



Life satisfaction and emigration plans of students from four EU countries



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Background:

International migration is considered an important and challenging topic in the process of globalization in the 21st century (Divinský, 2007). In Slovakia, there has been an increase in the number of students who aim to move abroad. In Central and Eastern Europe, people less satisfied with life are more likely to report intentions to migrate – both internationally and domestically (Otrashchenko & Popova, 2014).

Methods:

The data were collected in 2016 via an online questionnaire. All respondents participated in the Student Life Cohort Study (SLiCE2) which focuses on the risk behaviour and migration intentions of university students.

Life satisfaction was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, E. D., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S., 1985) which consists of five items and measures the global cognitive judgement of one's life satisfaction (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree, theoretical range from 5-25). Higher scores mean higher overall life satisfaction. (see Table 1.)

In order to measure emigration plans, respondents were asked „Do you plan to leave your home country after you finish university?“ Then we categorized students into three groups - those who didn't want to leave their country (**stayers**), those who were **undecided** and those who planned to live abroad (**leavers**).

Main goal:

to explore the differences in life satisfaction (LS) according to the emigration plans (EP) of students from Slovakia, Hungary, Belgium and Lithuania.

Results:

We found significant differences in LS according to the EP of students in Slovakia and Belgium.

Stayers in Slovakia reported significantly higher LS than leavers ($p < 0.01$) and undecided students ($p < 0.01$) (see Table 1).

In Belgium, stayers reported significantly higher LS than leavers ($p < 0.05$) (see Table 1). We also focused on the gender differences in LS, which were only significant in Hungary, where men reported higher LS than women ($p = 0.001$).

All other results were insignificant.

Conclusions:

The highest percentage of undecided students from the explored countries was found in Belgium (56.5%).

Stayers in Belgium and Slovakia are more satisfied in life than leavers.

In Hungary, men are more satisfied with life compared to women in general.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the sample in all four countries

Country	N	Men (%)	M (SD)	Stayers (%)	Undecided (%)	Leavers (%)	LS score for stayers, (SD)	LS score for undecided, (SD)	LS score for leavers, (SD)
Slovakia	474	23.2	22.4 (2.13)	21.9	41.6	36.5	17.5 (4.1)	15.8 (3.9)	15.9 (4.2)
Lithuania	161	80.7	19.9 (1.61)	8.7	55.3	36	18.1 (3.6)	16.3 (4.8)	15.5 (4.6)
Hungary	106	63.2	22.6 (2.85)	26.4	34	39.6	17.1 (4.3)	17.5 (4.2)	14.8 (4.3)
Belgium	207	32.4	21.4 (2.29)	24.6	56.5	18.9	17.5 (4.1)	16.8 (4.5)	15.2 (4.5)

M= Mean age, SD= Standard deviation, LS= Life satisfaction

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