
Geographical Patterns and Impacts of the Hungarian Workforce Mobility in Europe

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Abstract

Within the confines of a four-year research project entitled ‘**The recent emigration trends in Hungary**’ the crucial characteristics and direct, indirect impacts, moreover the specific geographical patterns have been analysed of Hungarian emigrants having been settled in mostly Western European countries. Since the European integration (2004) the intention of the Hungarian workforce mobility has been growing rapidly.

In this research, besides official and mirror statistics, three empirical databases have been produced, which are:

- The emigration intention of the Hungarians (based on the online and field surveys in Hungary).
- The characteristics of Hungarians living abroad (based on the online surveys in the target countries).
- Life career and plans of the Hungarians living abroad (based on semi-structural interviews in the target countries).

It is difficult to find reliable data on emigration involving relocation. Sending countries do not register those moving abroad, and thus there is also no detailed time series on this group in Hungary. Records kept by host countries vary from country to country (for instance, some countries register arrivals, while others register the population living there at a particular point in time); data are published with different frequencies covering different periods. Furthermore, details on migrants’ individual and labour market characteristics (such as education level, age, gender, the ratio of unemployed/economically inactive persons) are usually unavailable.

During the field survey we collected a total of 6,461 completed questionnaires. In order to reach the appropriate response rate at the national level (one respondents per thousand people), we also launched an online questionnaire survey. Through the combination of field survey and online questionnaire survey finally we received nearly 10,000 filled forms. Also, during the sampling the group of university and college students was paid special attention, and they are slightly over-represented. The measurement of the emigration intentions of students is really a crucial issue because the loss caused by the emigration of young people,

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whether it is a short or long-term stay, or permanent move, has an immediate impact on the economy and society.

One of the outstanding features of the Hungarian research that a spectacular increase can be observed in terms of women's emigration intentions, explained by their emancipation, their endeavour to build career. We deliberately dealt separately with those who just think on emigration, as their intentions are not strong enough, mostly consider migration as an opportunity for the future. Those who plan to emigrate are likely to leave the country within the following one-two years as they have concrete scenario. In spite of these facts, the possibility of their real future emigration cannot be predicted.

Concerning the research results the most affected age group is the 18-40 and the three important target countries are Germany, Great-Britain and Austria. The growing importance of personal networks in emigration was also confirmed. Information and help provided by friends and relatives who live or had been living abroad has utmost importance in current migration decisions. The main reasons explaining emigration intentions of Hungarians are the blighting economic situation of the country and dissatisfactory job opportunities.

The questionnaire targeted Hungarians living already abroad proved a higher proportion of women. An essential question aimed at getting to know if these people intend to come back to Hungary in the future but in the great majority of cases their answers were definitely no.

Usually Hungarian emigrants do not have adequate jobs based on their highest educational attainment as they take even less prestigious jobs in the beginning as they have taken in Hungary.

In this paper a detailed, empirically well-founded analysis is shown on the geographical distribution of the emigrants' intentions and reasons from the Hungarian perspectives, moreover, the effects of the workforce mobility on the economy of the sending and host countries. The main questions of this project are; whether this recent emigration wave is a beneficial or disadvantageous process for Hungary? What are the consequences of this process for Hungarian social and economic structures?

Observing the dynamizing trends of mobility (both emigration and return migration), it will undoubtedly remain a hot issue in Hungary and other post-socialist countries; therefore, the future development of the economy will be influenced by this process with growing volume.

Keywords: emigration trends, Hungary, geographical patterns, workforce mobility