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Title: Declared and realized student mobility on the contemporary labor market

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Chapter 5

Declared and realized student mobility in the contemporary labor market

RAFAŁ CEKIERA

The accession of the Visegrad Group countries into the European Union structure in 2004 opened new perspectives for the professional development of their citizens. Potential departure – for a shorter or longer period – to work in another EU country has become one of the easily accessible alternatives. The possibility of legal employment abroad has created new career opportunities and, on equal terms, became part of the potential professional career paths available.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to identify the attitudes of students from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary towards internal and external mobility. The first part of the chapter will address the general preferences of students in relation to the desired future form of employment. The results of research in this area will be presented after a short description of selected elements of the contemporary labor market, which in itself determines particular attitudes and influences the student's ideal form of employment. The second part of the chapter will discuss the responses to the set of questions concerning readiness for specific actions that may result in getting a better job. The next section will describe contemporary conditions of migration processes and the students' experiences related to foreign travel, and their opinions on the benefits such experiences may involve. The summary with a brief outline of the most important findings concerning students from different countries will conclude this chapter.

5.1 Occupational preferences against the background of contemporary labor market conditions

In the context of labor market research, students may be considered as an exceptionally specific and sensitive research group. People entering the labour market only learn the rules of its functioning, but on the other hand, their attitudes may serve as an important measure of its transformation. Students begin-

ning their careers while designing their own career paths are forced to respond quickly to these changes. The nature of higher education one receives exerts significant influence on the perception of the rules governing the labour market – and not only in terms of the specific direction of higher education but also in the overall premise of the education system, which is currently oriented primarily to narrowly understood economic growth (NUSSBAUM, 2016: 37).

The common belief of the temporality and variability of contemporary life paths – including the professional ones – does not change the fact that a period of study is a time of fundamental importance for future life choices. This is the critical phase of a person's life when he or she “concentrates his/her activity on the formulation of interests and choices – guided by various motives – of the path of individual professional development” (ŻAK, 2015: 14). Various repercussions of social change show up there. After the transformation of the political system and the transition from the socialist to the capitalist economy the younger generation's sense of disorientation in relation to work and its value became clear – as pointed out in the research carried out in Poland (SWADŹBA, 2012: 77–78). Currently, this disorientation has other sources, which can be found in unstable forms of employment, dynamic and unpredictable labour market fluctuations, or, more broadly, the socio-cultural consequences of transformations, ceding on the individual the need for independent search of solutions to the system contradictions (BECK, 2004: 204).

An example of such a contradiction is suggested by M. Jacyno: “the new middle class” individual is forced to contend with the “opposing values of an entrepreneurial culture”. On the one hand, one is under the pressure of acceleration, the need to take matters into one's own hands, the proactivity, the intensity and not postponing plans for the future. At the same time yet, one should be able to find time for oneself, limit control and self-control, keep in mind also non-professional self-realization – otherwise, as the media prompt, one will find oneself in a sterile, empty existence of a lonely and desperately one-dimensional life (JACYNO, 2007: 203). As the author writes, “the process of professionalism in being a subject means that individuals can and have to take care of and manage themselves, and nobody has to or even can relieve them in it. Entrepreneurial culture strengthens the divide between into normal, i.e. autonomous, self-sufficient, responsible individuals, and those who lack these characteristics” (IBIDEM, 217–218).

Contemporary reality of the labour market is strongly marked by temporality – “nothing for long” is the guiding principle, and old permanent jobs are turning into projects or areas of tasks (SENNET, 2006: 22). This has far reaching implications for the shape of human existence. As R. Sennet stresses, we must pose ourselves a uniquely up-to-date question of how to organize the history of one's life in the times of capitalism, which requires constant drifting (IBIDEM, 160). This issue is brought in a similar way by D. Walczak-Duraj who raises the

fundamental question of what can replace work in being the essential building block of the subjectivity of the individual and their sense of values (2015: 67). In addition to short-termism, interim-ness and temporality, the modern digital technologies and, more broadly, the dynamic development of civilization all have a significant impact on the rapid transformations in the reality of work. (see e.g. CRARY, 2015).

These circumstances are the cause of the state of flexibility and deregulation of employment relationships, which in turn has become the main and immediate cause for the emergence of a statistically significant category of workers called “the precariat” – a recent, fashionable term coined by G. Standing (2014: 85). Their distinguishing feature is uncertainty and lack of stabilization, which have their source “primarily in the absence of a permanent source of income and social protection related to day job, health care, place of residence, sustainability of social relations” (PUCHTA, WYLEŻAŁEK, 2017: 151). In this reality the psychological contracts between employees and employers assume a different character, increasingly marked by change, uncertainty, flexibility or mobility (CZARNECKA, SŁOCIŃSKA, 2017: 187). It should not be forgotten, however, that at least for some employees, the flexible labour market also brings some benefits (BYŁOK, SWADŹBA, WALCZAK-DURAJ, 2016: 74). It does especially for those who are well-suited to the networked economy, who take on the strategy of the players, who feel good about the situation of change, who are more oriented to the ethos of fun than work, and who treat stabilisation in terms of a boring burden– J. Rifkin characterized them using a term introduced by psychologist R.J. Lifton – the “protean self” (RIFKIN, 2003: 15).

Recalling these analyses seems to be necessary to give the right context to the students’ preferences and perceptions related to their professional future. All the more so, as stressed by A. Giddens, in today’s world of diverse opportunities where strategic planning of one’s own life is of great importance (GIDDENS, 2002: 118). In Beck’s terms, it is a sort of an imperative – the individual must be something like a planning bureau of one’s own biography and acquire competence in the management of one’s own skills or preferred life orientations or relations (BECK, 2004: 203).

So how do students plan their professional biographies in the Visegrad Group? Before we move on to the analysis, one more factor is worth considering – the level of unemployment in these countries at the time of the study (2015) and its contemporary dynamics. It can be assumed accountably that, to some extent, this factor could influence the preferences of the respondents. Throughout Europe, unemployment among young people has increased significantly after the last economic crisis – people starting their professional careers have felt it particularly strongly. While its peak level was reached in 2014, the next two years have seen gradual decrease in the whole European Union. Among the four countries of our interest, the highest unemployment rate in 2015 – both

in general and among young people under 25 – was in Slovakia, the lowest in the Czech Republic (Figure 5.1). These circumstances may have influenced the declared willingness to go to work abroad, which reached the highest level in the survey among the Slovak students (18.1%), and the lowest among the Czech students (10.5% – the same as in the case of the Polish students). The percentage of the Hungarian students thinking of going abroad for work was 17.2%.

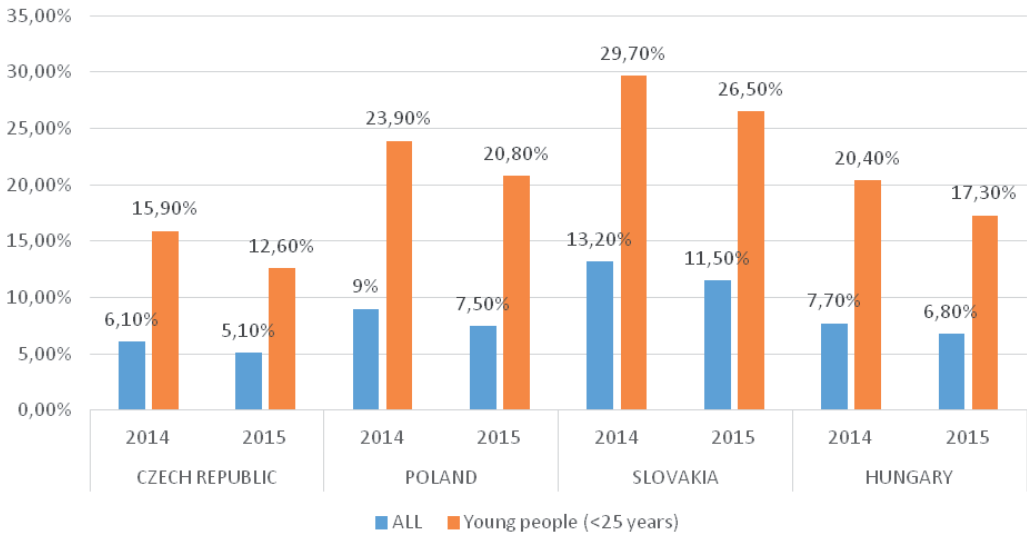


Figure 5.1. Unemployment rate in the Visegrad Group countries. Young people – category of people up to 25 years of age. Own compilation based on Eurostat data (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics, available online 7.08.2017)

The results of the research in each country clearly differentiate students in terms of intentions of running their own business. Against the background of the rest of the countries, the Czechs clearly stand out – only 14.5% of the respondents would like to start their own company. On the other hand, about half of the Hungarians and Poles think about this solution (59.3% and 49.3% respectively), and slightly less Slovaks (39.9%). Czech students also stand alone in terms of the frequency of choosing to work in a private company – the most preferred form of work by them (42.0%). The alternative was less popular among students from other Visegrad Group countries: it was chosen only by 14.5% of Poles, 17.8% of Slovaks and 18.8% of Hungarians.

Slightly smaller, but also interesting differences were observed in terms of the students' desire to work in state-owned enterprises. This option was preferred by every fourth Czech and Polish student (26.5% and 25.3%, respectively), it was a less popular choice in Slovakia (16.0%), while in Hungary it was marked by only one in 11 study participants in (9.3%). The questionnaire also proposed to the students the choice of "in general, not to work". It was chosen by a very small

percentage of respondents – the largest in the Czech Republic (3.3%) and in Hungary (1.4%) and Slovakia (0.5%). Such answer was not chosen by any student in Poland. Detailed results are shown in figure 5.22.



Figure 5.2. Preferred form of employment

In the case of Slovakia, the percentage does not add up to 100. The questionnaire also contained the option “I have no specific plan”, which was chosen by 8% of the respondents.

5.2 Student mobility and readiness to change

Contemporary labour market not only promotes, but even requires mobility of a large number of employees (CEKIERA, 2017). This applies not only to spatial mobility (e.g. relocation to another branch of the company), but also to the readiness for changes within the work environment, flexibility, ability to adapt quickly to new fast-changing conditions of the market game. These conditions are conducive to temporary forms of employment – a deregulated labour market is pressured by multinational corporations aiming to minimize the number of permanent employees (ROMANISZYN, 2015: 18). The remedy, which is to limit the uncertainty and build up one’s position as an employee, is to continuously improve one’s qualifications, gain new skills – but also dif-

ferent types of certificates to authenticate the competences that are in line with new requirements. The deregulated labour market is “compensated [...] by the possibility of constant retraining, acquiring new skills, participating in further courses, and lifelong learning to secure further jobs” (ROMANISZYN, 2015: 29). As shown by the number of conducted studies, students are aware of the need to continue learning by taking variety of courses, postgraduate studies, training or workshops designed to help them function in the contemporary labour market. (*Żaka praca...*, 2013: 53).

The students in this study were asked two questions related to this issue: “If you could get a better, permanent job, would you be willing to use your free time to learn, improve skills?” and “If you could get a better, permanent job, would you be willing to retrain, learn a new profession?” (detailed results are presented in Figures 5.3 and 5.4). The vast majority of respondents reacted positively to the possibility of devoting their leisure time on improving their qualifications. Very similar results were obtained in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – cumulative responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” amounted to 95.5%, 94.6% and 93.6% respectively, although we should note a slightly lower frequency of “definitely yes” indications among the Czechs. The least readiness to devote leisure time is demonstrated by the students from Hungary – in total 89.1% of the respondents declared this possibility, of which only 38.0% chose the “definitely yes” option.

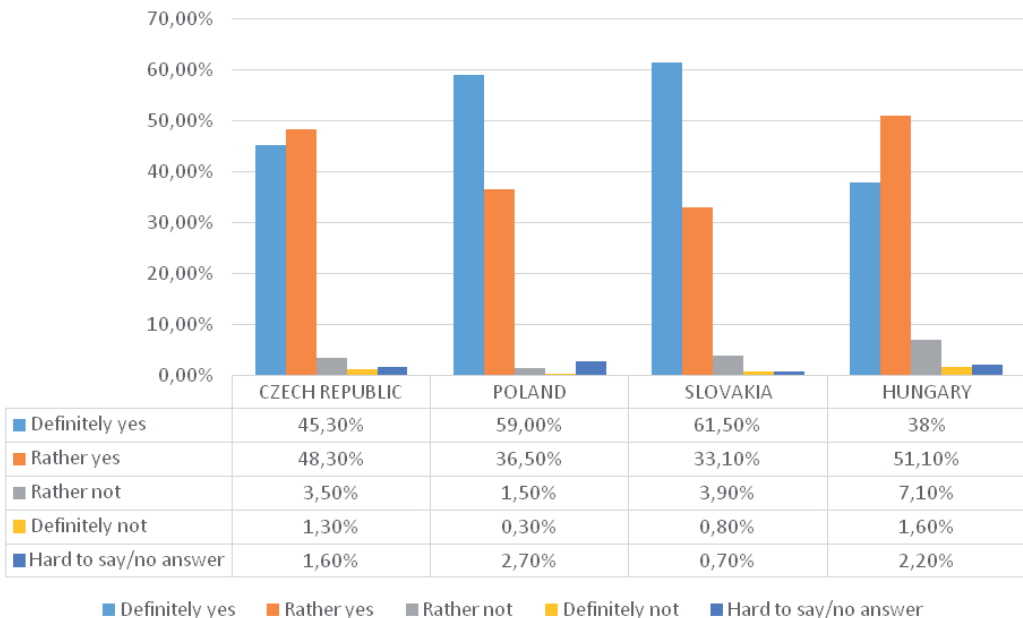


Figure 5.3. Students’ willingness to devote their leisure time to get a better, permanent job

The Hungarian students surveyed are also less willing than others to declare their readiness to retrain in order to get a permanent, better job – 32.2% of the respondents rejected such a possibility. Students from the Czech Republic express an even more negative attitude towards such activity – the percentage of “rather no” and “definitely no” answers was 40.8%. In this context, Polish and Slovak students are significantly different – the percentage of total negative responses amounted to 15.3% and 15.5% respectively (figure 5.4).

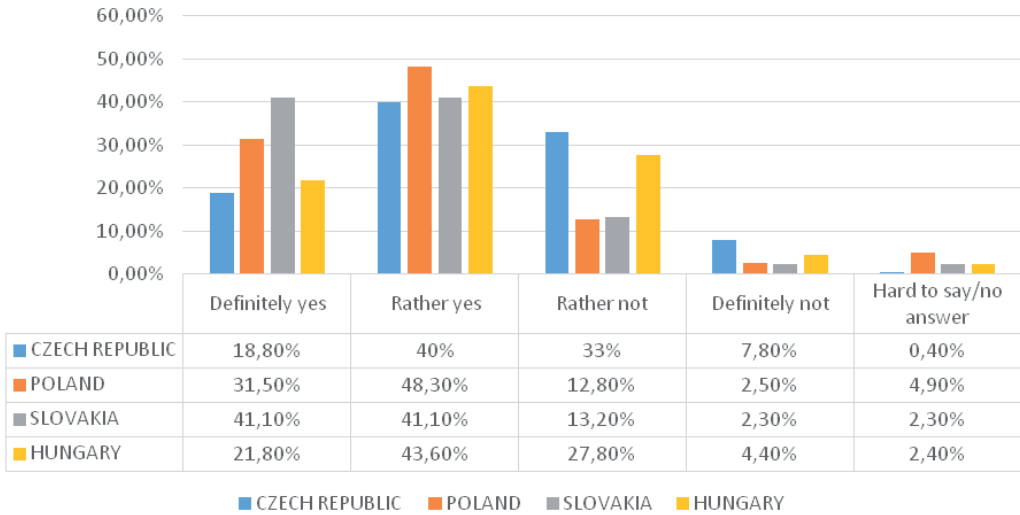


Figure 5.4. Students’ willingness to retrain and learn a new profession in order to get a better, permanent job

The modern labor market often requires from young people not only specialist knowledge, but also appropriate, proven experience. In order to acquire it, some young people start various forms of professional activity during their studies, gaining practical skills and thus increasing their competences. This is possible by combining education with full-time or part-time work, various internships or work placements. Volunteering is one of the specific forms of acquiring practical work experience, which is frequently associated with a positively valued ethical approach. We can define a volunteer as “a person who devotes their time, energy, knowledge and skills for the benefit of someone else without any compensation” (HORÁKOVÁ, ŠOBÁŇOVÁ, 2016: 25). In the countries of the former socialist bloc, such a form of work sometimes brings with it a baggage of not necessarily positive connotations from the past. Czech researchers write that “some people still perceive volunteering in conjunction with the ‘forced voluntary’ brigades during socialism time” (HORÁKOVÁ, ŠOBÁŇOVÁ, 2016: 25). Nowadays, however, volunteering refers to completely different contexts and values: “it teaches altruistic thinking and action, transforms ‘ordinary’ people into organizers, creators, precursors,

negotiators, defending the rights of others who are unable to find themselves in a difficult social reality” (LEŚNIEWSKA, 2016: 37). It is emphasised that volunteer work also helps to acquire skills which are often useful in professional career, thus increasing the chances of gaining valuable employment (LEŚNIEWSKA, 2016: 38). However, it is sometimes also perceived the source of free workforce.

The study asked students from the Visegrad Group about their willingness to undertake volunteer work should this result in better, permanent employment. The responses clearly differ from one nation to another (Figure 5.5). Slovakia was the only country where the majority of the surveyed students declared such a possibility (cumulative responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” amounted to 54.0%). Against the background of other surveyed countries, the declarations of the Hungarian students are clearly distinct: 33.6% of the respondents would be willing to work as a volunteer, while 60.6% reacted negatively. The declarations of the Czechs and Poles were between those two countries – volunteering is considered (cumulative responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes”) by respectively 46.8% and 42.0% of the surveyed students.

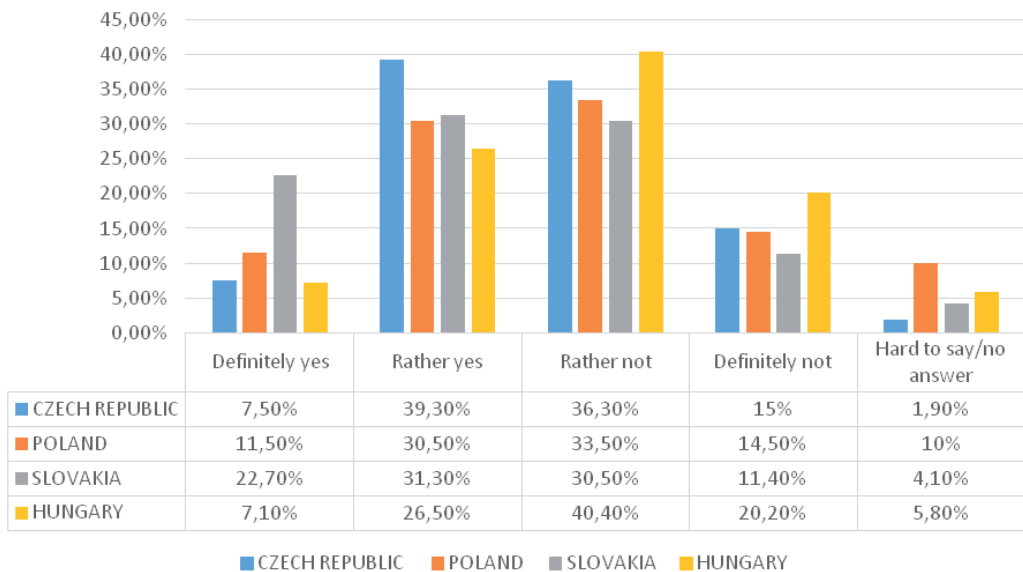


Figure 5.5. Students’ willingness to work as a volunteer in order to get a better, permanent job

Considering students’ professional future, it seems particularly interesting to find out what their attitude towards spatial mobility is – whether they express readiness to move to another place in or outside their country of residence and how they perceive working away from home involving daily commuting. These issues seem to be of absolutely fundamental significance these days. What is important, the qualitative differences between particular choices are becoming

blurred. In the past, a trip abroad was usually connected with a decision that had long-term consequences and a significant biographical burden. Nowadays, due to the common European labour market, open borders and technological development (the Internet, low-cost airlines) trips abroad and working abroad have become much easier and more accessible (CEKIERA, 2014). Migration is no longer perceived as a sort of degeneration, as a “problem” that needs to be addressed or as a symptom of system dysfunction. The former migration discourse suggested emigration is essentially a pathology that is contrary to the nature of man, which was eagerly described by terms relating to trauma – such as rupture, escape, exile, expulsion or wandering (GARAPICH, 2010: 38). These terms are certainly still relevant considering the accounts of the newcomers from other continents who strive and struggle to enter Europe, but no longer so for most personal stories of people from and migrating between the member countries of the European Union. Moreover, internal European Union mobility is considered something positive – “In the migration of the population one perceives the formation of such values as: entrepreneurship of the individual, openness to the surrounding reality, tolerance towards different cultural systems and values, attitude towards the future, belief in progress, recognition of the supremacy of human rights over state legislation, acceptance of global consciousness, a sense of belonging to the world community” (CHODUBSKI, 2003: 55).

The divide between permanent and temporary migrations is also becoming blurred: “finally, in the neighbouring countries of the European Union, numerous inhabitants of one of them ‘migrate’ every day to the other side of the border to work, to the cinema or shopping. Even in far distant countries, the phenomenon of functioning in two of them simultaneously is on the increase” (KULA, 2007: 10). According to the researchers of migration processes, modern migrations move away from the traditional migration pattern understood as a single act leading to relocation and settlement abroad. Contemporary mobility is “often amorphous movement with no clear pattern of direction, a circulation rather than migration per se” (KACZMARCZYK, 2007: 61).

Flexibility, which has become an important and desirable attribute of adopted life strategies in emigration, is coherent with the requirements of the transnational labour market. A modern transnational migrant is much less often subject to assimilation paradigms, and his/her situation goes significantly beyond the bipolar model of “host country – sending country” (BUDAKOWSKA, 2005: 56). This is consistent with the increasingly popular forms of hiring employees – “contemporary work creates a task work culture, for example ‘project’ cultures and grant cultures are becoming more and more visible” (SULIMA, 2015: 138). Modern working models also have an impact on forms of mobility, such as “transmigrations, partial migrations or migrations occurring on the basis of international contracts for individual service provision or on the fulfilment of a task by a foreign company” (KORYŚ, OKÓLSKI, 2004: 22). As R. Sulima empha-

sizes, “the phenomena of multi-complexity and ‘situationality’, i.e. no longer of chronotopicity of contemporary work processes ultimately undermined the social continuity of narration and the expressiveness of the ethos of diligence” (2015: 137). This break with chronotopicity is also characteristic of many contemporary migration strategies.

The mobility expected by the modern labour market also brings with it some potential dangers. One example is the issue of family life and family ties. As U. Beck warns, mobility, translated into everyday practice, can lead to erosion or even disappearance of family ties ; he even described it as “poison for the family” and a “wedge-driven into it” (BECK, 2004: 121). Another restriction related to mobility within the European Union is relatively new and has a broader socio-political character. After the accession of the Visegrad Group countries to the EU structures, a period has begun which, from today’s perspective, we can call the “golden decade of trans-border mobility” (CEKIERA, 2016: 35). It is difficult not to get the impression that it is coming to an end – we are becoming witnesses of the historical turmoil again, of which Brexit is just as significant as symbolic a symptom. Emigration again becomes an uncertain life situation, which is no longer only a question of individual preference, but becomes dependent on unstable and unpredictable political decisions.

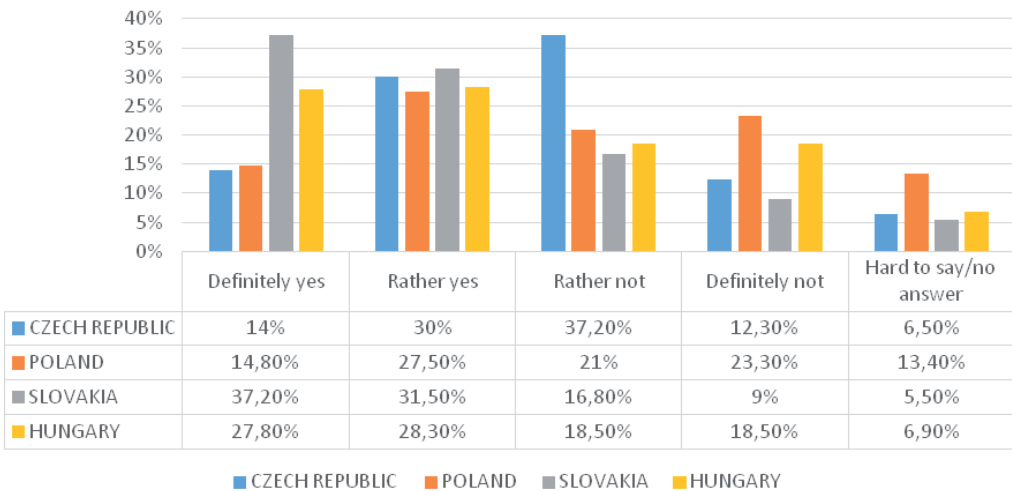


Figure 5.6. Students’ willingness to go abroad to get a better, permanent job

In this migration context, the students were asked about their readiness to go abroad in order to get a better job (figure 5.6). Students from Slovakia turned out to be the most willing to work abroad (the cumulative responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” amounted to 68.7%), of which only 9% definitely rejected such a possibility. The declared foreign mobility of the Hungarian students is also relatively high among the respondents, with more than half of them willing

to leave (the cumulative responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” amounted to 56.1%). Czech and Polish students declared less readiness for such a move. In the first case, almost half of them strongly or moderately rejected this possibility (49.5%). As far as Polish students are concerned, it is puzzling that the percentage of “hard to say” responses (13.4%) is high compared to other nations. It may well be a sign of their awareness of the above discussed growing uncertainty associated with intra-EU migrations.

The students were also asked about their readiness to move to another location in their own country of residence in order to get a better, permanent job (Figure 5.7). What seems particularly interesting, in the case of Slovakia and Hungary internal mobility is considered less frequently than cross-border movements. Among the Slovak students, 42.2% of the respondents accept a move to another place in Slovakia (definitely yes: 12.7%, yes: 29.5%), whereas foreign migration was in total considered by 68.7% of the respondents. Similarly, in Hungary, 43.9% of the respondents anticipate moving to another town (definitely yes: 12.3%, yes: 31.6%), which is a much smaller percentage than of those willing to move abroad (56.1%). More than half of the respondents in both countries reject moving to another place in their country of residence.

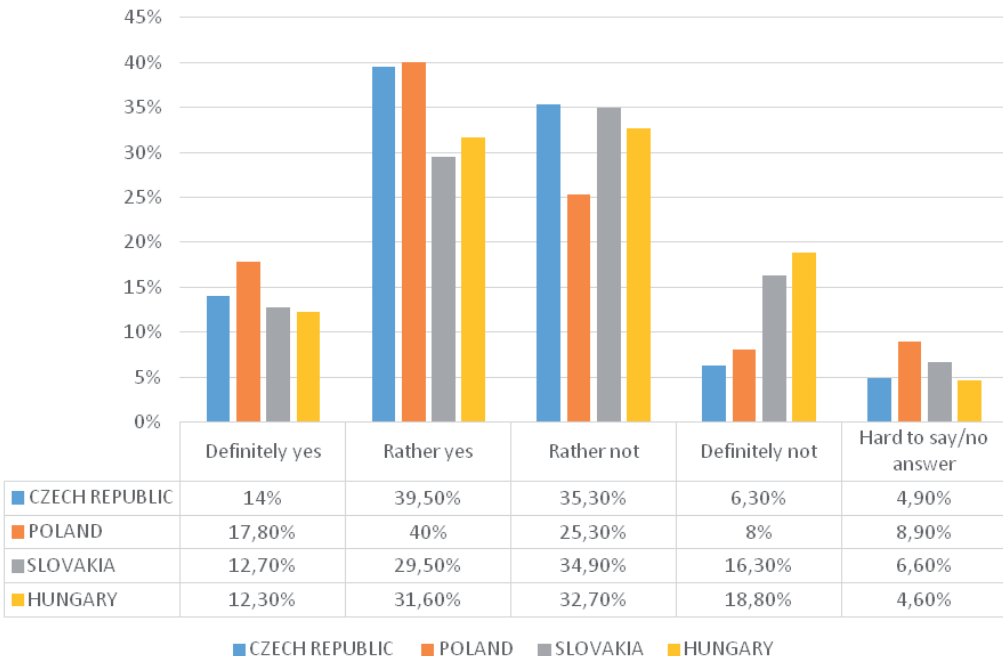


Figure 5.7. Students’ readiness to live in another town in order to get a better, permanent job

The highest level of internal mobility is declared by the Polish students. The readiness to move to another town is reported by 57.8% of students, of which

17.8% definitely take such a possibility into account. A slightly smaller percentage of the Czech students chose such an option – 53.5% of the respondents would move to another city, and 41.6% reject such a possibility. The responses received are certainly an important marker of the students' disposition to move to another location in order to get a better job. It is, however, important to be aware of certain limitations that may affect students' willingness to move and may be a strong push factor (or hold back their willingness to move).

Taking the above concerns into consideration, it is worthwhile to review the potential mobility of students-future employees from the point of view of their readiness to travel to work away from home (Figure 5.8). In this case, Hungary stands out from the surveyed nations – as many as 35.4% of respondents are negative towards this possibility. Interestingly enough, as many as 8.2% of the respondents definitely do not accept such a solution. Most frequently this possibility is accepted by the Polish respondents. In order to get a better job, as many as 89.5% of respondents are ready to commute to another town, of which 41.5% responded “definitely yes”. Only 6.5% of the respondents are reluctant to do so, of which only 0.5% definitely reject such a possibility. Commuting to work is also accepted by a slightly smaller – although still high – percentage of the Czechs (82.3% in total) and the vast majority of the Slovaks (76.5%).

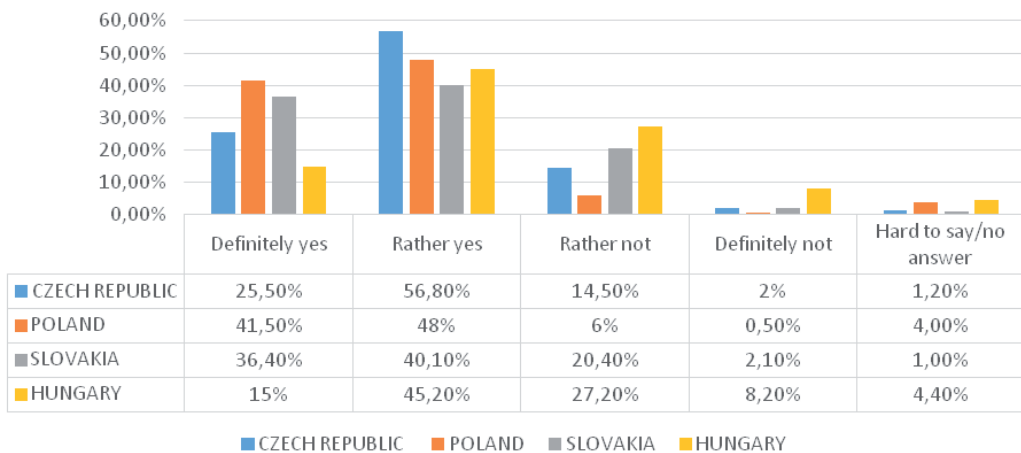
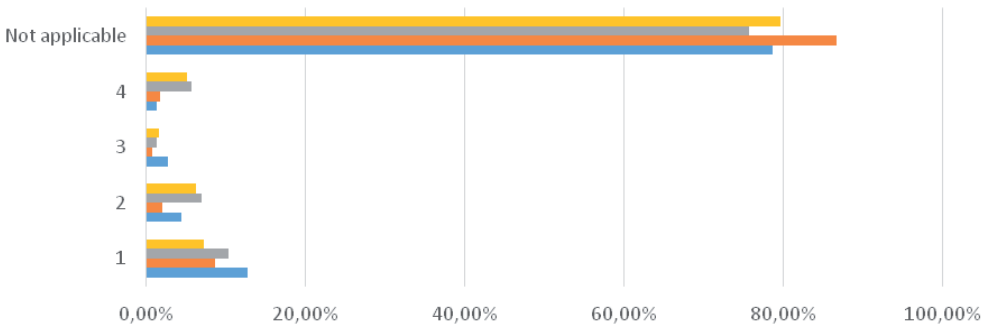


Figure 5.8. Students' willingness to work outside their place of residence in order to get a better, permanent job

5.2 Migration experiences and evaluation of their benefits

Students' plans and declarations were confronted in a study with their previous migration experiences and opinions on the benefits of working abroad. The period of studying is particularly interesting in the context of cross-border

movements – not only from the point of view of programs, such as ERASMUS, obviously supporting mobility and familiarizing with trips via international exchange. In the case of students, as some researchers observe, we are dealing with a specific form of migratory pressure, which involves perceiving the time of higher education as a period of acquiring new experiences, discovering oneself in different circumstances, or finally as an adventure and readiness to take up interesting, courageous challenges – “the realization of ambitions, willingness to test oneself, free status, openness and the awareness that the world is a global village makes the young generation consider such a life strategy and be more willing to decide on foreign migration (SZYSZKA, 2016: 143). In the academic literature, we can find opinions that “students are therefore real and potential emigrants, more than other socio-demographic categories” and constitute one of the most obvious emigration resources (CIEŚLIŃSKA, 2012: 145). As B. Cieślińska emphasizes, several factors contribute to this. As adults, students can legally gain their first professional experience on emigration during a relatively long academic holiday. They are also at an important point in their lives, which involves choosing an individual professional career path – and the departure may constitute a kind of verification of their own ideas and facilitate the decision to go to work abroad after graduation. Last but not least, contemporary students have much higher competences in foreign languages than those of older generations (CIEŚLIŃSKA).



■ HUNGARY ■ SLOVAKIA ■ POLAND ■ CZECH REPUBLIC

Figure 5.9. Foreign work experience of the surveyed students.

What are the current emigration experiences of the surveyed students? In terms of their plans and readiness to travel abroad, they can be considered as

relatively little (Figure 5.9). Most frequently it was the Slovakian students who left to work abroad (24.3% of the respondents had such experiences), then the Czechs (21.4%) and the Hungarian students (20.4%). The smallest percentage of the students with migratory experience was recorded in Poland – only 13.3% of them were abroad for work purposes. Among the Slovak and Hungarian students, we can distinguish a small group of people who quite regularly (four times or more frequently) go to work abroad; they represent 5.7% and 5.2% of the examined population, respectively.

The analysis of the obtained results allows us to distinguish between people whose migration abroad was not a one-time incident, so we can treat them as fully-fledged actors of transnational migration flows. In this context, the students from Poland stand out again – only 3.6% of the total number of respondents stayed abroad more than once for work purposes. In the other Visegrad Group countries, the proportion of such persons is higher and amounts to 14% for Slovakia, 13.1% for Hungary and 8.6% for the Czech Republic, respectively.

For well educated people working abroad often means working on a position that requires less qualifications than they actually have. Many studies suggest a devaluation of the educational capital of emigrants – they work in industries and occupations that do not require high competences or offer no development opportunities (e.g. PAWLAK, 2013). However, it is often pointed out that this does not necessarily imply social degradation, but it is sometimes a sort of choice which makes work more instrumental: “the phenomenon of the work of educated migrants far below their qualifications can be assessed not as a case of social degradation, but as a case of a one-off choice of lifestyle, in which the social position is not an important value, since the provision of opportunities for development in a broad sense is valued higher” (TREVENA, 2010: 146). In the situation of working abroad, another broader mechanism is also becoming clearly noticeable, i.e. the contemporary perception of work as a means of achieving objectives related to the sphere of consumption (BYŁOK, 2015: 105).

The character of work undertaken by educated migrants during emigration is often the result of a compromise, reached in the name of such values or goods that are possible to obtain thanks to a low prestige work, but offering a relatively high financial reward. (CEKIERA, 2015). Working abroad can also build up a sense of self-confidence and confidence in one's own skills, which seems to be particularly important in a situation of entering the labour market.

In terms of the benefits from working abroad, two sets of benefits are particularly easy to distinguish, i.e. those that can be called material (related to the use of appropriate tools to colonize reality) and the subjective ones (related to the development of the given individual) (FELICE, 2011). The first type includes, for example, the possibility of saving money or high wages, and the second – benefits, such as the possibility of professional development, improving language skills or testing oneself in a multicultural work environment. The surveyed

Table 5.1. The advantages of working abroad in the opinion of the students with experience of working abroad. A maximum of 3 alternatives were allowed to be selected

No.	The Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia	Hungary
1.	Improving my language skills (16.3%)	High earnings (10.3%)	High earnings (17.6%)	Improving my language skills (11.7%)
2.	High earnings (13.8%)	Ability to save money (8.3%)	Improving my language skills (13.7%)	High earnings (10.4%)
3.	Ability to save money (8.8%)	Improving my language skills (6.5%)	Opportunity for professional development (8.8%)	Opportunity for professional development (8.5%)
4.	Opportunity for professional development (7.5%)	Ability to check the work in an international environment (4.0%)	Ability to save money (7.5%)	Ability to in an international environment (7.7%)
5.	Ability to fry working in an international environment (4.3%)	Timely payments (3.3%)	Good conditions at the workplace (6.7%)	Ability to save money (5.5%)
6.	Good conditions at the workplace (3%)	Good conditions at the workplace (3.0%)	Timely payments (6.7%)	Good conditions at the workplace (3.8%)
7.	Good social conditions (2.3%)	Respect in the workplace (2.8%)	Good social conditions (3.1%)	Respect in the workplace (3.6%)
8.	Other (2.0%)	Opportunity for professional development (1.3%)	Ability to in an international environment (2.1%)	Timely payments (2.7%)
9.	Respect in the workplace (1.8%)	Good social conditions (0.3%)	Other (2.1%)	Good social conditions (0.8%)
10.	Timely payments (1.3%)	Other (0.3%)	Respect in the workplace (1.3%)	Other (0.3%)

students who already had experience of working on emigration were asked about their opinions on the benefits it brings (Table 5.1). The study revealed significant differences between the indications of the students from particular countries. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, the students most frequently pointed to the possibility of improving their language skills – this advantage was ranked second among the students from Slovakia and third among the Polish students. For the Slovaks and Poles, the most important thing turned out to be high salary, which came second to the list of benefits suggested by the Czechs and Hungarians.

As far as the possibility of professional development via work abroad is concerned, the small percentage of the Polish students who marked this benefit

stands out comparing to the other countries – this benefit was only on the eighth place (among the students from the Czech Republic – fourth, Slovakia and Hungary – third). Among the choices, there is also a lower frequency of indications of profiting from the possibility to test oneself in an international working environment among the Slovak students. This advantage was only on the eighth place, with the students from the other countries ranking it much higher (the Czechs – fifth and the Poles and the Hungarians fourth).

An analysis of the combined advantages of working abroad indicated by the students shows a mixture of material and subjective benefits. The students with experience of working abroad pay attention not only to financial issues – earnings or the possibility of saving money, but often also stress those aspects which relate to their individual development (language competences, professional development or testing themselves in an international work environment). This may indicate that going to work abroad is more thoughtful, and a part of their individual life plans, than merely a temporary economic migration.

5.3 Summary

Students currently preparing to enter the labour market and starting their own professional careers face many dilemmas. They must confront life in a globalised world, where “points of reference, which enable individuals to identify their place in society and shape their social identity, that until recently have been largely located within the national state and (being its constituent parts) the local communities, are now dramatically increasing in number and already crossing its borders” (WNUK-LIPIŃSKI, 2005: 35). Effective navigation between these potential biographical reference points can generate many disturbances. In such a rapidly changing world, in which it is extremely difficult to plan long term, yet to formulate such plans seems to be all the more important. Having one’s own professional plans makes it much easier to “make one’s own life meaningful” (DOMECKA, 2005: 230). Even if the plans need to be modified in a variety of ways, their very existence makes it considerably easier for people to make conscious biographical investments in resources such as time, education and financial capital. Significantly, “out of the many choices that an individual makes in terms of biographical planning, those concerning work (and related decisions on allocation of time and capital, choice of objectives and reference groups) seem to be the most important” (DOMECKA, 2005).

The research area highlighted above covered those key issues – professional plans, readiness to make sacrifices for better work or, finally, readiness to work abroad and the experience related to such work. In conclusion, it is worth noticing the most characteristic research results for students from particular countries.

The Czech students relatively rarely think about running their own business, and rather prefer working in a private company. They are willing to use their leisure time to improve their qualifications, but are reluctant to think about retraining and learning a new profession. Less than half of the respondents express their readiness to emigrate for work, but most of them anticipate work-related relocation or commuting to work within the Czech Republic. About one in five Czech students has the experience of working abroad. According to the Czech students, the benefits of such an experience are mainly related to foreign language learning and high earnings.

Among the Polish students, the most preferred form of work is running one's own business. Among all the surveyed nations, the Poles are least reluctant towards the possibility of retraining in order to get a better job, and showed biggest acceptance of the idea of using one's leisure time to improve professional qualifications. Going abroad for work is much less likely to be accepted by the Polish students than in the other study groups. This may be due to the fact that the percentage of the Polish students with actual experience of working abroad is the lowest among the surveyed groups. The Poles do not associate professional development opportunities with working abroad. On the other hand, the Poles most often declare their readiness to move to or commute to another town within their own country for work. The declared level of mobility of the Polish students is therefore very high, but has an internal character.

During the time of the study, Slovakia noted the highest percentage of the young unemployed among the countries considered. This is perhaps why the Slovak students turned out to be most eager to go abroad for work comparing to their peers from the other countries – only 9% of them have definitely rejected this possibility. What is interesting, the surveyed students more often considered going to work abroad than moving to another town in Slovakia. The vast majority of them allow devoting their own time to improving competences or retraining. The Slovak students are also characterized by the most positive attitude to volunteering – more than half of them declared their readiness to volunteer if this could result in better work in the future.

The Hungarian students are the least likely to think about working in a state-owned company. They are also least willing to devote their free time to study, and almost one in three students rejects the possibility of retraining in order to get a better job. The Hungarian students also stand out in terms of their reluctant attitude towards volunteering. Similarly to the Slovaks, they are more willing to consider working abroad than moving to another place in their own country. They are also characterized by the greatest reluctance to commuting to work in another town – every third surveyed student rejects such a possibility. Going abroad to work is linked to improving language proficiency, better earnings and a chance for professional development. The conducted research has revealed the existing similarities, but also differences in the attitudes of students

from the Visegrad Group countries towards internal and external mobility and their readiness to make certain sacrifices to improve their professional situation. Interesting discrepancies – for example in the case of preferred internal or external mobility – certainly require further analysis within particular countries. The observed heterogeneity of students' attitudes may, however, be indicative of their attempts at finding the most effective professional path within the specificities of individual countries and their socio-economic conditions. Thus, they can be considered as indirect proof of the surveyed students' reflectiveness, as they create heterogeneous scenarios of their professional biographies.