

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN SOME CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

In this article we will talk about economic and social changes which happened in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the last twenty years, from 1989 to 2007, and also compare these changes with some countries from Western Europe. These economic changes occur in gross national product (GNP) and gross national income (GNI) per capita as well as in competitiveness of industry, export of goods and services, energy use and investment in science and technology. Social changes are most visible if we analyse GNP and GNI but also life expectancy and net migration. In most cases, difference in degree of economic development between Central and Eastern Europe decreased, as well as between them and Western Europe in the post-cold war period (1989-2007). In fact, post-socialist countries of Central Europe decreased the difference while the post-socialist countries of Southeast Europe did not.

Key words: Central and Eastern European countries, level of development, life expectancy, competitiveness of industry, net migration, transition.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this article we used various indicators of the World Bank to be able to show and analyse some comparable data of economic and social changes for selected countries in Europe. We also used secondary data, such as published research of other authors, who had written about this subject to a narrower or broader extent. Some of the data are shown in graphics so that one can have better insight into economic (GNI and purchasing power parity per capita, distribution of income and consumption in some countries, export of goods and services) and social differences (infant mortality rate and survival to age 65) in the analysed countries.

INTRODUCTION

Former post-socialist countries changed in very fundamental way under the impact of various interacting forces of economic integration and transition that are shaping the new European economic landscape. Time will show if western-type growth and prosperity levels shall eventually be reached in the East and the South and will the costs and benefits of the East-West interaction in Europe be equally shared by transition countries (Patrakos and Totev 2000).

There have been numerous attempts to explain the variance in economic performance of Central and East European countries during the last two

Table 1 GNP per capita in 1989. Source: World Bank.

Country	GNP per capita (USD, 1989)
Czechoslovakia	3,450
Yugoslavia	2,920
Hungary	2,590
Bulgaria	2,320
Poland	1,790
Finland	22,120
West Germany	20,440
France	17,820
Austria	17,300
Italy	15,120

decades. Some theories emphasize the importance of macroeconomic policies implemented and the determination to speed up the necessary transformation socialist economies into market economies. Others have underlined more specifically the impact of openness (Cernat 2006). Also transition was associated with disorganization and that disorganization accounts for some of the decrease in activity (Blanchard 1998). But the fact is, that for those countries the EU is the dominant factor in any forward-looking political and economic analysis (Donnorummo 2006).

In the year 1989, ten countries existed in Central and Eastern Europe from which we will analyse the following five: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria, or today's Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. These countries will be compared to selected Western European countries: Finland, Austria, Germany, France, and Italy. We will analyse what kind of changes in economic and social sense occurred among Central and Eastern European countries and in comparison to the above-mentioned Western European countries. We wanted to detect what differences occurred between these two groups of countries – post-socialist and West – after the fall of the Berlin

Table 2 GNI per capita in 2007. Source: World Bank.

Country	GNI per capita (USD, 2007)
Slovenia	21,510
Czech Republic	14,580
Slovakia	11,720
Hungary	11,680
Croatia	10,460
Poland	9,850
Bulgaria	4,580
Serbia	4,540
Finland	44,300
Austria	41,960
Germany	38,990
France	38,810
Italy	33,490

Wall. We used the statistics of the World Bank so that data could be comparable between countries. We also used multiple indexes because we wanted to see the changes from different economic and social aspects. These changes are represented for the years 1989 and 2007, i.e. for the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and for the last year with data available from the World Bank at the time of preparing this article (2010).

LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

If we analyse the GNP per capita in 1989 (Table 1) we can see that Western European countries had their GNP per capita several times higher than Central and Eastern European countries. For example, the richest country in Western Europe, Finland, had 10 times higher GNP than Poland, the poorest country in Central Europe. Among Central and Eastern European countries, Czechoslovakia had the highest GNP in 1989 while Poland had the lowest, and among Western European countries Finland had the highest GNP per capita while Italy the lowest.

If we analyse gross national income in 2007 (Table 2) it is obvious that GNI in Central and Eastern European countries raised significantly. After Slovenia,

Table 3 GNP and GNI per capita, 1989 and 2007 (Finland = 100). Source: World Bank.

Country	GNP per capita (1989)	Country	GNI per capita (2007)
(Yugoslavia)	13	Slovenia	49
(Czechoslovakia)	16	Czech Republic	33
(Czechoslovakia)	16	Slovakia	26
Hungary	12	Hungary	26
(Yugoslavia)	13	Croatia	24
Poland	8	Poland	22
Bulgaria	10	Bulgaria	10
(Yugoslavia)	13	Serbia	10
Finland	100	Finland	100
Austria	78	Austria	95
(West Germany)	92	Germany	88
France	81	France	88
Italy	68	Italy	76

the Czech Republic had the highest GNI followed by Slovakia, Hungary, and Croatia. All other Central and Eastern European countries had their GNI lower than 10,000 USD per capita in 2007, especially Serbia and Bulgaria. As for Western European countries, the highest GNI was recorded in Finland. Austria had a little lower GNI and the lowest one was in Italy. If we look only at countries in the Balkan region, all countries from that area experienced deep recession in the post-1989 period. Also, these countries had an estimated GDP growth of 0.0% in the period 1993-1997, while Central European economies had 4.3% GDP growth at the same time (Petrakos and Totev 2000).

To be able to compare both years, 1989 and 2007, we compared all countries with the development level (GNP/GNI per capita) of Finland, as a country most developed in both years (Table 3). Through this comparison we can see that post-socialist countries reduced their gap when compared to the West in last two decades. Yet countries of Southeast Europe remain at the same level of difference as before. For example, Czechoslovakia had its level of development as index 16 in 1989 (Finland 100), while the Czech Republic in 2007 had 33 and Slovakia 26. Polish index grew from 8 to 22, but in the case of Bulgaria this index did not grow at all,

it remained the same (10). Ex-Yugoslavia had the index of 13 in 1989 and Serbia was at 10 in 2007. Thus, we may conclude that transitional period in the post-socialistic countries of Central Europe was more successful than in the post-socialistic countries of Southeast Europe.

Social development index

Social development, through interventions designed to lay the foundations for equitable and sustainable growth, has a critical role. Stability and prosperity depends not only on sound economic policies, but also on well-functioning institutions that are able to implement policy because they enjoy social support. In post-socialist countries, economic and social development are intrinsically interdependent and therefore demand an integrated cross-sectoral approach (World Bank 2000).

Social development index is an indicator consisting of purchasing power parity of GNI per capita, life expectancy, and literacy rate (adult literacy). In this index there is a good relationship between the amount of used data and insight into social development level. With only three items of information we get quality look at the economic and social development of a country. PPP GNI per capita

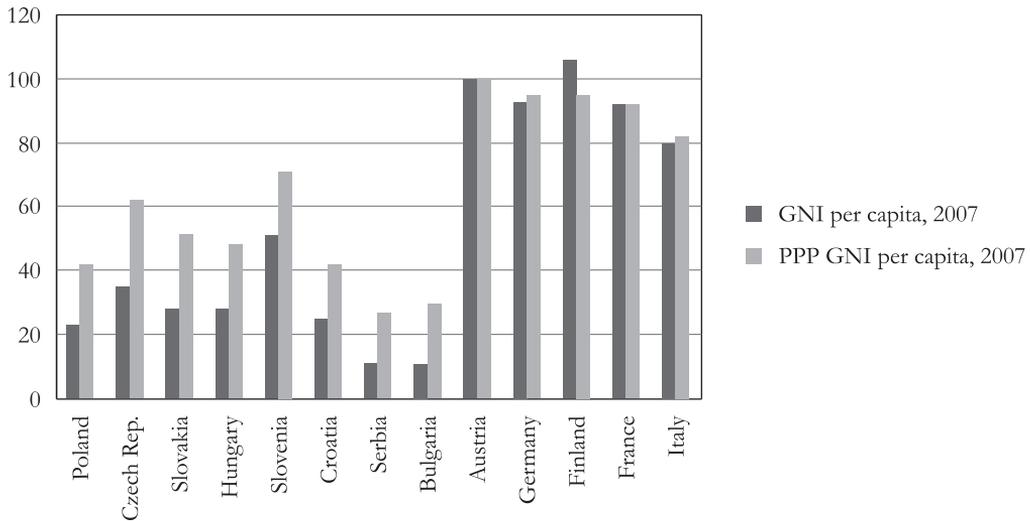


Figure 1 GNI per capita and purchasing power parity per capita, 2007 (Austria = 100).

Source: World Bank.

shows the living standard – life expectancy, medical care, living conditions, health insurance in workplaces, etc. Literacy of adults shows the quality, possibilities, and economic power efficiency and it is also a projection for the future. However, the definition of literacy by the World Bank (ability to understand, read and write a short, simple statement) is not very good because in order to be literate you do not even have to finish elementary school (Šimurina 2004). In any case, literacy shows possibility for quality upbringing of children. In this article we looked at two indicators: PPP GNI per capita, and life expectancy, while the literacy of adults is not analysed here. The reason is that for PPP GNI per capita and life expectancy there are differences between post-socialistic and Western countries, while the literacy of adults is virtually the same (i.e. at a high level) in both groups of the countries.

Purchasing power parity

Purchasing power parity (PPP) of GNI is the best instrument to demonstrate living standard because it shows what amount of goods and services can be obtained for the given sum of money in the individual countries. If we compare GNI per capita and PPP GNI per capita in 2007 (see Figure 1), we can

see that Central and Eastern European countries have better standard looking through PPP GNI per capita, than if we just look their GNI per capita. In that way, differences in the living standard between Central and Western European countries are smaller than we imagine. Of course, Western European countries have, in some cases, three times higher purchasing power parity than some post-socialist countries (e.g. Austria 100 compared to Serbia 27). Normally, it is fact that the difference in the living standard between richer and poorer countries is lower than the GNI or GNP per capita shows. The main reason for that is that prices of services are higher in richer than in poorer countries which cuts down the value of dollar. Simply, for 100 dollars it is possible to buy more services in poorer countries than in the richer. In that way, value of the dollar rises. Therefore, from this point of view, the difference in the living standard between the most developed transitional country, Slovenia, and Italy, for example, is pretty small.

We can conclude that differences in the level of development between Central European (Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Croatia) and Western European countries have decreased, while East European countries (Bulgaria, Serbia) are still equally far away from the West.

Table 4 Life expectancy in 1989 and 2007. Source: World Bank.

Country	Life expectancy at birth (1989)	Country	Life expectancy at birth (2007)
(Yugoslavia)	72	Slovenia	78
(Czechoslovakia)	72	Czech Republic	77
(Yugoslavia)	72	Croatia	76
Poland	71	Poland	75
(Czechoslovakia)	72	Slovakia	74
Bulgaria	72	Bulgaria	73
Hungary	71	Hungary	73
(Yugoslavia)	72	Serbia	73
France	77	France	81
Italy	76	Italy	81
Austria	76	Austria	80
(West Germany)	75	Germany	80
Finland	75	Finland	79
World	65	World	69

Life expectancy

Another important indicator of economic and social development is life expectancy at birth. A phenomenon manifested in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the post-communist era was a decline in life expectancy at birth. So, the fall of communism and transition to more market-based economy appear to have been associated with the negative changes in life expectancy, at least temporarily. There is little doubt that epidemiological and public health factors, such as life style and behaviour, and the resulting diseases, are major contributors. Beyond these issues, civil unrest and war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have dramatically impacted on the population (Reamy and Orešković 1999). But, things have changed for the better with years. In 1989 life expectancy in Central and Eastern European countries was 71 to 72 years of age, while in West Europe it was from 75 (West Germany, Finland) to 77 years of age (France). By 2007 life expectancy at birth grew and people live longer, both in Central, Eastern and Western Europe; to a maximum of 78 years of age in Slovenia for Central and East Europe, or to 81 years of age in France and Italy. The lowest life expectancy at birth was in Serbia and Bulgaria

(73) and for Western Europe in Finland (79). When looking at individual countries in Central Europe, the overall life expectancy at birth went up markedly in the Czech Republic (increase of 2.2 years), while the largest decline was in Romania and Bulgaria (decrease of 0.7 years). In Central European countries the difference between male and female life expectancy at birth widened in 5 countries. The widest gap between male and female was 8.8 years in Hungary (Reamy and Orešković 1999).

Life expectancy is specifically reduced by mortality of young people, especially infants. Birth is the most traumatic period of life and mortality rate in the first year is pretty high, like among people in their 60s or 70s. Mortality rate decreases, virtually becoming zero, with the second year of life. Indicator of infant mortality rate shows quality of medicine and wider health care for pregnant women and babies.

When we analyse infant mortality rate, which is the rate of dead-born infants per 1,000 live births (see Figure 2), in 1990 infant mortality rate was considerable in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Poland where it was 19. In all analysed countries of Central and East Europe in 1990 infant mortality rate was between 10 and 20, while in Western

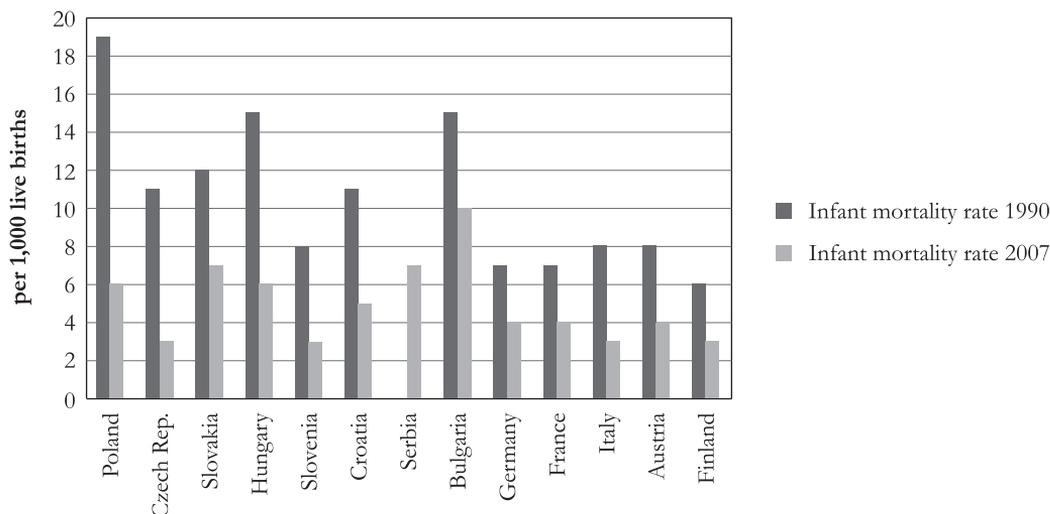


Figure 2 Infant mortality rate in 1990 and 2007.

Source: World Bank.

European countries this number was around or lower than 8. By the year 2007 infant mortality rate in Central and Eastern European countries fell significantly – to only 3 in the Czech Republic and Slovenia or to 10 in Bulgaria. In Western European countries the rate was 3-4 which is very admirable in comparison to the world as a whole (infant mortality for the world is 47). From this data it is also obvious that high infant mortality considerably decreases life expectancy.

In the context of life expectancy it is very interesting to see what percentage of people lives longer than to the age of 65. This is important because of the question: Who will pay the pensions for people over 65? In Central and Eastern Europe, 85 to 90% of the whole female population and 67-80% of the whole male population will live at least up to 65 years of age. In Western European countries these numbers are even higher: 93% of the whole female and 84% of the whole male population will live to age 65. This means there is a very big group of people who will look for their pensions. There are two possibilities for resolving this situation: countries with bigger percentage of old population will be forced to employ foreign work force, i.e. immigrants, or the pensions will be very low. In

any case, every state for itself must find the best solution how to ensure more money for the ever-growing number of pensioners.

Property differences between rich and poor

We cannot deny that the world's wealth is highly concentrated. Most African and Asian countries gained their independence after the Second World War. This fact is important because the post-war period was dominated by numerous optimistic assumptions about the prospects for development (Gilbert 1985). But, situation becomes different. Rich countries stayed rich, while a big number of poor countries stayed poor or became even poorer.

First, in terms of rich and poor, we will analyse property differences inside society by the Gini index. The higher the Gini index is, the bigger the property differences, while a lower Gini index indicates smaller property differences between the rich and the poor within a society. In this article we compare European countries with other countries in the world in order to get a better map of property differences in the world. We chose several non-European countries with smaller and higher Gini index for this purpose (Figure 4).

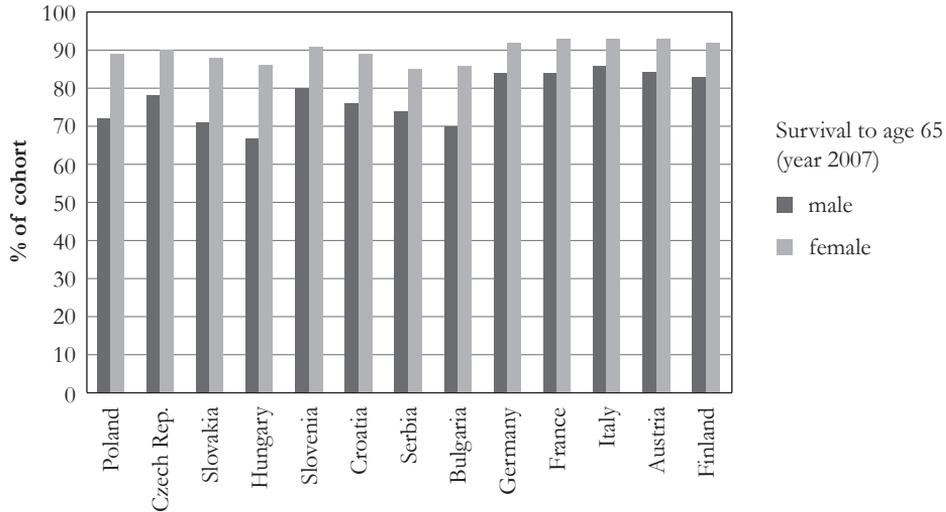


Figure 3 Survival to age 65, 2007.

Source: World Bank.

When we look at distribution of income or consumption (Table 5), we can conclude that the differences in terms of property between people in Central and Eastern Europe are not so big. The highest Gini index (after the year 2000) was in Poland (35) and the lowest in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (26). Similar situation was between Central and Western European countries – the highest Gini index among Western European countries was in Italy (36) and the lowest in Finland (27).

So, there is no significant difference in property level between the richest and the poorest within these two groups of European countries. In former Yugoslavia, for example, it is primarily since the beginning of 1990s that the existing property structure seems to have begun changing more rapidly in favour of private ownership (Uvalić 1992). People from post-socialist countries usually think that there was significant growth in property differences in the transition period in their societies. That is correct because the Gini index was lower in the East of Europe during the period of socialism. That brings some people to the conclusion that property differences in transitional Europe are now unacceptably high, but it is necessary to say that post-socialist Europe, together with Western Europe and Japan,

has the smallest property differences in the world. Some insight into the property differences in non-European countries is provided by Figure 4. When we look at those countries, the situation is very different. Among analysed countries, the highest Gini index in the world is in Namibia and the lowest in Japan. Therefore, differences in terms of property are the lowest in Europe and Japan. The rest of the world has somewhat or significantly higher differences between the poor and the rich in terms of property. The highest Gini index in some African and Latin American countries shows that differences between the richest and the poorest are higher in these areas.

Competitiveness in industry and export of goods and services

The participation of industry in world export is one of the best measures for competitiveness of industry. If participation in world export grows, competitiveness grows proportionally. In the last twenty years Central and European industry increased its share of industrial goods in world export while Western European industry decreased its participation in world export in the same period (Table 6). But the fact is that all former post-socialist countries

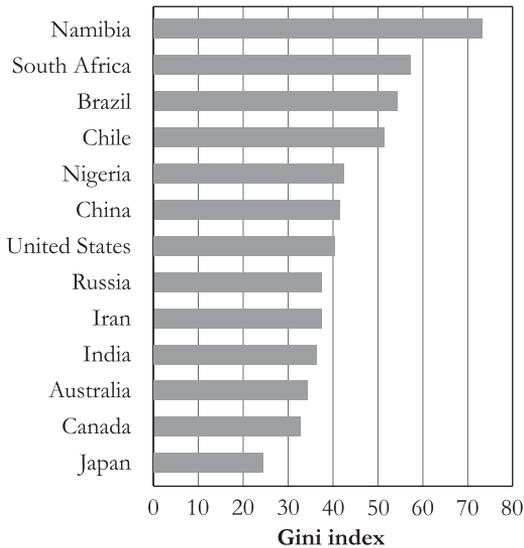


Figure 4 Distribution of income and consumption in some countries. Source: World Bank.

had an artificially high share of industry and low share of services in GDP. This is a general feature in all Central and East European countries as well as in the former Soviet Union countries (Petrakos and Totev 2000). The highest growth in the world export in the last 20 years was in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. As for countries of former Yugoslavia, with the break-up of Yugoslavia the importance of the former Yugoslav area as a market greatly declined, and market focuses shifted towards EU countries (Stiperski and Lončar 2008). From Western European countries the highest export, twenty years ago as well as today, have Germany and France.

Besides the industry it is very important to analyse export of goods and services as a whole. In this article we analyse the share of export of goods and services in GDP of Central and Eastern European countries. As Figure 5 shows, usually smaller states have relatively higher export (in relation to the level of GDP). From Central and Eastern European countries Slovakia ranks first in relative export of goods and services, while the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, and Bulgaria also have their relative export over 50%. The smallest relative export of

Table 5 Distribution of income or consumption. Source: World Bank.

Country	Gini Index
Poland	35
Slovenia	31
Hungary	30
Serbia	30
Bulgaria	29
Croatia	29
Czech Republic	26
Slovakia	26
Italy	36
France	33
Austria	29
Germany	28
Finland	27

all countries has Serbia, only 29%. From Western European countries, Austria (59%) is first in export ranking, while the lowest relative export have Italy and France (29 and 27%)

Science and technology

Technologies have always played an important role in the growth and development of countries. The importance of technology for growth and development has been very high since the First Industrial Revolution onward (Šimurina 2004). It is also important that technology and production programmes are in the function of human needs and improvement of their life (Plenković 1998). It is evident that investing in research and development and especially in science and technology innovations is characteristic of well-developed countries, which accounts for some 15% of total population. When we analyse the number of researchers in European countries (Table 7) we can conclude that Central and Eastern European countries have less researchers and invest less in research and development than Western European countries, which is an expected result considering their economic development. But, these countries fit into the category of countries

Table 6 Share in world export of goods, 1989 and 2007 (in %). Source: World Bank.

Country	Merchandise trade – exports 1989 (%)	Country	Merchandise trade – exports 2007 (%)
Poland	0.45	Poland	0.99
(Czechoslovakia)	0.50	Czech Republic	0.88
Hungary	0.33	Hungary	0.68
(Czechoslovakia)	0.50	Slovakia	0.42
(Yugoslavia)	0.46	Slovenia	0.22
Bulgaria	–	Bulgaria	0.13
(Yugoslavia)	0.46	Croatia	0.09
(Yugoslavia)	0.46	Serbia	0.06
Germany	11.74	Germany	9.51
France	5.95	France	3.97
Italy	4.85	Italy	3.52
Austria	1.12	Austria	1.17
Finland	0.80	Finland	0.64
World	100.0	World	100.0

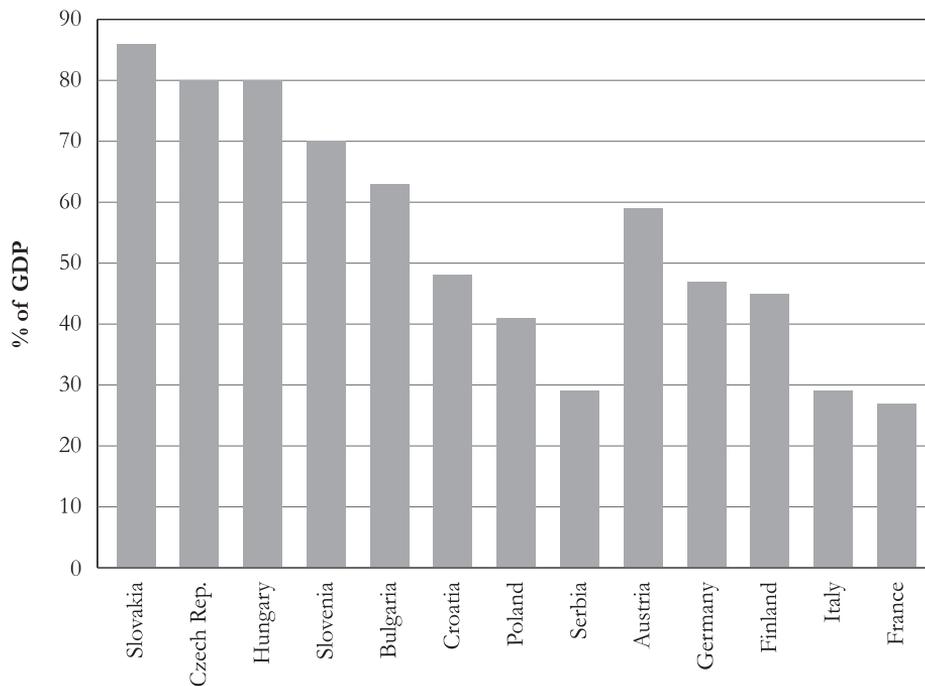
**Figure 5** Export of goods and services, % of GDP, in 2007.
Source: World Bank.

Table 7 Science and technology. Source: World Bank.

Country	Researchers in R&D, 2000-2006 (per million people)	Expenditures in R&D, 2000-2006 (% of GDP)
Serbia	–	1.65
Slovenia	2,924	1.63
Czech Republic	2,578	1.54
Hungary	1,745	1.00
Croatia	1,148	0.87
Poland	1,562	0.56
Slovakia	2,186	0.49
Bulgaria	1,344	0.48
Finland	7,681	3.43
Germany	3,386	2.52
Austria	3,657	2.46
France	3,353	2.12
Italy	1,407	1.10
World	1,173	2.30

Table 8 Net migration, 2000-2005. Source: World Bank.

Country	Net migration, 2000-2005 (thousand persons)	Net migration, 2000-2005 (per 1,000 people)
Croatia	100	25
Czech Republic	67	7
Hungary	65	7
Slovenia	22	11
Slovakia	3	1
Bulgaria	–43	–5
Poland	–200	–5
Serbia	–339	–48
Italy	1,125	19
Germany	1,000	12
France	722	12
Austria	180	23
Finland	33	7

Table 9 International tourists, 2007. Source: World Bank.

Country	International tourists – inbound, 2007 (million)	International tourists – inbound, 2007 (per 100 people)
Poland	15.0	39
Croatia	9.3	233
Hungary	8.6	86
Czech Republic	6.7	67
Bulgaria	5.2	65
Slovenia	1.8	90
Slovakia	1.7	34
Serbia	0.7	10
France	81.9	132
Italy	43.7	74
Germany	24.4	30
Austria	20.8	260
Finland	3.5	70
World	911.5	14

which are able to adopt new technologies very fast. From Central and Eastern European countries the highest expenditure for research and development is in Serbia, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic, and the smallest in Slovakia and Bulgaria. But, in terms of research and development the absolute domination has the Russian Federation (there is more than 3,000 researchers in R&D per million people). Other countries lag behind considerably (Šimurina 2004).

Western European countries had more researchers and spent more money on research and development between the years 2000 and 2006. Finland is the first country in investing in research and development (3.43% of GDP), followed by Germany and Austria. The last in the ranking was Italy.

Net migration

Net migration is the difference between immigrated and emigrated population. This data is used because we consider it as an indicator for certain activity of the state towards immigration. In some way, this will

be important in the future for societies which have old population, i.e. as a substitute for non-existent domestic work force. In the period 2000 to 2005 the Western countries recorded higher emigration than the Eastern ones (Table 8). Italy, followed by Germany, recorded the highest net immigration of all Western European countries in this five-year period. From Central and Eastern countries the highest net immigration had Croatia, both in absolute numbers and in relative comparison (per 1,000 people), while Serbia recorded the largest net emigration, also both in absolute and relative numbers.

International tourist flows

In the past two decades, tourism industry of the post-socialist countries of Southeastern Europe had to overcome multi-layered obstacles, which have not been felt in other countries of transition from communism to market economy and democracy. In 2004 international visits to the post-socialist countries of Southeastern Europe have finally reached the level they had at the beginning of the 1990s.

Europe is the tourism-generating area for the region (Gosar 2007). Data of international tourist flows show certain attractiveness of this region (Table 9). The highest number of international tourists in Central Europe has Poland and Croatia, but if we analyse the number of tourists per 100 inhabitants, the first is Croatia, followed by Slovenia and Hungary. But, Southeastern Europe was and is lagging behind western Mediterranean destinations as a tourist destination. With 35 million visitors/year, 110 million bed-nights and 1.6 million tourist accommodation facilities (beds) available, the region could not be lined-up along such giants as France, Spain, or Italy (Gosar 2007). France, Italy, and Germany welcomed the highest numbers of foreign tourists in 2007, while Austria, Croatia, and France were the most visited by foreign tourists in comparison to local population.

CONCLUSION

- Difference in degree of development shrank between countries of Central and Western Europe in the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the last analysed year (2007). Differences between post-socialist countries of Southeast Europe and Western Europe are virtually the same in 2007 as in the year 1989. As the period 1989 to mid 1990s was characterised by a decline in economic activity in post-socialist Europe, significant period of prosperity and economic progress started in mid 1990s and lasted to the year 2007.
- Difference between post-socialist and Western Europe in life standard, measured in PPP GNI per capita, is smaller than the GNI per capita itself. It is usual that in poorer countries the same value of US dollar worths more, mostly because of lower service prices. Difference in life standard between post-socialist Central and Western Europe is somewhat reduced in the period 1989 to 2007. This is especially obvious in comparison of Italy and Slovenia.
- In Western Europe, life expectancy is 4-5 years longer than in post-socialist Europe. In the analysed period (1989-2007) life expectancy grew both in the East and West of Europe. UN social development index shows that development of society between East and West Europe (purchasing power parity, life expectancy and adult literacy) is smaller than the finance data shows.
- Infant mortality rate is higher in the East than in the West and it is significantly lowered in post-socialist Europe in the analysed period. This indicator is in tight relationship with life expectancy and from the social point of view shows the level of development of health care and medicine.
- Western Europe has a higher share of population that lives 65 years or more, but both in Western and post-socialist Europe this rate significantly grew up. From the economic and social points of view, European pension systems are under big challenge of subsistence and because of the lack of young work force there are only two possibilities: import of work force or decline of economic growth.
- Property differences between the rich and the poor are equal in post-socialist and Western Europe, and besides Japan they are the smallest in the world. Property differences in post-socialist Europe are among the lowest in the world, although the public opinion in these countries is different. That is probably a consequence of the fact that property differences are somewhat bigger today than during the socialist period.
- Industry of post-socialist Central Europe grew in its share in world export from year 1989 to 2007, while the industry of Western Europe reduced its share in world export of goods in the same period. That indicates growth of competitiveness in post-socialist Central European industry and its decline in Western Europe. One of the reasons is that Western European countries prefer locations outside Western Europe, such as China, Turkey, Indonesia, but also in post-socialist Central European countries. This is a consequence of high labour costs and high level of protection of workers in Western Europe, but also the need to be present in emerging markets like China.

- Countries in Western Europe had more researchers and invested more money into science and technology than post-socialist Europe in 2007. Europe conducts a heavy struggle about technological leadership in the world, especially with USA and East Asia.
- Most immigrants, in absolute number, come into the three biggest Western European countries: Italy, Germany, and France. The highest numbers of emigrants left Serbia and Poland.
- Most foreign tourists in total were recorded in France in 2007, and most foreign tourists in relation to the size of domestic population was recorded in Austria and Croatia. Combined data about immigrants and foreign tourists shows economic attractiveness and environment image. In industry of high technology image of environment will be one of the most important location factors.

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Résumé

Ekonomické a společenské změny v některých zemích střední a východní Evropy

Po roce 1990 zažilo obyvatelstvo postsocialistických zemí radikální politické, společenské a ekonomické změny. Rychlost a velikost těchto změn byla v tomto regionu větší a rušivější než v jakékoli jiné části světa. Je však také zřejmé, že se postsocialistické země vyvíjejí různými směry. V společenském a ekonomickém vývoji postsocialistických zemí existují tedy rozdíly. Článek je sleduje v období mezi pádem berlínské zdi (1989) a rokem 2007. Střední Evropa míří do západní rozvinuté části kontinentu, jihovýchodní Evropa zůstává nerozvinutá a potýká se s ekonomickými a společenskými problémy. Transformace ve střední Evropě proběhla úspěšně, zatímco země jihovýchodní Evropy se stále potýkají s mnohými ekonomickými a společenskými problémy. Musí zefektivnit chod institucí, změnit systém sociální koheze, aby byly konkurenceschopné na evropských trzích.

Index společenského rozvoje OSN ukazuje, že rozdíl ve vývoji společnosti v západní a východní

Evropě (parita kupní síly, průměrná délka života a gramotnost dospělých) je menší než ukazují ekonomické údaje. Rozdíl v životním standardu mezi postsocialistickou střední a západní Evropou je v období 1989–2007 poněkud redukován. Majetkové rozdíly mezi chudými a bohatými jsou v postsocialistické a západní Evropě stejné a kromě Japonska nejmenší na světě. Majetkové rozdíly v postsocialistické Evropě patří k nejmenším na světě, veřejnost je však vnímá jako významné. Je to pravděpodobně způsobeno faktem, že jsou přeci jenom trochu větší než v období socialismu.

Průmysl postsocialistické střední Evropy v období 1989–2007 ve světovém exportu rostl, zatímco průmysl západní Evropy svůj podíl na exportu průmyslového zboží snižoval. To ukazuje na růst konkurenceschopnosti průmyslu v postsocialistické střední Evropě a její pokles v Evropě západní. Jedním z důvodů je fakt, že západoevropské země preferují průmyslové lokace mimo území západní Evropy, jako jsou Čína, Turecko, Indonésie, ale také středoevropské země. To je způsobeno vysokými pracovními náklady a vysokým stupněm ochrany pracovníků v západní Evropě, ale také nutností být přítomen na rychle se rozvíjejících trzích, jako je třeba čínský.