

Migration intentions of working-age population in Estonia

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The Ministry of Social Affairs carried out a survey among 1505 working-age (15–64 years old) people at the end of the year 2006. The survey aimed at finding out Estonian residents' attitude towards working abroad. This survey has been conducted in every 3 years since the year 2000¹. Therefore, the data enables us to analyse the changes taken place in the population's intentions to work abroad. The present publication presents an overview of the main results of the survey of 2006 and the changes in the Estonian residents' migration intentions compared to the results of the earlier surveys.

The data analysis shows some decrease in the number of people intending to go and work abroad as compared to the last years. According to the 2006 survey, 3.9% of Estonian working age population (about 36,000 people) would potentially go to work abroad. International surveys show a similar estimate of the number of people in Estonia potentially leaving abroad within the next five years².

Young people aged 15–24 are most willing to go to work abroad. However, their plans are rather unstable as compared to those in the older age groups. It may be assumed that in case they find a suitable employment, have a family or acquire a property, a considerable number of them would still remain in Estonia. The most preferred destinations for future employment are Finland that is favoured primarily for its close location and Great Britain in which case the knowledge of the English language is the decisive factor.

¹ The survey of 2006 was conducted by the research company Faktum & Ariko. In 2000 and 2003, the data collection was conducted by Saar Poll Ltd. Further information on the results of the survey and on the use of the database can be obtained from the Labour Policy Information and Analysis Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia.

² According to the Eurobarometer survey carried out in 2005 (European Foundation 2006), ca 3–4% of the people aged 15 and older in Estonia have a definite plan to move to another EU state.

Introduction

Every worker is important for Estonia today.

Migration has become an increasingly popular topic in the media and politics and in a small country like Estonia it is difficult to find people who do not know anyone who has been or currently is working abroad. With regard to migration policy, we share the same judicial area with the European Union that establishes the right of residence and work for its citizens in another Member State as one of their fundamental rights. In the EU, an increase in the workforce mobility is seen as an opportunity for achieving a more flexible labour market that would support employment and economic growth. However, it must be taken into account that there are also many other, not necessarily positive consequences to the free movement of labour. From the economic aspect, the high unemployment rate experienced at the beginning of the decade in Estonia has been replaced by labour shortage in many sectors, and a salary competition between the member States is intense. On the other hand, people working abroad must adjust to a foreign cultural and linguistic environment and they may not find an employment corresponding to their qualifications. In order to better assess the effects accompanying migration, it is essential to have information about the number of people considering getting an employment abroad, the population groups that are most likely to migrate, the length of the period they are going to stay abroad and the triggers and barriers behind this decision.

Opinion polls are one method for assessing migration potential.

Public opinion polls give an opportunity for analysing the potential and structure of migration. In the context of this analysis, migration potential is an estimate of the number of people willing to change their country of residence for employment purposes. However, at this point it must be taken into account that people's expectations and their actual behaviour do not always coincide and, therefore,

the results of such surveys are normally considered as under- rather than overestimated³. Empirical studies have shown that in reality, less than half of the people who have expressed willingness to settle elsewhere in the future, have actually migrated (Krieger and Fernandez 2006). Still, surveys enable us to collect more information on potential migrants and their attitudes and opinions than other sources (e.g. registers) could. This enables us to study migration phenomenon more thoroughly. By means of limiting questions (e.g. "Have you made preparations for going to work abroad?" or "For how long would you like to stay abroad?"), it is also possible to find out how definite the migration intentions are and therefore come to more realistic estimations in terms of potential migration.

The aforementioned surveys on migration intentions of Estonia's working age population help to find answers to the following questions:

- How many people are interested in and planning to work in another country and for how long they would like to stay abroad?
- What is the socio-demographic profile and employment background of people who want to work abroad?
- What are the preferred countries of destination and expectations towards the employment conditions and work itself abroad?
- Which factors influence most the migration decision of Estonian people and what are the main incentives and barriers to going to work to another country?

A thorough overview of the results of the surveys of 2000 and 2003 concerning Estonian working-age population's attitude towards going to work to the European Union Member States has been given in the study "Poten-

³ Further information on the methods used in migration forecasts can be found in: appendix 2 of the study "Potential of Estonian working age population to work in the counties of the European Union" by Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (Kallaste and Phillips, 2004, pp 36-41) or the publication by OECD „Trends in International Migration" (OECD 2003, pp 295-203).

tial of Estonian working age population to work in the countries of the European Union” by Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (Kallaste and Philips, 2004).

The present publication primarily focuses on the presentation of the results of the survey of 2006 and also outlines the main changes in migration preferences. **The first chapter** analyses the intentions of going to work abroad. An estimate of the number of people most likely to leave Estonian labour market within the next years is given. For giving a more realistic estimation of the possible migration, the firmness of the migration intention, any preparations made to that end and the desired length of the stay abroad is analysed. **The second chapter** looks at who the people most likely to go to work abroad are. For that purpose, migration intentions are analysed by the different socio-economic characteristics (like gender, age, education etc.). **The third chapter** covers the employment background of the potential migrants and tries to find out what kind of work they would be willing to do in other countries. Also the degree of satisfaction with the present employment and working conditions of those wanting to go to work abroad and those wanting to stay in Estonia is compared. **The fourth chapter** examines the migration destinations most preferred among Estonian population. Apart from geographical location, migration is also affected by several other (economic, social, political and cultural) factors that, in migration literature, are often classified as push and pull factors, depending on whether the aspects affecting migration are viewed from the point of view of the country of origin or of that of destination⁴. The last, **fifth chapter** of the publication covers the main incentives for and barriers to working abroad and the

awareness of the working opportunities and conditions in other countries.

An analysis of those topics should give ideas to both policy makers and the wider public. The absence of precise and valid data on the actual number of people worked or presently working abroad and on their long-term plans has been a hindrance to making policy decisions. Since no official statistics on those gone to work abroad is published in Estonia, one way of obtaining an estimate on migration flows is by using the immigration statistics of other countries. However, it must be kept in mind that the legislation regulating labour force immigration as well as the respective immigrant registration systems differ by country, which makes it impossible to obtain comparable and complete information⁵. Additionally, it must be taken account that the statistics of other countries does not include posted workers from Estonia⁶.

Due to the multiplicity of data sources and the diversity of their quality, the estimates published on migration have varied greatly from each other and must therefore be treated with cautiousness. For example, the number of people who have gone to work abroad after the accession to the EU could be, according to different estimates, 20,000–35,000 (Ministry of Financial Affairs 2006, Estonia Employers’ Confederation, 14.06.2007, Eamets, R., 22.10.2007). It may be presumed that the actual number of people worked abroad is much bigger (incl. the informally employed, seasonal workers and posted workers). However, many people have probably also returned to Estonia by now. On the basis of the information gathered through different channels (Eures network, embassies) and obtained from international reports pub-

The exact number of people working abroad is unknown.

⁴ On the theory of push and pull factors and on other theoretical considerations explaining migration processes and behaviour please see e.g., Massey et al. (1993) for international literature or Philips et al. (2003) among Estonian authors.

⁵ Soon, the situation should somewhat improve for as of 2008, collection of migration statistics on common grounds is established across the EU (EC Regulation 2007).

⁶ The number of certificates issued by the Estonian Social Security Board for posting workers has increased year by year. 1882 certificates were issued in 2004; 5918 in 2005; 10,717 in 2006. The number applications has still increased in 2007. The destination for most posted workers is Finland, followed by Norway, Sweden and Latvia.

lished on labour immigration, it can be said that after the accession to the EU, the main destinations for Estonian labour force have been Finland, Great Britain and Ireland.

According to the present survey, about 9% of the respondents have worked abroad during the last five years. However, it must be considered that no generalizations about the number of people presently working abroad

can be made on the basis of this information. This information gap can somewhat be filled by analysing the migration intentions of people to find out how many are planning or thinking of going to work abroad, which population groups are most likely influenced, whether the plans of moving abroad are short- or long-term and what the incentives making people choose between their native and a foreign country are.

1. Migration intentions of Estonia's working age population

1.1 Number of people wanting to work abroad

First, we have a look at how the migration intentions have changed as compared to the years 2000 and 2003 when similar surveys were carried out. We try to find out whether the opportunities accompanying the free

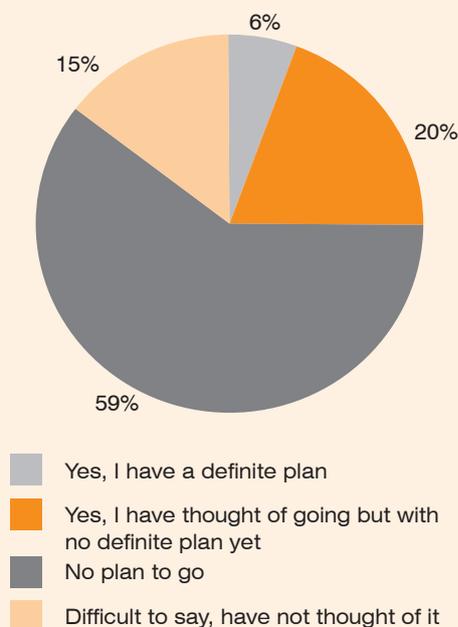
movement for workers after joining the EU have changed people's attitudes towards working in another country more optimistic or have the fast economic growth and increased labour shortage in the last years decreased the number of those wanting to work abroad. While presenting the comparative data, it must be considered that the survey of 2006 is not comparable on a one-to-one basis to the results of the previous surveys, as the questionnaires differ to some extent (e.g. the wording of some questions has been changed)⁷. Still, we are able to assess the volume and direction of the changes that have taken place.

The answers to one of the main questions of the survey, "Are you planning to go to work abroad in the future?" revealed that 26% of people aged 15–64 in Estonia⁸ have planned or are considering going to work abroad (Figure 1). Whereas, 6% (55,000 people) have a definite plan to go to work abroad and the rest, 20% have thought of going to work elsewhere with no definite plans yet.

Here, the most general intentions to work abroad were expressed. People's actual migration behaviour is also influenced by several other factors (employment opportunities, lan-

26% of working age population intends or considers working abroad.

Figure 1. Intentions to work abroad, 2006
% of the working age population (aged 15–64)



⁷ E.g., the previous questionnaires covered only working in other EU countries (then 15 countries) while the last survey included all countries, incl. the EU with its then 25 Member States.

⁸ In 2006, the total number of people aged 15–64 in Estonia was 9,15,114.

guage skills, family relationships, etc.) and the percentage of those actually migrating may be much smaller. Empirical studies have shown that, in reality, only up to half of those wanting to migrate is in fact doing this. Therefore, it is important to analyse the migration intentions in more detail: to look at the firmness of the intentions, preparations made, the length of the stay, etc.

The above showed that in 2006, 26% of the working age population either planned or considered going to work abroad. In comparison, in 2003, 42% and in 2000 51% of the working-age population wanted (definitely or quite probably) to work abroad. Consequently, it seems that people's general inclination to migrate has decreased in the last years (the number of those interested in working in other countries has decreased by approximately a third). The number of people with no intention of going to work outside of Estonia has changed as well. While in 2006 59% of working-age people said that they had no intention of going to work abroad (Figure 1), the respective percentage in 2003 was 47% and in 2000 only 40% of the respondents.

Such a change in the attitudes towards working abroad can be explained by the rapid growth of employment in Estonia (the employment rate among people aged 15–64 has increased from 62.6% in 2003 to 67.7% by the year 2006). This has probably enabled many people to find a suitable employment closer to home and family. The rapid economic growth has also brought along a rise in the salaries and the general standard of living that should also decrease the motivation to work elsewhere. However, the differences in income between Estonia and the old EU Member States remains big enough to make working abroad economically justified. While interpreting the results, we must also bear in mind the fact that since joining the EU, some have had the

opportunity to hold an employment abroad and perhaps already experienced the negative aspects of staying away from home or the difficulties in adjusting to a new environment.

Following, a detailed analysis on migration intentions is given examining the firmness of migration intentions and respective preparations made for going to work abroad that should help to give a more realistic estimate on the potential migration.

1.2. Firmness of migration intentions

Firmness of intentions to go to work abroad can be tested with several questions. First, we find out whether any preparations have been made for this (e.g. collecting information, applying to a job etc.). It appears that about half (49%) of those wanting to go to work abroad have made specific preparations for this. Whereas, among those with definite plans, 69% and among those considering of going to work abroad, 49% have made relevant preparations⁹.

However, there were less people that had made specific preparations three years ago. In 2003, 40% of the total number of those wanting to go to work abroad (incl. 51% of those with a definite plan) had made some preparations for this. Consequently, it can be said that as compared to the time before the accession to the EU, people who want to work abroad are better informed and prepared now. Therefore, their intentions can be considered more realistic and, consequently, the estimate on migration potential less overestimated than these have been in earlier years.

Thus, considering those who have expressed a definite wish to go to work abroad and have also made preparations to that end to give us a more realistic estimate of the potential outmigration. **When in 2003, 4.3% of the working age population could be expected to go to work abroad**

The number of people interested in working abroad has decreased by about a third.

About half of those who wish to work abroad have made actual preparations for that.

⁹ Here and hereinafter intentions of people „with a definite plan“ and those „with uncertain plans“ are compared where possible.

3.9% of working-age population will potentially go to work abroad.

(people with definite plans and preparations), by 2006, the number had decreased to 3.9% (about 36,000 people aged 15–64).

The obtained result corresponds to the results of the European survey on geographical and labour market mobility¹⁰ carried out in all EU Member States at the end of 2005. According to this study, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland were considered as countries with a comparatively high migration potential compared to the rest of the new Member States. The analysis revealed that 2.5–3.9% of the population of those countries has a definite plan to move to another EU state within the next five years (Karppinen et al 2006).

Whether the persons wanting to work abroad also put their plans into practice highly depends on their employment opportunities in Estonia and elsewhere. It appears that those wanting to go to work abroad are more optimistic about

finding a suitable job both in their native country and abroad. Nearly three-quarter (73%) of the total number of those wanting to work abroad think that they would find a suitable job in another European Union country and 61% thinks they would find it also outside the EU. Those wanting to work abroad are also more certain of the opportunities of finding a job in Estonia, which refers to the fact that labour migration is not so much caused by unemployment than by a higher income opportunities or other factors.

Compared to the previous years, the confidence in finding a suitable work in the European Union countries among those wanting to go to work abroad has increased remarkably (Figure 2). As in 2003, less than half (47%) of those wanting to work abroad thought that they would find a suitable job in a EU country, in 2006, the respective percentage was as high

Figure 2. Do you think you would find a job in other EU countries?

% of those with a definite wish to go to work abroad

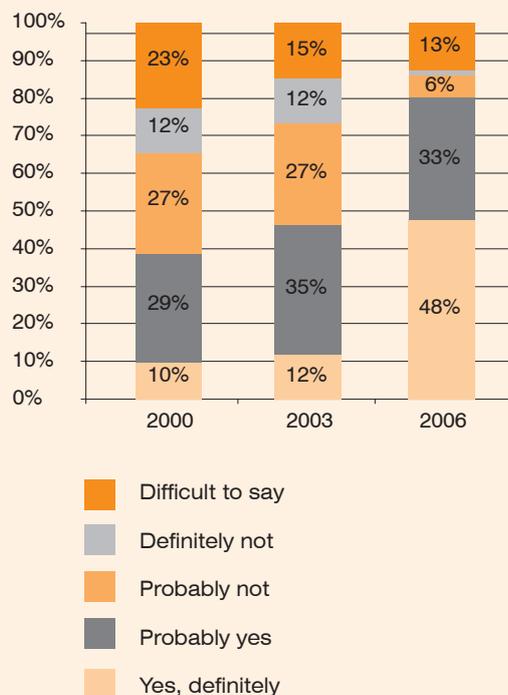
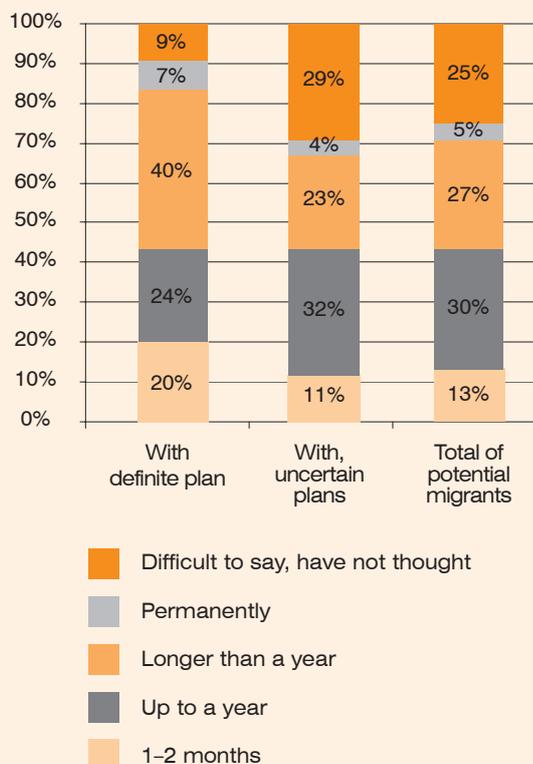


Figure 3. Preferred duration of stay abroad, 2006

% of those wanting to go work abroad



¹⁰ 2005 European survey on geographical and labour market mobility

as 81%. Although we have to take into account that there are 10 more new members in the EU, we may still consider the wealthier old members as the most attractive destinations for labour migration.

Thus, although the number of people wanting to work abroad has most probably decreased during the three years (from 4.3% to 3.9% of the working-age population), they have now made more preparations and are more optimistic about their employment opportunities elsewhere.

The decrease in the number of people wanting to work abroad between 2000 and 2003 were explained by the positive developments in the economy, positive expectations about the improvement of their living standard in Estonia and also the increased awareness of the opportunities of finding work abroad (Kallaste, Philips 2004, pp 7). The continuous decrease in the interest towards working abroad during the last three years may also be related to the fact that many people who wanted to work abroad have already found such opportunity after the accession to the EU.

In order to assess the impact migration has on different areas of life, we need to have more detailed information about the migration intentions – whether people want to go to work abroad on permanent or temporary basis.

1.3. Preferred duration of stay abroad

Figure 3 shows the preferences of the people wanting to work abroad with regard to the preferred length of stay in another country. It appears that a quarter (25%) of all the potential labour migrants¹¹ has never contemplated on or cannot tell for how long they would like

to stay away from Estonia. At the same time, people who were certain of going abroad, were more able to specify the expected length of the stay. Only 10% of those who definitely want to work abroad could not specify for how long they would like to stay abroad.

We can also see that most people would like to work abroad temporarily. Only 5% of all those wanting to work abroad would change their country of residence permanently. The number of people wanting to permanently migrate has decreased as compared to the previous years. When in 2000, 15% of those wanting to work abroad would have migrated permanently; the respective percentage had fallen down to 8% by the year 2003 and further to 7% by the year 2006.

People who are interested in working abroad for a longer period are primarily those who have definitely decided in favour of working in another country. 40% of people who have firm plans to work abroad are ready to stay there for longer than a year. The respective number of people among the respondents with uncertain migration plans is half that much. The longer a person stays abroad the less likely he or she returns to Estonia.

The following chapter presents a more detailed analysis of the potential short-term and long-term migrants looking at the preferences of different population groups. For this purpose, the term short-time migrants is applied to the people intending to go abroad for less than a year and the term long-term migrants is applied to those intending to stay abroad for more than a year¹². The short-term migrants typically include, for example, seasonal workers or cross-border migrants whose workplace and home are in two different countries.

Most people would like to work abroad only temporarily.

¹¹ Anyone who has definite plan or has thought of going to work abroad is considered as a potential migrant in this paper.

¹² Such classification also corresponds to the standards of international migration statistics (United Nations 1998).

2. A socio-demographic profile of people wanting to work abroad

The present chapter tries to find out who the most active to change their country of residence and start working abroad are and how the migration preferences among different population groups have changed in time. For that purpose, firmness of the migration intentions and migration preferences (e.g. with regard to the duration of stay abroad) are analysed by different characteristics, including gender, age, nationality, marital status, education, etc.

2.1. Gender

With regard to gender, the general migration activity of Estonian inhabitants has been comparatively similar by year. Despite the fact that the number of women and men wanting to work abroad is almost the same, differences in gender can be observed in specific migration preferences. For example, men are more determined in their migration plans than women. 27% of men and 19% of women have a definite plan of going to work abroad. Men are also ready to work abroad for a longer period than women. 40% of the men and 25% of the women wanting to go to work abroad are ready to stay for longer than a year. (Figure 4).

2.2. Age

With regard to age, there is a clear tendency of decrease in the migration potential of older people. Nearly half (46%) of the total number of potential migrants are young people aged 15–24 (Figure 5). Most of them are school-age children, aged 15–19 (27% of all potential migrants). As people become older and are more strongly devoted to a steady job and family-related responsibilities, the interest towards working abroad decreases considerably. This primarily applies to women. The share of women wanting to work abroad

falls drastically after the age of 35, which is obviously related to the roles they play in the household and the need for care of children.

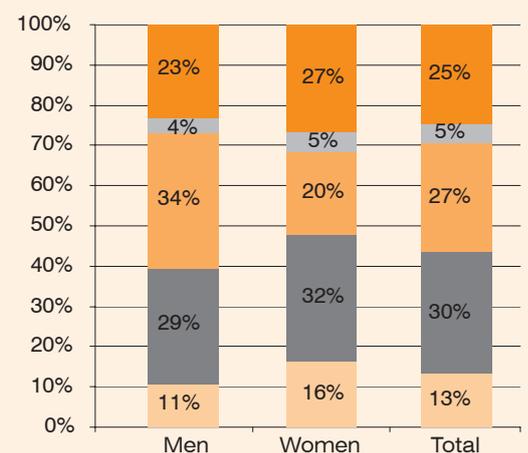
Although young people are very interested in working abroad, their plans are much more uncertain as compared to other age groups. 17% of young people aged 15–24 would definitely want to go to work abroad, the rest has only thought of this. The share of those not able to specify the desirable duration of their stay abroad was biggest among the youngest age group, which refers to the fact that in case of suitable opportunities, a high percentage of young people would rather decide in favour of working in Estonia.

Compared to the previous years, the interest in working abroad among the population has decreased in all age groups.

Men are prepared to work abroad for longer periods than women.

Figure 4. People wanting to work abroad by gender and the preferred length of stay, 2006

% of the people wanting to work abroad



- Difficult to say, have not thought
- Permanently
- Longer than a year
- Up to a year
- 1-2 months

2.3. Nationality

Although the share of people wanting to work abroad is almost equal among Estonians and non-Estonians (26% and 24%, respectively), the bigger differences in nationality occur by gender. Non-Estonian women are the least interested in going to work abroad; only one-fifth (20%) of them were willing to work abroad. At the same time, 25% of Estonian women and as much as 29% of non-Estonian men want to work abroad. The outlined differences are small but somewhat expected taking into account the lower economic activity rates among non-Estonian women in general.

According to the survey of 2006, 66% of non-Estonians wanting to go to work abroad have acquired Estonian citizenship. One of the factors that affect the higher migration activity of people with Estonian citizenship¹³ is certainly the fact that being EU citizens, they have more rights and freedoms to move within the common labour market. On the other hand, the relatively better language skills of non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship as compared to that of the Russian citizens or stateless persons may have an important role here. We must also take into account

the fact that Estonian citizenship has primarily been acquired by the younger generation non-Estonians who have better language skills and who differ from Estonians less than those in older age groups.

2.4. Education

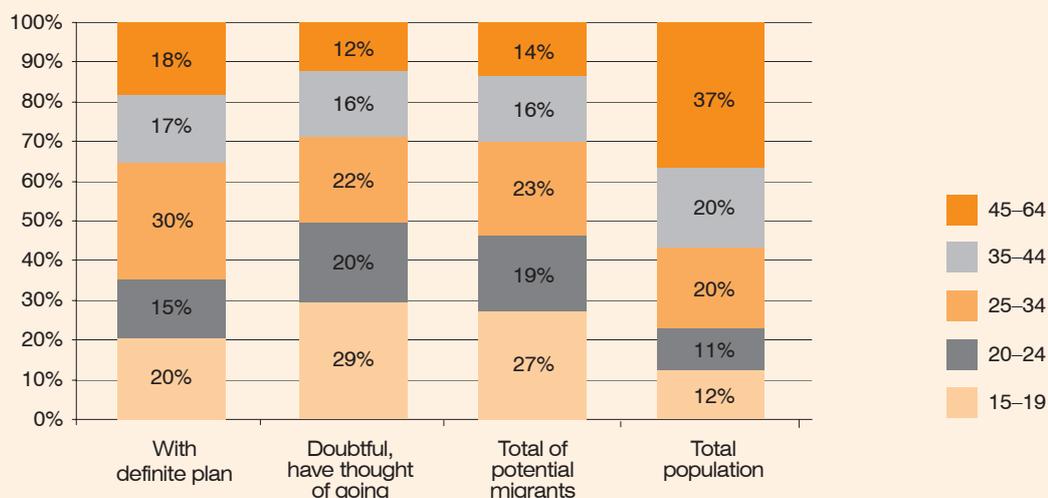
The level of education is also important when migration behaviour is analysed. In general, it has been found that people with higher education are more mobile and have better skills and abilities to work abroad (e.g. better language skills). There is also a migration policy to promote immigration of qualified workers in Europe. However, there are generally better employment opportunities and working conditions (incl. salary) for people with higher education also in the native labour market. The structure of labour demand in other countries may affect migration patterns more than the imposition of administrative measures can ever do. For example, foreign workforce is often needed and recruited more actively to the positions requiring lower qualification and for seasonal jobs (e.g. in services sector, agriculture, construction). Additionally, there is a movement of workers in the

Young people are more eager to work abroad.

Many young people would probably choose to work in Estonia if provided with suitable conditions.

Figure 5. Distribution of people wanting to work abroad by age groups, 2006

% of the people wanting to work abroad



¹³ According to the present survey, 48% of non-Estonians have acquired Estonian citizenship. According to the Census of 2000, 40% of non-Estonians had Estonian citizenship.

east-west direction also in medical sector due to the decrease and ageing of the population.

According to the survey of 2006, the highest share (64%) of people wanting to work abroad is among those with secondary education¹⁴, 24% have basic and 12% higher education. The ratio has remained more or less the same compared to the year 2003 and the result mostly conforms to the overall division of educational levels in Estonia. This means that migration is not a phenomenon characteristic of one certain group alone.

Settling abroad is easier for single people without children.

At the same time, the overall interest in migration has decreased with people at all educational levels, most of all among people with higher education. In 2006, 18% of all people with higher education wanted to work abroad, in 2003 the respective percentage was 37% and in 2000 as high as 54%. People with basic education have the highest expectations for an employment abroad, nearly a third (32%) of them would be interested in working elsewhere. Also, quarter (25%) of people with secondary education is the potential migrants.

Thus, it seems that in the period of fast employment and economic growth especially people with higher education have been professionally engaged and found opportunities also in Estonia and do not go abroad to look for a better job.

There were no significant differences detected with regard to the preferred duration of the employment abroad by education level. However, the higher was a person's educational level, the more certain he or she was in the migration intentions. Nearly a third of the people with basic education could not tell for how long they were going to work abroad. Similarly, the share of people who have made preparations for going to work elsewhere (e.g. collected information, applied for a job, etc.) was the smallest among those with basic education.

Although there is no higher migration activity noticed among one certain education group, working in a position that conforms to one's educational level is considered of great importance. Surveys on cross-border mobility within the European Union have shown that it is workers from the new Member States who rather have jobs requiring lower qualification.

2.5. Marital status

People's migration behaviour is strongly influenced by their marital status. On the one hand, moving abroad may be easier for single and childless people, but the necessity of taking care of a family and children may, on the other, be an economic incentive for going to work abroad.

The highest share (50%) of those wanting to work abroad is among single people. 41% of people wanting to work abroad are married or living with a partner and the rest of about 10% are divorced or widowed.

Compared to the year 2003, interest in migration has decreased among both single people or people living alone and people in a conjugal relationship. The lowest share of people wanting to work abroad is among married people. 14% (33% in 2003) of married people would like to go to work abroad, the respective percentage among unmarried people living with a partner is 27% (39% in 2003). 42% of people living alone¹⁵ are willing to work abroad (the percentage was as high as 65% in 2003).

Consequently, people in a conjugal relationship (married or living with a partner) have a smaller migration potential than single people or people living alone. The biggest gender difference is between men and women in a conjugal relationship. When the migration frequency among single men and women is very similar

¹⁴ Secondary education includes both secondary and vocational secondary, secondary specialized education .

¹⁵ People living alone include widows, widowers and divorced people although their behaviour resembles more to that of married people. This does not affect the results of the survey due to the very low share of them among the respondents.

(43% of single women and 42% of single men would like to work abroad), 22% of men and 15% of women married or living with a partner are willing to go to work abroad. Migration frequency is the lowest in case of married women, with only 10% of them willing to go to work abroad. Thus, it may be presumed that a family influences migration intentions more in women than in men.

In summary, the profile of people wanting to work abroad does not differ substantially from that of the previous surveys. Compared to the period before the accession to the European Union, the wish to work abroad has decreased among 15–64 year old people in almost all population groups. It is interesting to compare the obtained results with those of other similar surveys. For example, according to the results of the Eurobarometer survey on migration intentions, carried out in all European Union countries in 2005, the labour migration rate within the EU has increased mostly among

young people, people with higher education and women. Another study showed that the migrants from the new Member States (EU-10) tend to be younger, with lower educational level and more likely married as compared to the workers from the older Member States (European Commission 2006b).

The present survey shows that in Estonia young and single people, people with lower education level and lower income have a stronger desire to work abroad. However, the desire to work abroad in older people and those with higher education is more definite and the plans are clearer. Therefore, it is difficult to assess in which target group the actual migration behaviour corresponds most to the expected one.

When the present chapter analysed the personal characteristics of the people wanting to work abroad we will next look at them by different labour market and job characteristics.

The migration potential is lowest among married women.

3. Professional background of people wanting to work abroad

3.1. People wanting to work abroad by labour market status

The highest share of those wanting to work abroad is among students.

Like in the previous years, the proportion of employed persons (54%) and students (36%) among the people wanting to work abroad was the highest. Unemployed persons, retired or persons staying at home for other reasons only made up nearly 10% of all potential migrants (see Figure 6). Compared to the previous years, the share of employed persons among the potential migrants has decreased and that of students increased.

It appears from the survey that the highest share of people wanting to go abroad is among pupils and students (in total 53% of the people belonging to the respective group). Unemployed persons are also very likely to go to work abroad: a third (33%) of

them would work abroad if such opportunity became available. The share of potential migrants among both employed persons and people staying at home is 21%. Students are least definite in their plans as compared to the other groups (28% of them have thought of going to work abroad but never made any definite plans).

3.2. People wanting to work abroad by sector and profession

By sector or area of activity (Figure 7), the highest share of people wanting to go to work abroad is among those working in manufacturing (20%) and construction sector (17%). The group third in size includes people working in wholesale and retail trade (14% of the total number of potential labour migrants).

Figure 6. People wanting to work abroad by labour market status (2000–2006)

% of the people wanting to work abroad

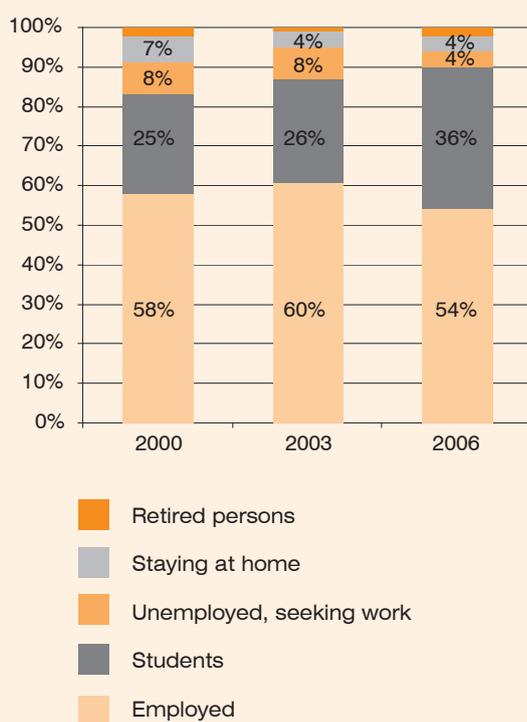
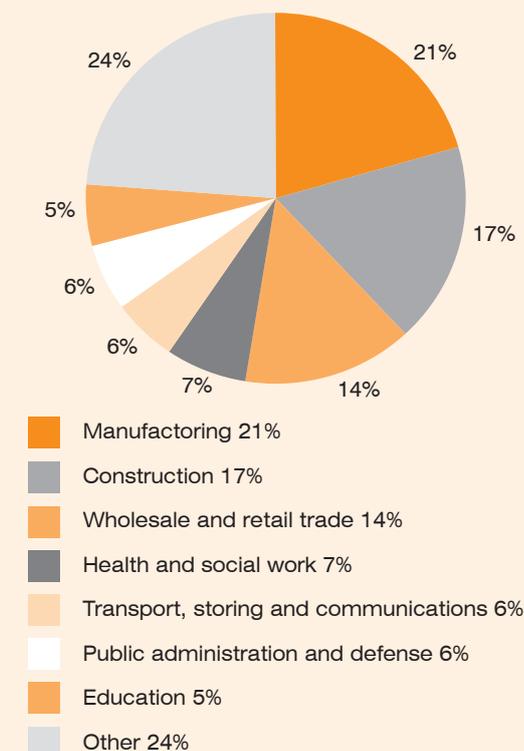


Figure 7. People wanting to work abroad by sector, 2006

% of the people wanting to work abroad



Migration frequency is higher also in case of people working in the medical sector. People working in the field of financial intermediation are comparatively less interested in working abroad; the same applies to agricultural workers.

What kind of job and which sector would the people wanting to migrate prefer? The most often mentioned sectors included construction sector (37%) and working in hotels and restaurants (32% of the answers). 21% of the potential labour migrants would also agree to work in the agricultural sector. In 2003, the sectors most often mentioned were agriculture and service sector.

There were differences in **occupational preferences** between men and women. Men preferred most working as builders and women in the areas of customer service. Men also named the jobs of a chauffer, bus driver, and computer specialist/work with a computer; women mentioned also working as a baby sitter or a care-worker, and the jobs of a cleaner and waitress. Work in the construction and customer service areas were characteristic of the choices of younger people, working as a chauffer or a bus driver was considered an option in older age groups.

3.3. Satisfaction with the present employment

Regardless of the job or field of activity, people can or cannot be satisfied with their work and employment in Estonia. It is obvious that in the sectors where labour demand exceeds its supply, the upward pressure on wages is stronger. At the EU level, free movement of workers is considered one of the means for decreasing structural unemployment (for people move from the areas with high unemployment rates to the areas and sectors in need of workforce). Apart from the actual employment opportunities and wage level, labour migration may also be caused by dissatisfaction with the present working conditions or insecurity of employment.

The present survey does not enable us to relate the desire to work abroad to a certain wage level or income. The share of potential migrants among people with lower and those with higher income is relatively similar. A migration decision is likely to be influenced by several factors (e.g. those with lower income are motivated by the possibility of earning more money and those with higher income by better career opportunities).

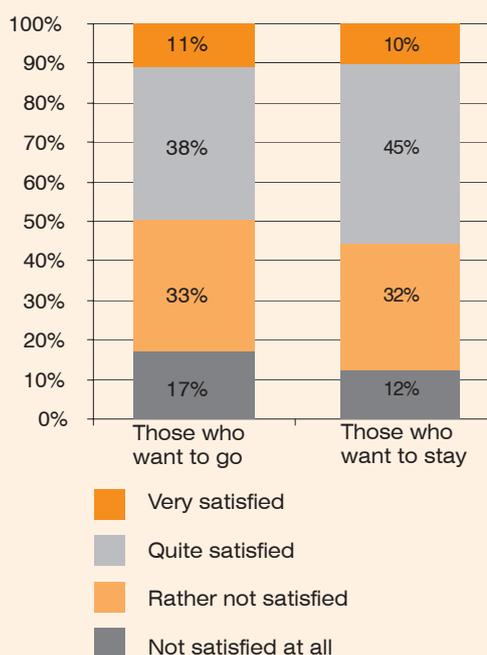
As we try to find out the income satisfaction level among the potential labour migrants and those wanting to stay in Estonia (Figure 8), it appears that people wanting to go to work abroad are less satisfied with their income than those staying working in Estonia. 17% of the total number of people wanting to go to work abroad and 12% of those preferring to stay in Estonia are absolutely not satisfied with their salary.

The survey also looked at other satisfaction aspects regarding the present employment, for example, the content of work, working conditions, working hours and arrangement,

Men prefer working abroad in the field of construction, women in customer service.

Dissatisfaction with wages and career opportunities increases the desire to go to work abroad.

Figure 8. Satisfaction with the present salary among potential migrants and people wanting to stay in Estonia, 2006
% of the respective group



In comparison with men, women are more tolerant to offered job.

employment security as well as career and in-service training opportunities. The results revealed dissatisfaction with salary, yet also with career and in-service training opportunities provided by the current employment. 45% of the persons wanting to go abroad and 38% of those preferring to stay in Estonia were not satisfied with the latter. A higher share of people whose present job would require a lower qualification and those whose work does not correspond to their professional qualification among the potential migrants compared to that among people staying in Estonia, can explain the difference in those figures. According to the results of the survey, 17% of potential migrants have a job requiring lower qualification and 46% work in another speciality. Thus, one of the incentives for going to work abroad is a situation where a person cannot fully apply his or her knowledge and skills in the home country.

A quarter of the total number of people wanting to go abroad was not satisfied with their employment security (Figure 9). 17% of those

intending to stay in Estonia were not positive about their job security.

Nearly half (42%) of the people wanting to go abroad considered it likely to lose their current job within 12 months or leave their employment at own request. At the same time, only 18% of the people wanting to stay in Estonia considered losing their job or leaving their employment likely. Hence, it may be concluded that satisfaction with one's job and employment relations as well as expectations for retaining a job or finding a new one if necessary, i.e. employment security, is a very important factor affecting people's decision to migrate.

3.4. Expectations towards employment abroad

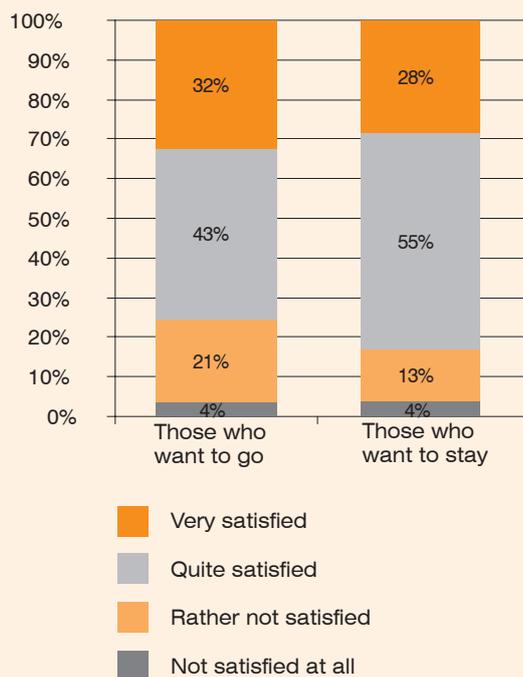
The majority of people wanting to work abroad would prefer work requiring at least the same qualification as the work they presently do or did in their latest employment. 19% are willing to work in a job that requires slightly lower qualification and 15% would be willing to do any work abroad. Women are more tolerant to the offered work than men. While half of the men would like to do work abroad that requires the same qualifications, only a third of the women considered this important.

Most of the potential migrants think that their salary should be at least equal to that of the local residents doing the same work. Nearly a third (29%) of them would agree to work for a slightly lower salary. People planning to stay abroad for a longer period are more demanding with regard to working conditions than those planning to stay for a shorter time.

Compared to the year 2003, people have become more selective about the employment abroad, apart from a higher income, finding a professional job and opportunities for self-education have become motives for working abroad.

Figure 9. Satisfaction with employment security among potential migrants and people staying in Estonia, 2006

% of the respective group



All in all, it can be said that the opportunities for working abroad are more attractive to people working in jobs that require lower qualifications (builders, front-line staff) for they would probably gain relatively more in income than the people who are satisfied with their current work and salary. The latter

would rather go abroad to get new experience (e.g. young people). It is pleasing to see that the potential migrants consider important not losing their qualification while working abroad and getting, apart from a higher income, opportunities for self-education and new experience.

4. Preferred destinations for labour migration

Prior to looking in detail the reasons for going to work abroad, we identify the preferred destination countries Estonian residents to go to work to.

Finland is still the most preferred destination for migrants from Estonia. Its importance as a destination country for labour migration has been increasing since 2000. In 2000, Finland was preferred by 30% of people wanting to work abroad; the respective percentage in 2003 was 34% and as high as 43% in 2006.

Great Britain, surpassing Germany, has become the second most preferred destination for the potential migrants with 19% of respondents willing to go to work there. Such a change in the destination preferences was expected, as Great Britain was one of the countries, along with Sweden and Ireland, which opened their labour market to the new Member States in 2004. Germany still exercises its right to maintain restrictions on the free movement of people from the new Member States¹⁶.

Thus, the accession of Estonia to the EU and the decision of the old Member States to open their labour markets to the new Member States have affected people's preferences with regard to migration directions.

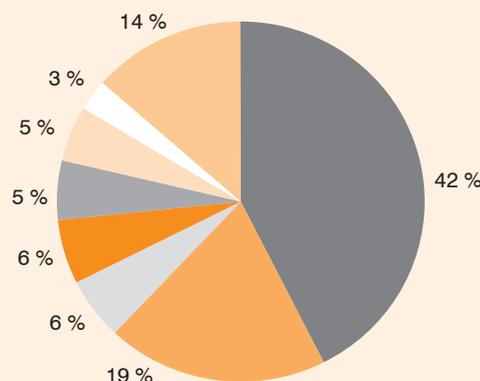
By nationality, the first preference labour migration destination for Estonians is Finland as the country closest to them both geographically and culturally. Half (50%) of Estonians and a

quarter (25%) of non-Estonians would first go to work in Finland. For non-Estonians, the most preferred destination is Great Britain that was named by 32% of non-Estonians wanting to go to work abroad. Compared to Estonians, non-Estonians are also more willing to work in Germany or the USA.

The most popular destinations are Finland and Great Britain.

Figure 10. The first preference of destinations for people wanting to go to work abroad, 2006

% of the people wanting to work abroad



¹⁶The right to maintain restrictions is valid until the year 2011. Most of the states have, however, progressively opened their labour markets as no massive immigration from the new Member States has been observed (European Commission 2006).

People prefer countries closer to their home country as they become older.

The preferences in migration destinations by age group show that by getting older, people prefer working in states closer to their native country. 31% of younger people (aged 15–24) and more than half of the people older than 35 named Finland as their first preference among migration destinations. The share of those who would rather prefer working in English-speaking countries (Great Britain, the USA) is higher among young people. The same tendency can be observed when looking at the destination preferences by labour market status. While students prefer Great Britain (29%), only 15% of employed people consider Great Britain as the country of their future employment. At the same time, 50% of employed people and 30% of students would prefer working in Finland.

Comments given by the respondents reveal that Finland is preferred primarily for its close location and Great Britain for its suitable language environment. With Norway, the good wage level and with the USA, the multiplicity of job opportunities was seen as the main reasons for migration.

The respondents considered language skills, geographical location and wage level as the most important factors (about a third of the people wanting to go to work abroad named these three aspects as important) influencing the choice of labour migration destination. Nearly a quarter (23%) thinks that it is important to have acquaintances in the destination country.

The fact that men considered proximity to home and women language skills as the most important criteria is of interest.

People wanting to go to work abroad for a shorter period value most the proximity to home (46% named the aspect as important) and language skills (named by 34%). Those wanting to go to work abroad for a longer period consider language skills slightly more important (49%) than the proximity to home (40%).

In summary, the exclusively most preferred destination country for migrants from Estonia is Finland. However, people intending to stay abroad for a longer period consider other destination countries as well.

5. Factors affecting the intentions to work abroad

Main motivation to work abroad is better wages.

When the previous analysis was focused on the characteristics of people wanting to go to work abroad, next, the factors affecting migration decision are analysed.

In the course of the survey “Eurobarometer Survey on Geographical and Labour Market Mobility” (Vandenbrande et al 2006) carried out in the member States of the European Union in 2005, migration experience of all residents of the EU States was studied. It appeared that people who had lived in another Member State named a change of employment as the most important reason for migration. 30% of the persons from the old and 36% of the persons from the new Member States have changed their country of residence because of a new job or a trans-

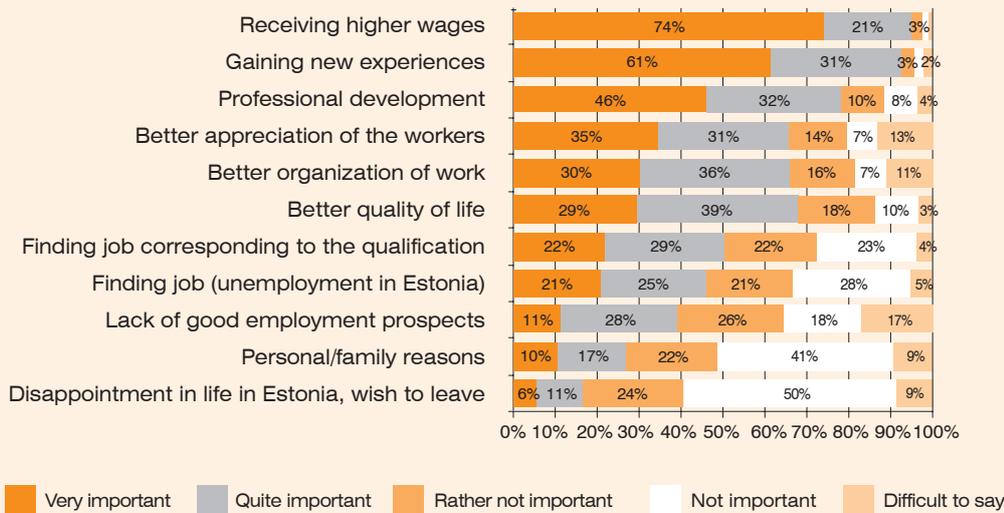
fer of employment/transfer to another position. In addition to economic incentives (a new job, higher wages), family-related issues also affect migration decisions. For example, a changed marital status (marriage, change of partner) is an important incentive for a change of the residence country or commencing a new employment. The third important migration incentive outlined in the survey is a desire to improve one’s living conditions, e.g. give up the status of a tenant or move to better accommodation. (European Commission 2006, pp 230–231).

The aforementioned survey showed that the most relevant incentives for labour migration, in the opinion of the EU citizens, are better working conditions and the salary or

Mostly young people consider also gaining new experiences as a motivation.

Figure 11. Importance of the reasons for going to work abroad, 2006

% of the people wanting to go abroad



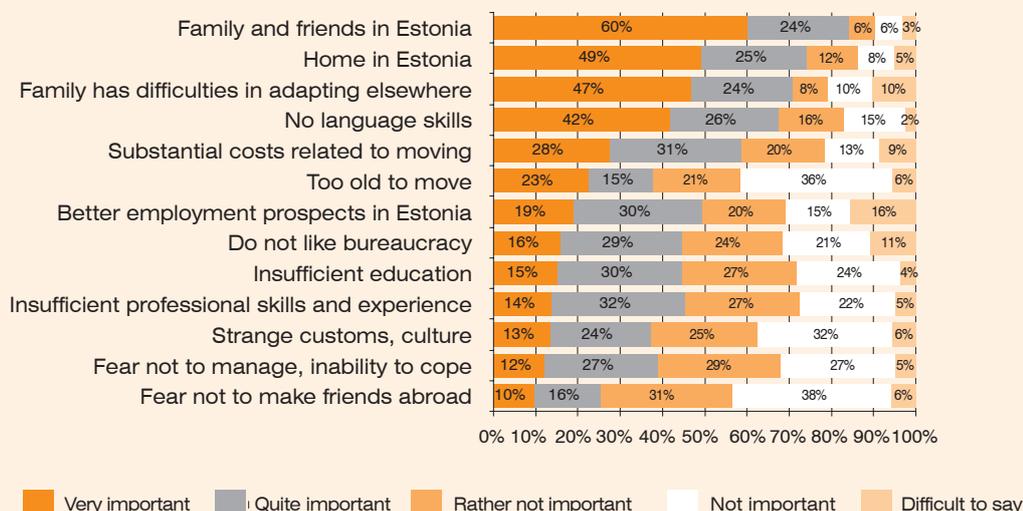
the opportunity to earn a higher income. A third of the respondents also think that working abroad enables to learn a new culture and language and a one-fifth consider a better climate as compared to the one in their native country as an incentive for migration (the latter is yet more important for the citizens of the older Member States). The main barriers to migration are losing contact with a family and friends and losing their daily support in taking care of children or older members of the family.

The migration potential survey carried out in Estonia confirmed the results of the pan-European survey with regard to the factors most affecting labour migration. As shown in Figure 11, the people wanting to go to work abroad consider higher income opportunities available abroad the most important incentive for migration; the opinion prevailed also in the results of the surveys conducted in Estonia in 2000 and 2003. The second most popular incentive is the desire to broaden the mind and gain new experience that is valued

People do not wish to be separated from their family and home.

Figure 12. Importance of barriers to labour migration, 2006

% of the working-age population



Poor language skills are another obstacle for working abroad.

primarily by young people. Difficulties in finding a job in Estonia is placed rather low on the importance scale while the so-called softer values, like professional development opportunities, valuing employees, better organization of work abroad, etc. have come to the foreground.

The availability of information about employment opportunities and working conditions in other countries also affects migration potential.

According to the survey, the lack of information about job vacancies is most acute. The respondents also thought that there should be more general information available about working conditions and employment opportunities offered abroad, but also specific information about living conditions and wages. Unemployed people value more highly information about job vacancies and wages, employed people consider general information and information about the documentation required for working abroad and about operation procedures more important.

Conclusions

Issues related to migration have been attracting the public attention since the beginning of the accession negotiations with the European Union if not even earlier, since the time the first opportunities to migrate became available. In the context of the accession to the EU, migration for employment purposes has had a remarkable influence on the societies of both new and old Member States and many scientists and policy researchers have specialized in studying this phenomenon.

Unfortunately, collecting of population statistics has not been able to keep up with these developments and, therefore, we do not have the exact information about residence changes and the reasons thereof. Surveys carried out for studying migration intentions among working-age population ordered by the Ministry of Social Affairs contribute to filling this information gap.

The present publication gives an overview of the most important results of the last survey and the changes in the migration intentions of Estonian population compared to the time before the accession to the EU. Such surveys help best to find out the population groups most affected by migration and incentives or barriers to migration intentions, etc.

The results of the survey showed that the number of people in Estonia intending to go to work abroad has somewhat decreased as compared to time before the accession to the EU. In 2003, 4.3% of the working-age population had made specific preparations for and had definitely decided to go to work abroad, by 2006, the respective percentage had fallen down to 3.9% (app. 36,000 people). The number of people leaving Estonia within the next five years forecast by international studies is approximately the same.

A slight decrease in the migration potential can be explained by the increase in the employment rate in Estonia in the last years that has given many people an opportunity to find a suitable job closer to their home and family. The wage increase brought along by the fast economic growth in Estonia has also somewhat decreased the difference in income level compared to the old EU Member States. However, we cannot ignore the fact that many of those who intended to go to work abroad have already had the opportunity to leave Estonia after the accession to the EU. Therefore, the issues concerning the competences of the people leaving Estonia and whether they return to apply their experience

obtained abroad or settle permanently elsewhere are increasingly important.

Very briefly it can be said that migration behaviour and migration intentions of different population groups depend largely on people's stage of life. Young people are the most active among those wanting to go abroad, however, as people grow older, their desire to change their country of residence decreases. At the same time, the strong interest in working abroad of young people and especially school-age (15–19 years old) children shows that they can see employment opportunities for themselves also outside Estonia. Yet, their migration plans are much less definite as compared to the older age groups and it is likely that under suitable conditions, many of them will stay in Estonia.

Although the share of men and women among the potential migrants is almost the same, non-Estonian women and married women with a migration activity lower than average stand up among the rest. Women prefer working abroad primarily in their young age (under age 35) and stay there for a shorter period. Family traditions and attitudes obviously have an important role here.

Compared to the previous years, the number of people wanting to work abroad has decreased with regard to all educational levels, but mainly among people with higher education whose employment opportunities and working conditions have presumably improved the most within the last years. It is also possible that some of people with higher education have already found better employment opportunities abroad.

The most preferred labour migration destinations are Finland, favoured mostly for its location, and Great Britain where one can manage by having some knowledge of English.

The migration potential survey carried out in Estonia confirmed the results of the pan-European study with regard to the factors most affecting labour migration. The people wanting to go to work abroad consider higher income the most important incentive for migration, the opinion prevailed also in the results of the surveys carried out in Estonia in 2000 and 2003. The second most popular reason for migration was getting new experience. The latter is valued most by younger respondents. Problems with finding a suitable job in Estonia are placed rather low on the importance scale. Compared to the previous years, the importance of the so-called softer values, like professional development opportunities, appreciation of the employees, better organization of work abroad, etc. has increased.

In the time that the number of young people entering the labour market decreases year by year, a migration rate of 3–4% may be a considerable number of people from the employers' point of view. We must be conscious of the fact that although income and better working conditions are the main motives for migration at the moment, there are other reasons to it. Young people, primarily, would like to go abroad in order to broaden the mind, gain new experience, develop language skills, etc. Knowledge and skills acquired while studying or working abroad and the remittances sent home help to compensate the possible negative effects arising from migration. Thus, migration may have both positive and negative consequences that can be directed by means of conscious and wise migration policy decisions. Under the circumstances of free movement within the EU and the globalisation of the world, migration will continue to exist to a certain extent even if the importance of economic incentives to working abroad decreased.

Migration potential will probably remain between 3–4% of working-age population.

Policy recommendations

The present chapter provides some suggestions for policy makers that are worth considering while developing Estonian migration policy.

1) In order to increase the positive effects of migration, it is important that people who have gone to study or work abroad would return to apply the acquired knowledge and experience in Estonia.

Attention should be paid to the potential migration of young and qualified people.

- **Youth-targeted information.** Young people are most willing to go abroad, but they are also more uncertain in their intentions as compared to other age groups. Under favourable circumstances, many of them would probably stay in Estonia. It is important to inform young people about the opportunities and choices for career in Estonia. On the one hand, studying abroad should be supported to improve the skills, on the other hand, young people should be encouraged to return to their native country to apply their knowledge and experience here.

- **Encouraging people with higher education to return.** Possibilities of attracting people with higher education (e.g. PhD candidates, scientists) to return should be considered. This can be done by keeping in touch with students abroad (e.g. in cooperation with the education institution), informing them of the latest developments in Estonian labour market and employment opportunities here.

- **Supporting the people returning to Estonia.** People, who have left Estonia some time ago, may be hindered from returning by both financial problems and lack of information. It is important to offer state support (e.g. through the foundation Estonian Migration Fund) and give them more information about the relevant opportunities (e.g. through embassies or certain information offices abroad).

Both financial issues and lack of information may be barriers to returning to Estonia.

- **Wages and working conditions.** Wages and working conditions are the most important factors affecting the migration decision. The employers in both private and public sector can contribute at this point, providing their employees with better working conditions as well as career and self-education opportunities.

- **Better appreciation of the employees.** The state, public and employers should consistently communicate the message telling that each person and worker is needed and valued in Estonia. Awareness of the fact that you are valued may decrease a person's wish to leave the country or motivate him or her to return.

- **Informing of rights and obligations.** It is important to ensure that people knew their rights and obligations when living and working in a foreign state. It is relevant with regard to the protection of the citizens and the reputation of Estonia. The state can arrange such informing through different channels and networks, incl. in co-operation with other states.

2) The other side of the "Migration coin" is immigration and the development of the relevant policy for ensuring a qualified labour force supply.

- **Immigration management.** One of the means of moderating labour shortage is immigration. It is necessary to analyse and enhance the awareness of the impact to the society to receive immigrants.

- **Paying attention to sectoral labour force shortage.** There are certain sectors from which people more often go to work abroad. Traditionally these include e.g. health, service sector and skilled employment that are less attractive for the citizens of wealthier countries. On national level the forecast of

labour needs should also consider emigration potential and assess which areas would require additional labour force from abroad in order to avoid labour force shortage.

- **More efficient use of local labour resources.** Under the conditions of economic growth and emigration it is important to enter into the labour market those people who are not yet employed for various reasons, although they would be able to work. Therefore it is necessary to develop the opportunities for lifelong study, active labour market measures, employment-supportive services, infrastructure, flexible forms of employment, and other measures that would help to overcome obstacles for finding or maintaining jobs.

3) Carrying out the migration analyses necessary for making policy decisions and collecting relevant data.

- **Collecting immigration and migration statistics.** Until the information about actual migration is not collected or published, it is difficult to find out the extent of outflow of brains or working hands and provide pro or contra argumentation. At this point one solution is provided by the Regulation of the European Community adopted in July 2007, according to which all EU member states are required to submit immigration and migration statistics based on single methodology starting from 2009.

- **Evaluation of labour migration effects.**

The impact of migration on economy and other spheres of life require further examination and evaluation. Will Estonia gain or lose due to the migration (e.g. investments in education, which leave the country together with people vs. application of experience gained abroad)? What effect, if any, has migration had on labour force supply and level of wages? It is known that many people working abroad do not spend their income abroad, but send or bring it to Estonia (eg remittances). In order to provide more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of emigration on Estonia it is necessary to find out the proportion of income earned abroad with regard to total consumption or investments in Estonia.

In summary, we must consider that migration is a two-way process and for developing an integral policy we need to take into account the opportunities and challenges related to both immigration and migration. To avoid a shortage of qualified labour, on the one hand, the state has to take measures to motivate people who have acquired knowledge, skills and experience abroad return to Estonia. On the other hand, deliberate decisions on recruiting immigrant labour in Estonia have to be made. Finally, all policy decisions must be based on quality information that has to be supported by migration statistics and necessary studies and analyses.

People would be inclined to stay in Estonia in case of better working conditions and valuing of employees.

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Facts from the survey

- 26% of working age population intends or considers working abroad.
- The number of people potentially going to work abroad has decreased by about a third.
- Migration will probably remain between 3–4% of working-age population.
- About half of those who wish to work abroad have made actual preparations for that.
- 5% of people potentially going to work abroad would leave permanently.
- Working abroad is the most attractive for young people aged 15–24.
- Migration intentions are more modest among non-Estonian women and married women.
- Men are prepared to work abroad for longer periods than women.
- Students and the unemployed are more willing to go abroad than employed people.
- Most of the people would like to work abroad either in construction sector (37%), hotels and restaurants (32% of respondents) or agriculture (21%).
- The most preferred destinations are Finland and Great Britain.
- Main reason for going to work abroad is higher wages and possibility to gain new experiences.
- Major barriers to work abroad are family and relatives who would stay behind or poor language skills.

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