

STUDENT MOBILITY OR EMIGRATION FLOW?

THE CASE OF STUDENTS COMMUTING FROM SERBIA TO HUNGARY

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Cite this article: Takac, Z., Szügyi, E. (2015). Student Mobility or Emigration Flow? The Case of Students Commuting from Serbia to Hungary. *Deturope*, 7, 1: 120-136

Abstract

Student mobility between two European countries in transition, Hungary and Serbia, was considered for the period 2001-2010. The high motivation and number of Hungarian-speaking students emigrating/commuting to Hungary began in 1990, with the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars. In 2010, 1,385 Hungarian-speaking students (from Vojvodina, Serbia) studied in Hungary and 3,152 in Serbia. *Student mobility between Hungary and Serbia is highly concentrated and causes a very low returning rate of educated young elite (approximately 30%).* For this reason, the future of the Hungarian minority has begun to be put into question in Serbia, in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where their percentage within whole population is noticeably decreasing (1991: 16.9%, 2001: 14.3%). *The research has been focused on answering the following questions: Are there integration conflicts in the autochthon minority within the state borders of Serbia? What can higher education offer to these students? Does the region offer enough to provide perspectives for young members of the elite? Will early student mobility end with continuous emigration?*

Empirical background: *Interviews with young adult migrants from Serbia to Hungary; Location: Serbia. Objective:* To examine the motives and willingness to emigrate among the Hungarian young adults/students from Vojvodina. *Interview subjects:* 18 university/college students or young adults with a diploma (from Vojvodina). It is important to note that only those young adults were interviewed who have returned to Serbia having finished their educational career or who are likely to come back later. *Conclusions in brief:* The Yugoslav Wars, worsening economic conditions, and low living standards have significantly influenced the willingness of the youth to migrate. The motives of migration among the Hungarian youth in Vojvodina are gaining professional experience, broadening knowledge, and improving language. *Hungary is the first target country of migration for linguistic and cultural reasons and in the last 20 years has naturally become the target country of permanent settling and emigration of the young Hungarian elite.*

Keywords: higher education, student mobility between Hungary and Serbia, emigration, return migration

INTRODUCTION

The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is the only autonomous province in Serbia that, after historical changes, has preserved the multiethnic structure of its population even

today. It is a European region where about thirty different autochthon national minorities or ethnic groups live together. The Serbs, who established the state, are the most numerous national group, followed by Hungarians, whose number, according to the 2002 census, was 290,207 (total population in Vojvodina: 2,024,487). The numbers of the Hungarian national group are *declining*. In 1961, there were 442,561; in 1981, the number decreased to 385,356, and in 2002, the number went down to 290,207. The number of Vojvodinian Hungarians has fallen about 50,000, or round 17 %. These numbers don't add up for the past 15 years (Gábrity Molnár, 2003, 2006a, 2008a, Penev et al., 2007).

The hardship of minority life has resulted in continuous assimilation, an aging population, and emigration in many cases. A basic characteristic of Hungarians as a nation is their rural mentality, which revolves around the perpetual seeking of success in the homeland. In spite of the constant efforts made for preserving cultural and national identity – in parallel with an intensification of nationalism over the past twenty years and under socio-political pressure – the living space of Hungarians in Vojvodina has been narrowed to the region on the River Tisa and to some scattered settlements. Hungarian-language schools provide education for the national group up to secondary-school level. Higher education in Vojvodina does not provide adequate (and sufficient) potential for young Hungarians (Gábrity Molnár, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2006b, 2007, 2008c; Takács, 2008, 2009).

Given the political and social changes in Central Eastern Europe, the conflicts of internal Serbian politics (e.g., wars, embargoes, bombing, and intensifying nationalism), the elimination first of mental and then of physical borders (simplified process for obtaining Hungarian citizenship), ambitious Hungarian intellectuals of Vojvodina have turned towards Hungary (Nađ, 2006; Gábrity Molnár, 2006a, 2008a, 2008b; Korhecz, 2009). To sum up, first, the national minority's view of the conditions provided by the Serbian higher education system, and second, the negative social (political and moral) reorganisation happening in Serbia have activated the movement of the inhabitants in the border region and have motivated emigration.

In order to present the processes of migration for educational purposes in the Serbian–Hungarian border region, this study based on a literature review and statistical analyses in addition to primary data sources (sociological depth interviews).

Young Vojvodinian Hungarians in migration processes in Serbia and Hungary

Hungary became an interesting destination for migrants from Serbia after the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Serbia (SFRY). Between 1988 and 1999, 155,105 refugees arrived in Hungary (Tóth Pál, 2001). About 30% of the refugees were Hungarians. Grečić considers Hungary as a location of significant ethnic migration (Grečić, 2001), with a remarkable continuity (Takač-Kinčeš, 2010). Nađ describes the period between 1991 and 1993 as the years when intellectuals left, limited-liability companies (Ltds) were founded, and capital fled (Nađ, 2006); workers and students who had finished secondary school also left in this period (Tóth Pál, 1997, cited by Gábrity Molnár, 2001).

The education of youth has been (and is) one of Hungary's most important roles. Between 1988 and 1994 10.3% of all foreign students studying in Hungary were Hungarians from Yugoslavia (Tóth Pál, 1997). Gábrity Molnár in her research cites the 1999/2000 school year when 395 primary school pupils, 676 secondary school pupils and 600 students were studying in Hungary (Gábrity Molnár, 2001). In 2001, T. Mirnics summarised the migration motivations of students as follows: the primary reasons are language (problems of mother-tongue Hungarian-speaking school children in a Serbian-language environment (Nađ, 2006)), lower educational standards in Serbia, and poor living conditions at home.

Almost every young adult had already considered the idea of migration, mostly because of better material conditions and professional chances. Hungary is in the first place of preferred target countries, followed by Western Europe, the U.S.A., Australia and Canada (T. Mirnics, 2001). Hungary often acts as a "springboard" (Nađ, 2006) for *transit migrants* (Grečić, 2001). People start to think of migration when they feel that the current situation – the loss of stability in themselves, the environment, the social system of institutions – is no longer tenable (Mežnarić, S., 2003). Mihailović highlights the transition period characterised by gerontocracy, self-destructive public spirit, chaos, and a fight for biological survival. He calls these generations the "victims" of the 1990s, the millennium and the potential future. In his research, "*catastrophic social events*" and their "*social expense*" (or 'social costs') are presented refined (Mihailović, S., 2004).

Young Vojvodinian Hungarians "*obtain a new opportunity by studying abroad*", in a new "*philanthropical environment*" where "*they are only foreigners*", Hungary is a "*gift*" for them, "*they receive it as a temporary residence*" and "*they do not choose it*". This a

country where they have “*more opportunities*” after university, even “*to go on to another advanced western culture*” after becoming acquainted with the “*normal, democratic course of things,*” yet with the awareness that after, finishing their studies, “*it is desirable or compulsory for young Hungarians from neighbouring countries to return to their homeland*” (T. Mirnics, 2001). However, ambitions for learning, further training and professional advancement or even the employment of young people from Serbia remain only desires, since they cannot be fulfilled in Serbia (Mihailović, S., 2004). Preconditions for fulfilling them would be “*democratic development*” of the homeland, “*tolerance*”, “*openness*”, “*normal living conditions*”, and “*job and adequate living opportunities*”, which together may be able to resolve the question of “*leaving or remaining*” among young people (T. Mirnics, 2001). Mihailović’s study reveals that every second youngster from Serbia would like to leave, to go to Europe “*and the developed world, alone, without Serbia!*” Conversely, others want to go to Europe together with Serbia, or better into a time machine, back to the “*famed past*”. In summary, young adults have been waiting for two decades simply “*to graduate and emigrate*” (Mihailović, S., 2004).

Among the losses from emigration, Gábrity Molnár mentions *human, material and demographic* ones, resulting in “*weakness of the region and lack of development potentials*” (Gábrity Molnár, 2008b). The lack of professionals is a source of further problems: among others, slow economic development, decreasing labour productivity, lack of innovation, technological backwardness, and gradual loss of competitiveness. Mihailović considers “*brain drain*” as an especially strong phenomenon in developing and transitional countries, which he already calls “*brain flight*” in the Balkans (Mihailović, S., 2004). Since the 1990s, about 30,000 qualified experts have left Yugoslavia (Grečić, 2001). Gredelj mentions the problems of “*reproducing scientists and researchers*” and “*scattering intellectual capital*” (Gredelj, 2006), while Gábrity Molnár points out that “*some profiles have become irreplaceable*” (Gábrity Molnár, 2008b).

In contrast to this, the Hungarian homeland (or some members of the intellectual elite) is one-sided, hoping that the emigrants will partly or entirely return home. For example, Gredelj in his research deals with the possibility of “*virtual returning*” and the “*interactive virtual networking*” of experts and Serbian intellectual capital. He differentiates several groups: “*those who actually return*”, “*half-breeds*”, “*seasonal emigrants*”, and “*migratory birds*”. These terms need at least a brief explanation/definition. He calls attention to mobilising their knowledge, experience and relationships (Gredelj, 2006). In connection with this, Korhecz would like to dispel the

“*concept of non-liveable homeland*” among the emigrants, in front of whom new chances are open in their former home (Korhecz, 2009). Grečić in 2001 expected the *reformation of the system* by potential returners, “*those who separate professional work from politics*”, *guest professors*, and actors leading and assisting *scientific researches*. He defines two possibilities for utilising the “professional, material potential” represented by Yugoslav emigrants: returning home (*return option*), and the intellectual network of the diaspora (*diaspora option, diaspora network*) (Grečić, 2001).

According to Kocsis Károly’s calculations, migration losses of the Hungarian community living in Serbia between 1948 and 1991 were 69,193 people (Kocsis, 2002. Cites: Gábrity Molnár, 2006a). We face the “disappearing” of new generation intellectual elite when analysing population movements in Serbia on the millennium. Fericsik quotes some estimation in her study, according to which about 50% of young Hungarians coming from neighbouring countries do not return home after finishing their studies in Hungary (Gödri – Tóth, 2005. Cites: Fericsik, 2008), and this way education and higher education is really a *migration channel, which may be considered for the preparatory phase of permanent settling* (Fericsik, 2008), or a possible springboard towards Western Europe.

For compensation of migration losses of Vojvodina Hungarians and for stopping further decrease, it is necessary to provide conditions for permanent remaining in the homeland and for returning there. The migration of Vojvodina Hungarians for educational purposes is reversible, and it should be observed by the political elite as a rationally utilisable phenomenon. The returning of young people graduating in Hungary, mobilising their experience, relationships – trans national networks – are necessary for the local-regional elite in their ambitions for founding a university. A Vojvodian (multiethnic) university could eliminate migration for educational purposes and the further waves of migration over adequate higher educational offer, cross-border organisational solutions, teaching in mother tongue and with the toolset of regional economic development.

Recent cross-border movements – commuting students in the region

The role of border region – from the perspective of 20 years – is redefined, receiving a “*postmodern*” interpretation, where *social, cultural and economic relations between individuals and groups* are revitalising (Langer, 2001). The years of wars have represented the Serbian–Hungarian border as a protecting wall, where young people have left behind a country struggling with huge problems for a more perspective country that provides more comfortable life and better studying conditions. Hungary has become attractive to

youngsters (Tóth Pál, 2001, Gábrity Molnár, 2001, Fábri, 2008, Fercsik, 2008, L. Rédei, 2009). In recent years there is an increasing and more characteristic group of young commuting students who study in Hungary and live in Serbia in the border region. Szeged has a more and more obvious role in higher education (Pál, 2003), and there are some new cross-border migration movements and ways of cooperation (Gábrity Molnár, 2008b).

In 2010, in Hungarian institutions of higher education there were 1,385 students with Serbian citizenship (769 women). The number of regular students was 1,009.905 students were on bachelor studies, 84 on master studies, 97 on undivided studies, 29 on vocational training, 40 students were on doctoral studies, while 230 students participated in other training forms (higher vocational training, college studies etc.). Hungarian students from Serbia make 7.6% of all students with foreign citizenship, mostly from the municipalities of the Tisa region with Hungarian majority. A total of 3,152 students studied in their homeland on the University of Novi Sad (state faculties and colleges). So, about 30-35% of the entire Hungarian contingent of 4,500-4,700 students are studying in Hungary (Ministry of Hungarian Resources, 2011, APV, Pokrajinski sekretarijat za obrazovanje, 2011).

The University of Szeged is the biggest “absorber” in the region. We can see from the application data of Serbian citizens that there is a huge interest for high-quality training in Hungarian teaching language. The number of applicants is high every year. In recent years (2007-2010) about 300 students were applied, while there were 2-3 times more applicants (!). In 2010 there were 927 applicants and 293 students were admitted (on the faculties of the University of Szeged) (Educatio Kht. 2011). The ranking of scientific fields by the number of admitted students: philology (21,5%), natural sciences (16,4%), informatics (8,2%), medicine (20,1%) social sciences (13,3%). Students are very consciously choosing between *professions that are not available* in Serbia (in Hungarian teaching language). The potential migration loss is big since the border represents dynamic movement for educational purposes and a latter emigration channel as well.

Almost half-half is the rate of Vojvodina Hungarians in the analysed border region (Szeged-Subotica) who study at home or in Hungary (based on the statistics of first-year students):⁶¹

- 30% in Hungary (Szeged, Budapest, Pécs, Debrecen),
- 50% on national state faculties, partly in Hungarian teaching language (Subotica-Noví Sad),

⁶¹ Comparative analyses: Central Statistical Office (Budapest) – Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Budapest), Central Statistical Office (Belgrade) – Republički zavod za statistiku (Beograd). 2011.

- 20% on private faculties in and near Subotica, training programs with questionable accreditation.

Some problems emerge from the realistic and existing danger of migration (permanent settling) because $\frac{1}{4}$ of young people remaining in the region has technical qualifications, $\frac{1}{4}$ of them are teachers and kindergarten teachers, and further $\frac{1}{4}$ are economists and managers, so they will be potential graduated unemployed after leaving higher education system! *The aim of this paper is to analyse the characteristics of migration for educational (and partly employment) purposes in the (Hungarian–Serbian) border region, highlighting the success potentials of young graduated intellectuals returning to Serbia.*

PRESENTATION OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Young Hungarian intellectuals of Vojvodina are important members of the Hungarian national community living in Serbia. With their emigration the national community suffers enduring damages (brain drain, loss of social status, biological-reproductive and demographic losses). *This paper analyses the educational career path of young Vojvodina Hungarian students and graduates. Such individuals have been included in the sample, who are/have been studying in the two countries (Serbia and Hungary). They have permanent relationships with trans-national character. Though, the most important circumstance is that after finishing their studies they have returned/will return to their homeland. They do not consider that their long-term prosperity and professional success depends on emigration to Hungary.*

Concerning the methodology, some sociological depth interviews were done with 18 people – graduates, university and college students – in 2010. The interviewees were such Hungarian young people between 24-34 who are attending/have attended economics or engineering⁶² studies in Serbia or Hungary. Two segments have been chosen because, on the one hand, these are among the most preferred professions, and on the other hand, in the case of both branches in Vojvodina these studies are organised partly (economics) or entirely (engineering) in Hungarian teaching language. The selection of interviewees was random, within the predetermined parameters. The difference in genders (12 men, 6 women) can be explained with the fact that mostly men are those who choose engineering training. Territorial distribution of the interviewees: Bečej, Mol, Ada, Senta, Kanjiža,

⁶² In Serbia informatics is taught within engineering studies, so some people with qualifications in informatics have also been involved in the sample.

Subotica, Palić. Hungarian towns concerned in migration for educational purposes are: Szeged, Pécs, Budapest.

The goal of the empirical research was to answer/to attempt to clarify the following questions:

- Why have more and more young Hungarians of Vojvodina chosen higher educational institutions from Hungary for achieving higher qualifications for the past 20 years?
- What circumstances are necessary for providing that students who have graduated abroad may be willing to return home with their knowledge achieved abroad?
- What are the arguments of those who study in Serbia for doing so?
- How strong and what kind of emigration motivation do young Hungarians of Vojvodina have?

Short logical chain of the *hypotheses* posed during the research: migration for educational purposes is a considerable and common event in the border region; positive democratic changes experienced between 2000 and 2008 gave hope to young people and a number of them have returned home after finishing their studies. Beside their emotional attitude towards the homeland, they have also reckoned intensifying existential conditions at the time of finishing their studies. The diploma (distribution of disciplines) can provide success in Vojvodina only jointly with knowing the official language. Every (returning) young Hungarian with university degree is welcomed in the region, even in the case when it is a profession that is fashionable and already in oversupply (e.g. economics-management training).

Widening learning horizons, educational potentials in Hungary and Serbia

During the depth interviews it has been proven that the actual learning orientation preferences of young people abroad and at home, the popular higher education system in Hungary, and the deficiencies of the Serbian/Vojvodinian one are the causes of migration for educational purposes and are characteristic ways of life for young people living in the border region. Based on the opinions of the interviewees, we can formulate the circumstances, under which young Hungarian intellectuals of Vojvodina are willing to return to their homeland, get employed and build a career in Serbia.

Causes – events preceding migration for educational purposes:

- In the period when migration was well-founded (political and social instability, problems, NATO bombing) it was hard (or more difficult) to be admitted to higher educational institutions in Hungary. The exception was year 1999 (spring semester)

because then higher educational institutions in Hungary admitted students from Serbia unconditionally.

- *“In Serbia the situation in '99 was worse than ever before, especially around here you could not see at all if things went in a good direction. Our grammar school teachers were encouraging us even in the second half of the '90s that it would be better and so, but there were teachers who received us on the first day of the bombing (when they sent us home from school) saying that we could have expected anything so far – they had been waiting for the situation to improve for ten years –, but GO NOW, ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, JUST FURTHER FROM THIS COUNTRY! We had teachers who helped us hold on, whose mother tongue is Hungarian, but I think that everybody got the finishing stroke with this year...” (...)*
“I have no time to wait for something to happen. Practically such things led me then.” – economist, 29, University of Pécs, Hungary
- The Hungarian system of university entrance exams has changed (been liberalised) a lot for the past 15 years (expansion of higher education, demographic gap), so in many cases Hungarian students of Vojvodina have decided to study abroad.

Arguments for and against studying abroad:

- Concerning the attainment of profession, it is easier to learn in mother tongue (but in case of employment in the homeland the lack of knowing the official language is an obvious disadvantage),
- Higher education of good quality and high standard, various professions offered, easy accessibility (e.g. Szeged), scholarship policy (Hungarian State, Vojvodina Hungarian Higher Education College),
- Better chances for employment (with more financial benefits), even on the labour market of the European Union.

Arguments/counter-arguments formulated by students remaining at home:

- school preference based on the language of teaching (entirely or partly in Hungarian), disregard of personal motivation and interests (further problems with the language of the environment),
- closeness, expenses (travel costs, residence, favourable schooling fees, state financing) as decisive factors during the selection of school,
- more information (faculties in Subotica and Novi Sad are well-known at home),

- poor quality of higher education, loss of prestige: outdated system, outdated methods (literature from the '70s and '80s), big classes, hierarchic teacher–student relation, counter-selective system.

According to the individual opinion of the interviewees, the chance for learning in Hungarian teaching language decisively influences the selection of institution. In many cases the labour-market prospects of the diploma become marginal. It is especially true in case of Serbia, where the higher education offer is narrow, while Hungary provides great professional potentials for students (individual professional aspirations, later labour-market perspectives). In Serbia the emphasis is on studying at “*any kind of*” faculty, since according to the “general consciousness – in general” it is easier to get employed as a graduate, and the principle of “*it is better to learn than to be unemployed*” is prevalent.

Concerning the field of interest of individuals, it is important to emphasise (especially referring to Serbia) that they first determine the place of their further education and only afterwards choose profession. Friends and partly parents have a decisive role in decision-making. The costs of the studies further optimise the decision: it is a standpoint that the institution should not be far from the native town since this way the costly “residence” in the place of the college/university can be avoided, or in case of commuting the smaller distance leads to lower travel costs. The quality of education has a special treatment during the selection of school. This could be the main reason for studying abroad.

Recent graduates entering the labour market may discover differences between degrees obtained in these two countries. The primary establishment is the following: as an economist it is more difficult to find a job in both countries (saturated market), so self-employment in private enterprises, as well as retraining, further training and undeclared work are quite often.

Those who have graduated in Serbia are generally satisfied with their diploma (prestige of a diploma issued by a national state university, knowledge of Serbian). They do not refuse the chance to (possibly) achieve a second degree in Hungary. However, it is a fact that a diploma achieved in Vojvodina is valuable only if it is applicable on a specific workplace (foreign trade, market relations, foreign language etc.). Yet it is important to have a diploma recognised in the European Union. Those who have graduated in Hungary

believe that they received training of higher quality compared to learning in Serbia, and they do not agree with the obligatory, lengthy and costly process of diploma nostrification (long waiting period, discriminative treatment, number of additional exams depending on an individual – administrative worker, humiliations etc.). In many cases interviewees have mentioned nostrification of their diploma as an obstacle to returning home. This is a country that often keeps the holder of a diploma from the European Union waiting for even two years, prolonging his/her entrance to the labour market. Possibly more assertive self-organised minority attitude, action and lobby would be necessary to improve this situation.

(...) *“We need to obtain the training program, have it translated, which is expensive and time-consuming. I think it is a waste of time and money.”* (...) *“In my opinion, a diploma issued by a renowned, widely recognised university should not be pried into whether it is good or not. I do not believe they really do any analysis or that the diplomas are actually compared.”* – We can often hear of cases when in Serbia they nostrificate a college diploma as a university one, while a master degree is degraded because of the lack of similar program, this way they hindering students willing to return home, according to a 31 years old PhD student (University of Pécs, Hungary).

Prospects of emigration and of returning home after a migration for educational purposes among young Hungarians of Vojvodina

In the past two decades, characterised by wars and public disturbance, economic recession and stagnation, young people in Vojvodina had to face the question of *“going away or remaining”*. The examined group initiated its emigration with educational purposes. They justify their later intention for emigration with reasons like employment, better living perspectives, possibility of professional improvement, general feeling of safety etc. Anyway, many of them return home after finishing their studies. They serve as an example how and by which circumstances it is possible to plan their future in their homeland.

From ten interviewees studying in Hungary, seven returned to Serbia after (or just before) finishing their studies. Even those who are employed in Hungary have left the question of returning home open.

(...) *“Probably first of all they should persuade me materially, but the conditions (working and social environment) provided would also count.”* – economist, 29, University of Pécs, Hungary.

(...) “I believe I have found my place at home and I would be sorry for all of this to drop into water. Of course, I do not exclude some possible occasions that may send me off (higher wages, obtaining professional experience).” – IT engineer, 30, Technical High School, Subotica, Serbia.

Those who have returned home could make their way in Serbia, although some of them are disappointed – not as much for their own chances as because of the country’s position:

(...) “I was planning the returning back. I assumed higher potentials in Serbia at that time (2003) than there really were. Seven years have passed without economic development. Well, I don’t know... I’m not sure if it was a good idea to return home. I am not disappointed just I have become more a realist.” – PhD student, 31, University of Pécs, Hungary.

Among the respondents there are clearly strong ties with the homeland. Those who have some kind of existence in Serbia must get an especially attractive offer from abroad or the situation at home should worsen drastically to make them leave to abroad. The majority of the interviewees has a real estate in Hungary, or other ties characteristic to transnational way of life (enterprise, acquaintances, friends etc.), which could be the basis of “standing on two legs”.

(...) “I was thinking of it, but a bigger motive would be necessary for me to go away from here. So I am devoted to my native village, my friends and acquaintances. I can hardly imagine a situation when I go away further, even to abroad only because of work.” – IT engineer, 30, Technical High School, Subotica, Serbia.

(...) “I still live in Hungary as well. Theoretically I do not live there, but I have an enterprise, a flat, everything there. So if one day I were forced to move off, I could go at once.” (...) “but something very dramatic should happen in the world to do so... (...)” – PhD student, 33, University of Pécs, Hungary.

The decision of young people having family is also influenced by their partner, since if at least one of them has an adequate job in Serbia, the other is more willing to accommodate and decide to remain. If emigration was mentioned anyway for the lack of other opportunities, they would like to settle as close to Vojvodina as possible, for example in South Hungary, or they would go to a West European country, but only for a certain period of time (to get experience, improve their language skills) and then make good use of their knowledge in Serbia.

(...) *“Why do I want to go abroad? I don’t know... I would like to go away while I am young to see how things work there, to get experience. Maybe I would see something I can bring home (knowledge, practice, experience, business etc.).”* – economist, 29, University of Novi Sad, Serbia.

However, there are young people who have been concerned with the idea of emigration seriously, considered their chances and migration is a realistic alternative among their plans for the future.

(...) *“I would like to go somewhere to the west: West Europe, Ireland, maybe England.”* – engineer, 31, Budapest University of Technology, Hungary. Others have mentioned Belgium, Switzerland as attractive multiethnic environments.

Since migration has reached enormous volume in Vojvodina for the past decades, every respondent has acquaintances, relatives, friends abroad – almost without exception. Over these people they can get a relatively clear (not biased, objective) picture of subsistence, living standard, chances in “these” foreign countries. However, the analysed segment was the least sensitive to this question. The success of former emigrants is less attractive for them than the environment at home. Higher willingness to migrate is present or absent among youngsters independent of this.

(...) *“I like living here, I have a family, a house, I am not so aspiring. (...) If I have a car where it is room for the whole family, I don’t need a three times bigger car. So I don’t need it, I think. No, I don’t long to go abroad. This calmness here in my small town is good for me.”* (...) – IT engineer, 31, University of Novi Sad, Serbia.

Separation from the family and friends from Serbia is a bit more sensitive question, as well as adherence to homeland. Among the respondents there were some who did not see the safety of family and friends as determinant factors; however for others this is decisive in the question of emigration.

(...) *“Nowadays technology is so developed that we can reach each other anywhere, and if you want to talk to somebody, you don’t need to wait. It happens that I do not see them even at home, only once a year (family, relatives).”* – economist woman, 25, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. A number of them – who are mobile – think similarly, and they do not see family as a “binding force” in these days.

According to an IT engineer, he has got job offers from Hungary several times in a firm that employs some of his friends. Demand for IT specialists, programmers is also high in western countries. But he has decided to remain at home anyway:

*(...) “They wanted to staff me. They have contacted me 3-4 times from Budapest.”
(...) “This is a huge multinational company, “tie and suit job”, good salary.” (...)
“My friends have called me several times, saying they are sure that with my
knowledge I would be applied right away.” (...) “I can see that they do not feel good
in Pest, they do not even like Budapest, but they earn much. Whenever they can, they
escape home on weekends (riverbank of Tisa, quietness, fishing, hunting...)” (...)*

SUMMARY

The number of autochthon Hungarian inhabitants in Vojvodina has significantly fallen, and their identity and regional self-organisation have also become weaker. Emigration is among the processes that have contributed to demographic decline of the national group. Vojvodina Hungarians with Serbian citizenship have moved to Hungary in great quantities for the past 20 years. Their migration was motivated by political factors, the warlike situation. A characteristic group of this population movement is the learning-migrating-commuting youth that has more and more often decided for studying in Hungary, especially for the past 10-12 years.

The commuting students learning in Hungary begin their university/college studies (rarely even the secondary school) in the “foreign country”. After the wars have finished and the period of expressed political and social doubtfulness have passed, the phenomenon and tendency of studying abroad have not fallen into the background. Migration for learning purposes is a significant and everyday phenomenon in the border region (a typical example is the Szeged–Subotica relation). The choice of profession of young Hungarians of Vojvodina is decisively influenced by the possibility of learning in mother tongue primarily, followed by material reasons (schooling fee, travel costs, distance etc.). The role of Hungary and the Hungarian higher education manifests in quality education (various offer, attractive fields of study, labour-market motives, diploma issued in EU, evolving individual interests).

The conditions of studying (higher education) in the homeland – considering other career prospects as well – are still not provided for young Hungarians of Vojvodina. It is among others affected by recently emerging nationalism, isolating efforts, turning inward,

seeking for cultural values and roots among the national group, neglecting the language of the environment (Serbian). In Serbia young people primarily choose profession in the fields of economics, technical studies or pedagogy (because training is partly or entirely organised in Hungarian teaching language), which decision is also influenced by distance from the family. This fact also proves explicit rural mentality of Hungarians.

Almost all of the interviewees graduating in Hungary have returned home, and even those who “remained abroad” have not refused the possibility of settling in Vojvodina. The cause of it lies in strong devotion to family, friends and the homeland itself. In case of migration the target country is Hungary in the first place, the reason for which – beside language and cultural factors – is in the smallest possible distance (especially in the towns of the border region). The willingness to migration could be strengthened by worsening economic and political situation in Serbia. The respondents are ready to move to abroad temporarily in order to achieve professional experience, improve their knowledge and language skills, widen their horizon and gain new ideas.

Staying – remaining in Serbia resulted in strong emotional relations. Public spirit is strong, decades of interdependence and collective culture implied close ties. This has also influenced those who have returned home after finishing their studies in Hungary, and this keeps at home those who have studied in Serbia. Still young people do not return home in many cases (according to some estimation between 30-50%). With their emigration the national community suffers enduring damages (brain drain, loss of social status, biological-reproductive and demographic losses). Studying in the homeland (with adequate innovative, cross-border organisations, institutionalisation of multiethnic higher education) could probably stabilise the remaining of the national group in Serbia.

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