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COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

A b s t r a c t

This milestone considers the evolution of tertiary educational attainment in the general population (age 25-64) and the variations that occur when considering the gender and age group variables in 11 formerly communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. These countries share a similar communist past that ended differently and was later followed but very particularized transitions that culminated in all cases with accession to the European Union. On this pattern, the evolution of tertiary education attainment was very particularized as well, and several observations can be made:

- While all countries included in the comparison experienced growth in the past 30 years, the speed and amplitude of the increase were different. Current results reflect the country's initial conditions and later development trajectories. The increase in the population size with TEA in 2020 compared with 1990 was the highest in Poland (3.71 times) and lowest in the Czech ¹Republic (1.57 times).
- At the starting point in 1985, in all cases, the male TEA was higher than the female TEA, and then during the 1990s and early 2000s, there was an inversion point. In general, female TEA increased at a more incredible speed than male TEA, which was faced in some cases with periods of decline or stagnation (for example, in the Czech Republic).
- On average, in 2020, among these countries, there was an 11-points gender gap between female and male TEA. This follows European tendencies, and on the current trend, it will increase. The gender gap in educational attainment was as high as 20 points in Estonia and as low as 2.6 points in Romania, where the situation is more equilibrated.
- The progress in TEA was visible across all ages-groups, but the 25-34 age group, primarily fueled the growth. Also, it should be noted that in older cohorts, the TEA changes result from the natural process of one generation replacing another.
- Significant disparities persist compared to the European average, and several countries included in the comparison lag behind European targets, including Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Hungary, missed their targets on TEA assumed at the European level for 2020.

This comparative analysis used the Baroo& Lee educational attainment dataset, last updated in 2021. Furthermore, since the data available goes so far as 2015, we used data from EUROSTAT for 2020.

¹ The data account for the separation of Czechoslovakia.

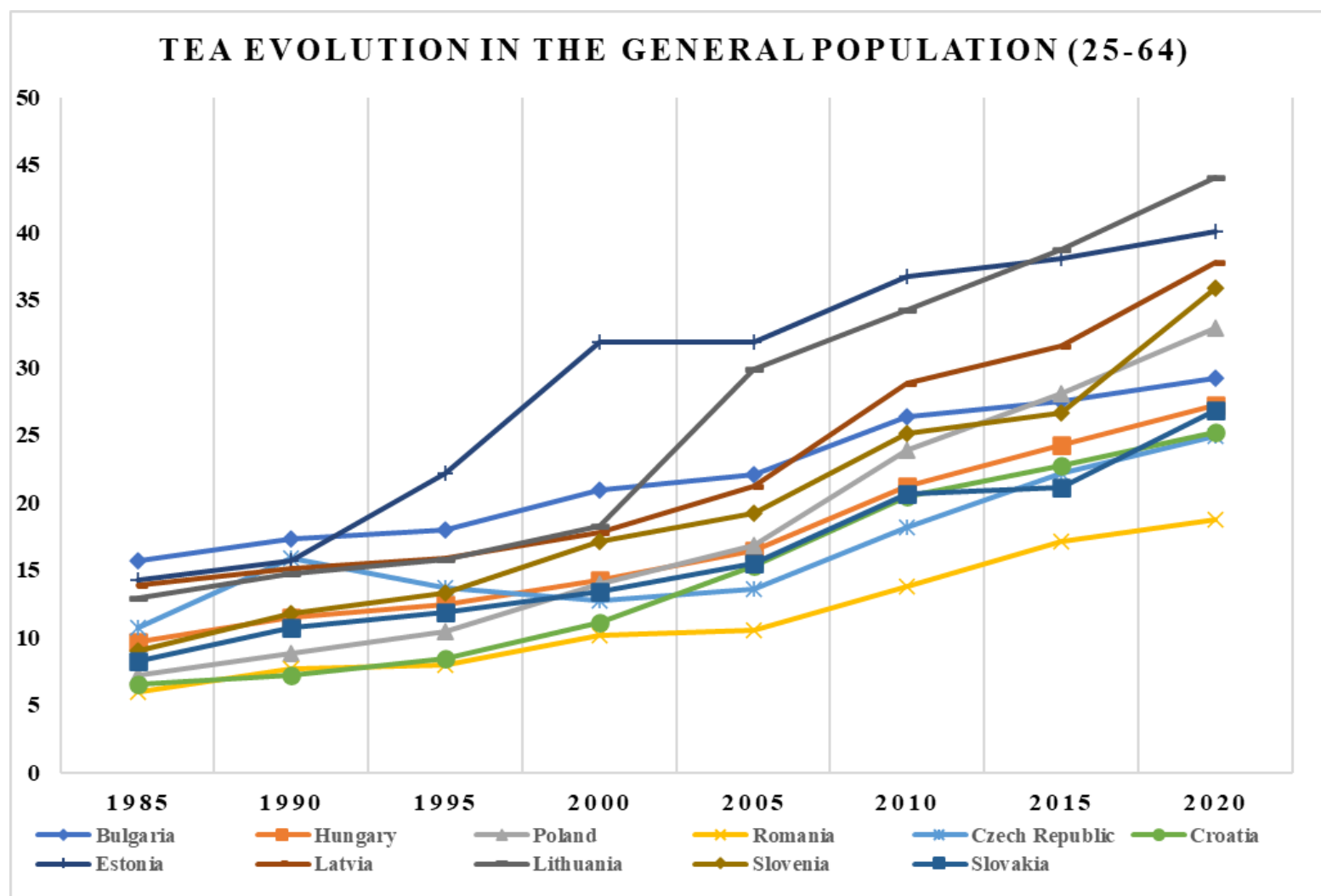


Fig. 1: The evolution of TEA as a % in the general population 25-64 (1985-2020)

Source: plotted by the author using data from the Barro-Lee Estimates of Educational Attainment from 1950 to 2015, 2021.