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Attitudes of Latvian Youths towards Migration in the European Context

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Abstract

The theoretical basis of this article is the European project Multiple Choice Identity : Materials of Migration and Mobility. A comparative analysis of statistical data about migration in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other countries, and a documentary analysis of authorities and media information about migration from Latvia are the basis of the paper. Empirical investigations, including observations, interviews and questionnaires were used, including interviews with people migrating from Latvia. The authors conclude that positive changes in the economic life and a positive attitude in the mass media materials are needed to help to form positive attitudes of students and youth towards their own country.

Introduction

Rapid migration to European and other countries as well as movement within Latvia has been characteristic since Latvia's membership of the European Union. There are several possible reasons for this including economic crisis in the country, low salaries in the social state sector, as well as individual strivings and dispositions of to self-realization. This migration has resulted in many children become 'parentless' as parents go to England, Ireland and other countries. Of course some people return but others continue to live abroad.

This provides the context for our investigation into the circumstances and reasons for migration from Latvia and the civic attitude of Latvian youths against migration.

Context

According to the Statistics Office Eurostat (SOE) the number of inhabitants in the EU in 2005 has increased by 2.3 million or 0.5% , reaching 459.5 million. However, this increase is not uniform and Latvia shows the most rapid decrease of all the EU countries. On the basis of population census of 2000 (Eurostat) 12.6 thousand people came to Latvia from 2000 to 2006, but 29.7 thousand long term immigrants left the country (Central Board of Statistics of Latvia Republic, 2007). According to the information of the Economic Ministry of Latvia Republic, most workers go to Ireland, Great Britain and Germany. This number is about 5% from the whole active workforce which is characteristic for all the new EU member countries. Sociological inquiry data in 2006 revealed that about 59.4 % of Latvian inhabitants were positive about emigration to other countries, and 22 % of respondents wanted to emigrate in the next two years.

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Table 1 Number of inhabitants until capacity to work, during capacity to work, above capacity to work in age groups and demographic load in Latvia in 2000-2007(beginning)

Year	Total number of inhabitants	Among them			Proportion in % in total number			Demographic load
		Until capacity to work	During capacity to work	Above capacity to work	Until capacity to work	During capacity to work	Above capacity to work	
2000	2381715	428082	1402249	551384	18,0	58,9	23,1	698,5
2001	2364254	409760	1424985	529509	17,3	60,3	22,4	659,1
2002	2345768	390478	1425116	530174	16,6	60,8	22,6	646,0
2003	2331480	372641	1454536	504303	16,0	62,4	21,6	602,9
2004	2319203	356505	1457858	504840	15,4	62,8	21,8	590,8
2005	2306434	341415	1473805	491214	14,8	63,9	21,3	565,0
2006	2294590	328547	1477108	488935	14,3	64,4	21,3	553,4
2007	2281305	318463	1489839	473003	14,0	65,3	20,7	531,2

(Source: **Central Board of Statistics** 2007)

The number of foreigners in Latvia is reasonably small compared with other European countries. The number of employed foreigners in Latvia in 2005 has increased by 54% compared with 2004, and by the beginning of 2008 there were 46 353 foreigners (2%) in Latvia. People come to Latvia to make safe investments and to establish business there. There is highly qualified and rather cheap workforce in Latvia. People from the former soviet union arrive here as they get married there, their relatives and friends live there, there is no language barrier and Russian language can be used there.

In accordance with the data of Citizenship and Migration Affairs Register the division among nationalities for 01.01.2008. is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Structure of Inhabitants of Latvia

Nationality	Citizens	Non-citizens	Foreigners Stateless people	Total	%
Latvians	1 342 215	1 724	1 161	1 345 100	59.1%
Lithuanians	18 385	10 245	2 150	30 780	1.4%
Estonians	1 496	573	435	2 504	0.1%
Bjelorussians	31 196	50 008	2 595	83 799	3.7%
Russians	367 035	245 665	25 710	638 410	28.0%
Ukrainians	17 442	35 290	4 549	57 281	2.5%
Polish	40 635	12 693	793	54 121	2.3%
Jews	6 507	3 217	444	10 168	0.4%
Other nationalities	32 597	13 006	8 516	54 119	2.4%
Total	1 857 508	372 421	46 353	2 276 282	100.0%

The government of Latvia is interested in the flexible arrangement of workforce from one sphere into another, thus not facilitating access of the third countries to the labour market of Latvia. A large proportion of Latvian inhabitants support the state immigration policy. Statistic information shows that Latvia is the most negative towards immigration: 69.8% of Latvian inhabitants show negative attitude toward guest workers (Central Board Statistics, December 2005). Further, 67% respondents consider that the government of Latvia should keep back people from other countries, so they do not come to Latvia. Such public opinion may be connected with the consequences of Soviet

time migration policy, inner insecurity about one's own identity and fear from competition.

Materials about migration supplied by the Central Board of Statistics of Latvia Republic show that in 2007 at least 3200 people (2760 in 2006) arrived in Latvia, but 5200 people (5100 in year 2006) left. The analysis of the domestic migration in Latvia shows that 52 482 people moved from one administrative territory to another in 2006. The clear tendency is to move to the capital Riga (6058 people moved to Riga in 2006). Statistical data shows that the number of inhabitants in the first 9 months of 2007 has reduced by 0.38 % due to internal migration in the state in general, but it has increased by 6890 people nearby Riga.

Furthermore, research from *Doing Business in 2006: Creating Jobs* (World Bank, 2006) shows Latvia in 26th place in the category of starting new businesses, but for non-elastic legal work Latvia is placed in the 103 rd place among 155 countries of the world. The workforce of Latvia now consists of the generation born in the 80's when the birthrate in Latvia was at its maximum point. Latvia will face a serious lack of workforce as soon as 200000 people born in the 90's enter the job market, but 300 000 people go on to retirement. Ivars Indāns, an expert from the Foreign Affairs Institute of Latvia, has predicted that those born in the 90's will come into the labour market during the next 5-7 years. The birthrate was low then and Latvia will face big lack of workforce – 15 % less than in 2005. About 200 000 economically active people will go away until 2015. By the year 2020 there will be approximately 1.6 million people in the age of 15-74.

The lack of workforce offers in Latvia as a problem was recognized quite recently. Little attention was paid to the possible social and economic consequences when 230000 people or 10 % of inhabitants left the country in the time period 1991-2004.

By 2005 problems caused by migration had intensified with discussion around:

- 1) Mobility and migration as an important questions in the whole EU as it has positive and negative socio-economical and demographic consequences;
- 2) The preservation of to preserve cultural identity;
- 3) Immigration control and integration in the cultural environment of Latvia.

Different state institutions made the report in 2007 about actions to encourage people to return to Latvia from abroad. This report will be discussed in the Parliament of Latvia Republic in April 2008.

There were three groups of people involved in the formation of this report:

- 1) people who had worked abroad themselves or their relatives still working abroad;
- 2) scientists and experts;
- 3) business people of different branches, representatives of State and municipality institutions.

The most important conclusion of the report –was that the *social environment and the lack of guaranties* prevent people from coming back to Latvia.

Many young people are among migrants: about 33 % - 40 % are up to 30 years old, 20 % - 25 % are from 30 – 39 years old. Predominantly people with general or professional

secondary education go away. The number of females with higher education prevail. The statement that the best and highly qualified workers leave is not true.

There are 3 groups of migrants:

- 1) 10 % think that they will come back to Latvia, they are interested in the events in Latvia, some of them have family in Latvia, some finance purchasing real estate property;
- 2) 10 % do not want to come back because of various circumstances, they keep apart and try to obtain the citizenship of another country;
- 3) 80 % hesitate but keep in contact with Latvia and help other people to go away from Latvia and to adjust in another country.

Motives for work migration are:

- 1) Hope to earn means of support for family, flat renovation, education of children, purchase of property, vehicle, payment of loans;
- 2) Wish to travel to other countries, study languages, obtain new experience;
- 3) Social guaranties and normal life. A big part of them hope to fulfill these goals in a year, seldom in 2 or 3 years. On average many of them have come back to their families in 2 years, a lot of them have started their business.

Some people would be ready to return if:

- 1) The salary were the same or at least half so high as abroad;
- 2) State and employers supported families with children and felt respect against employees;
- 3) Bureaucratic obstacles to establish one's own business were reduced;
- 4) People were mutually polite and smiling;
- 5) The church did not discriminate homosexuals and women – priests;
- 6) It was possible to get appropriate education for the market demands of the EU.

Student survey

613 respondents participated in the empiric investigation: 430 from Latvia, 183 from Lithuania. 359 students from 20 groups were inquired from Cēsis, Ventpils, Daugavpils, Jēkabpils, Kuldīga, Bauska, Rīga. 93 students from Kaunas and 90 from Klaipeda.

Reasons for migration

In response to the question about the reasons for migration one respondent told that she wanted to go because she had debts and wanted to start something new. Living conditions were good, the workplace was prepared. The attitude was good, she had worked in a cafe, washed dishes, prepared salads, earned good money. Feels uncomfortably in Latvia.

The second respondent (3 months in Great Britain): 40 years old, divorced. Essential migrated to study language and to earn money. There were already 7 people from her parish in Britain. It was possible to buy Latvian things in Latvian shop. It was difficult emotionally, she could not go to her daughter's final school leaving ceremony, but she

had earned enough money to pay for her both daughters studies. She contacted home via telephone. She felt the cultural environment was good as she had interest in everything – internet, magazines, newspapers both in Latvian and in English. Latvians are the nation who stick together, celebrate events together. Attitude had been very positive everywhere – smiling and polite people in the hospital and in service sphere. That is missing in Latvia. She thought it was not good that some migrants live the double life – one family in Latvia, one – abroad. After obtaining Master's Degree she will return to England as there are social guaranties, arranged state system and financial security.

A third respondent (23 years old): went away together with her husband, worked as a waitress. Earned money, the attitude was good but she missed Latvia as the life in Ireland had been solitary and monotonous. She got pregnant and they both went back to Latvia as she had got much to do in Latvia. She does not want her place to be taken by guest workers.

A 4th respondent: (3rd year in England). Was forced to leave Latvia as could not find job. She found it difficult at the beginning, the environment was unknown and she was unprepared. She worked in the hotel service, but now works in a factory. She is intelligent, interested in art, culture, reads a lot, travels. Especially praises social guaranties and possibilities to go to Latvia several times a year. Is not going to return as there are no social guaranties and the state does not care about the people.

There are many migrant interviews on the internet about life and work possibilities in Ireland. For example, one driver who had worked in Ireland for five years already: His reason for leaving Latvia was that he needed money to rebuild the house. He did not have work in Latvia. A friend invited him to Ireland. Before going he got his driver's license in all categories and studied some English courses. In Ireland he studied language in the evenings, during the daytime he worked in a market-garden, and at weekends worked in a vegetable warehouse. Later he found a job as a lorry driver. He thought that the living conditions are good, four Latvians live in the same house, forty minutes by tram to get the centre of Dublin. He suggested that salaries in Ireland are from 9 to 14 EUR per hour. Employees are well cared about. Trade unions are strong that is why the social guaranties are so good. He also thought that The Ministry of Integration wants foreigners to join the society as it is important for people to work legally and to pay taxes. In addition he noted that there are many Latvians, Lithuanians, Bjelorussians, Polish, so it is possible to communicate in Russian. In Ireland there is Latvian newspaper Sveiks.

With emigration the number of inhabitants goes down in Latvia. The countryside becomes empty, factories are closed, and agriculture does not develop and this further promotes internal and external migration. This trend has been evident for the last 20 or so years. Agriculture was devastated in the 90's and small businesses collapsed. Latvia entered the EU and the directives of the EU were fulfilled. The sugar industry was declared unprofitable as well as the paper industry. Now the coffee refinement factory and the bacon industry are endangered. New technologies are not put into small business enterprises. Enterprising people seek work and people are mobile.

Young people want to compete in the work market in Europe so they study languages, are opened to new impressions, and are determined and mobile. The way of thinking in Latvia has changed and it continues to change. Our philosopher A. Rubenis said that self-destruction of the nation would take place if the nation does not feel respect against its land or forgets its language.

Tasks and goals change in schools. Surprising is ability of young people to adjust to new circumstances, they can move to a new place quickly and without pain. We see the progress of innovative thinking.

Migration has influenced the whole Latvia. The family often does not fulfill its duties in children's upbringing. The role of school has changed. Observations in Jurmala State Gymnasium and in the state in general show that about 10 % parents of children work away from Latvia. The children have guardians. Their material needs are satisfied. School prepares their life skills. The goal of school is to educate a person for work and education market.

Student responses to questions on mobility and migration

Understanding the terms

79 % of Latvian and 74 % Lithuanian respondents tell they know the meaning of terms migration and mobility; 15 % Latvian and 19 % Lithuanian respondents do not know the meanings; 1 % Latvian and 5 % Lithuanian respondents are not interested in the terms, but 5 % Latvian and 2 % Lithuanian respondents give different answers. In Latvia: partly, guess, about, do not know mobility, have never thought about it.

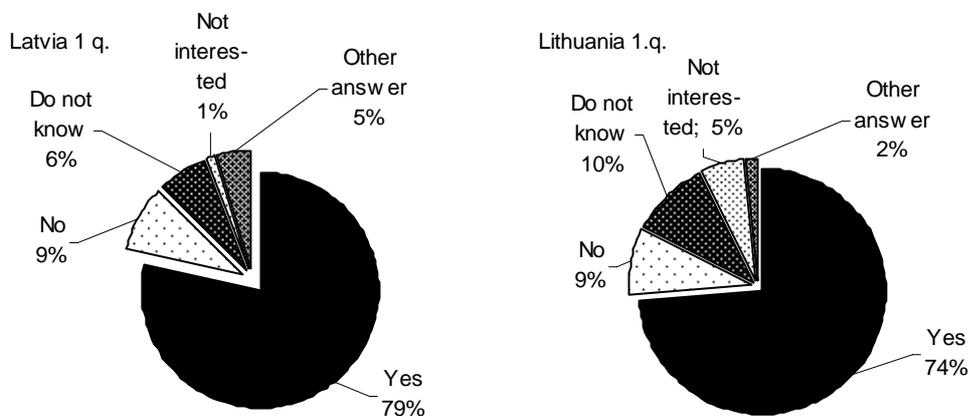


Figure 1. Ideas of mobility and migration

Question 23: Do you envisage that you will emigrate to another country?

Latvian respondents say: 13% yes, 55% no, 25% do not know, 6% different answer: not yet, for some months –probably, possibly in summer, at the moment not, but do not know about future.

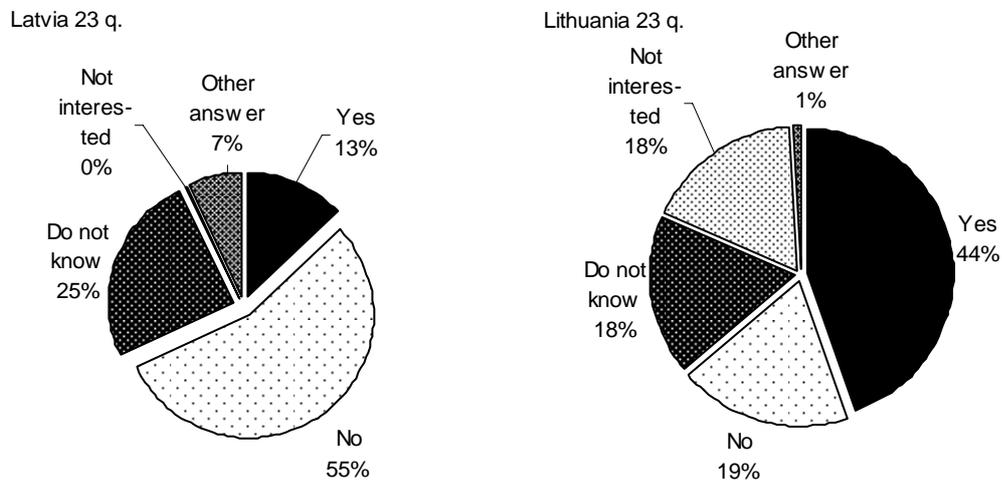


Figure 2. Future prognosis to leave the country

Lithuanian respondents: 44% prognose to migrate away from the country, 19% do not prognose to go away, 18% do not know, 18% not interested, 1% -will depend on work and possibilities in the future.

The effect of migration on cultural identity

Lithuanian students answer that migration has both positive and negative influence on the migrants themselves, on their relatives, on the society. Latvian students are more exact in their answers citing positively that migration brings new experience and emotions, practice of language, acquaintance with other cultures and traditions in the world, the possibility to earn money and help the family, and that a mentally and materially rich person can enrich his land. The most important thing is to be aware that one belongs to Latvia.

Negatively, with internal and external migration families break apart, nationalities and races mix up, cultural identity of the nation damps down, children are left with relatives, guardians, they emotionally become strangers for their parents, family traditions are not inherited. People do not come back to their own country.

Question 24. Can you attest yourself in Latvia?

For Latvians, 60% responded positively, 18% negatively, 8% did not know, 1% were not interested, 14% other answers, e.g., depends on the speciality. Lithuanian respondents: 53% are sure it is possible to attest oneself in speciality, 10% - no, 17% do not know, 17% not interested, 3% - depends on speciality.

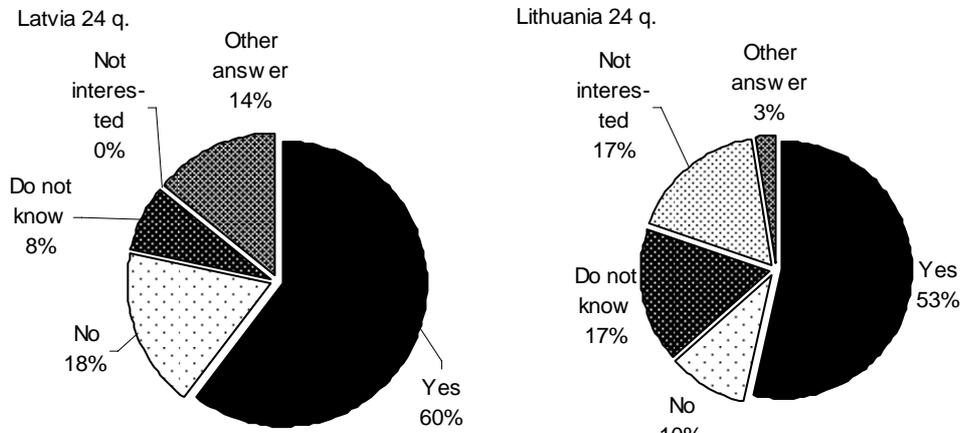


Figure 3. Possibilities for self-realization in own country nowadays (Q 24)

Question 38: Do you see the possibilities for development in your country?

The answer reveals to us the need for state policy to change conception and to create a strategy that makes long-term investments.

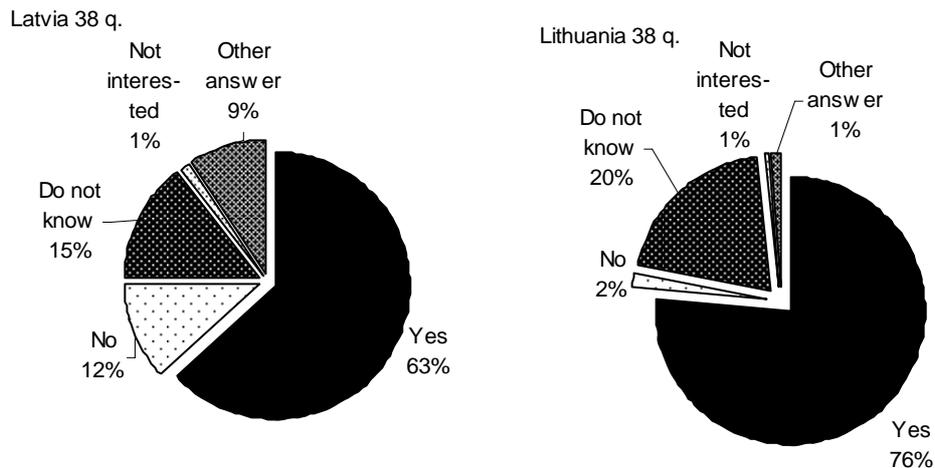


Figure 4. Possibilities for self-realization in own country in future (Q.38)

Cultural identity is important for our nation to survive. Economical problems have to be solved as satisfied basic needs will motivate people to attest themselves in the sphere of culture. But we have to admit that we give away our educated young people.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows how important it is to satisfy physiological needs as they are followed by safety. A person wants to feel safe and protected. Particularly the growing child needs to be supported, and school has an increasing role in providing this support.

Mobility for Lithuanian students is the movement from one side. The opinion exists that mobility is a skill to allow flexibility, quick reaction in unknown conditions. A mobile

person is active, able to adjust to new situations, is free, flexible, perceives new cultures. Real life promotes different way of thinking: feeling of distance changes. Opportunities and possibilities beyond state boundaries are realities.

Conclusion

Research shows that in Latvia both internal and external migration takes place, and economic factors are the main driving force. Our research among Latvian and Lithuanian students shows that Latvians are more well-disposed to their country and its cultural identity than Lithuanians. The positive factor is that students become aware of migration processes and become more mobile. We argue that the state has to change its attitude to all inhabitants and to ensure economic and social well-being. Educations must be provided a curricular balance that recognizes the pulls and pushes of the EU labour market and associated media, with the need to promote positive attitudes toward the country.

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