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**Institut für Soziologie**

Laura Wiesböck, Bakk. MA  
Rooseveltplatz 2  
A-1090 Wien

T +43-1-4277-49228  
F +43-1-4277-849228  
laura.wiesboeck@univie.ac.at  
<http://www.soz.univie.ac.at/laura-wiesboeck>

VEREIN MOMENTUM  
Für kritische Wissenschaft und Politik  
Forellenweg 5  
4400 Steyr

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**East-West Trans-border labour commuting in the European Union and its Social Effects.  
Lessons from the Centrope-region.**

This paper examines recent intra-European labour movements and its social effects, taking the Central European Region (Centrope) as an exemplary instance. Located at the heart of the Europe, Centrope covers large parts of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This European core region has a long history of cross-border mobility and social exchange, from Habsburg Monarchy to postwar period and after 1989. Several years after the fall of the Iron Curtain a process of European re-integration began which led to the accession of post-socialist countries into the EU. Since May 1st 2011 all citizens from A8 countries are given the freedom to settle in another EU-country and to seek employment according to their skills and qualifications.



My aim is to portray current patterns of trans-border labour commuting and its social consequences in the sending and receiving communities of Centrope through qualitative interviews with labour market experts, mayors and business owners (N=20) and commuters (N=10). Transnational labor markets and enhanced mobility within these markets are often promoted as the way forward in EU-policy. A variety of policy makers are advocating measures to facilitate the movement of migrants between their homelands and foreign workplaces. The main idea(l) behind is to generate a 'win-win-win' situation, namely benefits for receiving countries through meeting labour market shortages, sending countries through guaranteeing remittances for development and migrants through offering employment and control over the use of their wages. This new mode of migration



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management belongs to the flexibility paradigm which prevails in the European post-Fordist economies during the last decades and fits with the idea that positions may be temporary both on the high and the lower end of the labour market. This idea(l) of mobility of labour is also one of the aims of the Centrop strategy 2013+. Yet the actual patterns of mobility in this region and its social effects in both the sending and receiving communities have not sufficiently been subject to academic research and policy making so far. The research literature on the impacts of labour migration within the EU is predominantly focused on economic interests, e.g. the labour market outcomes of migrants, the influence on the wage-setting in the recipient local economy, the extent of remittances or the recruitment costs for low-skilled temporary workers. Favell (2008) has called for more micro level work on the human face of migration – the lives, experiences and networks of this new migration in Europe. Therefore I want to fill this gap by taking the Centrop region as an exemplary instance. The empirical data is gained in the course of the research project: “TRANSLAB – Cross-Border Labour Mobility, Transnational Labour Markets and Social Differentiation in the Central European Region”, funded by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund WWTF (2012-2015) at the Department of Sociology, University of Vienna.