

A picture of Hungary migration context after the referendum failure

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On October 2016 a referendum initiated by the government and related to the European Union's mandatory quotas for relocating migrants was held in Hungary¹. The kvótanépszavazás or kvótareferendum (quota referendum) was only a partial victory for Prime Minister, Viktor Orban. In fact those who participated to the referendum overwhelmingly voted “no” in order to reject the relocation of new asylum seekers, but the number of voters was not enough for the result to be considered valid. The vote was anticipated by a very harsh propaganda against asylum seekers and foreigners that portrayed migrants as a danger to Hungarian society. The campaign promoted many deceptive messages accusing for example migrants and asylum seekers of diffused sexual harassment crimes in Europe and even for the Paris terrorist attacks.



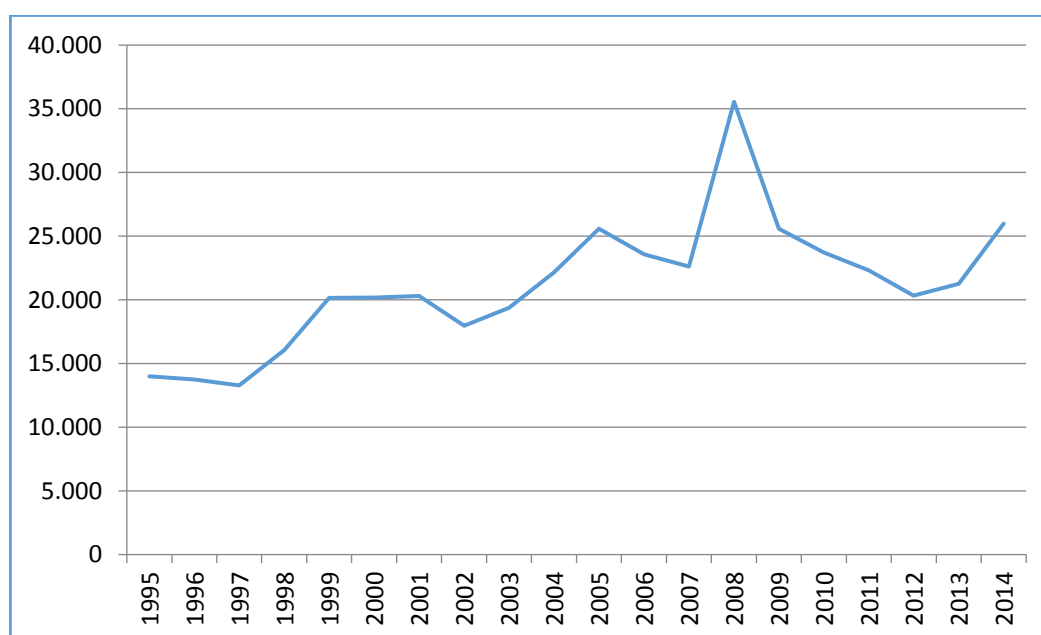
“Did you know? From the beginning of the immigration crisis more than 300 people died in Europe in terrorist attacks”

Photo: L'Espresso <http://espresso.repubblica.it/internazionale/2016/09/20/news/ungheria-la-xenofobia-e-al-governo-ecco-i-vergognosi-cartelli-del-referendum-sui-migranti-1.283357#gallery-slider=undefined>

¹ The referendum question was “Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?”

The aim of this paper is to present an updated picture of the Hungarian migration context in terms of presence of foreigners and asylum seekers. Hungary is in a very peculiar phase of its transition from a country of emigration to a country of immigration². According to Eurostat the number of legal incoming immigrants has been rising in the last 20 years. As shown in picture 1 the number of annual immigrants rose from less than 15 thousands in the period between 1995-97 and settled to around 20-25 thousand in 2010-14 after picking to 35 thousands in 2008.

Picture 1 – Immigration of foreigners, Years 1995-2014. Hungary



Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_imm1ctz] extracted on September 2016

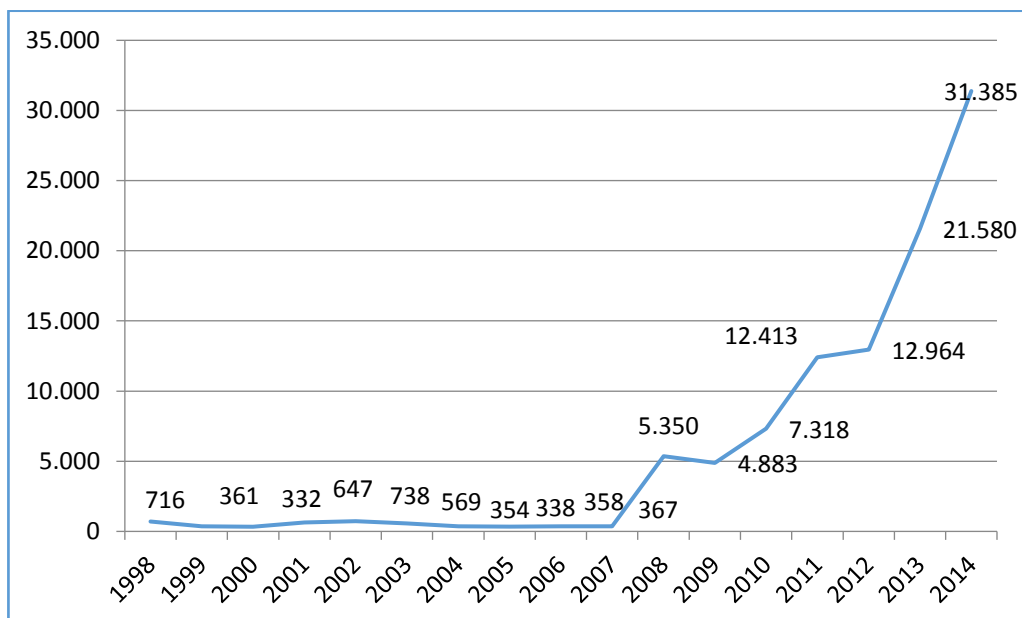
At the same time Hungary remains a country of emigration as shown by data on emigration of Hungarian nationals in 1998-2014 (Picture 2).

Despite the diffused social alarm related to a supposed growing presence of foreigners their incidence on the total population remained stable and on lower levels compared to those observed until 2011 (Picture 3).

The drop in the proportion of foreigners after 2011 is probably mostly a statistical effect due to the high number of acquisitions of citizenship in 2011-12 (picture 4).

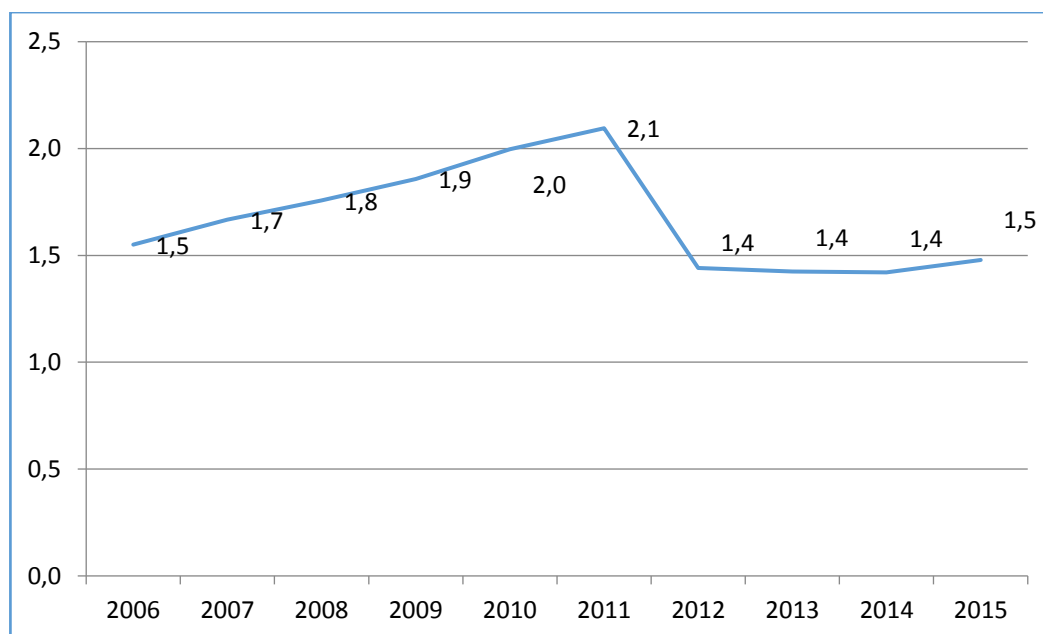
² For a more detailed picture see Juhász 2003 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/hungary-transit-country-between-east-and-west>.

Picture 2 - Emigration of Hungarian nationals. Years 1998-2014. Hungary



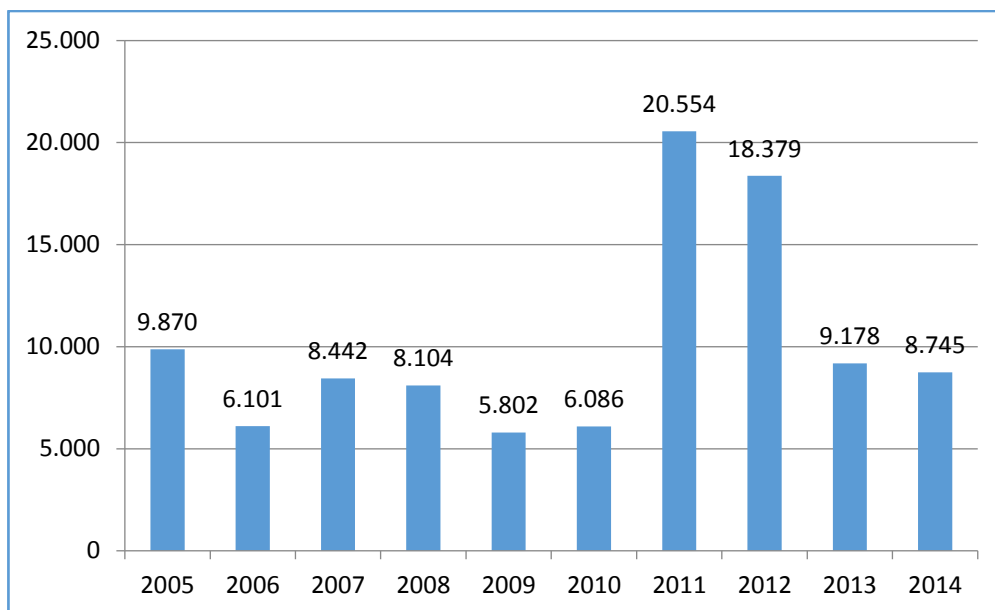
Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_emi1ctz] extracted on September 2016

Picture 3 - Proportion of foreign citizens on the total population, Years 2006-2015. Hungary



Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_pop1ctz] extracted on September 2016

Picture 4 – Acquisitions of citizenship. Years 2005-2015. Hungary



Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_acq] extracted on September 2016

The proportion of foreign nationals legally present in Hungary (1.5%) is very much at the same level with those observed between Eastern European post 2004 accession countries (in light blue in Table 1). With the exclusion of Estonia and Lithuania which show a large number of non-citizens due to their geopolitical history, the proportion of foreigners in EU Eastern European post 2004 accession countries varies between 0.3% in Poland and 4.9% in Slovakia.

Table 1 –Number of foreign nationals and their incidence on the total population EU28 plus Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. 2015

Country	2015	% on total population
Belgium	1,300,493	11.6
Bulgaria	65,622	0.9
Czech Republic	457,323	4.3
Denmark	422,492	7.5
Germany	7,539,774	9.3
Estonia	191,317	14.6
Ireland	550,555	11.9
Greece	821,969	7.6
Spain	4,454,354	9.6
France	4,355,707	6.6
Croatia	36,679	0.9
Italy	5,014,437	8.2
Cyprus	144,599	17.1
Latvia	298,433	15.0

Lithuania	22,470	0.8
Luxembourg	258,679	45.9
Hungary	145,727	1.5
Malta	27,476	6.4
Netherlands	773,288	4.6
Austria	1,131,164	13.2
Poland	108,279	0.3
Portugal	395,195	3.8
Romania	88,771	0.4
Slovenia	101,532	4.9
Slovakia	61,766	1.1
Finland	218,803	4.0
Sweden	731,215	7.5
United Kingdom	5,422,094	8.4
Iceland	24,294	7.4
Liechtenstein	12,579	33.7
Norway	512,279	9.9
Switzerland	1,997,179	24.2

Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_pop1ctz] extracted on September 2016

If accordingly to the data the Hungarian migration context doesn't show critical points, the impact of the flow of asylum seekers received from this country as the effect of the activation of the Balkan route in 2015 (picture 5) came as a shock for the country. Before the building of a fence to stem the migrant flow 850 thousands asylum seekers and migrants passed through the Hungary in 2015.

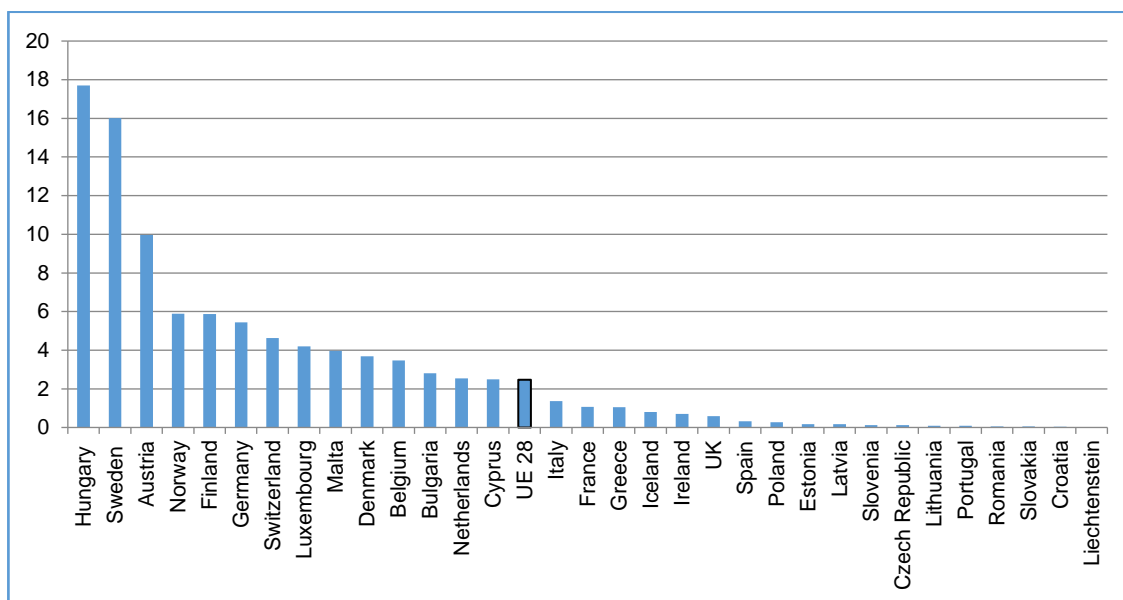
Picture 5 – The Balkan Route



Source: UNHCR

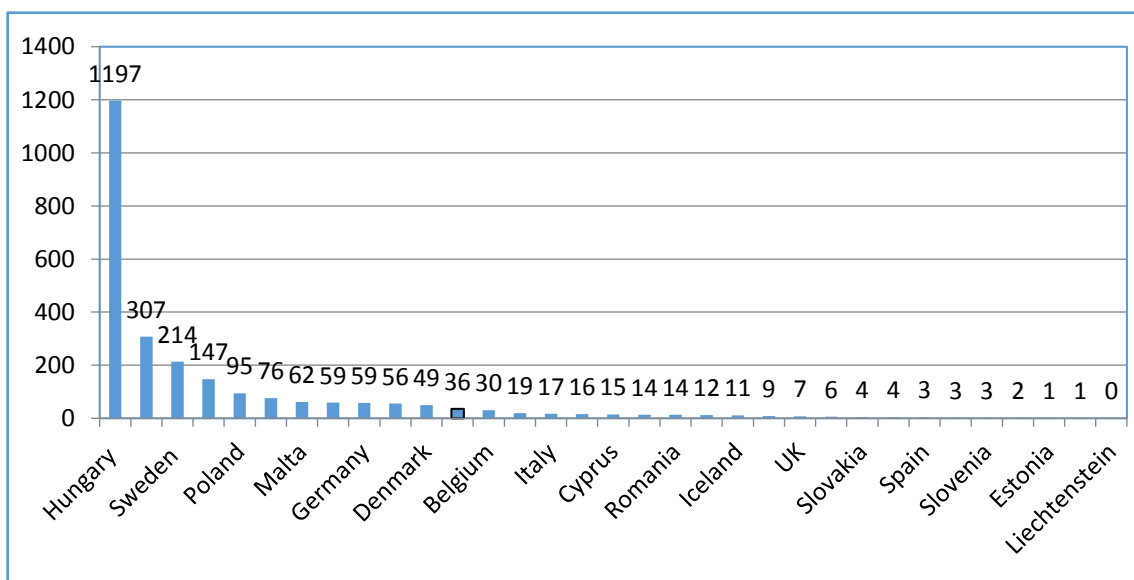
In 2015 Hungary received the highest number of asylum requests in Europe compared to both the number of inhabitants and the number of foreigners (Picture 6 and 7). The number of asylum applications was higher than the total number of foreign present in Hungary (174,000 applications compared to 145,000 foreign residents).

Picture 6 - Asylum applications every 1,000 inhabitants Year 2015



Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_asyappctzm] [migr_pop1ctz] extracted on September 2016

Picture 7 - Asylum applications every 1,000 foreign nationals. Year 2015

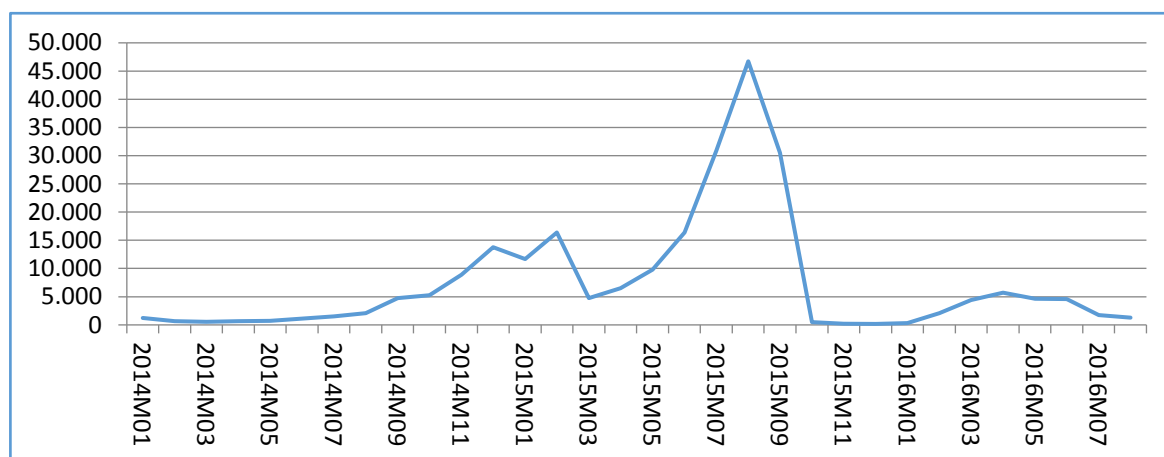


Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_asyappctzm] [migr_pop1ctz] extracted on September 2016

Such a high number of applications compared to a quite small presence of foreigners can help explaining why a country not fully ready to logistically and culturally cope

with immigration reacted with such hostility even without a situation of general heavy migration pressure on the country.

Picture 8 – Number of first asylum applications. Hungary, January 2014- August 2016



Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data [migr_asyappctzm] [migr_pop1ctz] extracted on September 2016

Moreover according to recent Eurostat data, and as a consequence of the deal with Turkey, the number of asylum applications to Hungary in 2016 has been around 3,000 per month (Picture 8). A number of applications in line with 2014. So even to a lesser extent, Hungary remains the eastern European country most affected by asylum seekers' flows. The mean number of first asylum applications per month in the first part of 2016 was in fact around 1,300 in Bulgaria, 100 in Czech Republic, 80 in Croatia, 1,000 in Poland, 70 in Romania, 90 in Slovenia, 5 in Slovakia. These figures are much lower than those observed in main receiving countries: the mean number of applications per month in the first 8 months of 2016 according to Eurostat data was around 66,000 in Germany, 8,600 in Italy, 4,100 in Austria, 3,200 in UK, 2,300 in Switzerland, 2,900 in Greece and 2,000 in Sweden.

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It works with national, European and international organisations and institutions, in both the private and the public sector. It is inserted in academic networks, it cooperates with welfare and healthcare agencies, and it exchanges with libraries and documentation centres in Italy and beyond.

ISMU organises conferences and seminars on migration and produces a wide-range of publications. It has its own Documentation Centre (CeDoc) – which, over the years, has built a comprehensive collection of volumes, periodicals and audio-visual material to contribute to the sharing of information on migration.

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