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## **International migration and new mobility trends**

Eva Abramuszkinova Pavlikova

Mendel University, Faculty of Business and Economics

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International Migration and New Mobility Trends

Eva Abramuszkinová Pavlíková

**MENDELU Working Papers in Business and Economics**

Research Centre

Faculty of Business and Economics

Mendel University in Brno

Zemědělská 1, 613 00 Brno

Czech Republic

<http://vyzc.pef.mendelu.cz/en>

+420 545 132 605

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## **Abstract**

Eva Abramuszkinová Pavlíková: **International Migration and New Mobility Trends**

World migration community covers 3 per cent of the world population, in Europe it is around 7 per cent and 4 per cent in the Czech Republic. Europe is an important target for migration stimulated by the work offer but also by wars and natural disasters. In Western Europe at the end of the 20th century there were 20 millions of foreign migrants and also probably 3–5 million illegal migrants. Recently, we have faced new trends in international mobility which are different from traditional migration flows. They include mobility of multinational firms employees, mobility of students, pensioners but also mobility of professionals. Specific area under study is foreign migration or mobility of scientists and researchers. There is another phenomena connected with the development of modern technologies which stimulates the mobility in virtual space. Virtual mobility is another form of mobility which is using virtual space for communication, study, work and other aspects of life. The aim of this paper is to introduce the main trends in international migration including the traditional ones but stressing the new types of international mobility. The focus will be on the current situation in the Czech Republic related to migration.

## **Key words**

migration, international mobility, high skilled professionals, brain drain, virtual mobility

**JEL:** J1, J6, Z13

## **Contacts**

Mgr. Eva Abramuszkinová Pavlíková, Ph.D., M.A., Research Centre, Faculty of Business and Economics, Mendel University in Brno, Zemědělská 1, 613 00 Brno, Czech Republic, e-mail: [eva.pavlikova@mendelu.cz](mailto:eva.pavlikova@mendelu.cz)

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## **Introduction**

Europe is an important target for migration stimulated by work offer but also by wars and natural disasters. In Western Europe at the end of the 20th century there were 20 millions of foreign migrants and also probably 3–5 million illegal migrants. (Drbohlav, 2001) The assumption of the International Organisation for Migration estimates 230 – 250 million international migrants by year 2050. (Divinsky, 2005)

World migration community covers 3 per cent of the world population, in Europe it is around 7 per cent and 4 per cent in the Czech Republic (433 305 foreigners in December 2009). The most common nationality groups in the CR include citizens of Ukraine (30 per cent), Slovakia (17 per cent), Vietnam (14 per cent), Russia (7 per cent) and Poland (5 per cent). The Czech Republic used to be a transit country for foreigners but changed into popular destination for migrants. They compose quite heterogenous group in terms of reasons for a stay or motivation for the future. (Project Selection, 2003-2010)

The latest data on international migrant stock show that estimated number of international migrants at mid-year 2010 for Europe is 69 819 282 which is 9.5 as a percentage of the population, for Eastern Europe it is 21 045 866 which is 7.2 as a percentage and for the Czech Republic it is 453 041 which is 4.4 as a percentage of the population. Eastern Europe defined by the United Nations Population Division is composed of the following states: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine. (Trends in International Migrant Stock, 2009)

There are different types of migration and new forms of mobility are becoming more frequent. A physical mobility is not any more the only way which is opening possibilities for work, studies or communication. A virtual space can be a platform providing wide possibilities for virtual mobility. The aim of this paper is to introduce the main trends in international migration, mentioning the traditional ones but stressing the new types of international mobility. The traditional migration will be analysed in the Czech Republic context whereas the new types of mobility, resp. virtual mobility will be explored in EU context interpreting own research results and case studies as examples of good practice.

## **Methods and Resources**

The research on virtual mobility was directed by author of this text in cooperation with College of Business Doba Maribor, Slovenia and School of Management, Open University of the Netherlands. After a pilot study of five interviews conducted with people involved in virtual mobility activities, we have developed a research questionnaire which was sent by email to 3,142 Erasmus coordinators in

February and March 2008. The current list of Erasmus coordinators (year 2007) was provided by the National Agency. We have received and analysed 198 answers, followed by in-depth interviews with institutions dealing with virtual mobility. Within this qualitative part of the research we addressed six universities: Technical University of Ostrava (VŠB), Palacký University Olomouc (UP), University of Economics, Praha (VŠE), University of West Bohemia in Pilsen (ZPU), University of Hradec Králové (UHK), Tomas Bata University in Zlín (UTB).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Overview of the migration situation in the Czech Republic**

In the first half-year of 2010, the population of the Czech Republic increased to 10 515 818. Two thirds of the growth result from natural change where the number of live births exceeded the number of deaths by 5.7 thousand. According to the data from the Central Population Register Record of the Ministry of Interior the net migration was 3.3 thousand in the 1st half-year 2010. It was markedly lower than in the same period of 2009 (by 17.1 thousand). The number of immigrants was lower almost by half (by 10.9 thousand to 13.6 thousand), on the contrary the number of emigrants was 2.5 times higher (10.3 thousand against 4.0 thousand a year before). The higher net migration was reached with the citizens of Ukraine (1.6 thousand) and Russia (1.5 thousand), followed by Vietnam and United States (both 0.8 thousand). On the other hand, the significant decrease in the number of citizens from Slovak Republic (by 1.8 thousand), Poland (by 1.5 thousand) and Germany (by 0.7 thousand) was registered. The net international migration of the Czech citizens was balanced (1 092 people migrated so as emigrated). (Pohyb obyvatelstva, 2010)

The age structure of foreigners is different as compared to the age structure of the majority population. Most of the foreigners come to earn their living so age groups in junior productive age (20-39 years) have the biggest share. Over a half (53 per cent) of all legally residing foreigners in the Czech Republic belonged to this age group by the end of 2008. Very small shares in comparison with the age structure of the CR population can be found among children and those in post-productive age. The most numerous groups of foreigners according to nationality have been very similar in last years. Nationals of the Ukraine dominate among the foreigners with more than 30 per cent, followed by citizens of Slovakia (17 per cent), Vietnam (14 per cent), Russia (6 per cent) and Poland (5 per cent) by the end of 2008.

The number of legally residing foreigners (i.e. with visas over 90 days or some of the types of residence permits, excluding accredited refugees) exceeded, according to data of Alien Police Service, 430 thousand by the end of 2008. 93 per cent out of this number resided in the CR one year

or more. The proportion of female-foreigners reached about 40 per cent of the total number of foreigners in 2008. (Foreigners in the Czech Republic, 2009)

The latest data (31.5.2010) related to the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic mentioned by Alien Police Service declare 426 749 foreigners, namely migrants from Ukraine (128 636 people, 30 per cent), Slovakia (71 392 people, 17 per cent), Vietnam (60 931 people, 14 per cent), Russia (31 037 people, 7 per cent) and Poland (18 572 people, 4 per cent). (Počet cizinců, 2010)

## **2. Definition of the foreigner's residence in the CR**

Residence of foreigners in the CR is governed by the Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on the Residence of Foreigners, and partially also by the Act No. 325/1999 Coll., on Asylum, as last amended. According to the law, a foreigner is defined as a physical person, who is not a citizen of the Czech Republic, including a citizen of the European Union. The issue of the foreigner's entry, residence and exit from the CR belongs to competences of the Police of the CR, the Ministry of Interior of the CR, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the CR. A foreigner may reside in the CR temporarily or permanently. The categories of foreigners residing in the CR are as follows:

A. Citizens of member states of the EU, Norway, Switzerland, Island and Liechtenstein, abbreviated as „EU Citizen“ and their dependants

- Citizens of EU Member States registered not having temporary or permanent residence permit and their dependants

- Citizens of EU Member States and their dependants having temporary residence permit

- Citizens of EU Member States and their dependants having permanent residence permit

B. Citizens of countries out of the EU abbreviated as “Citizens of third countries“

- Citizens of third countries staying in the CR for a short time, generally up to 90 days without visa

- Citizens of third countries staying in the CR based on short/term visa up to 90 days

- Citizens of third countries staying in the CR based on visa over 90 days

- Citizens of third countries having long/term residence permit

- Citizens of third countries having permanent residence permit

- Foreigners with current asylum

C. Foreigners regardless the EU borders

- Registered asylum seekers

- Foreigners staying in the CR within temporary protection
- Foreigners staying in the CR illegally

The demand for a specific type of foreigners in the country have lead the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czech Ministry of Interior to open the project called *Project Selection of Qualified Foreign Workers*. It offers to selected workers the opportunity to apply for permanent residence within a shorter period, to highly qualified workers (with university level education) after one and a half year or to standard category of qualified workers after two and a half years. Their family members will also be allowed to settle in the CR and to obtain permanent residence there. The pilot stage of the project started in July 2003 as Pilot Project Active Selection of Qualified Foreign Workforce and was planned for 5 years. The project is opened now for participants from 51 countries. (Project Selection, 2003-2010)

### **2.1. Illegal migration**

Labour offices made together with other bodies of state administration (Alien Police, Czech Customs Administration, labour inspectorates, trade licensing offices, tax authorities) checks of how foreign citizens are employed. In 2008, 24 203 foreign workers were checked. From this number, there were 2 342 illegally employed foreigners (i.e. 9.7 per cent of the total persons checked). It is absolutely and relatively more than in 2007 (1 662 i.e. 7.6 per cent of the number of checked persons). (Foreigners in the Czech Republic, 2009)

In relation to the accession of the CR to the Schengen territory, it was necessary to basically change the concept of definitions of illegal migration in the CR. Since 2008, two basic categories of illegal migration in the CR have been observed. At first, Illegal crossing of the external Schengen border of the CR done by foreigners or the Czech national. At second, illegal stay as a category where foreigners are revealed in the CR including transit areas at the airports who violate the conditions required by law regulating the stay of foreigners. (Foreigners in the Czech Republic, 2009)

## **3. New Trends**

### **3.1. New types of mobility**

Among traditional forms of migration we can find family migration, asylum seekers migration or work migration. There are also other types of international mobility which are different from traditional migration such as: mobility of multinational employees, temporary mobility of high skilled professionals, mobility of students and researchers or retired people willing to live abroad. (Horáková, 2003)



Special group under study nowadays is composed of international migrants such as scientists and researchers which are offered attractive opportunities in a global world. There is a need for mobility of high skilled professionals from certain areas which are considered as positive impulses for the development of society and its competitiveness. (Kostelecká a kol, 2008)

On the other hand, it opens the issue of brain drain not only for underdeveloped countries but also for European countries after 1989 political changes. (Baláž, 2007) The Czech Republic is facing these challenges too which are focused both on Czech professionals but also on foreign professionals in the Czech Republic.

### **3.2. Virtual Space as a new opportunity**

Virtual mobility is another form of mobility which is using virtual space for communication, study, work and other aspects of life. In higher education area it is quite rapidly developing issue offering many opportunities for students. There are several definitions of virtual mobility used in this context.

According to the definition by *elearningeurope portal*, virtual mobility is: „The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to obtain the same benefits as one would have with physical mobility but without the need to travel“. (Elearningeurope, 2010) ICT supported environments include, for example, collaborative workspaces, computer mediated conferencing, live streaming and videoconferencing.

The definition by the *Being Mobile team* says: „Virtual mobility is a form of learning which consists of virtual components through an ICT supported learning environment that includes cross-border collaboration with people from different backgrounds and cultures working and studying together, having, as its main purpose, the enhancement of intercultural understanding and the exchange of knowledge.“ (Being Mobile, 2005)

As the definition by *EADTU and E-move project* states: „Virtual Mobility is defined as an activity based on a co-operation of at least two Higher Education institutions: two or more institutions agree to offer their students the opportunity to acquire a number of ECTS-points at one of the foreign partner universities or through a joint activity of the partners. The ECTS-points of this international experience will then be counted to the student´s degree at his/her home university.“ (EADTU, 2007)

According to EADTU, the virtual mobility can be represented by three models. The first model is „Virtual Erasmus“ - the Virtual Stay Abroad. It offers to non-mobile students an international study experience similar to the Erasmus-stay abroad. The focus is on the international exchange of distance teaching course modules in the framework of a study-programme. Students study a module at different university in EU which is counted towards their degree at home.

The second model, the European Virtual Seminar, is a joint course that promotes an international, multidisciplinary dialogue among students on authentic and current issues using modern ICT and the internet to overcome the constraints of place and time. Students participate in heterogeneous groups in terms of nationality, discipline, institution and gender.

The third model is the Virtual Campus where students from the partnering institutions are involved to round-off a specific course in their curriculum with a virtual international experience. They complete assignments in a virtual workspace, through collaborating in an international community of students. (EADTU, 2007)

### **3.3. Research on Virtual Mobility Coordinators**

In 2008, I conducted a research in the European Union to explore the issue of the virtual mobility at universities with Erasmus charters. From the sample of 198 respondents, 9 per cent of institutions have been already involved in virtual mobility. There were 16 institutions where the position of VMC exists.

The goal of this research was to define the virtual mobility (VM) coordinator profile and to design the virtual mobility supervision scheme. VM Coordinator profile describes the required qualities and competences of the staff involved in VM for providing efficient support to VM students during the pre-virtual mobility phase including information, guidance and counseling and during VM to enhance their performance. VM supervision scheme describes the roles, functions and responsibilities of VM coordinators.

According to our online research, the ideal VM Coordinator has good organizational, communication and social skills. He/she is a team oriented person with an acceptable level of foreign languages and good IT competences. The ideal VM Coordinator has good management and marketing skills, incl. time-management. He/she is well educated, with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree, willing to learn more and is an open-minded person. The ideal VM Coordinator has intercultural experience and is acquainted with the virtual learning environment that supports a VM course. He/she is informed about the content of a VM course and has personal experience of being an online learner and of distance education. The ideal VM Coordinator believes in VM.

The Supervision scheme is based on the Virtual Mobility Coordinator research results. It reflects the research findings, especially relating to the roles, functions and responsibilities of virtual mobility coordinators which will enable them to provide efficient support to virtual mobility students. The research results have shown that there are basically two roles of a virtual mobility coordinator: a core role and a course specific role. The core role is related to basic activities of a virtual mobility coordinator, such as being a virtual mobility ambassador towards students and the rest of the

organization; informing students about the European virtual mobility courses and presenting virtual mobility courses to students.

I anticipate that the core role of a virtual mobility coordinator will be more present in bigger universities or colleges. Course specific role is more suitable for smaller colleges since the activities of Erasmus Coordinator, International Officer or Student Councillor are usually performed by one person. The course specific role is related to activities supporting students in a pre virtual mobility phase, during their virtual stay and after the termination of a virtual mobility course. Course related coordinator's activities were classified into 3 categories: before (providing information about the course, recruiting students, collecting registration forms, etc); during (contacting and motivating students, counselling and providing psychological support, exchanging information with the course tutor, etc.) and after (giving feedback on their own satisfaction with the course implementation, writing a report, etc.).

The results of this research showed that it would be beneficial for further research to contact personally Erasmus coordinators and conduct qualitative interviews with coordinators who actually deal with the coordination of virtual mobility. For this purpose, I took part in several seminars for national Erasmus coordinators in the Czech Republic. By asking recent Erasmus coordinators on their experience with virtual mobility, I have got very up-to date results and monitored possible interests in developing the school curriculum in this direction. A short survey was introduced reflecting the definition of the ideal coordinator of virtual mobility, asking respondents to rank the chosen competences from the most important to the least important. I also asked for potential interest in the development of virtual mobility at their institutions and conducted several interviews with participants in order to get detailed information about their involvement in virtual mobility projects.

The qualitative part of the research showed that among the most important competencies of the virtual mobility coordinator belong: acceptable level of foreign languages together with good organizational, communication and social skills with ability to work in a team. Both coordinators from private and state institutions agreed also on the fact that the coordinator should be acquainted with the virtual learning environment that supports a VM course.

The results of the qualitative part reflect the situation in the Czech Republic, where virtual mobility is very new and there is a need for information. Two of the institutions have no experience with VM, while another one was participating in a VM project as a team member but they have no knowledge about the coordinators' experience. The answers of respondents show that there is a need for the position of a Virtual Mobility Coordinator to assure successful participation in virtual mobility. An institutional background of the VMC is preferred with Erasmus office in cooperation with study

department. Direct relations with Erasmus were strongly recommended. (Project MoreVM, 2007-2009)

### **3.4. Case studies**

Institutions which are aiming at development of virtual mobility can benefit from the experience of former projects. The links to specific projects could be an inspiration to settle their own virtual mobility project. The coordinators profile developed by MoreVM project could be used as a tool for the selection of the right person for the position of the virtual mobility coordinator. The supervision scheme can be helpful for the institutional placement of the coordinator. The Erasmus framework is a good platform to develop virtual mobility.

The following case studies are examples of good practice. The first group contains cases of short time courses whereas the second group is focused on the whole virtual study programmes.

#### **A. A virtual course (as part of a programme) or seminar (series) at a Higher Education Institution**

In this type of virtual mobility the virtual course or a seminar are parts of a whole study programme. Students engage in Virtual Mobility for a single course or seminar and the rest of their learning activities takes place in the traditional way.

#### **Case study: Cinema and Literature Course**

It is an initiative of the teacher at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) and the teacher at the University of Granada (Spain). The course is taught in Leuven and Granada by these two teachers to two groups of students. As a virtual course, students follow the same syllabi made by the teacher in Leuven. For the students, the course is essentially self study of the online material in combination with local contact hours. Online discussion forum can be used. The students are assessed on the cooperation during the local contact hours, the online discussions and mainly a group assignment and an oral exam at the end of the year. Each group consists of 3 to 4 persons, chooses a topic for the paper and works on the paper collaboratively on a virtual platform. This course is a good example of a semi virtual course based on a collaborative arrangement. Parts of the course are organized by the partner university but the assessment and credits stays at the local university. It is very important to have good contacts among teachers, the course is built on the personal contacts. It was important to use a mix of working methods: virtual teaching methods and traditional teaching methods. In this sense it was a virtualized course where virtual moments were accompanied by contact moments. (Cinema and Literature Course, 2010)

**Case study: European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development**

This course was run fully virtually between international students in groups of 4-6. They worked on a group report and a policy summary for 4 months, representing 120 study hours. Students communicated through a forum and chat on the Internet. (European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development, 2010)

**Case study: International Student Business Game**

This game is giving students an opportunity to create virtual companies and compete with each other on an economic market. Students are divided into groups of 4-8 students at the local institutions and make up a virtual company. On a national level, teams compete in fictional markets in their own institutions and the winning teams move on to the second international part. The international competition is a videoconference session evaluated by an international jury consisting of instructors and local business representatives. (International Student Business Game, 2010)

**Case study: Venus seminars**

It offers so called „international – regional“ virtual seminars on various relevant European topics which are open to all citizens. During each seminar, European and other universities are connected via videoconference. Each seminar consists of a short lecture given by an expert, by a local discussion chaired by a local expert and a central debate made via videoconference amongst all participating sites. The seminars are also delivered through live streaming to participants around the world with online interaction possible (WIKI, forum, chat). (Venus seminars, 2007)

**Case study: EHLEE pilot course**

This course called The Identities in European History was held on an Internet-based learning platform WebCT and in local study groups as part of the Ehlee project (eHistory Learning Environment and Evaluation). Each student had one local and one international tutor. It was a blended learning activity based on local student groups and an online learning platform. (EHLEE pilot course, 2006)

**Case study: Open GI systems course**

It develops theoretical and practical professional competencies in the field of Open Geographic Information Systems. The course is fully online without face-to-face elements except for the Erasmus students at the provider university. The tutor meets the students in virtual form using forums, chats and videoconference tools. These are open discussion sessions on a topic announced in advance. The course does not run at specific times during the year, but can be followed at the student's own convenience. It is very flexible and also location-independent. (Open GI systems course, 2005)

**Case study: SPACE E-Learning courses**

The SPACE network has developed e-learning courses on European Studies and Intercultural Communication: oral and written communication, negotiation and values in each country. These online/blended learning uses SPACE Dokeos system as a technological platform with conference system facilities, mailing and forum function. (SPACE E-Learning courses, 2009)

**Case study: Searching for scientific information**

The aim of this course is to introduce to students the most important scientific information sources within their field. The library's information specialists act as tutors for the course. The study material is completely online. Although a virtual learning environment has been tested for these purposes, the organisers consider as the most efficient communication tool e-mails. Students have a choice between a totally virtual or a blended learning activity. (Searching for scientific information, 2010)

**Case study: A Virtual Erasmus Student**

This project was partially funded in the framework of the SOCRATES Programme – MINERVA Action, DG for Education and Culture of the European Commission. The training module „A Virtual Erasmus Student“ has been designed for university students willing to improve their knowledge on virtual mobility and virtual communities. This project is based on the idea that virtual mobility constitutes a complementary component in the internationalisation strategies of higher education institutions. It cannot really replace physical mobility, but it can complement it with adding a dimension of continuous exchange of experiences, information and opinions with people living far away.

The main aim of this module is to provide students with hints, suggestions, and tools to enrich their knowledge about students mobility, with specific attention to virtual mobility. Moreover, students will enhance their skills as active members of a virtual community of learners with participants located at European universities and beyond.

The learning approach adopted is referring to active learning (or learning-by-doing) or to discovery learning. Learning is expected to occur informally, by using different learning resources, services and tools. Students will be possibly going through contextualisation of what is being learnt, socialisation of what they have been learning and personalisation of their own learning path. This training module „A Virtual Erasmus Student“ is combining many opportunities offered by internet technologies in terms of accessibility, versatility, expandability and magnitude of resources. The module has an average duration of 10 hours.

(A Virtual Erasmus Student, 2000-2010)

### **Case study: Training module Humanities**

This training module was adopted within the framework of a project called HUMANITIES – Historic Universities Multimedia Network for Innovation in Education Systems, which started in 1994. The HUMANITIES project aimed at introducing new technologies and at developing and testing Open and Distance Learning models in traditional university environments. It tried to overcome a reluctance to use new technologies and also to prove to teachers that virtual mobility could work effectively on an European scale with a usable hybrid model which is introducing a distance learning module into normal curricula. The HUMANITIES model was delivered jointly by a number of participating universities aiming at the enrichment of existing courses delivered in the involved universities. The main components were co-ordinated content, distance teaching (videotapes, videoconferences, satellite broadcast) and assessment of results. The HUMANITIES approach is representing the concept of virtual mobility which includes all forms that are communication intensive and run at international level. This project used the following elements: transnational lectures and/or learning material, cross-border recruitment of students, intensity of communication flows, international accreditation of achievements, multilingualism, complementarity between virtual mobility activities, traditional lectures and physical mobility and international recognition and accreditation of study achievements. This project has identified the following benefits for the university and the students: visibility (greater visibility on the European scene), capitalisation (lectures can be recorded and become reusable resource), increased exploitation of technical infrastructures, enlargement of the students base, import-export flow of expertise, learning effectiveness, time (higher flexibility), access and re-usability. (Humanities, 1998)

#### **B. A whole programme at a Higher Educational Institution: Virtual Study Programme, The Virtual Stay Abroad – “Virtual Erasmus”**

It is an entire virtual study programme giving students from different countries the chance to take this study programme without having to go abroad for a whole academic year.

### **Case study: International Course Exchange**

The international Course Exchange is activity of European Association of Distance Teaching Universities and their description of objectives is the following: „This website is a product of the **Humanities Academic Network** of EADTU for **International Course Exchange** on the Bachelor and Master level. We bring together offerings and demands in Humanities programmes between various Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning Universities in distance HE and national organisations including consortia for LOF learning. **Our objective is to organise a pool of international courses to enable students to choose courses from different foreign institutions.** This, as to further individualize and specialize their education. Special emphasis of this International Course Exchange

pool is European Studies and Philosophy. Our aim is to include as many courses as possible from various universities in Europe and beyond.” (International Course Exchange, 2005-2006)

**Case study: EPICS for Virtual Erasmus** (European Portal for International Courses and Services)

The EPICS project works towards mainstream provision of Virtual Mobility by offering international courses as integral part of the university study programmes. The main objective is to work from Virtual Mobility projects towards a Virtual Erasmus programme. To institutionalise mainstream provision of Virtual Mobility EPICS is developing the supporting infrastructure of a European Portal for International Courses and Services. (EPICS for Virtual Erasmus, 2009)

**Case study: Master programme in Development management**

This four semesters study programme is launched under the Global Environment and Development Studies. It is online study programme using internet, social constructivist approach, group work, discussions and joint assignments. The study year begins with two weeks face-to-face sessions where students, professors and tutors meet. It is coordinated by the United Nations University/Global Virtual University. (Master programme in Development management, 2010)

**Case study: E-Urbs**

E-Urbs is a European Master Course on Comparative Urban Studies. It is an extensive online course together with an intensive summer school in Urbino held by nine European universities specialised on urban studies. This „virtual international campus“ is using traditional ICT distance learning techniques complemented with new visual and heuristic approaches. E-Urbs work with integrated blended mode learning system which integrates virtual and physical mobility and the use of ICT. This blended approach complements online teaching with face-to-face teaching. A summer course in Urbino is followed by online courses. (E-Urbs, 2007)

**Case study: Experience with E-Urbs and virtual mobility coordinaton**

I have contacted an experienced coordinator of virtual mobility, Giovanni Torrisi<sup>1</sup>, from the University of Urbino in Italy which uses the Urbino Blended International Learning System and asked him for sharing his unique experience as a model of inspiration for other institutions. As he explained: “I occupy this role since 1997 when the first experiences with virtual mobility began to be addressed by the University of Urbino as relevant. Urbino is a beautiful walled city, nice to live and to work in. But it is very difficult to reach. No Airport nearby, no highway, not even a train station to directly reach it. Just one hour of curvy roads from the nearest city on the Adriatic coast (Pesaro). This splendid

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Torrisi is a social science researcher and a Virtual Mobility Coordinator at the University of Urbino, Italy.



isolation pushed Urbino university to look for solutions that would permit students that would not have the possibility to move in, to follow classes without the need to reside and live in Urbino. One of the solutions found was developing the Urbino International Blended Learning System. The decision of having a blended approach, instead of a purely virtual one, was due to both reasons of learning efficacy and local economic issues. The city of Urbino bases its economy on the University. Having a purely online course would scare away students from the territory, provoking an economic issue for the city. Since 1997, several virtual courses and activities have been developed..."<sup>2</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to introduce the main trends in international migration from the traditional ones to new types of international mobility. The focus was on the current state of migration in the Czech Republic and new mobility possibilities related to virtual mobility.

Europe is an important target for migration stimulated by work offer but also by wars and natural disasters. The Czech Republic is not only a transit country but more often a popular destination for migrants, not only in traditional forms of migration such as family migration, asylum seekers migration or work migration. Recently, the Czech Republic has faced new trends in international mobility which are different from traditional migration flows. They include mobility of multinational firms' employees, mobility of students or pensioners but also mobility of professionals, scientists and researchers. There is a need for mobility of high skilled professionals from certain areas which are considered as positive impulses for the development of society and its competitiveness. On the other hand, it opens the issue of brain drain not only for underdeveloped countries but also for European countries after 1989 political changes, including the Czech Republic.

There is a challenging phenomena connected with the development of modern technologies which stimulates the mobility in a virtual space. Virtual mobility is a specific form of mobility which is using virtual space for communication, study, work and other aspects of life.

The research results presented in this paper showed that the issue of virtual mobility is quite new and interesting topic for institutions in higher education area in the Czech Republic. The answers of respondents show that the establishment of the position of a Virtual Mobility Coordinator would assure successful participation in virtual mobility. An ideal institutional background of the coordinator would be Erasmus office in cooperation with study department. Higher education institutions, which are aiming at development of virtual mobility, could benefit from the experience of former projects. This paper is shortly introducing 15 successful case studies as an inspiration for

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<sup>2</sup> The information was provided by Giovanni Torrisi in an interview with author of this text at EDEN conference in Gdansk, Poland, 10.06.2009.

future possible virtual mobility projects. These good practices contain cases of short time courses but also the whole virtual study programmes.

This paper tried to open current trends in international mobility incorporating also the issue of virtual mobility. I suppose that this contribution could increase the knowledge about this topic and also open an academic discussion on positive and negative aspects of virtual mobility.

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