

Migration intentions – between dreams and definite plans **The impact of life-course events on different types of migration potential**

(Extended abstract)

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During the first decade after democratic transition of 1990 in Hungary, migration potential was low and it started to rise only at the turn of the millennium (the increase was mostly reflected in intentions to work abroad). Substantial increase in the trend of migration potential was measured in the late 2000s and this reached a peak in 2012 when one fifth (19 per cent) of the adult population planned some kind of migration (working abroad or emigration). Migration potential is much higher among young people: 33 per cent of 18-40 aged population showed migration intention in 2013.

Not only migration potential tripled over the last two decades in Hungary, an increase of actual out-migration can also be observed. Hungary's EU accession in 2004 was followed by only a slight increase of out-migration; remarkable change was brought about in the late 2000s when the effects of economic crisis resulted in an increased number of out-migrants. With the complete opening of European labour markets (in 2011) this process speeded up. While until 2006 the number of Hungarians emigrating into EEA countries was below 30 000 person per year, this number was far above 70 000 in 2012. These data only reflect the number of immigrants officially registered in the destination countries while person working abroad for a short period of time or cross-border commuters are presumably not included in the figures.

At the same time – although factors that hindered working abroad have been eliminated and the established migrant networks in destination countries reduce the risk and cost of migration for many – it seems that the number of people considering or planning migration is still significantly higher than those actually realizing the move. It is widely known that migration intentions are not always realized either because realisation is hindered by certain factors or, due to changing circumstances, those previously planning migration give up their plan. In many cases intention turns out not to be really 'serious'.

Although migration potential cannot be considered an accurate forecast of subsequent migratory processes, a number of studies (albeit some of them based on internal migration) have concluded that on individual level migration intentions are important indicators of the realisation of migration (Kley – Mulder 2010, van Dalen – Henkens 2008, Papapanagos – Sanfey 2001, Sandu – De Jong 1996). Applying the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991, 2005) to migratory decisions also led to the conclusion that previous migration intention is a primary determinant of migration behaviour (De Jong 2000). Therefore, studies on migration potential – although unable to predict the volume of subsequent migration – can provide important information on the characteristics and motivations of prospective migrants as well as on their situation before migration. We can presume that the results of these studies are more reliable if real migration intention is grasped during the study instead of only desires and dreams.

Various survey techniques are used to measure migration intentions and plans and these various methods can lead to different results. It is important to consider the type of migration the question refers to (e.g. short or long-term labour migration, emigration), the wording of the questions and what kind of filters are used to identify serious intentions. Depending on the approach used by the researcher, migration potential can reflect persons in various stages of the decision making process: persons willing to migrate, considering migration, having a definite plan to migrate and those who have already made steps towards realising migration. As for the ‘seriousness’ of migration, Fassmann and Hintermann (1998) describe three types of migration potential: general migration potential (those thinking about going abroad), probable migration potential (those already collecting information) and real migration potential (those already having started the process, for instance by applying for residence permit or employment permit). We can assume that these groups have differing socio-demographic composition, varying resources, etc.

The aim of this paper is to explore the explanatory factors of the different types of migration potentials, with special focus on life-course events. The paper examines the following questions: 1) what are the characteristics of people with different type of migration intentions; 2) what are the major individual determinants of different migration intentions; 3) how are different types of migration intentions related to life-course events?

Decision making on migration – that is the stage between considering migration and having definite plans on migration – is assumed to be influenced by life-course events, especially during life-course transitions (Kley 2011). While the realisation of migration plans are mostly determined by the existence or lack of various financial, network and psychological resources which either promote or hinder the plan to become an action (Massey – Espinosa 1997, Palloni et al. 2001), various studies have proved that certain life-course events play an important role mostly on the decision-making phase of the migration process. These life-course events (like starting or completing higher education, starting work, leaving parental home, getting married etc.) are related to the emergence of migration intention (Mulder – Wagner 1993, Mulder – Clark 2000, Kley – Mulder 2010). At the same time, anticipated life-course events can also affect migration intention, especially the formulation of ‘serious’ plans.

There are life-course events that could promote the formulation of migration intentions (like the completion of education, especially if it is complemented by poor employment prospects) and others that hinder the emergence of migration plans (e.g. expected/planned child birth). These latter can be considered as 'competing plans' that hinder the formulation of migration plans even if migration willingness exist.

The study is based on data from a national representative survey ('Migration plans in Hungary among the 18-40 aged population'¹) carried out in 2013 in Hungary among 18-40 aged population. The sample includes 1464 persons and is representative of the above mentioned population according to sex, age-group, educational level and settlement type. The study identified three types of migration intentions/plans – short-term migration (a few weeks or a month), mid-term migration (a few years) and emigration – and included questions about other types of migration plans (e.g. educational) besides labour migration. Since the survey was specifically designed to study migration intentions, it explored the following aspects with great detail: the preferred destination country, duration of stay abroad, motivations, timing (when it is planned to be realised), respondents' presumed probability of realising the move, steps already taken towards migration, related investments (language learning, gathering information, finding a job abroad etc.), the type of planned employment and the expected wage. Based on the above, from the group of people generally planning migration, one can select those not only considering migration but having definite plans about realising it, and/or those who have already taken the first steps. Thus the so called 'real' migration potential can be calculated.

According to the first results – while many people have already left the country over the past few years – 26 per cent of people aged 18-40 have short-term and 28 per cent has long-term migration plans while 6 per cent are planning to leave the country for good. On the whole, considering all three types of migration, nearly one third of the respondents formulated migration intentions; however, the majority of this group (43 per cent) was only considering migration, 39 per cent claimed to have serious considerations while 18 per cent had already made the decision. Taking into account other filtering questions as well, we define various groups of people with migration intentions or plans, and we examine the composition of these groups. This section will be followed by the exploration of the explanatory factors behind the above mentioned types.

In the survey respondents indicated major life-course events that had occurred in their life over the past three years on a list and they also provided information on the date (year, month) of that event. Similar method was used to explore anticipated life-course events in the next three years. The following life-course events were considered: starting or completing (higher) education, marriage, starting cohabitation, divorce, separation, leaving parental house, birth of a child, starting employment, becoming unemployed, changing employment, starting or terminating a business.

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We examine the effect of the above mentioned life-course events on various types of migration intentions/plans using logistic regression models, in which all those explanatory factors are used as control variables which – according to the literature – may determine migration intentions:

- individual socio-demographic characteristics and human capital variables (gender, age, marital status, number of children, educational level, labour market status, knowledge of a foreign language, previous migratory experience, health status)
- financial capital (income, equipment of the household, dwelling situation)
- network capital (family members, relatives, friends living abroad or planning to migrate)
- satisfaction with present living conditions (dwelling situation, job, income, quality of life, etc.)
- anomie (trust in the future, sense of control, feeling of being lost, finding happiness in work)
- evaluation of one's own financial situation currently and in 3 years' time, and of the country' situation currently and in 3 years' time

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