overseas visitors and especially former Hungarian emigrants who are potential buyers of real estates.

Migration processes in a broader sense are in a close relationship with tourism. A thorough analysis of mechanisms and their theoretically based interpretation, however, necessitate an interdisciplinary approach from geographers and representatives of the related (social) sciences. This paper presents the achievements to date of this co-operation.