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# **The attitudes of young people in the Baltic states towards migration and mobility within the European context**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper compares Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian university students' attitudes toward migration. A comparative analysis of statistical data about migration from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to other countries, and a documentary analysis of population census data are presented here to provide contextual background to the study. Observations, questionnaires and interviews with the students were used. The findings of the study revealed that young peoples' attitudes toward mobility among the three Baltic States were similar at the global and personal levels, and differentiated at the country level.*

**Keywords:** Migration, mobility, attitude, population census, Baltic States

## **1. Introduction**

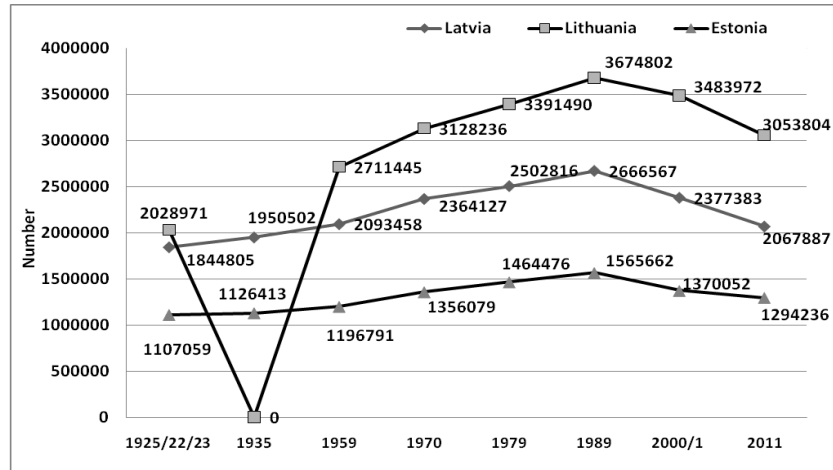
This paper discusses students' attitudes to migration and mobility in the Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - based on a range of findings from research into *Youths' attitudes towards the future of Baltic States* carried out as part of the ToGather project. The research included a questionnaire with student in higher education. There were 700 respondents: 359 from Latvia, 159 from Lithuania, 182 from Estonia; interviews with migrants from different social classes in Latvia and Lithuania were also conducted.

Discussion is set within a context where high emigration levels are of concern. It provides background information with regard to demographics with particular focus on ethnicity, gender and education which we see as potentially significant in affecting student attitudes.

## **2. Population**

All three Sates show decline in population since 1989 (Figure 1): Latvia's population has decreased by 309,000 since 2000, Lithuania's by 430,168, and Estonia's by 75822. Moreover, this trend is likely to continue: a recent Eurostat survey predicted that the population of the Baltic States could drop by as much as 25% by 2060.

Figure 1: Population censuses in Baltic States



The Baltic States have a complex ethnic mix, which the following brief historical overview helps to explain.

With respect to Latvia, Latvians have been the largest ethnic group throughout the past century. Before WW II (Population Census, 1935) the proportion of non-Latvians was approximately 23%, categorised as Russians, being the largest minority (8.8%), followed by Jews (app. 5%), Germans and Poles (2-3%). After WW II there was massive immigration of Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians into Latvia and by 1989, the proportion of Latvians had decreased to 52%. However, the proportion of Latvians has considerably increased during the past two decades reaching 62.1% in 2011 (Demographics of Latvia, accessed 2012). Russian minority inhabitants' numbers have decreased from 29.6% in 2000 to 26.9% in 2011. During the same period Belarus minority inhabitants' numbers decreased from 4.1% to 3.3%, and Ukrainian minority inhabitants' from 2.7% to 2.2%, Poles from 2.5% to 2.2%, and Lithuanians from 1.4% to 1.2%. (See: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/skaitisana>)

Estonia gained independence at the end of World War. A population census was held in 1922 and then 1934. At that time Estonians were still the predominant ethnic group, while all others constituted 12% of the total population of Estonia. Today, Estonia is an ethnically fairly diverse country. Estonians make up 889,770 or 68.7% (compared to 88% in 1934), but Russians make up 321,198 (8.2% in 1934) inhabitants of the total population (Demographics of Estonia Population).

In Lithuania the reality of demographics is as follows: Lithuanians - 2,583,518 (84.6%), Poles - 183,228 (6.0%), Russians - 146,583 (4.8%). Therefore, the situation with the citizenship in Lithuania is different: Lithuania's membership of the European Union has made Lithuanian citizenship all the more appealing. Lithuanian citizenship is theoretically easier to obtain than that of many other European countries as only one

great-grandparent is necessary to become a Lithuanian citizen. Persons who held citizenship in the Republic of Lithuania prior to June 15, 1940, and their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren (provided that these persons did not repatriate) are eligible for Lithuanian citizenship (Demographics of Lithuania Population, accessed 2012).

### **3. Education and Migration**

The Baltic States all have high-levels of literacy and a well-established education sector. However, there is some suggestion that higher education is not universally regarded as important. In Latvia, for example, in 2009: 31.3% chose not to continue studies in their native country or to continue studies abroad, 2.3% chose training in vocational schools, but 66.4% went to study at universities and colleges. However, 9% of secondary school students gave up their studies and left school. Moreover, the most recent data shows that 40% of Latvia's students after leaving secondary school are not interested in studying at higher education schools and colleges. The following arguments are mentioned: high tuition fees, inadequately high-quality courses compared to other the EU countries, and unemployment in Latvia. 'Brain-waste' and economic opportunities in the EU may also be factors.

Hazans and Phillips' (2011) research shows:

“Post-enlargement migrants from all three countries were significantly less educated than stayers. After accession, medium-educated workers were most likely to move, other things equal, and human capital became increasingly less pro-migration over time. Return migrants differ from all movers in many ways and, in particular, are more educated. Although brain drain was not a feature of post-accession Baltic migration, brain waste was: during 2006-2007, the proportion of overqualified among high educated movers ranged from five out of ten for Latvia to seven out of ten for Lithuania, but it was around one fifth among high-educated stayers in all three countries”

### **3. Gender, Education and Pay**

In the European Union (EU) females constitute 59% of all university graduates. In Latvia, together with the both other Baltic States, the figure is higher, being over 65% in Latvia. There exist essential differences in choice of the fields of studies both in the Baltic States as well as in the EU member states (on average only 32% of all graduates in science, mathematics, information technologies and engineer sciences branches are female). However, in Latvia, females constitute 52.8% of the total number of scientists, whereas the figure is 32.9% in the EU. In future this proportion could increase, as both in Latvia and in other countries the number of female graduates with PhD qualification is has increased in recent years. In 2011, 193 or 65% females and 104 or 35% males graduated with PhD in Latvia.

Education, enterprising and purposeful activities allow females to be competitive with males for management positions. Females have reached approximately 20 members in

the recent *Saeima* (Parliament). The highest achievement in the gender opportunity area regarding politics was a female as the president of the Republic of Latvia. At present there is a female – Prime minister of *Saeima* in Latvia. In Lithuania a female is the state president at present. Up to now the female employment level in Latvia has been relatively high, even a bit higher than the average level in the EU.

There are positions and professions, in which females have high representation. For instance, there were 6985 females and only 8 males employed for preschool educational institutions in Latvia at the beginning of the academic year of 2010/2011. (Females in Latvia constitute – 54% of population, 8 March, 2012). Significantly, females in the Baltic States suffer from discrimination due to relatively low payment assigned to the teacher's work. Females in Estonia and Lithuania are in a similar situation in this area.

Moreover, research conducted in 2007 established that a number of people predicted to return back would not now do so as they feel part of the EU and will continue to work outside Latvia. Among the reasons stated were low pay in the education sector, and closed schools in the countryside areas, due to migration. At present the minimum wage in Latvia is LVL 200, the survival minimum is LVL 176. The teachers with ten years experience receive a salary of LVL 255, reduced from LVL 355. Since 2009, salaries of the university lecturers have reduced by half. Low pay in the education sector is a feature in all the Baltic states. Educators in Estonia have recently taken industrial action with regard to salaries.

#### 4. Youth' attitude to the future of Baltic States

##### *Questionnaire*

The Questionnaire consisted of several questions about migration: *Do you know the meaning of migration and mobility?; Is migration a problem of the world?; Have you thought about migration from Estonia/ Latvia/Lithuania in future?; Is it possible nowadays in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania to be successful in your speciality?; Does migration enrich culture identity of other countries?; Can you see possibilities for yourself in Estonia/ Latvia/ Lithuania?*

A choice of three possible answers was given: with *Yes, No, and I'm not interested.*

The final question of the questionnaire was: *'Your attitude on migration to Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?'* where the respondents were required to choose their answer from a set of pre-provided answers: *Positive, Negative or I don't know.*

Table 1 shows the frequency distributions for seven questionnaire items that measure the students' attitudes toward migration across the three samples of students (Estonia, Latvian and Lithuanian). Table 2 represents statistically significant differences measured by  $\chi^2$  test compared answers of the questionnaire items across three Baltic States samples, where analysis of results consists of only statistically significant differences.

**Table 1. Percentages of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian students answers across questionnaire items about attitudes of migration**

Question Answer	Estonia (n=182)			Latvia (N=359)			Lithuania (N= 159)		
	Yes	No	Not interested	Yes	No	Not interested	Yes	No	Not interested
1 <sup>st</sup>	Do you know the meaning of migration and mobility?								
	92%	8%	0%	55%	34%	11%	89%	6%	5%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Is migration a problem of the world?								
	79%	21%	0%	68%	27%	4%	61%	35%	4%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Have you thought about migration from Estonia/ Latvia/Lithuania in future?								
	69%	31%	0%	13%	78%	9%	36%	58%	6%
4 <sup>th</sup>	Is it possible nowadays in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania to be successful in your speciality?								
	54%	44%	2%	53%	33%	14%	65%	27%	8%
5 <sup>th</sup>	Does migration enrich culture identity of other countries?								
	91%	9%	0%	43%	50%	7%	49%	43%	8%
6 <sup>th</sup>	Can you see possibilities for yourself in Estonia/ Latvia/Lithuania?								
	72%	28%	0%	55%	34%	11%	66%	31%	3%
7 <sup>th</sup>	Your attitude on migration to Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?								
	Posi-tive	Nega-tive	Do not know	Posi-tive	Nega-tive	Do not know	Posi-tive	Nega-tive	Do not know
	61%	15%	24%	26%	37%	37%	89%	6%	5%

**Table 2.  $\chi^2$  values of comparison the frequencies of questionnaire items of three samples of respondents**

Question Answer	Estonia versus Latvia	Est. ver-sus Lithu.	Latv. ver-sus Lith.	Est. ver-sus Latv.	Est. ver-sus Lith.	Latv. ver-sus Lith.	Est. ver-sus Latv.	Est. ver-sus Lithu.	Latv. ver-sus Lith.
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Not interested		
1 <sup>st</sup>	Do you know the meaning of migration and mobility?								
	67.45*	ns	53.30**	41.67**	ns	43.73**	ns	ns	ns
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Is migration a problem of the world?								
	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Have you thought about migration from Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania in future?								
	72.41*	35.33**	35.85**	84.04**	24.66**	4.16*	ns	ns	ns
4 <sup>th</sup>	Is it possible nowadays in Baltic States to be successful in your speciality?								
	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns
5 <sup>th</sup>	Does migration enrich culture identity of other countries?								
	89.59*	59.70**	ns	73.44**	38.99**	Ns	ns	ns	ns
6 <sup>th</sup>	Can you see possibilities for yourself in Estonia/Latvia/ Lithuania?								
	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns
7 <sup>th</sup>	Your attitude on migration to Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?								
	Est. versus Latv.	Est. versus Lith.	Latv. versus Lith.	Est. versus Latv.	Est. versus Lith.	Latv. versus Lith.	Est. versus Latv.	Est. versus Lith.	Latv. versus Lith.

	<i>Positive</i>			<i>Negative</i>			<i>Do not know</i>		
	60.68*	33.13	72.30**	31.08**	4.12*	49.92**	ns	22.61*	56.15*

\* - <0.05; \*\* - <0.01

Research results indicated that most of the university students (more than 55%) know the meaning of the migration and mobility, but more Estonian and Lithuanian students know the meaning compared with Latvian students.

Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian students' attitudes toward migration tended to be similar in two levels - global and personal, namely - most of the students of three Baltic countries perceived that (1) migration is world-wide problem, and (2) there were personal possibilities to be successful in the county, especially in the area of personal professional development.

The empiric research was accomplished on the student attitude dynamics to migration and mobility on the basis of the analysis of theoretical sources and obtained statistical data. 744 respondents participated in empiric investigation: 402 from Latvia, 166 from Lithuania, 182 from Estonia.

With regard to education, the survey results of 40 students studying the first year in RTTEMA, a part of secondary school pupils believe that the education content is too difficult, containing too much non-constructive, useless stuff. Teachers should involve the pupils into the subjects much more by explaining how the subject content can be used in practice.

It must be admitted that the students have a different attitude to the sense of pupils' regular autonomous work. They are not used to seeing connections between the education content to be learnt and its impact on their balanced holistic (physical, psychic, social) and balanced psychic (intellectual, emotional and volitional) development. The actual situation reveals that pupils in contemporary school gain good knowledge in several foreign languages, and are competitive in the EU Labour market, continue studies and work in the EU member countries, where they have well organized and secure social guarantees.

### *Interviews*

In this section we report on interviews with three Latvian respondents of different social status. The first respondent is a student now. Together with her boy-friend she had worked for one year doing two jobs in England in order to earn money for her studies, car and flat. She describes both the positive and negative things; even such information is given that others keep silent of (humiliations, tiny pay and impolite attitude to the employees, who want to have social guaranties). There is an opinion that for a self-respecting person it is unacceptable to do jobs as service employees. The second respondent has been working in the same factory for many years. As her pension is small, she will continue to work for the same company. She is contented with social guaranties and possibilities to go to Latvia several times a year. She is not going to return back to Latvia because the state and government do not care about the people.

The third respondent works in Germany. He has good wages. He is not a citizen of any country and considers that it is not wise to belong to inhabitants of Latvia. Data shows that the young people have come to decisions not to continue their studies at higher education institutions in Latvia. They are eager to study or search for jobs mainly beyond Latvia. It brings to a conclusion that adolescents are shaping themselves as mobile global citizens.

From Lithuania in interviews participated seven respondents: three men and four women. All had working experience abroad for some months during summer for 3 years. Five of them are students and part time employed, two fully employed. Their reasons for experiencing living abroad were given as: To study and to gain more experience abroad (1), also, to see world, get to know other cultures (4), financial (5), visit family, who lives there (1), to try on new things and to try out myself (1), improvement of competences (especially, language) (2). In evaluation of experiencing living abroad they cited positive experience as: study programmes of higher quality, increased competences, respect for all professions and occupations, new rewarding experiences: better transport, beautiful nature, friendly people, new contacts. Negative experience: disrespect for employee from other culture, difficult and un-rewarding work, missing family and social isolation (3), food is different and that causes problems too, consultations on conditions (of living and working) are scarce, no cultural experiences in Lithuanian language (e.g., theatre).

Respondents' were asked to give their impression as to how they were accepted in the other country: positively (3), (*Local inhabitants are polite and tolerant so they look and behave with me very well*). In a neutral way (3): *I was accepted well [the USA], however, also the requirements are set at a very high level*. Negatively (1), sample: *Even if neighbours, service people were quite friendly, employers demonstrated disrespect, emphasised us being not from the country, not being sufficiently effective and so on...*

With regard to the respondents' impressions of foreign country in which they stayed: 1) Positively (2): well establishes social services, more restricted access to medicine. 2) Negative (4): very expensive and no degree of freedom (for paying for services/accommodation a bit later) (2); a burden of taxes and types of taxes – higher (1).

Six respondents think that every young person should try to study or work abroad at least for several month, because this experience gives different perspective on what you have in your country. Studying and working abroad shows that there are pluses and minuses everywhere, teaches you to be more responsible for yourself, to value one's family and education. Increased competence in foreign language was almost universally mentioned among measurable gains. One respondent thinks his life is more orientated to living abroad. All others seem to consider the experience as a valuable and insightful phase of their life, but seem to associate their future with their own country, culture, and people.

## Conclusion

The attitudes toward migration of three respondents groups in the country context tended to be different in three areas: (1) general attitude toward migration in the country was most positive among Lithuanian students, most negative among Latvian students, and



middle among Estonian sample, whereby the neutral attitude was more prevalent for Estonian and Latvian compared with Lithuanian students' attitudes; (2) more Estonian students have thought about the migration in the country than Lithuanian students, and Latvian student's results in this area were the lowest; and (3) Estonian student's attitudes toward the enrichment of cultural identity of the country through migration were more positive compared with Latvian and Lithuanian students' opinions.

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