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POST-SOCIALIST DIASPORA POLICIES:  
IS THERE A CENTRAL-EUROPEAN DIASPORA  
POLICY PATH?<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The paper raises the question whether there is a certain diaspora policy model that is typical for Central European states. Based on the findings, the paper argues that although post-socialist states have very similar paths in relating to and engaging their diaspora communities abroad, these policies are shaped by diverse political contexts, considerations, and expectations, as well as by different experiences in the diaspora – homeland relations. More specifically, the research identifies four points where a detailed qualitative analysis points out differences in these states’ diaspora policies behind the similar structures: the effects of special/benefit/status laws, the politicization of external voting rights, the symbolic aspects of diaspora policy, and the level of awareness of the new (post-2000, labor migrant) diaspora.

Diaspora politics, engagement practices, and homeland – diaspora relations have been acquiring increasing attention within diaspora studies. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of theoretical approaches on diaspora policy typologies, both from deductive and from inductive perspectives.<sup>2</sup> This paper attempts to contribute to the existing scholarly work on diaspora policy models, by offering critical evaluation on diaspora policy models in the Central European context. The paper raises the question whether there is a certain diaspora policy model or type that is typical for all the Central European states. Based on the findings, the paper argues that although post-socialist states have very similar paths in relating to and engaging their diaspora communities abroad, these policies are shaped by diverse political contexts, considerations, and expectations, as well as by different experiences in the diaspora – homeland relations.

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1 The research was supported by the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund.

2 Alexandra Délano and Alan Gamlen, “Comparing and Theorizing State–diaspora Relations,” *Political Geography* 41 (July 2014): 43–53, doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.05.005; Francesco Ragazzi, “A Comparative Analysis of Diaspora Policies,” *Political Geography* 41 (2014); Alan Gamlen, “Mixing Methods in Research on Diaspora Policies,” in *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, by Carlos Vargas-Silva (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), <http://www.elgaronline.com/view/9781849803113.00023.xml>; Alan Gamlen, “Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?,” Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Working Paper No.32. (University of Oxford, 2006).

The region's states have a very similar situation in terms of co-ethnics living abroad. This situation is twofold for these countries. On the one hand, due to 20<sup>th</sup> century border changes and more recent state dissolutions, all of these countries have ethnic kin-minorities in the neighboring countries or in the region. On the other hand, emigration trends from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century affected these countries similarly and thus they have significant ethnic diaspora / emigrant communities overseas and in Western Europe. Since there is a vast literature on Central European kin-state policies, this paper focuses on the latter category: the states' relations with and policies towards their (emigrant) diasporas.

The paper attempts to analyze how these states have been relating to their diaspora communities since the democratic transitions or independence of these countries. Can we identify a specific post-socialist diaspora policy model or path, or on the contrary: do these states have their own way of treating their diasporas? Are the policies of kin-minorities and diaspora communities intertwined, or are they separated from each other? Is one of the two types of ethnic community abroad preferred or prioritized by the mother country? What are the primary goals of these states' diaspora politics?

To answer these questions, I examined seven Central European states' diaspora policy practices from a comparative perspective. The items of analysis are the same in the case of each country:

- the level of legislation (constitution, special law on diaspora or kin-minority, citizenship and electoral law)
- institutional aspects of diaspora politics (government entity responsible for the policy, forum of dialogue between the state and the diaspora)
- strategic goals of diaspora policy
- symbolic aspects and other special characteristics of diaspora politics

The countries examined in the research are: Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia – thus, Central-European countries that share a socialist past, have kin-minorities in the neighboring countries, and have been migrant sending countries for over a century. I opted for not incorporating post-soviet states into the research, as I believe that in their case, a different approach would be necessary in order to take into consideration the geopolitical context of diaspora policies.

As Table 1 shows, there are clear similarities in the diaspora policies of these countries, which could lead to the conclusion that there is a Central European diaspora policy model. However, the research identified four points where a detailed qualitative analysis points out differences in these states' diaspora policies behind the similar structures: the effects of special/benefit/status laws, the politicization of external voting rights, the symbolic aspects of diaspora policy, and the level of awareness of the new (post-2000, labor migrant) diaspora.

The structure of the paper consists of five major parts. The first section gives a brief insight to the theories of diaspora policies. The second section outlines the similar history of diaspora formation of Central European countries. The third section explores the legal framework of the states' diaspora policy and points out the differences of the status/benefit laws of these countries, and through that, the differences in how these states relate to their co-ethnics abroad. The fourth section explores the politicization of external citizenship and voting rights in these countries, and the fifth part examines the symbolic aspects and the issue of new diaspora.

	Article in constitution	Special/benefit law	External citizenship	External voting right	Institution responsible	Forum for dialogue	Strategy	Symbolic policies	New diaspora
<b>Poland</b>	Yes	status, territorial restriction	yes	yes, assimilated representation	MFA, Senate	Advisory Committee in the Senate	yes, 2012	Day of Polish Diaspora	aware
<b>Slovakia</b>	Yes	status, all co-ethnics abroad	no	no	Office	Slovak Conference	no	n.d.	not aware
<b>Slovenia</b>	Yes	status, all co-ethnics abroad	theoretically no, practically yes	yes, assimilated representation	Office	Committee of Slovenes Abroad (diaspora separate)	yes, 2008	n.d.	aware
<b>Croatia</b>	Yes	status, all co-ethnics abroad	yes	yes, separate representation	Office	Advisory Committee for Croats Abroad	yes, 2011	n.d.	not aware
<b>Serbia</b>	Yes	no status, all co-ethnics abroad	yes	yes, assimilated representation	Ministry	Convention of the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region	yes, 2011	Prizes for Serbs Abroad	not aware
<b>Romania</b>	Yes	no status, all co-ethnics abroad	yes	yes, assimilated representation	MFA	-	yes, 2013, 2017	n.d.	moderately aware
<b>Hungary</b>	Yes	territorial restriction	yes	yes, assimilated representation	Deputy PM, State Secretariat	Diaspora Council	yes, 2016	Prizes for Hungarians Abroad	moderately aware

*Table 1: Elements of diaspora policies of CE countries, comparison*

## Theoretical implications of diaspora politics

Homelands' interest in diaspora population and efforts to engage diaspora members for specific goals have become a widespread phenomenon. Gamlen points out that while in the 1980s there were only 15-20 countries that disposed some kind of government body or institution in charge of emigrant communities, in 2014 half of the states of the world had some kind of office responsible for diaspora policy.<sup>3</sup> What explains the growing interest of states for their diaspora and the proliferation of diaspora policies? Ragazzi provides three possible explanatory frameworks for diaspora politics: the structural-instrumental, the ethnic, and the political-economic (or governmentality) framework<sup>4</sup>

The structural-instrumental approach explains diaspora policies primarily with economic considerations and applies Wallerstein's theory on core and periphery. This approach argues that periphery states have an interest in exploiting the economic potential of their diaspora and thus build on them as resources, focusing on their mostly financial, but also political remittances. The structural-instrumental approach also implies that only developing (periphery) states have an interest in pursuing diaspora policies, but this hypothesis has been falsified by comparative studies.<sup>5</sup>

The second analytical framework draws on the assumptions of the classic ethno-national approach of nationalism. It claims that diaspora policies are the states' reactions to the challenges posed by globalization and transnationalism; nation states initiate diaspora policies in order to be able to govern, control, and reconnect those members of the nation that have emigrated from the homeland. To do so, states offer extra-territorial citizenship and political and social rights for their nationals abroad, and, as a result, they generate "long-distance nationalism" within those communities.<sup>6</sup> The ethnic approach also implies that while states that apply the ethnic nation concept are prone to initiate government diaspora policies, states that rely on the civic concept of the nation are not invested in doing so. However, this assumption was also falsified in Gamlen's study, who found that neither geographic location, nor economic position, nor the understanding concept of the nation defines whether or not a state engages in diaspora policies.

3 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance," *International Migration Review* 48 (September 1, 2014): S180–217, S182.

4 Ragazzi, "A Comparative Analysis of Diaspora Policies."

5 Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?"; Ragazzi, "A Comparative Analysis of Diaspora Policies."

6 Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson and Gail Kligman, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam, 1992).

A third, less rigid approach building on Foucault's governmentality concept argues that diaspora policies are constantly changing, and they react to the actual social, political, and economic challenges facing the nation state. Therefore, diaspora policies are not static, they are "*not determined by material factors or conceptions of ethnicity alone, but by the broader political-economic rationality within which these material factors and conceptions are framed, problematized and constituted as elements of broader strategies of political, economic and cultural development*".<sup>7</sup> Gamlen arrives to a similar conclusion: diaspora policies should not be understood as coherent, coordinated government policies. Rather they "*form a constellation of institutional and legislative arrangements and programmes that come into being at different times, for different reasons, and operate across different timescales at different levels within the state*".<sup>8</sup>

From the perspective of the present paper, the theory of governmentality is the most useful for the examination of Central European diaspora policies. As the comparative part will show, diaspora politics of the examined states have been adjusted and modified according to the changing political and social circumstances. While leading motives and dominant features can be identified in those cases, the reactive and situational, and in some cases, changing character of Central European diaspora policies are clear. The governmentality approach thus provides a useful interpretative framework for the research.

## **The formation of Central European diasporas**

In a comparative study on Central European diaspora politics, the first similarity that these states share is the history of diaspora formation, as the emigration history of the region was very similar for almost 100 years. The first significant migration wave affected the region at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when the great European emigration wave, caused by economic depression, hit Central Europe (at that time the territory of the Habsburg Empire), and made millions of people leave their homelands. Although migrants from Western Europe started to leave for America as early as the 1830s, the migration wave did not reach the Central European region until mostly the 1880s. Between 1861 and 1913, almost 4 million people emigrated from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to the USA, and most of them, 2.3 million, arrived only after 1899.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Ragazzi, "A Comparative Analysis of Diaspora Policies."

8 Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?"

9 Julianna Puskás, "Migráció Kelet-Közép-Európában a 19. és 20. században" [Migration in East-Central Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century], *Regio* 2, no. 4 (1991).

The emigrants of this wave belonged to large extent to the lower social classes (mostly peasants), and their primary aim was to save up some money, and eventually return to their homelands. Contrary to their original plans, the majority of the emigrants settled down in their new home – although occasional return migration and seasonal “commuting” was frequent, – and thus they established the first Central and Eastern European diaspora communities in America. As it was the United States that offered the best labor opportunity at that time, the majority of the turn-of-the-century emigrants left for America, and only those who were not admitted there did go to Latin-American states, or Canada.

As international migration in the interwar period was heavily limited by the immigration quotas introduced by America, masses of emigrants could not leave the region until the Second World War, which can be considered the time of the next systematic emigration wave from the region. The emigrants of the Second World War had different socio-demographic characters than the economic emigrants of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were primarily political refugees, people who were fleeing first from the Nazi, later from the communist system. Between 1944 and 1952, almost 250,000 people from the East-Central European countries were registered as refugees in the United States,<sup>10</sup> but Latin-American countries, Canada, Western Europe, and Australia also admitted the region’s refugees in large numbers.

In the 1950s, the so far highly similar history of emigration of the Central European region started to develop different paths in each country. Emigration from Hungary culminated after the 1956 revolution, but in the case of Poland, the highest numbers of emigrants was registered in the first half of the 1960s. In the case of Romania and Yugoslavia, there was not (or, could not be) significant emigration until the 1970-1980s.<sup>11</sup>

Democratic transitions of 1989-1990, as well as the state dissolutions of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia opened a new chapter in the migration trends of Central Europe. The Yugoslav war provoked a new emigration wave from the Balkans in the 1990s; the revolution in Romania and its aftermath also made many people leave the country. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia induced mobility primarily within the territory of the former union. Democratic transition in Hungary and Poland also gave citizens the freedom to leave their homeland, but in these two cases, the volume of post-1990 emigration was much smaller than in Yugoslavia or Romania. Besides emigration, Hungary and Poland witnessed immigration of co-ethnics from the neighboring countries as well in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

10 *Ibid.* Table 1.

11 *Ibid.* 12–13, based on the data on US immigration registrations.

12 Pál Péter Tóth, “*Nemzetközi vándorlás – Magyarország (1990–2000)*,” [International migration - Hungary] Népesedési Kormánybizottság Migrációs Bizottsága 2002. Programja (KSH Népeségutományi Kutatóintézet), accessed May 16, 2017, <http://kisebbssegkutato.tk.mta.hu/kettosallampolgarsag/tanulmanyok.html>.

1990 not only marked a new phase in the emigration history of the Central European countries, but also opened a new chapter in the diaspora – homeland relations. During the communist era, these states had only very limited contacts with the emigrant communities abroad, and in fact, there were periods when the homeland – diaspora relations were explicitly hostile. Democratic (and in many cases right-leaning) emigrants often did not accept the communist leadership of their home countries, and the homeland governments often treated the emigrants as traitors of the country. For this reason, the regime changes in the region put an end to the antagonistic relationships, and created the opportunity for the homelands to consolidate their diasporas, and re-incorporate them into the imagined community<sup>13</sup> of the nation.

Central European states have in common not only a similar emigration history and diaspora structures, but also the fact that the borders of states and nations are not congruent, and for that reason, significant kin-minorities, or co-ethnic communities, live in the neighboring countries or the region. Thus, 1990 brought along a new situation not only in terms of the diaspora – homeland relations, but also in terms of kin-state policies. Similarly to the diaspora communities, Central European states did not pursue very active politics towards their kin-minorities abroad until 1990, because the communist ideology did not allow to engage in any national (or nationalistic) issue in extraterritorial context; minority and ethnic issues were thought to be resolved automatically with the realization of classless society.<sup>14</sup> Thus, 1990 opened a new chapter in terms of relations with and politics of kin-minorities and kin-states as well. Most of the examined countries, as we will see, started to handle their kin-minorities and their diasporas within the same legal, institutional and political framework, but the priorities and accents of these policies differ from country to country.

### **Legal framework: Special (benefit, status, patriot) laws**

Besides the constitutional reference to co-ethnics, all of these states have adopted a special law on diaspora and/or kin-minorities abroad. However, in this regard we can observe three main approaches to co-ethnics abroad. The first approach does not differentiate among the different groups of co-ethnics abroad at all, and handles kin-minorities and the diaspora in the same way. The second approach defines the different types of co-ethnics abroad, but does

13 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

14 Nándor Bárdi, “The History of Relations between Hungarian Governments and Ethnic Hungarians Living beyond the Borders of Hungary,” in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/Or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, Slavic Research Center, 2004).



not apply any restrictions on the availability of the benefits provided by the law. The third approach is territorially restricting, as the status law is available only to the kin-minority of the country, but not to the diaspora.

The first approach is applied by the Slovenian (2006), Romanian (1998, revised in 2007), and the Slovak (1997) special laws on co-ethnics abroad. These documents do not apply any differentiation between the different categories of co-ethnics abroad. The Slovak law, the earliest in the region, creates the status of ‘Slovaks abroad’, which can be applied for by Slovaks abroad and their descendants up to the third generation. The status comes with a certificate of Slovak abroad (quasi citizenship<sup>15</sup>), and offers a range of benefits for the holders (preferential settlement, labor, education, etc. opportunities) while in Slovakia. The law does not differentiate between Slovak kin-minorities in the neighboring countries and the Slovak diaspora; the benefits of the Slovak abroad status is available for both groups. The reason behind the early and territorially non-limiting (that is, open for both the Slovak kin and diaspora) status law is that in the 1990s, Slovakia put high hopes in the lobby and financial power of the Slovak diaspora, especially in the USA and Canada. However, these hopes proved to be false, as the Slovak Americans, compared to e.g. the Hungarian or Polish Americans, are in a more developed phase of assimilation, and are internally divided, hence they did not hold stakes in the homeland’s affairs, and did not mobilize themselves for the interest of Slovakia.<sup>16</sup>

The Romanian and Slovenian laws also do not apply a territorial limit, and are available for all the co-ethnics abroad. The Slovenian law states that all Slovenes abroad, irrespective of their residence, are part of the Slovene nation.<sup>17</sup> The law creates the status of Slovenes abroad without Slovenian citizenship, which can be applied for any Slovenes abroad, provided that they can prove their Slovene ancestry, their participation in Slovene organizations abroad, and effective ties to the homeland.<sup>18</sup> The status comes with benefits on the field of culture, education, labor, and research on the territory of Slovenia. The Romanian law, however, is different from the others in the sense that it does not create a status for Romanians abroad. Both the original 1998 and the new 2007 laws are about the support Romania provides for

15 Szabolcs Pogonyi, Mária M. Kovács, and Zsolt Körtvélyesi, “The Politics of External Kin-State Citizenship in East Central Europe,” EUDO Citizenship Observatory (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2010), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/ECEcompreport.pdf>.

16 Iván Halász, “Szlovákia, a külföldön élő szlovák állampolgárok és a határon túli szlovákok kapcsolatai” [Slovakia’s relations with Slovak citizens abroad and Slovaks abroad] (Állampolgárság Európában, 2005, Europa Institut Budapest, 2005), <http://www.europainstitut.hu/index.php/24-sonstiges/915-allampolgarsag-halasz>.

17 The Slovene law was preceded by a declaration in 1996 on the situation of autochthonous Slovene communities in the neighboring countries. The territorial restriction of the 1996 declaration was ruled out with the 2006 law. See: Felicita Medved, “‘Unified Slovenian Nation’: Slovenian Citizenship Policy towards Slovenians Abroad,” *Minority Studies* 16., no. Special Issue: Trends and Directions of Kin-State Policies in Europe and Across the Globe (2013): 153–187.

18 Dejan Valentinčič, “Slovenia’s Attitude Towards Slovenian Minorities in Neighbouring Countries,” *European Perspectives - Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans* 6, no. 2(11) (2014): 63–83.

the Romanians abroad (in the original Romanian, it is “Romanians everywhere” or “Romanians around the Globe”). Thus, the most important contribution of the 1998 Romanian law is that it established a fund for the support of Romanians abroad. The 2007 Romanian law is similar to the previous one, the main difference is that it dedicates special attention to the newest diaspora (labor migrants in Western European countries).

The second approach is applied by the Croatian (2011) and the Serbian (2009) laws, as they specify the different types of co-ethnics abroad. The Croatian law (Act on relations of the Republic of Croatia with Croats abroad) talks about three categories: Croatian national minorities in Europe, the Croats in Bosnia (who are one of the ‘constituent peoples’ of the country), and the Croatian diaspora. The law creates a special status for those Croats abroad who do not have Croatian citizenship (and cannot be dual citizens because of the regulation of their country of residence), which makes them entitled to several benefits in Croatia. The Serbian law (Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region) similarly defines the different subjects of the law: “diaspora” unites recent Serb emigrants abroad as well as the descendants of former emigrants from the country, while the “Serbs in the region” category stands for the Serbian kin-minorities in the post-Yugoslav countries, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania.<sup>19</sup> The law defines the priorities of the relation of Serbia and Serbs abroad: language education, economic cooperation, minority rights protection. Besides, the law creates the institutions of the Serbian diaspora policy as well, which will be discussed later, and symbolic measures (e.g. the Day of Serbs Abroad, and different prizes for Serbs abroad who contributed greatly to Serbia’s development in any sense).

The third approach is applied by the Polish (2007) and the Hungarian (2001) special laws. The Hungarian Status Law provoked international attention and tense relations with two of the neighboring countries. It is entitled ‘Act on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries’, thus it is clear from the title that it is applicable only for Hungarian kin-minorities, but not for the Hungarian diaspora. The status created by the law came with an official certificate (Hungarian Card) that made the holder eligible for different benefits in Hungary (public transportation, health care, education, etc.). Romania and Slovakia opposed the law, claiming that the Hungarian Status Law violates their territorial sovereignty. The debate was concluded by the Venice Commission’s ‘Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by their Kin-State’, which was the first international document on the rights and responsibilities of kin-states.<sup>20</sup> The Polish law (2007) had a long parliamentary debate before its adoption. One of the debated aspects of the law was exactly the territorial focus of it, but

19 “Documents,” *The Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region*, accessed June 6, 2017, <http://www.dijaspora.gov.rs/en/documents/>.

20 Zoltán Kántor, “Status Law and ‘Nation Policy’: Theoretical Aspects,” in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/Or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, Slavic Research Center, 2004).

eventually, the Polish lawmakers decided that only Poles living in the post-soviet states could apply for the Polish Card.<sup>21</sup> The Polish status law offers similar benefits as the other status laws of the region.

As a conclusion it can be argued that Central European special/benefit laws are heterogeneous in their effects. Although most of them do not differentiate between the kin-minority and the diaspora and are thus available for both groups, the Hungarian and the Polish status laws are dedicated exclusively to the kin-minority.

## The politicization of external citizenship and voting rights of the diaspora

Citizenship policies are the most visible practices of kin-state and diaspora policies. Granting the homeland's citizenship for co-ethnics abroad serves the political incorporation of non-resident co-ethnics into the nation's political community, and it has practical implications as well (civil and political rights) – no wonder that citizenship policies of the Central European region acquire great scholarly attention.<sup>22</sup> The first statement in this section can be that, with the exception of Slovakia, all of the examined countries offer preferential naturalization for non-resident co-ethnics abroad, and non-resident citizens are enfranchised as well. In some cases, extraterritorial citizenship and voting rights are heavily politicized (Croatia, Romania, Hungary), in others they are not debated neither domestically, nor internationally (Serbia, Poland, Slovenia), and in one case (Slovakia), the citizenship regime can be interpreted as a reaction to another state's (Hungary's) external citizenship policy.

Croatia and Romania have the longest tradition in offering citizenship and voting rights for co-ethnics abroad among the examined countries. The Croatian nationality law in 1991 enabled Croats abroad (the Croats in the neighboring countries, as well the

21 Iván Halász, "A külhoni lengyelek és Lengyelország diaszpóra politikája" [Poles abroad and Poland's diaspora policy], *Regio*, no. 4 (2003): 120–41.

22 Pogonyi, Kovács, and Körtvélyesi, "The Politics of External Kin-State Citizenship in East Central Europe"; Rainer Bauböck, "Expansive Citizenship: Voting beyond Territory and Membership," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38, no. 4 (2005): 683–87; Myra A. Waterbury, "From Irredentism to Diaspora Politics: States and Transborder Ethnic Groups in Eastern Europe," *Global Migration and Transnational Politics Working Paper No. 6*, 2009, [http://www.gmu.edu/centers/globalstudies/publications/gmtpwp/gmtp\\_wp\\_6.pdf](http://www.gmu.edu/centers/globalstudies/publications/gmtpwp/gmtp_wp_6.pdf); Myra A. Waterbury, "National Minorities in an Era of Externalization," *Problems of Post-Communism* 0, no. 0 (December 5, 2016): 1–14, doi:10.1080/10758216.2016.1251825; Rainer Bauböck, "Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation. A Normative Evaluation of External Voting," *Fordham Law Review* 75, no. 5 (2007), <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/7313>.

diaspora, and their descendants up to the third generation) to apply for Croatian citizenship. Although the discursive and normative reasoning of the extraterritorial citizenship was to provide symbolic restitution for those Croats who had to flee their country due to oppression, in fact, most of the citizenship applications came from Bosnia-Herzegovina, not from the diaspora: between 1991 and 2010, more than one million citizenship applications were received in Croatia, and the majority of them was submitted by citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>23</sup>

The 1995 electoral law in Croatia regulated the voting rights of non-resident citizens, and the Croatian solution of extraterritorial voting was highly debated for a long time.<sup>24</sup> The Croatian election system created a separate electoral district for the ‘diaspora’ (in the literature, it is most frequently referred to as the ‘diaspora electoral district’, however, it is the electoral district of all Croatian citizens abroad, not only the diaspora’s), and granted 12 parliamentary seats for them – thus, Croatian citizens abroad delegated the same number of representatives as any other electoral district of the country, regardless of the turnout.

The electoral behavior of Croats abroad since the independence of the country has been very straightforward; they have been voting overwhelmingly for the nationalist HDZ (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, Croatian Democratic Union) party. The strong relationship between Croats abroad and Franjo Tuđman’s party dates back to the war for independence, when Tuđman made conscious efforts to engage the Croatian diaspora (in Canada and the US primarily) for the cause of national independence. He visited the diaspora several times, and persuaded them to support both financially and politically the country’s fights for independence. As the majority of the active diaspora were nationalists, the cooperation was easily achieved, and the diaspora indeed supported Croatian independence with all means.<sup>25</sup> The voting rights of the diaspora thus can be interpreted as gratuity for their help, but also as a mean to solidify the HDZ’s ruling position. As the diaspora electoral district always voted for the HDZ, the non-resident voting rights became a debated issue of Croatian politics, and it came in for a lot of international criticism.<sup>26</sup>

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23 Viktor Koska, “The Development of Kin-State Policies and the Croatian Citizenship Regime,” *Minority Studies* 16., no. Special Issue: Trends and Directions of Kin-State Policies in Europe and Across the Globe (2013): 214–230.

24 Croatian citizens abroad were allowed to vote at the Croatian elections before 1995 too, only there was no separate electoral district for them. They could vote on party lists.

25 Daphne N. Winland, “Contingent Selves: The Croatian Diaspora and the Politics of Desire,” *Revija Za Sociologiju* XXIX, no. 1–2 (1998): 47–57.

26 *Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook*, 2007, [http://www.idea.int/publications/voting\\_from\\_abroad/index.cfm](http://www.idea.int/publications/voting_from_abroad/index.cfm).

At the end of the 1990s, when the absolute dominance of right-wing cabinets in Croatia started to fade, the electoral weight of the diaspora was reformed. As a first step on that road, the electoral system was modified so that the number of representatives elected by non-resident citizens was adjusted to electoral participation and to the number of votes necessary to elect an MP. As the result, at the 2003 elections, the number of MPs elected by the diaspora was only 4. Further on, in 2011, the Croatian constitutional court demanded that the size of the electoral districts be balanced. With the 2011 amendment of the electoral law, the number of MPs elected by the diaspora was changed to a fix number again, but it became considerably smaller than initially; the diaspora has only 3 representatives since 2011. It is important to note that however close the cooperation was between the diaspora and the HDZ politicians in the 1990s, the majority of the non-resident votes were always casted by the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>27</sup>

Extraterritorial citizenship and voting rights in the case of Romania have also been a heated issue. Since 1991, Romania allows fast-track naturalization for Romanians abroad in three ways: return home, preferential naturalization without returning home, and restitution. Restitution is available for those who were deprived of their Romanian citizenship before 1989 for various reasons or against their will, thus it offers a compensation for the past's injustices. The option of restitution has been the most debated part of the nationality law, and therefore has been amended many times.<sup>28</sup> The most important motivation of extraterritorial Romanian citizenship was to offer Romanian citizenship to the Romanian minority in Moldova (who lost their Romanian citizenship in 1940 when the former Romanian territory of Moldova was attached to the Soviet Union). Thus, in the case of Romania, the major motivation of dual citizenship was to link the Romanian kin-minorities to the kin-state. Romanian dual citizenship is a neuralgic point in Romanian-Moldovan bilateral relations, as mass applications for Romanian citizenship were submitted from Moldova.<sup>29</sup>

Non-resident Romanian citizens are allowed to vote at the Romanian parliamentary and presidential elections. The issue of non-resident voting rights has been a debated issue in the country, especially since the 2009 presidential elections, when external citizens had a decisive effect on the election's result; the diaspora vote turned around the outcome of

27 Koska, "The Development of Kin-State Policies and the Croatian Citizenship Regime."

28 Irina Culic, "From Restitution to Privileged Re-Naturalisation: The Expansive Politics of Dual Citizenship in Romania after 1989," *Minority Studies* 16, no. Special Issue: Trends and Directions of Kin-State Policies in Europe and Across the Globe (2013): 125–152.

29 Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship and National Identity in Romania: A Historical Overview," *Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society – English Edition* 13, no. 1 (2002): 3–34.

the elections and made Traian Băsescu president of the country.<sup>30</sup> External citizens, and especially Romanians in Moldova got into the focus of Romanian politics during the 2004 presidential term of Băsescu, which led to the infamous presidential election results of 2009.<sup>31</sup> This instance greatly contributed to the domestic debates on external voting rights, thus it can be argued that non-resident voting rights in Romania is a debated, non-consensual issue. However, as the party system in Romania intensely fluctuates, non-resident citizenship and voting rights is not a deeply embedded issue in party politics (as it was the case in Croatia), rather an opportunity that can serve short-term political interests.

Hungary has been offering non-resident citizenship for Hungarians abroad since 2010, however, the idea of making Hungarian citizenship available for Hungarians abroad had come up in the public discourse from time to time after 1990. In 2004, a referendum was initiated to grant external citizenship for Hungarians abroad. The campaign before the referendum caused long-lasting grievances between Hungarians abroad and the then-governing parties in Hungary, as the governing socialist and liberal politicians encouraged the voters to refuse the idea of dual citizenship. The government played a ‘welfare-chauvinist’ card by claiming that the new Hungarian citizens abroad would mean a huge threat to the social and welfare (pensions, health care) benefits of resident Hungarian citizens. On the other hand, right-wing and conservative parties campaigned for the ‘Yes’, saying that granting dual citizenship for Hungarians abroad is a national duty, and it is a way to express solidarity with those ‘parts of the nation’ who are forced to live in another country. After that campaign, the relationship of the then-governing left-wing parties and Hungarians abroad deteriorated, and it also reinforced the place of Hungarians abroad on the agenda of right-wing parties. The referendum eventually failed, as turnout did not reach the minimum for a valid referendum.

In 2010, after the landslide victory of the right-wing, conservative Fidesz party, the issue of dual citizenship for Hungarians abroad emerged again. The amendment of the citizenship law was the very first legislative act that the newly elected parliament passed in 2010. The amendment made it possible to obtain Hungarian citizenship without permanent residence in Hungary if two criteria are met; applicants have to prove that one of their ancestors was a citizen of Hungary, and they must have a command of the Hungarian language. Thus, it requires former legal ties (i.e. citizenship) to the state of Hungary. Soon after the amendment of the nationality law, the electoral law was amended as well, in order to enfranchise non-resident citizens. Based on the tense relations of left-wing parties and

30 Costica Dumbrava, “Access to Electoral Rights Romania,” EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Reports (Badia Fiesolana, Italy: European University Institute, 2013), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=countryProfiles&f=139-RO-FRACIT.pdf>.

31 Zoltán Kántor and Zsolt Pászkan, “A határon túli románok és a románok státusz törvényei,” [Romanians abroad and Romania’s Status Laws] *Pro Minoritate*, no. Tavasz (2011): 70–81.

Hungarians abroad since 2004, and the intense national politics of Fidesz between 1998 and 2002 and especially after 2010, it was widely expected that newly enfranchised non-resident citizens would overwhelmingly support the governing Fidesz party. The first elections that took place after the citizenship extension were held in 2014, and they confirmed the initial presumptions: 95% of those non-resident citizens who cast a vote indeed voted for the governing Fidesz.

The composition of external votes shows a clear difference in the intensity of politicization of Hungarian kin-minorities in the neighboring countries and of the Hungarian diaspora. The majority of external votes were cast in two countries, Romania (58,330) and Serbia (17,521), whereas the postal votes casted in the larger Hungarian diaspora communities (United States, Germany, UK, France) ranged from a couple of hundreds to slightly over a thousand. Although the campaign of Hungarian parties among Hungarians abroad was not particularly intense before the elections, there was a clear focus on the Hungarian communities in the neighboring countries, and Hungarians in the diaspora were not approached as strongly. The external votes were not decisive at the 2014 elections (they were worth one mandate), but the theoretical potential is definitely there for external voters to decide the results of the Hungarian elections. Should such a scenario happen, external citizenship and voting rights would certainly generate heated political debates, and, similarly to the 2004 referendum, would probably polarize again Hungarian politics.

The Slovakian citizenship regime in its current form is closely related to the Hungarian one. Prior to 2010, Slovakia had a citizenship regulation that, even though did not offer non-resident Slovak citizenship for Slovaks abroad, it did not ban dual citizenship: Slovak citizens living abroad could naturalize in their respective countries of residence, and Slovak resident citizens could have another country's citizenship. Moreover, it offered preferential naturalization for those who had Slovak Card according to the 1997 act (described in section 2), for former Czechoslovak citizens, and for those who had lost their citizenship in the Czechoslovak era.<sup>32</sup> In 2010, as an instant reaction to the amendment of the Hungarian citizenship law that made Hungarian non-resident citizenship available, Slovakia amended its citizenship law so that Slovak citizens who acquire another country's citizenship would lose their Slovak citizenship. The intention of the amendment was to prevent ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia to apply for Hungarian citizenship, however, in practice it affects the numerous Czech and Slovak dual citizens, and other dual citizens as well. While the amendment raises constitutional concerns,<sup>33</sup> and has been sent to the Constitutional

32 The preferential naturalization entailed a shorter period of time of required Slovak residence before the citizenship was granted than in the case of non-Slovak applicants.

33 According to the Slovak constitution, Slovak citizens cannot be deprived of their Slovak citizenship against their will.



Court, it is still an unresolved legal issue. As a conclusion, Slovakia's citizenship law in its present form has to be interpreted as a reaction to Hungary's citizenship law rather than as a tool of diaspora policy.

External citizenship and voting rights are less politicized issues in Serbia, Slovenia, and Poland. Serbia allows Serbs abroad to apply for Serbian citizenship since 2004. Serbs living in the region as well as in the diaspora are entitled to naturalize as Serb citizens without residence in Serbia, provided that they prove their Serbian ancestry. The law does not specify the ways in which Serbian ancestry can be proven, therefore the law is applied in a rather flexible way. Interestingly, this did not generate tensions in Serbian domestic politics, and since citizenship acquisition is inclusive not only in the case of Serbs abroad, but in the case of immigrants too, there is a national consensus about the liberal nature of the law.<sup>34</sup> External citizens have political rights, however, they are allowed to vote only in person at Serbian diplomatic and consular missions.

External citizenship in Slovenia is a hidden opportunity for Slovenes abroad. According to the citizenship law, Slovenes abroad and people of Slovene heritage (up to the fourth generation) can obtain Slovenian citizenship in a preferential treatment if they settle in Slovenia. However, the law includes the option of exceptional naturalization, which can occur when it is the state's interest to grant a certain person Slovenian citizenship for exceptional achievements or contributions (in the field of science, sport, art, etc.). While exceptionally naturalized people normally have to reside in Slovenia for at least one year, this requirement can be waived if the person is of Slovene origin or a Slovene living in the neighboring countries. Thus, although external citizenship does not exist in Slovenia by default, in practice it is available under the exceptional naturalization, and between 2009 and 2011, 30% of all naturalization was exceptional naturalization, and 88% of exceptional naturalizations happened on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Most of the external Slovene citizens belong to the Slovene kin-minority communities (especially in Italy, Serbia, and Croatia), and to a lesser extent to the diaspora.<sup>35</sup> Non-resident citizens have voting rights at Slovenian elections, which can be executed by postal vote or in person at consular and diplomatic missions. There is no separate electoral district for citizens abroad, their votes are counted in the electoral district where their or their ancestors' last Slovenian residence was at.<sup>36</sup>

Poland also enabled Poles abroad to become Polish citizens without permanent address

34 Nenad Rava, "Country Report: Serbia," EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Reports, CITSEE (Badia Fiesolana, Italy: European University Institute, Revised and updated 2013), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=countryProfiles&f=Serbia.pdf>.

35 Medved, "Unified Slovenian Nation": Slovenian Citizenship Policy towards Slovenians Abroad."

36 Matej Accetto, "Access to Electoral Rights Slovenia," EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Reports (Badia Fiesolana, Italy: European University Institute, 2013), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=countryProfiles&f=1318-Slovenia-FRACIT.pdf>.



in the country. There are certain limitations: only those can naturalize whose Polish ancestors were born after the 1918 independence of the country, and Polish citizenship has to be continuous in the family. During the 1990s, most of the external citizenship applications were registered from the Polish diaspora in the US, Canada, and Western Europe.<sup>37</sup> Polish citizens abroad have voting rights. Prior to 2014, they could cast a vote only in person, but since 2014, postal voting is available as well. There is no separate electoral district for external citizens, their votes are counted into the Warsaw central district.<sup>38</sup>

## Symbolic policies and the issue of new diaspora

In the last section, two other regards are briefly discussed that show differences in the Central European diaspora policy models: whether diaspora policy entails significant symbolic gestures towards the diaspora, and whether the newest diaspora (migrants who left their country in the last 20 years, but exhibit great levels of transnationalism) acquires attention within the diaspora policy framework. As sources on these two aspects are less available and less exact than in the cases of the former points, this part of the paper should be regarded as a tentative argumentation. Otherwise not related to each other, the two directions of investigation in this section are handled together because they both present rather speculative or open-ended, less exact aspects of diaspora politics.

Gamlén argues that symbolic policies are important elements of nation building as they help to constitute the diaspora itself and create close ties between the diaspora and the homeland through increasing the diaspora's "sense of belonging".<sup>39</sup> The tools of symbolic policies can be various: they range from the already examined constitutional articles on the diaspora, through national days dedicated to the diaspora, to communication, etc. Among the countries examined, symbolic policies are present in Poland, Serbia, and Hungary, while in the other countries there were no data found in this regard.

In Poland, the Day of the Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad was introduced in 2002, "*in recognition of centuries-old achievements and the contribution of the Polish diaspora and Poles abroad to regaining by Poland of independence, loyalty and attachment to Polishness, and*

37 Agata Górny and Dorota Pudzianowska, "Country Report: Poland," EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Reports (Badia Fiesolana, Italy: European University Institute, Revised and updated 2013), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=countryProfiles&f=2013-26-Poland.pdf>.

38 Piotr Korzec and Dorota Pudzianowska, "Access to Electoral Rights Poland," EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Reports (Badia Fiesolana, Italy: European University Institute, Revised and updated 2013), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/admin/?p=file&appl=countryProfiles&f=1317-Poland-FRACIT.pdf>.

39 Gamlén, "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?" p.6

for helping the country in its most difficult moments”.<sup>40</sup> Poland also have been broadcasting Polish programs on the worldwide TV channel ‘Polonia’ to Poles living abroad, and it have been giving grants to the best diaspora projects since 2012.

In Hungary, symbolic policies are more pertinent to the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries, while diaspora has not received significant attention before 2010. There is no day dedicated to the diaspora, however, June 4<sup>th</sup>, the day that signals the dissolution of historic Hungary and thus the coming into existence of Hungarian kin-minorities in the neighboring countries, has been introduced as the ‘Day of National Cohesion’. The message of this national day is to make ‘mainland’ Hungarians more aware of Hungarians abroad; however, the date is relevant only for the Hungarian kin-minorities, but not for the diaspora. Besides the national day, Hungary, alike Poland, have been offering a worldwide TV channel since the 1990s, and established various grants for Hungarians abroad who contribute to the maintenance of Hungarian culture abroad. Furthermore, since 2010, an intense symbolic narrative has been present in the government’s discourse on the Hungarian nation. Politicians often talk about the “unified, coherent” Hungarian nation that is similar to a three-legged chair: one leg being Hungary, the second leg being the Hungarian minority communities in the neighboring countries, and the third leg being the diaspora. Frequent visits of government officials to diaspora communities for citizenship oath celebrations or for national holidays can be listed among the symbolic policies as well.

In Serbia, the 2009 law on diaspora and Serbs in the region established the “Day of the diaspora and Serbs in the region”, which is celebrated on June 28<sup>th</sup>, on St. Vitus’ day. Furthermore, the same law lists seven different awards that can be granted to persons who contribute to the strengthening of the homeland – diaspora (or homeland – Serbs in the region) relations, as well as for special contribution to promoting Serbia abroad.<sup>41</sup> Data on Croatia’s, Slovenia’s, Slovakia’s and Romania’s symbolic policies was not found during the research, therefore we can tentatively claim that the intensity of symbolic measures within diaspora policy also differs in the Central European region.

As the last analytical item, the awareness of the new diaspora within the examined countries’ diaspora policies is addressed. In the second section on the history of Central European diasporas it was claimed that especially after the 2004 EU-enlargement, these countries have been experiencing the newest, highly intense wave of migration. Although this wave is still in process, newly emerging Central European diaspora communities are already perceivable in Western European states. However, the level of awareness of

40 “2 May Celebrates Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad Day,” 2, accessed June 15, 2017, [http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/2\\_may\\_celebrates\\_polish\\_diaspora\\_and\\_poles\\_abroad\\_day](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/2_may_celebrates_polish_diaspora_and_poles_abroad_day).

41 “Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region,” 2009.

these phenomenon is different in the examined countries; some have already started to work out strategies to treat these new diaspora communities, and some seem to be not responding to this challenge.

Slovenia was the first among the examined countries that reacted to the newest emigration wave. The first strategy on the relationship of Slovenes abroad and Slovenia was accepted in 2008, which was followed by an action plan in 2009 that addressed the cooperation with Slovene scientists and researchers abroad (in Slovenia, the newest emigration trends affect the highly educated social class the most). Even before the strategic cooperation, initiatives existed to engage Slovene businesspeople abroad with the Slovene Business Network Initiative and the Business Development Council for Slovenes from Abroad.

Poland started to pay attention to the newest diaspora in the 2010s. In 2011, a plan was presented on the cooperation with the Poles abroad, and within that, the newest emigrants were addressed excessively. The basic idea is to generate stronger cooperation between Poland and the Polish communities abroad; to help them in maintaining the Polish language and culture through education; and to foster return migration. In 2013, a survey was carried out among Poles abroad, which intended to investigate the views and attitudes of the newly emigrated Polish diaspora towards Poland's diaspora engagement policies.<sup>42</sup> This shows that Poland is increasingly aware of its newest diaspora, and has been experimenting to find the possible ways for their engagement, and their incorporation into the diaspora policy of the country.

Romania also has a considerable number of new diaspora, however, in the Romanian case the majority of the new emigrants belong to the lower classes, and very often they are seasonal workers in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Romania has been aware of its labor migrants for a longer time; the second special law on Romanians abroad (2007) already talked about Romania's responsibility to monitor the rights of those citizens working abroad. While the first Romanian diaspora strategy (2013) was very vague about the strategic goals with the diaspora, the second diaspora strategy (2017) is more promising, as it outlines an exact timeline for the different diaspora projects, and it prioritizes economic cooperation with the diaspora. To sum it up, Romania has showed traits of being more and more aware of its new diaspora, but since concrete projects have just recently started, no deep conclusions can be drawn.

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42 Anna Fiń et al., "Views and Attitudes of the Polish Community and Poles Living Abroad on the Policy Towards Polish Expatriate Communities" (Institute for Western Affairs Poznań, 2013), [http://www.iz.poznan.pl/uploads/pracownicy/nawosielski/773\\_Polish%20\\_community.pdf](http://www.iz.poznan.pl/uploads/pracownicy/nawosielski/773_Polish%20_community.pdf).

Hungary has been facing intense migration in the past 10 years, however, the issue of the new diaspora has not been handled systematically. The focus of diaspora policy is clearly on the well-established old diaspora communities; the majority of diaspora projects aims to strengthen the weakened communities and to preserve their heritages.<sup>43</sup> The Hungarian diaspora strategy (2016) although acknowledges the existence of the new diaspora, but the only goal that is defined in connection with them is returning home. The only program that was designed exclusively for the new diaspora focused on return migration. The program run for only one pilot year, and so far there has been no signs of its re-launch. As a conclusion, the new diaspora is not a major concern for Hungarian diaspora politics; its focus is on the old diaspora communities, and although there have been sporadic initiatives to turn to the new emigration, systemic or strategic planning has not begun yet. In the case of Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia, traces of awareness of the new diaspora, or engagement practices were not found during the research.

## Conclusions

The paper analyzed Central European diaspora policies in a comparative perspective, and raised the question whether there is a certain diaspora policy model or type that is typical for the Central European states. Based on the findings, the paper argued that although post-socialist states have very similar paths in relating to and engaging their diaspora communities abroad, these policies are shaped by diverse political contexts, considerations, and expectations, as well as by different experiences in the diaspora – homeland relations. The paper also identified four major points where Central European diaspora policies differ: the extent to which kin-minorities and diaspora communities are intertwined in the state's diaspora policy; the politicization of external voting rights; the symbolic measures within diaspora policy; and the extent to which these states are aware of their newest diaspora and reach out to them.

Regarding benefit laws, three major approaches were discovered: limiting the status (and benefits) to the kin-minorities abroad; making the status (and benefits) available for both the diaspora and the kin-minority; and defining the categories of co-ethnics abroad without granting them any status or benefits. The politicization of external citizenship and voting rights showed two major patterns: in the case of Croatia, Hungary, and Romania, dual citizenship and voting right are politically sensitive issues, while in Serbia, Slovenia, and Poland these rights of co-ethnics abroad enjoy national consensus.

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43 Eszter Herner-Kovács, "Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics," *Minority Studies* 17. (2014): 55–67.

Slovakia does not fit into these groups as the country's citizenship law has to be interpreted as a counter-law to the Hungarian dual citizenship. Symbolic measures in the diaspora policy framework as well as the awareness of the newest diaspora also showed differences, however, as data in this regard was less available and less exact, these should only be regarded as tentative arguments of the paper.