

PERSONAL STORIES OF MIGRANT PARENTS

COLLECTED FOR THE PROJECT

“CREATING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR MIGRANT PARENTS”

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BASED ON THE QUALITATIVE STUDY IMPLEMENTED BY THE PROJECT PARTNERS IN THE CZECH R, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, ROMANIA AND TURKEY FROM JULY 2012 TO JULY 2013.

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Introduction

The EU enlargement and the establishment of free labour movement principles resulted in the higher mobility of European population. The free movement of persons is declared as one of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the European Union (EU) citizens by the Treaties. The concept of free movement of persons came about with the signing of the Schengen Agreement in 1985 and the subsequent Schengen Convention in 1990, which initiated the abolition of border controls between participating countries. Being part of the EU legal and institutional framework, Schengen cooperation has gradually been extended to include most EU Member States as well as some non-EU countries.¹

According to Eurostat, 3.8 million people migrated to and between the EU-27 Member States in 2008. The EU-27 Member States received nearly two million migrants of other EU nationalities. Romanians were the most mobile, followed by Poles and Germans (note that these migrants were not necessarily previously residing in their country of citizenship). If returning nationals are excluded from the analysis, Romanians still ranked first, followed by Poles and Bulgarians. The EU-27 Member States received 384 000 Romanian citizens, 266 000 Polish citizens and 91 000 Bulgarian citizens.²

The majority of EU-27 Member States in 2008 reported more immigration than emigration, but in Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Romania and the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, emigrants outnumbered immigrants. Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom were among the EU countries with the highest immigration. They received more than a half (53 %) of all immigrants in 2008, but at the same time they also experienced high emigration. Relative to the size of the resident population, Luxembourg (with 36.3 immigrants per 1 000 inhabitants) had the highest immigration in the EU in 2008, followed by Malta with 21.9 and Cyprus with 17.8. Luxembourg, the country with the highest immigration per capita and one of the smallest countries in the EU in terms of population size, also reported the highest rate of emigration in 2008, with 20.6, emigrants per 1 000 inhabitants.³

¹http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/

² Migrants in Europe, A Statistical Portrait of the First and Second Generation, Eurostat: Statistical Books, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011

³ Ibid. P. 18

Top 10 citizenships of immigrants to EU-27 Member States, 2008⁴

EU citizens (including nationals)	Country of Citizenship (1 000)	EU citizens (excluding nationals)	Country of Citizenship (1 000)	Non-EU citizens	Country of Citizenship (1 000)
	At least 384	Romania	384	Morocco	157
	302	Poland	266	China	97
	196	Bulgaria	91	India	93
	146	Germany	88	Albania	81
	126	Italy	67	Ukraine	80
	105	France	62	Brazil	62
	92	United Kingdom	61	United States	61
	81	Hungary	44	Turkey	51
	61	Netherlands	40	Russian Federation	50
	48	Portugal	38	Colombia	49

However, together with the benefits for economic growth, free labour movement brings about the number of challenges for both migrants and the citizens of the EU member states. According to the recent research on migrant families, migrants experience the higher levels of unemployment, under-qualified jobs, overcrowded and low quality housing, the children of migrants are often exposed to risk of early-school leaving. In addition, migrants have usually a lower level of income and particularly those from outside the EU have a significantly increased risk of poverty or social exclusion, even if they are in employment. This risk is greater in households with children. Aiming to reduce these challenges, migration has recently become one of the most important social, economic and political issues in Europe. The number of research has focused on the tools and methods to face the problems brought about by increased migration of EU citizens.

However, there are very few studies analysing the impact of migration on family relations, including the relations between partners, parents and children, and grandparents. It is obvious, that family life style changes considerably after the decision is made to move either as a whole family together or one member. In both cases migrant adults and their children face social and emotional challenges related to the new circumstances and conditions they have to adjust, situations and people they have to accustom as well as feelings of loneliness and longing for the home they were accommodated to and people they have been close to. While the European Commission has a number of programs and measures aimed to provide help for immigrants and their children, who arrive together with them, such as social integration programs, training courses, special schools for migrants' children, the problem of children left behind while their parents work abroad, is rarely addressed. Official statistics do not give information about the exact numbers of children and partners left behind. In

⁴ Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_imm1ctz) and Eurostat estimates

addition, social and emotional development of these children has rarely been the focus of research on migration within the European Union.

About the Project

The project “Creating of educational services for migrant parents“ under the Grundtvig Learning Partnership, Life Long Learning Program of European Commission is aimed at addressing some of the emotional and social issues of the emigrant parents, their left behind children and partners. The aim of the project is to propose solutions to communication problems, which would contribute to the reduction of emotional deprivation and psychological hardships of the members of families, whose members migrate for work to other EU countries or to other areas in own countries and leave their children at home.

The project is being implemented in partnership of organizations, schools and institutions from six European countries:

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The project idea was brought by the teachers and social workers determined to help children whose parents went abroad for work. The problem of children left at home while one or both of the parents work abroad or in other remote areas has severely affected some poorer EU and candidate countries. For example, Croatia recorded high levels of parent’s migration for work to the EU countries. There are fears that together with country's accession to the EU, the extent of such migration will increase. "Turkey's fathers" migrate for work to other countries or to other areas of Turkey because of high unemployment, but in any case, the family's mother never leaves her children.

According to the current state of knowledge the most common problems of children left behind by emigrant parents are related to social, psychological, and adaptive factors. Schools provide some psychological, material and educational assistance for emigrants' children. However, children of emigrants need to experience parental responsibility, constant communication with parents, teachers and carers, they also lack social life skills. Often families with children do have doubts about their decision to go abroad to earn for living, because it is an expensive and psychologically demanding solution. Usually, this is the

last option to be chosen by parents. Moreover, parents note that neither during the decision-making period nor later, they receive any support from state institutions or social agencies. Most of the parents, who are working abroad, are representatives of a working class without any special skills for adjustment to the different cultural, social and economic environments. Moreover, they themselves often lack social as well as language skills necessary for the successful migrant career. Last but not least, they also have to solve everyday detached communication difficulties with their growing up children and long-term departures from the family disrupt relationships with family members even more. Therefore, the special educational tools and focused training could provide them with necessary knowledge and skills enabling to maintain closer ties with children and other family members left behind.

The key project activities include research based on the qualitative interviews (50 interviews) with the partners and family members left behind by one or both emigrant parents as well as emigrants themselves in six countries. The research yields important information about the changes in family life style, as well as difficulties faced after the emigration of parents. This information will enable to design the training course for partners and adult family members (grandparents, other relatives) left behind, which will contribute to the reduction of communication problems, emotional and psychological hardships experienced after the departure of one or both parents. In the following chapters of this publication you will find the main research findings as well as selected personal stories of emigrant parents from six countries: Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Turkey. Due to the ethical reasons, the names of respondents have been changed.

Main Research Findings

The themes of qualitative study have focused on five main issues: pre-history of leaving, hardships faced after separation, changes occurred in family relations, communication with children after emigration and support received, and future aspirations. (Please see the Annex: Interview Protocol)

1. Pre-history of separation (main reasons for leaving the country). Among the most common reasons for making a decision to leave the homeland were *financial reasons*: shortage of financial resources for the family to survive, aim to earn more money, acquire material wealth and ensure better life for children. Often, the migration has been here considered as *a short-term solution* (seasonal work, short term jobs), which eventually became the long-term commitment. Next stimulus was brought about by the outcomes of economic crises, namely *loss of jobs and long-term unemployment*. In this case, the decision was taken to find a new job abroad or better work conditions. In this case, the departing family members received support from their partners and relatives. However, they have rarely gained support or understanding from the side of their children. The third important reason was *family factors*: divorce, family conflicts, or effort to bring family together (leaving to unite with partner or parents). In some of the cases, the decision to leave was made thereby following the example of migrant parents or friends.
2. Among the most common problems experienced after the separation were *emotional problems* caused by the detachment of partners or parents and children. These problems included: longing, despair, sadness, and anger, weakening of feelings towards the partner sometimes resulting in divorce. The emotional problems are stronger in families with small children. The emotional hardships further evoke the change in children behaviour, low academic achievements, and drop out of school, as well as conflicts between parents and children, grandparents and other family members. The other frequent problems were related to the *physically and mentally demanding work* both in case of emigrant parents and the family members left behind (partners, grandparents taking care of children at home), which further result in various *health problems*. Among the other hardships were mentioned: *low or absent foreign language skills* of migrant parents, which increase the risk of social exclusion, under-qualified employment and prevent from gaining information about the labour markets in the country of emigration. In addition, migrants often face the *disapproval of the local residents/communities*, which sometimes even result in physical assaults on immigrant workers. The respondents also mentioned *the fear of coming back home related to inability to adapt* to the changed labour market as well

as family situation at home. Moreover, mothers left behind by emigrant fathers also experience *disapproval and discomfort in their communities at home*, especially in societies with strong traditional values. (Turkey) Last but not least, emigrant parents are also exposed to the *unfavourable political situation* in the country of emigration, and even more so a fear of life-risk dangers and psychological problems related to this. (Iraq war)

3. The life-style of families after separation has changed considerably in all the cases. The changes were related to *physical absence* of one or both family members as well as *mental burden* overtaking responsibilities by one person. In some cases *children had to overtake the responsibilities of adults* regarding the household chores and taking care of siblings. In other cases, due to the emigration *old parents were left behind* without support from the younger generation, which also evoked family conflicts. Moreover, *grandparents had to replace the parents* for their grandchildren, which has often exceeded their capabilities and will. As a result the communication between grandparents and grandchildren, parents and grandparents worsened. In addition, *the misbehaviour of children* and problems at school occurred. The long-term separation of children and parents also resulted in *weakening family ties and emotional despair* on both sides. These problems have become more prominent with the growing age of children.
4. Emigrant parents and children try to stay in touch *via Skype and phone*. Phone is considered to be a more personal and easier although more expensive way of communication. Internet tools (Skype, Facebook) are considered to be very helpful, albeit sometimes difficult to arrange (time scheduled on both sides, absence of Internet access). Some of the parents do frequently *return home* to ensure the physical contact with their children and partners. In some cases (Poland) *the strong emigrant community* also helps to keep contacts with families and children left-behind. The biggest support the emigrant's families receive from *other family members, grandparents and friends*. Some respondents also mentioned the support from the governmental programs of country of emigration (benefits for emigrants children, courses on legal issues of working in Norway - Latvian and Lithuanian case).
5. When talking about the future aspirations, the respondents often mentioned *the unification of family* by either emigrating all together or returning of emigrant parents back home. Some of the respondents were eager on *sustaining their job abroad*, learning the foreign language, validating the education certificates in order *to obtain a better job abroad*. Others were planning to *find a job or start new business at home*. Other aspirations were related to *achieving material wealth*: build a house. Some of the respondents also stated, that their *priorities* after time of separation *had switched from material to family values*. (Poland) Among the answers

to these questions, there was also the feeling *of despair: no future plans, living for the current day.*

Czech Republic



Background

There is no obligation for the Czech citizens to terminate their permanent registration in the home country for the long-term departure. Therefore, it is difficult to track the exact statistics of Czech emigrants. According to the research, there were 30 000 Czech emigrants in the EU in 2006. The total number of the Czech citizens working in the EU countries reached 36 011 persons in 2004 and 2005. Most of the Czechs emigrants work in Germany (17,406 persons), in Britain (12,219 persons) and in Austria (2,716 persons).⁵



According to the prognosis of Eurobarometer, the migration potential of separate EU members differ considerably. Migration potential of new member states, including the Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic was lower than the EU-15 countries (data before the accession of Romania and Bulgaria). In general, Czech citizens are not willing to move for work inside the country as well as have a very low international migration potential. (see the table below⁶) The separate group of migrating workers constitute persons from border regions in the West of the country travelling to work in Germany for the periods from two weeks to month. The periodically leaving mothers were also the respondents of our qualitative study.

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⁵ Eurostat

⁶ Eurobarometr 64.1. on geographical and labour market mobility (2005) in Mobility in Europe - The way forward. [online]. 2007. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [cit. 25. 10. 2007]. Dostupné z: <<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2007/03/en/1/ef0703en.pdf>>.



Fig. 6: Percentage of people who would be ready to move to find a job if they were unemployed, by country



Source: Eurobarometer 64.1 on geographical and labour market mobility – September 2005

Personal Stories

Ivona, 45 years old from Břeží

1. Leaving and separating:

It has been six years already since Ivona started to work in Austria. The main reason why she decided to leave her family alone for fourteen days each month was her very low salary at the cashdesk in a supermarket.

Ivona: „*The last drop? 8 500 czech crowns (note: 340 euros) in Billa at the cashdesk. I was registered at Registry office for a long time and they didn't offer me any job in health care, so after a year and half in Billa I said that's enough, I can't live like this, 24/7 of permanent working and for a minimum wage.*“

She was decided to take every job offer instead of that one in a supermarket. She did not have to care about children, they were almost grown-up at that time. And she also had a loving husband, who stood by her, but only at the beginning, as later came out. After few years her husband could not tolerate her missing presence anymore and divorced her.

Ivona has two children. A daughter Veronika is 24 years old now and a son Jakub, who is 22 years old. Veronika finished her bachelor degree this year and started to work, also in Austria as her mother. And Jakub studies two universities at the same time. This takes money and since Ivona has been a single mother, she must earn some extra money to support her children.

2. Problems and solutions:

When Ivona left family for the first time, she felt bad. By that time she was only at home with her children or she worked near the hometown. But this kind of separation was new to her. She said that she cannot get used to it until now.

Ivona: „*...the main difficulty is psyche, you're separated from the family, the separation is the only thing you can think of.*“

But now in the time of modern technologies can Ivona cope with the separation. She mentioned that she communicates with her children as much as it is necessary. They use skype or text messages to keep in touch. Sometimes when she worked near home, Verča came to visit her once a week.

3. Needs and support:

The separation is also difficult for the other members of the family, especially for Veronika, because she assumed the responsibility for household when her mother is gone.

„Verča replaced me very quickly. She knew she must do things instead of me, so that is why I could stay calm. Fortunately my husband was at home before and cooked at least during the weekends, so Verča could do her stuff.“, said Ivona.

In spite of Ivona's husband tried hard to cope with the separation, he was not successful. As Ivona said fourteen days showed to be a very long time for to keep relationship between partners.

„What I hear from other caregivers, all of them are divorced. Because only a few husbands can stand it. At the beginning they say yes, we can manage it, but they can't. They aren't able to accept this. He must be a character. I always remind, when a man goes to work somewhere for fourteen days, a woman must get over it. But when it is the other way around and the woman goes to earn money, the man doesn't understand it. It's something like a betrayal for men that the woman goes away and let the man to take care of himself.“, Ivona explains.

4. Future and dreams:

Ivona's dream is to have her education validated in Austria, which will help her to find a better and easier job for example in some nursing home, where she could stay until her retirement. She wants some job close enough to her children and maybe grandchildren in the future. And her last wish but not least is to meet a normal man who would tolerate her work.

Jaroslava, 47 years old from Mikulov

1. Leaving and separating:

Jaroslava and Jaroslav are married, they live in the Czech Republic and both of them commute to work in Austria. Jaroslav has been working there since 90's after the break-up of Czechoslovakia. He is a car mechanic. Jaroslava tried to do some business in the Czech Republic, but „it was not so ideal“ as Jaroslava said. That is why she decided to start working as a caregiver in Austria in 2011. She admitted that she was influenced by her husband, even though he did not push her into anything. They have two children: one daughter, one son. The son Ondřej is older and he is 26 years old and the daughter is younger, her name is Veronika and she is 22 years old. Both of them live separately from their parents. They have their own lives already.

For Jaroslav and Jaroslava is working in Austria like working in the Czech Republic, but in better conditions. Their work is close, so they come home early, and can spend time together. Even if children were younger, was their dad home every day at 5 p.m. as every other parent.

„Well, he also came home early, when he worked in Mistelbach, about 5 p.m., like he would go to work somewhere here in the Czech Republic.“, said Jaroslava about Jaroslav.

2. Problems and solutions:

What finds Jaroslava very difficult about work in Austria is the non-acceptance from the side of Austrian inhabitants.

„Well, they have the feeling that we must know everything immediately, I'm talking about the language. If I'm talking about our working skills, we are much better than them,...I mean we're more interested in work...but they (the Austrians) think that if you work in their country, you must speak their language fluently, in spite of they have no language background...I realized the difference when I worked in Vienna. There were many foreigners, I worked at the department with two thirds of female foreigners, so they were used to us, but it changed when I came to Poysdorf, that border area is totally different, people are more nationalistic there, they see themselves as better ones and us as someone who comes there only to earn money.“, explains Jaroslava.

The other problem is the work itself. It is demanding for the mental and physical health.

Jaroslava: *„We have some patients with alzheimer, with dementia, the work with some of them is good, but some of them are tough. You say to them to stan dup, but they are lying instead, so it's bad for your back, you can have problems with it.“*

3. Needs and support:

It is not easy for Jaroslava to work in Austria. She has every day problems with a language, she do not have a good relationships with her Austrian colleagues, her work is hard and she cannot communicate with her patients and with relatives of patients as whe want, but in spite all of these things she is happy that she does not need to care about money anymore. She has a job which meet her wishes.

Jaroslava: *„It’s a plus for me to have a job in Austria, since my children are grown up, because I do not have to spend much time with them, so maybe that’s why I plunge into my work. I really enjoy my job and my family supports me in every way.“*

4. Future and dreams:

Jaroslava’s biggest wish is to have well-being family and to stay in her job untill her retirement. She wants to have peace in the family and to earn enough money to help her children when they would need it.

„It’s better to have some extra money to support your children“, she said.

Marie, 47 years old from Šatov

1. Leaving and separating:

Marie lives in a small village near border to Austria. She has worked in an exchange office for 10 years, when her boss fired her. He told her, that he do not want to pay taxis for her, that he rather hire a pensioner. She was decided not to work in the Czech Republic anymore. That is why she was looking for a job in Austria. Then she found one through her friend, who works as a cleaning lady in hospital. This was one and half year ago.

Marie has two grown-up children. One son, who is 25 years old and works as a policeman in Prague and one daughter, who is 22 years old and works as a teacher in kindergarten. Marie also have a loving husband, who stands by her. They have a nice marriage.

2. Problems and solutions:

The beginnings were very tough for Marie. Every day she came home from work totally exhausted.

Marie: *„At the beginning I didn't live, I keep saying that I didn't live for half a year. I came home, went to sleep and the other day went to work again, I functioned like this for half a year. I didn't care about the household, I didn't know what was going on in the family, I didn't care about the children.“*

The main reason why her beginnings were so hard, is that the Austrians do not really accepted her from the start. It takes a time, sometimes more than six months, untill they are satisfied with you as a worker and as a person. You have to persuade them that you are a hardworker and that you do your job properly. Marie is worried about loosing her job every day, that is why she is permanently under stress.

Marie: *„We are still foreigners for them (note: for Austrians). They look at you differently and consider you as one hundred percent worker right from the beginnning. They found out that foreigners are better workers than the Austrians. The Austrians don't do their job precisely. The Czechs are hardworkers, because every of us is worried about the job. It is better paid job than in our country, so we are really appreciative of it.“*

3. Needs and support:

Anyway Marie is a lucky person, because she has a very big support from her family. They help her mentally, without them she wouldn't be able to persist such a hard work. Of course, they wanted her to quit the job, because they were worried about her health, but when she decided once to persist in this job, they stand by her.

„They were happy when I got the job there, but when they saw how exhausted I came home every day, they didn't want me to go there anymore. Then I said, when others could manage it, I can manage it, too and now it's ok. I have the advantage that I have a grown-up children. That they are self-contained. My daughter Káťa takes care of household. She does all this stuff instead of me. I would like to do it, but I can't, I'm so exhausted. The good thing is that I have this job now, when my children are grown-up. If I worked there before, I wouldn't leave my children alone. I would always prefer my children instead of better job. I'm a kind of person, for whom are children in the first place. Now I can be proud of them that they are self-contained and earn their own money.“, explains Marie.

Every day when Marie has a holiday is a wonderful time for her. She really enjoys these days, she usually makes a cake for her children and she spends her time with them and with her husband as well. She is glad that she can do something for them, even she is sometimes more exhausted afterwards.

4. Future and dreams:

How Marie sees her future? She wants to stay in that work as long as possible. Her dream is to persist in Austria until her retirement, but maybe in some other job which will not be that mentally and physically exacting.

She said: *„I want to be healthy what else. If I'm healthy, I will earn money. I'm not afraid of working.“*

Martina, 41 years old from Znojmo

1. Leaving and separating:

Martina has been working in Austria for two years. Her story began when she got divorced and became a single mother. She was not able to secure the family with her 7000 czech crowns salary (note: approximately 280 euros).

„I couldn't maintain a family with a job for 7000 czech crowns, I must pay a house, a roof on the house, very big debts. I had to maintain the children, because the older ones were unemployed, when I started in Austria, so it was hard for me.“, explains Martina.

Martina is a mother of three children. The oldest one is 23 years old, the middle one is 20 years old and the youngest one is 10 years old. The older ones earn already their own money, but Martina has still maintain the younger one. Her name is Terezka and she must be very self-contained.

„She commutes from Konice to Znojmo to school, it isn't far, but she has to get up in the morning. She gets up by herself, she must take care about herself, she must lock the house, she is self-contained from the first grade...“, told Martina about Terezka.

2. Problems and solutions:

It was a hard decision for Martina to start working in Austria, but she got the opportunity and she took it even though her German skills were not so good, but she did not have any other choice. If she did not take the job, they would probably be homeless.

Martina: *„Of course my working in Austria influences everything. Because of the job I can't go to Terezka's class meetings if I have a longer shift.“*

Although Terezka have to be diligent and for one hundred per cent self-contained, as Martina said, she is really happy when her mum has a day off. They enjoys these days when they can spend some time together.

The other thing is Martina's hard job. She is worried about loosing it every day. From the beginning she had big problems with her German. She couldn't speak very well. That is why she was crying every day during first six month. It was a tough time for her psyche.

Martina: *„Well you can be sure that they will pay your for your work, but you can't be sure if you won't get fired. Every time you can be fired, even though you have a contract. It doesn't matter.“*

3. Needs and support

Martina is glad that the other two children are already grown-up. The older daughter helps her with Terezka, she does homeworks with her, and she also helps with the household. Without that help would be Martina lost.

„Everybody of us have to help, the older daughter, me, Terezka. Every of us have to work for the family, we have to stick together“, explains Martina.

4. Future and dreams:

Martina: *„We are living now, we don't live for the future, we are living now. I'm happy that I earn money, that I'm able to support my family and to pay debts. I'm glad that I have a job...I wish to every person to find the job in Austria ((with tears in her eyes)). As I said, if I imagined to be without job, we would probably be homeless. Instead of that we can now buy a car, we were on holiday with Terezka after nine years.“*

Věra, 61 years old from Mikulov

1. Leaving and separating:

Věra has been working in Austria since 2008. It was just a coincidence that she met a woman five years ago, who helped her to get a job abroad. At that time Věra was nearly in a retirement, but she wanted to work, because she is very energetic and optimistic woman, who cannot be without job for a long time. Věra is divorced for many years, but she has a boyfriend who lives with her. She has one son Vítek, who is 37 years old and who lives with his wife in their own flat near his mother. Věra is also a grandmother of two little grandchildren, the older one is 5 years old and the younger one is 3 years old. Her daughter-in-law Kelly comes from Holland.

Věra: „My child is already grown-up. When I began in Austria, I had a mother and family here in the Czech Republic, but still I was close to home. Víťa has already moved out to a new flat with his wife. That’s why I didn’t need to care about him too much, and my previous boyfriend lived across the street from my apartment. Everything was close and I went home very often, also during my fourteen days shift.“

2. Problems and solutions:

Věra is in a very difficult family situation now. She would like to take care of her old mother, who is reliant on other people’s aid, but she cannot. After her sister’s death she cannot get along with her nieces. From Věra’s point of view they only want money which her mum has and that is why they launched a lawsuit against Věra about nursing care of their grandmum (Věra’s mum). Věra is has to earn money only for to pay the lawyer. If she did not have such a well-paid job, she could not afford it as a woman in retirement in the Czech Republic.

3. Needs and support:

Věra also admits that it is not an easy job for her psyche.

„Fourteen days is a really long time for a family to stay secured. The man can’t take all the responsibility for the family functioning. It’s a long time in separation and other member’s of the family can’t get over it. This work can’t do everybody. Mostly there are women who have grown-up children. The women I know, are grandmothers already. I also couldn’t do this job, if I had a little children. If Kelly told me, that she would work in Austria and asked me, if I could take care of her children, I would probably say no, because I can’t do it properly. I’m older and I don’t have as much energy as I used to have when I was younger and I can never give to my grandchildren what they get from their mum.“, explains Věra.

From time to time Věra looks after her grandchildren and she really enjoys that moments. When she has a day off she usually invites her daughter-in-law with the children to her place, where is a big bag full of toys prepared for them. She also counts with a possibility that she would have to quit her job because of the looking after her grandchildren, when they mum will go back to work.

„My son has two small children, the younger one will soon attend the kindergarten and my daughter-in-law wants to go back to work as soon as possible. So if they needed me, I would help them with the children.“, said Věra.

4. Future and dreams

Věra's greatest interest is to solve problems with her nieces in near future and having taken care of her mother. She also wants to spent more time with her grandchildren, but without loosing her job in Austria.

Latvia



Background

The number of Latvians with registered address abroad has increased significantly during the last two years:

- 2007 – 41 277
- 2008 – 42 521
- 2009 – 45 741
- 2010 – 49 691
- 2011 – 72 292
- 10.09.2012 – 81 815



According to an annual report about the conditions of children in Latvia provided by Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia school year, 2 820 children in educational institutions in Latvia had one or both parents abroad in 2011/2012

2010/2011 – 3 325 children

2009/2010 – 3 126 children

2008/2009 – 2 855 children

According to 5th annual report made by Liepāja City Municipal Education Department, there are there are 792 children in educational institutions in Liepāja whose parents migrate for work to other countries. 542 of them a fathers, who work abroad, 179 – mothers, 71 – both parents

	Parents abroad	Fathers	Mothers	Both parents	Grand parents raise left children	Others raise left children	Nobody raises left children
In Schools	555	376	132	47	105	20	1
In Pre-school institutions	237	166	47	24	56	1	-
Total	792	542	179	71	161	21	1

Comparison of the numbers of emigrant parents among regions of Latvia, 2012

Region, city	Total
Kurzemes reģions	195
Latgales reģions	248
Rīgas reģions	270
Vidzemes reģions	297
Zemgales reģions	330
Jēkabpils	48
Valmiera	81
Daugavpils	358
Jelgava	148
Jūrmala	97
Liepāja	200
Rēzekne	68
Ventspils	102
Rīga	378

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Personal Stories

Alexander, 52 years old from Riga

1. Leaving and separating:

Two years ago Alexander's wife Nina lost her job. She was an accountant. Nina could not find a job in her professional field in Latvia so she went to Germany. She worked as a nanny in a Latvian immigrant family in Germany. Nina and Alexander have two daughters: Lisa is 16 years old and Anastasia is 12 years old. The oldest daughter Lisa is a Latvian champion in her age group in art gymnastics. Art gymnastics requires constant concentration, persistence, rational time planning and much money.

Alexander: *"Lisa is seriously engaged in sports. She has always been very independent, but sport is also related with high costs."*

The youngest daughter Anastasia is opposite to her sister. She is a troublesome child, she cannot concentrate on one thing for a long time and she is less emotionally balanced than the sister. Anastasia also has poorer achievements at school.

Alexander believes that Nina is a very good mother and wife. Everyone understood that if she goes to work abroad, the daily life will change and will require everyone's greater responsibility, mutual help and independence. But the family decided to try to live separated, because money was really necessary to support Lisa's passion.

Alexander: *"My daughters are very talented. I want to give them the best education."*

2. Problems and solutions:

After Nina's moving to Germany everything became more difficult than the family had expected. Nina had always believed that the daughters are old enough and can take care of themselves. However the problems began soon after her leaving. Anastasia became bold. She went from one extreme point to another: she wanted to be a Goth, then a Punk. Lisa also became more anxious and worsened her achievements in sport. Alexander was very busy at work, but he undertook additional responsibilities. However he had not enough time and effort to talk to and support the daughters. He could manage his life with difficulties.

Nina talked to her daughters via Skype in the evenings, but it did not dispel the tension. Later Nina began to feel guilty about being abroad.

"In Germany Nina took care of other people's children, who were not much younger than Anastasia. So Nina was thinking all the time that nobody cares much of her own children," Alexander explains.

3. Needs and support:

Alexander remembers: *“The main problem was that we could not emotionally cope with the situation. Even that what used to be pleasant, began to irritate. Our cat gave birth to the kittens, but we could not be happy about it, because it required an extra care that nobody wanted. I understood that both daughters also missed warmth, care.”*

The family is get used to decide everything by themselves so it did not anticipate any other help or support in this situation. Although Alexander thinks that if the girls could have had the opportunity to attend a psychologist time after time, the tension would be lower.

4. Future and dreams:

After a year Nina and Alexander understood that while earning money abroad Nina began to lose the contact with her daughters. So they decided that Nina had to return to Latvia. When she returned it took several weeks to get everything as it was before. Later problems were solved and everyone felt happy again. Nina and Alexander believe that it was an important experience to live separated for a while. But they also made a conclusion that it would be better if Nina does not leave again while the daughters are still very young. But they did not exclude the opportunity that someday later this experience can be repeated.

Gita, 28 years old from Pilsrundāle

1. Leaving and separating:

Gita is 28 years old. She lives in small town Pilsrundāle in Latvia. She is an administrator in a cultural institution. In 2010 Gita's husband Vilnis left Latvia. He went to work to United Kingdom. At the beginning he worked in the forest and at the moment he is working in the construction company. Vilnis found the job in advance because he had several friends (other Latvians) in England who were working in the same company.

However Vilnis received a salary in Latvia, what was about 2 000 euro, it was not enough for the family. The money was necessary mostly for paying the loan of the bank what he took to buy a flat and two cars. Gita supported going abroad to work. It helps the family to live well.

"My parents were waiting for better time, all people in Latvia were waiting for better time. I do not want to wait. I want to live a normal life because nothing will improve in Latvia," explains Gita.

The oldest son Mārtiņš was 3 years old and the youngest - Juris was some months old when Vilnis left the family. There were not difficulties at the beginning of Vilnis' leaving. Children were very small and did not show emotions much. It was also easy for Vilnis to leave the job in Latvia because he was an independent worker and he could leave the job when he wanted.

2. Problems and solutions:

Gita says that she can manage daily organizational issues alone. She also has not emotional problems. Gita wants that Vilnis lives in England.

They call each other via Skype. Vilnis is very happy to see how his sons are growing up, especially he was happy to follow how the youngest son began to walk. Once Gita was in England, but mostly Vilnis comes to Latvia. It is about four or five times in a year. When Vilnis comes to Latvia, he spends most of his time with the children. He likes spending time with the children very much. And children like the father.

„For example Vilnis attended the Christmas and the Mother's day celebrations in the kindergarten. He was the only father in the Mother's day in the kindergarten last year," Gita remembers with smile.

3. Needs and support:

The children and the mother do not receive any support from external institutions. Relatives, friends support and make Gita happy. For Vilnis there are not problems to integrate in

England because he has friends from Latvia there and he communicates with people from Poland. Gita does not know about her husband's hobbies. *"He is running also probably"* Gita adds.

4. Future and dreams:

In Gita's opinion money is an advantage of being abroad. She dreams of building the house for the family. Gita also says that *"the relationship with the husband is becoming weaker"*. She does not have any feelings regarding that fact. "It happens," she says, *"Because we live separate too long time"*.

Gita believes that nothing will change within next years. She is often also thinking of joining to Vilnis to receive higher salary. Gita needs to graduate the university in Latvia. She will do it next year. Gita cannot imagine that Vilnis works in Latvia and receives a salary what is about 300 euro. The best wish for her is to live well in the future.

Inta, 68 years old from Aloja

1. Leaving and separating:

Inta is a 68 years old masseur. She works in a hospital in Aloja. Inta's son Vilis divorced his wife six years ago when their son Jānis was 10 years old. Inta thinks that perhaps one reason for the divorce was the intention of Vilis' wife Inese to go to Switzerland because she found a job as a nurse there. Inta says that Vilis was against going abroad, as a result they started to argue and it led to the divorce. Inese went abroad and left her son Jānis at Vilis and Inta. In 2008 Vilis found a job in Germany and also moved abroad. Jānis was left with his grandmother.

2. Problems and solutions:

Inta believes that Inese's leaving was a betrayal. She thinks that once there was the first opportunity – Inese waved her "tail" and disappeared. In her opinion Inese never really loved her husband or son.

"In public Inese pretended that she takes care of the son, but in fact he grew up as the grass in the field. Nobody controlled him, nobody was interested if he ate or not, if he was or was not prepared for the lessons. This randy was only interested in the good life," she adds.

Inta noticed that after Inese's leaving Jānis became defiant and rude. For her it was almost impossible to cope with this situation. Vilis also became angry, shouted at his son and could even beat him.

"So when Vilis also decided to leave Latvia, I was even happy and I thought that it will end the scandals. Now I think different. All boys like Jānis need parents. The father at least can talk to him like a man, to order or force. Jānis is not listening to me at all," tells Inta.

Vilis sometimes calls to them, but it does not happen very often. All conversations are very formal – he mostly gives advices to his son to learn and to listen to the grandmother.

3. Needs and support:

Inta has turned many times to the school where Jānis is studying and asked to help her in the situation. But the teachers shrug and said that they could not help her. Jānis also refused to visit a school psychologist. *"He said, that he is not crazy and has nothing to talk to the psychologist,"* remembers Inta.

4. Future and dreams:

Inta is convinced that Vilis and Jānis have to live together. In her opinion it can be in Latvia or abroad.

"I am tired of it. I don't need money, I need the peace," admits Inta.

Sarmīte, 30 years old from Liepāja

1. Leaving and separating:

Sarmīte is 30 years old. She lives in Liepāja and works in the kindergarten. Her husband Māris went to work abroad four years ago. Now he is working in the warehouse of the fish factory in Norway. Some months before the leaving friends of Māris moved to work to Norway. Māris' salary was reduced very dramatically during the economic crisis in Latvia. The last drop for Māris leaving was the moment when the salary was reduced till 240 euro per month. Sarmīte was not working during that time, but was staying at home with a little baby. Their son Ints was only some months old. They have also a daughter Jana, she was 10 years old. Māris and Sarmīte understood that they will not be able to survive.

"It was very terrible, nobody wanted that Māris goes abroad. It was emotionally very difficult for us to accept the fact that he must leave Latvia and the family. I still cannot accept it," explains Sarmīte.

It was very easy for Māris to leave his job in Liepāja. Other employees were also leaving their jobs in the company where Māris also worked. Soon after his leaving the company went into bankruptcy.

2. Problems and solutions:

Māris comes to Latvia to see the family about three times a year. One visit is usually about two weeks long. During the visits the family members try to be together as much as possible. They have a lot of joy, they travel, visit friends and other relatives. Māris comes to Latvia when his daughter has holidays. Sarmīte and children visit him in Norway about twice a year.

Every day at least two times Sarmīte and children speak with Māris via Skype or phone. If there are any emotional and organizational issues they solve them successfully when talk via Skype. They try to be happy and laugh, but often the conversation leads to the topics about sadness of being separated.

"He usually says that the separation will not long forever and soon we will be together again. I know that Māris feels sad, but he tries to encourage us to bear the situation," Sarmīte admits.

The daughter Jana can call her father via Skype, but the son talks with him when the mother helps to call. They show each other the news in Skype video. For example when the son began to walk they showed it to the father and encouraged the son to learn it fast. Māris and her daughter study together and he helps her to do home tasks. Māris is very happy when the daughter is successful at school. But he becomes also angry and says some sharp words when she is bad at school to motivate her to succeed.

At the beginning of separation there was an opportunity that the entire family could go to Norway together. But as the daughter Jana refused to go, the family took the decision that Sarmīte and children stay in Latvia, but Māris goes abroad. Now the daughter would also like to go abroad, but Sarmīte does not know what would be better – to leave Latvia or not because she hopes that Māris will come back to Latvia soon. The biggest disadvantages are related to emotional support what Sarmīte is missing sometimes when she needs to take the decisions regarding children or some daily organizational household duties. Children are also missing the father.

3. Needs and support:

The family does not receive any support from state institutions or the municipality of Liepāja. Sarmīte would like to receive the support regarding new jobs in Latvia. Institutions in Norway help Māris to integrate in the community and assist in organizational issues. Recently Māris attended the seminar about gaining benefits of taxes what was organized by the governmental institution of Norway. As he is an immigrant in Norway he has better conditions for paying lower taxes.

“Māris has friends and he knows other Latvians in Norway so he socializes and feels integrated in the community in Norway,” explains Sarmīte.

4. Future and dreams:

The situation has almost not changed after living separated. Sarmīte always has the feeling that Māris is by her side.

“When I buy plates, I buy four plates, when I buy chairs, I buy four chairs. It is for all four members of the family,” emotionally says Sarmīte.

Sarmīte wants that the family lives together again in Latvia or in another country. She believes that it will happen within the next year. Her biggest wish is that Māris returns and they can live in Latvia because here is their home. They have family, friends and relatives in Latvia and all their life they have been living in Latvia. She also hopes that Māris will have a job in Latvia.

Vera, 72 years old from Daugavpils

1. Leaving and separating:

Vera is 72 years old and she lives in Daugavpils, Latvia. Vera is retired. Since 2009 she looks after her granddaughter Anna.

In 2009 Vera's daughter Antra took a mortgage to buy an apartment. The amount of payment for the loan was about 500 euro per month. It was half of Antra's salary. While Antra and her husband Gatis were working, they could manage the financial burden. During the crisis salaries fell sharply, it was not possible for the family to pay for the loan. It was also impossible to sell the apartment and to cancel the loan. The bank did not agree to any concessions. Antra had to find a way to survive and she decided to Leave Latvia. Vera understood her daughter's decision.

Antra had 2 children. Anna was 5 years old and Richard was just 1 year old. A friend told that Antra could try to find a well-paid job in Norway. So Antra with her husband and son went to Norway to work in the fish factory. They left the oldest daughter Anna with her grandmother Vera in Latvia.

Five-year-old Anna long time could not accept the fact that the parents had taken her younger brother with them and she was left with her grandmother. She cried and was angry to her parents and tortured the grandmother. Kindergarten teachers said that the impact on her intellectual development was also visible.

2. Problems and solutions:

The family communicates via phone and Skype. Sometimes they talk for hours. Now Antra's salary is big enough to pay for the loan so the family solved the financial problems. But internal family issues intensified. Vera thinks that Antra's relationship with her husband became worse.

"For Antra he became like another child, of whom she has to take care," explains Vera.

Due to that there were also disputes between Vera and Antra. Vera reproached her daughter for the fact that Antra cannot get the husband to help her. For example to spend more time together with Richard. Antra in turn blamed the mother that she intervenes in her life and sets her against the husband. It was bad that the children also witnessed these disputes.

Vera believes that Antra did not have time for emotions neither before the departure nor during her arrival in Norway. She had to take care of the little Richard and her daily life. At the beginning she needed also to call to Anna every day to calm her down explaining that as soon as they can the girl also will be taken to Norway.

Questions regarding children's emotional well-being were relevant during the first year of the living separated. After that all of them have adapted to the situation. The children and their problems became marginal, emotions became weaker and the separation is not so hard.

3. Needs and support:

The family has not received any institutional support neither in Norway nor in Latvia. The attitude from the Latvian authorities is the only thing what Vera does not like. She has the feeling that the government does not need the family.

"When we rushed to the government, it promised golden mountains. We will live like people in Western Europe. In fact nobody cares about us - if we die, nobody will notice," Vera is convinced.

The institutions in Norway also do not assist the family and help in its wellbeing. When the company where Antra and her husband worked closed, she had just been told: you are fired. Nobody helped her to find a new job.

In Vera's opinion, family's integration in Norway is not well managed. Norwegians are also not very friendly to the foreigners and do not communicate with them. Regarding other nationalities Vera says that people from Poland communicate only with each other. But with Lithuanians Antra does not want to communicate, because most of them drink, some use drugs and involve in fights.

The recruiting agency what is getting workers to Norway advised to take English courses. But in reality it was not necessary. Above the Arctic Circle people speak only Norwegian and the work in the fish factory does not require much communication.

"Fish does not speak in English. Antra just should do her duties," laughs Vera.

4. Future and dreams:

There are no positive sides of the fact that family members live in different countries. The only benefit is money. Everything else is a disadvantage. Antra is not planning to return however she has a flat in Latvia, for what she is still paying. Vera is also going to Norway because due to health problems she is not more able to live alone.

"In Norway she at least has the salary what is big enough and she does not need to get starving," concludes Vera.

Lithuania



Background

Pasvalys district is in the Northern part of Lithuania. There are 27,3 thousand of inhabitants living in the district (less than 1% of the country's population). A district is socio-economical disadvantaged area. There are 7000 inhabitants living in Pasvalys town and a little bit more than 1000 inhabitants in Joniskelis town. Other people live in villages nearby: the number of inhabitants living in the villages are from 20 to 800 inhabitants.



The background research was conducted during October-November 2012 year. The aim of this research was to collect the data about emigrant parents in the area. For this reason, the local authority institutions were contacted as well as Pasvalys labour market. The rural communities, schools, school workers and students assisted in collecting the data. 120 questionnaires were distributed among the inhabitants of Pasvalys district.

The data was received from 32 sources: 2 local municipalities, 4 rural communities; Joniskelis gymnasium; 25 individuals (volunteers).

In total investigated area with 12106 inhabitants (44 percent of the total population in the district). The migration for work separated 187 families in this area. In this number were in total 217 migrant parents, among them both parents were migrants in 30 families, father in 100 families; mother in 57 families;

Education background of emigrant parents: 13 of migrant parents have achieved basic education, 25 – secondary; 72 – vocational; 24 – higher non-university; 9 – higher education. There was no data on education available for 74 studied cases.

Time of separation. In 43 families time of separation counted for 1 year. In 80 families from 1 to 5 years; 45 families - from 5 to 10 years . 9 families were separated for more than 10 years. There was no data on the period of separation available for 10 studied families.

One of the parents has taken the responsibility to take care of the children after parents' emigration in 121 families. Grandparents or one of them were in charge of children after their parents went abroad in 56 families. In 7 families other relatives were taking care of children after their parents left. Other persons were in charge in one family and in two cases children were left alone.

Information about the left behind children. In total 187 families had left behind 334 children in the region. From them in a current time: 33 are adults; 94 children are with their parents abroad or parents have returned; 5 children' parents are dead; 202 are growing up without parents or without one of them.

Current situation of emigrant families: 49 families are with their children abroad or in Lithuania. Children of 21 families are now adults. The labor migration has influenced 112 families.

The contributors to the qualitative study from Lithuania:

Jūrate Jovaišienė, Joniskėlio Igno Karpio žemės ūkio ir paslaugų mokykla, Pasvalys District.

Personal Stories

Daiva, 29 years old, from Pasvalys district

1. Leaving and separating:

Daiva is 29 years old. For the first time her husband, then a boyfriend, went to work in Ireland for ten months in 2003. Young couple wanted to build their life together, which required money. Any friends or relatives didn't help to decide they simply filled in the company profile, and departed. This separation was perhaps the toughest test for Daiva's and her prospective spouse's relationship which made it close to the splitting up. Then they did not have children and it was not a tragedy. After marriage a child was born, then the second. Husband constantly has worked and still works in abroad.

2. Problems and solutions:

When the first child was born in the family, Daiva's husband stayed for two months and then did not come back for 5 months. Then husband stayed three weeks or one month at home and then 2-3 months abroad. A year later, the second child was born. Parting intervals with husband was large and Daiva believes that this had an effect on her well-being and health.

The hardest time for Daiva was when born both children because Daiva had to grow and maintain them herself. Well that Daiva's mother helped her. Daiva can not imagine if she could cope without mother's help. Now, the whole family lives in a two-week and month rhythm: husband is two weeks at home and a month he is away.

"Daiva: Everyone has got used to this way of living, and you don't think, there are no such meetings and separations. Previously I cried. It was pity. In the past it seemed like departing to the war. And now the month runs quickly. "

Daiva thinks that the biggest disadvantage is related to the children, as they are difficult to educate. Children get used to one family member and behave one way, when father returns children behave differently, allow themselves more. When daddy is away, children miss him very much. There are no other problems because children are still small.

Family mostly communicates by telephone. Sometimes they communicate on Skype, but rarely, because husband has to have the internet at that moment, and the family needs have free time. They need to sit down at that moment, at that time to join and often opportunities of the two sides don't match. In addition, kids do not like to communicate with their father on Skype, because it is a dead connection. There is no association with a live person when you are sitting rooted to the computer and looking at a single point. Family

uses E-mail when something is needed to be translated and sent via e-mail. They do not communicate with letters because it takes a long time.

"Daiva: The phone is the best."

Daiva's children now attend primary school. While Daiva's husband is at home, he tries to control children's learning, tries to lead them. Also, he engages on children as much as possible.

"Daiva: since there are electronic daybooks, I have organised that my husband could check online. This obviously is not the same thing as every time to be at home, but still something."

3. Needs and support:

The family has taken a loan. We have taken it at that moment when the construction prices increased. Daiva's spouse pays taxes, provides some home stuff and covers the loan. This, according to Daiva, is the most important thing.

In terms of living and working abroad, there was everything. Daiva's husband lived and worked in various countries such as Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland again. Now he is working in Lithuanian company, but abroad. When Daiva's spouse lived in Northern Ireland he felt very negative attitude of local Irish community - they regarded him as someone who takes away the bread. There has even been a variety of physical attacks: staff meetings or the local children, stoked of their parents, threw a house with eggs where her husband lived with other migrants or children encouraged by their parents' hunted away foreigners. Daiva's husband now is working as a lorry driver and the communication is low with the others. If the husband communicates it's just the countrymen. When he lived in Northern Ireland, then he had Lithuanian friends, and now those relationships are individual. Daiva's husband tried several times to return to Lithuania. He tried to work in Lithuanian companies - after a month of work, all sorts of problems arose: salary was not paid, and if it was paid then it was with all sorts of deductions: it was not made as it had to be or the fuel was used too much, etc. In short, he received a salary not that he hoped for, and finally husband returned to the foreign company, where it was easy to find a job. There he constantly received salary: that day when the salary had to be and without any deductions and no exceptions.

4. Future and dreams:

Previously, the family had plans to live together constantly. Man suggested moving to live abroad but Daiva did not want to. It's because she loves her homeland. Here she feels safe and does not want that she and her children would be strangers in another country. Now family wants nothing to change in their life. Neither Daiva nor her husband intends to change the current work. Sometimes they dream about living in Lithuania together, but

"push" that dream far away because they think that there is no hope to her husband to change a job and go back to Lithuania.

"Daiva: Now we are trying to be content with what we have, at least with the model of the family-as it is now. Better this than any. Of course, it would be much easier if we had lived together. We get a lot of comments from the other people. I am trying not to compare my family model with others and try to see more advantages because the comparison is painful."

Rita, 35 years old and Roman, 36 years old from Panevezys district

1. Leaving and separating:

Rita is 35 years old, her husband Roman - 36. They live in a small town near the city of Panevezys. Rita has accountant's diploma and till 2008 had worked in a private company as a High accountant. The salary she received was inconsistent with her position and work undertaken. Romanas had been working for a long time in factory "Ekranas" in Panevezys. He received a good salary, but in 2006 factory went bankrupt and Romanas dabbled two years in various temporary jobs. Family bought their own flat, had two children: son - 12 years old and daughter - 7 years. Money was needed for apartment renovation, furnishing and for the normal family life. Near, there lived a family which went to Norway for a few years to earn money. They suggested to Roman to come together. While Rita was considering whether to leave with her husband or stay with the children, the last straw was workplace decision to refuse to raise her salary. Rita left the job. They arranged departure through the company and the family went with the neighbors' family to work in Norway, to the fish factory. Children were left to Rita's father's family care.

„Rita: I quit my job because my employer did not consider the work I've done. ”

2. Problems and solutions:

For the first time, Rita with Roman spent four months abroad. Then came back for Christmas, New Year, stayed a little bit and then left again. A year and a half they used to travel to work together and come back, stay for a month or few months with children and leave again. Both parents of Rita live in Panevezys, but they are divorced and have separate families so all the time children have been thrown down: they lived with their grandparent and their grandmother for a bit of time. After a few years, Rita decided not to go to work in Norway, and to stay with their children because it was difficult for grandparents to cope with the grandchildren, who didn't listen to grandparents, started to study less. After six months of staying alone with the children, Rita have misused Roman, so she have decided to go with him again. This time they left the children at home and invited a young cousin of Rita to supervise them. Half a year later cousin found a boyfriend and created her family. Rita came back to the children. After that Rita with Roman left again and another cousin helped to take care of the children, but after a while she had also created her family. So 3.5 years Romanas constantly worked in Norway returning briefly in Lithuania, while Rita was going out in circles: she left with him, leaving children to other persons care (relatives, neighbors) or she stayed with the children. Eighteen months ago the family received another daughter and these last year, Rita spent with children. Romanas is still working in Norway, returning home several times a year. Long-term family separation led to Rita's and Romanas relations cooling.

“Rita: Tomorrow Romanas travels to Norway. I am very glad. The whole time while he was at home, we argued like a dog with a cat. When he isn't at home, I'm so quiet. ”

3. Needs and support:

The family did not receive any help from the government authorities. Relatives and neighbors help to Rita and Romanas. When the family is not together, they mostly communicate online: Skype or Facebook. They contact by telephone, but less because it is expensive. Both Romanas and Rita mainly interact with the Lithuanian communities abroad because there are lots of Lithuanians. Also they communicate with some other migrants: Poles, Latvians. They don't have relations with the local Norwegians.

During these years in Norway, the family has earned enough to cope way of living and ensure a full family life. This year, the family arranged documentation and Norwegian government has paid benefits for their children, for the entire period during which they worked in Norway. During seven years it was a great amount of money. The family has extra money, they would like to invest somewhere, to create a business, but both do not know how and where that is why they choose the same job in Norway– the one that they know, where there are no risk and guaranteed incomes.

“Rita: We have extra money, we would like to invest but we do not know where. Business? Tell us what business we could create? „

4. Future and dreams:

Both Rita and Roman want to save family. They both realize that life separately does not improve the family relationships. Their plans: the whole family in Norway.

“Romanas: Tomorrow I'm going to Norway because I want that my family would live a full life. Our friends with whom I went to work earlier, they don't go any more because they already have enough. I will go again because I don't have enough.”

“Rita: I see the future of our family in Norway. But now when we will go, we will also take our children.”

Tomas and Laima, 42 years old from Pasvalys district

1.Leaving and separating:

Laima is 42 years old; her husband Tom is also 42. They live in a small town in northern Lithuania. In 2006 Tomas left the job in a private company because the salary was low and it not permanently. Laima worked an administrative part-time work in a budgetary enterprise. They had two children: daughter was 16 years old, son - 12 years old. Daughter has studied very well and after completing the secondary school, she planned to study at university. Son had congenital health problems - it was constantly needed to carry him to the doctors and sanatoria. Shortage of money forced to think about going abroad. Tom's brother worked as a long-distance driver, so the family decided that her husband should try such a work. At first he worked as a student - traveled with his brother to various European countries. Later, he started to work independently. Tom does not consider himself as a real migrant because he works in Lithuanian company just that all work is abroad.

"Tom: Before making a decision, it was a lot of talk with close people in the family: objections and acceptance. It was everything, but in the end, the decision was made that we all accept that work. "

2.Problems and solutions:

"Laima: At first, when my husband departed, I was very afraid of being alone with the children. After he left, like the irony of fate, all household appliances began to deteriorate. It was hard for me to deal with children and domestic life. "

At first, it was planned in the family that Tom would work at this job just temporarily, but long distance driver he has been working already for 7 years. The family lives in a six-week and three-week rhythm: 6 weeks Tom carries goods in various European countries and three weeks he is at home. Family communicates with Thomas variously: at first they communicated more by Internet, on Skype, now they communicate more with mobile phones, because the services became cheaper, and this connection is more accessible because Tom does not always have the ability to connect to the Internet. Family solves a lot of problems during those three weeks when Tom is at home. When Tom is at home, he talks a lot with children, interests in their studies and plans. He is worrying about their failures and applauds their achievements. When he is away, practically every day he communicates with his wife by phone, tries to support her with all children's upbringing questions and advises domestic issues. Both, Laima and Tom, agree that when father is away, upbringing of children suffers. Now my older daughter is successfully studying at the University, but the younger son began to flee the school in the final class gymnasium and deserted his studies. Sufficiently a good student became one of the worst achievers. Hardly finished secondary

school the son is now studying at a vocational school, though Laima is in serious doubts about whether he will finish it. Laima turned to a psychologist for the son's problems. Received a reply that it is probable that the son is suffering from depression, but to provide the necessary support it is necessary to make it to visit specialists. Son refused to do so and any family and loved ones persuasion did not help. During seven years, Laima has never put up with husband's long absence at home.

"Laima: I am still not used to his departure. For me it is always difficult to come to terms with the separation, and the deterioration of my health, I believe, is the result of separations."

3. Needs and support:

The family did not receive any help from the authorities. Her and Tom's parents, friends help to Laima. Tom doesn't keep communication with the local communities abroad because his living place is changing all the time. He mainly contacts with countrymen and Russian-speaking people because he knows Russian well. The main problem at work and communicating with others speakers from EU countries is that he knows a little or doesn't know at all other necessary languages such as English or German. Tom would like to learn English.

Three years ago, Laima got a better paid full-time job at her workplace, so her and husband's salaries are sufficient for the needs of the family.

4. Future and dreams:

Actually, family has no intention to take some kind of solutions that to change the situation. However, the biggest dream of both of them is that Tom could find a job in Lithuania and family wouldn't separate any more.

"Tom: Although I really like my job and love it, but from the first day abroad for six weeks I start to count the days, then weeks when I go back home for 3 weeks vacation. My biggest dream is to find a job here in Lithuania even with the same or slightly lower salary, but that I could be at home with my family, wife, children and all other dear relatives."

"Laima: My biggest wish is that husband could find a job in Lithuania and would stay with family. I am convinced one hundred percent that money does not make people happy; they only make it easier to live with."

Violetta, 29 years old from Pasvalys district

1. Leaving and separating:

Violetta is 29 years old. She and her husband lived in the countryside in Pasvalys district.

Violetta's husband went abroad in 2008. Then it was especially difficult period for their family. The family lived with Violetta's parents and was their dependants, because they did not have work. Violetta's parents also had beared and their children (2 and 1 years old). The prices of good got up and husband could not find a job. It was very difficult living in the village and without a car. With the help of friends, Violetta's husband found a job in a small Irish town, Tiltianis. Job certainly was not the easy one – carcass-cutter in the meat factory. It was a hard decision for the whole family to go abroad. Violetta's parents were very angry and didn't want to let. After departure of her husband, Violet stayed with children to live with her parents.

"Violet: The last straw that helped to make decision was the fact that prices of all goods got up and still we could not find a job, especially living in the village, and without a car."

2. Problems and solutions:

"Violetta's husband went for a long period and had been returning back very rarely, only once in the first half and this is the best case. The phone call was a rare opportunity as it was expensive. After two years, when the children have grown, Violetta also went to Ireland. There she worked as a domestic helper. Children had been left, according to Violetta's, in good hands – with her mother. Violetta and her husband sent money regularly to Violetta's mother and their children. They called as often as possible. Moreover, due to the possibility to use Skype, they often communicated, but still missed children very much. Children longing and fatigue at work highly exhausted Violet. Both with her husband they saved money and dreamed of returning to Lithuania. After a couple of years they bought a small house in the village of Lithuania. Violet returned to Lithuania and her husband stayed there. Violet was happy being with children, but the situation has not improved. Children and the needs were growing, also, began reconstruction of house which was really inevitable. They did not want to live from the allowance, so again she left children to her mother and left the country.

Violeta: "Although we worked hard in Ireland, but life is better there."

3. Needs and support:

The family did not receive any help from the government authorities. Violetta's parents help her. The family is in contact with the Lithuanian community in Ireland. They do not have Irish friends.

4. Future and dreams:

After discussion Violetta's family have made a decision that the whole family was going to move to Ireland. The family moved closer to the school because Violetta's daughter is going start to go to the first class in September this year. Moreover, the family found a weekend Lithuanian school, where the children will learn the Lithuanian language.

„Violeta: We take the children now so that they have time to adapt to the new environment. All summer I will be with them, certainly will not work and introduce to a new life. When junior will start going to school and kindergarten, I will start to look for a better paid job. Really I do not want to work as a full-time housekeeper all the time. Also, my English skills are improving. We do not disown Lithuania because we leave all the loved ones, but today we associate our life with Ireland. “

Poland



Background

According to the Central Register of Statistics, there were 2 060 000 Polish people temporary abroad in 2011/2012 (60 000 more than in 2010). 1 750 000 of them were in Europe(2010: 1 685 000), 1 670 000 (2010: 1 607 000) in EU countries, 625 000 (rising tendency) in UK, 470 000 (rising tendency: 01.05.2011 – opening of the labour market) in Germany, 120 000 (decreasing tendency) in Ireland.



The main characteristics of emigrants: 29,4% of the emigrants were mothers. Referring to the time of separation, on average men leave for 6,96 months, women for 5,2 months. The longest migration was 48 months (women), 96 months (men) 75% of mothers leave for no longer than 6 months, fathers – under 7 months.

27,6% of children experience a temporary emigration of at least one parent, of whom 26,5% were 9 year-olds; 33,6% - 10 years of age; 35,3% were 11 years old; 30,4% were 12; 28,9% were 13; 22,1% were 14 years old; 28,3% were 15; 27,9% were 16; 22,4% were 17 and 23,9% -18 years of age.

Countries of emigration of Polish citizens:

AUSTRIA	25 000
BELGIUM	47 000
CYPRUS	3 000
DENMARK	21 000
FINLAND	2 000
FRANCE	62 000
GREECE	15 000
SPAIN	40 000
IRELAND	120 000
THE LOW COUNTRIES	95 000
GERMANY	470 000
PORTUGAL	1 000
CZECH REPUBLIC	7 000
SWEDEN	36 000
GREAT BRITAIN	625 000
ITALY	94 000
NORWAY	56 000

SIZES AND DIRECTIONS OF EMIGRATION FROM LODZ VOIVODESHIP

14,5% of students in Lodz Voivodeship are children of migrant parents (below average for Poland = 14,8%). The highest percentage in Poland was in Opolskie Voivodeship with 43% families and the lowest in Mazowieckie Voivodeship with 11,2% of families.

RESULTS OF MIGRATION FROM POLAND: DEMOGRAPHIC PROGNOSIS (EUROSTAT)

In 2060 there will be the highest percentage of people above 65 years old (1/3 of Polish society) The numbers of population will be dropping from 38 mln. in 2012 to 31 mln. in 2060.

The increasing population number in hosting countries (Spain, Belgium, France, GB, Luxembourg, Ireland, Cyprus) is caused by the higher birth rate of immigrant mothers as compared to the native mothers, for example since 2008 Polish mothers hold the 2nd place for giving birth in Great Britain.

INTERVALS OF PARENTAL ABSENCE

According to the research the absence of parent/s for fewer than 2 months is insignificant for children development. Absence for 2-6 months has weak influence on socialisation process, no family structure disruption, and possible weakening of the parent-child bond. Absence of parents for 6-12 months may result in strong influence on socialisation process, taking on the role of the migrant parent by the staying parent, visible disruption of the social bonds, and possible traumatising effect of rejection. Parental absence for more than 12 months causes significant restructuring of the family and the relations with social background, intercepting functions by the staying parent, strong disruption of the family ties, high probability of rejection in the child.

AREAS OF CHANGE IN CHILDREN BEHAVIOUR

The parental absence may result in deviations of children behaviors. For example behavior related to school attending: skipping lessons only in children aged 14-18 with both parents abroad. It may also cause an indisciplined behaviour: higher tendency towards fights in younger children (9-10 years) with one parent abroad, low in older children. There is also a risk of criminal behaviour in children with one parent abroad (1,5% - general, 4,1% - children of migrant parents) and a higher tendency for alcohol and drugs use in children with one parent abroad.

Among the identified risks could be also mentioned: psychological unbalance, aggression, low self-esteem, difficulties in socialising, distrust, skipping lessons, worse marks, inability to cope with the situation, emotional tension

Contributors to the qualitative study from Poland

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Personal Stories

Karol (32) and Magdalena (30) from Lodz, Poland

1. Leaving and separating:

The family comes from Lodz. In June 2012 Karol got an opportunity to work as a construction worker in London. He joined his two friends. Before leaving, he was working at a similar job in his uncle's firm in Lodz. The reason for his migration was bigger salary. After giving birth to their son, Magdalena went on maternity leave for half a year. She returned to her job as a shop clerk.

Both husband and wife agreed that taking the job by Karol would be financially beneficial for their family. They were both a bit worried and sad but they knew that each separation would last only 3-4 months.

Magdalena's parents were initially against the idea. They were worried about the marriage and their young grandson.

2. Problems and solutions:

They keep in touch by phoning, texting, skyping and writing e-mails. Karol leaves Poland for periods usually between 2 and 5 months after which he returns for 2 to 4 weeks.

When he is absent, Magdalena has to manage working and taking care of their son. She is being helped by her parents who are already on their retirement.

Their son, Jerzy (2), is still very little and does not react to the absence of his father. His development is healthy. He spends a significant amount of time with his grandparents who take care of him when his mother goes to work or has other duties.

Karol claims that every time he goes away it gets harder for him because he cannot participate in the process of taking care of and raising his son.

Magdalena was finding it very difficult in the first few months to cope. She was very stressed and quite sad but because of her parents' great support she gradually managed to organize her life.

"It was very hard for me at first but my mom and dad are a great help. And we speak often with Karol, so we know what's going on in each other's lives. That helps too." she says.

Both of them agree that the husband's job brings them good money, which makes them calmer about their future as a family.

3. Needs and support:

No family members live abroad. Karol received support only from his two friends who had been working several months longer in London. They helped him with finding a cheap place to stay and with handling all the necessary paperwork. He socializes mainly with his Polish colleagues. He made several acquaintances with British people but he

finds it difficult to become friends with them due to his low level of English language skills.

After the initial shock that lasted for about two months, he got used to the multicultural society of London.

Because he tries to save all the money that he can, he is sometimes tired of not being able to buy goods of better quality.

4. Future and dreams:

The family plans to move to London together. Magdalena has been attending an English course and is getting better at it. Karol has been searching for a cheap place for them to rent but has not found a suitable one yet. They are wishing to relocate by the end of this year.

“Yes, we are scared because it will be a huge change for our family. But we are willing to take the risk and try to live the way we always wanted to.” says Karol.

Krzysztof (43) and Dorota (38) from Konstancynow Lodzki, Poland

1. Leaving and separating:

The family comes from Konstancynow Lodzki. Dorota, a trained nurse, got a job offer in 2006 to work in a hospital in Frankfurt am Main. Her sister had been working there earlier and helped her to get the job. The main reason for Dorota to accept the offer were the difficulties in finding a job after going on maternity leave.

Krzysztof owns a small car workshop. He has been running it for 12 years now with variable success.

Their family (grandparents, uncle, aunt) expressed their disapproval of Dorota's decision to take the job. They claimed it could affect the children, Maciej (10) and Julia (8), in a negative way.

Dorota left the country with a heavy heart – firstly, because she was leaving her husband and the children, and secondly, because of the lack of support from their family.

"I almost didn't go. I had a lot of doubts and the critical comments from our family members made the situation ever worse. But I understood that this was the chance that I had to take." says Dorota.

2. Problems and solutions:

The whole family meets about two or three times a month. Dorota tries to come home every weekend but that is difficult due to her work schedule, the long time of the journey and the high prices of tickets. When she is abroad, her husband and her children keep in touch with her by calling everyday or every other day.

Because Krzysztof runs his own business, which is located near their home, he is flexible and able to take care of the children. He claims that it is a difficult thing to do on his own.

"It's almost like my second job!" he says, laughing.

Maciej and Julia are mostly taken care of by their father. The son has not been coping well with the frequent absence of his mother. He is often tense and can cry easily when Dorota is not around. The parents try to explain the situation to him. Their daughter is coping better with the situation and is calmer. The education course of the kids is going well but because the signs of the emotional tension in their son are sometimes also showing at school, Dorota and Krzysztof were asked to speak with his teacher a few times.

They admit they find it more and more difficult with every passing month to live separately. They are tired of living their lives on their own and are afraid that it is affecting their children. The only advantage they mention is that Dorota's work is quite well paid and stable.

3. Needs and support:

Dorota can count on her sister Dagmara she is working with. Dagmara is strong and gives her sister emotional support. Dorota made friends with her colleagues at work. They

spend their free time together – cooking, talking, watching movies. She does not like the city she works in. She still feels like a guest, not a citizen. She claims that people are not as friendly there as in Poland and that they can be quite formal and distant.

4. Future and dreams:

Dorota plans to quit her job in Frankfurt this year and move back permanently to Konstantynow. The couple talked a lot and decided that it is more important to be together and take care of each other. They were both very moved when talking about this.

“Some things are more important than money, you know... Like family. We have to take care of each other and to do that we need to be close together.” says Dorota.

Tomasz (28) and Joanna (31) from Warsaw, Poland

1. Leaving and separating:

Tomasz and Joanna are a couple from Warsaw, married a few years ago. Their daughter is 3 years old. Two years ago Tomasz got a proposal of a permanent job as an IT specialist with a Stockholm-company. He had worked for that company for a year on tele-work basis. Joanna is a graphic designer – she is a freelancer and runs her own business.

Tomasz started cooperation with the current employer upon his father's recommendation who used to have business relations with this Swedish company. Tomasz's parents, who often visit Scandinavian countries, fully supported his decision to settle down working in Sweden. Joanna's parents were not enthusiastic about this idea and tried to dissuade him from doing so.

'The tension between us and my parents was quite intense. We had a few quarrels but we realize that they want the best for us and their resistance was caused by the fear of the unknown and the concern about our future' says Joanna.

2. Problems and solutions:

As Joanna works mainly at home, the initial idea was that she would take her of the daughter on her own. After a month however, it turned out that working and looking after the child was very hard to do, therefore Joanna and Tomasz decided to hire a nanny who is helping Joanna to run the house and look after Marysia.

'At first I was concerned whether it was a good idea, mainly because of the financial reasons. But it turned out that thanks to Tomasz's earnings with the new company we can afford it. I was also worried whether I can trust a stranger and let her look after my child but we managed to find a fantastic and warm person' says Joanna.

Joanna and Tomasz are in touch almost every day, mostly online. In one of the conversations Joanna told Tomasz that they spoke less and less frequently over the past three months. Tomasz answered that he did not see the difference.

3. Needs and support:

Tomasz quickly found his ways around in the new place. He says that people he meets at work in Stockholm are very friendly. He does not have too many problems communicating people – he uses English to talk to others. The working conditions provided by the company are very good and the company also helped him find a flat to rent. Tomasz can also count on his parents' support who have a network of contacts in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries.

Joanna says she got used to this way of life although she needed to work out a new way of organizing her time. What she misses most in the current situation is her close relation with her husband, she misses him and few-weeks-long periods of separation are becoming more and more difficult for her.

4. Future and dreams:

Tomasz and Joanna have thought several times about moving down to Sweden for good. Tomasz is confident that this would be the best solution for their family and tries to convince his wife. Joanna is still hesitating. On one hand she knows that settling in Sweden would let them be together every day, on the other hand she is concerned about the influence this change might have upon their daughter. She also knows that her parents would be hurt if she left her home town for good.

'I don't want to hurt them but I also have to care for my family and want to be close to my husband' says Joanna.

Tomasz (48) and Elżbieta (49) from Lodz, Poland

1. Leaving and separating:

Tomasz and Elżbieta are from Lodz. They have three children: Michał (25), Patryk (19) and Klaudia (16). Elżbieta has been working as an accountant in one of the Łódź-based companies. Tomasz worked as an electrician since he had finished high school in a few companies. Five years ago he lost his job and was unemployed for a year.

Their oldest son Michał went to work with his friends to Dublin when he was 20. At first he worked for different construction companies and after a year and a half he started a construction business together with his friends. As he knew about his parents' difficult financial position and that it was difficult for his father to find a job, he offered him cooperation within the construction company he had started. Tomasz agreed.

2. Problems and solutions:

Tomasz goes to Dublin for few-month-long periods – usually between two and six months. He always tries to be at home for more important holidays. Every few days he talks with his wife and children on the phone, trying to keep up-to-date with what goes on there.

'I miss my wife and children but I can't complain. I have a good job and earn good money. One has to cope with it'.

Before he left Tomasz did not know any English. During the three years of working in Ireland he mastered some basic communication skills but he still very often depends on his son's knowledge of English.

Tomasz's cooperation with his son Michał is usually ok but Elżbieta says that there have been a few serious rows between the son and the father, for whom it may be difficult to separate two different roles he is in.

Elżbieta copes well although she admits that looking after two teenagers is not easy. Especially Klaudia is going through her adolescence in a turbulent way and Elżbieta thinks this might be due to her father's absence.

'I am not as assertive as my husband. I know that she needs her father' she says.

3. Needs and support:

Tomasz knows that he can always depend on his son, and his son knows it too, although occasional conflicts. He says that Tomasz's friends from work are honest guys and he gets on well with them although the age difference is quite big and sometimes it is difficult for him to find a common language with them. Tomasz got to know a few Polish people working in Dublin, in the free time they go out to pubs or sports events. In her difficult moment Elżbieta is supported by two close long-time friends.

'If I didn't have them I don't know if I would manage. They're like sisters to me!' she says deeply moved.

4. Future and dreams:

Tomasz and Elżbieta agreed, before he left abroad, that he would stay working with his son till he reaches the retirement age and then he returns home. They both realize that it is difficult to find work in Poland for people their age, so they do not complain about their situation.

'There are people who have more problems than us, and we do manage so far. Yes, we do not see each other for a couple of months... But then the joy is greater when we meet again!' says Elżbieta.

Piotr (33) and Kinga (33) from Lodz, Poland

1. Leaving and separating:

Piotr, Kinga and their son Wojciech (8) are a family from Lodz. For about three years the parents leave at irregular intervals to work abroad, mostly to Italy. These are seasonal works, usually in farming or orchard business. Piotr had problems with finding a permanent and well-paid job in Poland went abroad. On the first occasion he went alone, when he went abroad for the second time, Kinga went with him.

2. Problems and solutions:

Piotr says that the first time was the most difficult for him. He did not know Italian, did not know what his work would look like and whether the employer was honest. The cooperation however went fine, also financially – it was more profitable than his previous jobs in Poland. Therefore, Piotr started to convince his wife to join him. Kinga had many doubts, leaving the son in Poland being the largest of them.

‘I was worried whether the little Wojciech is not too small for such separation with parents, but my mother and sister assured us they would take care of him when we are not there. I can trust them’ says Kinga with a smile.

3. Needs and support:

At first Kinga’s parents and sister looked after their their son. In the course of time, also Piotr’s parents offered to help. Currently, when both parents are abroad, either Piotr’s or Kinga’s parents take Wojciech to their place, or move temporarily to Kinga and Piotr’s flat.

Before they left, Piotr and Kinga did not know anybody in Italy, with time they got familiar with their employer’s family. They learned the basics of Italian and now are able to conduct simple conversations. Acquaintance with the employer created more opportunities of employment – they received a few proposals of work from befriended farmers.

‘It’s like this everywhere in the world, I guess, that it’s easier to find a job after someone recommends you’ says Piotr.

4. Future and dreams:

Piotr and Kinga have not decided yet whether to stay in Poland or to move to Italy for good. They are closely related to their families and would not like to leave them. Also, Piotr would like his son to go to school in Poland. Another thing is that the jobs in Italy are seasonal, they’re not available all year long.

‘And prospects for permanent employment are limited. Our Italian is still too weak. And jobs in farming are only in the season’ says Piotr.

Their biggest dream is to put aside a larger amount of money and starting their own business in Lodz. They do not have a specific plan yet, but Kinga has an idea to use their experience and knowledge and open a shop with good-quality fruit and vegetables from regional suppliers.

Romania



Background

Romania has 41 counties. Olt County lies in a flat area on the Western part of the Romanian Plain. Slatina is the capital city with a population of 87,608 (as of 2007) In 2011, Olt County had a population of 415,530. Research was conducted during October-November 2012. We found 61 families (5,42%) with 83 children left home after parents emigration.



17 families (27,86%) with both of parents are/were away from their child/children
21 cases (34,42%) with father was or is away from his child/children
and 23 families (37,70%) where mother was or is away from her child/children

Educational background of emigrating parents: 100% parent/parents doesn't/don't have University education.

The shortest time spent away from child/children was 2 weeks. The longest time spent away from child/children was 18 years.

Who takes care of children? In 9 cases: grandmother, 7 cases: both grandparents, in one case: grandfather, in one case: mother and grandmother, in one family: father and grandparents, in one case :father and grandparent, in one case: relatives, in one family: uncle and grandparents and obig brother, in two cases: no one takes care of the child, in one case: Social Services, in tow cases- aunt takes care of children, in 20 cases mother takes care of children, and in 13 cases: father

Emotional and social problems: 19 cases were examined: they answered that they have a good situation, without any other comments. In four cases the parents got divorced

The current family situation: 11 cases said that the parent/parents offer financial support, 4 cases did not want to answer this question, 18 cases indicated, that the parent/parents are abroad and did not offer further information, 2 cases said, that the parent/parents are in

Romania but they are preparing for leaving, 1 case: the parents are in Romania with no further information case.

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Personal Stories

Maria, 24 years old from Slatina

Maria is not married and she is studying at Colegiul Tehnic Metalurgic, Slatina in the ninth grade. She is attending the evening classes. She has a child who is five years and seven months old. She has been living in Spain for six years but came back to raise her child and to continue her studies. She works as a shop girl.

Her parents divorced when she was a year and nine months old. Her father left for England and her mother for Italy. Maria stayed with her grandmother who didn't receive financial support neither from her mother nor from her father. Her mother got married again but her new husband didn't accept Maria.

She met her father again when she was 16 but she was a simple acquaintance.

When she started highschool she used to live in her grandmother's studio flat and her only income was a scholarship called "Highschool money", about 40 euros a month. This was not enough to support herself so she abandoned school at 17 to leave for Spain.

She left for Spain a month after her child's father had left. She found a job there after she had stuck leaflets on the pillars asking for a job.

She had chosen Spain because it was the country where her child's father had left and she thought she was her future husband. She had taken the decision by herself. No one said anything because they didn't know what she was doing, so she abandoned school and she left. She thought this was her only chance and that she was saving herself from a complicated situation.

When she was 18 years and six months old she gave birth to her baby daughter in Spain. For a year and four months the girl stayed with them in Spain than they brought her to Romania to her father's parents.

They kept in touch through the phone and the Net. Every three months she had to come home because of her daughter's health problems, a reason to worry for her grandparents.

When she was four they took the girl with them to Spain for a year. Then they separated and she returned to Romania with her daughter. She had brought her again to her grandparents. Her father stayed in Spain, she sees her daughter twice a year but they communicate through the Internet.

The girl is too young to understand that her father and Maria are separated. She feels at ease at her grandparents'. Both parents decided that when she starts school she will live at her place and during the holidays in Spain.

When Maria is not there she gets on very well with her grandmother. She educates her and guides her. She thinks she will be very happy when she starts school. Her father helps by sending money and everything she needs.

Maria adapted herself very easy to the local community because there were many friends and acquaintances from her village. They have also made Spanish friends very fast. In Spain she felt like home. She had worked and she used to earn very well and except her job she used to do other housekeeping activities and take care of babies. So, during her free time she had managed to earn some money by doing occasional jobs.

Missing the baby is something tormenting. As a mother she always misses her baby, she regrets the fact that she can't play with her, dress her nicely as she would like to.

In her soul there is always an emptiness. When they see each other and they are together they communicate very well. Maria would like to be with her but she is at ease that she is feeling well with his grandmother. She has a cousin with whom she plays, in the courtyard there are trees, animals and poultry.

Maybe Maria will leave again for Spain after she finishes her studies. Here she works ten hours a day, even Saturday and Sunday for a salary of approximately 90 Euros a month.

She does not think they will ever be a family again. Maria wishes the two families (hers and her fathers') accepted the girl. Maria does not want her daughter to face the same problems she had.

Maria does not know if the sacrifice was worth it because back then she was thinking differently and she wanted to make a family.

Ion, 48 years old from Slatina

Ion is 48, he has graduated high school and at the moment he is attending a course at Colegiul Tehnic Metalurgic to become a foreman. His wife is 45, she has graduated the 10th form and a vocational school.

Ion is a mechanic and his wife doesn't work. In the last four years his wife worked in Spain.

After his wife had left, because she had to work, he was forced to leave their son with his grandparents or with his brother and sister. Between four and five years his son stayed at his grandparents', when he was six he moved to his brother's place, at Ramnicu Valcea, and when he was seven Ion took him to Dragasani at his sister's place.

After they got married they both worked but the expenses were very high and they earned little money. Then his wife lost her job and he was the only one who supported the family.

Ion decided to buy a studio flat from the company he worked for because it was for sale. The studio looked terribly, it needed to be renovated but they needed money to do this work. That was the moment they decided his wife had to go abroad.

Ion found out from his colleagues that a selection of workers was held in Bucharest. They received temporary working contracts to collect strawberries. After his wife had attended an interview she was accepted and she was sent to Spain with a working contract.

It was very difficult for Ion when his wife left but she was aware she had to leave. The child, who was four, was too young to realize what to expect after his mother's leaving. Ion's wife found it very difficult to leave but she was determined to resist for their own sake. After she had left they used to talk on the phone, only his wife would call, every two or three days and she would talk mostly with the son. Later on they began using the Net. Without any doubt these ways of communication were very helpful to them.

When Ion's wife was away and their son was at his grandparents' he would go and see him very often, about three times a week. It was very difficult for Ion when his son was at Ramnicu Valcea because they were very far from each other and he could visit him only during the week-ends. He was an obedient child but he suffered because parents were not there for him. Time went by and his wife would return after the three months her contract stipulated.

In Romania Ion's only concern was his son and his job. The boy was perfectly safe at their relatives but he still worried about him. He never caused problems to parents. Like any other child he is happy if he achieves something. It's hard to convince him to do something but when he begins it's hard to stop him. The good grades and the praises make him happy. Parents help him and advise him whenever necessary.

Ion considers that they accomplished what they intended, that is to renovate their house but also to guide their son. His wife had to adapt there. When she left for the first time she suffered. Especially the first few weeks. She faced troubles with the accommodation, the food, the new colleagues but she managed to overcome these problems. She hardly ever had some spare time.

It was very hard to be separated: his wife in Spain, him in Slatina, and their son in Dragasani or Ramnicu Valcea. The only advantage was the financial one, that is the money his wife earned.

Ion considers himself lucky to have a job in Romania and he does not want to ever lose his job. In ten years time he will retire. His wife says she will never leave her house again.

They hope to be in good health and he keeps his job.

A desire that he couldn't fulfill is for his wife to find a job. They accomplished what they initially wanted: that is to renovate their house. They also bought a car. They all had to do some sacrifice, and the only reason it was worth it was the financial reason, because emotionally they all suffered.

Mihaela, 35 years old from Slatina

Mihaela is 35, she has graduated the 7th grade and she has two daughters: the younger one is 16, she studies at Colegiul Tehnic Metalurgic, and the older is 18. She has never worked in Romania and she got divorced after she had left to work in Italy. When she left the girls were 6 and 8 years old. They have remained with their grandmother. Her ex-husband was the only one who supported the family. He treated me badly and he was reproaching me that she had no job. The reproaches and the bad living made Mihaela to leave the country.

She has left for Italy without having a working contract. At the beginning she was working in a bar and the accommodation was very poor. To earn her living she was working as a housekeeper for a few families. Then she worked in a pizza shop without having legal documents. Later on she have worked as a cook assistant and now she is working for an old people asylum having legal documents.

The girls' father was very happy when she left. The girls didn't understand what their mother leaving meant and their grandmother didn't agree with her decision.

She has left very scared in an unknown place without knowing the language. These are deep feelings that can't be expressed in words. She has kept in touch with her family through the telephone, she used to call about every three days.

At the beginning she was coming in the country every three months, the integration in the E. U. made it easier to travel and she had taken advantage of this opportunity. She has used mainly the phone to communicate.

The girls never offered her bad surprises and their problems or those related to the house were solved with their grandmother. The girls discussed their problems only with their grandmother. She knows all their joys or their teenager problems. Now there is a wall/gap between her and the girls.

When they would ask Mihaela for money she would send them the last euro she had, perhaps she didn't keep money enough to buy her something to eat. Later on she used to send them money and packages hoping these would help her fill in the empty space between them. But this didn't happen.

She got used to living in Italy very hardly. The Romanians' envy made her life difficult. She had no spare time. She used to run between different houses to do the housework in order to earn money. In the evening she was exhausted and she would cry.

It's very tormenting to be away from those that you love. The day the girls began school she wanted to be with them, to dress them up, to make them look nice, to give them hope.

The only advantage was the money. There are many disadvantages: her youth will pass, she will lose her health, everything comes with a price. There is always the pressure of the problems we have there and those we have here.

She wishes the girls came with her to Italy. It would be easier because now she has to support financially three houses: one in Italy, another one in Slatina, where the girls live with their grandmother, and the last one in the countryside where her father lives. Mihaela's parents don't have a retired pay.

The girls don't want to understand Mihaela and she does not know what their desires are. They don't appreciate her sacrifice and she thinks the sacrifice was not worth it. She is very sad to see that she no longer communicates well with her daughters. There is a wall of silence between her and daughters.

Turkey



Background

In Mersin, there are thirteen districts and almost eight hundred different types of schools. Our background study was conducted at one hundred twenty four schools in four central districts; Akdeniz, Toroslar, Mezitli and Yenişehir. According to the results, the total number of the families, who migrate for work to others EU countries or to other areas in own countries and leave their children at home, is 2757.



Who is away from children: Mother = 65, Father = 2565, Both =123

Education of emigrant parents: No education= 107, Primary =1429, Secondary = 323, High School = 606, Two-year degree=20, University Graduate=269

Time of separation: The shortest time is one month. The longest time is 28 years. The ages of children left at home are between 1-18 years old.

Countries of emigration:

Foreign countries = 1792 emigrants (64%) (Arabia , Iraq, Iran, Germany, Russia, Cyprus, France, Canada, Romania, Syria)

Cities in Turkey = 965 emigrants (36%)(İstanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Hakkari, Şırnak, Hatay, Ordu)

The current family situation: 85 % of parents (2344) are still away from their families. 15% of parents (413) are not away anymore.

The contributors to the qualitative study from Turkey:

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Personal Stories

Derya, 34 years old from Mersin

1. Leaving and separating:

Derya is 34 years old and has two children. She is a housewife and they have been living with Derya's mother since her husband left Mersin, Turkey. After her husband was recruited from his long-term job, he could not find a proper one for a long time. They had started living financial problems. Then Mr. Kiran tried to establish his own workplace by getting bank loan. However he was not able to run his business, as he was not qualified enough.. Unfortunately they couldn't pay back and they lost not only their work but also their house. After all that, her husband found a job abroad by means of a construction company. He has been working as a construction labourer for 6 years in Romania.

2. Problems and solutions:

Derya says she had to struggle at all paces of daily life. She had not only financial problems but also psychological problems. At first, especially Derya's parents were not pleased with the situation but they knew it was compulsory for him to work abroad and earn money.

"However they didn't like me to be alone because it is hard to be a lonely woman in Turkey" says Derya.

Before leaving the country, because of financial difficulties, she and her husband were having problems too. Mr. Kiran couldn't come to Turkey for the first two years. Then he had the permission to be at home once a year. *"We rarely talk on the phone because it is extremely expensive."* says Derya but internet has been a much cheaper way to communicate recently. They see each other once in two weeks on Skype.

"I have been trying to do my best for my children since their father went abroad. However my husband didn't have a good relationship with our children." she says.

They still do not have a strong relationship with their father and Derya does not know how to get over with this problem.

3. Needs and support:

As her husband is not paid on time, Derya still lives financial issues. After she moved to her mother's house most of their expenditures have reduced but the children's needs are increasing as they are growing up.

Two kids study at the same school and their teachers know about their situation. Thanks to teachers' care, our children love school and their friends at school. They are good at their lessons.

4. Future and dreams:

Living separated is emotionally and psychologically rough for the kids. Although Derya has been trying to think positively, she says

“I can’t stand not being a complete family. I can talk about disadvantages but not about the advantages.”

Derya thinks that they have a routine now and her family members get used to this situation. In future she wants to live all together with her husband and kids in their own house without any problems. However, she thinks her husband has dreams but none of them came true.

“I want him back at home as soon as possible.” Says she.

Özlem, 29 years old from Mersin

1. Leaving and separating:

Özlem is twenty-nine years old and she has only one daughter. For three years her husband has been working abroad as a construction laborer. She has worked as a saleswoman at a shopping center for a short while but then she had to leave her job.

The Aydın Family have lived through a lot of troubles because of debts and bailiffs on their house. Her husband, firstly, went to Istanbul to find a job but he couldn't. Then he decided to work abroad because one of his best friends advised him.

2. Problems and solutions:

"There were a lot of gossips about me in my neighborhood so my father-in-law forced me to give up my job." says Özlem.

That's why she had to leave her job. Then she started to live with her family. Because she hasn't felt herself safe and wanted to stop the others gossiping about her. Her parents and her husband's parents have never let her alone and free.

"I cannot tell you about my suffers in detailed" says Özlem.

She also mentions about her husband's problems. He has never lived alone. His mother and then Özlem has taken care of him for all his life long and it is first time that he had to do his laundry, prepare meals for him, etc.

"My daughter cannot give a hug or touch her father when he visits us." declares Özlem.

Her daughter is eight years old and she doesn't know anything about her father and he is a stranger for her. She feels happy when she is at school and with her friends.

3. Needs and support:

The Aydın Family could have not saved enough money yet and they are still in debt. So Mr Aydın has to work abroad for a few years more. Mrs. Aydın thinks that, just like her, her daughter need psychological help too. Her parents are trying to support them but this situation is a heavy burden for all the family.

Mrs. Aydın says "I and my parents are more patient people than before. We exactly understood how valuable being a family was."

4. Future and dreams:

Özlem Aydın hopes to save enough money to pay their debts as soon as possible. She also wants to be a real family and live in peace.

“I don’t feel myself comfortable and safe” says she and she wants to get her freedom back.

“ I want to welcome my husband when he comes back home from work just like other married women.”

She also wants her daughter to be happy and spend rest of their life in peace.

Cahide from Mersin

1. Leaving and separating:

Cahide is a housewife with five daughters and they are living in a house next to their parents' house. Before Mr. Sancar went abroad he was working at constructions as a casual employee. He and his family had no health insurance because he never worked at a long-term job. They had five kids but they could not afford their health problems and this situation made him look for a well-paid job. He did not have a professional training or education. That's why he had to accept to work in Iraq as a construction laborer. They could pay him as much as he needed. Although it was dangerous to be in Iraq because of war, he could not reject the offer. Moreover, he had friends there and encouraged him to work with them.

2. Problems and solutions:

"My daughters were angry with their father as he left them." Says Cahide.

The girls are at different ages and they had a very close relationship with their father. Although their father tried to explain their situation, the kids did not want their father to live away from them.

"My husband wants our daughters have a good education and live a better life than ours" adds mother and they save money for their education and continually communicate with their teachers.

Furthermore their relatives are afraid of Mr. Sancar being in Iraq as there is still a disruption . Mr.Sancar 's cousin was murdered during an attack with bomb in Iraq. Especially her brother-in law was against his leaving and he never supported them although he is a wealthy man.

"My husband also was attacked,Thanks to God" he survived" says Mrs. Sancar.

3. Needs and support:

Cahide Sancar is very upset with their parents. She confesses that they have never supported them although they are capable. The kids need an authority figure at home and this makes everything difficult for Mrs. Sancar. She has to deal with every single issue herself and having five kids results in many problems at daily life or school life.

"When my husband visits us , our house turns into a festival square." says Cahide and the only happiness for her husband is their daughters' success at school. Whenever he comes to Turkey, he definitely goes to school to get information about their daughters.

4. Future and dreams:

The Sancar Family wants to save enough money, which will enable them, lead a good life and support their kids' education without asking for help from their parents. The girls miss their father a lot and she wants them to spend their life all together.

Annex: Interview Protocol

- I. **Pre-history/ leaving abroad:** What kind of issues the family dealt with before leaving? What was the last drop for decision to leave? Did he/she find a job in advance? How he/she did you chose the country of destination? (any friends, family abroad?)
- II. **Reaction to leaving:** The reaction of close family (partner, children) and close circle (friends and colleagues)? The feeling of the leaving person at the moment of separation?
- III. **Attachments and relations:** How relations and attachments were kept during the separation time? How often all the family meets? How often other means of keeping in touch are used (internet, letters, phone calls.....) What kind of issues do they solve most often with the partner left blind?
- IV. **Children upbringing and education:** How do they react to success or failures? What make them happy about school?
- V. **Receiving support from the other family member from abroad:** How?
- VI. **Life abroad:** integrated into the local community abroad? or rather with the national community abroad? The main difficulties faced? How they spend time?
- VII. **The change:** How is it to live separated? What are advantages and disadvantages of living separated?
- VIII. **The future:** the future regarding work and family? What is their biggest wish?

Would you like to say something what have omitted?