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MIGRATION OF LITHUANIAN POPULATION

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Contents

1 Evaluations of Unauthorised Emigration of Population ........................... 1

2 Migration motives and qualifications of migrating employees
   (Survey Data overview) ........................................................................... 2

3 Extents of future migration ...................................................................... 4

Conclusions ................................................................................................. 7

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SUMMARY

The major demographic changes of the last decade are related to reduction of birth rate and increase of out migration in Lithuania. Birth rate is quite precisely recorded by the national statistics. Emigration, on the contrary, is almost not registered at all. Therefore this Chapter overviews efforts to assess emigration extents by indirect methods – on the basis of census data and surveys. Results of surveys on motivation for population migrating are presented, as well. The end of the Chapter is dedicated to emigration forecasts, which are usually made either on the basis of population attitudes to migration or on the basis of surveys of emigration intentions.
1 EVALUATIONS OF UNAUTHORISED EMIGRATION OF POPULATION

After the restoration of the Independent State out migration of Lithuanian population was determined by two main factors. First, at the beginning of the time period (1990-93) part of Slavic descendants returned to Russia, Belarus and other countries of the former USSR, and quite a large number of Lithuanians returned from them. This process is sufficiently well reflected by population statistics (see Table 1). Second, upon commencement of economic reform in Lithuania economic situation grew worse, unemployment increased, and state borders were open. Furthermore, visa regimes for entrance to many West European countries were cancelled. Therefore a part of Lithuanian population moved to EU countries and the USA looking for employment.

Table 1. International Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Emigration</th>
<th>Migration saldo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>14744</td>
<td>23592</td>
<td>-8848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>11828</td>
<td>20703</td>
<td>-8875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6640</td>
<td>28855</td>
<td>-22215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2850</td>
<td>15990</td>
<td>-13140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1664</td>
<td>4246</td>
<td>-2582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>3773</td>
<td>-1753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td>3940</td>
<td>-915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2536</td>
<td>2457</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2706</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2679</td>
<td>1369</td>
<td>1310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1510</td>
<td>2616</td>
<td>-1106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>3956</td>
<td>-2763</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As far as employment and permanent residence permits in the Western countries are issued only in exceptional cases, the majority of migration to the West is unregistered. Therefore it is not reflected by the national statistics, according to which only 2-4 thousand residents annually leave Lithuania during several recent years (see Table 1). Illegal migration of population is clearly typical for Lithuania, like for the majority of the Eastern countries. Precise numbers of illegal emigration are not known. But there are various methods for its assessment, which exceed the numbers of the registered emigration from tens to thousands of times.

According to assessments presented by the European Union resources of the legally employed in the fifteen EU member-states amounted to 290.000 from the accession countries, and the number of illegally employed resources – to 600.000; Lithuanian share was assessed at 1%, or 8.900 legally and illegally employed population. Such numbers seem to be low, as well.

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One of the methods proposed by publications for assessment of unregistered migration extent is comparison between census data and current population statistics data. Both births and deaths are registered in the country. The preciseness of this registration may be relied upon, as far as it has sufficiently strict requirements applicable. Besides this, residents are also interested to register births and deaths, because in both cases social protection system provides for significant social security support to families and relatives. Upon comparison between data based on birth and death registration and census data it is possible to sufficiently precisely assess out migration saldo.

According to the schedule of census organised on April of 2001, the comprehensive data will be prepared in 2003. Irrespective of that, the preliminary census data has been already published. According to this data, there were 3 million 496 thousand people living in Lithuania. According to the official current statistics data, at the beginning of 2000 there were 3 698 500 people living in Lithuania, i.e. even by 198 500 people more. Therefore an assumption may be made that within more than ten years out migration from Lithuania exceeded immigration by approximately 200 thousand residents.

It is supposed that not all persons among this number illegally migrated to the Western countries. The difference between indicators of population numbers presented by census and the current statistics includes approximately 50 thousand officers of the former Soviet Army, as well, together with their family members and other persons, having emigrated from Lithuania without registration. Besides this, the census tolerance is assessed to be 1%, i.e., approximately 35 thousand residents were not covered. In this case unregistered migration to the Western countries would amount only to 113 (198-50-35) thousand residents.

But the data of the census of end of 2001 provides that 204 thousand members of Lithuanian households had worked abroad in November 2001. This data was collected after surveying one thousand respondents of 15-55 years of age. Lithuanian labour force resources legally and illegally employed in the EU member-states amounted to 118.000 persons. The majority of the rest of 204 thousand were in the USA. Among the entire number of persons employed abroad 90 thousand ones have been employed there for more than three years.

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2 MIGRATION MOTIVES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF MIGRATING EMPLOYEES (SURVEY DATA OVERVIEW)

According to the official statistics covering only registered migration the basic causes for emigration to foreign countries are the wish for family reunification and the wish to live in a certain location. These reasons were indicated respectively by 32 and 59% of persons having emigrated from Lithuania in 2000. While the purpose of getting employment was

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6 Kauno diena, 2001, No 92.
7 Digryte E. Lietuvos gyventoju gretas retina emigracija / Respublika, 2001, spalio 31 d.
8 Digryte E. Lietuvos gyventoju gretas retina emigracija / Respublika, 2001, spalio 31 d.
10 Migration extent is registered by Lithuanian Migration Department under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior.
indicated only by 4% of registered migrants (the same number of them wanted to study), 1 per cent of them left due to other reasons. We suppose that distribution of responses could be much more objective, if migrants could specify at least three reasons for migration instead of a basic one, which often is too general in nature and usually masks other reasons for leaving. As far as various states strictly restrict flows of job-seeing immigrants, therefore persons wishing to enter these states search for other formal reasons. Most probably they specify such formal reasons during surveys, as well.

The Ministry of Interior has found out that since the beginning of 1991 to March 31, 2000 the majority (61.%) of the emigrants were economically motivated, i.e., they wished to be employed and reside there. Other 25% indicated the reason of family reunification, and the rest (14%) left due to other reasons, with adoption as a major cause among the latter.

On the grounds of the above survey of November, 2001, A. Dobravolskas makes the conclusion that even 99% of persons emigrating to the Western countries have the job-finding purpose. Beside this, he justifies migration incentives of Lithuanian population with the aim of employment by two indicators: higher unemployment rate and lower wages and salaries. Lithuanian unemployment rate twice exceeds the EU one and four times – the USA one. The average salary in Lithuania is five times lower than the EU one and eight times – than the USA one. Even if it is twice harder for immigrants to find employment in the EU and the USA, these possibilities get balanced due to the unemployment rate differences. Differences in remuneration represent enormous migration incentive.

Other authors stress the following basic factors inducing emigration of CEE residents to the Western states:

- Lower level of economic and social development in general;
- Lower general living standard;
- High unemployment;
- Low level of remuneration (income);
- Inefficient policies with respect to business conditions and taxes by central and local government institutions.

To which extent workers’ mobility is related to their qualifications? As mentioned already, The Department of Statistics collects data only on registered migration. But even these Department of Statistics data are controversial. Between able-bodied and senior persons having legally emigrated in 2000 even each fifth of them had a university-level education, and only each tenth of them was unqualified. While the labour force survey of the Department of Statistics shows (data of 2000) that every second person of the above group is unqualified, only 13% among them have university-level education.

The Institute of Labour and Social Research has completed a survey “Determination of Youth Motivation, Territorial Mobility and Possibilities for Integration into Labour Market” in 2000. More than 2000 of the young unemployed (up to 25 years of age) registered

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in Lithuanian Labour Exchanges took part in the survey. The survey demonstrated that the majority of persons having indicated their previous employment in the survey had worked in their parents’ residence places (65%). Only 8% of persons having employment experience had worked in the place of studies before becoming the unemployed. Slightly less (7%) had worked in residence places of their spouses (7%). This means that the young unemployed have low mobility.15

Qualified residents are more mobile. This was revealed by the Survey on Need of Specialists with Higher Education, initiated by the Science and Studies Department under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science in 1999. Even every second person having graduated from a higher education institution was employed in the place of studies, only each fourth of such graduates – in the residence place of their parents, every tenth – in other places. Current relatively high extent of domestic migration of labour force having acquired higher education is witnessed by the fact that only 7% of the respondents had studied in residence places of their parents.

Upon comparison of results of various surveys it may be stated that better educated persons are much more mobile in the domestic market, they have higher intensity of domestic migration. But there is a lack of reliable information on the intensity of out migration flows between population groups with various levels of education.

3 EXTENTS OF FUTURE MIGRATION

Having no reliable data on the number of emigrating residents available and wishing to assess the extent of future migration, surveys of population attitudes to migration are carried out. There is an opinion presented by sources that upon free movement of workers approximately 1.8 million of the employed or 3.9 million of residents will within 10 years immigrate to better developed countries from the ten Eastern and Central European accession countries (total number of residents in the new member-states - 105 million). Within 10 years time the flow of migration should reduce from 330 thousand down to 145 thousand persons per annum.16

On the basis of the above survey of 2001 A. Dobravolskas has calculated that within 10 years up to 2% of the employed should leave Lithuania in search for employment, and calculating together with their family members – up to 4% of the country residents. Within the next 10 years time the limit of maximum number of persons having left in search for employment may reach approximately 140 thousand residents. Emigration from Lithuania is expected to exceed immigration within 20-30 years (including re-emigrants, as well).17 But the increase of Lithuanian labour resources abroad is expected to reduce even during the closest future.

Table 2. Forecasts of Lithuanian Labour Resources Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pessimistic In total</th>
<th>Compared to previous year</th>
<th>Optimistic In total</th>
<th>Compared to previous year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>236000</td>
<td>32000</td>
<td>231500</td>
<td>27500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>262000</td>
<td>26000</td>
<td>252000</td>
<td>20500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>284000</td>
<td>22000</td>
<td>266500</td>
<td>14500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>302000</td>
<td>18000</td>
<td>278000</td>
<td>11500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>314000</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>284000</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to “Survey of Living Conditions” carried out by Norwegian Applied Social Research Institute (FAFO) together with Lithuanian experts, at the end of 1999 persons having had intentions to leave for foreign countries and stay there (not necessarily for work) during next three years amounted to 2.7% or 100 thousand of Lithuanian population. Younger persons (up to 34 years of age) are primarily inclined to leaving.\(^{18}\)

According to the data of the survey of graduates from higher educational institutions conducted by the Institute of Labour and Social Research in 2000, more than 2/3 (69%) of surveyed workers would like to work abroad for 1-2 years, 13% - would not like to work abroad, 18% - have no clear-cut opinion. This witnesses sufficiently high inclination of graduates with higher education to work in foreign countries and high risk of brain drain, especially upon Lithuania becoming a member-state. Quite many employed respondents (28%) suppose that their education is sufficient to be employed in EU countries. Quite a lower number of respondents have sceptic attitude to their possibilities for employment in EU countries (18%) due to insufficient education. More than half of respondents had no clear-cut opinion on this issue.\(^{19}\)

Upon the data of scientists mobility survey carried out in 1995, more than 80% of scientists would like to leave to foreign countries (even having employment in Lithuania) for more than 1 year to work according to their area of expertise. Attitudes of scientists to long-term emigration are determined by their understanding the need for scientific work in Lithuania. People thinking that their work is needed by Lithuania, that Government institutions are interested in their survey results, are less inclined to emigration. Scientists thinking otherwise would choose emigration.\(^{20}\)

Especially high potential possibilities of out migration of youth of 16-29 years of age is revealed by the Survey of Lithuanian Youth Attitudes Related to Their Situation in the Labour Market, carried out by “Sprinter” Market and Public Opinion Survey Study in 2000. Even 72% of youth having taken part in the survey stated that they would, upon a chance, temporarily of permanently go abroad to do unqualified work. This is the opinion of 9/10 of the respondents below 20 years of age. But these numbers most probably imply a wish to

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\(^{18}\) Respondents were inquired whether they plan to leave for another location for living within the next three years (Lietuva 1999. Gyvenimo salygos, Vilnius, 2000. P. 175-184.).

\(^{19}\) Darbo jugos konkurencingumo politikos tobulinimas Lietuva integruojantis į Europos Sajungą. DSTI trečiojo tyrimo etapo atskaita Studijo ir mokslo departamentui prie Svietimo ir mokslo ministerijos. Vilnius, 2000. P.55.

try and earn money for living at least on a temporary basis rather than the need to emigrate in general, upon having no possibility to successfully find a place in domestic (Lithuanian) labour market. Under the current conditions one must see a large-scale contradiction between wishes of young people (especially youth having no qualifications) to find a well-paid job and their abilities to realise these wishes. This contradiction is justified by low real territorial mobility of the young unemployed.

Surveys carried out in the countries having made a much better progress in the direction of well-developed market economy (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic) demonstrated that no surge of labour force to the West is expected from them after their joining EU. One may try to use this fact for justifying the assumption that the boom of analogous migration will end in Lithuania, as well.

It is supposed that “in the long term negative consequences of migration will not be so significant, because “brain drain” will be compensated by “brain return”, and relative excess of unqualified labour force – by foreign capital investments into labour-intensive sectors; reduction of household income and savings – by their increase due to re-emigration and economic growth”.

Becoming a member-state should not very extensively influence Lithuanian emigration flows in medium term. Emigration is expected to change trend-wise, rather than increase. The majority of emigrants may choose EU countries instead of the USA.

In the long term fear of loosing qualifications may become one of hindrances for qualified labour force emigration, because quite often persons having immigrated to the Western countries are forced to get lower-qualified jobs. In other words, in a long run having a higher-qualified job in the native country may become more cost-effective than having low-qualified job abroad (after development of tendencies for life standards of Central and Western Europe countries getting closer).

The opinion is often stated that migration flows from CEE countries will be subject to whether people of these countries will feel improvement in economies of their countries in the nearest future. At political discussions high flows of emigration are assessed as the consequence of failure to manage economic country affairs by certain Governments. But there are no ideas initiated for development of some special emigration reduction programs.

The experience of the Western countries usually shows that the risk of depopulation at low birth rates is usually compensated on the account of immigration. The lack of unqualified labour is compensated thus, but there is an increase of risk for social disturbances due to clash between interests of migrants and local residents. We suppose that this problem will sooner or later be typical for Lithuania, as well.

With respect to the arguments presented, it would be possible to state that the process of more distinct depopulation in Lithuania may be quite a short-term one (its duration should

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not reach 10 years in future). According to a more pessimistic scenario lower birth rates in a longer time should be compensated by higher extent of immigration, according to a more optimistic scenario – higher birth rates should be compensated by lower extent of immigration.

In qualitative terms Lithuania may have several long term scenarios of migration flows. In case of the optimistic scenario, due to enlivened economics emigration flows to EU would significantly reduce. In case of the pessimistic scenario, emigration extent to the Western countries would remain high and Lithuanian Government would be forced “to open the door” to labour force from the Eastern and Southern countries.

CONCLUSIONS

During the recent years significant out migration is noted in Lithuania. It is not registered by official statistics, therefore only indirect assessments are possible. Upon comparison of two latest census data with birth and death indicators, assessment of unregistered emigration represents 115 to 200 thousand residents. According to the data of Sociological Survey approximately 200 thousand residents had went abroad for employment until 2001.

The major emigration reason is economic recession at the beginning of the transition phase, as well as high domestic unemployment rate. Almost all unregistered emigrants leave looking for employment and higher remuneration. Higher qualified labour force has more mobility.

Future emigration development could be assessed by several recent surveys of population attitudes. These surveys indicate that during the next decade additional 100-140 thousand residents may leave for foreign countries. Emigration should not be significantly increased by Lithuania becoming a member-state of EU. However EU countries, which will not set forth a transitional period for free movement of workers, may attract higher number of emigrants, on the account of countries applying such transitional period and especially on the account of the USA.