

Return migration to Central and Eastern Europe: transnational migrants' perspectives and local businesses' needs

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forum



Heft 23

Thilo Lang & Robert Nadler (Hrsg.)

Return Migration to Central and Eastern Europe – Transnational Migrants’ Perspectives and Local Businesses’ Needs

The following contents refer to studies which were conducted in the framework of the Re-Turn Project. Re-Turn is implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme co-financed by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund).



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1 Introduction

Robert Nadler, Thilo Lang

Since the EU accession in 2004, many A8 countries (CZ, PL, SK, SI, HU, EE, LT, LV) have witnessed large-scale emigration of young and skilled people. In particular, more remote and rural regions have suffered from this brain drain, whereas large urban agglomerations – in particular capital regions such as Prague, Bratislava and Budapest – could attract internal migration. Between 2003 and 2007, it is estimated that about 2.2 million Eastern Europeans moved to Western European countries in order to find a better life and better paid work. Other regions within Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have also been witnessing strong emigration. Since the German reunification in 1989/90, Eastern Germany, for example, faced a loss of more than 2 million people. Eastern Germans mainly moved to Western Germany, but to Switzerland, Austria and other countries as well. Furthermore, mountainous regions in Northern Italy struggle with negative migration balances and cross-border commuting to Switzerland.

This large-scale emigration has resulted in a lack of skilled labour in the regions of origin. Given that mainly the elderly remain, these regions are affected by ageing, and the average age of the regional labour force is also growing. Businesses located in these regions are struggling to replace colleagues who retire with young, skilled people. This shortage of labour does not affect all regions and all economic sectors in a similar way, but it has consequences for the regional economic prosperity and competitiveness.

However, there is also reason for optimism: a large share of those who left their Central and Eastern European home regions have returned in recent years. The economic situation in their home regions has improved and emigrants often faced socially and psychologically dissatisfying situations in their host countries. The proximity to friends and family and the feeling of homesickness has drawn them back to CEE. According to an OECD study (OECD 2008), 20-50% of emigrants leave their host region within five years after arrival, many of them heading back home. Emigrants often leave with the intention to come back, making emigration a temporary step in life, thus, return migration is not a marginal phenomenon. Using EU Labour Force Survey (2005-2008) and Eurostat data (2009), we found that the share of nationals compared to non-nationals immigrating to CEE varies between countries. In Poland, 75% of cross-border immigration is composed of Polish return migrants. In other countries, the share is smaller: 29% for the Czech Republic, 23% for Germany, 13% for Austria, 10% for Slovenia and 8% for Hungary, Italy and the Slovak Republic. Nonetheless, these return migrants represent a human resource to encounter the lack of skilled labour in all countries: they are younger than those who have stayed at home, their level of education is better than that of non-migrants, and they cultivate connections with their home countries, thus facilitating their integration as compared to international immigrants.

On the other hand, there are also indicators for problems upon return. Return migrants are often affected by irregular work conditions. They are more often unemployed than non-migrants. They also work more often in part-time jobs. Furthermore, there is mixed evidence of whether or not the foreign work experience pays off in financial terms. Some studies remark that there is a sort of income premia (e.g. MARTIN & RADU 2012) and enhanced career opportunities (VAVREČKOVÁ & BAŠTÝŘ 2009); others have found that this is not the case (CO et al.

2000; GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA 2010). Still, it is relatively unclear as to why some return migrants in certain regions succeed upon return, whereas others have difficulties.

With the creation of a common labour market, migration flows have increased within the EU and they are becoming more circular, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Hence, return migration can no longer be seen as a marginal phenomenon (see LANG 2013). Due to the increasing relevance of return migration to CEE and a lack of comparative studies, the 'Re-Turn: Regions Benefitting from Returning Migrants' project has shed light on a wide range of open questions. The main objectives of the project are to better understand the phenomenon of return migration, to raise awareness about topics related to emigration and return as well as to develop policies to re-attract and re-integrate (former) emigrants. Therefore, motives and expectations, conditions, and circumstances of emigration and return have to be examined. Their analysis is of crucial importance to the project and beyond.

This volume of forum ifl is based on the previous volume 21 "Return Migration in Central Europe: Current trends and an analysis of policies supporting returning migrants" (LANG 2013), which included a detailed discussion of the theoretical literature on return migration. In this current volume we will put the emphasis on the few empirical studies that exist in this field and we will abridge the theoretical background. For those readers, who are interested in a more detailed theoretical discussion, we recommend to have a look at the above mentioned forum ifl volume 21. The current volume will report two major empirical studies which evolved within the Re-Turn project and which have been co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Based on an online survey of 2,000 Central and Eastern European migrants, the first study deals with the motives, expectations, experiences and capacities of emigrants and return migrants (chapter 2). The second study is about the business perspectives on return migration in a number of case study regions involved in the Re-Turn project (chapter 3). Here, potential employers in CEE home regions were asked for their experience and attitudes related to return migrants as a potential labour force. Both studies provide valuable insights into the phenomenon of return migration to Central and Eastern Europe.

2 Migrants' Capacities and Expectations: Empirical Results Concerning Return Migration

Thilo Lang, Aline Hämmerling, Stefan Haunstein, Jan Keil, Robert Nadler, Anika Schmidt, Stefanie Smoliner

2.1 Researching Migrants' Perspectives on Return Migration

Return migration, i.e. the return of emigrants to their home country after at least six months abroad, is not a marginal phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and might gain importance in the years to come (LANG et al. 2013). The share of nationals among immigrants is especially high in the EU member states that joined the European Union in 2004 (ibid.). Numerous empirical inquiries and various approaches are trying to identify prerequisites and effects of return migration from macrostructures to individual decisions and motives, but understanding still 'remains blurry' (CASSARINO 2004, p. 1). Following international debates about brain drain and brain circulation (e.g. SALT 1983; BEINE et al. 2001; MAYR & PERI 2009; HORVAT 2004), processes of return migration can be seen as offering new opportunities to reverse negative outcomes of emigration (e.g. HUNGER 2004; KLAGGE et al. 2007). In this respect, emigration and return migration can also be understood as (temporary) episodes of more complex migration biographies. During their time abroad, emigrants gain human capital so that especially the highly skilled returnees can be seen as possible drivers for innovation in their home regions (CASSARINO 2004) and have relevance for regional economic development as well (MATUSCHEWSKI 2010). Such observations have led to empirical studies on returning migrants' performance in home country labour markets (e.g. MARTIN & RADU 2012; IARA 2008; DE COULON & PIRACHA 2005; Co et al. 2000). However, findings show different evidence and are restricted in their validity and comparability due to different spatial scales of research (region, country, several countries) and a tendency to apply neoclassical approaches to migration, whereas other theoretical perspectives seem to be underrepresented in current migration research. Recognising this lack of research on transnational labour mobility, Re-Turn has set its focus on analysing motives, prerequisites and social relations of emigration and return migration in an integrated and multi-national comparative perspective. Furthermore, the rationale of the project was to understand return migration and its potential for regional development in the original source regions.

The following chapter will review previous research results on return migration, especially in CEE. A discussion of existing typologies of returnees and open questions of previous empirical studies provides the basis for the Re-Turn online survey. In this survey of emigrants and returnees from Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Italy, the main aim was to answer questions concerning the decision to and probability of return and the capacities of migrants gained during their migration projects. Based on the literature review, hypotheses have been derived which structure the project's empirical proceeding. Chapter 2.3 describes the applied methodology, outlining sampling strategies and sampling outcomes. The following chapter (2.4) provides general characteristics of the survey data in a global analysis; chapter 2.5 confronts the empirical findings of the online survey with the posed hypotheses.

A thorough understanding of the phenomenon of remigration is crucial for an improvement of the reintegration conditions for those willing to return – the central policy objective of the Re-Turn project. With reference to the empirical findings, the creation of better framework conditions to retain and re-attract human capital is expected to be an important factor for regional economic development (MATUSCHEWSKI 2010). In this respect, the report finishes with conclusions in chapter 2.6. Annex I contains nine reports presenting the survey results for each country covered in the survey.

2.2 Return Migration: State of the Art, Open Questions, Hypotheses

Return migration is a sparsely treated aspect of the otherwise broadly studied field of international migration. Existing studies are, to a large extent, focusing on the decision to return and reintegration processes upon return (CARLING et al. 2011, p. 3). Due to global economic changes and increased accessibility to means of transport and communication, the processes and patterns of migration have become more complex (PRIES 2008, p. 5) and more difficult to study. Approaches to analyse migration have widened and the consciousness that migration can no longer be seen as a one-dimensional movement but as including new patterns and arrangements, such as temporary migration and circular migration, has risen. Within this context, return migration can be seen as a ‘sub-process’ of international migration (CASSARINO 2004, p. 1). There are various theoretical concepts and approaches to analyse return migration, each with a different focus on migrants’ characteristics, environments, expectations and motives determining the decision to return. In a preceding study within the framework of the Re-Turn project, SMOLINER et al. (2013) give a detailed overview concerning these different approaches theorising return migration. In the following contemplation we will lay the main focus on the classification of return migrants.

Typologies of returnees

One of the first typologies of international migration that takes temporary migration into consideration and thus also the aspect of return was developed by the British demographer and migration researcher Ernest G. RAVENSTEIN (1885 cit. after PRIES 2008, p. 6). He concentrated on aspects of duration (several stages of migration, temporary migration) and spatial dimensions of migration (close, local or distant destinations). Another typology by CERASE (1974) takes into account that return migrants follow different expectations and motivations; this typology is basically limited to economic argumentations. Based on his research findings on Italians returning from the USA, he distinguished the following types of remigrants:

- Return of failure: return as a consequence of difficulties in host country.
- Return of conservatism: professional life was satisfactory, but return after strategic economic goal is achieved (e.g. financial accumulation), no interest in innovation and change of social context in home country.
- Return of retirement: reaching pension age, followed by small investment.
- Return of innovation: expecting new possibilities in their home country, return is accompanied with social and economic activity.

Returnees of the last type within Cerase's framework have the most concrete expectations to return migration and they want to use their potential to be the 'carrier of social change', consequently contributing to innovation in the home region (CERASE 1974, p. 258). Migrants return with the expectation that acquired new ideas, traits and values would give them the ability to solve problems and bring efficient thinking into the 'group' of which they see themselves as a part (ibid.). Thus, return of innovation can be seen as the most dynamic category of all these types of return (SMOLINER et al. 2013, p. 14).

Unger's typology, also based on empirical findings, distinguishes between the following types of remigrants, adding structural aspects to her conceptualisation (1982, cited in DIENEL et al. 2005, pp. 12f.):

- Traditional remigration: closely related to Cerase's return of conservatism, the stay abroad is above all determined to lead to improved living conditions upon return.
- Structural remigration: return as a consequence of not being able to meet planned goals, because of lacking success, dissatisfactory working conditions or unemployment (similar to Cerase's 'return of failure').
- Planned remigration: self-set objectives could be reached and return takes place in order to implement plans in home country.
- Family remigration: migrant is successfully integrated in migration context abroad, but private reasons (family, health problems, caring for relatives) lead to remigration.

As the settings of return might vary significantly, CASSARINO (2004) sets up a typology of returnees beyond the 'success-failure' dichotomy. Relating to pre-return conditions and post-return conditions, he clusters the heterogeneous group of return migrants into those with a high level of 'preparedness', those with a low level of 'preparedness' and those without any preparation (CASSARINO, pp. 19f.). For the first group, the propensity to be an 'actor for change' is high and public programmes aiming at repatriating these skilled and business returnees might just be perceived as a positive signal from the government. For the second group, these programmes might even be of crucial importance for successful reintegration, both concerning social and labour market aspects. By contrast, focussing on the third group might not lead to success for repatriation initiatives. A single focus only on economic motives or social aspects would lead to a narrowed understanding of the expectations and reasons of remigration as well as the returnees' context-related potential for regional development.

In addition to the mentioned typologies that, above all, relate to rational economic decisions and general professional settings, thus following neoclassical theoretical assumptions, there are further approaches to identify groups of returnees that also take additional social and structural aspects into consideration. With an emphasis on the motives that played a role for the decision to return, DIENEL et al. (2006) try to develop a typology based on interviews with return migrants who migrated from Eastern to Western Germany. Besides the already mentioned types of remigrants who first and foremost relate to attributes such as failure or success (relating to professional or economic aspects), retirement or planned return after training and education, DIENEL et al. (2006, pp. 77ff.) identify additional types where more or less private aspects prevail and social networks have an influence:

- Family returnees: searching for stability within the families' social ties.
- Relationship returnees: willingness to live with partner.

- Emotional returnees: feeling of homesickness and return to existing social networks.
- Returnees out of traditional attachment or real estate ownership: returning due to an inherited real estate or self-built private residential house.

Motives such as private and emotional satisfaction and better living conditions in general (natural landscape, child care, etc.) cannot be described economically, but can still lead to a decision to return without professional success (see MATUSCHEWSKI 2010, p. 85).

Based on the already existing typologies (especially the typology of CERASE 1974) and the Re-Turn project's conceptual framework with a focus on labour migration, the following typology of return migrants referring to the individual motives for return has been used for the underlying research:

- Return of failure: strongly relating to the neoclassical approach and the assumption that return follows certain unsuccessful performances on the labour market, personal disappointment, unemployment, etc. (see CERASE 1974, or 'structural remigration' as formulated by UNGER 1982, cited in DIENEL et al. 2005, pp. 12f.).
- Return of conservatism: relates to the perspective that return might be planned or is at least not happening as a consequence of failure, but following the achievement of goals that allow to return and follow traditional or conservative patterns in the home society, not taking advantage of acquired human capital or knowledge from abroad (see CERASE 1974, also 'return of tradition' by UNGER 1982, cited in DIENEL et al. 2005, pp. 12f.)
- Return of retirement: return is a consequence of going on pension, possibly leading to investment, e.g. in housing, but no further innovative impact.
- Return of innovation: return takes place when a migrant has reached their self-defined goals or those expected within their social network, such as a higher level of education, qualifications, knowledge or financial resources. The perception of the home region includes a favourable situation for the usage of those resources for 'innovative' purposes, such as self-employment.
- Private/social return: decision to return is mainly influenced by private or emotional aspects (e.g. health problems, marriage, birth of children, attachment to home region/town, willingness to live closer to friends/family, property/heritage).

The motives behind return might overlap and in many cases several of the mentioned types might apply to one person. As an analytical frame, such a typology is notwithstanding an interesting categorisation for return migrants' motives and performances. Whereas type 1, 2 and 3 follow economically centred theoretical assumptions, the last two types, 'return of innovation' and 'private/social return', relate to the embedding of the migrant in social and network structures that shape the patterns and decisions of migration and remigration. They also mirror the conclusion that the social, political and economic situations in both the target and the home regions are of relevance, and that their respective perception shapes the decision to migrate and consequently transfer one's knowledge and experiences (see MATUSCHEWSKI 2010).

Empirical results of previous studies on return migration in CEE

Concerning socio-economic and demographic characteristics, return migrants tend to be younger not only in comparison to non-migrants, but also to those who stayed abroad (MARTIN & RADU 2012, p. 116; SMOLINER et al. 2013, p. 42), and they attained more years of formal education than those who did not migrate (MARTIN & RADU 2012, p. 124). KLAGGE et al. (2007, pp. 10f.) showed that the rate of Polish return migrants holding a university degree is higher than the rate for permanent emigrants as well as the adult Polish population, and that 74% of this group of highly-skilled return migrants is between 20 and 49 years (45% from 20 to 39 years). According to IARA (2008), a higher level of education seems to raise the propensity for Central and Eastern European citizens to participate in Western European labour markets. Iara concludes that 'temporary migration appears to improve the labour market situation of those who are in a relatively advantageous position already, instead of being equally accessible to the more disadvantaged' (IARA 2008, p. 33). With regard to gender issues, sources are rare. WIEST et al. (2009, p. 378) could find a higher propensity for male migrants to return to their home region in Saxony-Anhalt in Germany than for women. In the European context, this finding can only be supported for Poland, where 60% of the returnees between 2005 and 2008 were male (SMOLINER et al. 2013, p. 43, based on LFS data from 2005-2008). On the contrary, SMOLINER et al. (2013, p. 43) showed that the number of male returnees roughly equals the number of female returnees in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Italy, whereas findings for Austria showed a rate of 60% of female returnees.

Social ties to the home country during the stay abroad seem to be of great relevance for the process of return and reintegration. Evidence shows that most migrants stay in contact with friends and family at home and that those contacts can be pull-factors for return migration (e.g. BECK 2004; WIEST et al. 2009; KLAGGE et al. 2007). For the German context of East-West migration, WIEST et al. (2009, p. 376) show a very significant relation between the probability to return and the density of social ties to the home region, e.g. in the form of visits or telephone calls.

With regard to human capital and labour market performance, return migrants seem to profit from their stay abroad. A tendency to receive income benefits after return is observable when looking at several studies on return migration (MARTIN & RADU 2012; HAZANS 2008; IARA 2008). However, findings concerning gender are mixed or not included in the study of income premia (CO et al. 2000, pp. 64f.; IARA 2008, p. 12) and the comparability of studies is questionable due to country specific data and different types of analysis as well as the data bases used. In IARA's (2008, p. i) study, young and male return migrants earn an average wage premium of 30% on CEE labour markets if they have Western European work experience. Interestingly, no wage premia can be found for labour market experience in other CEE countries. As a possible explanation for the wage premium, IARA (2008) interprets these findings with an upgrade in skills, and thus human capital, through learning on the job in countries with higher technological development, adding to know-how diffusion in CEE countries. Additionally, work experience in Western European countries might make employers expect higher productivity and thus enhance their willingness to pay higher incomes.

CO et al. (2000) examine labour market performance of return migrants using the Hungarian Household Panel Survey. Their findings interestingly differ in relation to the returnees' gender, as there is a definite 'premium' to work experience abroad for women, but the difference in

earnings of men who have been abroad to those who have not been abroad is statistically insignificant (Co et al. 2000, pp. 64f.). They offer a possible explanation for this difference when referring to the specific professional branches, such as financial industries, which female returnees enter. These professional branches are characterised by their specific validation of work experience from abroad. Furthermore, they suggest that opposing effects lead to the insignificant wage premium for male returnees, as having gone abroad is generally rewarded, but overlaid by the loss of contacts and networks through migration (ibid., p. 71). Likewise MARTIN & RADU (2012, p. 120) argue that a negative selection of return migrants is observable, which means 'if return migrants had decided not to move, their earnings would have been lower than that of a randomly selected non-migrant'. Such different human capital characteristics lead to different rewards that migrants can receive: 'the less educated of the movers fare significantly worse than the stayers, compared with the better educated in the respective group' (IARA 2008, p. 32). Still, Martin & Radu's statistical analysis of return migration in CEE-countries based on the Labour Force Survey data shows a wage premia both for self-employed and dependently employed return migrants of 10% to 30% (MARTIN & RADU 2012, p. 120).

Relating to the returnees' level of education, different findings exist for the ability to enhance career opportunities or, contrastingly, a fragmentation of the career. MARTIN & RADU (2012, p. 122) found out that return migrants have a higher probability to be either not participating in the labour market or to be self-employed, but a lower probability to be dependently employed. This finding is even more significant for male returnees than for female remigrants and for returnees with a higher education. They suggest a possible explanation for this constellation based on the returnees' lack of characteristics valued on home country's labour markets (specific local labour market experience and local human capital, network ties) and their asset of others that can be used for self-employment (entrepreneurial skills, risk-taking propensity). For their study of return migration to Albania, DE COULON & PIRACHA (2005) also found a large proportion of migrants became self-employed after their return. KLAGGE et al. (2007, p. 12) substantiate this finding for Poland, where different evidence has been obtained as highly skilled returnees are mainly employees, but less-skilled returnees are more likely to start their own business. This could mean that they are actively taking advantage of skills and experiences obtained abroad, but self-employment could also be seen as an economic strategy due to problems they are facing while and after returning, and trying to reintegrate in local employment structures.

The probability to not actively participate in local labour markets is higher for returnees than for non-migrants (MARTIN & RADU 2012). A possible explanation for this finding could be the returnees' lack of social ties and networks, which usually help to find a decent job on the home country labour market. Employers might be unsure about the value of foreign work experience or interpret them as a failure on the local labour market and thus prefer employees with domestic human capital (HAZANS 2008, p. 3). Contrastingly, HAZANS (2008, p. 3) suggests an additional theoretical perspective according to which the returnee's savings gathered during the stay abroad enable them to spend more time finding a job that suits their higher expectations in terms of income and career opportunities. In relation to all these findings on different wages upon return and career effects, it is important to stress the fact that a decision to return is often based on private reasons, and in this case worse working and employment conditions are perceived to be acceptable (SCHMITHALS 2010, p. 292; MATUSCHEWSKI 2010, p. 85).

Open questions

Even if research on remigration has broadened in the last years, there are still a variety of aspects with a need for further clarification. Firstly, researchers are confronted with a lack of data that allow deeper analysis which is viable not only relating to larger samples, but also for a greater comparable set of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Relatively few empirical findings exist on labour market behaviour and integration of highly-qualified return migrants (SMOLINER et al. 2013, p. 11). Furthermore, studies giving an insight into 'income premia' of returnees, effects of qualifications and human capital (obtained through the experience of migration) as well as self-employment, are not producing reliable findings that could be transferred to other country settings and related to the different kinds of returnees (concerning qualifications, education, age, gender). Besides this, most data sets do not allow drawing conclusions on the region of return to which remigration is directed. Even if SMOLINER et al. (2013) analysed Labour Force Survey data according to the country of return, it is not possible to draw conclusions if the return region is identical to the region of emigration. MARTIN & RADU (2012) stress the importance of regional ties due to networks, peer pressure and local interactions as migrants cluster into specific regions in the country of emigration and in their home country after return, however, they do not provide reliable empirical evidence (MARTIN & RADU 2012, p. 120). Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical findings paying attention to gender and a viable framework to measure regional economic effects.

Hypotheses

The Re-Turn project had the objective of bringing to light some of the open questions on the characteristics of return migrants in Central and Eastern Europe and constructed a framework within which reliable data should be delivered. Such data could be the basis for the design of policies and return initiatives. The data collection process in the frame of the Re-Turn project looked to improve existing inconsistencies in remigration literature and it will be orientated on the following main hypotheses:

- Returnees are young, competent and qualified above average (MARTIN & RADU 2012; KLAGGE et al. 2007; IARA 2008). The proof of this hypothesis might be especially interesting for an estimation of the role of return migration for knowledge-based regional economic development.
- The decision of returning and staying abroad is driven by motives which are different from those leading to emigration (LEE 1966, p. 22). The intention to migrate might already include the plan to return. This would have an impact on the duration of migration and the moment of return, as it is not a one directional movement, but might be organised as a circular pattern.
- Return is, to a large extent, the consequence of failure and lacking economic success in the host country. Following the basic assumption of neoclassical theories, the main motive for return migration is to be seen in unachieved goals in the country of destination.
- Returnees experience barriers while returning and after the return (MARTIN & RADU 2012; CO et al. 2000; SMOLINER et al. 2013). Such barriers might evolve as a consequence of lost social and professional contacts when abroad and/or because of employers not rewarding the acquired human capital. Barriers could also evolve from structural contexts in the home country.

- Returnees have a certain potential of innovation (CERASE 1974) and of being an ‘actor of change’ (CASSARINO 2004). They have the willingness and ability to invest in the home region. Thus, returnees e.g. have a higher rate of self-employment and capitalise on their human capital from abroad (DE COULON & PIRACHA 2005; MARTIN & RADU 2012).
- Returnees are willing to accept income losses in exchange for an improvement in social life (CO et al. 2000; SCHMITHALS 2010; MATUSCHEWSKI 2010). For a certain group of returnees, such as of the type ‘private/social returnee’, an estimation of private advantages is relevant to the acceptance of a less successful performance on the home country labour market.

Clarifications within these hypotheses will provide the basis for understanding the potential of return migrants to generate innovations and regional development in their home country and region in CEE. As based on the literature review, the research findings presented so far point to the perhaps unused potential of many returnees. Based on their knowledge and experience, they could contribute to economic and social regional development. Within the analysis of the data acquired in the Re-Turn online survey on migrants, it is expected that more will be found out about the determinants and prerequisites of return migration in general, as well as characteristics and needs of return migrants, allowing to define groups that can be addressed (by policies) according to their respective requirements.

2.3 Methodology

The following chapter gathers information about the sample design of the Re-Turn online survey. It covers information on the study’s target population, the sampling frame and sampling strategies. It gives insights into the survey techniques and the data collection process. Furthermore, it points out the challenges of identifying the sampling population, given the restrictions of limited statistics about the target population. When describing the data and potential error sources, shortcomings and related restrictions concerning data analysis are reported.

Target groups

For the purpose of the study, two different groups need to be distinguished:

- ‘Return migrants’, who once lived in another country for a period of six or more months, returned to their home country and are at least 15 years old (returnees). Originally, the home country of a person was defined as their country of birth. This definition was modified since respondents could be born in one country but have then spent more time in another country. Then the respondents might declare the country where they spent more time as their home country. Therefore, respondents were asked to give information about their country of birth and whether they would describe it as their home country. If they failed to do so, they were asked to enter their home country. Country of birth differs in 5.5% of all valid cases in the sample from the actual home country, and in 2.2% of respondents in the countries of interest (CZ, SK, SI, AT, DE, PL, HU, IT).

- ‘Emigrants’, who are currently living abroad for six or more months and who are at least 15 years old. In this group we differentiated:
 - Emigrants who consider a return to their home country (potential returnees).
 - Emigrants who never want to return to their home country (permanent emigrants).

Since there are no official statistics of how many people once migrated and returned to the selected countries (or regions, respectively), there is no information about the size of the total population.

Sampling frame: Selection of the countries resp. regions

Given the spatial focus of the Re-Turn project on Central Europe, the sampling frame of the target population comprises a number of new EU-Member states which have experienced strong emigration since 2004 next to Eastern Germany, Austria and Italy, with a focus on selected rural and peripheral regions characterised by weak labour markets and a lack of skilled labour:

1. Germany (Eastern)
 - Harz Region (within NUTS2-region of Saxony-Anhalt)
 - Görlitz Region (within NUTS2-region of Dresden)
2. The Czech Republic
 - Ustecky Region (within NUTS2-region of Severozápad)
3. Poland
 - Lodz Region (NUTS2-region of Łódzkie)
 - Swietokrzyskie Region (NUTS2-region of Świętokrzyskie)
4. Hungary
 - Mid-Pannon Region (within NUTS2-region of Közép-Dunántúl)
5. Slovenia
 - Podravska Region (within NUTS2-region of Vzhodna Slovenija)
6. Italy
 - Piedmont Region (NUTS2-region of Piemonte)
7. Slovakia
8. Austria

According to differing locations of return migrants and emigrants, several areas had been considered in order to sample the groups. Since the eight selected countries partly also receive emigrants of other relevant foreign countries (e.g. Polish emigrants in Germany and Slovakian emigrants in Austria), a sampling of both subgroups in one country was possible in most of the cases. Since particular regions were selected for developing pilot measures within the Re-Turn project, the sampling process was highly concentrated in those regions. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about the entire country. National sub-samples are strongly biased to the case study regions within the countries. Due to the special situation of post-socialist Eastern Germany, East-West-East intra-German migration was treated the same way as international migration from and to Eastern Germany.

Sampling strategies

The target population was predominantly addressed via internet by linking the online survey to websites that are frequently visited by members of the target population. The following institutional websites (in the regions selected) should attract the attention of emigrants and returnees:

- Municipal administrations
- Universities and research institutes
- Employment centres, job service agencies
- Trade unions
- Regional and country newspapers, radio and TV stations (incl. online)

Furthermore, it was sampled via announcements in newspapers, on radio channels, on postcards, flyers and via personal networks. Digital networks were also used (e.g. Facebook, Xing). For the latter, people were asked to participate in the online survey by following the web link leading to the survey questionnaire. Moreover, members of the target subgroups were directly contacted in Austria and Slovenia. In Austria, several data bases of expatriate email lists could be used. In Slovenia it was possible to use an official email list of expatriates. Slovenia could refer to a list of all expatriates and reached a great deal of emigrants, but there had been problems of sampling return migrants. Thus, it should be noted that sampling strategies differed in amount and quality between countries, as project partners in the regions dealt with different restrictions of resources, data access and capacities for sampling.

The sampling population was accessed with an open online survey, i.e. a survey of unrestricted self-recruiting volunteers (online sample of type 2 according to COUPER & COUTTS 2004). People were asked to participate in the survey if they are emigrants or return migrants. First, they had to identify themselves as a member of the target population and then they entered the online questionnaire. In order to guarantee that all respondents were members of the target group, a filter question in the beginning asked whether respondents had once lived abroad. A book voucher lottery and a newsletter containing results of the study were used as incentives to raise the response rate and lower drop-out rates.

Among other issues, shortcomings of the online survey tool relate to repeated participation; there was no control for IP addresses through 'cookies' in the respondents' internet browser. This allowed the functionality of the survey in multiple respondent workplaces. Therefore, it was possible that persons participated more than once or that one respondent started the questionnaire and another finished it. For 1,298 out of 1,913 valid cases an email address was recorded, out of which 13 email addresses were entered twice.

Since sampling strategies differed between countries and regions and respondents had not been selected randomly in the countries, they cannot be compared directly to other respondents in other countries; the socio-demographic parameters in the sample might be confounded. Also, the sample size itself is very small in some countries, thus all statistical conclusions are very restricted.

The online survey

Since the study's target group is international, and also for reasons of time and cost efficiency, the internet was chosen as a means to contact our sampling population. The online strategy comes with a range of advantages; nevertheless, the shortcomings of online surveys should be considered as well.

Online surveys represent a self-administered, expeditious and low-budget way of gathering quantitative data sets. Problems of social desirability and interviewee bias are low. Possibilities of illustration and complex filtering as well as immediate plausibility checks are handier. The respondent's behaviour can be documented easily (see DIEKMANN 2007, pp. 520f.; BANDILLA 2002).

However, the population of internet users is selective: people using the internet are younger, richer, more educated, often male and have their own families (see BAUR & FLORIAN 2008, pp. 112f.). Even if the sample is adjusted by socio-demographic characteristics, the attitudes and behaviour of persons sampled by conventional methods still might greatly differ in reference to persons sampled online. User behaviour also differs considerably. Moreover, having no information on the total population and using unrestricted self-recruiting volunteer methods, the survey is not based on random selection. Thus, conclusions on the target population are not valid (see BAUR & FLORIAN 2008, pp. 112ff.) nor are means and proportions (DIEKMANN 2007, p. 525).

In this regard, the Re-Turn Online Survey deals with two limitations: coverage-error and unit-non-response. Since there is no valid reference frame on the total population, the Re-Turn sample could not be drawn randomly. It cannot be assessed how selective the sampling population is and how many target persons never had the chance to participate in the survey or who refused to take part in the study and for what reasons. Thus, it cannot be adjusted for coverage and drop-out errors. As a consequence, inference conclusions from the sample to the total target population are neither valid nor can mean values and proportions be understood as a more general observation. However, correlations between parameters are valid and mechanisms of variable relations for the subgroups of interest can be approved.

Furthermore, using an online tool, the Re-Turn target population comprises potential returnees who are rich, young, highly educated and computer skilled. In this case the coverage-error might be smaller. It is still not assessable, as no information on the total population and selective non-response of specific subgroups of returnees and emigrants is available. If labour market problems of emigrants and returnees who are less educated, less skilled and older are of special research interest, this particular subgroup might be underrepresented in the Re-Turn online sample. Especially when studying international migration flows, the opportunities to use internet vary significantly on an international level (see BAUR & FLORIAN 2008, p. 112).

The questionnaire comprises several topics: questions on the respondent's migration biography, socio-demographic characteristics, living conditions in the home and the host country, and for return migrants, living conditions in the home country after return, as well as qualification, expectations and barriers related to emigration and return. The questionnaire was programmed with the Limesurvey (<http://www.limesurvey.org>) open source software, which was slightly extended according to the Re-Turn questionnaire's filter logic. Data collection period had a term of 8 months. The survey was launched on 21 December 2011 and the final data set was extracted on 5 August 2012.

Data and sample distribution

The raw sample size comprises 3,064 cases, out of which 20% were not members of the target population (i.e. no emigrants or return migrants) and had been deleted. 3% (n=67) of respondents in the raw sample only migrated within one country. About 1% gave implausible information, e.g. a home region which was not in the home country. Furthermore, cases (n=439) had been deleted because of completely missing data in the main questionnaire modules. The statistical analyses can be done with 1,913 remaining cases (62%), which provided valid information for the main variables (see tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Overview of deleted cases

	Gross	Returnees	Emigrants	Non target	Net
Total of recruited respondents	3,064	728	1,716	620	2,444
%	100	24	56	20	80
Net %		100	100		80
Implausible cases	2,444	696	1,681	67	2,377
%	100	28	69	3	97
Net %		96	98		78
Missing information on more than 70% of variables	2,377	687	1,665	25	2,352
%	100	29	70	1	99
Net %		94	97		77
Missing information in main modules	2,352	554	1,359	439	1,913
%	100	24	58	19	81
Net %		76	79		62

Source: Re-Turn data

In Austria the sampling procedure was most effective and drop-out rates the lowest. Italy reached the lowest sample size and lost half of the cases after data cleansing. On average, between 20% and 30% of the data was sorted out in each country.

Tab. 2: Sampling population by country: valid numbers

Country	Total n	Valid n	Valid %	% of global sample
Austria	771	664	86.1	34.7
Czech Republic	199	162	81.4	8.5
Germany (Eastern)	481	392	81.5	20.5
Germany (Western)	48	24	50	1.3
Hungary	145	109	75.2	5.7
Italy	35	18	51.4	0.9
Poland	131	101	77.1	5.3
Slovakia	41	29	70.7	1.5
Slovenia	507	398	78.5	20.8
Other Countries	67	16	23.9	0.8
Total valid	2,425	1,913	78.9	100.0
System	639			
Total	3,064	1,913	62.4	

Source: Re-Turn data

The last column in tab. 2 depicts the shares of the sampling population over countries. One third of the analysable sampling population was collected in Austria and about 20% was sampled in both Slovenia and Germany. These three countries together make up about 75% of the sample. This means that respondents from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Italy are underrepresented.

Description of the sampling population

In the global sample (n=1,913), return migrants make up 29% of the total, potential returnees have a share of 45% and permanent emigrants make up 26%. As the sample comprises different countries, it should be kept in mind that those shares can greatly differ between countries.

The socio demographic structure of the sample is depicted in table 3. The sampling population is young, on average 37 years old. Respondents' age ranges between 19 and 88 years. More than half of the population is younger than 35; only 16% is 45 years or older. A share of 81% is well educated; 22% of respondents have a PhD, 59% have an academic degree. Women make up 55% of the sample, 45% of the sample is male. Two thirds of the sample have a partner, 23% are single. About 60% of the sample have no children. As mentioned above, an online sampled population can differ from the total population. For example, more highly educated people have more online knowledge and better online access. Since no information exists on the socio-demographic character of the subgroups in the total population, the Re-Turn population could differ due to the online method.

Tab. 3: Socio-demographic characteristics of the global sampling population

Characteristics	Proportions
young	52% < 35 84% <45 19-88 years old mean age: 37.3
well educated	22% PhD 59% university 15% vocational / pre-university
female	55% male 45%
in partnership	72% with partner 23% single 6% divorced / widowed
without children	58% no children 42% with children
returning to the region	78% region returnees 22% country returnees
prepared to return	63% consider returning 37% don't consider returning

Source: Re-Turn data

About 78% of all return migrants settled in their home region, the rest returned to another region of the home country. Of all respondents in the survey who were still living abroad, 63% considered returning to their home country. About one third did not consider returning to their home country (see tab. 3). Additionally, table 4 depicts target group numbers by country.

Tab. 4: Subgroups of the Re-Turn sample by countries

Country	Permanent Emigrants	Potential Returnees	Returnees	Total
Austria	95	344	223	662
The Czech Republic	63	62	36	161
Germany	64	197	153	414
Hungary	37	29	43	109
Italy	5	6	7	18
Poland	19	24	58	101
Slovakia	14	9	6	29
Slovenia	185	185	23	393
Total	482	856	549	1,887

Source: Re-Turn data

Merits and limitations of the study

Since there is no knowledge about the size of the total population of interest (i.e. all emigrants and return migrants from a respective country), a random sample cannot be guaranteed nor can it be assessed whether each target person had the same chance to take part in the survey. Having no information on size and socio-demographic parameters of the target population, the sampling population can neither be adjusted nor evaluated with respect to representativity and selection error (see BAUR & FLORIAN 2008). Therefore, all inference statistical conclusions are invalid and all conclusions are restricted to the sample of the survey. Comparisons between countries are to be treated cautiously due to different sampling strategies in the countries.

In addition, using questionnaire techniques always implies certain limits and pitfalls. Asking sensitive questions, for example one's income situation or negatively experienced events, implies the risk that respondents refuse to answer (item non-response) or answer the question in a 'socially desirable way' in order to prevent 'losing face'. The probability of the latter is lower in the case of an online survey, since no interviewers are present in face-to-face interaction. However, asking sensitive questions and for events and experiences that lie in the past, the problem arises that stated memorised information is less trustworthy. Moreover, respondents might have rationalised or forgotten their negative experiences (memory falsification).

These are shortcomings every migrant survey study needs to address as long as there is no comprehensive register of migrants available for random sampling. Despite the methodological limitations, the Re-Turn survey provides an innovative method to gather data. A multilingual tool (set up in 8 languages) had been developed, allowing - at least from the set-up of the questionnaire - a direct comparison between countries' subsamples.

Furthermore, as the survey was set up in the LimeSurvey open source software, it can be re-opened again to study other cohorts with the same tool, without generating extra costs for survey implementation. In this way, the survey might also be used by individual countries and regions to broaden their sample sizes independently from other countries and regions. IP control and cookies have been excluded so that the survey might also work in public terminals, where many different potential respondents are able to participate on the same computer. Thus, one could achieve new target groups who are not available via internet. Content-wise, the survey generates comparable data about the phenomenon of return migration within the European Union, which so far do not exist.

Finally, methodologically setting-up the study as an online survey has the advantage that one can approach the mobile population of migrants, which are hardly available through traditional survey techniques such as letter surveys or visits from interviewers at home. Migrants are travelling a lot between different places and as such they make use of the internet to maintain ties to different places while being absent. Therefore, online surveys are an appropriate and efficient measure to study this mobile group of people.

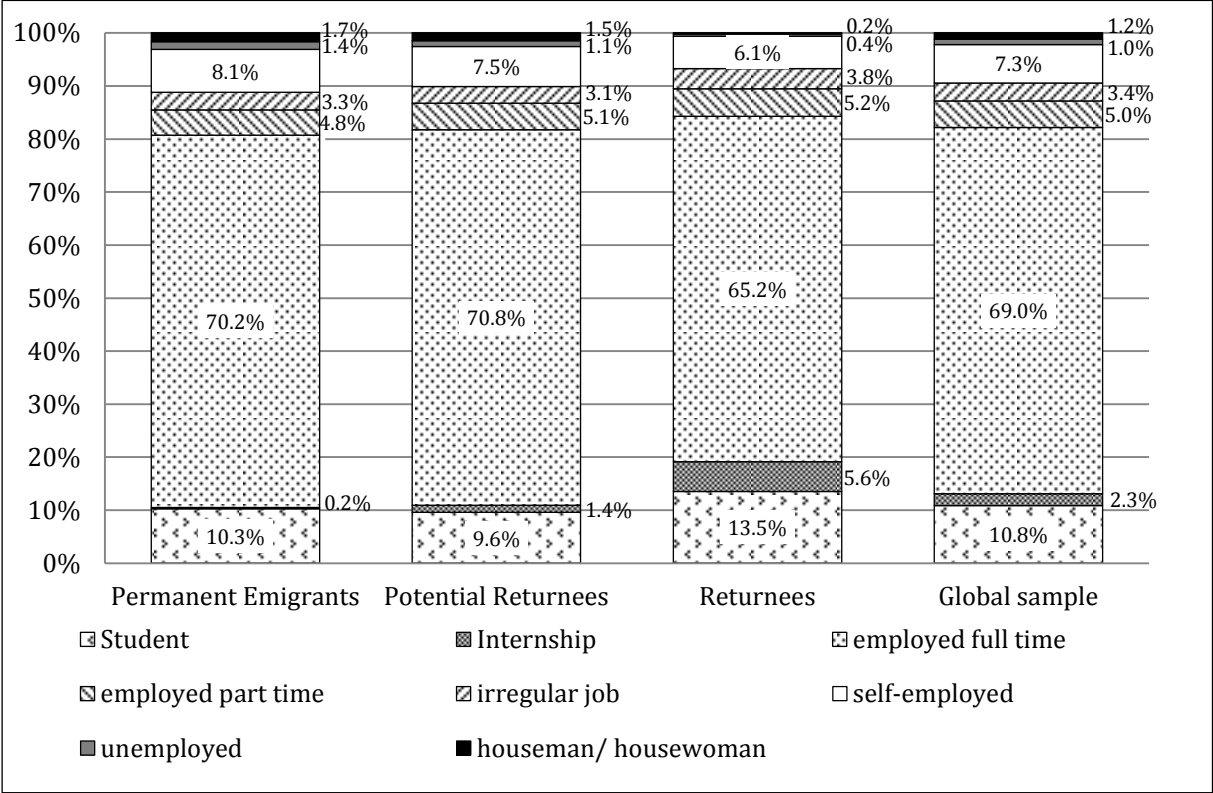
2.4 General Analysis: Emigrants and Returnees

The general analysis refers to the overall returnee population compared to the emigrant population of the Re-Turn online survey. Partly, results vary significantly between countries. In such cases, the results are presented differentiated by country. Further, there are detailed country reports in Annex I.

The Re-Turn sample consists of 549 return migrants (returnees), 856 emigrants who consider a return possible (potential returnees) and 482 respondents who currently do not intend to return (permanent emigrants). Subsequently, emigrant groups are compared by employment status abroad, educational level, age and marital status. Also differences in household composition and return-specific factors are presented.

Overall, emigrant groups differ in their employment status while being abroad. About 80% of all emigrants have (had) a regular job abroad, whereas the share of returnees employed full time while being abroad is with 65% lower than in the other groups (~70%)(see fig. 1).

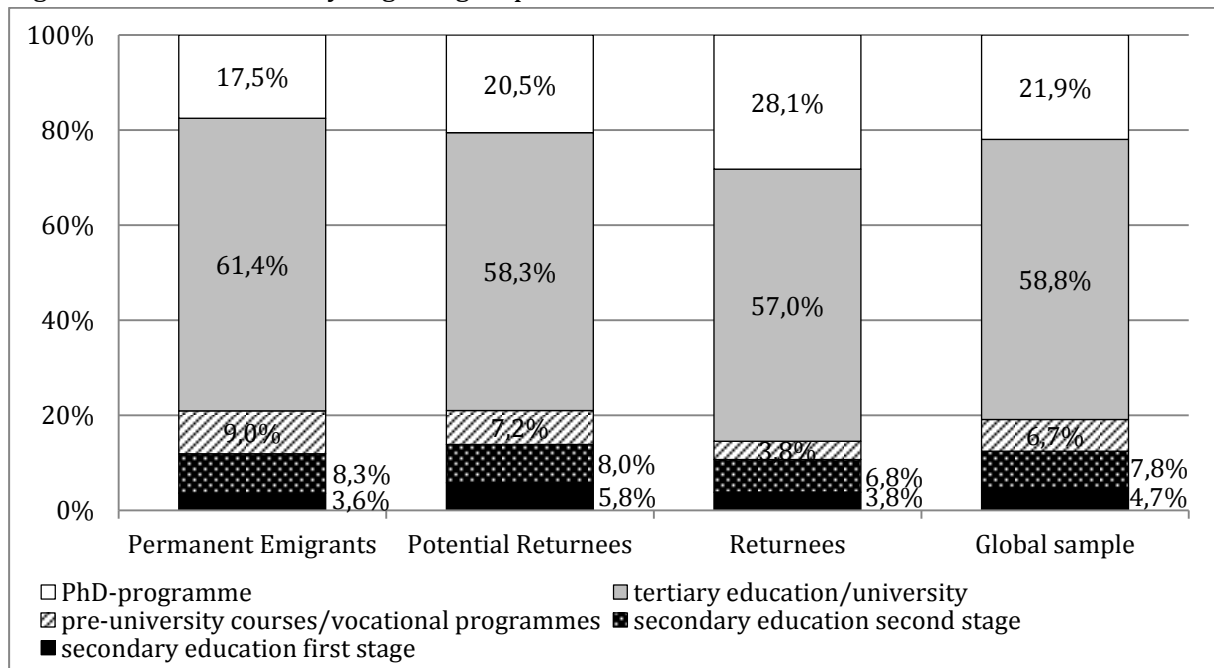
Fig. 1: Employment status abroad by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,596). Question: “What was your employment situation in [host country] after emigration?”

Furthermore, groups slightly differ in the proportion of migrants who study and do internships abroad. Whereas about 19% of returnees went abroad to study or for an internship, only 11% in other emigrant groups did so (fig. 1). This is even more obvious when comparing educational degrees between groups. Returnees have a higher rate of PhD titles (28%) compared to permanent emigrants (17%). Up to 80% in all subgroups are educated above average. In general, middle and lower educational levels are under-represented in all groups of the Re-Turn sample (fig. 2).

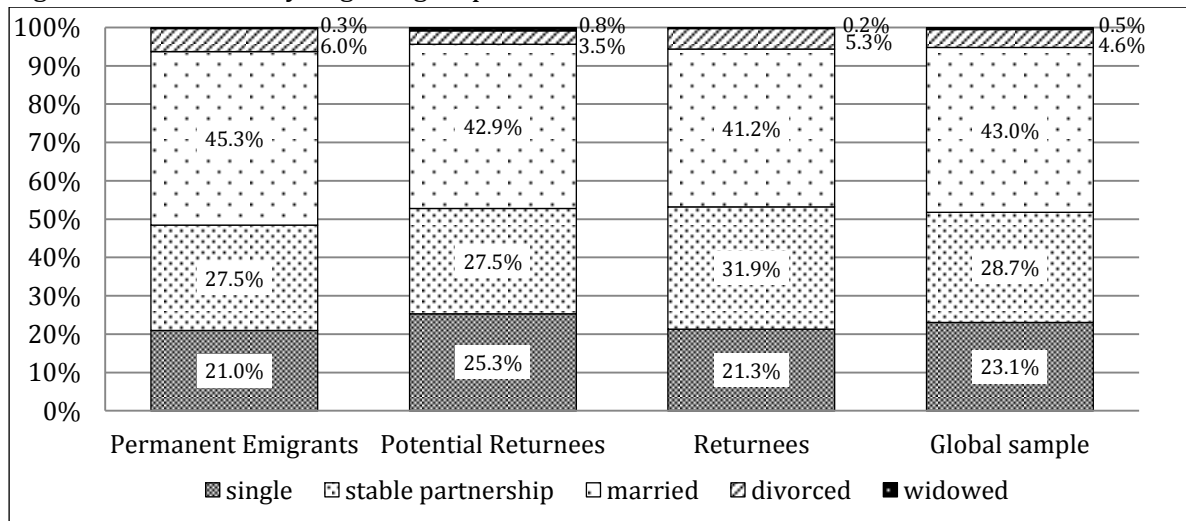
Fig. 2: Educational level by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,741). Variable: highest educational level.

Regarding gender and marital status, the migrant groups only slightly differ. Females are slightly over-represented and males tend to be under-represented in the Re-Turn sample. Moreover, potential returnees are more often single (25% as compared to 21% in the other groups). Returnees are less often married than permanent emigrants, but they are more often in a stable partnership (fig. 3).

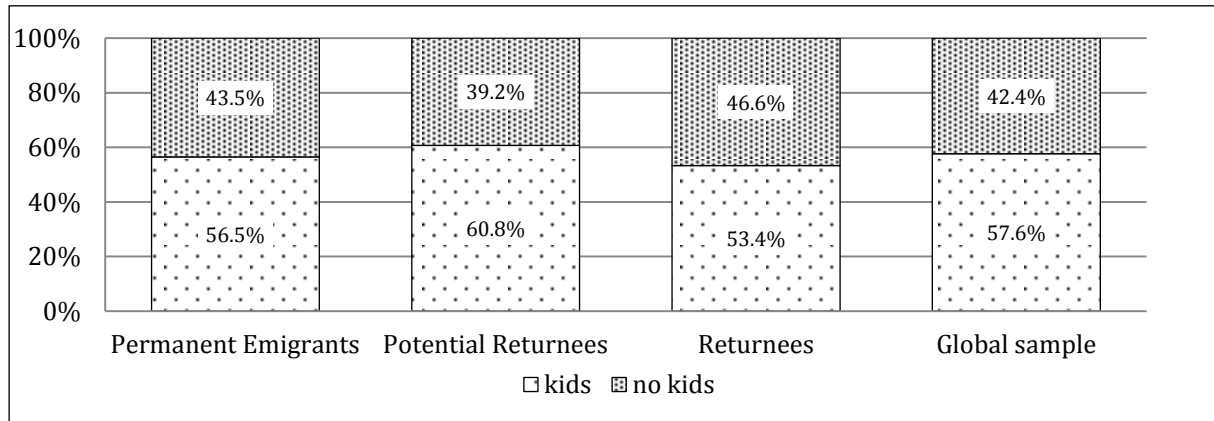
Fig. 3: Marital status by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,887). Statement: "Please indicate your current marital status."

Regarding the assumption that having children lowers the probability of migration, this relation was indeed observable in the data. The proportion of emigrants without children is higher among returnees (47%) than among potential returnees (39%) and among permanent emigrants (44%) (fig. 4).

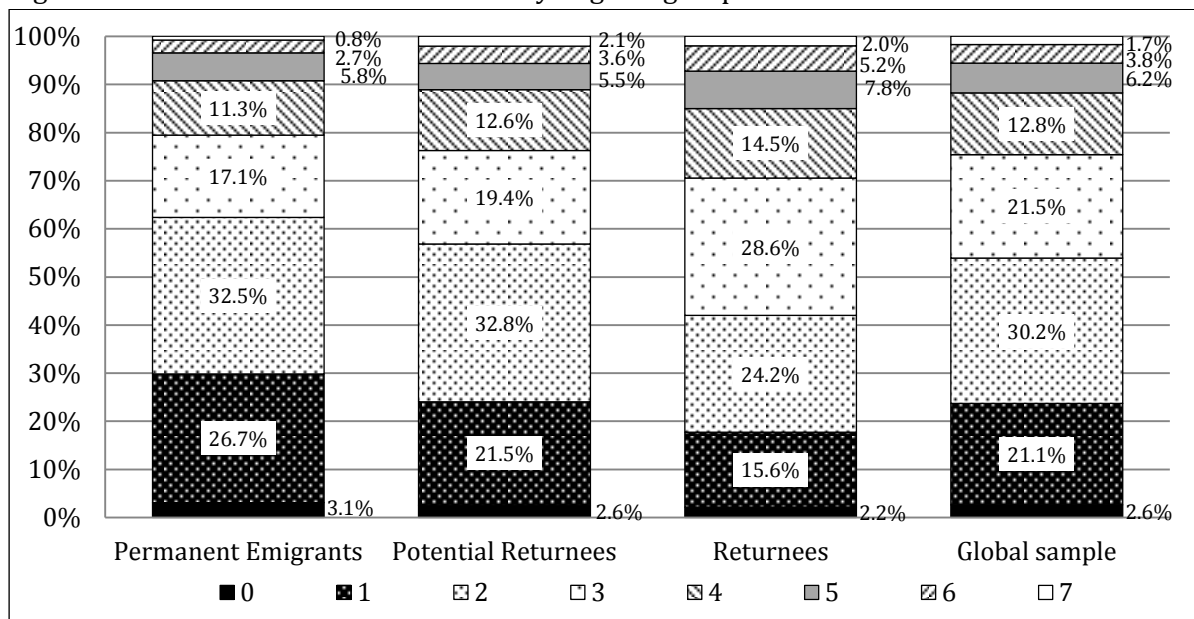
Fig. 4: Parenthood by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1563). Variable: having kids or not.

When asked how often respondents had changed their place of residence since 2002, the following figure depicts that returnees have moved more often than the other groups, as they have high shares that changed residence more than four times in the last ten years (fig. 5). It should be mentioned that intra-national re-locations are included here.

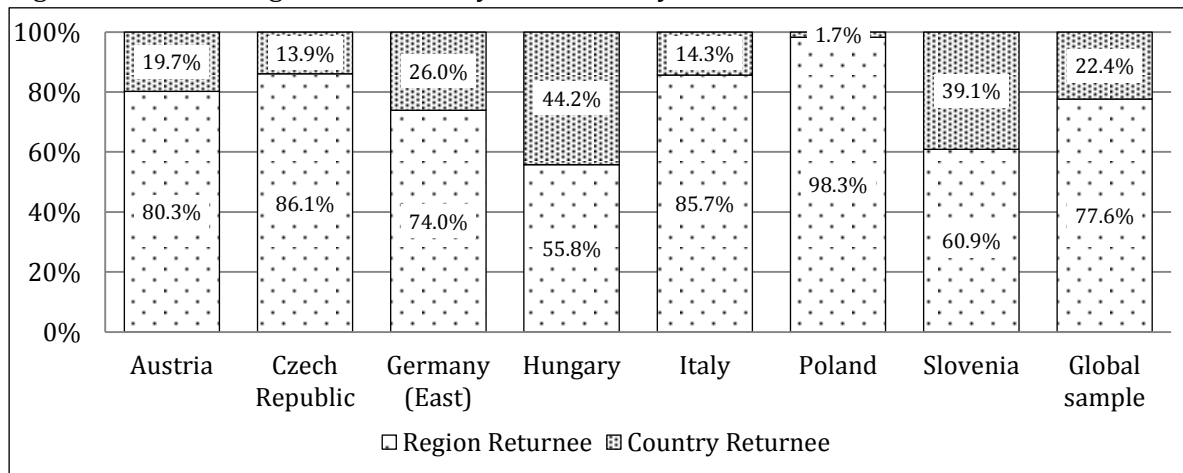
Fig. 5: Number of relocations since 2002 by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,901). Question: "Where have you lived since January 2002? Please list all former places of residence of more than 6 months chronologically up to your current place of residence."

Furthermore, returnees remigrate rather to their home region than to any other region of their home country (NUTS2 regions). More specifically, three out of four returnees in the sample remigrated to their home regions, only 22% decided to live in another region of their home country after returning (fig. 6).

Fig. 6: Destination regions of return by home country

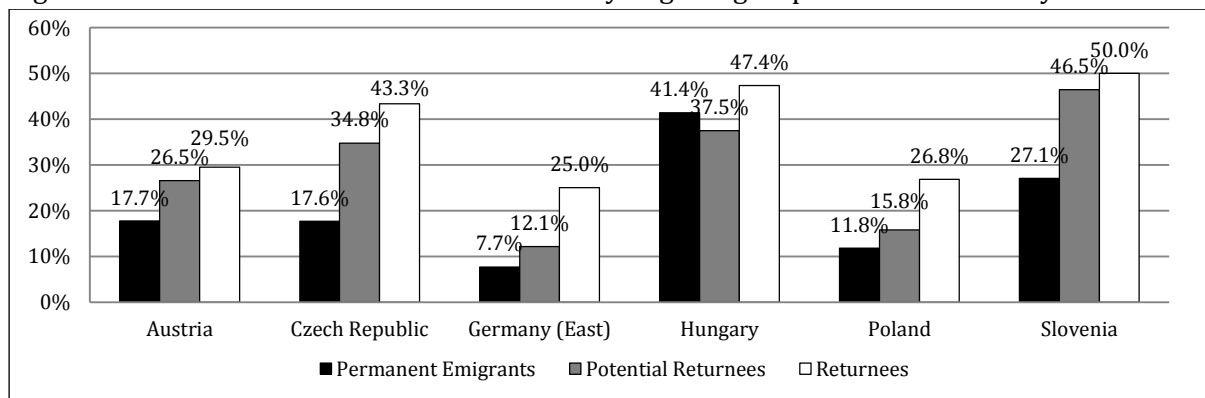


Source: Re-Turn data (n=554). Question: "Do you consider your region your home region?"

Comparing countries, the shares differ but the basic pattern remains: a higher share of returnees came back to their home region. The shares of those who returned to another region of their home country is higher in Hungary (n=43) and Slovenia (n=23), but the group size is relatively low, thus numbers are less trustworthy. Asked for their return plans, about 83% of potential returnees in the global sample consider returning to their home region.

The decisions to return (to the home region) depend on situational and contextual factors (CASSARINO 2004, pp. 5f.), as, for example, maintaining a second household, having friends and family who still live in the home region. According to the figure below, about one third of all returnees maintained a second household in the home country while being abroad (fig. 7). This share is lower in the other groups, e.g. compared to one out of five permanent emigrants. This pattern applies to all countries with different shares per country.

Fig. 7: Maintenance of a household back home by migrant groups and home country



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,550). Variable: I maintain(ed) a household in [home country] while living abroad [yes, no].

To sum up, within the Re-Turn sample, migrant groups differ in certain characteristics, e.g. educational level, parenthood and maintenance of a second household. Most prevalent is the higher amount of returnees studying or doing internships abroad compared to other emigrants. Also, returnees have an educational level above the average of other emigrant groups and are less often parents. Moreover, returnees have a higher propensity to maintain a second

household in their home country, which indicates the intention of a temporary emigration, or respectively a planned return. This also points to a higher level of flexibility among returnees.

Results for each country differ in several aspects. Country specific analyses are presented in Annex I. As a contribution of empirical evidence to several inconclusive theoretical assumptions and inconsistent empirical findings in the literature (see chapter 2.2), the next section presents basic results on qualifications, motives and the success of returnees compared to other emigrants.

2.5 Hypotheses and Empirical Findings

2.5.1 Returnees' Age and Qualifications

According to former research, returnees are younger, more skilled and qualified above average compared to non-migrants (KLAGGE et al. 2007; MARTIN & RADU 2012).

Tab. 5: Age groups by countries: total population compared to returnees

Total Population in %						Median Age (2011)	N
	up to 25	up to 35	up to 45	up to 65	over 65		
The Czech Republic	27.5%	15.4%	15.1%	27.1%	14.8%	39.6	10,505,445
Germany	25.5%	12.1%	14.2%	28.5%	19.7%	44.6	81,843,743
Italy	-	-	-	-	-	43.5	60,820,764
Hungary	27.9%	15.1%	14.9%	26.1%	14.1%	40.1	9,957,731
Austria	27.9%	13.0%	15.2%	27.1%	16.8%	42.0	8,443,018
Poland	29.9%	16.6%	13.3%	27.4%	12.8%	38.0	38,538,447
Slovenia	26.5%	14.8%	14.7%	28.3%	15.8%	41.7	2,055,496
Slovakia	30.4%	16.7%	14.4%	26.6%	11.9%	37.2	5,404,322
Total	28.0%	14.8%	14.5%	27.3%	15.1%	/	217,568,966
Returnees (n=552)							
The Czech Republic	8.3%	44.4%	38.9%	8.3%	0.0%	34.5	36
Germany	7.5%	53.4%	30.8%	8.2%	0.0%	34.0	146
Italy	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%	44.0	7
Hungary	9.3%	39.5%	30.2%	18.6%	2.3%	36.0	43
Austria	4.5%	36.5%	42.8%	16.2%	0.0%	37.0	222
Poland	5.3%	64.9%	28.1%	1.8%	0.0%	33.0	57
Slovenia	0.0%	52.2%	21.7%	26.1%	0.0%	35.0	23
Slovakia	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	32.0	6
Total	5.6%	45.3%	35.9%	12.9%	0.4%	35	552

Sources: Eurostat 2012; Re-Turn data

The upper part of table 5 depicts the shares of age groups and median age of the total population by country. The lower part presents the shares of age groups and median age by country in the Re-Turn survey. Earlier findings can be confirmed by the results of the current survey: the shares of returnees among the age groups 'up to 35' and 'up to 45' are higher than for the total population and they are lower in the older age groups in all countries. This is also true when the median age is considered, except for Italy. The result implies that migration as well as return migration is most likely at younger ages.

Regarding higher education, the next table (tab. 6) shows the shares of tertiary education for non-migrants and return migrants as in the Labour Force Survey (LFS, 2005-2008) and in the Re-Turn sample. In both data sets, returnees have higher levels of education compared to those who did not return (permanent emigrants). Nevertheless, the shares of tertiary education among return migrants in the Re-Turn sample are tremendously high. This finding points to a positive selection bias of the sample in terms of educational attainment.

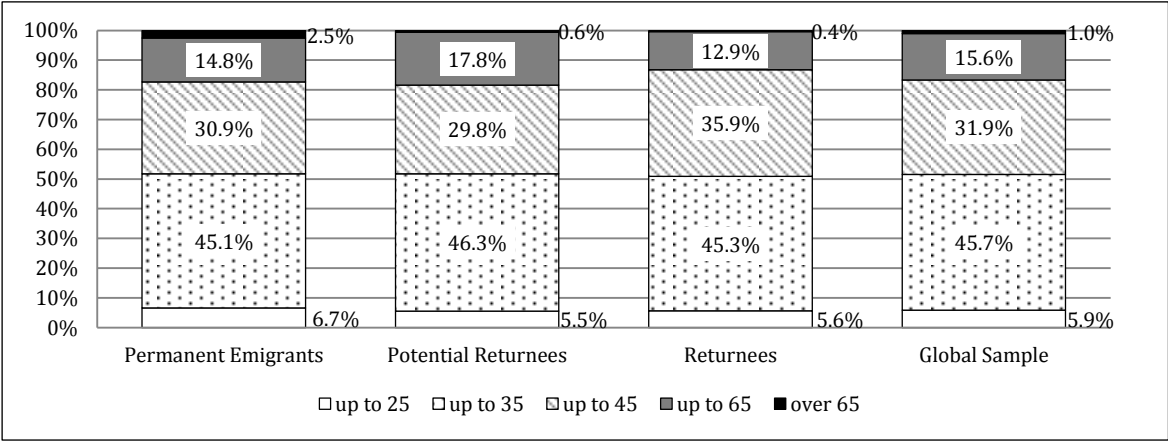
Tab. 6: Percentage of tertiary education by countries (LFS) and in Re-Turn survey

Tertiary Education by Countries	LFS		Re-Turn	
	Permanent Emigrants	Returnees	Returnees	N Returnees
Austria	14.9%	26.1%	90.3%	206
Czech Republic	11.6%	25.0%	82.9%	35
Germany	20.7%	34.3%	80.3%	137
Hungary	15.3%	42.9%	74.4%	39
Italy	11.7%	24.5%	83.3%	6
Poland	15.2%	22.8%	90.9%	44
Slovakia	11.9%	20.0%	60.0%	5
Slovenia	-	31.0%	80.0%	15

Sources: LFS 2005-2008, weighted data; Re-Turn data

In a further step, returnees are compared to other emigrant groups in the Re-Turn sample with regard to age and qualification level. In comparison to other emigrant groups, returnees are not younger and in only few aspects are they more skilled. In detail, half of all emigrants in the sample are younger than 35 years. The share of 36 to 45 years old people among returned emigrants is slightly higher. Across all age cohorts, there is no remarkable difference in age between returnees and permanent emigrants. Potential returnees are more strongly represented in the older age group (55 to 65 years) compared to other emigrants (fig. 8).

Fig. 8: Age cohorts by migrant groups



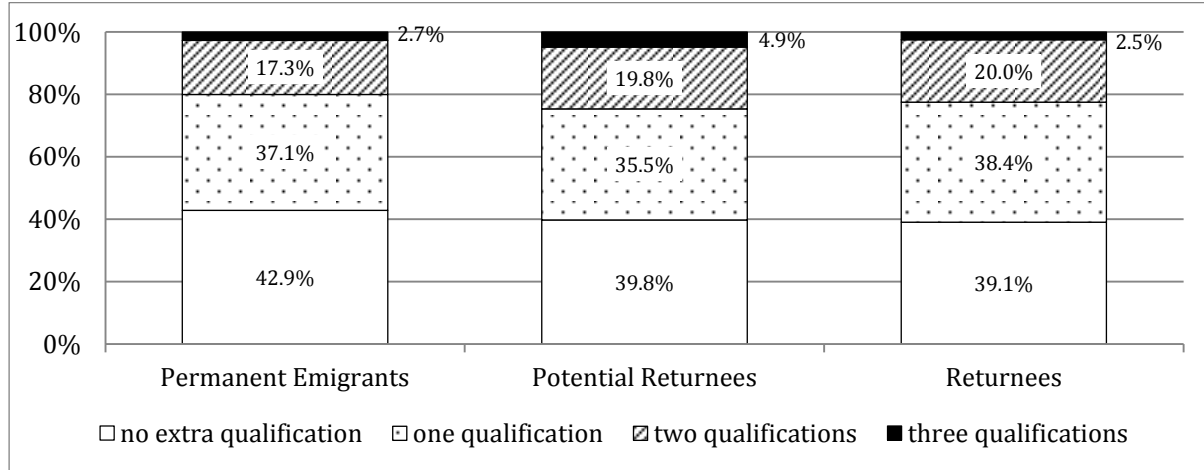
Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,880). Statement: "Please indicate your birth year."

The group of returnees is higher educated than other emigrant groups. A share of 28% of returnees holds a PhD as compared to 18% among other emigrants. However, two out of three in both groups have an academic degree (returnees: 57%; permanent emigrants: 61%).

Potential returnees range between the other groups, with about 58 % having a tertiary degree and 21% a PhD (cf. fig. 2). Note that in almost all countries (except Italy) returnees have a higher share of PhD degrees.

Regarding skills and competences, indicated by the amount of qualifications, the groups show similar shares. About 40% in each group have no additional qualification, only 20% have two qualifications. Returnees have slightly higher shares of one or two qualifications (fig. 9).

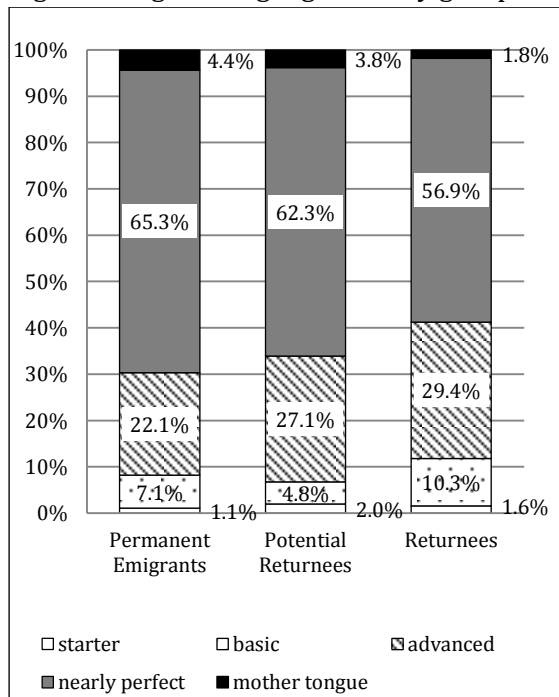
Fig. 9: Number of qualifications by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,738). Variable: Amount of certified qualifications.

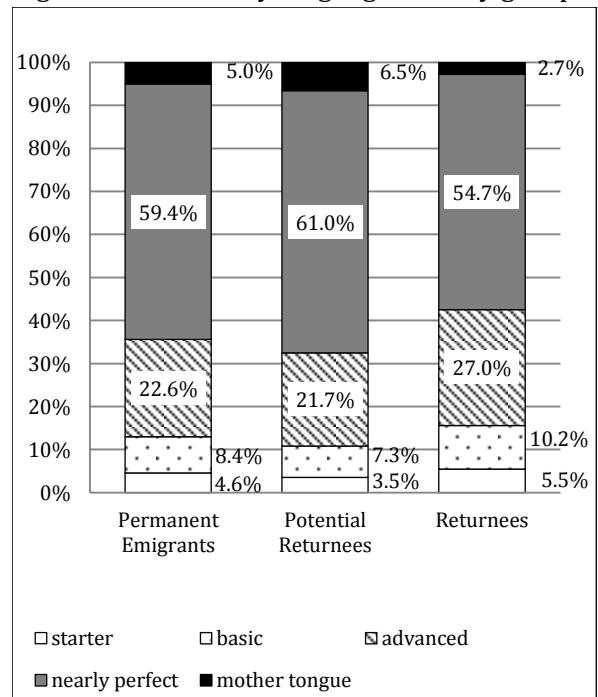
Apparently, returnees' English and host country language skills are on average lower as compared to other emigrants (fig. 10; fig. 11). This is probably related to the length of stay and the return intentions. Investing in language skills is expensive. Those who intend to stay permanently might put more effort into learning the host country language.

Fig. 10 : English language level by groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,457).

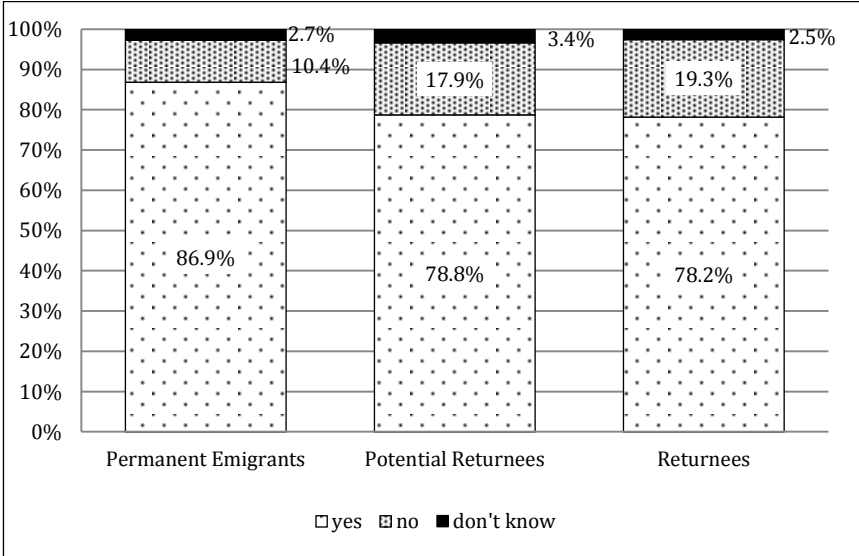
Fig. 11: Host country language level by groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=914).

Regarding the subjective evaluation of whether language skills had been improved abroad, nearly 80% of returnees and potential returnees approved, whereas this share is even higher (87%) among permanent emigrants (fig. 12).

Fig. 12: Subjective improvement of language skills by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,585). Question: “Did you improve your language skills while abroad?”

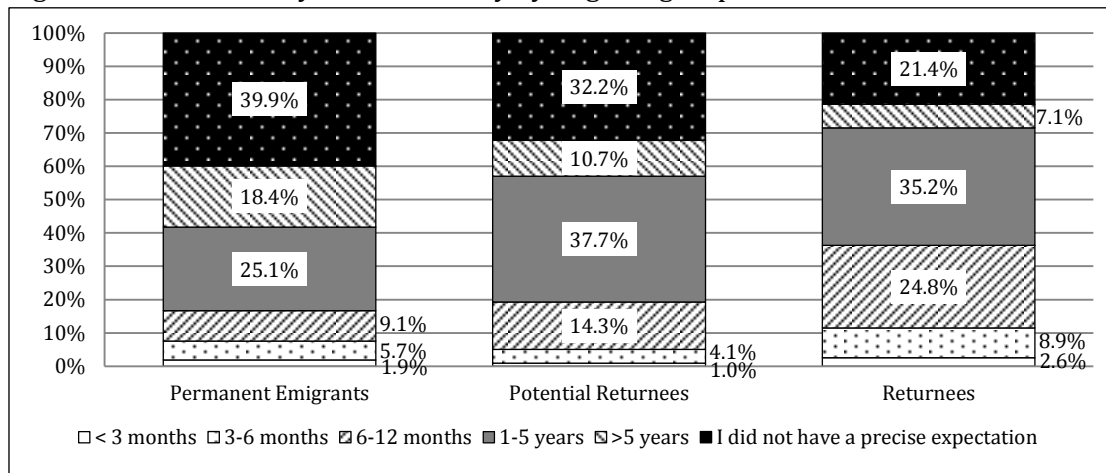
All in all, returnees are highly educated and as old as other emigrants in the Re-Turn sample. In some aspects they are more skilled. In the next section, we will now look at the motives for migration: do emigrants and returnees differ in motives of emigration and in experiences in the host country?

2.5.2 Motives of Emigration and Motives of Return

According to the literature, the decision to return or to stay abroad is driven by different motives than the initial decision to emigrate (LEE 1966, p. 22). Comparing motives of emigration and reasons for staying versus returning, varying patterns for migrant groups are expected. A general analysis reveals intra-individual differences in the motives to emigrate, to stay and to return as well as differences in satisfaction with conditions in the host country. As a main result, returnees more often intended to emigrate for a limited period of time. Whereas the decision for emigration was made for career and economic reasons, the return is realised in order to improve social life, e.g. to start a family or reunite with family and friends.

In detail, about 80% of the return migrants and 65% of the potential returnees intended to migrate only temporarily. Intentions of length of stay differ significantly between permanent emigrants and returnees (fig. 13).

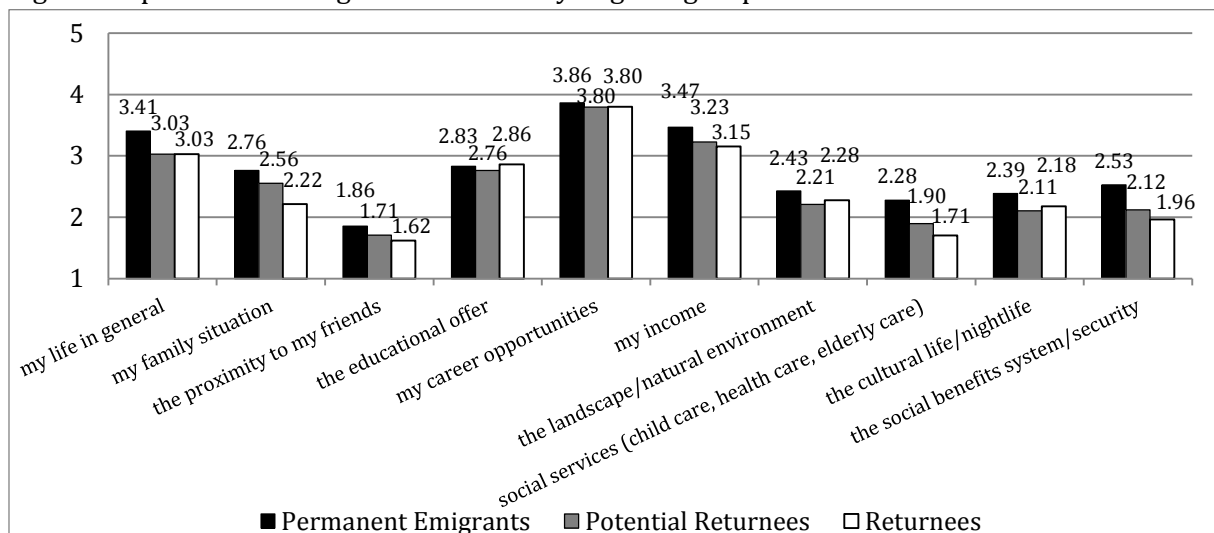
Fig. 13: Intention to stay in host country by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,860). Question: "Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay in [host country]?"

Regarding the motives of emigration, permanent emigrants score higher on all dimensions of emigration motives, as if they tend to have higher expectations in general (fig. 14).

Fig. 14: Importance of emigration motives by migrant groups

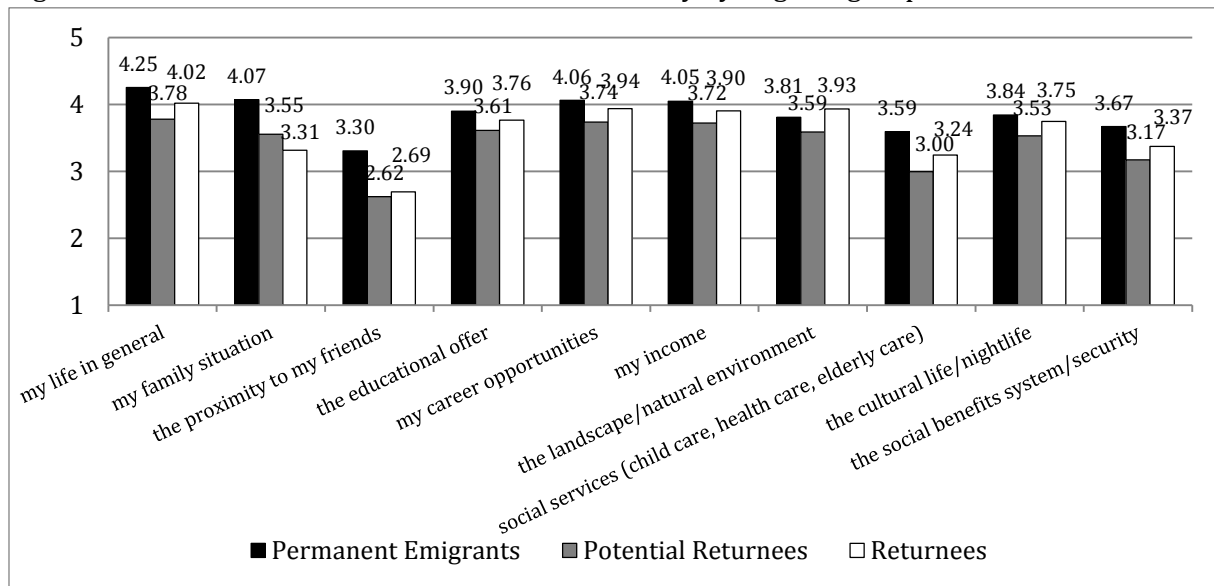


Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,842). Question: "How important was it for you to improve the following factors when you decided to move to [host country]?" (mean values; 1=not relevant, 2=less relevant, 3=important, 4=very important, 5=most important)

The groups do not differ in terms of their emigration motives : improving educational and career opportunities are quite important for all groups. Apart from being motivated to improve their 'life in general' abroad, the three main motives for permanent emigrants are improving career, income situation and education. The same applies to the other groups. Thus, emigration motives do not vary qualitatively.

Do groups differ in their satisfaction with these aspects in their host country, and are they – following this – differently motivated to return? Again, the bar for permanent emigrants is higher in nearly all aspects than those of the other groups, which means that they are more satisfied with the circumstances abroad (fig. 15).

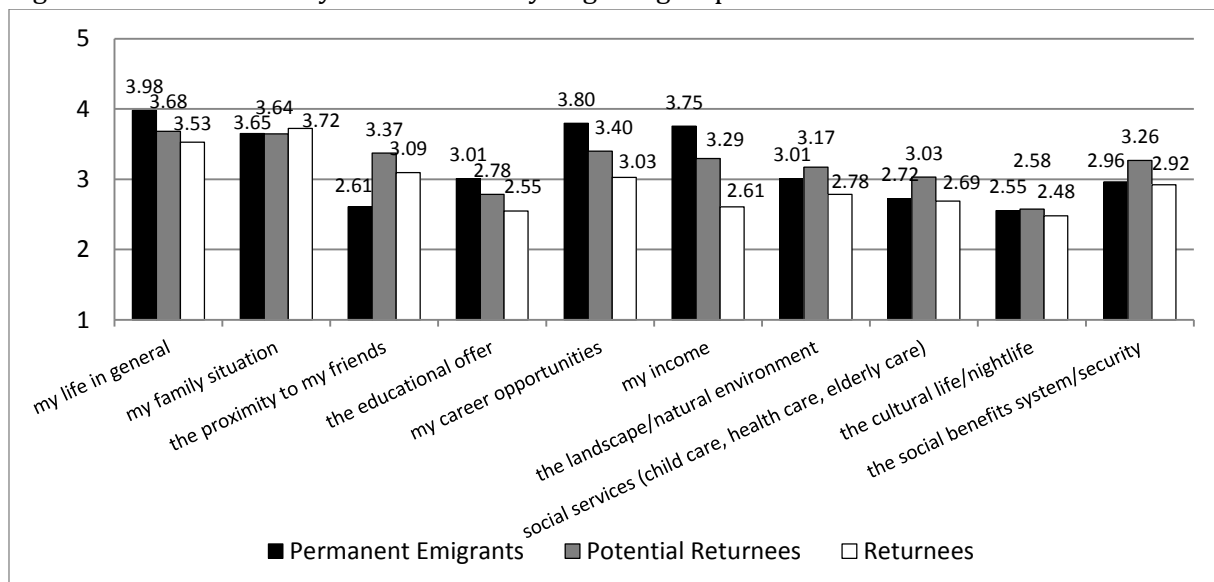
Fig. 15: Satisfaction with conditions in the host country by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,887). Question: “How satisfied have you been with the following factors in [host country] once you had moved there?” (mean values; 1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=neither nor, 4=satisfied, 5=very satisfied)

Comparing permanent emigrants and returnees, both do not differ much with respect to education, income and career (fig. 16). Thus, the return is not driven by dissatisfaction with the ‘hard’ factors in the host country, apart from the social acceptance dimension. Other than for economic reasons, their return is privately motivated, i.e. returning is driven by the wish for heading back to friends and family. Moreover, income does not seem to play a key role for returnees compared to the aforementioned social factors.

Fig. 16: Motivation to stay and to return by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,822). Questions for permanent emigrants/potential returnees: “What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?” Returnees: “How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to [home country]?” (mean values: 1=not relevant, 2=less relevant, 3=important, 4=very important, 5=most important)

Being asked for motives to stay or to leave, apart from improving their life in general, the two main motives of permanent emigrants to stay abroad are still the same as for their emigration: career and income. For returnees, career and income are less important in their decision to return. Aspects of education and career opportunities are now replaced by social motives such as family, friends and social security. This supports the idea of an emotional or family type of return. Moreover, this type might overlap with a return of conservatism.

'I always reached my peak at around Christmas time: the perspective of seeing my family and friends soon gave me the thrill' – Migrant story by Irena Šuler (Slovenia)

I got offered a job in Berlin in 2001 while working in Slovenia as a contracted translator in an EU funded project. Being a Slovene citizen having graduated in Austria, I could say that I got my first international experience already during my years at the university. Since I regularly commuted between Austria and Slovenia it allowed me to maintain my original roots in Slovenia and to keep my 'base'. This was always a quite important issue for me.

I accepted the job of an EU-project manager in Berlin, because I was curious and wanted to grab my chance. I decided to pack my bags and left for the 'unknown' without even having the time to say goodbye to all of my friends. My first weeks in Berlin were very exciting. All was new, the environment, the colleagues, the dynamics of the city – but since I graduated in German language, this all made it much easier for me. I remember spending an enormous amount of time in different authorities, agencies and local offices to get my papers sorted out. But my employer supported me in every possible way. After spending a few months in Berlin, my employer decided to dispatch me to our branch office in Brussels. This was organised in line with my working perspectives as I knew that the option of going for few years to Brussels existed. So I packed my bags again and left for the European capital.

Brussels was quite different from Berlin. You rarely get the chance to spend time with local people. The city is filled with foreigners like yourself and you are surrounded by motivated and ambitious young people. There are glass-front buildings and skyscrapers everywhere as a constant reminder that you are in the middle of the 'happening'. I ended up spending 4 years in Brussels. It was not always a fun time. I remember meeting an enormous



Brussels - Source: Oscar Franzén - <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Euparlamentet.jpg> (13.01.2013)

amount of people at receptions and in clubs and restaurants. However, what I realised quite soon was that the fluctuation of people in Brussels is enormous. This prevents you from building a constant and reliable social network around yourself. And although being a so-called workaholic, I often missed people around myself whom I could ring. I always reached my peak at around Christmas time: the perspective of seeing my family and friends soon gave me the thrill and I came home with my car stuffed to the roof with Christmas presents and Christmas tree decorations.

The work as such went well. I travelled a lot, being on fact-finding and project acquisition missions around the world. And although the professional success filled me with joy and confirmation, I started missing my 'base'. It was at that time when I began to think about going home again. I arranged with my employer to be dispatched to our branch office in Hungary, which was just about to be set up. It was closer to my home in Slovenia, which gave me the opportunity to visit my family more often. And after a year's time, the closeness to my family led me to the conclusion to end my journey.

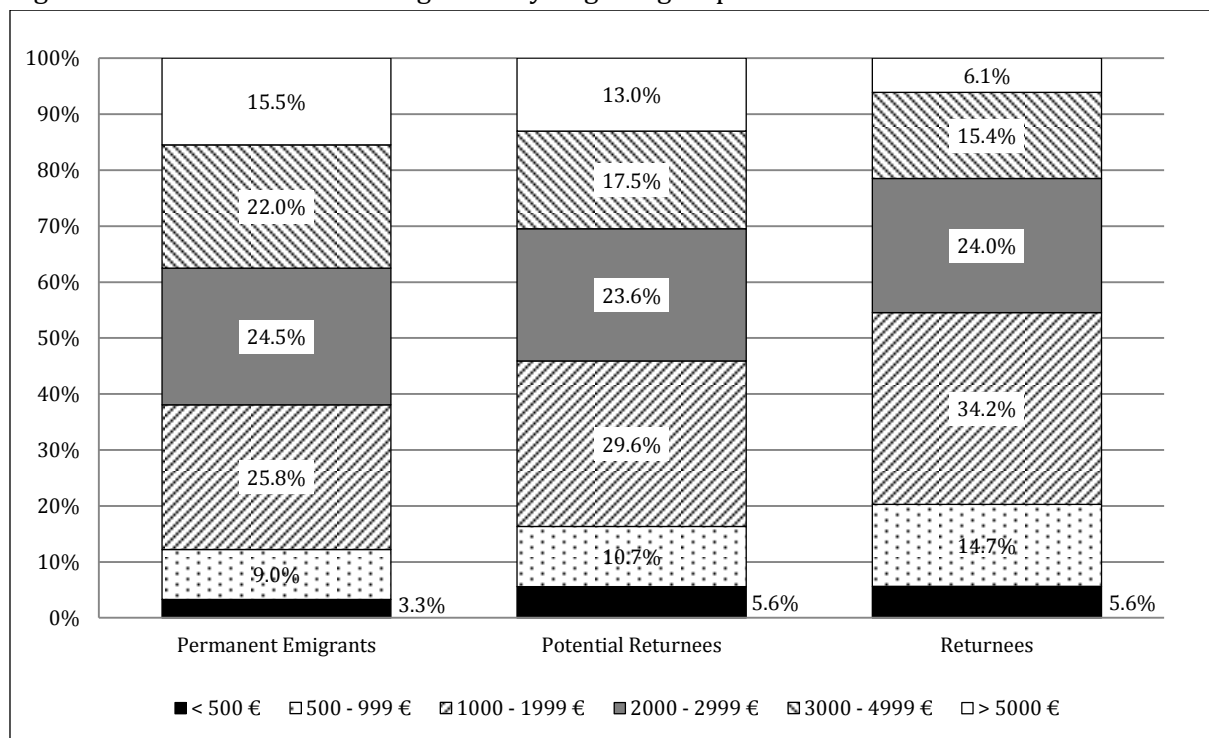
Looking back, I would never want to miss my almost 6 years of experiences abroad. It strengthens your character, broadens your horizon and gives you an opportunity to develop. However, at the same time I realised that I'm a family person from head to toe. I still work for the same company where I started in 2001, but from my home office in Slovenia, and in the afternoons, I couldn't imagine a better and more fulfilling time than spending it with my two kids and my husband.

2.5.3 Return: A Consequence of Failure?

A dominant perspective in large parts of the migration literature influenced by economic theory (cf. chapter 2.2) is to perceive remigration as ‘return of failure’, assuming returnees to be economically less successful in the host regions as other emigrant groups. According to this hypothesis, the return to their home country is seen as a consequence of failure abroad. With regard to the underlying study, this assumption is examined with three different indicators of economic success: 1) the factual income in the host region compared between migrant groups as well as compared over time, 2) the subjective evaluation of changes with regard to the job situation, and 3) the feeling of social acceptance in the host region.

With regard to the factual income situation of emigrant groups in the host country, permanent emigrants and potential returnees have higher shares in the upper income categories (see fig. 17). This implies that the higher the income of emigrants, the higher the probability of staying abroad and therefore the lower the rate of return. This supports the perspective that the economically less successful emigrants return.

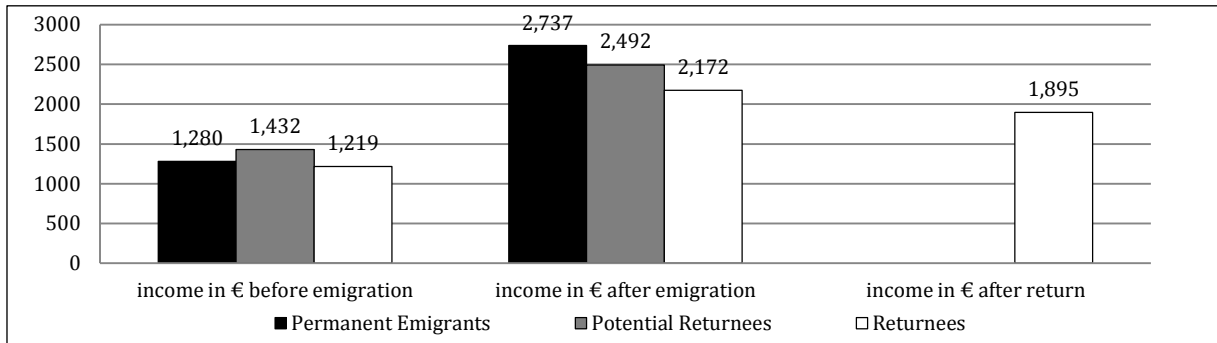
Fig. 17: Factual income after emigration by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,476). Question: “What about your average monthly household income after emigration?”

The next figure depicts the income situation for returnees before emigration, after emigration and after return. It implies an improvement of the income situation after emigration for both returnees and emigrants in the host country. However, on average returnees earn less than the other emigrant groups.

Fig. 18: Average income of groups by migration periods

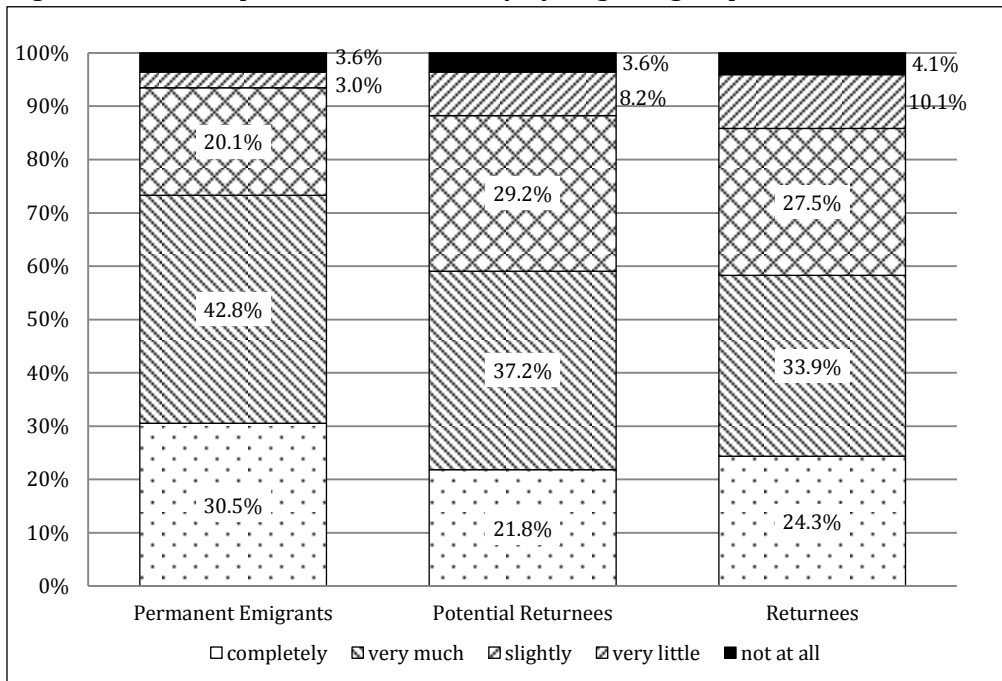


Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,476). (mean values).

Concerning the subjective evaluation of the job situation of returnees after emigration, 62% improved their job situation and 29% did not see major changes. For 9% of the returnees the job situation worsened in the host country after emigration. Further, 62% report that they lived comfortably with their income in the host country (compare fig. 27), whereas 38% of returnees were only coping on this income or found it difficult to lead a good life (permanent emigrants: 28%). Hence, at least for a part of the returnees, the hypothesis of failure seems justified.

The assumption about a 'return of failure' is also supported when analysing the feeling of social acceptance in the host country (fig. 19). The empirical results point to a feeling of lower social acceptance in the host countries among those who return. About 40% of returnees and also potential returnees feel/felt only slightly, very little or even not at all socially accepted in their host country. This indicates an emotional return type beyond economic factors, who want to feel 'home' in social terms as well (see also DIENEL et al. 2006, pp. 77ff.).

Fig. 19: Social acceptance in host country by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,650). Question: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the host society?"

In general, those emigrants are more likely to return who are economically less successful in the host country than permanent emigrants. About 38% struggled with their income situation in the host country (permanent emigrants: 28%). This finding supports the neoclassical approach ('return of failure'). However, accounting for intra-individual differences (e.g. in the economic branch) and individual decisions (e.g. intention to stay temporarily), a high share of returnees also had higher incomes and a better job situation after emigration. This rather points to the perspective of the new economics of labour migration theory. According to this approach, the return is a logical consequence once the original goals were achieved in the host country ('return of conservatism').

***'I rejected the idea of buying new kitchen furniture because I always hoped that there would be a chance to move back, and I would pack my things sooner rather than later.'* – Migrant Story by Marianne Strahler (Eastern Germany)**

I was born in Weißwasser (Saxony/Eastern Germany) and moved to East-Westphalia (Western Germany) in the year 2000. The departure from my old home was a necessary consequence of lacking job opportunities. After the German reunification, I had been doing odd jobs for ten years, which didn't lead to a long-term perspective. For ten years I hadn't given up hope to establish myself on the local employment market, but the odyssey from job to job did not lead to consistency. I felt that these were ten years I had lost.

Depressed by this disappointment, I made the decision to begin a new life. Together with my son I moved to Bielefeld, where an old school friend of mine already lived. Until today, I still do not know if that was a mistake at that time – but a sense of satisfaction about my new centre of life ceased to evolve. When arriving in East-Westphalia, I first worked in a supermarket, but after a half year I considered returning because I became a victim of mobbing. However, I found a temporary job in my professional field (librarian) in East-Westphalia. A little later this job was transformed into a permanent position. It was my destiny, whether good or bad, no one knows. I was over 40 years old and I could not reject the offer of a permanent position in the public service. The work is quite good, I have very dear colleagues in a great team. Yet, privately I live on call. Despite the long period of twelve years in East-Westphalia, under no circumstances could I think of a long-term stay. I rejected the idea of buying new kitchen furniture because I always hope that there would be a chance to move back, and I would pack my stuff sooner rather than later. I have not arrived here. It is this willingness to leave, this eternal feeling of not wanting to be here. Sometimes I have no willingness at all to go home to my flat from work. My melancholic mood concerning my new home is also a result of the initial hostilities that I experienced. Therefore, I blocked my mind in relation to new social contacts. The superficiality of many local people contributed to my internal isolation.

Instead, I keep up relations to my old environment and return to my home region about every eight weeks. However, I had to notice that the extent of original contacts rapidly decreased. Now I do not know where my roots are. After the long time here, I do not know where I belong, where I should go, where I can stay. And I have the feeling that I can't come to terms with my native home either. This inner turmoil of being unhappy with the situation in East-Westphalia on the one hand and on the other hand seeing the connections to my home fading away increased my reflection about a potential return. The main obstacle is the lack of job offers back home, although I expanded my efforts to the whole area of the former GDR, I have not had any success in finding a job so far.

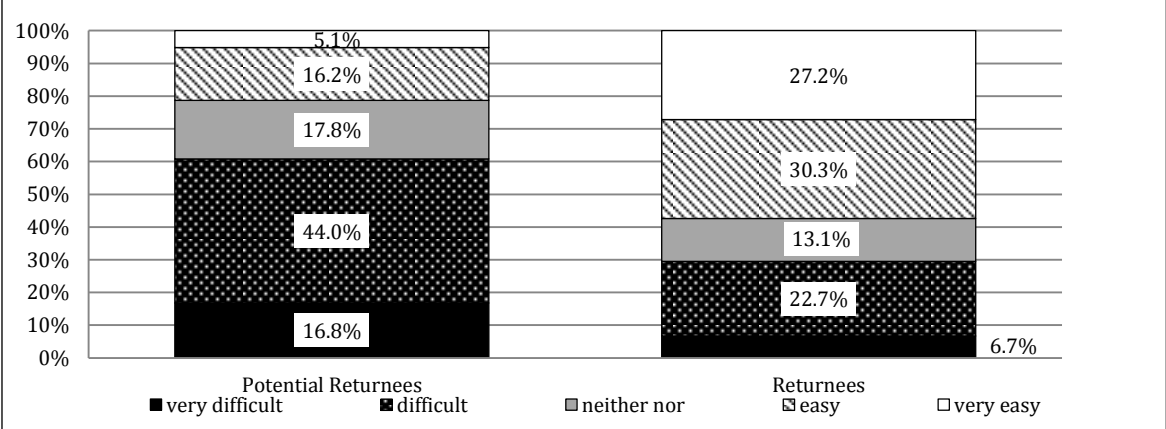
All these lessons having been learned, I came to my personal conclusion: I was ten years too old when the German reunification took place, I emigrated ten years too late and now I'm ten years too old to move back. But one thing is clear – if there were any job perspectives home, I would return.

2.5.4 Return Barriers: Expectations and Experiences

It is assumed in the literature that returnees have to deal with barriers upon returning and experience difficulties regarding their re-integration into local labour markets. The return is supposed to be difficult and costly for returnees (MARTIN & RADU 2012). Moreover, former research reveals problems in labour market re-integration for returnees (cf. SMOLINER et al. 2013). Regarding the return itself, the assumption is not supported by results of the Re-Turn sample. Most of the returnees do not report major difficulties in returning in their ex post evaluation, which contrasts the ex ante expectations among potential returnees. However, some returnees suffer re-integration problems.

In detail, about 70% of returnees did not experience major difficulties upon returning. Regarding the return itself, they report fewer barriers than potential returnees expect when considering a return while still being abroad. Noteworthy, about 60% of potential returnees who consider a remigration expect the return to be difficult and problematic. Obviously, there is a mismatch of experiences of returnees and expectations of potential returnees (see fig. 20).

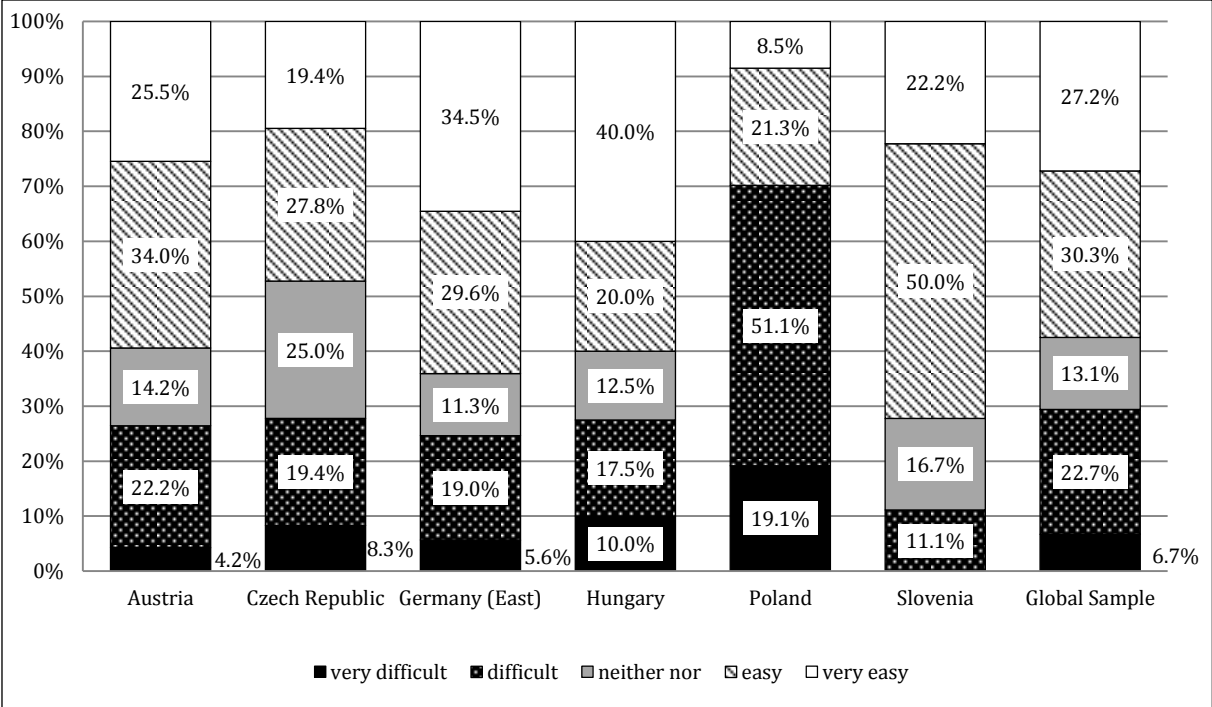
Fig. 20: Expected (potential returnees) vs. experienced (returnees) difficulty of return



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,585). Questions: “For potential returnees: How easy do you expect the return to be? For returnees: How easy was it for you to return to [home country]?”

The next figure illustrates experienced difficulties with the return between countries. Brighter parts in the graph indicate an easier return, which is obvious for about half of the returnees in all countries. An exception makes Poland, where 70% evaluate their return as difficult or very difficult, but results are less viable due to low numbers in the subgroups (fig. 21).

Fig. 21: Difficulty of return by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=519). Question: “How easy was it for you to return?”

'After the return, it is very difficult to accept the reality around you.' – Migrant Story by Eszter Sziladi (Hungary)

I was working in Switzerland for an aviation company for 1.5 years. I found the job description through a friend, I went for an interview and I was accepted. The integration in the working environment was very easy due to the fact that there were employees from more than 40 nations working for the company. Switzerland is a very special country in terms of the openness towards foreigners. The population is not particularly happy to have so many migrants. In my opinion it is hard for Eastern European people to integrate into a Western European country. Even if they have a qualified, well-paid job, Switzerland is still special. Above 30 years of age, it is not easy to establish the same social network as in your home country where you were born, grew up, or went to university etc. I think even for those people who marry in a foreign country, the integration is hard because of the cultural and language differences. In Basel there is a need of at least 3 languages, and in addition to that the Swiss German language is completely different from German, so it makes life even harder. I didn't want to stay forever, so I took it as an experience, and returned to Hungary. I prefer staying close to my family and friends rather than only considering the money I could gain in Switzerland. The salary is obviously not comparable with the Hungarian level.

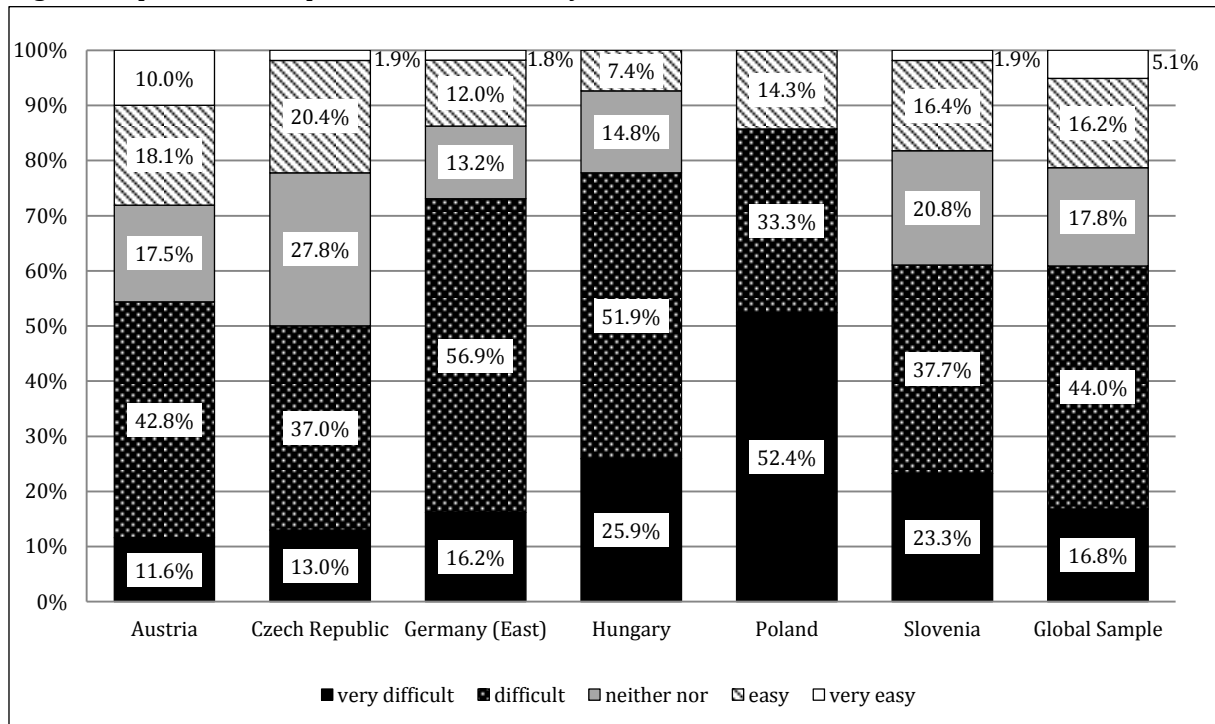


Basel - Source: Joergsam - <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BaselHaus2008.JPG> (18.01.2013)

However, there were different challenges to pass concerning my reintegration. It is very comfortable to get used to the excellent infrastructure (punctual, clean and modern public transport, high level of service everywhere), to the health system, to the good salary and to the higher living standard in Switzerland. After the return, it is very difficult to accept the reality around you. People's behaviour in Hungary is sometimes bad, such as jealousy and impoliteness, and it is difficult to get used to that again. The social benefits are low compared with the conditions in Switzerland, black labour is very common and extra hours are mostly not paid.

In comparison to the returnees' experiences, the following figure shows country specific differences in the expected difficulty of return (fig. 22).

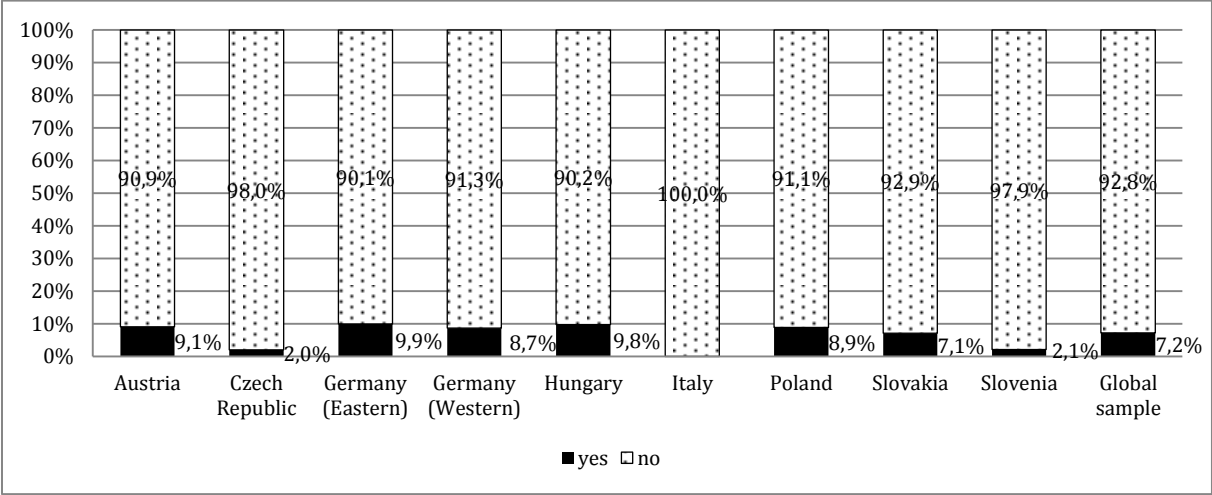
Fig. 22: Expectations of potential returnees by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=779). Question: "How easy do you expect the return to be?"

Given that there is no selectivity in terms of capacities and qualifications between the returned and potentially returning migrants, there is a significant mismatch between experiences of returnees and expectations of potential returnees. In conclusion, the actual return seems to be much easier than expected. Emigrants seem to be afraid of returning. Here, return migration support initiatives could help to reduce the expected barriers of return. However, only 7% of all emigrants know about such initiatives in their home countries (fig. 23).

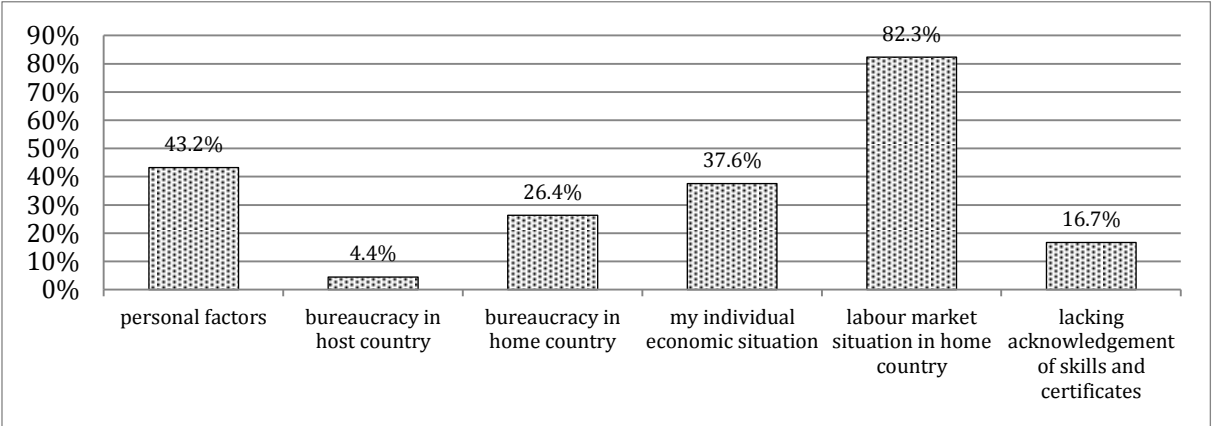
Fig. 23: Knowledge about return initiatives by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,806). Question: “Do/ did you know about any initiatives/support service agencies in [your home country] assisting your return?”

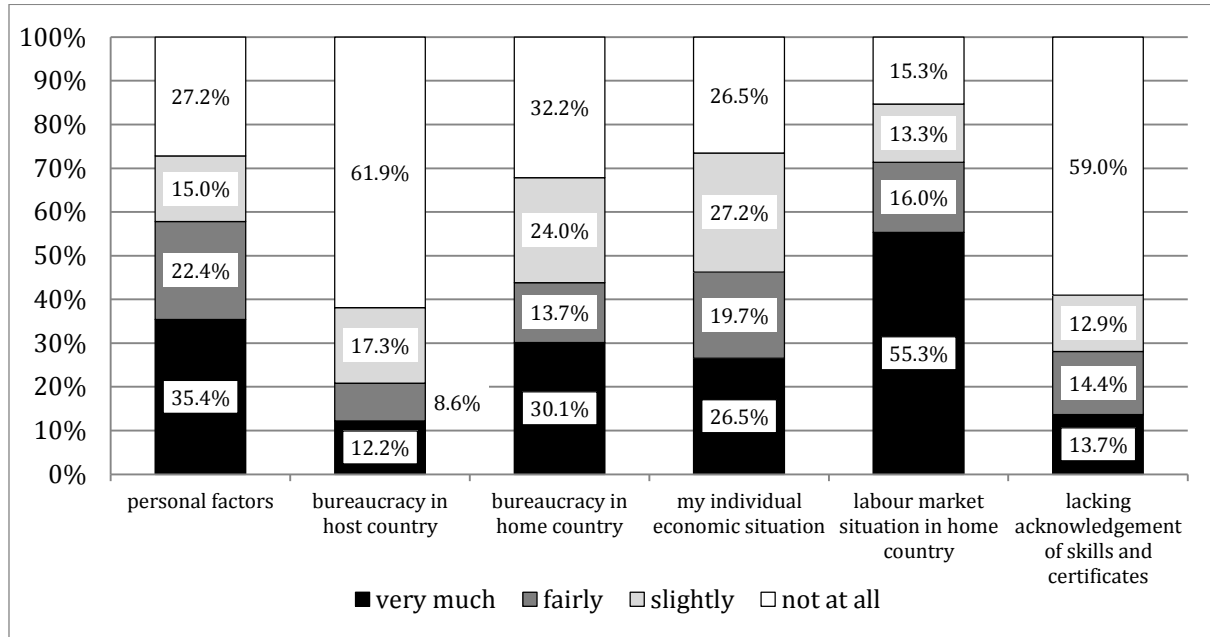
Nonetheless, some expectations of emigrants meet the actual experiences of those returnees who reported difficulties in realising their return (fig. 24; fig. 25). 82% of the potential returnees who expect the return to be very difficult or difficult are mainly concerned with the labour market conditions in their home country. For 85% of those returnees who reported difficulties, the labour market situation in their home region made their re-integration difficult. However, as the following figures show, they seem to adapt after a certain period of time (see fig. 26; fig. 27).

Fig. 24: Expected barriers to return of potential returnees (those who expect the return to be very difficult or difficult)



Source: Re-Turn data (n=474). Question: “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”

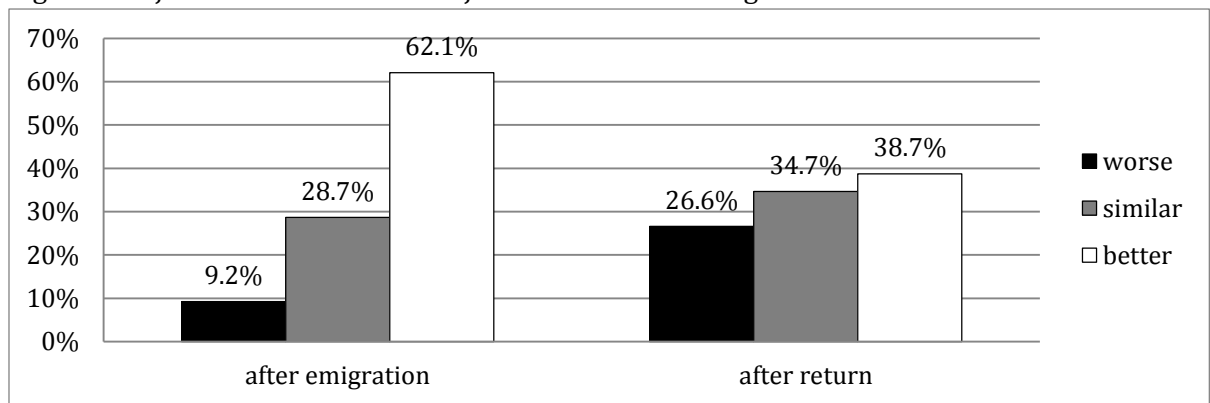
Fig. 25: Experienced barriers of returnees (those who experienced the return as being very difficult or difficult)



Source: Re-Turn data (n=153) Question: "Which factors made the return difficult?"

This reflects also the literature according to which returnees have problems with re-integration into their home countries' labour markets (cf. SMOLINER et al. 2013). This could tell us that returnees might need a while to find appropriate work in their home countries (about 10% of returnees are unemployed after their return, see fig. 29). However, once they found a job, their job situation is often better than abroad. Within the Re-Turn sample, about 39% of returnees evaluate their job situation as better after return (fig. 26). One third ranks their job situation after returning as similar.

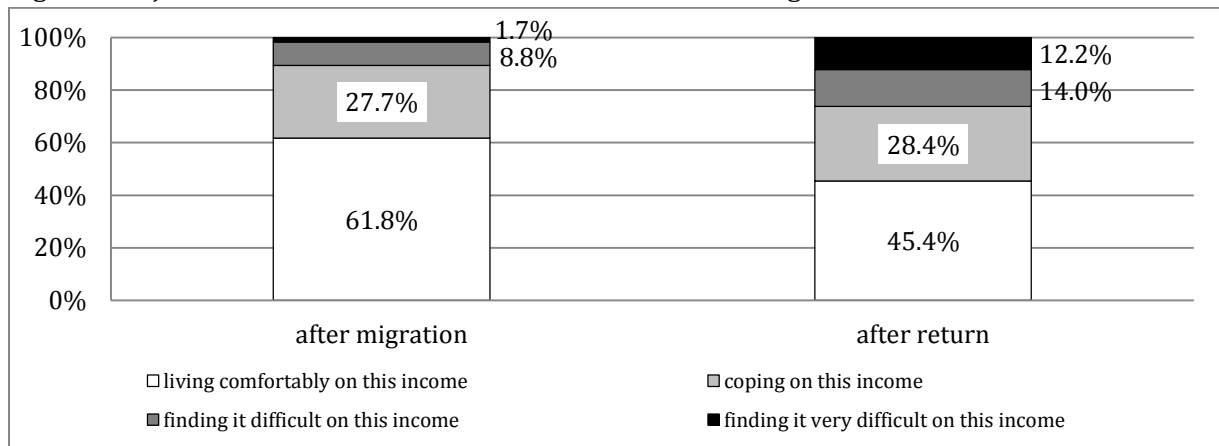
Fig. 26: Subjective evaluation of the job situation after emigration and after return for returnees



Source: Re-Turn data (n=314). Questions: "How would you describe your professional situation ...: a) ... in [your host country] after emigration compared to your previous situation?; b) ... in [your home country] after return compared to your situation in [your host country]?"

Additionally, about 45% evaluate their income situation positively and live comfortably on this income and 28% are getting along with their income after return. About 12% of returnees find it very difficult with their income compared to only 2% of returnees while abroad (see fig. 27).

Fig. 27: Subjective evaluation of the income situation after emigration and return for returnees



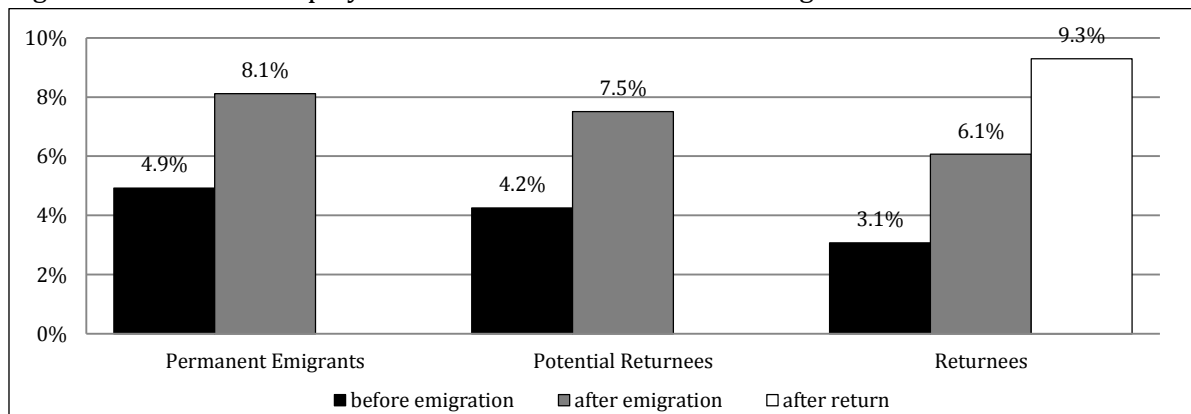
Source: Re-Turn data (n=401). Questions: “What about your average monthly household income in [your host country] ([your home country]) after emigration (after return)?”

A high share of returnees apparently does well in the local labour market. However, this leads to another question: Are those, who actively engage in the labour market, actors of change and innovation? The subsequent section will deal with this aspect.

2.5.5 Returnees’ Potential for Innovation

A further research issue is the labour market potential of returnees, their potential to invest their capacities and mobilise social capital in their home region after return. Returnees can be perceived as bearing a certain potential for innovation (CERASE 1974). Therefore, a relatively high rate of self-employed individuals can be expected (CASSARINO 2004). In general, the rate of self-employed individuals increased along the migration biographies. Before emigration, only 3% of returnees were self-employed, whereas the percentage doubles during emigration across all groups. After return, a percentage of 9% is self-employed among returnees (fig. 28). Moreover, comparing the shares of self-employed people after emigration and after return among returnees, 17% of all self-employees employ other workers within their own businesses. They created jobs for other people in the local labour market at home. This implies a certain innovation potential among returnees for the local labour market confirming the existence of a ‘return of innovation’ (cf. CERASE 1974).

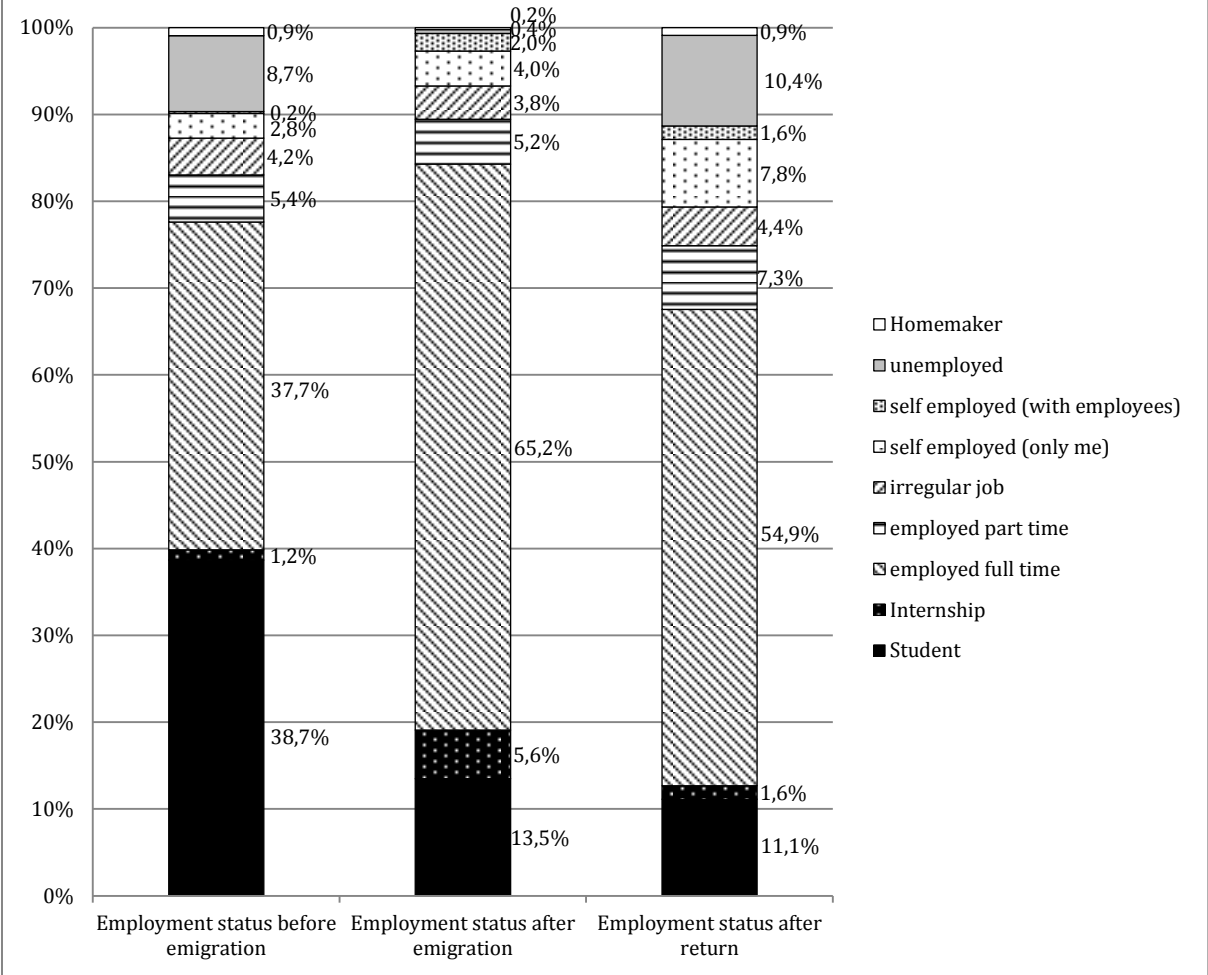
Fig. 28: Share of self-employed individuals before and after emigration as well as after return



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,596). Question: “What was your employment situation ...?”

After their return, most of the returnees are full- or part-time employees (62%). About 10% are unemployed, compared to only 0.4% while being abroad. 4% have an irregular job, 13% are students or absolve an internship and 9% of all returnees run their own business (last pillar, fig. 29).

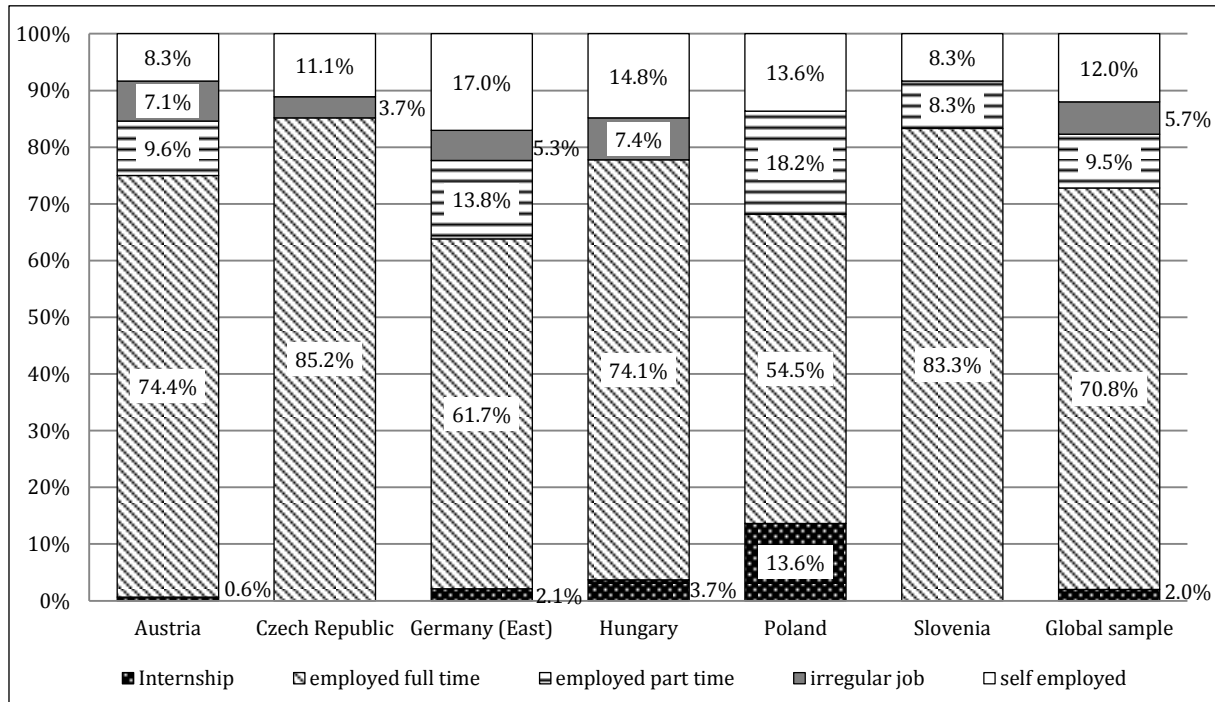
Fig. 29: Employment status of returnees by migration stages



Source: Re-Turn data (n=445). Question: “What was your employment status...?”

The job situation after return varies between home countries. This might be related to institutional structures, e.g. support in starting one’s own business or the design of formal restrictions. In particular in Eastern Germany, Hungary and Poland, the climate might be favourable for business start-ups and business transfer, or – if interpreted differently – there is a stronger necessity to find individual solutions for making a living because regular jobs are not available. The second interpretation might be more reasonable, particularly for Poland, as the share of full-time employees is the lowest and the internship participation is highest. This can be a sign for structural problems with returnees’ reintegration into labour markets back in Poland. In the Czech Republic and Slovenia the shares of full-time employment are the highest (however, data is not reliable due to low participation rates). This might at best indicate that the companies evaluate foreign work experience as a positive property of workers (see fig. 30).

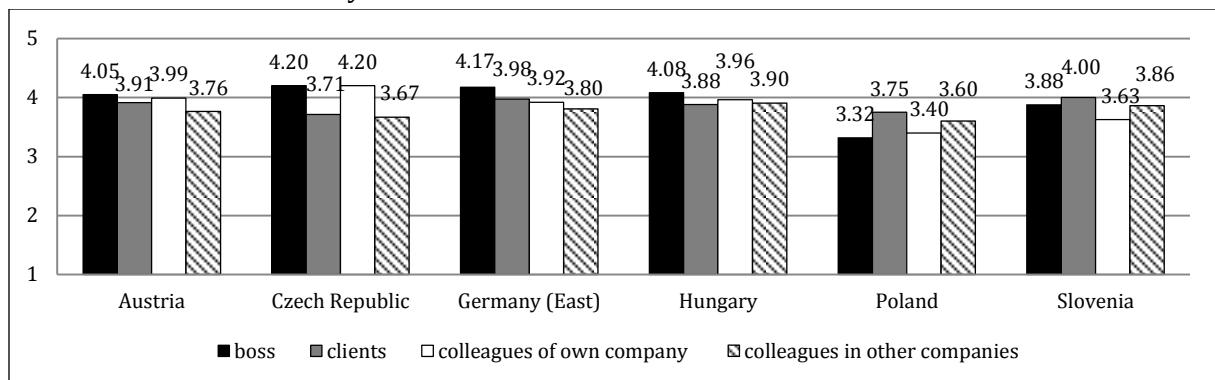
Fig. 30: Employment status of returnees after return by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=450). Question: "What was your employment situation after return to your home country? Note: Only working population."

Regarding the human capital stock brought back into the home region, there is a positive evaluation of foreign work experience from superiors, clients and colleagues across all countries with the lowest values in Poland (fig. 31).

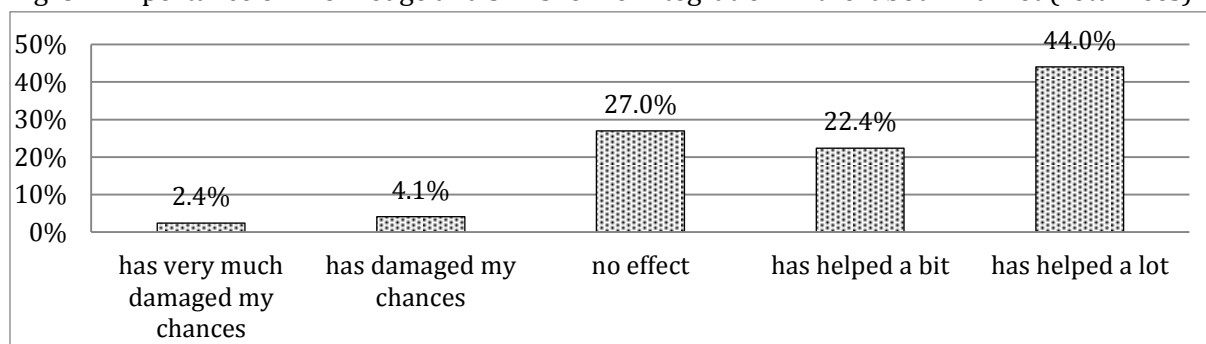
Fig. 31: Appreciation of knowledge and skills brought from abroad in the professional environment after return by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=357). Question: "How open-minded are people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you bring from [your host country]?" (mean values; 1=very rejecting, 2=rejecting, 3=neither nor, 4=open-minded, 5=very open-minded)

In addition, two thirds of all returnees believe that they could make use of their acquired knowledge and skills while re-integrating into the home labour markets (fig. 32). 44% state that the foreign work experience helped a lot to settle into the regional labour market at home; still 22% indicate that it helped at least a bit. About 27% of all returnees report that it has no effect at all. Finally, 7% of returnees state that their foreign work experience negatively affected their chances on the labour market in their home country.

Fig. 32: Importance of knowledge and skills for re-integration in the labour market (returnees)



Source: Re-Turn data (n=411). Question: "Did your former professional experiences, knowledge and skills help you to settle in the regional labour market in [your home country] after the return?"

All in all, the analysis indicates that returnees indeed provide innovative potential for the development of their home regions. The rate of self-employed individuals increased moderately comparing all migration episodes for returnees. Returnees also create jobs for local people in the home region. A large share of returnees capitalises on knowledge and skills acquired before, stating that their foreign work experience was helpful in finding a job back home and that their bosses, colleagues and clients appreciate the imported knowledge and skills. However, the share of full-time employees is lower after return compared to the job situation abroad and the unemployment rates are relatively high after return.

'I used my knowledge of US-American stores, bought brand-name clothes on cheap conditions and sold them to customers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.' – Migrant Story by Radek Horak (The Czech Republic)

When I came to Virginia Beach (USA) for the first time, I was 23 years old. I participated in a work and travel programme for university students and worked as a temporary employee, e.g. in restaurants. As I could not find a job in my field of study (economy and financial management) after graduation in the Czech Republic, and as I had so much enjoyed previous experience in the USA, I decided to return to Virginia Beach the following summer to do an internship. During this internship I started managing parking lots and kiosks along the resort strip. My stay in the USA lasted 18 months and when my visa expired I returned home just for a short time because I wanted to go back and try my entrepreneurial ambitions in the area that I knew well.

The third time I came to Virginia Beach was in 2003 and I had applied for a business licence and a business visa. My idea was to help other students to find jobs and flats. A few years later I opened a service centre for students from all around the world and met my future Slovakian wife. I was running my business for five years, met a lot of new people and made many friends. Everything took its course. Yet, in 2009 I began to feel homesick and missed my family, my friends, the European culture and city life. Virginia Beach had great summers, but in winter I got bored. Consequently my wife and I decided to move back to Europe.

We did not return to my home town in the Ústí region because my wife found a job as a teacher at the Palacky-University in Olomouc. This means that we returned to my home country the Czech Republic, but for both of us it was a new start in a new city and a new region. Before we could make this move we started to invest back home in real estate in Prague and we opened an e-shop for clothing. I used my knowledge of US-American stores, bought brand-name clothes for cheap conditions and sold them to customers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. When we came back to the Czech Republic, we had already bought a new flat. The e-shop was running successfully, and we could save money for investments. Now we live an enjoyable life here, but I still miss many things from overseas, so I travel there quite often and visit my friends.



Radek at the beach (his own picture)

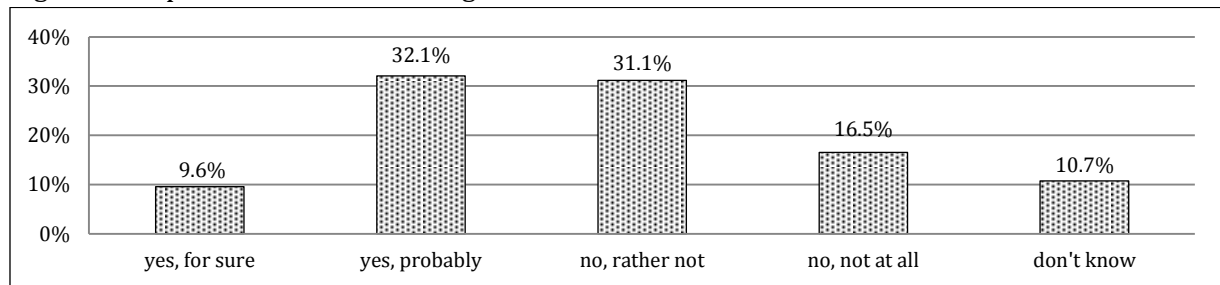
2.5.6 Returnees' Willingness to Compromise

A final assumption refers to returnees' acceptance of income losses in exchange for an improvement in the social aspects of life. The hypothesis is that returnees accept worse employment conditions, e.g. income losses and a lack of career opportunities, in order to improve the quality of social life and to be close to family and friends.

The analyses so far reveal that 27% describe their professional situation as being worse than in the host region and more than 26% find it difficult or very difficult to live with their income after return. Hence, for many migrants, the return brought both a worsening of the professional situation and the income situation compared to the situation in the host region.

Asked for their willingness to accept worse working conditions, about 42% of potential returnees answered positively whereas 48% indicate their unwillingness to accept such a worsening of conditions (fig. 33). This observation points to the partial trade-off character of return migration: some returnees exchange professional success for social/private well-being.

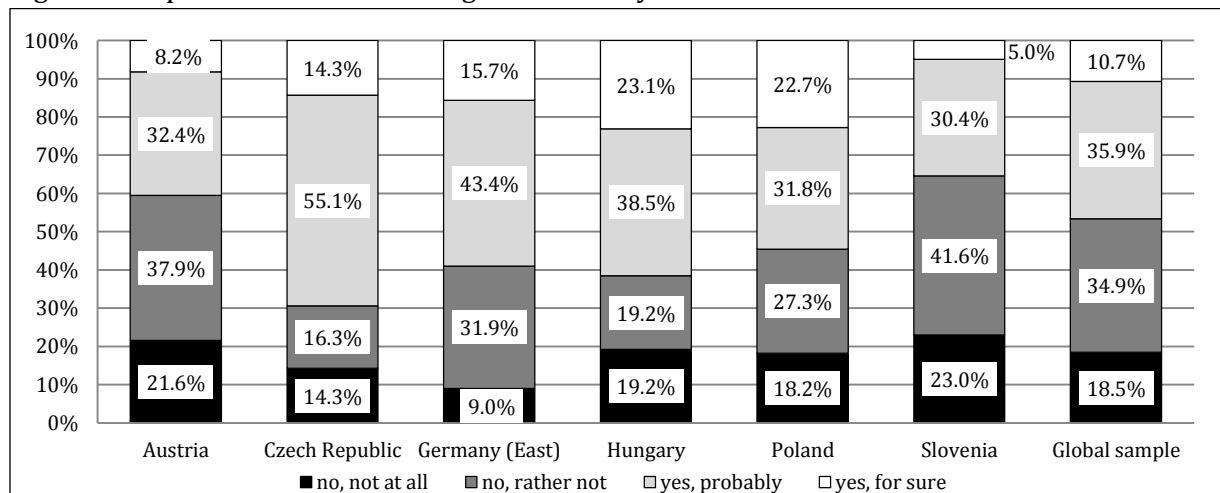
Fig. 33: Acceptance of worse working conditions



Source: Re-Turn data (n=848). Question: "Would you accept worse working conditions in order to realise your wish to return to [your home country]?" Note: only potential returnees.

However, the shares differ a lot by country. Whereas in Slovenia only one third of the potential returnees would accept worse working conditions, the proportion is much higher in the Czech Republic (~70%) and Germany (~60%) (fig. 34). This contradicts an economic perspective of return migration and rather shows that other aspects can initiate emigrants' return.

Fig. 34: Acceptance of worse working conditions by countries



Source: Re-Turn data (n=848). Question: "Would you accept worse working conditions in order to realise your wish to return to [your home country]?" Note: only potential returnees.

'The money that I earned very quickly didn't make me happy anymore.' – Migrant Story by Joanna Męczyńska (Poland)

I was 18 years old when I joined the college. It was June and I had four months of holidays ahead of me. Therefore, I organised a trip to my brother in Ireland. He worked there for a long time and earned a lot of money, not comparable with the income level in Poland. I aimed to save a considerable amount of money in a short time during my stay there and quickly found a job as a kitchen porter. In October I had to come back to Poland to start my studies. However, as I had a higher income in Ireland than it would have been possible for me in Poland, I decided to continue my stay abroad. It was amazing that I worked, lived and at the same time could save some money. A short time later my boyfriend followed me to Ireland and got a job really fast. I called my family at home and told them I would give up my studies and stay in Ireland, maybe permanently, maybe for a few years. My father was very upset and said he would come and bring me back to Poland. He didn't want me to stay abroad and tried to persuade me to come back, but I didn't listen to him.

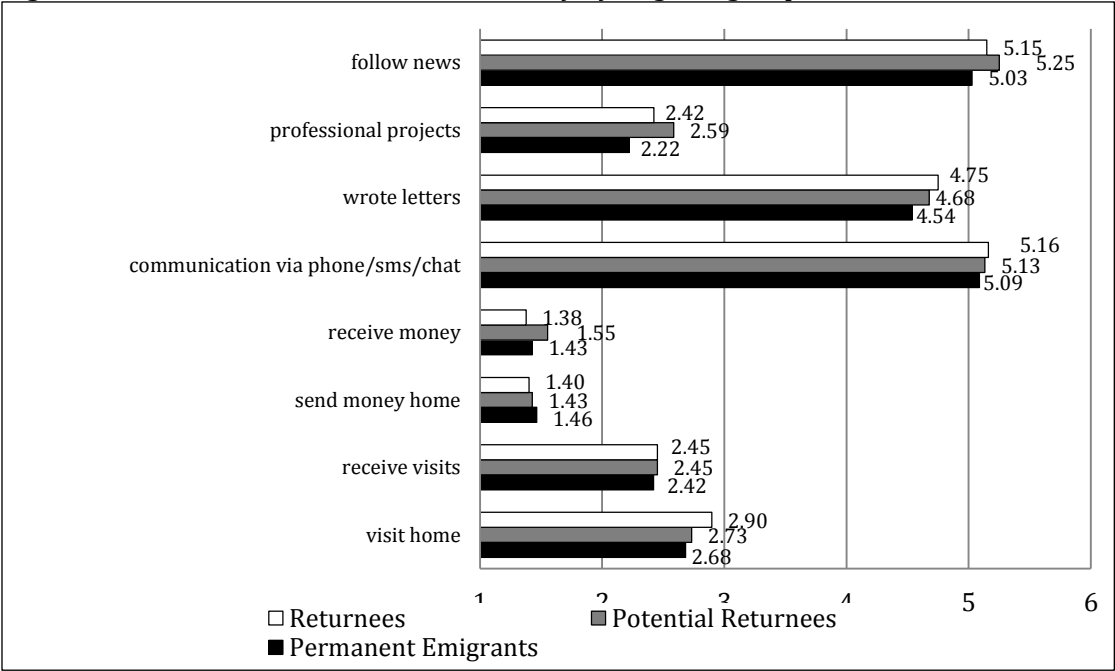


Lodz - Source: Wedlowski - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lodz_Piotrkowska.jpg (23.01.2013)

I got pregnant and after three more months in Ireland I began to miss my homeland. I came to the conclusion that my work was unambitious and I was not developing my skills, as I have secondary education and no prospects. The money that I earned very quickly didn't make me happy anymore, and I thought about where to give birth to my baby. Finally I decided to come back to Poland, where I was grateful to my father for not having deleted me from the list of students so I could finish college and simultaneously care for my child. My boyfriend came back to Poland a half year later as he had missed me very much. Working abroad made me realise that nothing can replace home. I don't think that I will decide to go abroad again. In Poland I have a good job, friends and family.

The importance of social aspects for return migrants also becomes visible in another finding of the Re-Turn survey which concerns transnational ties of the migrants. While being abroad, most of the emigrants stay in contact with their home country via three main channels: 1) immediate communication through telephone, SMS, chat; 2) mediate communication such as emails, letters and postcards with friends, family and acquaintances at home; and 3) also internet, TV and newspapers are used to stay informed about regional development at home (fig. 35). Taking into account that, firstly, about 80% of potential returnees consider a return possible, and that, secondly, all emigrants follow news about their home country and speak to friends or family members back home on a (bi)weekly basis, these channels could be used by local stakeholders to make contact with potential returnees and increase the awareness for the services provided by return initiatives.

Fig. 35: Connection modes with home country by migrant groups



Source: Re-Turn data (n=1,530). Question: “How do you connect to [your home country] while being in [your host country]?” (mean values; 1=never, 2=once a year or less, 3=up to four times a year, 4=every month, 5=every two weeks or weekly, 6=daily)

2.6 Conclusions

The conducted research on emigration and return implies manifold issues encompassing different types of returnees with varying qualifications and skills, different experiences and goals abroad as well as diverging motives for emigration and return. The Re-Turn survey captured many of these aspects and their implications for the investigated regions. This report summarised the main descriptive results and commented on prevailing return types and their characteristics, motives and expectations as compared to other emigrants, who are still abroad and who do or do not consider a return.

In general the willingness to return is very high among emigrants. Moreover, about 20% of the returnees studied and interned abroad with the intention to return. As a first result of the Re-Turn survey and consistent with former research, the educational level of returnees is, on average, higher compared to other emigrants (permanent emigrants and potential returnees).

A main issue in migration literature concerns a ‘return of failure’, which refers to the return of those who had been less successful abroad. Re-Turn findings partly support this view, as the average income level of returnees while being abroad is lower than in other emigrant groups. However, most of the returnees improved their job and income situation with the emigration. Thus, a return of failure is only appropriate for those who lived on the same or worse conditions in the host country, which is true for only about one third of the returnees in our sample. The major part of migrants return successfully and for other reasons. Since returnees more often maintained a second household in the home country and also more often intended to emigrate temporarily, their return can be interpreted as a ‘planned return’ after having achieved their goals abroad and thus it reflects the ‘return of conservatism’, as discussed in the literature.

Furthermore, emigration motives do not differ remarkably between emigrant groups. All groups predominantly emigrated in order to improve their career, education and income

opportunities. Moreover, all groups are similarly satisfied with conditions abroad. Consequently, the return is not so much driven by dissatisfaction with life in general or economic conditions in the host country. Regarding the returnees, findings reveal lower rates of feeling socially accepted in the host country. Accordingly, the return seems to be mainly driven by private reasons. It aims at reuniting with family and friends and profiting from home countries' social infrastructures. These findings reveal an 'emotional and social type of return', whereas there is also an 'economic type of permanent emigrant' who decides to stay abroad for income and career reasons. As a consequence, about 27% of returnees accepted a professional situation which is worse compared to their situation before return. Of those emigrants willing to return, even more than 40% would accept worsening working conditions in favour of an improved social life.

The return itself is not experienced as being difficult by most of the returnees. On the contrary, most potential returnees expect a lot of difficulties, which implies a mismatch of experiences and expectations that needs to be addressed by return policies. However, less than 10% of all emigrants know about return initiatives. Although all groups are in regular contact with their home country via formal (mainly following the news) and informal (family and friends) channels, their knowledge on return initiatives is limited. Here, raising awareness is necessary in order to make existing return initiatives more efficient in terms of reaching their target population or to start new return support services.

The research literature is inconclusive about the labour market integration of returnees. Some assume penalties whereas others expect rewards for experiences and skills acquired abroad. 39% of returnees in the Re-Turn sample report improved working conditions. On the other hand, about 27% of the returnees have to deal with worse working conditions, 10% suffer from labour market re-integration problems and are unemployed. Here, accompanying measures should be developed to support the returnees' re-employment and efficient utilisation of foreign work experience in the home countries' labour market.

In the literature a lot of discussion deals with the question of whether returnees are actors of change and innovation and whether they invest their capital in their home regions. This is often indicated by relatively high rates of self-employment among returnees. About 6% of returnees had been self-employed while abroad. After return, about 9% of the returnees are self-employed, of whom one in five has their own employees. This finding points towards an innovative potential of returnees ('return of innovation'). Moreover, most of the returnees return to their home regions rather than to other regions in their home country. This implies a potential of innovation for the rural case study regions in the Re-Turn project.

Concluding the results and prevailing types of return on the base of the Re-Turn sample, one out of five migrants returned after completing their education or an internship abroad ('returnees of study/apprenticeship', cf. DIENEL et al. 2005). One out of ten migrants returned as an innovator ('return of innovation', cf. CERASE 1974). Most of the other returned emigrants can be seen as a mixture of a 'conservative type' (CERASE 1974) and a 'family and emotional return type' (or 'social return type', cf. UNGER 1982; DIENEL et al. 2005).

All results of this study are restricted to the Re-Turn sample. They cannot be generalised for the total population of return migrants. However, the results provide valuable insights into the phenomenon of return migration and will be helpful in designing return migration support policies as well as further research projects.

3 Companies' View of Return Migrants and Foreign Work Experience

Robert Nadler, Stefan Haunstein, Thilo Lang, Stefanie Smoliner

3.1 The Business Perspective of Return Migration

As outlined in the introduction, return migration represents one important policy field – next to international/internal migration and retention. However, most studies which inform policymakers focus merely on the return migrants' attitudes and motivations. This means they disregard the perspective of the businesses in the home regions. In fact, it is these businesses being the potential employers for return migrants which define to a certain extent the success of return migrants in home regional labour markets. Or vice versa, it is the return migrants being the potential labour force for businesses at home, helping businesses to encounter the lack of skilled labour. How do these two groups come together? In section 3.2 we will illustrate theoretical and empirical insights from the few studies that dealt with this nexus.

With this third chapter we will shed light on the businesses' perspective towards the connection between these two groups, return migrants and employers. Based in a comparative set of interviews in our case study regions Ústí (CZ), Görlitz (DE), Harz (DE), Mid-Pannon (HU), Piedmont (IT), Lodz (PL), Swietokryzkie (PL), and Podravska (SI), we intended to answer the following questions:

- What challenges and opportunities do businesses face in these regions?
- In what ways do businesses expect problems to hire qualified staff in the near future?
- Are businesses aware of major (public) regional strategies to secure the supply of skilled labour?
- How do these businesses secure the availability of qualified personnel? What formal and informal strategies exist for the attraction of qualified personnel? Is there any cooperation with other businesses or organisations?
- What strategies exist for the retention of qualified personnel?
- What positions are currently vacant in these businesses?
- Are return migrants a specific target group for attraction strategies? Are they already employed by the businesses?
- If so, what makes return migrants specific for the businesses?
- Do these businesses help returning migrants with their return and reintegration?

Before we answer these questions in section 3.4, we will outline the methodological aspects of the Re-Turn business interviews (3.3). Section 3.5 will then highlight the case study regions' specificities and section 3.6 will give some policy implications. Finally, section 3.7 will provide an overall conclusion and a discussion about the relevance of the findings.

3.2 Literature Review and Hypotheses

As mentioned above, there are relatively few studies that directly analyse the relation between return migrants and the perspective of businesses in the home regions. There are some insights from the return migration literature which deal with migration between mature economies and developing countries. GITTER et al. (2008) have found that in some regions in Mexico, return migrants from the United States have a higher propensity to be employed than non-migrants. They interpret the finding as being caused by the acquired valuable foreign work experience and training, which is appraised by Mexican employers.

ANTAL & WANG (2003) studied the impact of Chinese return migrants on organisational learning among firms and organisations in China. For several decades, China has applied a policy of re-attracting Chinese emigrants through a complex system of benefits for returnees. Each year, between 50,000 and 100,000 Chinese students go abroad to learn in western countries - about one third returns - and half of the returnees go abroad again. Thus, there is a large pool of talented people that bring in knowledge from abroad, yet most companies and organisations do not know how to systematically make use of this new knowledge from abroad. Firms need to install systems of organisational learning which help to distribute the individual knowledge from the remigrants to non-migrant employees. ANTAL & WANG (2003) mention that the companies as well as policy makers and the returnees themselves have to pay attention to a list of aspects in order to allow for organisational learning. First, companies should adjust their organisational culture in an open-minded way, accepting the 'foreign' and the 'unknown' as valuable information. Furthermore, they should pay attention to efficient leadership, with leaders who prefer learning over knowing. An often repeated barrier to successful organisational learning is the fear of non-migrants and locals to be contaminated by their local routines and knowledge and to be criticised for that from returnees. Thus, there is an urgent need to moderate returnees' and non-migrants' interaction and their knowledge sharing. Tools could consist in platforms for creative learning between locals and returnees, mixed leader groups composed of returnees and 'internal outsiders' (those who are non-migrants, but do not think in locally conformed ways) within companies, or a general shift in organisational culture. ANTAL & WANG (2003, p. 22) remark: 'The 'turtles from the sea' need the 'turtles from the puddle' and vice versa.'

ANTAL & WANG (2003), the same as BLACK & GENT (2004), point to the importance of discrimination between returnees and non-migrants, which might be caused by return assistance policies discriminating non-migrants. As a consequence, sustainable reintegration and knowledge spillovers might fail. Furthermore, BLACK & GENT (2004) point out that traditional return assistance often malfunctions, as it underestimates the returnees wish to maintain transnational ties to their former host countries. Newly developed and more flexible programmes account for that by not forcing returnees to return, but rather allowing them to bring in their capacities (knowledge, skills, finance) from abroad and through temporary visits back home.

CASSARINO (2004) points to another aspect influencing the potential impact that return migrants can have on their home regions. A large share of remigration literature suggests that the difference between voluntary and forced return is decisive for regional development in the home region. Cassarino, however, mentions that a more important point is the 'preparedness' of return migrants before their return. Preparedness consists of both the 'willingness' and the 'readiness' to return. He (2004, p. 21) defines preparedness as the 'returnees' ability to gather

tangible and intangible resources', which then could be used to facilitate personal re-integration and to stimulate development at home. Such resources are not only of financial nature (remittances, savings). The level of preparedness is also connected to the intensity of social relations and the effectiveness of social networks (family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues) in both the host and home country. Also, the type and length of experience abroad is an important factor in determining the outcome of the migration process. Finally, Cassarino suggests that return migrants who are more prepared before return are also more likely to have success back home and therefore will probably stay longer before an eventual re-emigration.

For Germany, MATUSCHEWSKI (2010) developed a multi-level research concept which should serve to estimate the regional effects of return migration in Eastern German rural home regions. Her approach is based on human capital theory and considers return migration as a driver of regional development. She defines human capital as 'all person-bound capacities, skills, and knowledge stocks which were acquired through formal education, learning by doing, learning by interacting, training on the job or even trial and error' (MATUSCHEWSKI 2010, p. 82; translated from the German by the authors). Migrants are then transporters of this knowledge and information. Important to say, there are two types of knowledge: first, codified knowledge which could be acquired through formal education by everyone; second, tacit knowledge, which is informal and could only be acquired through social practice. Matuschewski calls the latter 'embodied practice' (ibid.) which moves around with migrants. It is in particular this knowledge which could define competitive advantage for companies, as other companies cannot simply access the same tacit knowledge. AUDRETSCH & KEILBACH (2005, p. 22, cited in MATUSCHEWSKI 2010, p. 83) resume: 'The mobility of economic agents across different contexts and their creation of trajectories becomes an important mechanism for the process by which knowledge spills over from one context and organisation to another.'

Matuschewski points to the problem that migrants are often not employed according to their qualification and education. According to labour market segmentation theory this is because of the regional differences between labour markets, which do not provide jobs for all qualifications and professions (MATUSCHEWSKI 2010, p. 82). Thus, a simple deduction of regional development effects from returning migrants' formal educational levels is not the appropriate way. Matuschewski argues that studying the regional development outcome of return migration necessarily implies the observation of labour market insertion. In order to study the position of return migrants in home regional labour markets, one access to empirical data is provided by the employing businesses.

We can only assess the regional development effects in this manner. MATUSCHEWSKI (2010, p. 84; translated from the German by the authors) mentions: 'The unfolding of positive impacts depends on the compliance of individual expectations and experiences, the compatibility of return migrants' qualifications, knowledge and skills with the home region's knowledge stock and knowledge demand, as well as on the potential to reintegrate return migrants into the professional and social environment.'

While these theoretical aspects might be valid for migration in general, what's so special about return migration then? Matuschewski used an explorative empirical design to study the role of return migrants for regional development. In two case studies in Saxony and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, she interviewed both return migrants and businesses about their expectations and opinions.

MATUSCHEWSKI (2010, pp. 90ff.) spoke to SMEs and business associations which were mainly in a positive economic atmosphere in 2008, before the crisis. The majority of businesses expected employment growth and thus had developed distinct human resource (HR) strategies. For example, companies directly addressed potential returnees who still lived outside their home region but who were interested in return migration. However, all businesses reported problems in filling vacant positions, of which about 55% were positions in operative units, 28% medium management, 20% high level management/CEO, 10% research and development (R&D), 9% field services/sales. Most of the businesses already experienced a lack of skilled labour.

Matuschewski's business interviews reveal that many businesses have focussed on return migrants because 'return initiatives' allowed them to post job vacancies for free. Yet, for 28% of businesses this coincidental and free offer was not the only important driver to focus on return migrants. These companies mentioned that they perceived return migrants as more bound to the region, and thus less likely to leave again after a short period. Furthermore, businesses expected return migrants to have high work motivation. The businesses, thus, formulated job vacancy descriptions with a type of wording that was more likely to attract return migrants than other migrants. These formulations included 'ambition', 'pioneering spirit', 'experience', 'competency', 'qualification'. While it seems rather unclear why these notions should address return migrants more than any other migrant, there is a more obvious reason to focus on return migrants. The businesses are located in regions in which wage levels are comparably low, and the probability to successfully attract someone from the region is higher than for someone who is not from that region. Businesses are aware of the fact that 'being back home' is traded off by return migrants against wages and economic aspects of the job. Yet, also in Matuschewski's study, businesses realised that some return migrants have still higher wage expectations than non-migrants, and sometimes it becomes even impossible to re-attract return migrants because of their wage expectations.

Matuschewski's interviews also point to the positive experiences that businesses have made with return migrants as a labour force. On the one hand, professional experience, the skills and knowledge that return migrants bring from other regions are important issues. Businesses say that return migrants help improve production processes and make the business more competitive, however, this might also account for other incoming migrants.

The specificity of return migrants consists in that they share a certain regional mentality, which makes it easier for them to become accepted by colleagues and integrated into the work environment. Business representatives report that return migrants show a more honest and long-term interest in the company than other migrants. This fact is considered an important advantage of return migrants as it facilitates knowledge spillover in comparison to other migrants. Additionally, return migrants – based on the shared cultural values, dialects, origin – have a higher appreciation as sales and service personnel among regional clients. Trust is more easily built if cultural proximity is higher, and trust also positively affects client/customer relations, which is visible in turnover and sales figures.

Finally, businesses also acknowledge the fact that return migrants are strongly orientated towards their private life, family and friends. Thus, they try to allow for a better work-life balance, which is positively evaluated by return migrant employees.

In sum, 2/3 of Matuschewski's business interview partners will focus on return migrants again in the future. Here, companies see an important link to a large future issue: how can a smooth succession of management and highly-skilled positions be organised when current

employees retire? In particular, family-owned businesses and SMEs will have difficulties in finding new owner-managers. Return migrants will be of importance here, as they possess local social capital and regional ties. Matuschewski concludes that bringing both perspectives, the return migrants' as well as the businesses', together is a necessary conduct in order to understand the labour market reinsertion.

Hypotheses

Based on the indications in the remigration literature, we can formulate the following working hypotheses:

- *Human Capital Hypothesis:* Employers in the home regions appreciate the knowledge and soft skills that return migrants bring from abroad. This leads to a competitive advantage against non-migrants in the home regions' labour market. In particular, the returning migrants' tacit knowledge from host regions can lead to competitive advantages for companies back at home. Return migrants are considered motors of product and process innovation and can provide new management models, but organisational learning methods are necessary here. Then there is also the important aspect of maintaining social relations to the host country networks in order to allow return migrants to fulfil the bridging functions between knowledge networks at home and abroad.
- *Local Rootedness Hypothesis:* Return migrants are a particularly interesting workforce for companies in rural and less attractive regions because they are supposed to be emotionally tied to that region and less affluent to leave again after a short while. Other immigrants might leave more rapidly again, which equals a lost human capital investment from the perspective of the businesses.
- *Lower Salary Hypothesis:* Return migrants are supposed to be an attractive workforce as they are suspected to accept lower wages than other immigrants. However, empirical evidence is mixed in this respect: some studies also found that returnees ask for above average salaries.
- *Easy Integration Hypothesis:* Return migrants are suspected to have fewer problems to become (re-)integrated, both in the broader social community as well as the companies' teams, than other immigrants. Return migrants share the humour, values and habits of their home region. This also positively affects sales numbers in regional home markets.

3.3 Methodology

The Re-Turn project intended to compare the perspectives of return migrants as well as potential employers in home regions. In order to gather information on the perspective of potential employers, we decided to use qualitative interviewing as a method.

In particular the expert interviews are well suited to gather information on specific and abstract topics (cf. BOGNER et al. 2005). A person is considered an expert if they have specialised knowledge in a specific topic. In a closer definition this might be related to a specific profession, but an expert can also provide expertise on social facts in general, not only related to the professional sphere (cf. BÜHRMANN 2005). 'Expert interviews are an attractive data collection method because they allow researchers to bridge the divide between case studies and the comparison of a large number of countries based on more general and publicly available data. Furthermore, expert interviews give the researchers control over the dimensions that are central to the comparative research' (DORUSSON et al. 2005, p. 317). The Re-Turn project

focussed on the 'employers' perspectives on return migration and the value of returnees as 'employees'. Thus, we considered business representatives (managerial positions, shareholders, owners) and multipliers (representatives of business associations, Chambers of Industry and Commerce, business promoters) to be experts in this given field.

Nonetheless, the data gathered through expert interviews is highly dependent on the quality of expertise that the interview partner provides. In order to assess the quality of data gathered in expert interviews, DORUSSON et al. (2005) suggest paying attention to coherence between individual experts' answers to a certain topic. The higher the accordance between interviewees' statements, the higher the reliability of information gathered. DORUSSON et al. (2005, p. 334) remark: 'Even though reliability does not guarantee validity, it makes it more likely that a valid conclusion will be reached. At the same time, reliability should not be pursued at all costs: there is always a possibility that one expert is 'right' and all others are simply 'wrong'.'

In order to ensure the quality of data and thus reliability and validity of our analysis, we adopted a multi-level quality control scheme. The project partners were to conduct the expert interviews in a decentralised way – meaning each project partner did interviews in his own case study region. To allow for comparison of interviews across case study regions, local teams were to apply identical interview designs. All local team of interviewers were taught in conducting interviews in a joint training session, which was organised before the interviews started. In this workshop interviewers were made familiar with the interview method in general and the Re-Turn interviews in particular. They received information on the sampling process, the questionnaire guideline, the opinion card method, the codes of conduct during the interviews, and the ways of data recording. Then a guideline was sent to each interviewer, in which the central information from the training session was summarised.

The interviewer teams were also responsible for a first interpretation and analysis of the data collected in their case study regions. A standard analysis template was used, into which first information from individual interviews were extracted. The extraction of information followed the logics of content analysis (cf. MAYRING 1993). Then cross-case comparison concerning certain items was applied within individual case study regions, and an overall conclusion on the survey within one case study region was written by local teams.

Case study regions

The Re-Turn project aimed at understanding barriers and enhancing potential in the process of return migration towards the case study regions in rural areas that had suffered from significant brain drain during the phase of post-socialist restructuring of the economy and the political environment. Today most of these regions are confronted with an ageing workforce and an expected lack of skilled labour in the near future. Therefore, we have selected eight case study regions in CEE.

In the specific case of Eastern Germany, we selected the Harz Region and the Görlitz Region. The Harz Region is located at the border with Lower Saxony in Western Germany. It suffers rapid ageing and continuous migration loss (about -6% in 2009). Furthermore, the working population is characterised by a small share of tertiary-educated people. This reflects the demands of the regional labour market, with 32% of employment in a dynamic production sector (mainly automotive, plastics, engineering) and in a strong tourism industry. Here, apprenticeships and vocational training play a larger role than academic education (only 7% are tertiary-educated inhabitants). The main problems arise from the wage differences with the

neighbouring labour market in Lower Saxony, which is within commuting distance and attracts many workers. The Görlitz Region is located at the Polish-German border. In this peripheral situation within the country, it suffers a stronger migration loss (-8 % in 2009) and more rapid ageing than the Harz Region. Also the regional economy is performing worse, with a GDP per capita 13% below Saxonian average. The region is characterised by a strong primary sector employment (about 40%), which is mainly concentrated in coal mining and the related energy sector. The production sector is composed of many small and medium sized companies which will all face human resource problems in the near future, but so far are unable to offer competitive wages and career opportunities. Emigrants from both regions mainly emigrated to prosperous Western German regions, Austria and Switzerland. In the Görlitz Region, emigration to Poland can be observed, too.

The Czech case study region is the region around Ústí nad Labem. This Czech region in fact is experiencing small migration gains (+1 % in 2009), but it still suffers from a rapidly ageing population. The Ústí region has a strong industrial tradition and even after massive restructuring starting in 1989, the production sector accounts for 49% of employment (mainly in geodesy, chemicals, and industrial engineering). However, the restructuring of the production sector has caused high unemployment which continues to be a regional problem. Unemployment is accompanied by below average wage levels. Similarly as in the German case study regions, apprenticeships and vocational training characterise the demanded qualifications. Graduates of universities have few job opportunities in the regional labour market. As an effect of the regional labour market problems, many workers commute across the German border in order to work in Saxony's companies. Some promising developments are taking place in the Ústí Region, e.g. with a growing IT sector demanding highly-skilled workers. Czech emigrants from the Ústí Region mainly emigrated to Prague, Saxony (the Eastern German region behind the border) or to Western German regions.

The two Polish case study regions are Lodz and Swietokrzyskie. The Lodz Region is specific in terms of having fewer problems with ageing than other regions, yet emigration increased massively after the EU accession, doubling within two years after 2004. The regional labour market is characterised by a high share of primary sector employment (20%). The regional production sector is based on textiles, but it suffers from low R&D input. Only the chemical sector could have been restructured successfully during the post-socialist transition. The regional service sector, although employing about 50% of the workforce, is still struggling and could not lead regional development. In the Swietokrzyskie Region, ageing is also less dramatic than in the German case study regions, but migration losses reached between -5 and -7% in the last years. In particular, young people left the region after EU accession. The regional workforce is dominated by low qualification levels, with only 12% having attended tertiary education. Similarly to the Görlitz Region, the primary sector is dominant in the regional labour market (48% of employment in mining and agriculture). The small production sector is concentrated around the construction industry, metal and metallurgy, energy and chemicals. The Swietokrzyskie Region mainly suffers from the proximity of more competitive regions such as Warsaw, Lodz, Silesia and Krakow. The massive emigration of the Swietokrzyskie Region's inhabitants caused regional employers to organise and discuss return initiatives with the government already in 2007. The Polish emigrants mainly headed towards the UK, Ireland and Germany.

The Hungarian case study region Mid-Pannon in Central Transdanubia is characterised by a migration gain of about 2% in 2010, but ageing is a problem here, too. As seen in the other case study regions, employment in the production sector remains important after the transition (59% of employment), while service sector activities play a minor role. Many hopes lie in the tourism sector, but this is not yet reflected in high employment numbers. 19% of the work force has a tertiary education. Given the increasing process of ageing, one of the larger problems is the low labour market participation of people aged 45-64 years. Also in the case of the Hungarian emigrants, Austria and Germany are two main destinations within the EU.

In Slovenia, the Podravska Region was selected as a case study region. It is located between Austria and Croatia. While the region was a centre of the Yugoslavian industry, it could not restructure its production sector after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Today the region is still characterised by an unemployment rate of about 14% and a high share of commuting to Ljubljana and the neighbouring Austrian regions. Employment is currently dominated by the service sector. Second sector production is focussed on chemicals, metallurgy as well as food and beverages. Demographically the region is characterised by a rapid ageing process and low labour market participation of the age group 50-65 years (53%). In combination with the shrinkage of the job entrants' age group (15-24 years), the problem of a lack of skilled labour will increase in the close future, too. Slovenian emigrants moved mainly to Austria, as well as to Croatia and Germany.

Even though not a post-socialist region, we also included the Piedmont Region in Italy, in particular the Ossola Valley in the Alps. The region provides a similar situation as other case study regions. The Alpine valleys in the north of Piedmont are bordering Switzerland, where wages are up to three times higher than Italian ones. Thus, the Ossola Valley, with direct road access to Switzerland, is losing young workers to the Swiss labour market. This loss is rather caused by cross-border commuting than by real emigration. Actually, the Ossola Valley is experiencing migration gains. Employment is concentrated in the tertiary sector (56%; mainly tourism and leisure), whereas the production sector is less important (construction and metallurgy). About 8% of employees have passed tertiary education. The Ossola Valley is also suffering rapid ageing and a shrinking active workforce. On the other hand, young job entrants suffer high unemployment (only 35% of 15 to 24-year olds participate in the labour market). Furthermore, unemployment is increasing in the Ossola Valley, currently levelling 21%. In combination with high living costs, there is an urgency to increase youth employment, partly tried for by the government via youth entrepreneurship programmes.

Thus, our case study regions are all characterised by demographic problems which will affect the availability of skilled workers in the short and medium-term. Ageing, emigration and structural problems such as youth unemployment stand for the difficulties that entrepreneurs have to deal with when operating in these regions. Furthermore, they often face the problem that cross-border commuting reduces their access to skilled workers, when more competitive labour markets with higher wages lie only some kilometres from their own location.

Sampling: How did we find and select interview partners?

Sampling was organised in a two-fold manner. First, multipliers were approached in all case study regions. These multipliers were assumed to have a general and encompassing knowledge about the regional business climate and problems of regional companies. Furthermore, multipliers were asked to provide information on interesting companies in the case study region

which they would recommend for an interview on return migrants as labour force. Following up multiplier interviews, business representatives were approached as interview partners. Thereby, theoretical sampling was applied, meaning that business were supposed to vary in terms of company size and economic sector; it was up to local interviewer teams to decide on the relevance of individual economic sectors within the case study region.

Interview technique

Interviewers were asked to record the interviews or to bring an assistant to take notes. In order to gather comparable information, interviewers were equipped with questionnaire guidelines for multipliers and business representatives (cf. Annex II). Guideline questions were divided into three content blocks. In block 1 (question 1-8), the focus was put on the challenges and opportunities of the region and the companies' strategies to secure the availability of highly-qualified personnel. Furthermore, questions related to the general image of returnees in the region. The second block (opinion cards) specifically focused on the attitude of employers towards 'work experience from abroad'. The third content block (question 9-12) dealt with specific strategies, currently applied to find appropriate staff.

The opinion-cards were used as a method to uncover attitudes which respondents might hold back because of their fear of exposing socially undesirable views. Here, three statements that other persons had expressed were shown to respondents. Presenting the statements as the opinions of others helped to legitimise sentiments and stimulated discussion and 'story-telling' by offering a range of viewpoints, some of which would reflect and some of which would challenge the respondent's own point of view.

Profile of businesses interviewed

As table 7 shows, the sampling led to a very heterogeneous group of interview partners. Thus, expert interviews covered a wide variety of different perspectives within the case study regions. In the rural case study regions, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are dominant against large companies. The few large companies that were interviewed in the case study regions are often dependent branches of multinational corporations and as such also less autonomous in terms of human resource management. Thus, in our sample, SMEs are more strongly represented. The sampling strategy also looked for variety across economic sectors. As we can see in table 7, business representatives in the manufacturing and service sector were equally interviewed. Agricultural producers were only included in the interview series in the Piedmont Region (IT). Furthermore, in several case study regions businesses at the intersection of public and private sectors were also interviewed (e.g. education and health care). The interview partners were mainly people who hold positions with strategic decision taking power and high responsibility for their companies. The relevant target group was managing directors, owners and HR managers, who all are well represented in the sample.

Tab. 7: Sample overview

Case study region	Number of interview partners & No. of employees	Economic sectors	Position of interview partners	Business climate
Ústí Region	Multipliers: 4 Businesses: 10 <50: 8 50-250: 1 >250: 1	Financial and insurance services, technical ceramic manufacturing, education/school, IT, retail, construction, tourism, engineering, transport and mining vehicles repair services, components manufacturing	2 financial managers, 1 HR manager, 5 directors, 3 executive directors, 1 general representative manager, 2 chairmen	Growth: in particular IT and manufacturing
Görlitz Region	Multipliers: 4 Businesses: 8 <80: 5 350-700: 2 2100: 1	Manufacturing, industry (glass, wood, solar energy), service (hotel business, software, housing, water)		Growth: 4 companies Decline: 4 companies
Harz Region	Multipliers: 8 Businesses: 7 <50: 1 50-250: 4 >250: 2	Metal and electrical industry, social and health care, service and consulting sector	Members of management boards, HR managers, network managers	Growth: all but one company
Mid-Pannon Region	Multipliers: 3 Businesses: 10 <50: 7 50-250: 3 >250: 0	Manufacturing (glass); services	2 HR managers, 5 managing directors, 1 quality control manager, 1 director, 1 trade leader	
Piedmont Region	Multipliers: 4 Businesses: 10 <50: 8 50-250: 2 >250: 0	Social work, building industry, stone industry, restaurant industry, floricultural, dairy industry, ceramic industry	Directors, managers, HR managers, technical staff	Stable: only one company in decline, two companies slight growth
Lodz Region	Multipliers: 3 Businesses: 11 <50: 11 50-250: 0 >250: 0	Carpentry, motorisation, gastronomy, engineering, social studies, licence to deal with oil products, advertising agency, legal services, real estate, clothing sector, chemical industry	Owners, head of HR, presidents, team leaders, head of business development, department director for business consulting and public sector	Stable: only one company in growth, two companies in decline
Swietokrzyskie Region	Multipliers: 3 Businesses: 12 <50: 8 50-250: 0 >250: 4	Business support, construction industries, chemical industry, trade and manufacture, warehouse groceries, entertainment, advertising industry, electrical apparatus, production of vehicles	Owners, Managing Director, 3 HR managers, Specialist in Administration and Organisation Field, Director of Board Office, The Company's Vice President for National Projects, Branch Managers, Chairman	Growth: except for two companies
Podravska Region	Multipliers: 2 Businesses: 10 <50: 7 50-250: 1 >250: 2	Production/manufacturing (3) and services (7)	Directors, human resource managers	Growth: except for two companies

Similarity in terms of low foreign work experience and low relevance of highly-skilled labour

Most of the interview partners have not been abroad for longer periods; they themselves have little experience with working abroad, yet several interview partners reported having people with foreign work experience among their company's staff. This includes foreigners as well as returnees. Highly-skilled personnel are less relevant for most of the interviewed companies. Generally, highly-skilled occupations are to be found among managers and in administrative positions. The role of highly-skilled employees also depends on the economic sector. In services, the share is much higher than in the manufacturing industries. Furthermore, smaller companies employ a larger share of highly-skilled people than larger companies.

Differences in terms of business climate and HR strategies amongst regions and businesses

Against these similarities between the sub-samples in the case study regions, we also found differences in terms of the general business climate in which the companies operate, and which affects their own stock of employees. Companies in the Ústí Region (CZ), the Harz Region (DE), the Swietokrzyskie Region (PL) and the Podravska Region (SI) have faced a prosperous regional economy and have been able to increase their staff throughout the last ten years. Companies in the Lodz Region (PL) and the Piedmont Region (IT) operate in a climate of business stagnation, maintaining a stable stock of employees. Finally, companies in the Görlitz Region (DE) indicated both decline and growth.

Differences could also be found in terms of regional human resource (HR) strategies (meaning if regional policy makers or multipliers engage in joint activities). In Ústí, Görlitz, Harz and Mid-Pannon such regional and encompassing HR strategies do exist and they are available as a framework for the companies. In the other case study regions there are no such policies.

In terms of their own HR strategies, businesses also report difference between case study regions. In the Görlitz Region (DE), the Podravska Region (SI) and the Mid-Pannon (HU) the majority of businesses interviewed were able to name their own strategies to attract and manage the businesses' HR. In the Ústí Region (CZ) and the Harz Region (DE) half of the interviewed companies have such strategies, too. In the Piedmont Region (IT) and the two Polish regions, companies have not yet developed their own HR strategies.

Sending staff abroad as a chance for corporate development – The example of an enterprise in the Harz Region

The transnational team of the Re-Turn project visited a regional employer in the Harz Region, Germany. The company is developing production lines for sweets production. The company is experiencing the competition for skilled workers and has developed their own human resource strategy. This strategy does not focus on return migrants, but rather on keeping skilled workers. The company offers attractive training schemes and career paths, and their products are sold worldwide. The employees have to go abroad both for selling and for installing their production lines in the customers' locations. Mechanics and engineers are thus short-term emigrants and return with important knowledge and skills from their stays abroad. The employees in the sales department are often international immigrants who have their cultural background in important markets such as South America or the USA. Return migrants with experience of having lived in these markets would be a valuable human capital for the company.



A visit to a regional enterprise in the Harz Region (authors' own picture).

3.4 General Analysis

3.4.1 Companies' View on Challenges and Opportunities

In the beginning of the interviews we asked company representatives to evaluate the situation of their own businesses as well as the regional market in general. A similarity between case study regions concerns the idea that the situation of the regional market is strongly dependent on the economic sector in question. If regions were dominated by a specific industrial sector, then there is a historic path dependency which cannot be ignored. In particular, the primary and secondary sector activities which were major employers throughout socialist times have left their traces in the case study regions and affect labour markets to this day. Restructuring has not always worked well, as the examples of the heavy industries in the Ústí Region or the Podravska Region show. This causes continuing problems with unemployment. However, these unemployed people often cannot be hired by upcoming companies in new sectors (such as IT services in the Ústí Region) as their skill profiles do not fit the labour demands of the new companies. In particular, industrial paths that need long-term investment, such as the mining sector in the Görlitz Region, will pre-define opportunities for development in the long-run. If these sectors slide into difficulties, the whole region will be affected. Thus, unemployment and a lack of skilled labour often go hand in hand. For the regions it is very difficult to develop new sector profiles.

Furthermore, the situation of the individual regions depends on the geographic location. Those regions at border locations to more prosperous regions face serious problems with emigration and cross-border commuting. While this might reduce the unemployment in individual sectors, the mobility of the workforce increases the lack of skilled labour in other sectors. The employers in the home regions often cannot compete with wage levels behind the border, and thus lose skilled workers.

Another important point is the proximity to clients and markets. Wealthy and prosperous regions are often those who buy the products from companies in our case study regions, and business representatives say that being located close to these markets is advantageous for the regional development. This is, for example, the case for the Ústí Region, where a lot of business is done with the Czech capital region of Prague as well as with Saxonian companies in Germany. The Slovenian Podravska Region also profits from the proximity to Austria, as well as the Ossola Valley in Piedmont with its proximity to Switzerland. On the contrary, regions which are located far from economic centres such as the Görlitz Region, or which are poorly connected to them through train and road infrastructure such as the Swietokrzyskie Region, face serious problems in remaining competitive.

Evaluating the current situation of their own region, business representatives express different opinions in the case study regions. In the Podravska Region (SI), the Ústí Region (CZ), the Harz Region (DE), and the Swietokrzyskie Region (PL), the interviewed entrepreneurs think positively about the current situation. They interpret the regional business climate as defined by growth and they stress the achievements after the transition period and the integration into the EU market.

By contrast, in the Piedmont Region (IT) and the Lodz Region (PL), entrepreneurs express a feeling of nostalgia for better times. They mainly think of the regional business climate as defined by stagnation. The regional markets are perceived as less dynamic and defined by growing problems. Finally, in the Görlitz Region (DE), business representatives showed mixed opinions about the situation of their area. Some mentioned operating in a prosperous climate of

growth; others disagreed and pointed out that the Görlitz Region is characterised by decline and long-term problems.

Regional challenges as seen by the businesses

When it comes to the main challenges that result from the current regional situation, there is astonishing agreement across individual companies as well as across regions. The main problem for regional development and the individual business development is the future labour supply. As mentioned, the emigration waves of the last decade(s) since 1989 and 2004 have caused dramatic changes in the composition of the regional workforce, now being older and less qualified for new and innovative business activities. Cross-border commuting was also mentioned as a threat to individual business development, meaning that the regional workforce is not willing to work for affordable wage levels. Companies simply cannot compete with wages paid in the more prosperous regions.

‘The good and qualified people are not available on the market, they’re out of the market.’

(Business association representative, Harz Region)

‘Every new staff member is a treasure for the company.’

(Business representative, Harz Region)

This implies that labour supply might affect the innovativeness and competitiveness of the interviewed businesses. Business representatives express worries about their own market position. This is mainly related to three aspects: first, companies in our case study regions see difficulties in the field of regional branding and product placement. Whereas other regions exist as a brand, our case study regions do not operate in the frame of joint regional marketing strategies. Often companies have difficulties entering into existing markets in their own field because they have no renowned brand – neither the product itself nor the region where it was produced. Second, this raises worries in the field of internationalisation. In order to access wider markets and to place their own products, the companies we have talked to would need experienced and transnational employees who can help to enter international markets. Third, there is the question of competition. Many firms find themselves confronted with increasing competition from other firms in their field which operate from different regions and situations. Market relevant information might be obtained through internationally experienced workforce as well.

Finally, many business representatives express the feeling that the world economy is slowing down and that the financial crises are reaching their own regions and companies.

‘In the current situation it is hard to plan further than six months ahead.’

(Business association representative, Swietokrzyskie Region)

In addition to these inter-regional similarities, there are also specific challenges which only affect some regions. In the Harz Region (DE), the Görlitz Region (DE), and the Swietokrzyskie Region (PL) businesses see themselves as particularly confronted with the problem of an ageing workforce. The ageing process among workers results in a reduced capacity to innovate and adapt to new knowledge and processes. Companies might thus face competitive disadvantage to competitors with a younger and more flexible workforce, however, as companies in these

regions express difficulties in finding new and young workers, they have to develop strategies to include their older workers in the innovation process.

In the Mid-Pannon Region (HU), the Harz Region (DE), and the Lodz Region (PL), companies also felt that the firm size structure was rather disadvantageous in their region. The regions are characterised by a high share of small and medium sized companies and an absence of global players and multinational companies. This leads to difficulties in entering international markets, but also in finding regional customers. Furthermore, business representatives in these regions add that there are institutional problems in their case study regions. Finally, individual sectors also face economic problems at the moment which affect the wider regional economy.

Other challenges that were not equally apparent in all case study regions were: the general business environment; the lack of appropriate leisure facilities and quality of life; the lack of appropriate infrastructures; the region in general; the backwardness of regional authorities; the difficulties in implementing regional innovation systems; the regional unemployment; problems in providing appropriate education systems; inappropriately high tax levels; and finally, the missing possibilities for business financing.

Regional opportunities as seen by the businesses

Given all the challenges mentioned above, the business representatives also expressed different opportunities to tackle these challenges. The first thing mentioned equally across the case study regions concerns the ways by which businesses might improve their business networks. Business representatives consider business-to-business (B2B) networking to be the most important step in improving their own companies' market position. This includes individual activities such as cooperation in product development or marketing, knowledge transfer or the development of joint human resource strategies. Thereby, regional B2B networks are as important as transnational ones.

A second and very important issue is the school-to-business nexus. Business representatives know that they operate in a demographic situation in which many young people have left the region, the main stock of workers is ageing rapidly, and school graduates are becoming fewer. Hence, it is more important to recruit graduates directly from school before other companies do so or before they leave the region. Many employers have developed their own networks with regional schools and they engage in projects that enable school students to investigate their regional employment opportunities while still in school.

Third, innovation strategies are considered important by most of the business representatives. In order to stay competitive, even if located in disadvantageous regions, business representatives and their companies develop strategies to innovate their products as well as their production and management processes. In addition, innovation in terms of identifying and accessing new markets has also become more important.

Fourth, the current staff is a resource which the companies try to work with in an efficient way. Given the fact that most of our interviewed companies are struggling with an ageing workforce, they have to develop ways to capitalise on them. The positive aspects of an old workforce are emphasised here. An older workforce that has been loyal to the company for several years works mainly in a climate of mutual trust between employer and employee. Thus, business representatives expect workers who have worked for them for years to have a stronger working attitude than young job entrants. Furthermore, they also mention that the older workforce is valuable in terms of practical and tacit knowledge which is company specific and

needs time to be acquired. However, older workers' practical knowledge is not sufficient for most of the companies; therefore, life-long learning becomes a large topic for the companies. New models for continuous training and requalification models might enable even older employees to support company innovation through a mix of practical experience and new formal knowledge.

'Further and additional education and training is one of the most important topics.'
(Business association representative, Harz Region)

A fifth opportunity is the field of quality management and customer satisfaction. The companies are increasingly acknowledging that binding customers in quickly changing markets is helpful to achieve a stable position in the market. Whereas many companies did not pay attention to that issue in their start-up years, the quality of products and services has become more important today.

Finally, another opportunity is seen in the extending market of temporary labour and headhunting. If the companies' business environment is defined by short-term changes and the lack of skilled labour, both of these services become valuable tools for human resource management.

This section showed us that each region has its own history, and each region has its own way of accepting this history and turning it into a starting point for future development. However, this does not happen successfully in all of the case study regions. The individual businesses express diverging opinions about the business climate in which they operate. Both of these observations, the situation of the region as well as that of the individual businesses are very much dependent on their economic sector and their geographic location to main markets.

3.4.2 Strategies to Secure the Availability of Highly-Qualified Personnel

In this section we will analyse regional as well as company-based strategies to secure the availability of highly-qualified personnel. In total, regional strategies are implemented in all case study regions except the Podravska Region and the Lodz Region.

Formal strategies in the regions

One aspect of securing the availability of qualified labour is the presence of formal over-arching regional strategies, which include a broad variety of actors.

As our interviews reveal, these regional strategies are composed of very different topics. The most important is the nexus between regional schools and regional employers which could be found in various forms in the case study regions. One business association representative in the Ústí Region e.g. mentioned that:

'We have a special competition for students from secondary and tertiary schools – Dobrý list komory. It rewards the best students (graduates) and it is a very positive signal for potential employers.'
(Business association representative, Ústí Region)

As the example shows, companies, business associations and other regional stakeholders actively try to approach graduates before they leave their home region in order to inform them about career opportunities.

This topic also includes the integration of educational institutions into stakeholder networks in order to influence the educational offer according to the needs of businesses. Another point for intervention is the expansion of life-long learning concepts which address post-graduates and employees, and which should help the regional labour markets to include the existing, older workforce. Another target group of these strategies is composed of unemployed as well as non-skilled and low-skilled employees who should be re-qualified with the help of the regional educational infrastructure. Interviewees report on testing new vocational and advanced training schemes in their companies which are used to re-qualify the existing staff. Furthermore, trainee and internship programmes are implemented in order to allow for 'quick assessment' of new potential workers. University students are also systematically approached by companies and are contracted to write their final theses on applied and business-relevant issues.

'It is important to continuously invest in human capital; the young people have the potential in themselves and – combined with their passion – they can bring tangible benefits.'

(Business representative, Swietokrzyskie Region)

Content-wise, business administration knowledge is becoming ever more important for regional companies. Therefore, a lot of regional educational content is designed to tackle these needs. Through seminars and courses on venture capital, fundraising, marketing, business start-ups and leadership, regional workers should be encouraged to become more self-reliant.

Apart from direct educational issues and the qualification of the regional workforce, business networks are also an important component of regional HR strategies. In the Ústí Region, a strong focus has been put on cross-border business co-operation with Saxonian companies which should be addressed to build trustful value chains. In the Piedmont Region, business co-operation targets the pooling of businesses' service demand. Small and medium-sized companies co-operate in buying specialised business services (such as accounting or consulting) in order to reduce their costs.

There are also activities that only help attract new staff in indirect ways. This can be done through corporate social engagement in the region (e.g. sponsoring sports and cultural associations) or through the participation in regional job fairs.

Additionally, soft factors have become an issue in the companies in our case study regions. Family-friendliness and healthy work environments are two fields in which new procedures are being tested. Employees can flexibly organise their working hours and are allowed to work from home if they wish. Regular check-ups concerning the physical and psychological stress at the workplace are also being developed and tested. They should guarantee that elder employees can better deal with the high requirements of their work. This includes trainings for a healthy lifestyle and the support of healthy rehabilitation as well as prevention techniques.

Finally, specialised employment offices (both public and private) were mentioned as important actors in the regional labour market. These employment offices often offer individualised and tailored services to look for specialised staff according to companies' labour needs (similar to headhunting services). Temporary labour agencies are also relevant actors in

the regional labour markets, as they provide a flexible workforce which can be used by companies to respond to short-term changes in the markets.

Regional strategies have different degrees of formality and different forms of organisation. In the Mid-Pannon Region, the strategy has a very formal character, written down in the Central Transdanubian Operational Programme, while in other regions strategies have a less binding and formal character and exist rather in the form of shared ideas about problem-solving in the region.

In addition to businesses themselves, important regional actors in all case study regions are labour offices (private and public), headhunting companies, temporary work agencies, universities and schools, public authorities, business associations and chambers of commerce and industry.

A final interesting observation concerns the role of return migrants in these regional strategies. Actually, return migration does not occur as an issue in all of these regional strategies. Rather, the strategies focus on the exploitation of the human capital which is already present within the regions.

Strategies of the companies in the region

We subsequently asked the companies what strategies and key messages they apply to attract new staff. A first observation here is that the size of the companies matters. The few large employers that were interviewed could name formalised strategies (e.g. in the form of established HR departments; monitoring tools to evaluate the development of staff) and company mottos for external advertisement and image building, while the smaller and micro-sized companies tended to not dispose of such tools. A second general observation is that the economic sector's specialisation matters. Those businesses with a high degree of specialisation are confronted with stronger difficulties in acquiring new staff. Thus, they often have HR strategies which are more precise and methodologically more refined. Businesses which demand low-skilled and manual labour face fewer difficulties in recruiting staff within their own regional labour markets; therefore, they are less forced to develop specific strategies.

Generally, strategies can be differentiated by their degree of institutionalisation/formalisation. A rather formal strategy is one which is not bound to a specific individual within a company. It implies explicit formal knowledge and rules. Such formal HR strategies might be written down in strategic papers and HR manuals. Common formal strategies of the interviewed companies include monetary aspects, educational/training aspects, the use of headhunting services, aspects of work regulation, external PR, and temporary labour pools.

Monetary aspects: The monetary aspects refer to the wages and salaries that a company has to pay for an appropriate workforce. The companies are aware of the fact that they are participating in competitive labour markets and that they have to excel over other employers in terms of the offered monetary aspects. This includes fixed wages as well as additional benefits (lunch tickets, fitness studio and swimming pool access, company cars, company mobile phones and laptops), shares in the company's profits and premia (e.g. extra holiday). Still, they mention that this type of 'hand wheel' is only available in a limited scope, namely that of regional labour profitability. Most companies in our case study regions realise that their location is a competitive disadvantage as productivity in the rural case study regions is below national average. Therefore affordable wage levels are disadvantageous as well. Only those companies who operate on global

markets (e.g. machinery and engineering in the Harz Region) and in innovative sectors (e.g. IT in the Ústí Region) can afford to pay competitive wages. Other companies which mainly target regional private customers face serious problems to keep up with monetary incentives' development.

Educational aspects: In the field of educational aspects, employers increasingly offer access to new knowledge to their workers. This can happen through refresher courses, language training or other formats. Again, the interviewed businesses report that they engage in the school-business nexus, and they also do this independently of the existence or activities of an overarching regional strategy. They have realised the necessity to keep their school graduates in their regions, and they promote their jobs' profiles in schools.

Work regulation: In terms of work regulation, it was already mentioned in the section before that employers experiment with new schemes. Working hours are becoming more flexible in order to allow for a better balance between family and work life.

External public relations (PR): Activities in external PR mainly aim at constructing and distributing a specific image about the company as an 'attractive employer' (employer branding). These images are often transported through campaigns and advertisement in local, regional and national media (newspapers, internet, TV etc.). This field of activity also includes the reflection of the company's own presence in the internet. Companies have realised that their websites have to be appealing and that they must provide easy channels to their own vacancies and job descriptions. Another point is the individual participation of companies in career exhibitions.

Temporary labour: The aspect of temporary labour has also become more important for the interviewed companies. They engage in long-term and trustful relationships with temporary labour agencies and head-hunters. In order to secure the short-term and flexible availability of labour, companies often also engage in thematic business networks that deal with HR issues within their region. They circulate relevant information about vacancies, skilled employees within the region and efficient channels to attract human capital from outside the region.

Head-hunting: Companies in one region are not only connected through trustful and co-operative relationships, but through competition as well. In terms of informal ways of HR development, this becomes evident in the fact that companies also actively engage in head-hunting, using informal sources of relevant information such as those circulating in private and personal networks.

After we examined what role these formalised strategies and activities play in HR management, we asked companies for their rather informal strategies. Informal strategies are those strategies which are heavily dependent on individuals and cannot easily be handed over to other colleagues. These informal strategies are e.g. linked to an individual HR manager's conviction and mode of conduct, and they rely on tacit knowledge. They also affect the wider company's attractiveness for employees. In terms of these informal ways of handling HR, we found atmospheric aspects, inclusion of workers, and networking in regional contexts to be important.

In particular, small and medium-sized companies often rely mainly on these rather informal ways, as they cannot afford or do not see the necessity for formalising HR management.

‘Strategic planning is not necessarily the strong point of small businesses.’

(Multiplier, Görlitz Region)

Atmospheric aspects: The atmospheric aspects refer to the work environment and atmosphere. Employers acknowledge that employees are more satisfied if the work environment is peaceful, co-operative and relaxed among colleagues, and if an open hierarchy allows for informal and friendly interaction between different organisational levels. The atmosphere among colleagues and supervisors has to be trusting. Measures for ‘team building’ are applied, for example, it was mentioned by employers that they pay attention to the birthdays of their employees in order to not only express their esteem of a worker as a person, but also of their merits for the company. Another activity consists of socialising events that include all staff members, e.g. Christmas parties or excursions. This means workers appreciate if the management of the company maintains a direct and uncomplicated contact with all departments and workers. One manager in the Görlitz Region illustrates this by explaining that it is the aim of his management style

‘... to run a company so that you can still meet someone individually, that they [the staff] feel that the company lies close to my heart, that I take a stand for it and I would never leave them.’

(Business representative, Görlitz)

In this context, the design of interesting workplaces which are stimulating and challenging is an important aspect. Finally, the healthy work environment plays into these soft aspects of HR strategies. Employers offer company-based health insurance schemes or supplements to public health care. They pay attention to the furniture and design of workplaces.

The inclusion of the company’s own staff: One informal way of attracting staff is using informal personal networks. Entrepreneurs exchange information on good employees among each other, and managers also speak with employees and tell them about their HR needs so that these employees can distribute the message in their personal networks. This strategy is perceived as very efficient because information about a job or a company which circulates through personal networks is considered very reliable from the perspective of potential future employees. If people get information about a vacancy from a friend or acquaintance, they can also ask for additional implicit information which is not displayed in the published job descriptions. Therefore, the entrepreneurs and managers make use of the private networks of their employees in order to distribute the information about vacant positions. Own staff is also integrated into decision making within the company, which allows staff members to feeling responsible for the company. As a consequence, the interviewed managers expect that staff members engage in a better way for the company and their personal interests are aligned with company interests. Integrating employees into decision making does not only have this functional character in terms of emotionally binding staff to the company, managers also esteem the HR relevant knowledge of their employees.

Relational ties to the region: Another informal way of looking for new staff is through rather informal contacts to the above mentioned regional organisations. Apart from over-arching regional strategies and more formalised bi-lateral alliances with other actors in the region, companies also maintain more informal ways of interaction with these actors. These informal relations are sometimes based on acquaintanceships, which include mutual trust and empathy. This channel is also used to 'brand' the company as an attractive employer. The informal relations to educational organisations in the region play a particularly decisive role; they are used by entrepreneurs to constantly monitor the availability of young experts and professionals.

To conclude, informal strategies in the interviewed companies heavily rely on word-of-mouth information flow within private and personal networks. The company's own employees are considered the most important resource in these strategies. Additionally, other organisations engage in informal relations with the company, too. HR-relevant information circulates in informal meetings and interaction between companies and business associations as well as between companies and educational institutions. In informal strategies, return migration was hardly mentioned as a specific issue.

It can generally be observed that during the interviews, companies had difficulties in properly differentiating between 'formal' and 'informal' strategies. Both seem to intersect in the everyday life operation of the interviewed businesses. As a consequence, we suggest understanding both complexes of HR development not as solitary ones, but as interrelated and interdependent – going hand in hand. At the same time, it has to be mentioned that companies clearly differentiate between HR measures that focus on the 'attraction of new personnel' and HR measures to develop the potentials of the 'existing staff'. A large share of measures and content of strategies refers to the latter, the development potential of the company's own staff.

We also found regional differences between the external necessity (e.g. through labour market structures) to engage in formal strategies. The Piedmont Region's companies mention that they had many problems in finding skilled staff in the last decade, but since the crisis hit the Italian market, they have had no problems in finding people. Since unemployment has risen, employees become even more loyal towards their companies as they are more dependent on their current jobs. In other regions such as the Lodz Region and the Podravska Region, the interviewed companies are internationalising. Therefore, they need employees who dispose of foreign language skills and foreign work experience. To them, it is very difficult to find appropriate staff. Thus, they are forced to be more pro-active in HR strategy development. In the Podravska Region, companies and business associations try to become part of EU funded networks and projects in order to extend their range for recruitment. Also in the Swietokrzyskie Region, companies have developed internal incentive systems (e.g. tenure fast-track) to motivate employees to acquire international skills (language, trainings abroad) and thus allow the company to enter foreign markets. In particular, people with technical skills are in demand, while there is less demand for people with certificates in humanities.

As for the rather over-arching regional strategies, return migration was not named as a topic. It remains unclear from the interviews if this is caused by the strong focus on measures to develop the 'existing staff's potential' – and the generally subordinated role of attraction of new people – or if this phenomenon is linked to a disinterest or conscious disregard of return migrants as labour potential in the specific field of attraction measures for new staff. At the end,

it is also dependent on the individual economic sector if foreign work experience is required, as one multiplier mentions:

‘But, like it was said before, in our field of activity working abroad is not so important.’

(Multiplier, Swietokrzyskie Region)

3.4.3 Experiences with Staff Returning from Abroad

In this section we will present insights into the ‘practical experience’ that the interviewed companies and business representatives have with staff returning from abroad. We have structured this section according to four important points. First, we will look at the general experience that companies have with return migrants as employees. Second, the perception of the specificity of return migrants – as compared to the local non-migrant but also to international immigrants/foreigners – will be examined. Third, we will present the ways in which the interviewed companies try to support return migrants. Fourth, we will show which difficulties companies generally see in the field of return migration.

Experience with return migrants as labour force

At first we requested our interview partners to state some experiences which local companies made with returnees. It turned out that the extent of the experiences differs strongly between the case study regions. The selected companies in the Ústí Region, the Görlitz Region and the Harz Region had no or only limited empirical knowledge with the inclusion of returnees. Respondents mentioned that one problem is the lack of employees with foreign work experience. Particularly, many small companies do not have sufficient personnel capacities to send staff abroad to gain new impressions and skills.

Another aspect which makes sending employees abroad a problematic issue is the fear of losing human capital. Employers said it is hard to make qualified employees come back. Emigrants are seldom available, especially when they studied somewhere else. Furthermore, there are only a few young employees who want to go abroad.

Actually, for most companies in the above-mentioned regions the origin of potential employees is less relevant when hiring new staff. They do not focus on returnees or pay any special attention to them. Rather future employees are evaluated on the basis of their practical and job-specific skills and knowledge. This might in some cases include foreign work experience, but in most positions that are currently vacant in the case study regions foreign work experience is not important.

In the frame of our business survey we found that there is more experience with returnees in the regions of Mid-Pannon, Piedmont, Lodz and Swietokrzyskie. Therefore, the companies can better evaluate the opportunities connected to return migration. Companies in Mid-Pannon appreciate the experiences, language skills, work culture and up-to-date technological knowledge that the returnees bring from abroad. In Lodz two of the respondents said that their employees were sent abroad for training to gain technological and cultural knowledge for the company in which they work. Furthermore, the improvement of the English language abroad is very important because software, machinery interfaces and correspondences in Poland are based on the English language.

In the Piedmont and Swietokrzyskie Regions, returnees are seen as potential staff who have developed in terms of their own personality. This personal growth is positively evaluated by the interviewed employers. All agreed that foreign work experience would add value at least on a personal level by allowing individuals to understand a different culture and a different way of organising things in the private, societal and professional spheres. In many cases, the knowledge that is learned abroad can be useful to the interviewed businesses because they offer possibilities of making returnees carriers of innovation in the organisational, management and production fields.

However, it depends on the professional field whether a stay abroad is a useful element for the improvement of the professional skills. There are areas, such as construction, where foreign work experience is less necessary and field experience is much more important.

Commonalities and differences: Reasons to employ return migrants

We also asked which arguments support or contradict the potential employment of return migrants. In general all interview partners told us that their companies are very open-minded concerning the employment of returnees. Most of the interviewed employers have not seen returnees as a specifically problematic group of applicants in the labour market. In the Görlitz Region almost all companies said that if returnees have exactly the same qualifications as any other potential non-migrant employee from the region – plus having experiences from abroad – then of course they would prefer the returnee.

The positive attitude towards employing return migrants is based on four arguments. The first one concerns the language skills which returnees improved during their stay abroad. Especially in internationally active companies, communication at the management level is mostly in English. The second argument relates to cultural aspects and understanding different ways of organising and of thinking. It is quite important to have people with work experience from abroad when it comes to the organisation of work in different fields and countries. Furthermore, personal experience from abroad is considered as providing return migrants with the capacity to see the bigger picture, to be more self-confident, and to be able to come to terms with different situations easily. The knowledge which is learned in another country can be a benefit in business because it often contains innovative perspectives on business development. The respondents mentioned that return migrants are able to integrate new, good practices and novelties into the company. The third point focuses on the individual growth and the learning of some professional abilities. In many cases, return migrants gathered up-to-date technological knowledge in internationally acting companies abroad. This knowledge can be used by the home region's company in order to become more competitive in international markets. Last, but not least, the fourth argument concerns the social networks which these potential employees build while abroad; the home companies can use these contacts to extend their international range. In the eyes of the interviewed business representatives, a mixture of regional know-how and experiences from abroad are the most valuable combination of assets which an applicant can provide.

On the other side, there are some factors which impair the interest to hire return migrants or to consciously send staff abroad. Many companies in fields like manufacturing, school, retail, insurance services or construction do not consider foreign work experience a necessary asset. They have the opinion that practical professional experience is more important for a successful business. The necessity to hire staff which has worked abroad exists primarily for

internationally active companies, not for small regionally operating ones. Multipliers and businesses often agree that it is unlikely that they would send staff abroad since they need them in the region. Therefore, in the Görlitz Region, only some businesses have contact with other organisations or companies to exchange staff. In the Swietokrzyskie Region there were no companies which were especially looking for return migrants. In a regular recruiting process return migrants were treated like all other applicants.

In the case of sending staff abroad, a problematic thing is to prove and judge the experience that expatriated employees have gained abroad – in many cases they were hired away to a different position than their previous one. In other cases a little group of employers was afraid of financial claims of the return migrants, as one business association representative highlights:

‘If they worked in their profession, after the return they will have unreasonable wage demands.’

(Multiplier, Swietokrzyskie Region)

Companies' support for return migrants

For evaluating the intensity of efforts to make emigrants come back, we were in search of companies/organisations/initiatives assisting people in their potential return. In general, it seems that institutional and corporate activities are not focused on the issue of promoting return migration. No representative of our selected case study regions could name a concrete organisation or company which is specialised in the recruitment of potential return migrants. Only a small number of agents care about this topic. One of the respondents in the Lodz Region said that companies are not responsible for supporting return migrants. This support should be provided by the Polish State. There is also no special support to the returnees in the regions of Ústí, Podravska, Piedmont and Swietokrzyskie. However, there are a few measures for the incipient stage after arrival of the new employees. For example, one of the respondents in the Podravska Region said that they are trying to be a socially responsible company. Therefore they offer a day off for voluntary activities so the other colleagues could help the return migrant with different tasks such as the relocation. In the Swietokrzyskie Region an employee of a company reported that they can offer a flat to those highly-skilled employees who can only be found abroad.

In the Harz Region no special support for returnees was mentioned. New employees were supported independently of their status. Some companies offer financial and technical support with respect to housing, relocation expenses or other aspects. However, this happens independently from the individual background of the new staff member. In the Mid-Pannon Region only multinational companies have developed some measures to support the return of their former employees. In the case of national companies, supporting returnees is not a topic at all – although they like to hire returning migrants. Multinational companies in the Mid-Pannon Region motivate their employees to gain experience abroad and to participate in a project at another company unit in a different country. These missions are for a certain period of time, and the mother companies would like to get their employees back. Therefore, they often offer a new position or a salary raise after the completion of the project abroad. One multiplier in the Görlitz Region built up a website with job offers so that returnees could already search for appropriate jobs from abroad. Another company offered support by paying for a hotel room for a week, by

building networks for the returnee, by helping with housing, and by giving information for mastering everyday life. Some companies also help with social networking.

A lot of businesses – particularly in Polish case study regions – say that returnees actually do not need support because they already know what they are coming back for and most times they have family and friends there who will support them. Some businesses said they would assist them, for example through providing financial support, paying for flights, helping to find accommodation, helping them to get the same wages as abroad. They would also support staff exchange or send staff abroad for special training.

Difficulties of returning migrants from the perspective of the companies

For the returning migrants a lot of barriers and difficulties exist which impair their assimilation into the home region's society. The survey revealed different kinds of problems. First, many companies mentioned difficulties related to aspects of social re-integration. In this context, one of the respondents in the Swietokrzyskie Region pointed out that the time spent abroad is significant. If the length is about two to three years, the returning person can still switch quickly to the conditions dominant in the home country. However, if this time is longer, it will be hard for a person to re-accommodate with the prevailing realities and to renew old acquaintanceships. Both the individual's own personality and the conditions in the home region changed during the stay abroad. Old friends moved away, the composition of the urban districts changed or other economic and social aspects have evolved over the course of time. Therefore, it is important that returning migrants have someone to help them to adapt to the new reality. One respondent in the Lodz Region said that he had two friends who had returned to Poland for a short period. His friends quickly went abroad again; they could not accept how people act and they did not comprehend procedures and rules of operating businesses. The social and organisational differences between abroad and life back at home might be a problem. People need time to adjust, as the interviewed business representatives mentioned.

Another problem which is connected to the difficulties described above is the difference of organisational systems in the host and the home country. Emigrants came in contact with either economic or social differences, or with both at the same time. This could cause a problem with the readjustment to the practices at home. In this respect, the main problems are the slow and heavy terms of bureaucracy. For example, employers in the Piedmont and Swietokrzyskie Regions reported that returnees complained about the impaired freedom of action in the economic sphere. Business representatives in the Ústí and Podravska Regions observed that returnees criticised the legal difficulties in founding their own company.

Several enterprises mentioned financial and qualification mismatches. A qualified professional in the Mid-Pannon Region can only earn up to a third of the former salary in some Western European countries, and the work load is even bigger, so the main concern of managers is how to keep returnees motivated if they have to work harder for far less money. Many of them are afraid that a return migrant would seize the first opportunity to go abroad again, therefore many business representatives do not consider returning migrants as a potential permanent staff. One of the respondents in the Lodz Region said that people who return will be unwilling to accept the Polish salaries. One entrepreneur in the Piedmont Region also argues that the remuneration in Italy is much lower compared to the situation in neighbouring Switzerland. So, from the perspective of the interviewed business representatives, differences in wage levels between our case study regions and regions abroad are considered one of the main obstacles for

return migrants. On the other hand, some return migrants face difficulties in finding a decent job appropriate to their profile, and they might even risk being overqualified for the positions in their home regions. One consequence can be that returnees have to deal with longer periods of unemployment. In the Harz Region, one of the most relevant difficulties is related to family aspects such as finding appropriate housing and school or child care facilities.

3.4.4 Attitudes towards Staff with Foreign Work Experience

After having asked the business representatives for their experience with return migrants and staff with foreign work experience, we looked further at the personal attitudes of the interviewed business representatives concerning this group of workers.

General attitudes towards staff with foreign work experience

A first point here refers to the general attitude towards staff with foreign work experience. This question focused on a wider perspective, which is independent of personal experience and actual needs within the company. Generally, the companies we interviewed expressed a positive attitude to foreign work experience. In particular, employers who already had direct experience with employees with foreign work experience would generally recommend to other employers that they hire these employees. As positive aspects, the interview partners mentioned that foreign work experience is an indicator of an employee's capacity to tackle unknown and foreign situations, or to translate and compare contexts. The development of character and personality was mentioned. Working abroad, people are supposed to become more self-confident, autonomous, co-operative, or knowledgeable. Intercultural competencies and language skills are valuable for the businesses. Employers think that people with foreign work experience can bring new knowledge to the company. This might refer to different fields. First, this knowledge can be technical; this refers to products and production processes, or equivalently to services and the way services are provided. Second, the transferable knowledge might rather be in the field of the organisational structure and the management of businesses. Workers with foreign work experience might provide innovative ideas in all these fields of knowledge.

'One who can handle living and working abroad can live and work anywhere.'

(Multiplier, Harz Region)

'People with experience from abroad are per se more valuable.'

(Other Multiplier, Harz Region)

Yet, the relevance and utility of foreign work experience heavily depends on the situation and the specific job in the home region. In particular, the Polish businesses are aware of the fact that Polish people abroad often work below their level of qualification or in different professional fields, other than the one in which they once graduated in Poland. So some businesses – in particular in Poland, but also in Germany – point to the importance of what the emigrants had actually worked as abroad. If they worked in jobs that do not correspond to their education or work experience at home, the foreign work experience might be less relevant. The valuable technical and organisational knowledge is then not acquired by the migrants, and the company back at home has no access to such knowledge relevant for innovation. This viewpoint is also shared by companies in the Piedmont Region who think that foreign work experience should

mirror a progression in career. If the foreign work experience was not combined with personal career advancement abroad, it seems less helpful.

Particularly in the Ústí Region – less so in other regions – business representatives mentioned that they do not see the sense in treating return migrants as a preferred group of workers. Some companies also mention that it would be a form of discrimination against local non-migrants – and this would be against the law.

‘I personally have the feeling that foreign experiences are very often overestimated in CZ. Lots of people look at these persons as if they were a god, they have something different than others. I don’t think these people are significantly better or worse than others. I suggest it is very individual.’

(Business representative, Ústí Region)

In all regions there are also intra-regional differences between individual companies, their size, their degree of internationality and their need for foreign work experience. This becomes obvious in a statement from a business association representative, who is also from the Ústí Region, just like the business representative beforehand (quote above). Contrary to the statement above, the business association representative (see quote below) stresses the importance of such foreign work experience and illustrates what his business association is doing to enhance it:

‘We organise German language courses for graduates and apprentices, and they can get paid master training in Germany afterward. The master certificate is eligible through the EU. Master training is still missing in CZ.’

(Multiplier, Ústí Region)

It therefore depends strongly on the individual situation of the company, the estimation of the companies’ representatives, and the economic sector how relevant foreign work experience might be. Then there are companies which would generally not differentiate between migrants and non-migrants, for they do not see different reasons for doing so. They say it is more important to look at the facts: the relevant skills and knowledge as well as their development and improvement.

‘Knowledge gained always is a plus.’

(Business representative, Swietokrzyskie Region)

The hypothetical idea that return migration might be interpreted as ‘failure abroad’ was not shared by the interviewed companies. The interview partners are aware of the fact that return migration is strongly related to personal and social factors: They mention ‘homesickness’, ‘proximity to family and friends’, or a ‘lack of social integration abroad’ as potential motives for return migration. The business representatives understand such motivations for return migration and they do not interpret them as ‘return of failure’. Some businesses use this conviction to argue that return migration is mostly an issue of the private life and thus companies do not need to support return migrants; their private networks should support them.

Finally, some companies also expressed that they would expect return migrants and people

with foreign work experience in general to be people who are more mobile than non-migrants, and who are more probable and perhaps more willing to leave the region again. From the companies' perspective this would be an argument against hiring migrants, as the investment in human capital and tacit knowledge is risky. This also includes that companies fear inflated salary demands. They expect return migrants to have experienced work environments with higher wage levels, which companies in the case study regions cannot offer. Basically, the interviewed businesses evaluate foreign work experience and return migrants positively, but they also express certain conditions to do so (e.g. type of professional experience abroad, willingness to leave the home region again, job expectations at home).

Judgement of the return process

We also asked the companies in the case study regions how they would evaluate the return process itself. Our interviewees reported several aspects that guide their personal perspective on return migration. They welcome return migration if returnees come back with the attitude to engage for their home region in wider civic terms. They also mirror positive opinions about the fact that returnees come back for their families and stabilise regional social networks. Return migration is not regarded as return of failure, but as a natural desire, a longing for social, cultural and geographic proximity to other people. The idea is repeated that return migration is first of all a phenomenon of the private life sphere. These interviewees think that they, as well as other businesses and employers, should not interfere here. Again, this is interpreted as an argument for not assisting return by some company-based measures. In contrast, other interviewees argue that especially the employing companies should also help their return migrant employees with private re-integration. Some mention that they provide help with relocation costs, with travel costs, with finding a flat or child care and schooling. Yet, this direct assistance from companies only happens in exceptional cases. In particular, in the Podravska Region, the interviewed company managers state that they would even prefer returning migrants to other applicants in order to facilitate their way back home. Only some interviewed business representatives even express suspicion towards return migration. In the Lodz Region this concerns the idea that mostly unskilled Polish people return, while highly skilled people stay abroad. Yet Polish companies who want to enter international markets would need highly-skilled persons to manage this process, as Polish multipliers remark.

3.4.5 Currently Applied Recruitment Strategies

In this last section we will present findings on the currently applied recruitment strategies of interviewed companies. In this part of these interviews we focussed on the immediate moment, and not on general and wider timeframes.

At the moment of the interview not all companies needed to hire and look for new staff, so they were not able to name current strategies of recruitment. Furthermore, returnees and other people with foreign work experience are not targeted in particular by most of the firms.

Companies named several channels for recruitment which they use if necessary. Among these channels they report public and private employment agencies, temporary labour agencies, headhunters, local newspapers and the internet. Only very sparsely are existing return initiatives channels used for recruitment. As such, only one company in the Görlitz Region named the return initiative 'Sachse komm zurück' as a channel for recruitment. The interviewed business

representatives stress the role of business associations in assisting recruitment through channelling information on vacancies. In the Harz Region, where labour shortages are acute in individual economic sectors, concerned companies employ people without decent qualifications and they retrain these people in internal apprenticeships. In the Mid-Pannon Region, informal networks are important to find appropriate staff from within the region. The same accounts for the Piedmont Region, where word-of-mouth information is the preferred way of recruitment. In the Piedmont Region there is the specificity that employers do not engage in the school-business nexus as they evaluate school education as too theoretical. As such, they rather hire through testing an employee's practical skills during stages of internship. In the Swietokrzyskie Region, the university is mentioned as a source for qualified staff. Co-operation with future employees starts when companies hire students for internships and thesis writing.

To sum up, a similarity in all case study regions is that many companies do not have refined recruitment strategies, and in most cases return migrants do not play a specific role in recruitment.

A company founded by a Slovenian returnee – An example of successful return migration

The transnational team of the Re-Turn project visited a regional employer in the Podravka Region of Slovenia. The company produces plastic profiles which are used for windows and doors in the building industry. It is one of the largest family-owned businesses in Slovenia and employs several hundreds of workers. The company itself is the symbol of successful return migration; it was founded by a Slovenian returnee who had lived and worked in Germany. Saving money from work there, he founded his first businesses in the construction sector. At the



A visit to a regional enterprise in the Podravka Region (authors' own picture).

beginning of the Slovenian transition there was a massive need for building machinery, which he imported second-hand from Germany. With the profits he made, he started his company, which now has its main markets in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. This example shows how transnational ties can be an important aspect of return migration.

3.5 Situation in Case Study Regions

In this section, general conclusions for the situation in each case study region are presented as they were drawn by the local interviewer teams.

Ústí Region (CZ) - by Zuzana Bartipanova, Otto Mertens & Jan Schroth

Regional employers see the Ústí region as a region with a good tradition (especially in manufacturing) and with a great geographical position (neighbouring Germany and Prague). They see the negative aspect in the low qualifications of the local people, in the brain drain to major cities of the Czech Republic (Prague, Brno, Plzeň – young experts stay there after their studies) and in the slow reaction of regional secondary/vocational and tertiary schools to their labour demands.

Generally, business representatives in the Ústí Region see returnees as a skilled group on the labour market, but they do not look for them directly nor do they look for them abroad. They educate experts in their own companies or through training courses during their studies. Foreign experience is generally considered a benefit, but they know it cannot be the rule for all employees. Local multipliers try to stop the brain drain or help acquire qualified staff through qualification courses and the development of a staff requirements database. Moreover, they cooperate, for example, with German business chambers or relevant bodies on improving the qualifications of Czech people.

The issue of migration and return migration is not popular and important for employers or multipliers in the Ústí region. This might be caused by the high share of daily work migration to Germany, which exceeds longer emigration abroad and follow-up return migration to the Ústí Region.

Görlitz Region (DE) - by Roger Schmidtchen, Franziska Schubert & Gabriele Schönfelder

It is obvious that return migration for businesses does not play a significant role. By contrast, multipliers already see returning migrants as an important potential with special knowledge and social skills. Some businesses still think that it is enough to offer potential employees a workplace in order to make them stay in the region. Interestingly, a lot of interview partners first said they do not know any returnees, never mind having them in the company, and after talking for a while they remembered someone they knew who had returned. Many interview partners also mention that there are not many young people who are willing to go abroad, even if the company offers paid exchanges or half-/full-year stays abroad. The question is if this is truly the fact, or if the requirements for going abroad within the company are unattractive. On the one hand, multipliers as well as businesses recognise what kind of potential the experiences from abroad might have (social/soft skills, work experiences, personal experiences to strengthen the personality), but except for a few, they do not link it to returning migrants.

It is also important to mention that many companies as well as multipliers blame family and school politics for doing too little in terms of education, recruiting, motivation and social skills. Often it is in the businesses' hands to educate their trainees in working and soft skills as the qualifications from school are insufficient. A few other businesses complain about the regulations of the EU and the state concerning certain economic branches. These regulations limit the chances of potentially qualified personnel since they are too restrictive. First, fewer people apply, and second, the ones applying fail. As a consequence, qualified personnel are rare. It is important for the future that businesses seem very interested in returnees. Some said they

would like to get in contact with return initiatives; one interviewee directly asked if there are returnees in the administrative district of Görlitz. He also mentioned that it is the job of those responsible for the district and town administration to make the region more attractive for young people, especially from outside the region.

Harz Region (DE) - by Thomas Brammer & Heike Zembrod

Overall, the business survey shows that the knowledge and experience of return migrants and people with foreign work experience were regarded as very positive. There were almost no negative experiences or statements about the topic of re-migration and foreign experience. Nevertheless, the interview partners mentioned that return migrants were no special target group within their HR strategy as there are only small numbers of return migrants.

The demographic change with the decreasing population, especially the reduced number of younger people, as well as the difficult market situation and competition among the companies and the regions were regarded as the main challenges. The regional SMEs are often depending on oligopoly clients or suppliers and have relatively little power within the market. The small size of the regional companies also makes it hard to attract new staff members or apprentices compared to bigger companies in metropolitan areas (competition between regions and employers). Regional branding as well as employer branding were seen as relevant and as factors for success in this competition. One open question with respect to this is how the region can increase its regional branding, reaching a better image as an attractive region for living and working.

The interviews confirmed the general assumption about HR strategies of SMEs: The interviewees mentioned that smaller companies, which are the majority of the regional companies, mainly do not have a long term and sustainable HR strategy due to a lack of time and capacities. HR strategies predominantly exist in bigger companies. Nevertheless, all interviewed businesses (independent of their size) use an active participation in networks and cooperation (e.g. with schools or universities) to secure an early binding of new staff members and to improve their employer branding.

Mid-Pannon Region (HU) - by Agnes Fiedler & Tamas Kovacs

During the interviews we tried to monitor the companies' and multipliers' opinion about potential institutional services specially developed according to the returnee's needs. At first they found this idea strange, but they more or less agreed that there is a need for such services. If flexible and fast tools were available, perhaps more people would feel motivated to return back home. Such services could be: housing, childcare, assistance in administrative issues. The following aspects were most striking in the Mid-Pannon Region:

1. The surveyed companies do not have special policies for returnees in their HR development strategies, and neither does the regional HR development strategy deal with returning migrants.
2. Most of the companies have experience with employing returnees. They are considered a valuable workforce, mainly due to their language skills and up-to-date technological knowledge.
3. When hiring a new professional, the companies do not focus only on returnees. In fact, many business representatives think that local knowledge and company specific competences are more important than the experience gained abroad. However, this kind of

experience is always an advantage at job interviews. Companies appreciate the language skills, intercultural knowledge and flexibility of these candidates.

Piedmont Region (IT) - by Erich Giordano, Nuria Mignone & Emanuela Dutto

There are issues raised by some respondents that require attention. The territory we are talking about, the Ossola Valley, is a relatively small area with a concentration of about 70,000 inhabitants.

There are no major leading industries that can host large pools of workers. The leading sectors of the territory, the domestic services and the construction industry, are still in crisis. Indeed, a critically highlighted fact is that there are no clear and strong development policies for this region and, in this delicate economic climate, the availability of capital worsened, creating a vicious circle that begins in banks' reluctance and ends in the inability of companies to make investments. At present, companies are struggling to survive. Furthermore, the area is getting older and the idea that emerges is that one should work to keep young people who are there rather than thinking about policies to bring them back; many of them, in fact, are going to study at the universities in Pavia, Milan and Turin and will stay there if they find a job in these cities.

Right now the aim for the territory of the Ossola Valley is not to bring back the skilled people who emigrated, since for them there would be no possibility of a return, or to recognise them as an appropriate value in terms of wages. The region's commitment is rather to avoid that people go elsewhere to look for work. Indeed, currently, those who work abroad do not have the desire to return, given the economic uncertainty that they would find in their region of origin. It is important to note that, at present, the cross border commuters of the Ossola Valley region are about 50,000, which is an added value and a great opportunity for the territory because many families depend on it and can count on a fixed Swiss salary, much higher than the Italian one. It would therefore be possible to reinforce collaboration with schools in order to ensure a path towards professionalism for those who probably will make the future of this territory. Apart from the declining traditional sectors such as domestic services and construction, new niche sectors could develop there, such as handcrafts and the stone industry as well as those related to an aging society which certainly needs particular services. In this regard, Università could be a good example. This project was originally developed in Druogno for the recovery of ancient crafts and traditions that might represent a good development opportunity for local people.

There will also be a workshop which is organised as a meeting between businesses, entrepreneurs and students who are entering the world of work to ensure a match between demand and supply of labour and to ensure that the main stakeholders will discuss these issues.

Lodz Region (PL) - by Nina Krajewska & Malgorzata Mastalerz

Statistics show that 95% of companies in the Lodz Region are very small ones (micro-sized firms). Companies do not develop dynamically. They have poor access to sources of financing. The tax system is unfavourable for the development of companies.

On the other hand, entrepreneurs want a quick and large profit. Few of them know about the benefits of employing people who are workers with professional experience. Companies want to employ young people and graduates who will work for little money. There are no real incentive systems. Companies operate in a short term perspective and they do not want to invest in their employees. They compete with other companies through the provision of a higher salary in

order to gain a new employee currently employed in another company. Thus, return migrants are actually no real target group of human resource strategies.

Swietokrzyskie Region (PL) - by Mariusz Kowalski

Interviewees in this region suggested that migrants should be supported in starting a new business on their own after returning. Yet people who are interested in this solution may be about 5% of all returnees. In those cases maybe the good method of support will be to select a group of business partners for those who want to start a new business after returning.

There also appeared a suggestion among respondents to form a data base of skills and qualifications of returnees so that companies could have access to them. In addition, the employers could use such a data base to post their own vacancies so that migrants could be aware of them. Some interviewees said that there should be more interest from the authorities on the matter of the outflow of skilled workers. Authorities should not only show 'theoretical interest', but some practical activities should be taken. 'Perhaps authorities should learn from their mistakes and restore trade schools', one of the interviewees said.

Right now the aim for the territory of the Swietokrzyskie Voivodship is to avoid further emigration of experts in technical fields. After the closure of trade schools, the region is lacking specialists such as welders, varnishers, logistic engineers, construction machinery and equipment engineers, maintenance engineers and engineers for construction of bridges.

Indeed, those who currently work abroad do not have the desire to return, given the uncertainty of finding satisfying jobs in the region of origin. The main reason for not coming back is lower pension in Poland than in countries of Western Europe.

Podravska Region (SI) - by Darja Borsic

According to the feedback received from the interviewed representatives of businesses and multipliers, it may be concluded that in this region:

- There is no regional strategy which would secure the availability of highly qualified personnel in the Podravska Region;
- There is a positive attitude towards employment of returning migrants, but neither interviewed businesses nor multipliers had any experience with it so far;
- Returning migrants mostly have problems with administrative procedures and adjustment to the new lifestyle;
- The companies doing business abroad think that employing staff with international experience has an added value, since people working abroad gain foreign language skills, social skills and networks. They consider these people to be more open-minded, communicative, and with a potential to bring new, good practices and novelties to the company;
- The return process is not discussed broadly in Slovenia and there is a lack of experience with returning migrants' issues. Therefore potential employers are not used to looking for (potential) returnees.

Businesses and multipliers identified the following existing problems which are specific for the region: First, the highly qualified staff leaves the region. Second, there is not enough experience and practical knowledge with returned employees. Third, the regional companies do not have enough time and resources to educate their own employees. Fourth, there is no interest of

unemployed people to work in specific, physically intensive work places and as such there is a lack of professional workers. Particularly, young people are no longer interested in educating themselves in these areas. Finally, there is a lack of technological development and of response of businesses to ideas from multipliers.

Sending employees abroad for training and learning – An example of a regional employer in the Mid-Pannon Region (Hungary)

A company in the Mid-Pannon Region (Hungary) is developing alloy profiles which are used in the automotive and ship-building industry. It is one of the largest industrial employers in the case study region, having contracted about 900 workers. The company has a long tradition and survived the post-socialist transition; it is now extending into global markets. Renowned clients are car manufacturers such as Audi or Aston Martin. While the largest share of workers must not have international work experience, the company sends individual employees abroad for training and learning from other companies that are part of the same multinational group. Upon return, these workers bring in market-relevant knowledge which helps the company to remain innovative and competitive. As product development



Alloy profiles, which were manufactured in the company (authors' own picture).

is a very complex process which is done in close cooperation with major clients, developers often have to go abroad, too. This example shows that foreign work experience and knowledge is an important resource for this company's global expansion. However, even when operating in global markets, wages are comparably low in this company. Thus the company is confronted with international head-hunters who search for engineers and developers as well as management staff. Once lost to countries such as Switzerland, Austria or Germany, these highly-skilled professionals earn up to eight times as much as they can earn in the Hungarian company, and their return becomes very improbable.

3.6 Policy Implications for the Design of Return Initiatives

This business survey has shown that companies in our case study regions are still at an early stage in terms of strategically dealing with human resources (HR). Many companies also do not have the sufficient size to run their own HR departments. Nonetheless, business associations and multipliers seem to be more aware of the fact that labour shortages will increase in the future. They inform companies about that fact and point to the importance of sound strategies. Companies still rely to a large degree on sourcing staff from the regional labour market, thereby concentrating on the school-business nexus. As school graduate numbers stagnate or decline, the sustainability of such strategies to rely on endogenous labour supply can be questioned.

Given our observations, it is possible to derive policy implications for the way in which projects and initiatives can be designed to facilitate return migration and to benefit regional companies. On the other hand, we can formulate a potential role that companies can play within the wider field of return initiatives. For securing labour supply, a HR strategy focussing on return migrants is one of many other possibilities (e.g. regional focus: school graduates; integration of the elderly; integration of unemployed persons; international focus on immigrants). Return migration, thereby, combines the positive features of both – regional non-migrants and international immigrants. Just like regional non-migrants, returnees consider the case study regions as ‘home’ and they can emotionally relate to it. On the other hand, they can also bring in new knowledge, contacts and experience from abroad. We call for stressing these positive viewpoints on return migrants and encourage the integration of businesses into return initiatives. Based on the findings of this survey, respecting the following four aspects might be helpful for installing a successful return initiative:

- 1) Initiatives should respect the diversity of the individual labour demand of the local economy. Companies needs and expectations vary according to company size, the degree of internationality, the economic sector and its current situation, the current staff and vacancies. As not all sectors and businesses are affected equally from labour shortages, the return initiatives should identify the specific needs of labour markets in their region. For further activities, such as pilot activities in the fields of re-attraction, reintegration and the reinsertion into the local labour market, individual sectors or groups of companies with a certain regional urgency can be picked out for cooperation in the return initiative.

- 2) Local businesses should proactively be addressed and informed about the topic of return migration. In particular, businesses must be convinced that return migration is an important issue in the light of increasing interregional competition for labour in the European Union. The demographic development of the entire European Union suggests that tensions might increase. In this competition, rural and peripheral regions have a competitive disadvantage: they have lost population through emigration to more favourable and mainly metropolitan European regions. Gradually, this might translate into something which can vaguely be described as a ‘regional culture of emigration’. Having said this, we should encourage companies to engage in the field of return migration as it is in their own favour. Here return initiatives can help to raise the awareness about the potential for regional development which is related to return migrants.

- 3) Local businesses should also be involved in the pilot activities of return initiatives. In particular, the field of matching companies’ with return migrants’ needs and expectations is one

of the major tasks for such return initiatives. Therefore, they should primarily ask companies to provide information about their vacant positions and provide a platform from which companies can introduce themselves. While generally all potential measures should leave space for the engagement and active participation of the businesses, mainly the measures relating to the labour market reinsertion call for local businesses' involvement in defining needs and expectations on the regional labour market. In the field of re-attraction measures, businesses could engage in terms of providing their information to the centralised information tools such as websites, telephone hotlines, apps, or ambassadors. To assist return migrants with the installation after return, companies can provide assistance in finding flats/housing, child care, jobs for family members, etc. through circulating information in their regional business networks.

4) Regional differences should also be respected. This includes that return initiatives and their measures should be tailored to the regional situation. In our study, the Usti Region and the Piedmont Region have large difficulties with the border situation to, respectively, Germany and Switzerland. Many people actually do not emigrate; they maintain their residence in the region. Yet, they are lost for the regional labour market, as they commute into regions on the other side of the border where wage levels are higher. In these cases, measures to retain people in their own labour market are necessary. The Lodz, Swietokrzyskie and Mid-Pannon Region have problems with the strength of wage level differences in main destination regions abroad. While many people return to these regions, they often leave again after a while as they do not find appropriate employment. Here, measures to moderate the return in terms of informing about the home regional realities might be more effective for sustainable return than uncontrolled return flows. In the Harz Region and the Görlitz Region, the demographic change is already so advanced – rapidly ageing workforce, decrease in labour supply through school graduates - that these regions must focus on external attraction and regional branding. There needs to be an appropriate mix of measures which reflects the regional situation.

3.7 Conclusions

This report has provided relevant insights into businesses' perspectives on return migration in general and on return migrants as potential workers in particular. We have seen that many of our case study regions are affected by the financial crisis, though in varying forms. This might be more obvious in Poland and Italy and less relevant in Germany or Slovenia, yet all regions show the duality of growing or constantly high unemployment rates in some sectors (low-skilled work, traditional sectors) and growing labour shortages in other sectors (high-skilled positions, new sectors such as IT, export based companies, care sector). Therefore, it seems important to reflect on the potential role of return migrants for tackling problems of regional labour markets.

Remigrants as labour potential: Reflecting the hypotheses

In chapter 3.2 we reviewed the body of literature on return migration and its development potential for the home regions. We have derived four hypotheses which will now be reflected in the light of our empirical findings from the business interviews.

Challenging the Human Capital Hypothesis: Basically, this hypothesis suggests that return migrants acquire new knowledge and skills while they work abroad. Upon their return and employment in the home regional labour market companies can profit from this extra-regional knowledge in order to innovate their processes and products.

Given our findings, we can only partly say that this hypothesis is verified by our case study regions' companies. The overall estimation of return migration is positive, and it is associated with human capital development. However, there are aspects which limit the predictive power of this hypothesis. The benefit of foreign (extra-regional) knowledge is constrained by the respective work experience abroad. Not all jobs done abroad lead to a relevant increase in human capital. On the other hand, not all companies in the home region particularly require foreign work experience, but they ask for the 'right' work experience. This means new knowledge and skills must be relevant to the home regional company, yet it does not always matter where (if abroad or at home) this work experience was acquired. Finally, not all companies operate internationally, so there is no general utility of professional skills from abroad.

A general agreement to this hypothesis can be given when it comes to non-specific (meaning not related to a profession or a job) foreign knowledge and skills. The interviewed companies esteem the value of foreign work experience and return for the development of a person's character and for making migrants more knowledgeable. Return migrants are considered more open-minded, self-confident, and co-operative as they had to orientate and integrate into a foreign environment. The learned mechanisms of adaption and translation are positively evaluated by our interview partners.

Challenging the Local Rootedness Hypothesis: This hypothesis argues that particularly for rural regions, return migrants are a more promising workforce than other immigrants. This is supposed to be due to the fact that they have an emotional attachment to the region and as such are less willing to leave again. Thus, investing in their human capital is more profitable than investing in other migrants who will supposedly leave again after a short while.

Based on our interviews, evidence is mixed for this hypothesis. Only some interview partners shared this idea when comparing returned migrants to other immigrants. These companies

referred to the binding ties of family and friends in the home region. Yet, a large group of companies also argued in the opposite direction. They have the impression return migrants – based on their experience in more attractive regions – will have a high propensity to emigrate again if their frustration increases back home. Having said this, companies are rather cautious in hiring return migrants. They still prefer to focus on non-migrants from their own region.

Challenging the Lower Salaries Hypothesis: The hypothesis says that return migrants are more favourable than other immigrants, as they are more willing to accept lower salaries back at home. This hypothesis, however, has been created based on the specific empirical background of Eastern Germany (cf. MATUSCHEWSKI 2010). In that specific situation there were only two main groups of immigrants to Eastern German regions: Western Germans with high wage expectations, and returning Eastern Germans with lower wage expectations. Western Germans would not accept a degradation of their career and income position, while Eastern Germans would accept it as a trade-off against the increase in social satisfaction back at home.

Based on our interviews in Central European regions, we cannot support this hypothesis. The interviewed companies rather reported that return migrants ask for income premia and higher wages when they look for jobs in their home regions. Yet, as wage levels are below national average in our case study regions, most companies cannot afford to pay the expected wages. As such, return migrants are even unattractive for companies in the home regions.

The wage level differences are even more pronounced between the case study regions and Western European regions of destination than they are for the specific case of German migration between Eastern and Western Germany. Therefore, this counter-argument becomes even stronger, and it can be formulated as an antagonistic hypothesis: 'From a financial point of view, return migrants are less attractive than non-migrants as their expected wages are far above regional average.' This observation supports the counter-positions to the above mentioned hypothesis, which can also be found in the literature.

The general problem in this negative estimation lies in the perspective that an employer takes for looking at return migrants. Companies in our case study region compare them to the regional non-migrant average because other (international) immigrants often do not move to these regions. As such the only group for comparison is the local non-migrant workforce, which accepts what is offered. However, if the companies really need to look for workers outside of their own region, they might perhaps start to compare return migrants to other (international) immigrants. Then the question becomes: are other immigrants available who would accept lower salaries than the return migrants?

An empirical example for such a development is the Görlitz Region. In the Görlitz Region, local Eastern Germans in the health and care sector emigrated from the region to work in high-income regions such as Western Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Scandinavian countries. Even though they are generally willing to go back home, they stay abroad as wage difference exceed a tolerance threshold. The regional health and care industry must not fight for these people to come back, as there is enough labour supply from Czech and Polish neighbouring regions. Nurses and medical doctors are increasingly cross-border commuters. An opposite case would be that of the Harz Region. Situated in the centre of Germany, it had the same problems with emigration of health and care workers, but cannot rely on a geographically given supply of cheap labour. In this context, return migrants could become more relevant again.

Challenging the Easy Integration Hypothesis: This hypothesis argues that return migrants are familiar with the mentality of people in the home region, and as such they are easier to integrate into the wider community and the individual company's team than other immigrants.

The interviews with the companies revealed very few insights concerning this hypothesis. Only some companies have mentioned this issue. This observation points to the fact that the issue of social or mental reintegration is not an issue on which companies reflect. However, the few statements we received concerning it tend to support this hypothesis, while also critically remarking that return migrants personally change during their stay abroad, as does the environment back home. Therefore, further study on this issue is necessary to examine this hypothesis.

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Annex I: Migrant Survey - Country Reports

Definitions

- Emigrants: People who currently live abroad.
- Permanent Emigrants: Emigrants without considerations to return to their home country.
- Potential Returnees: Emigrants with considerations to return to their home country.
- Returnees: People who returned to their home country after they lived abroad for at least 6 months.
- Region Returnees: Returnees who have moved back into their home region.

- Country Returnees: Returnees who have moved back to another region than their home region.

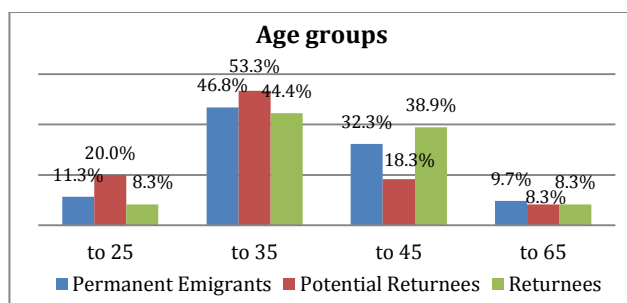
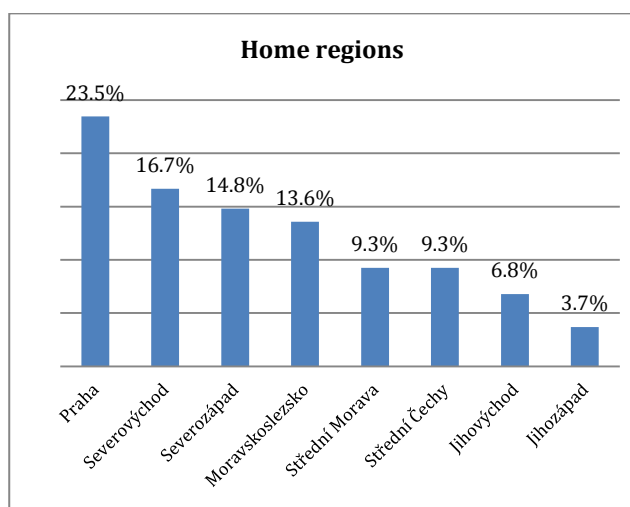
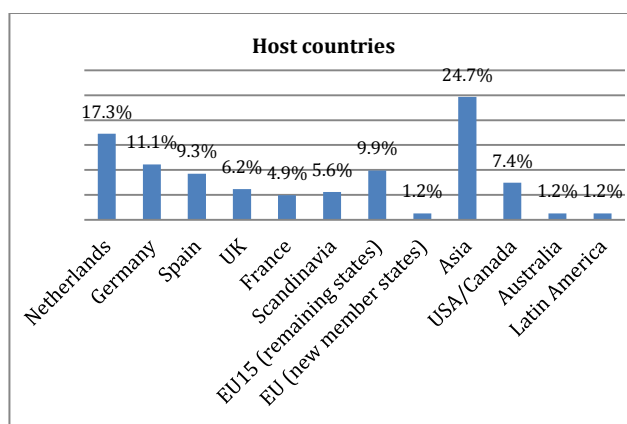
Countries

- EU15: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.
- EU (new member states): Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.
- Remaining Europe: Countries on the European continent but outside of the European Union

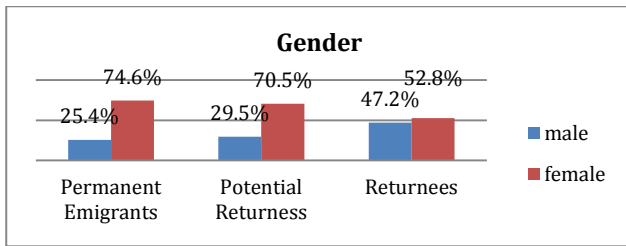
Czech Republic

Populations, geography, key descriptors

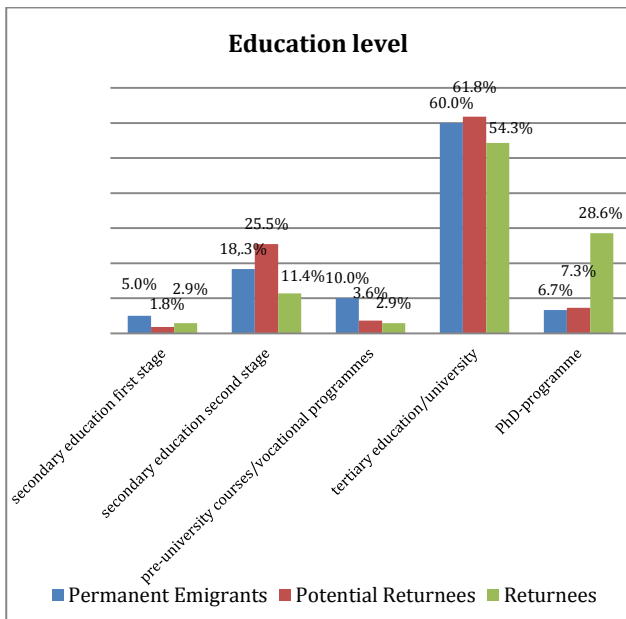
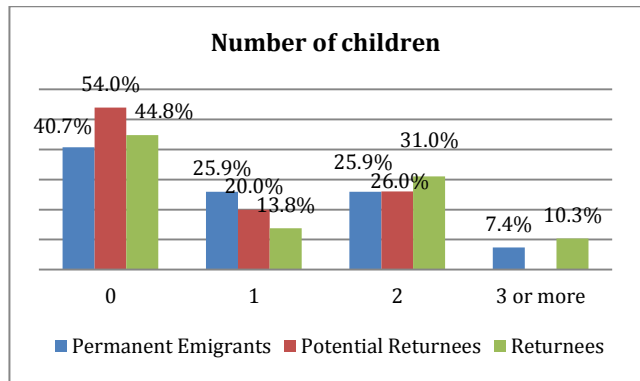
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	126	77.8	Potential Returnees	62	49.6
			Permanent Emigrants	63	50.4
Returnees	36	22.2	Region Returnees	31	86.1
			Country Returnees	5	13.9
Total	162	100.0			



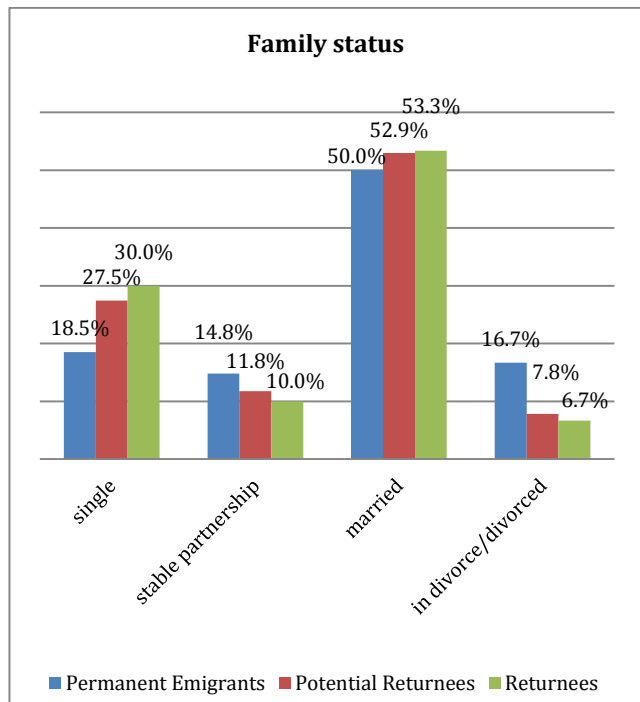
- There is no statistically significant difference among the three groups concerning the age (mean values: Permanent Emigrants 34.7; Potential Returnees: 33.2; Returnees: 34.8 years).



➤ The Czech sample consists of more women than men (~68% women vs. ~32% men). For returnees the ratio is nearly balanced.



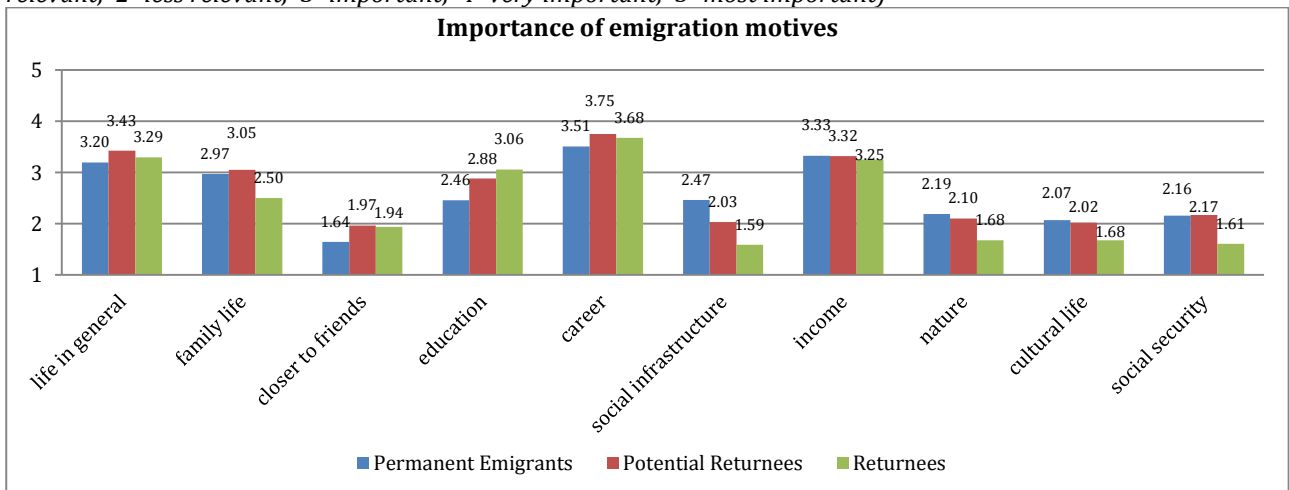
➤ There is a statistically significant difference concerning education level → Returnees have a higher education level than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants.



Thematic analysis

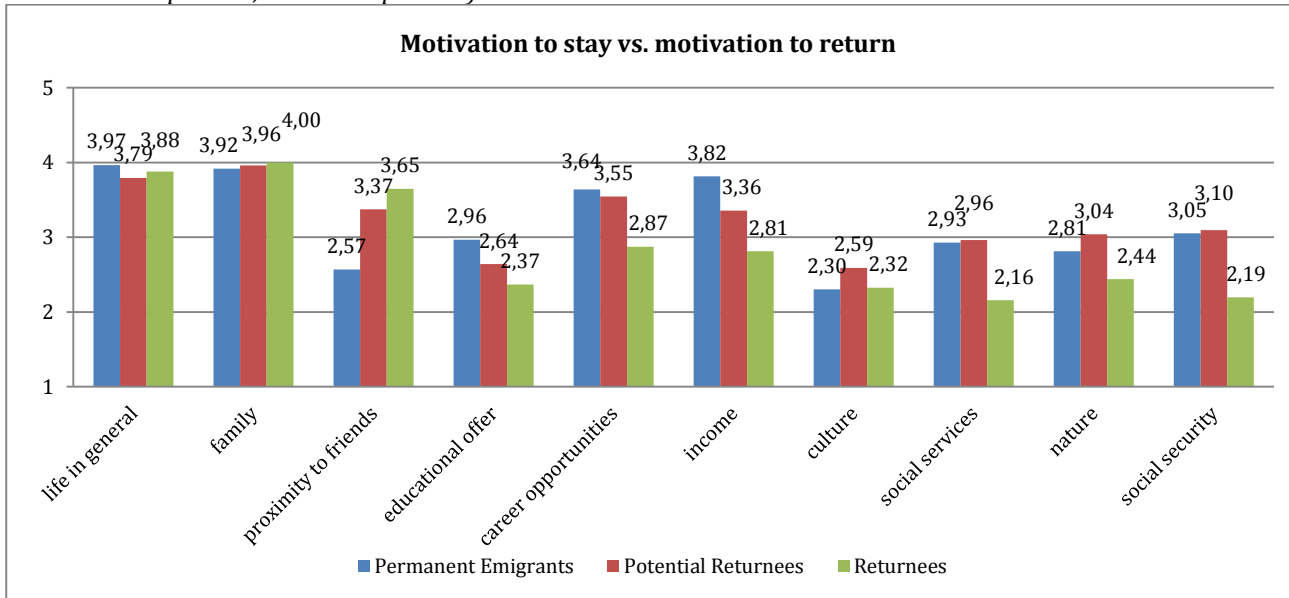
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?" (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



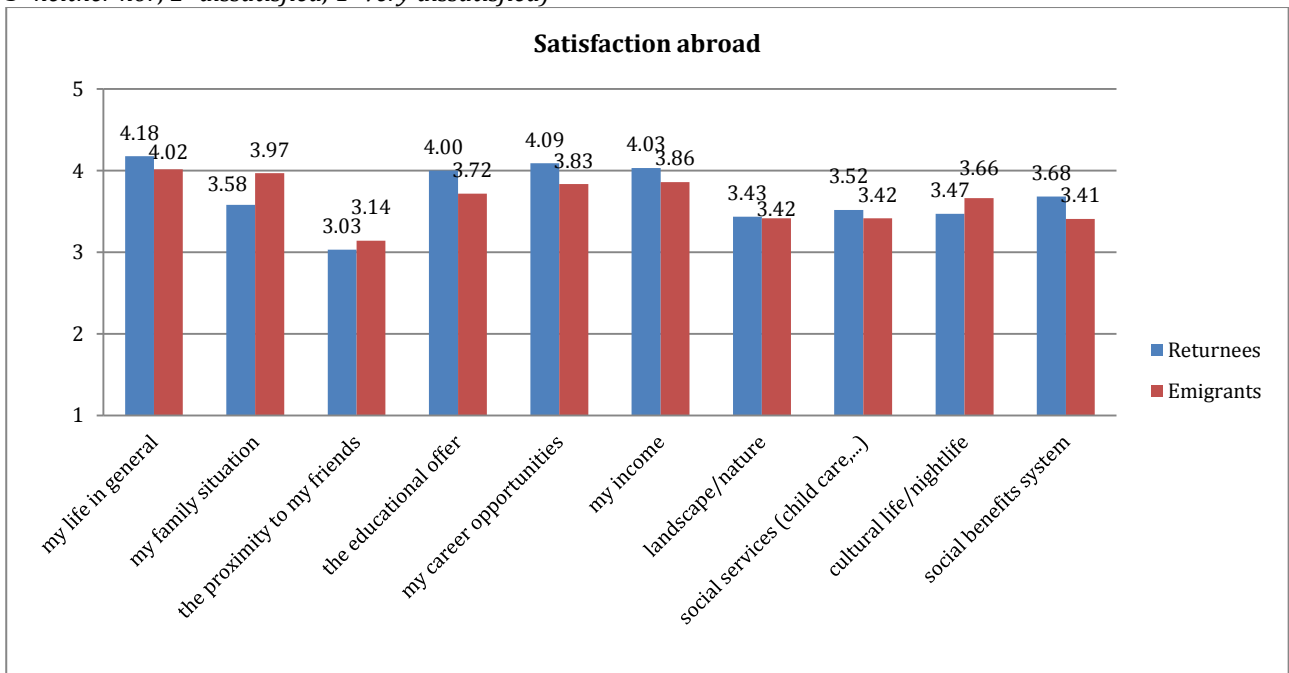
- For all three groups the career opportunities was the main factor influencing their decision to emigrate. There are statistically significant differences concerning the motives social infrastructure and social security → For Returnees these aspects were less important.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to the Czech Republic?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to the Czech Republic?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



- For all three groups, life in general and family were the most important factors in the decision-making process. Regarding the other factors, there are obvious differences among the groups. Statistically significant: proximity to friends → more important for Returnees; educational offer, career opportunities, income, social services, social security → more important for Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees.

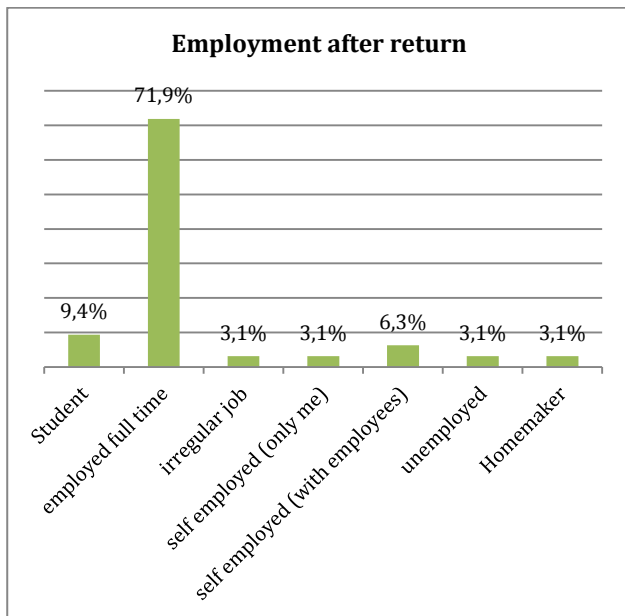
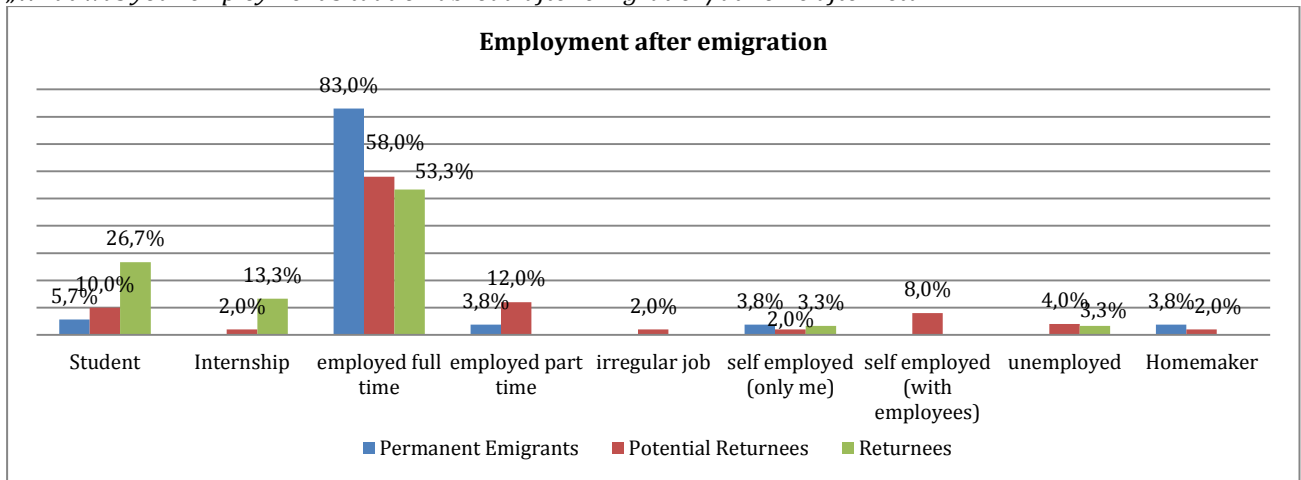
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5=very satisfied; 4=satisfied; 3=neither nor; 2=dissatisfied; 1=very dissatisfied)



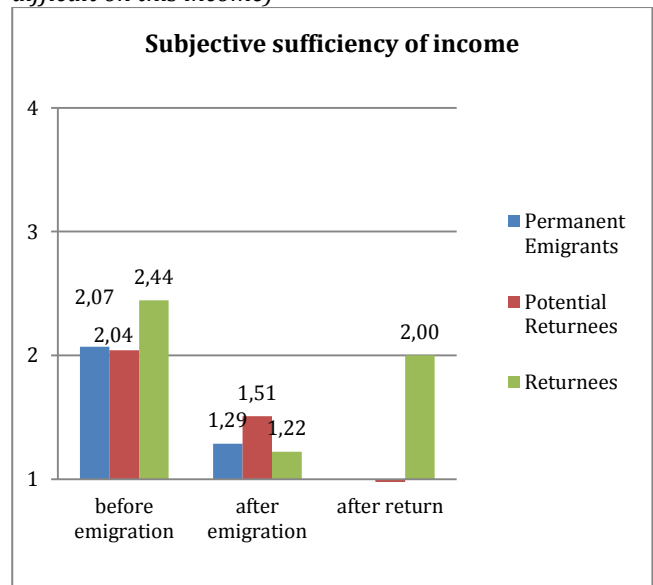
- Returnees were less satisfied with their family situation during their stay abroad.

Employment and Income

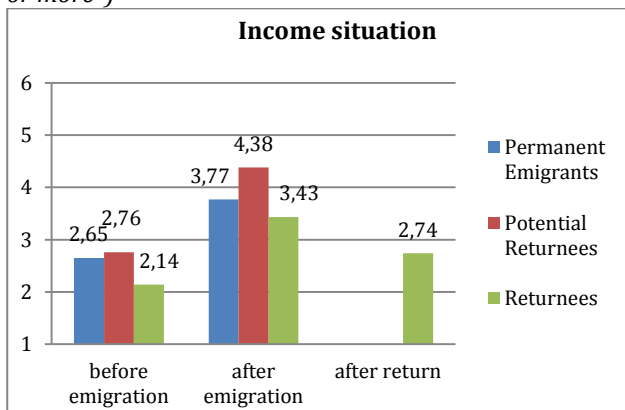
„What was your employment situation abroad after emigration/at home after return?“



„How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (1=living comfortable on this income; 2= coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



„What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (Mean values; 1=<500€“; 2=“500-999€“; 3=“1000-1999€“; 4=“2000-2999€“; 5=“3000-4999€“; 6=“5000€ or more“)



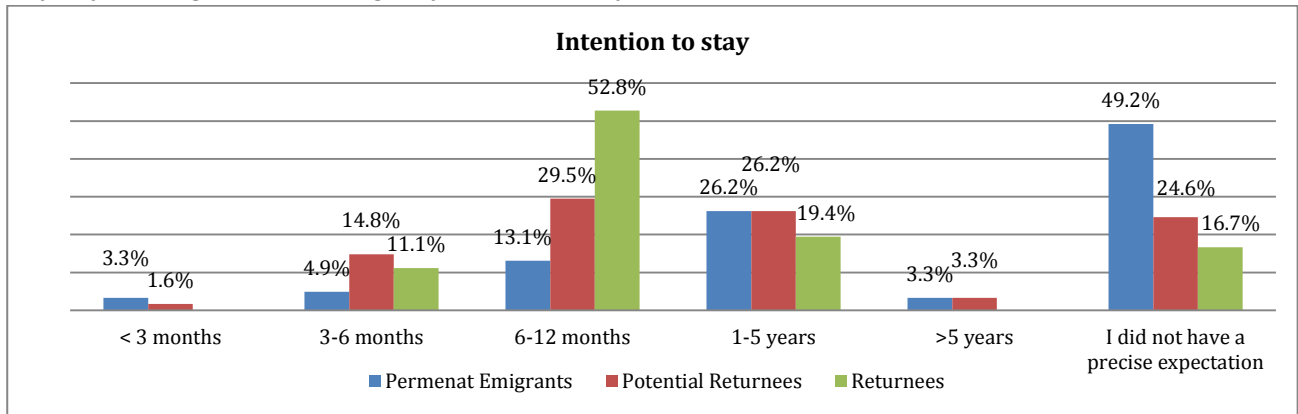
- Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees gained a higher income than Returnees before and after emigration. Although Returnees lived most comfortable abroad, they moved back.

„While being abroad, were you working in a relatively/completely new professional field compared to your previous jobs or education?“

yes	40%	no	60%
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Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

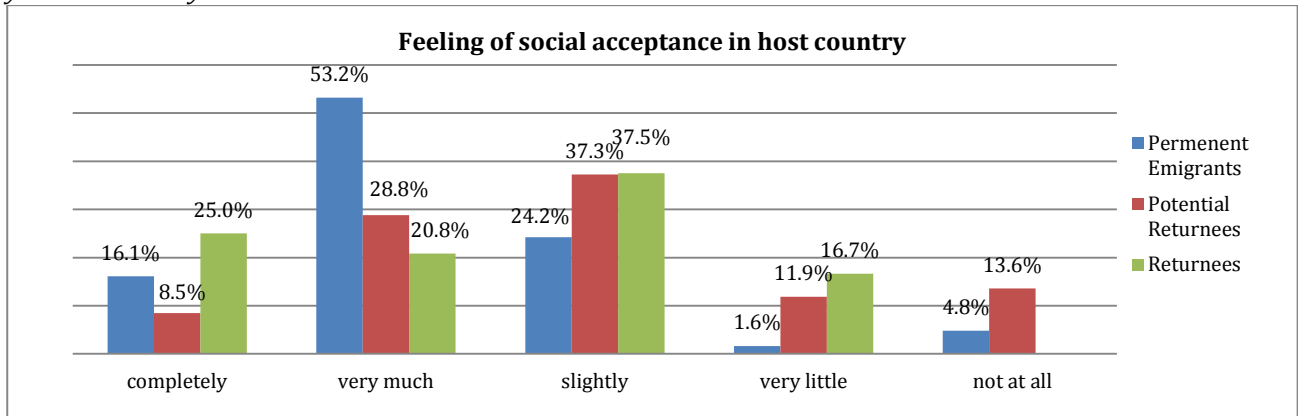
"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"



- Statistically significant: Permanent Emigrants were far more vague in their intended length of stay. The majority of the Returnees planned to stay abroad between 6 and 12 months.

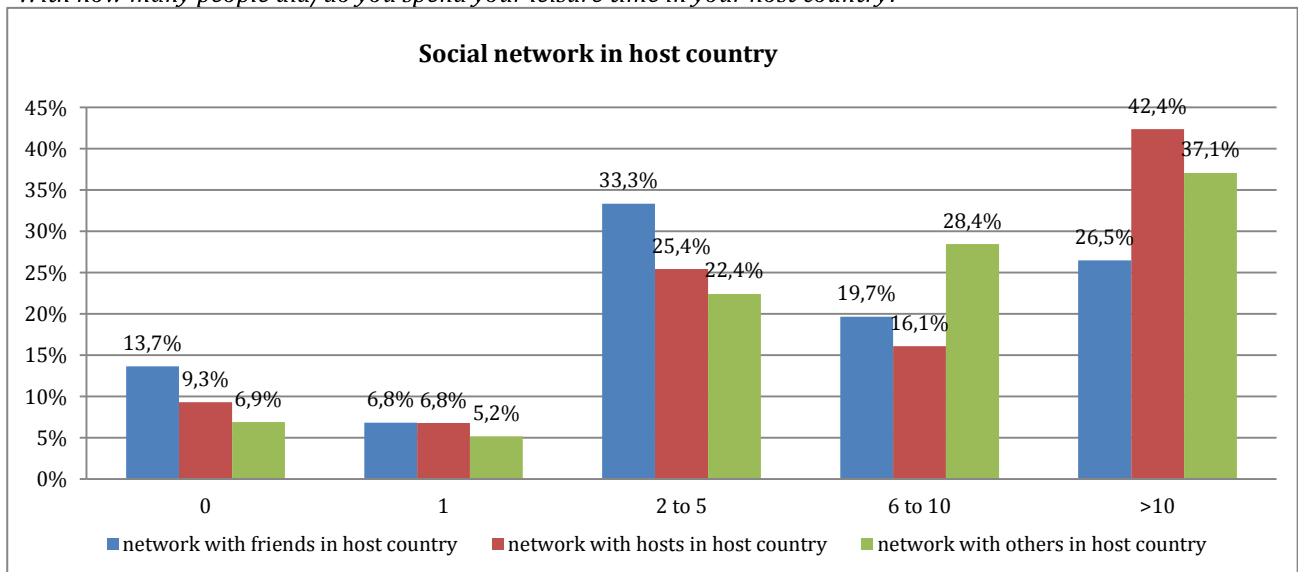
Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"

Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"

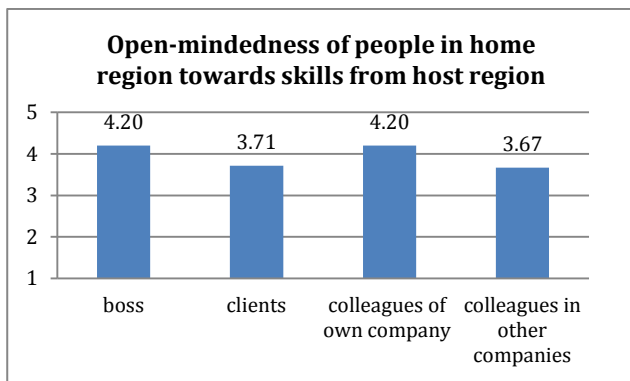
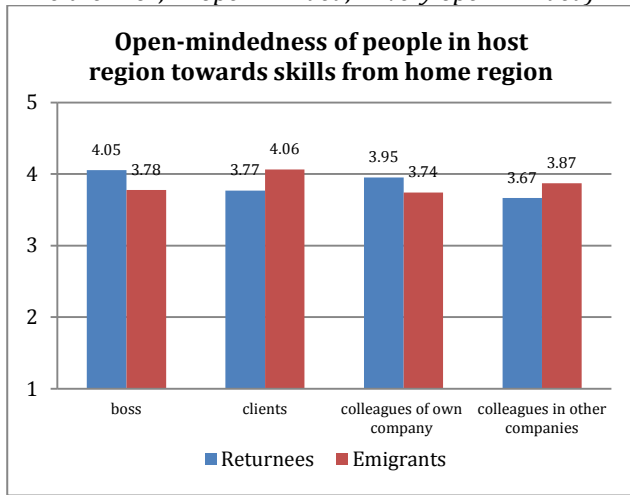


- There are significant differences between Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees/Returnees → Permanent Emigrants feel more accepted in their host country (~69% completely or very much) as opposed to the way Potential Returnees (~37%) and Returnees (~46%).

"With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?"



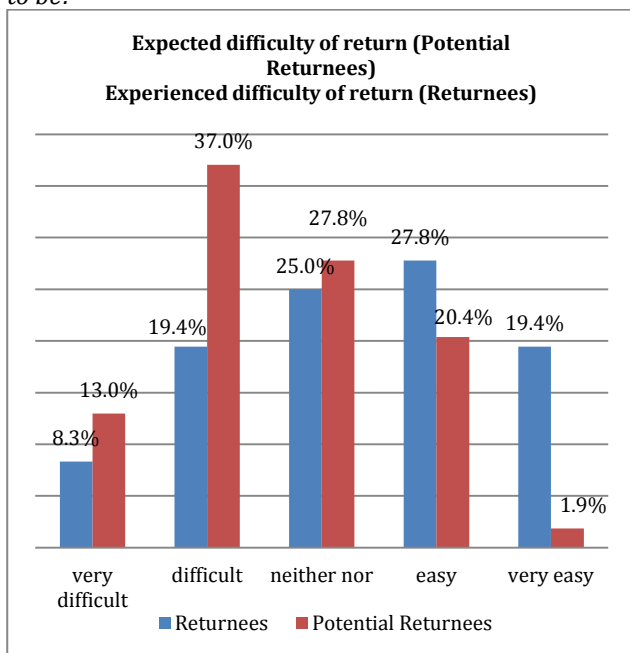
“How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?” (mean values; 1=very rejecting; 2=rejecting; 3=neither nor; 4=open-minded; 5=very open-minded)



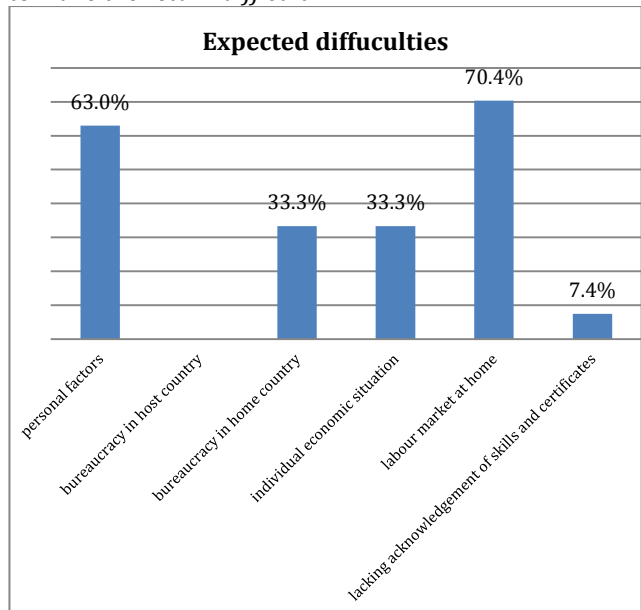
Obstacles of a (potential) return

Returnees: “How easy was it for you to return home?”

Potential Returnees: “How easy do you expect the return to be?”

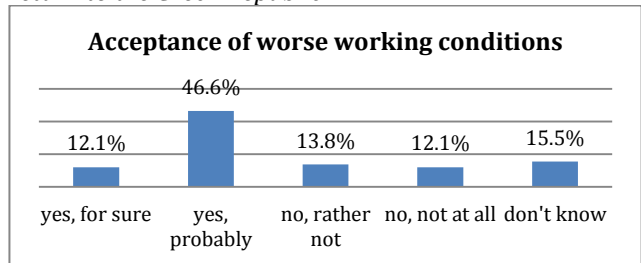


Potential Returnees (those who expect the return to be very difficult or difficult): “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”



➤ Potential Returnees expect larger difficulties in returning than Returnees actually reported. The labour market at home and personal factors are the main expected difficulties of a potential return.

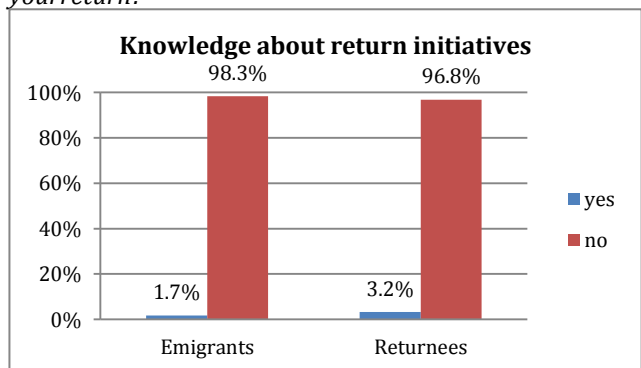
Potential Returnees: “Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realize your wish to return to the Czech Republic?”



Potential Returnees: “Have you already made plans for your return?”

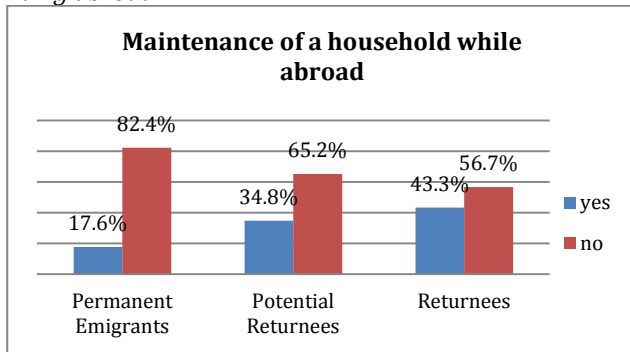
yes	81.8%	no	18.2%
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“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency in the Czech Republic assisting your return?”



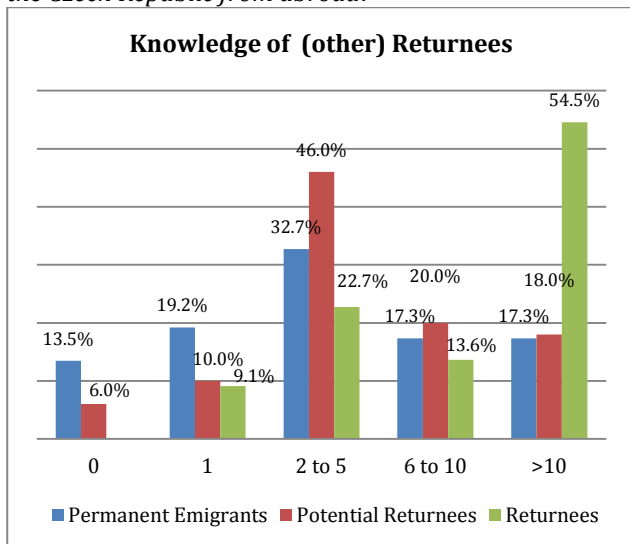
Social factors and the decision process

Returnees: "I maintained a household in the Czech Republic while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household in the Czech Republic while living abroad."

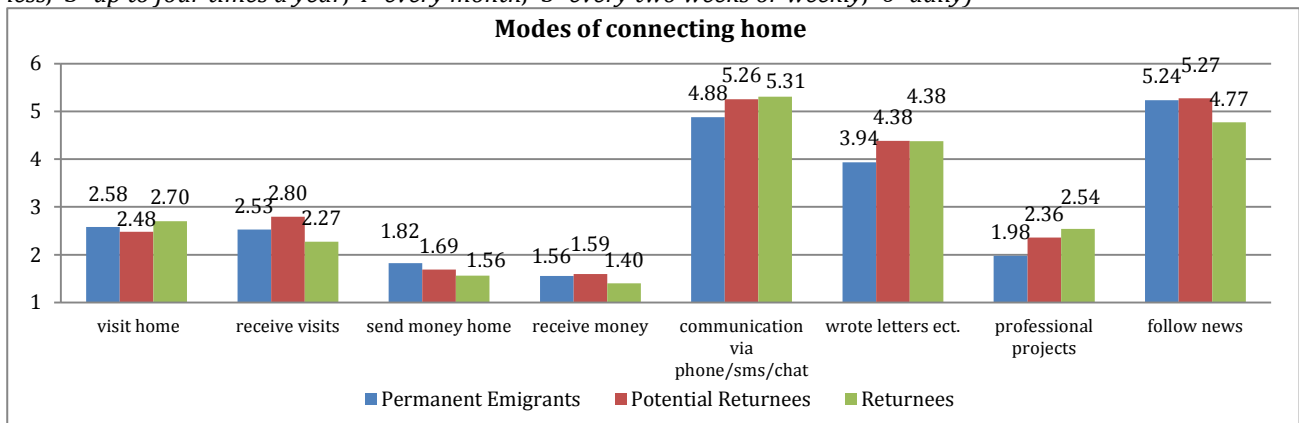


- There is a statistically significant difference among the groups → Returnees had maintained a household more often in the Czech Republic during the stay abroad.

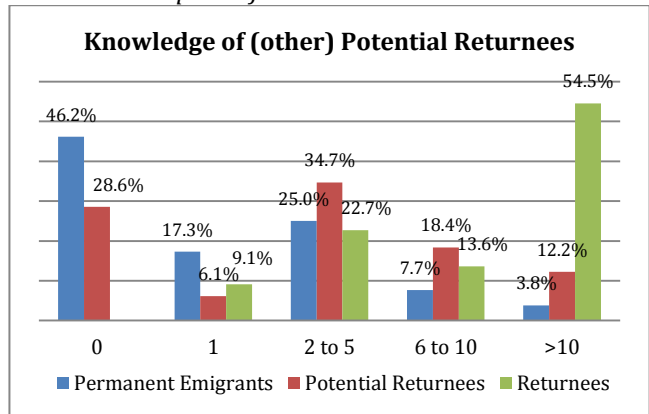
"How many people do you know that have returned to the Czech Republic from abroad?"



"How did/do you connect to the Czech Republic during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)

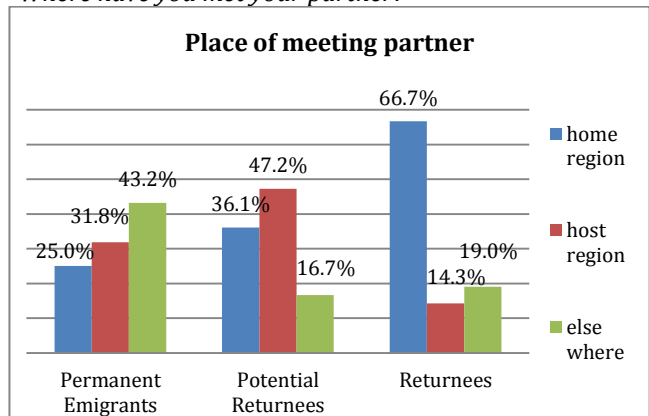


"How many people do you know who consider returning to the Czech Republic from abroad?!"



- There are the highest statistically significant differences among the groups. Returnees know more other Returnees and Potential Returnees. Almost half of all Permanent Emigrants know nobody who currently lives abroad and is willing to return to the Czech Republic.

"Where have you met your partner?"

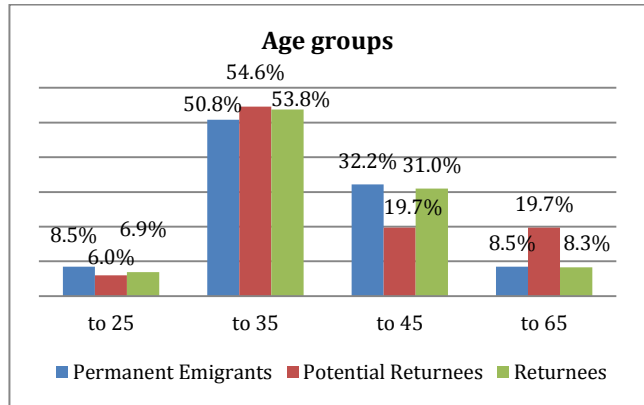


- Statistically significant: Returnees met their current partner more often in the home region than Potential Returnees/Potential Returnees.

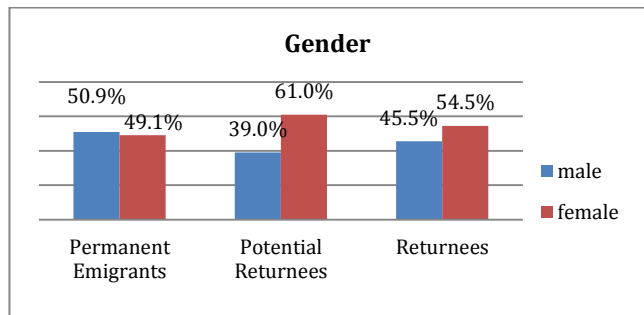
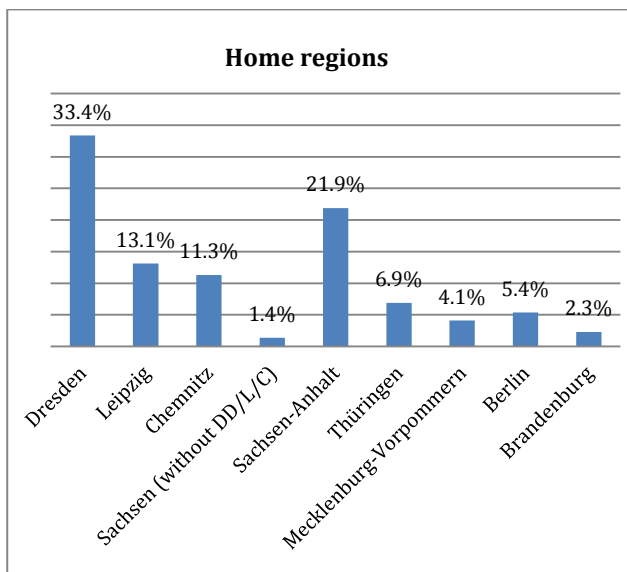
Eastern Germany

Populations, geography, key descriptors

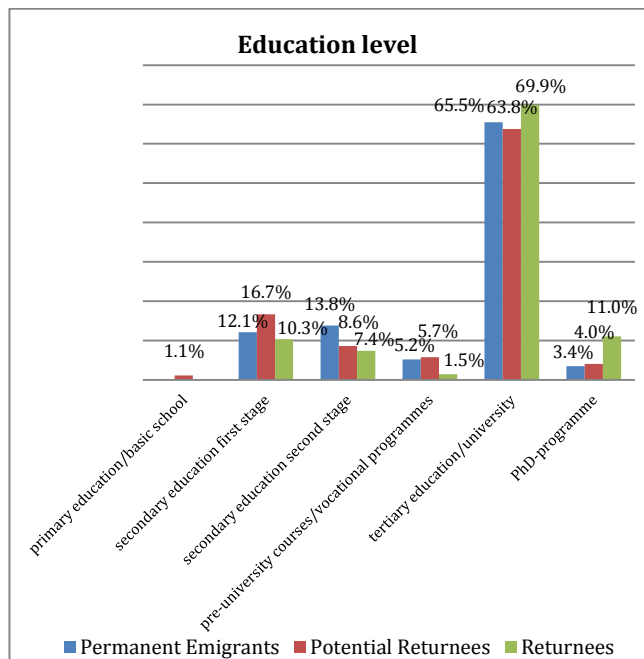
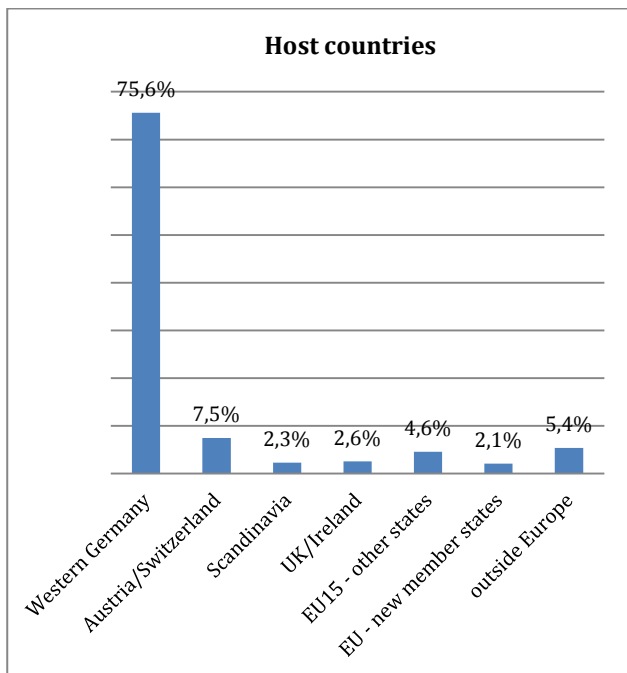
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	244	63	Potential Returnees	185	75.8
			Permanent Emigrants	59	24.2
Returnees	145	37	Region Returnees	107	73.8
			Country Returnees	38	26.2
Total	389	100			



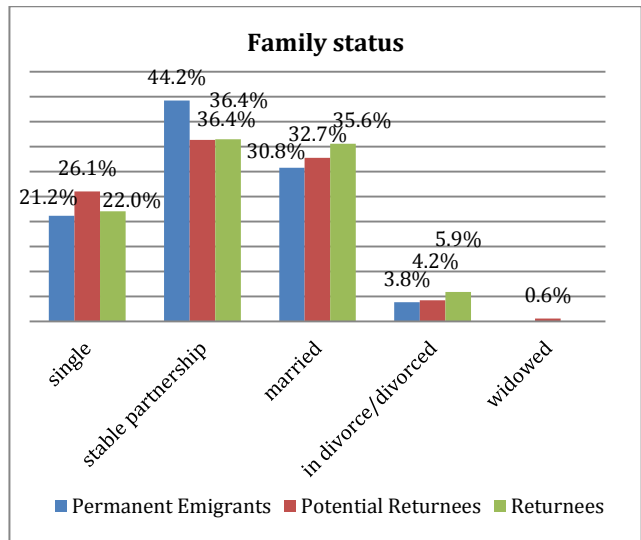
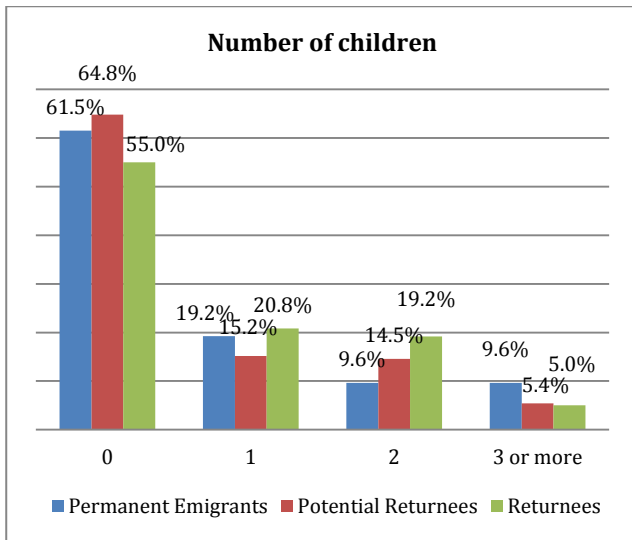
➤ Returnees are not significantly younger than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants.



➤ The Eastern German sample consists of more women than men (~57% women vs. ~43% men).



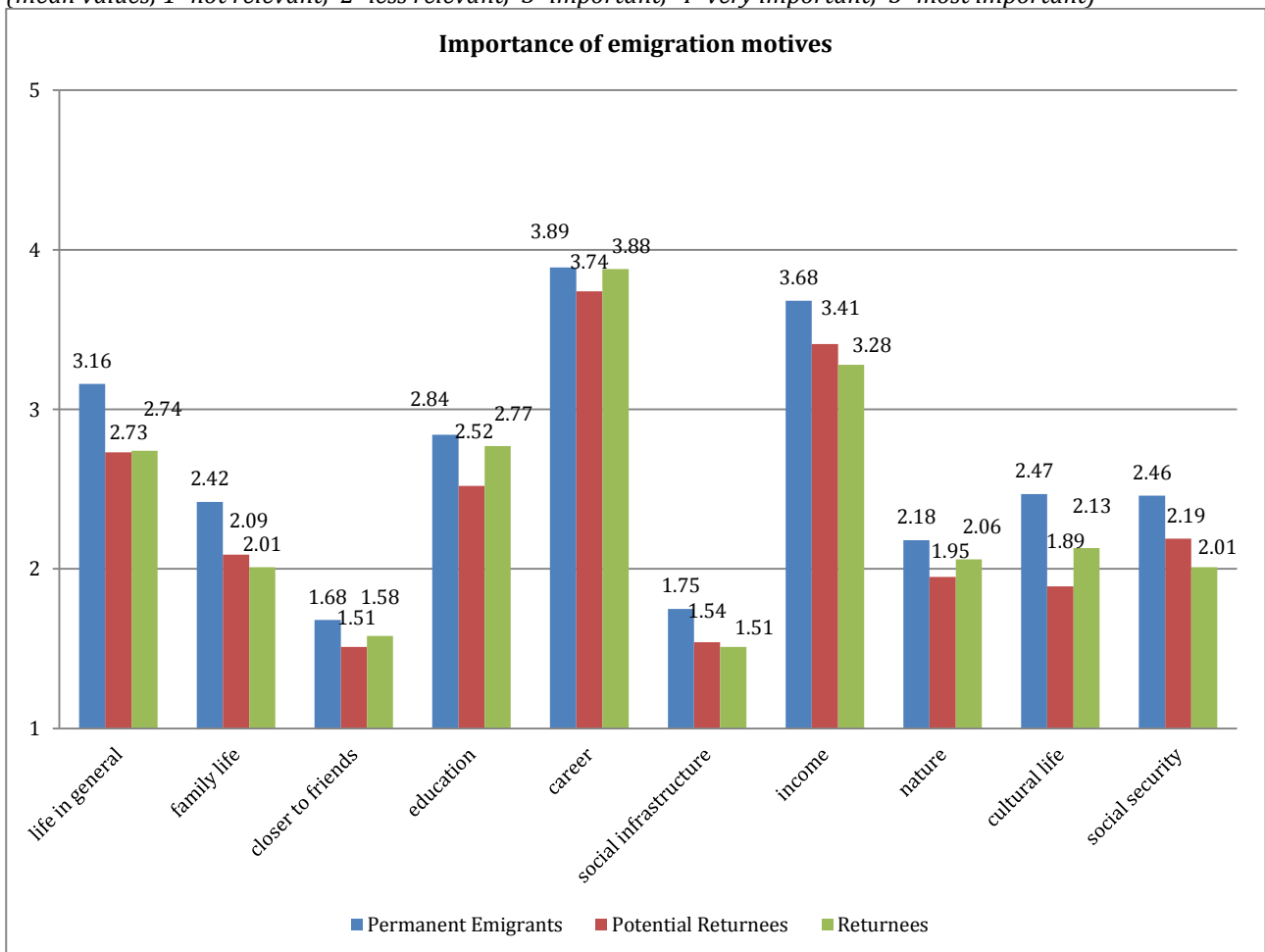
➤ There are significant differences concerning the education level → Returnees have a higher level than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants.



Thematic analysis

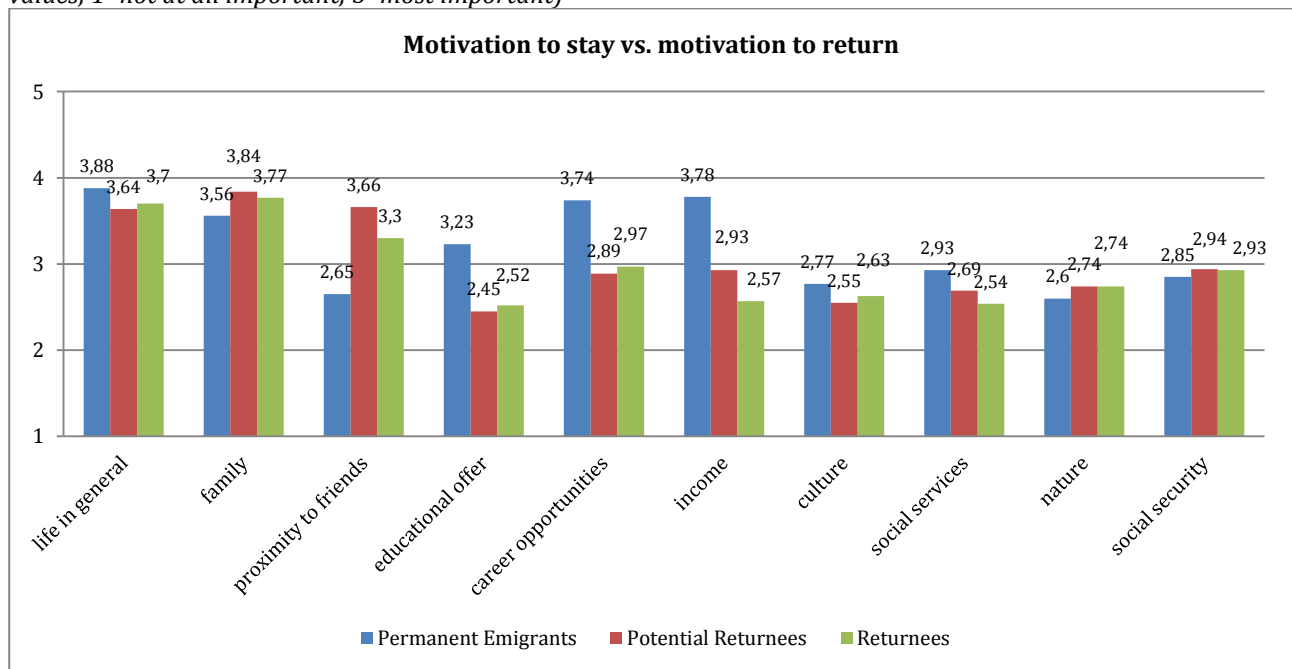
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad/ to Western Germany?"
(mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



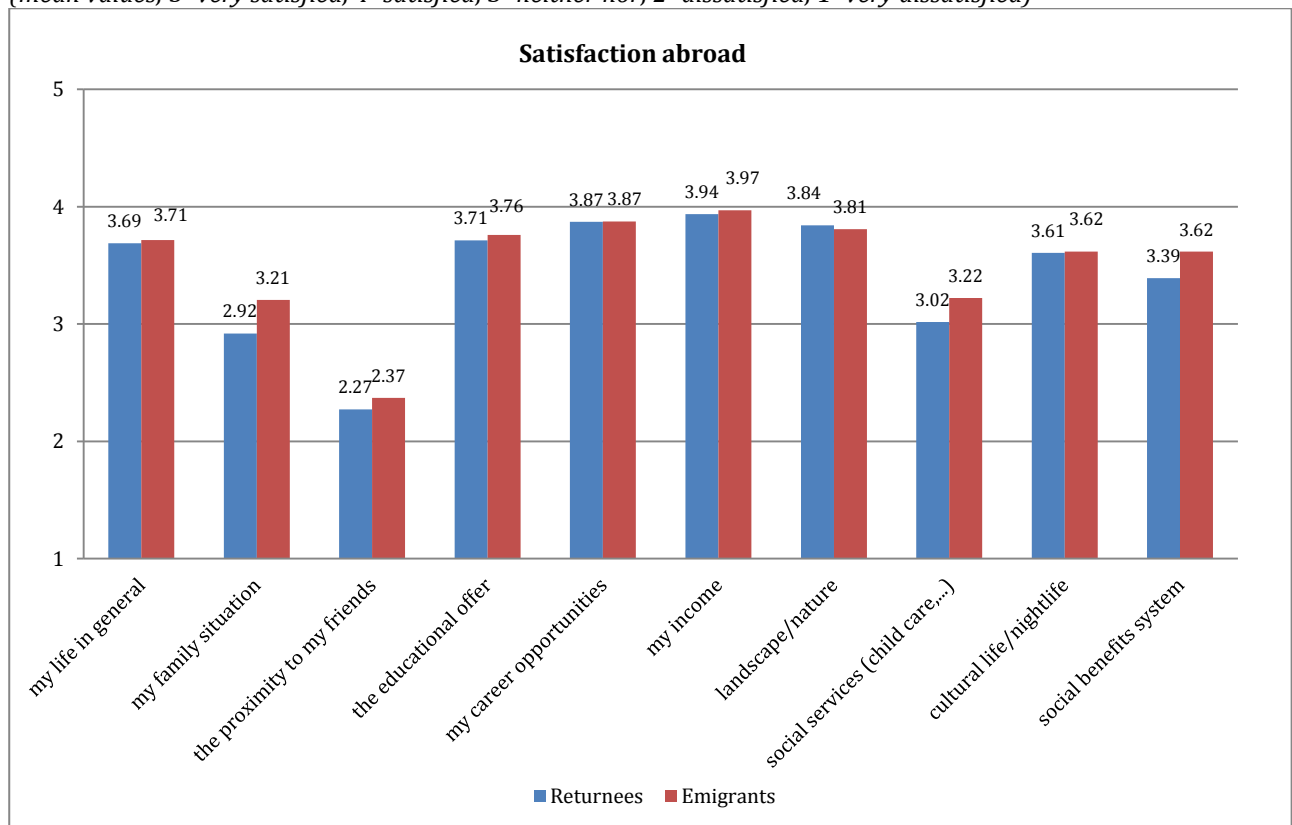
- For all three groups: the most important motives to emigrate were the career opportunities and the improvement of the financial situation.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to Eastern Germany?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to Eastern Germany?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad/in Western Germany?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



➤ For Permanent Emigrants life in general, the career opportunities and income were the most important aspects for their decision to stay abroad/ in Western Germany. For Potential Returnees and Returnees the proximity to friends and family were important aspects for decision-making.

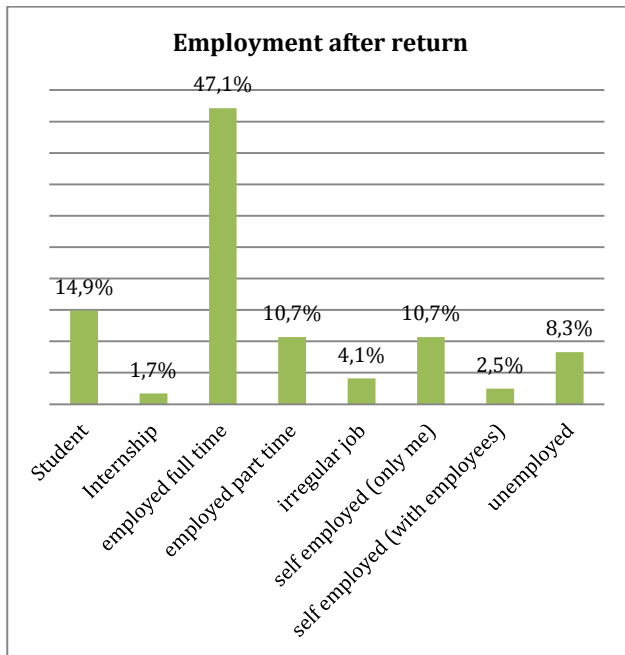
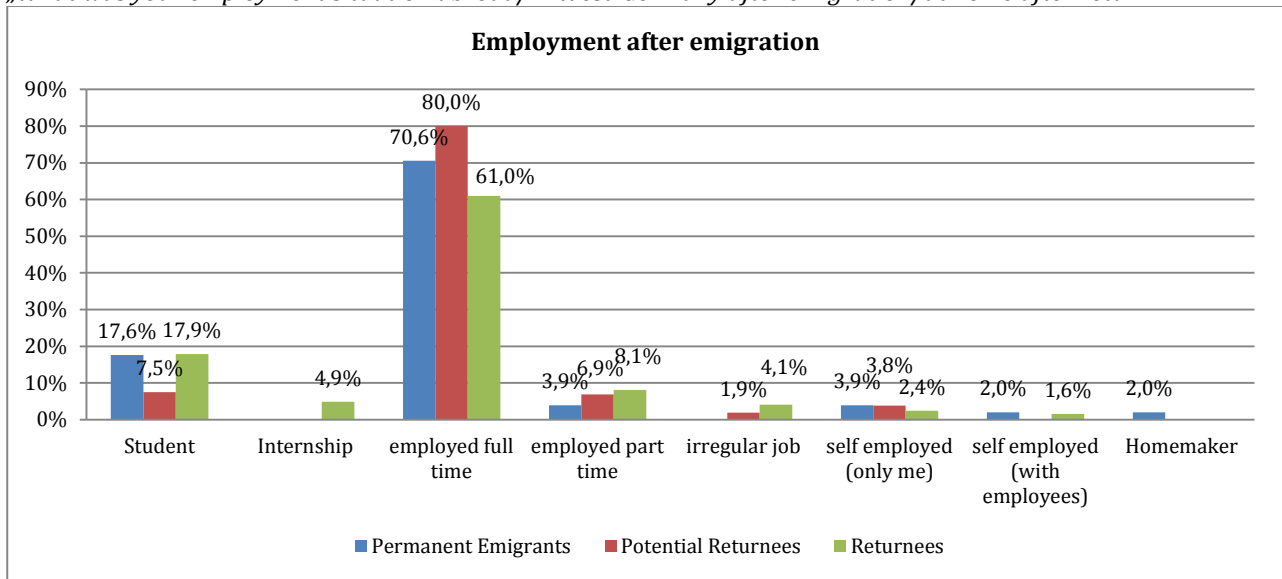
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad/in Western Germany once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad/in Western Germany?" (mean values; 5=very satisfied; 4=satisfied; 3=neither nor; 2=dissatisfied; 1=very dissatisfied)



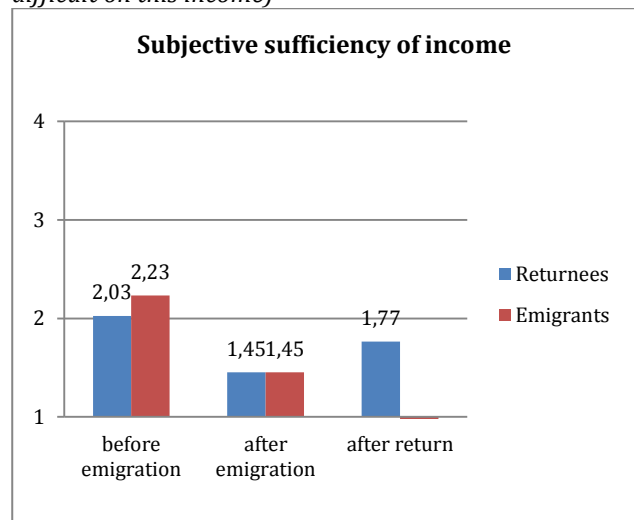
➤ Emigrants were statistically significantly more satisfied with the family situation and the social benefits system in the host country/in Western Germany.

Employment and Income

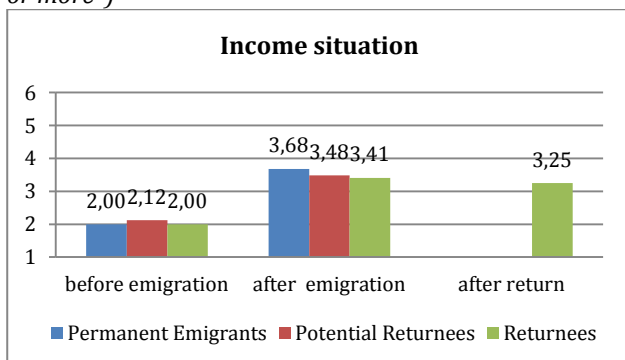
„What was your employment situation abroad/in West-Germany after emigration/at home after return?“



„How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (1=living comfortable on this income; 2= coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



„What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (Mean values; 1="<500€"; 2="500-999€"; 3="1000-1999€"; 4="2000-2999€"; 5="3000-4999€"; 6="5000€ or more")



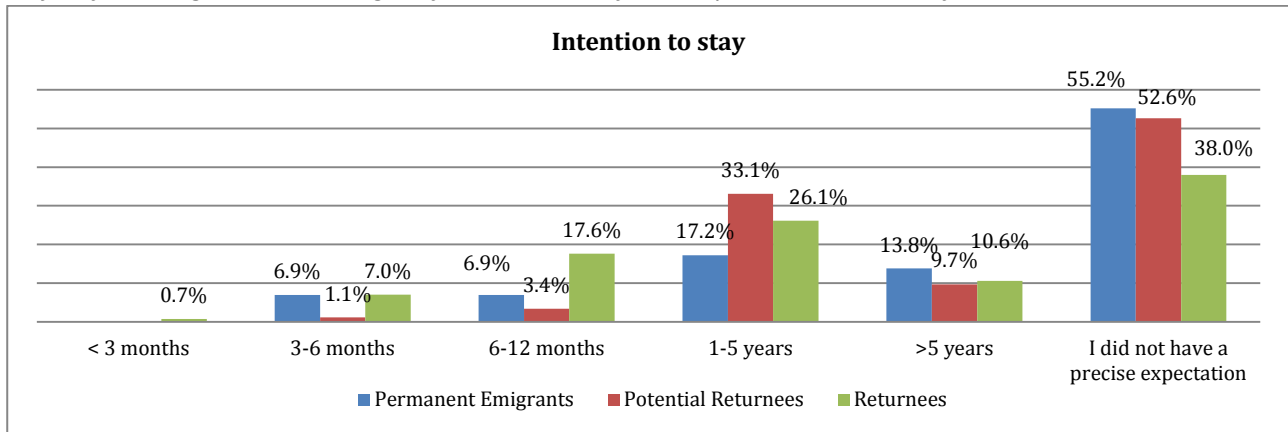
- Both real and subjective income reveals no statistically significant differences between the groups.

„While being abroad/in West-Germany, were you working in a relatively/completely new professional field compared to your previous jobs or education?“

Response	Percentage
yes	36,4%
no	63,6%

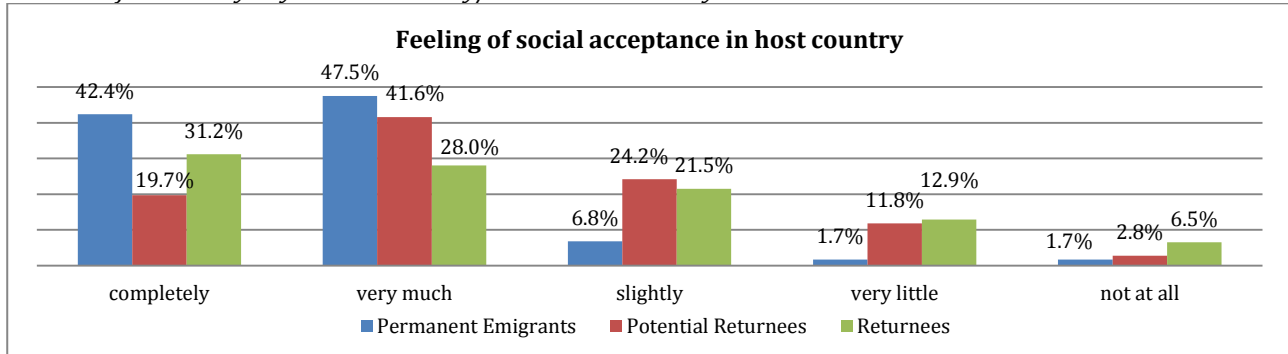
Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

“Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad/in Western Germany?”



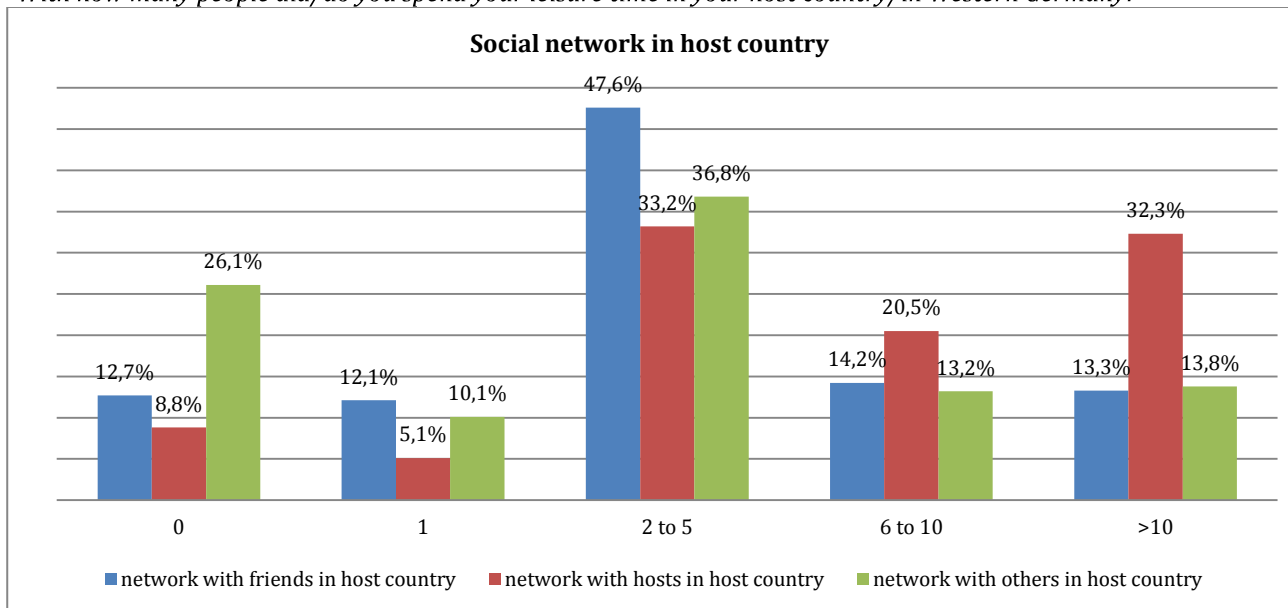
- Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees were more vague in their intended length of stay abroad/in Western Germany. More than the half of the Returnees intended to stay five years or less.

Returnees: “How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad/in Western Germany? Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: “How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country/in Western Germany?”

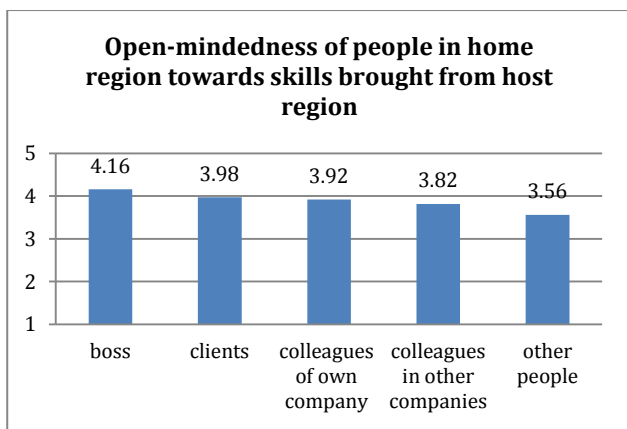
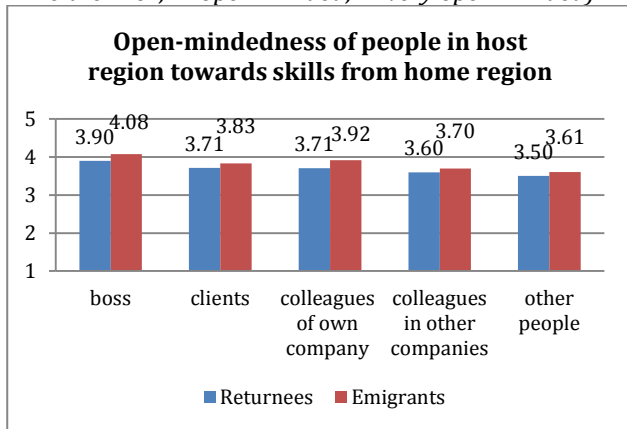


- There are significant differences among the three groups → Permanent Emigrants feel more accepted in host country/Western Germany (~90% completely or very much) than Potential Returnees feel and Returnees felt (only 59% felt completely or very much accepted).

“With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country/in Western Germany?”



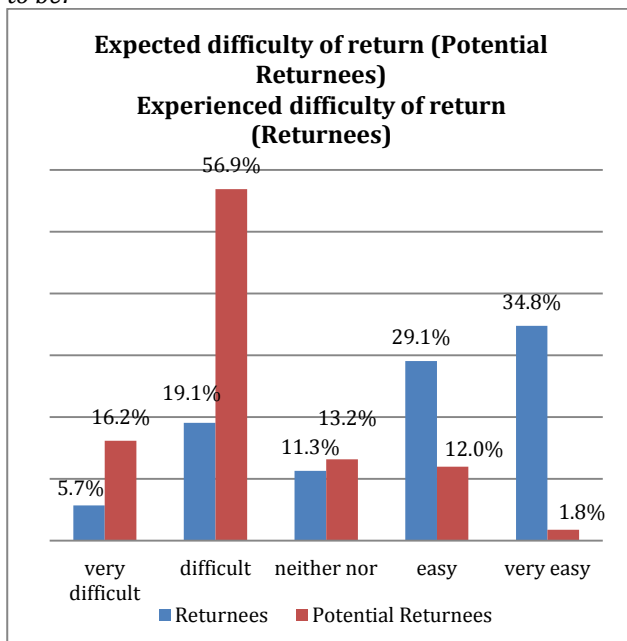
“How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?” (mean values; 1=very rejecting; 2=rejecting; 3=neither nor; 4=open-minded; 5=very open-minded)



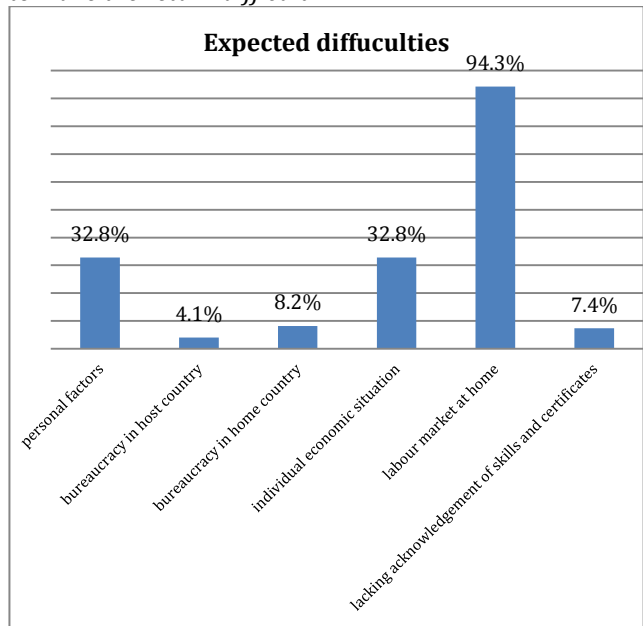
Obstacles of a (potential) return

Returnees: “How easy was it for you to return home?”

Potential Returnees: “How easy do you expect the return to be?”

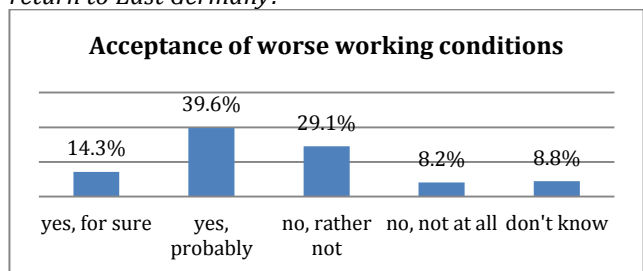


Potential Returnees (those who expect the return to be very difficult or difficult): “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”



➤ The labour market at home in Eastern Germany is expected as the aspect which makes a potential return most difficult.

Potential Returnees: “Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realise your wish to return to East Germany?”

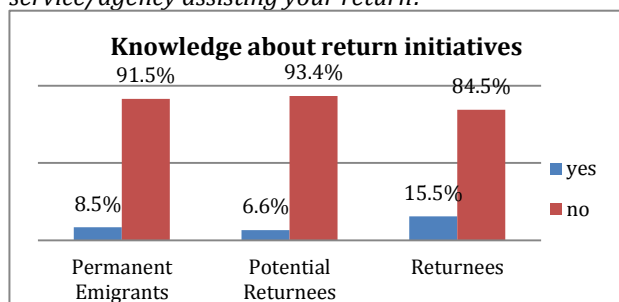


➤ ~54% of the Potential Returnees would also accept worse working conditions in order to realise their wish to return.

Potential Returnees: “Have you already made plans for your return?”

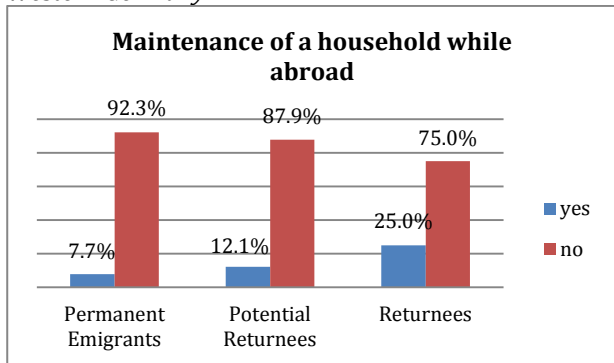
yes	42.7%	no	57.3%
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“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?”

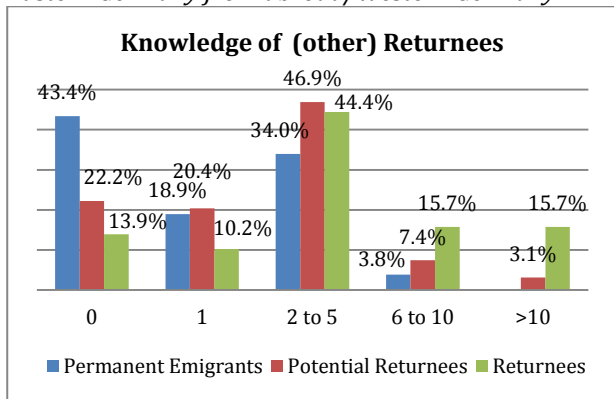


Social factors and the decision process

Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad/in Western Germany"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad/in Western Germany."

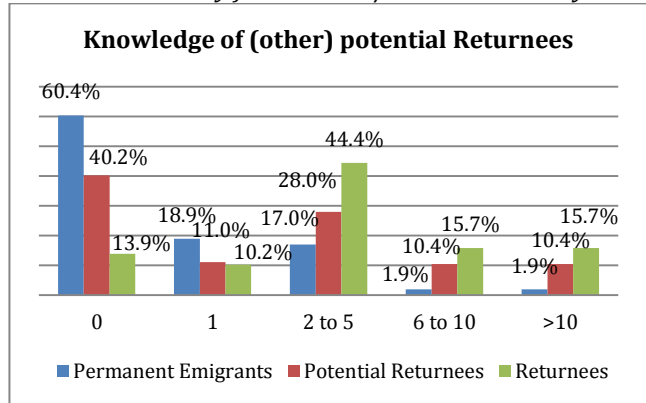


"How many people do you know that have returned to Eastern Germany from abroad/Western Germany?"



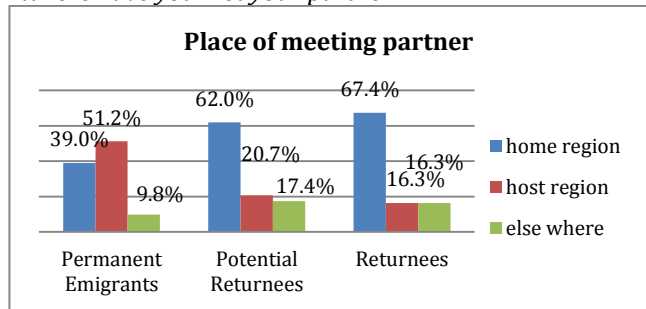
- There is a high statistically significant difference among the groups → Returnees know more other Returnees.

"How many people do you know who consider returning to Eastern Germany from abroad/Western Germany?"



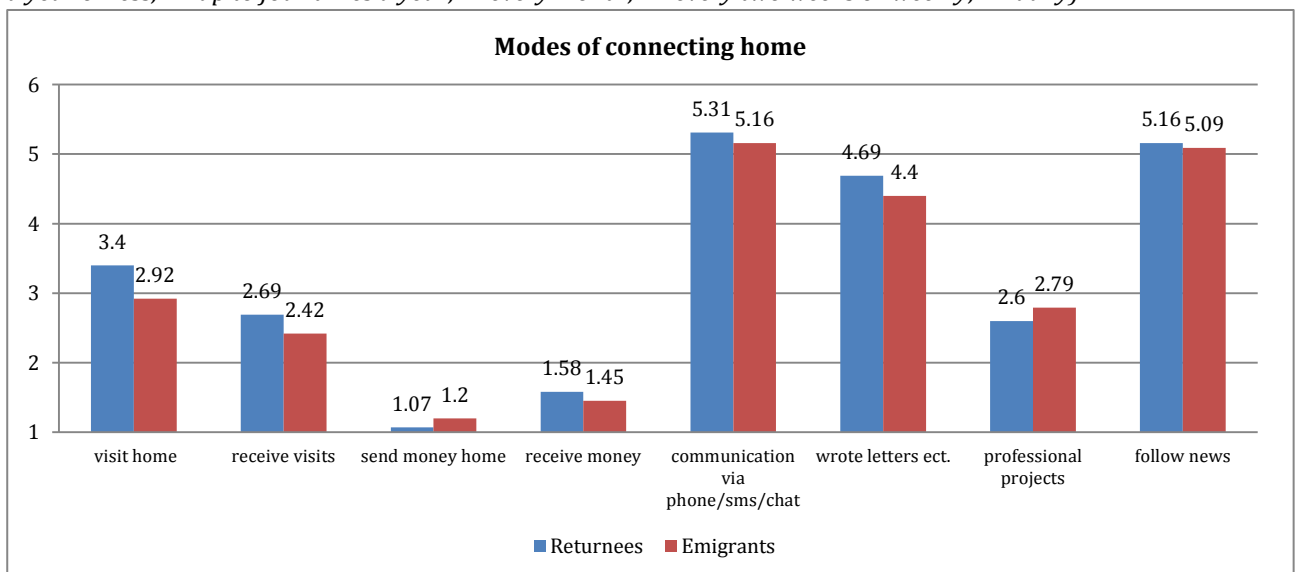
- Potential Returnees and Returnees know compared to Permanent Emigrants statistically significant more Potential Returnees.

"Where have you met your partner?"



- There is a statistically significant difference between the groups concerning the place of meeting their partner. Returnees (~67%) and Potential Returnees (62%) having met their current partner most often in the home region.

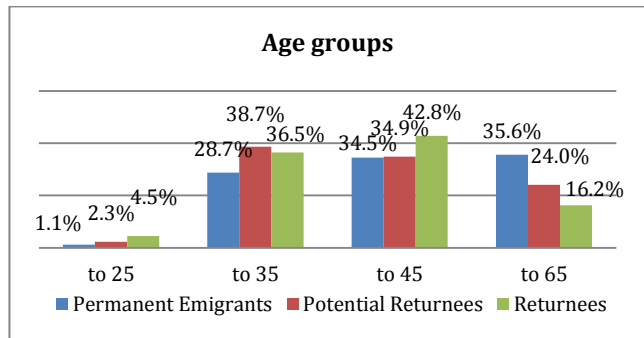
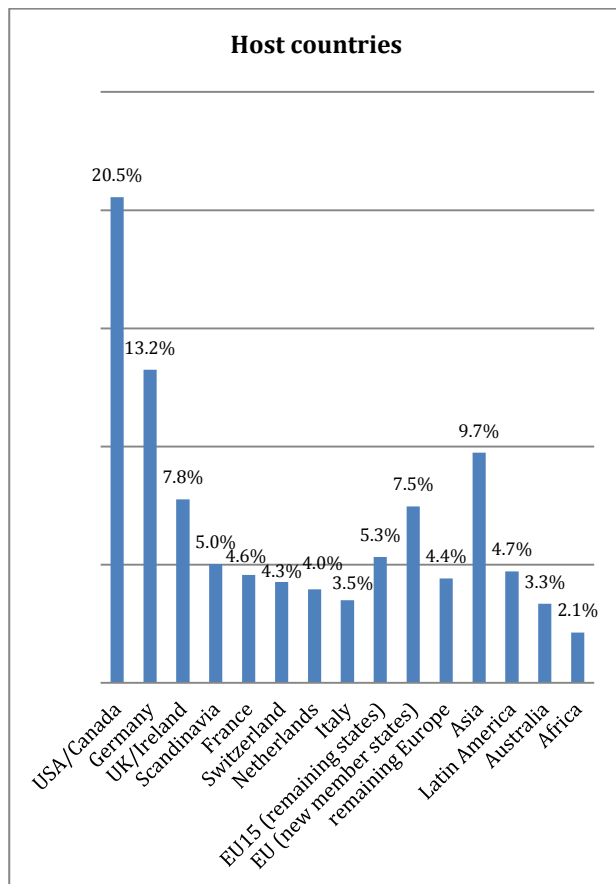
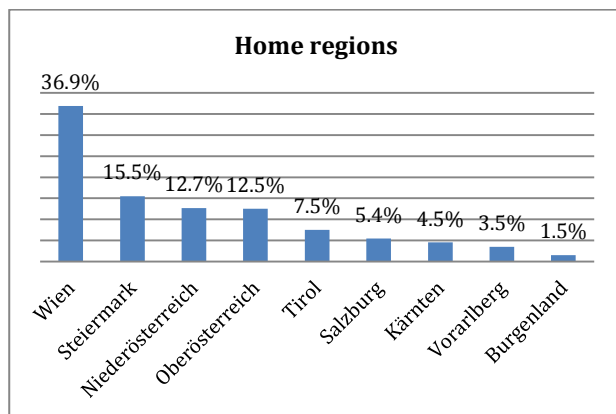
"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad/in Western Germany?" (mean values; 1=never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)



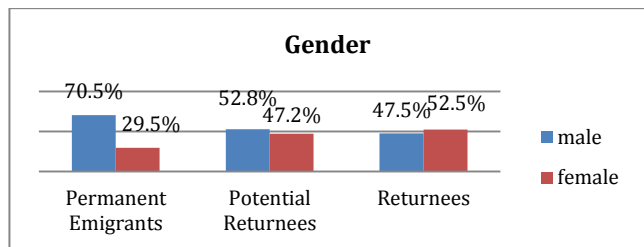
Austria

Populations, geography, key descriptors

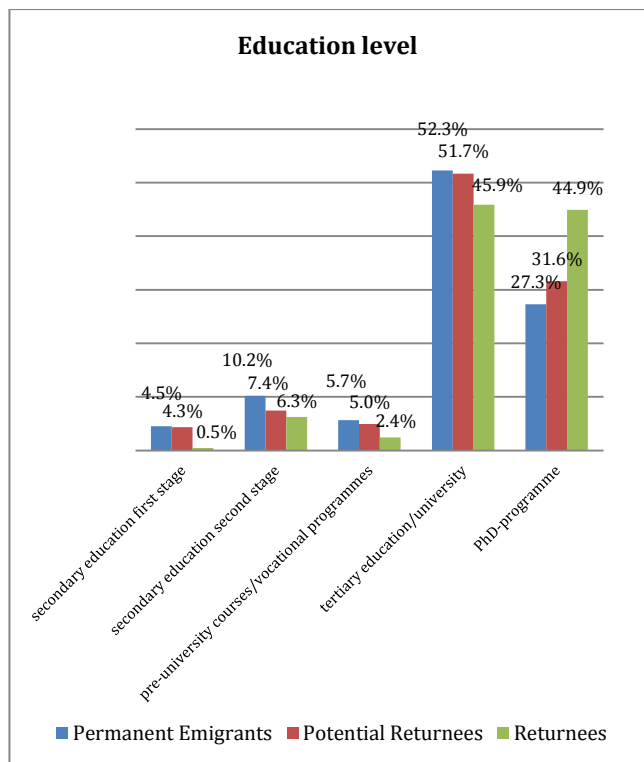
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	439	66.3	Potential Returnees	344	75.8
			Permanent Emigrants	95	24.2
Returnees	223	33.7	Region Returnees	179	80.3
			Country Returnees	44	19.7
Total	662	100			



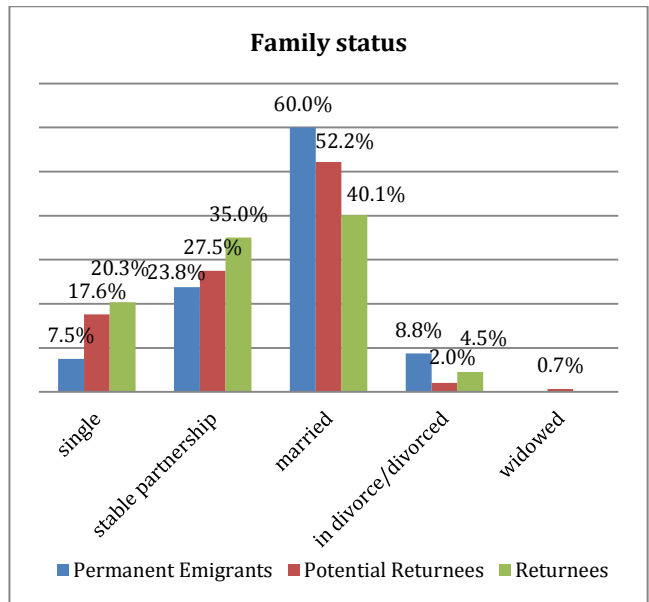
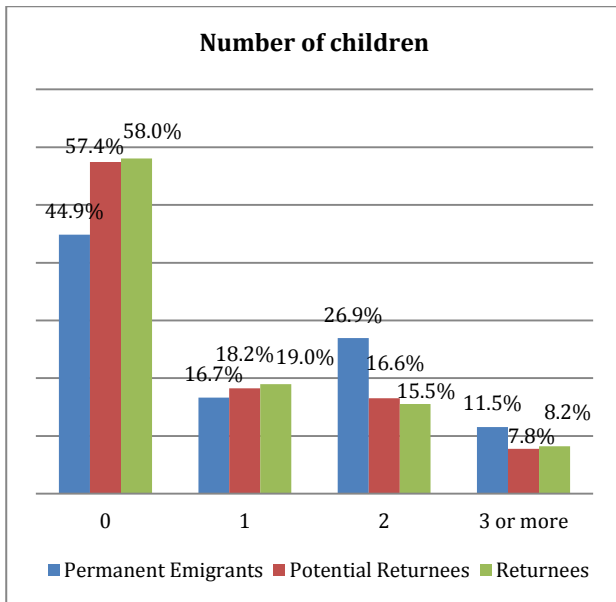
➤ Returnees are statistically significant younger than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants (Returnees average 38.1; Potential Returnees 39.5; Permanent Emigrants 45.3 years).



➤ The Austrian sample consists of more men than women (~46% women vs. ~ 54% men).



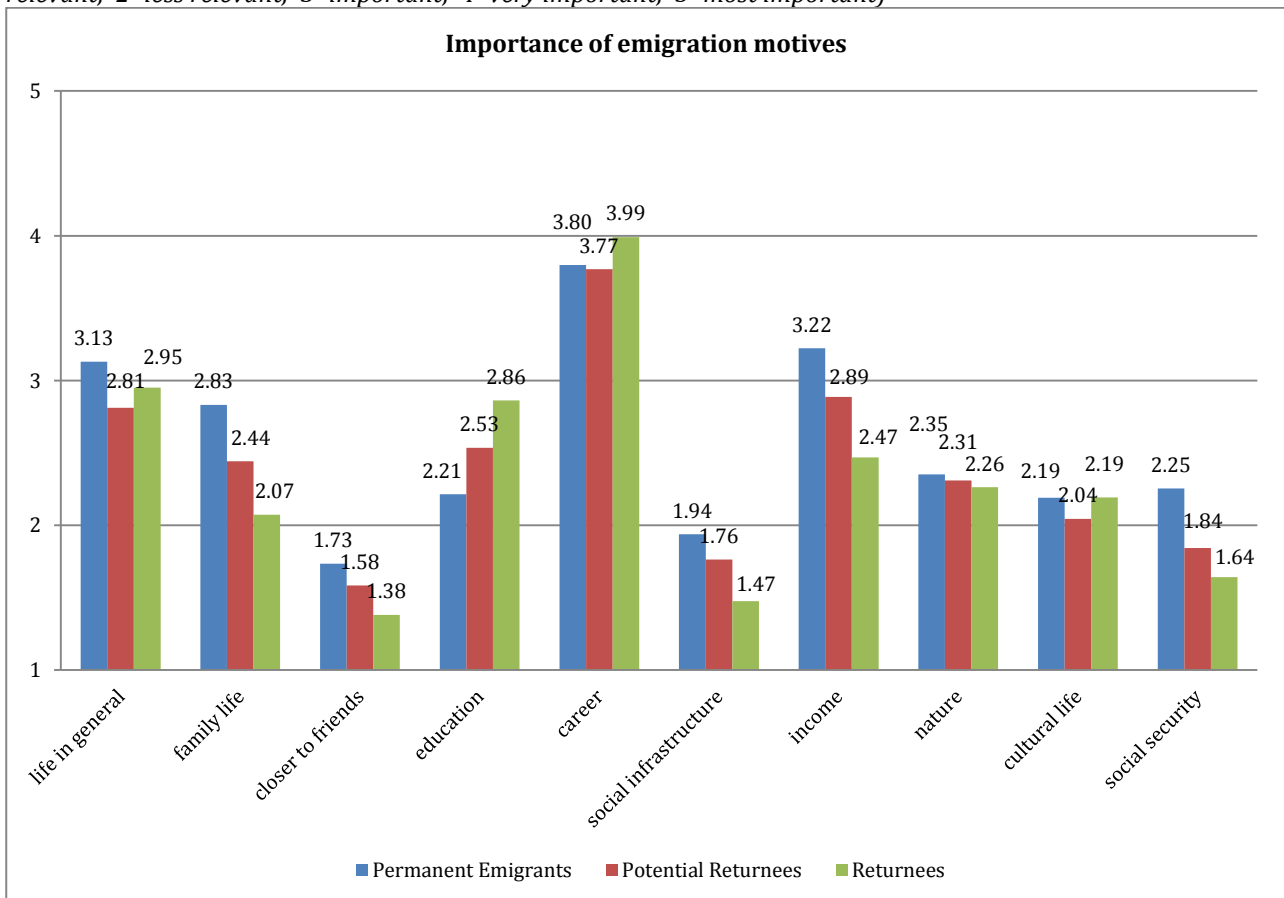
➤ There are significant differences concerning the education level → Returnees have a higher level than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants.



Thematic analysis

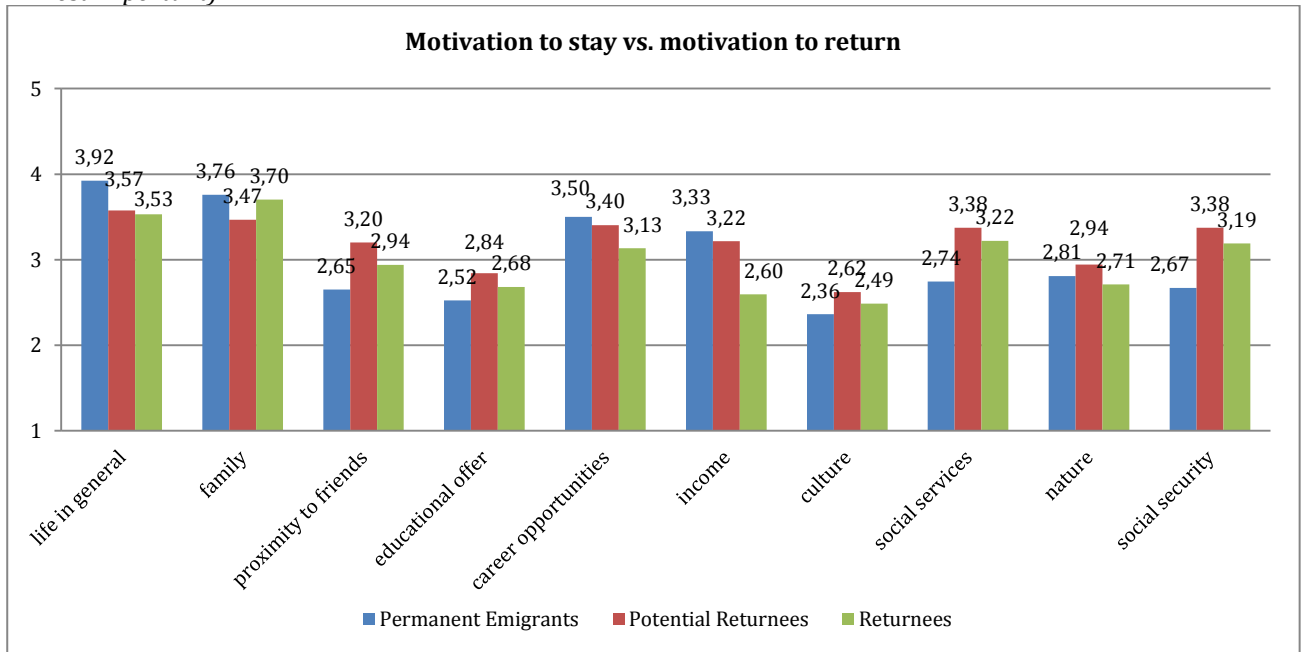
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

“How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?” (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



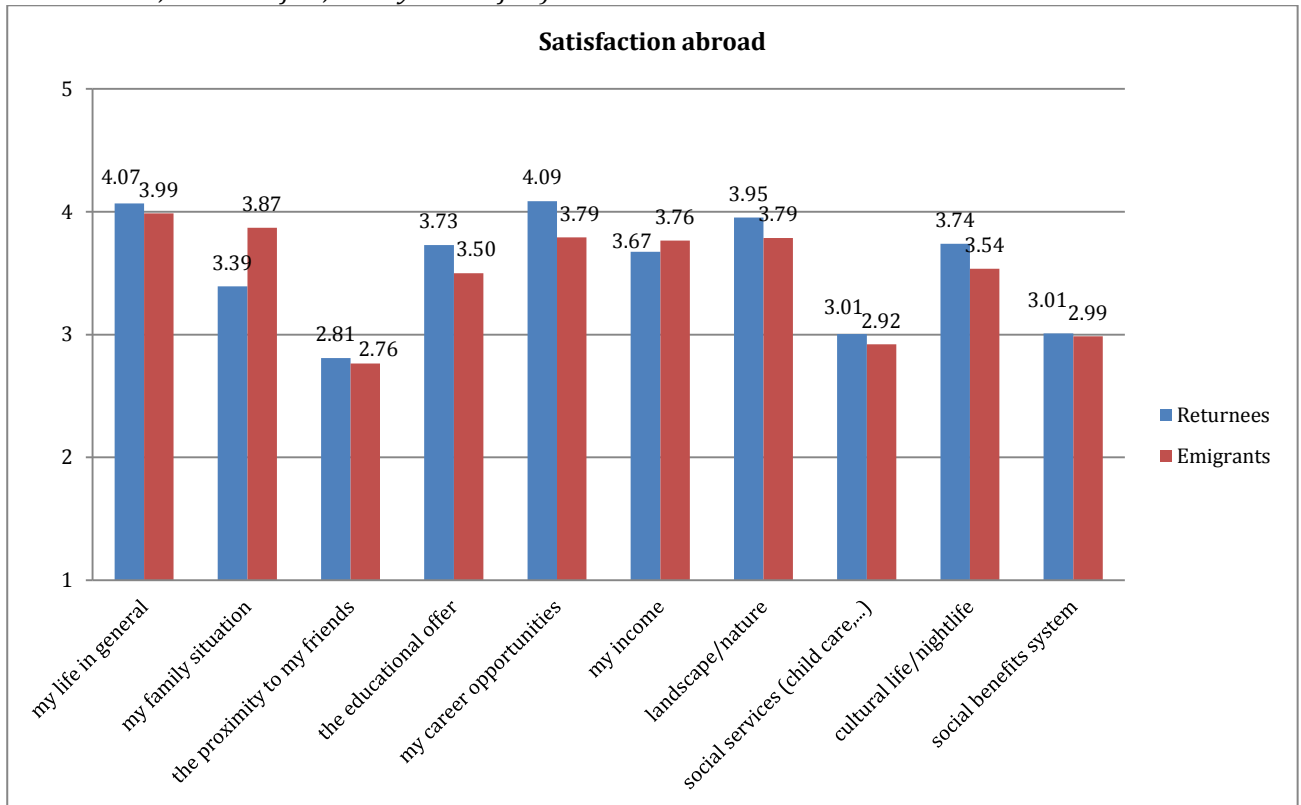
- There are statistically significant differences among the three groups concerning the motives family life, education, social infrastructure, income and social security → Permanent Emigrants attributed these aspects more importance (except education → more important for Returnees). For all three groups the career opportunities was the most important motive to emigrate.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to Austria?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to Austria?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



➤ In general: For all three groups, life in general and the family were the most important factors in the decision-making process. Returnees were less influenced by income. Permanent Emigrants ascribe social services and social security less importance than Potential Returnees and Returnees.

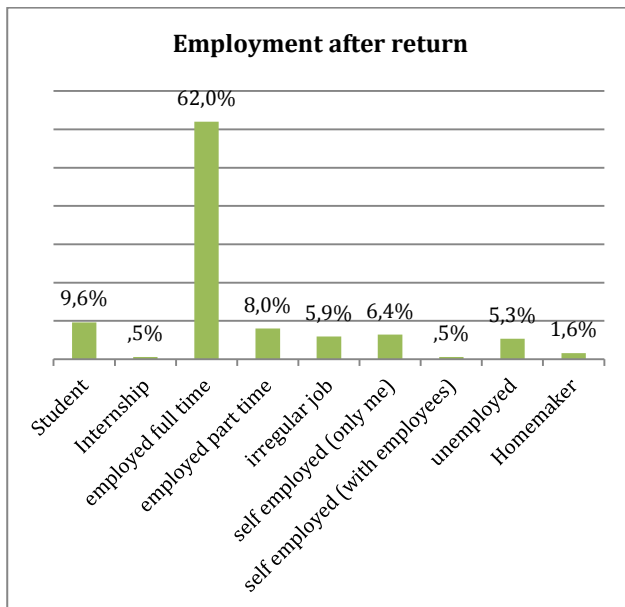
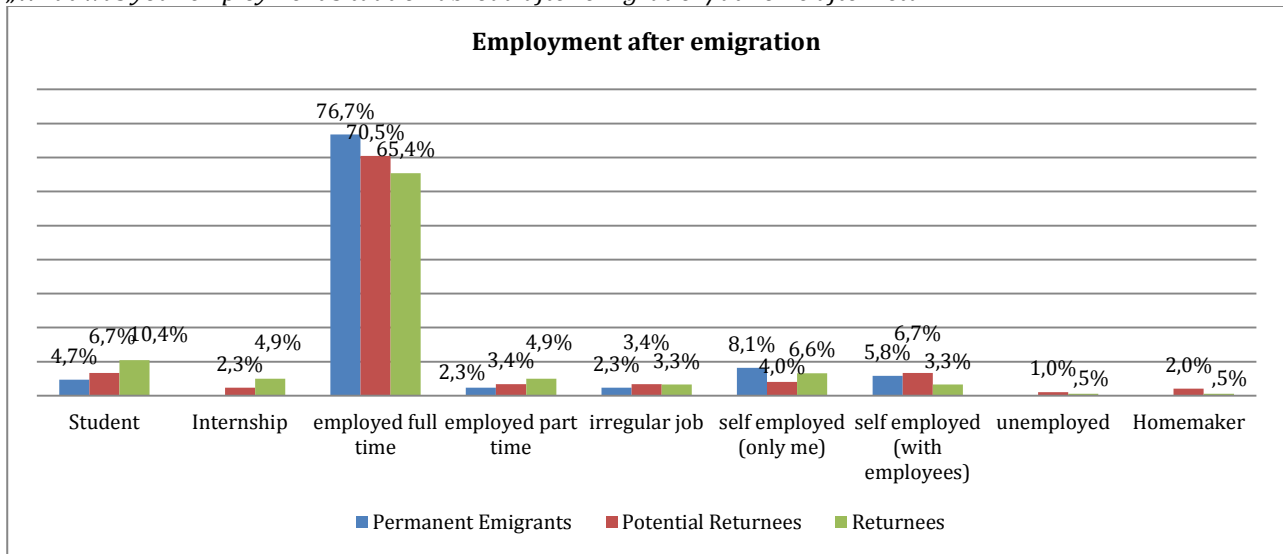
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5=very satisfied; 4=satisfied; 3=neither nor; 2=dissatisfied; 1=very dissatisfied)



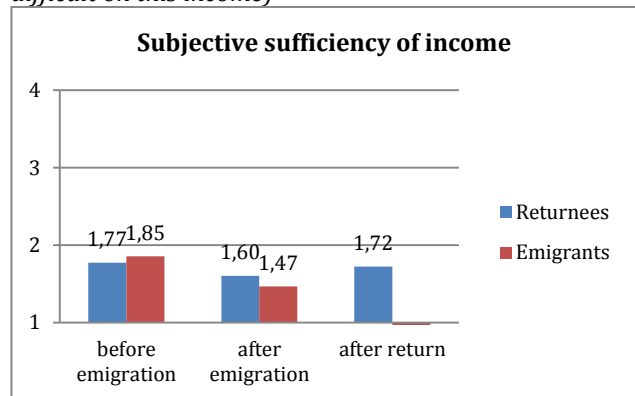
➤ Emigrants are more satisfied with their family situation in the host country. Returnees felt more satisfaction with the educational offer and the career opportunities → possible interpretation: Returnees moved abroad for a limited length with the intention to improve their knowledge and their career opportunities.

Employment and Income

„What was your employment situation abroad after emigration/at home after return?“

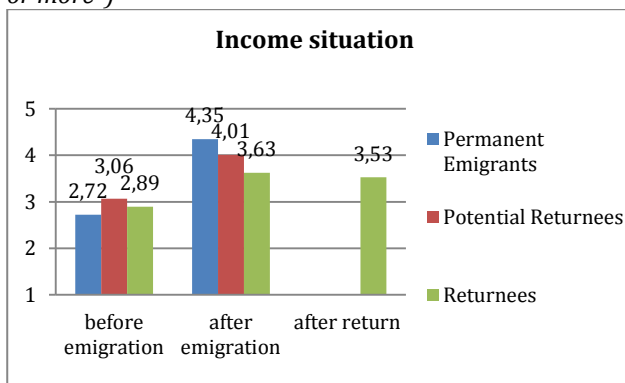


„How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (1=living comfortable on this income; 2= coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



- Returnees have earned less money than Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants after emigration → could be an evidence that less successful emigrants have a greater willingness to return.

„What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?“ (Mean values; 1=“<500€”; 2=“500-999€”; 3=“1000-1999€”; 4=“2000-2999€”; 5=“3000-4999€”; 6=“5000€ or more”)

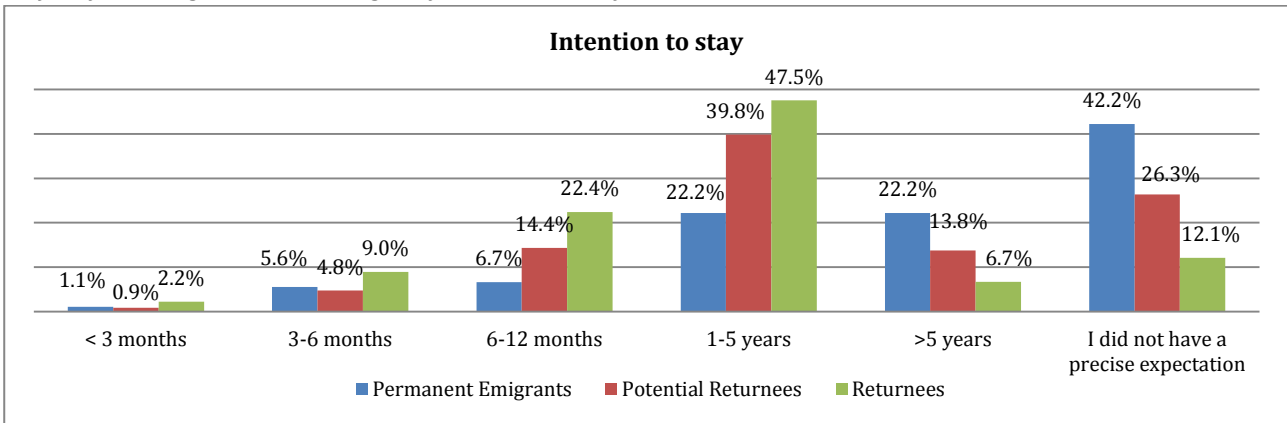


„While being abroad, were you working in a relatively/completely new professional field compared to your previous jobs or education?“

yes	18,4%	no	81,6 %
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Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

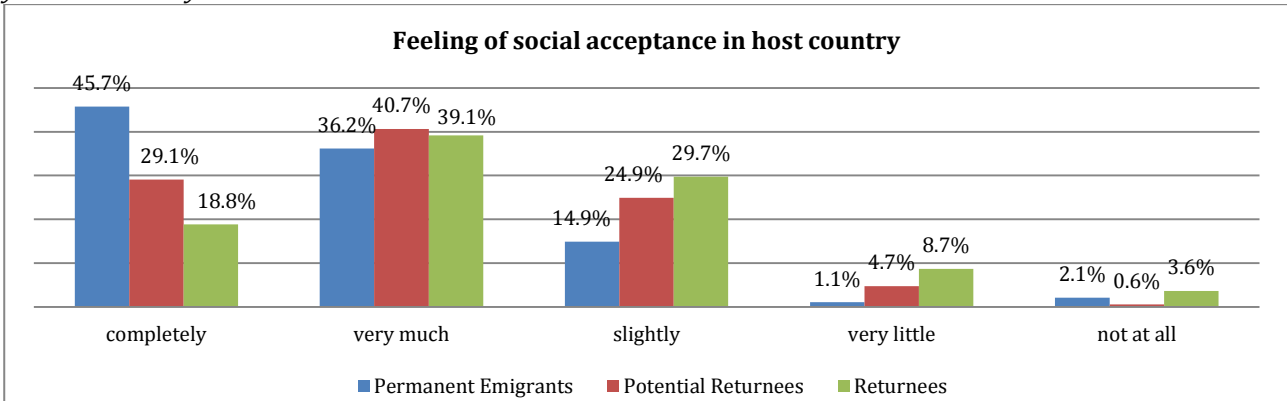
"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"



- The majority of the Returnees did not intend to stay longer than 5 years. As opposed to this group, ~42% of the Permanent Emigrants didn't have a precise expectation.

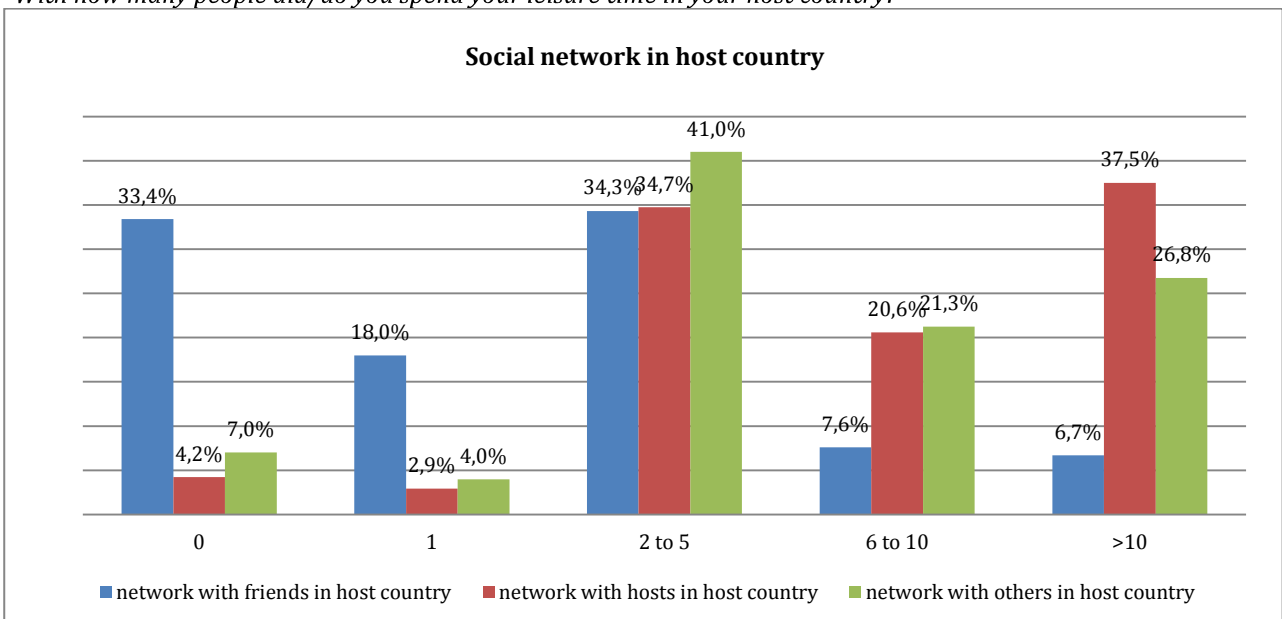
Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"

Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"

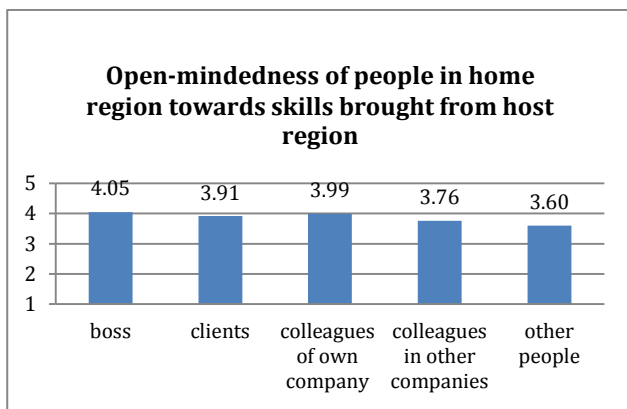
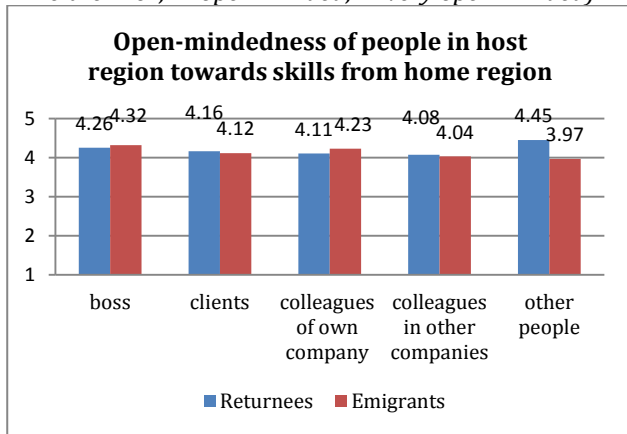


- There are significant differences among the three groups → Permanent Emigrants feel more accepted in their host country (~82% completely or very much) than Potential Returnees and Returnees.

"With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?"



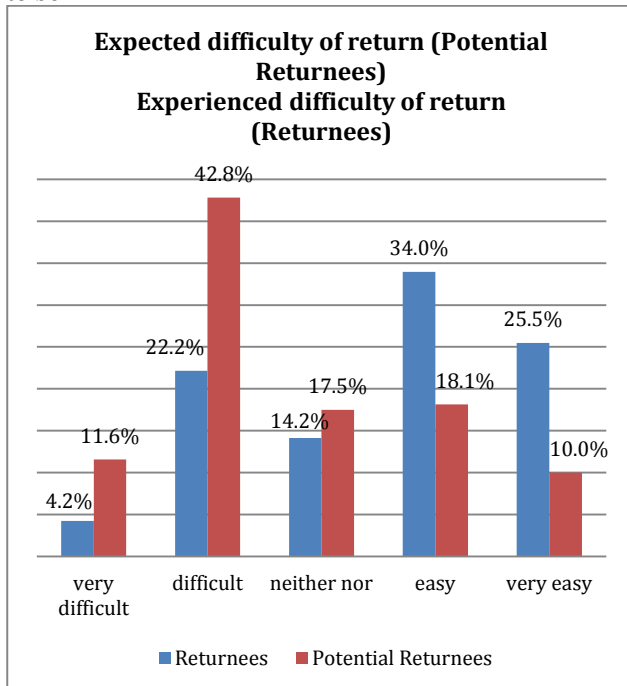
“How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?” (mean values; 1=very rejecting; 2=rejecting; 3=neither nor; 4=open-minded; 5=very open-minded)



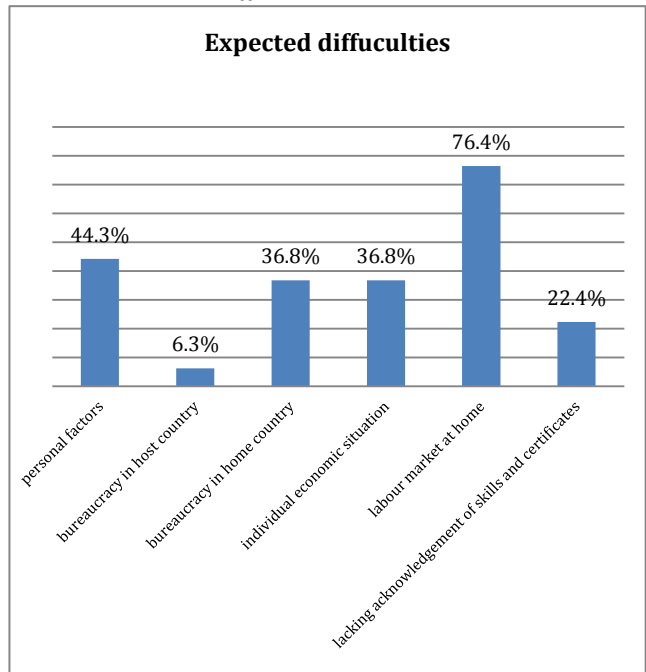
Obstacles of a (potential) return

Returnees: “How easy was it for you to return home?”

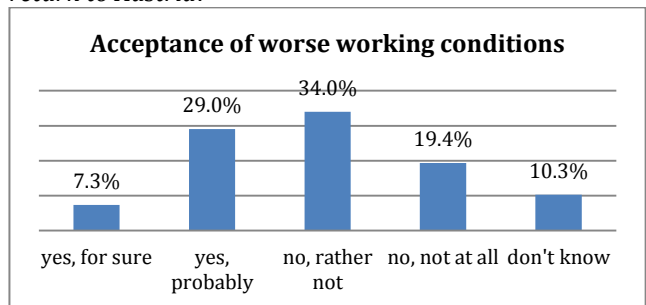
Potential Returnees: “How easy do you expect the return to be?”



Potential Returnees (those who expect the return to be very difficult or difficult): “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”



Potential Returnees: “Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realise your wish to return to Austria?”

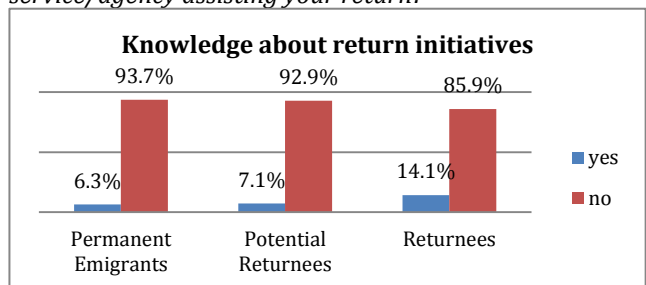


- Only ~36% of the Potential Returnees would accept worse working conditions to realise their wish to return.

Potential Returnees: “Have you already made plans for your return?”

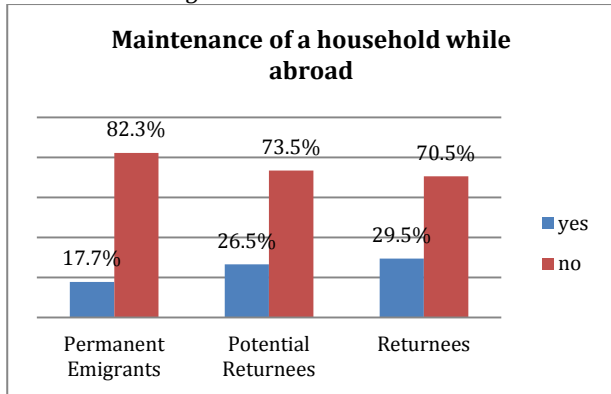
yes	30.7%	no	69.3%
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“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?”

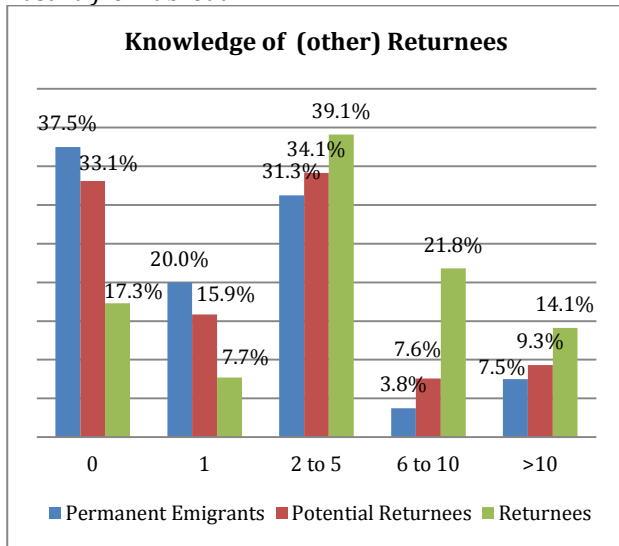


Social factors and the decision process

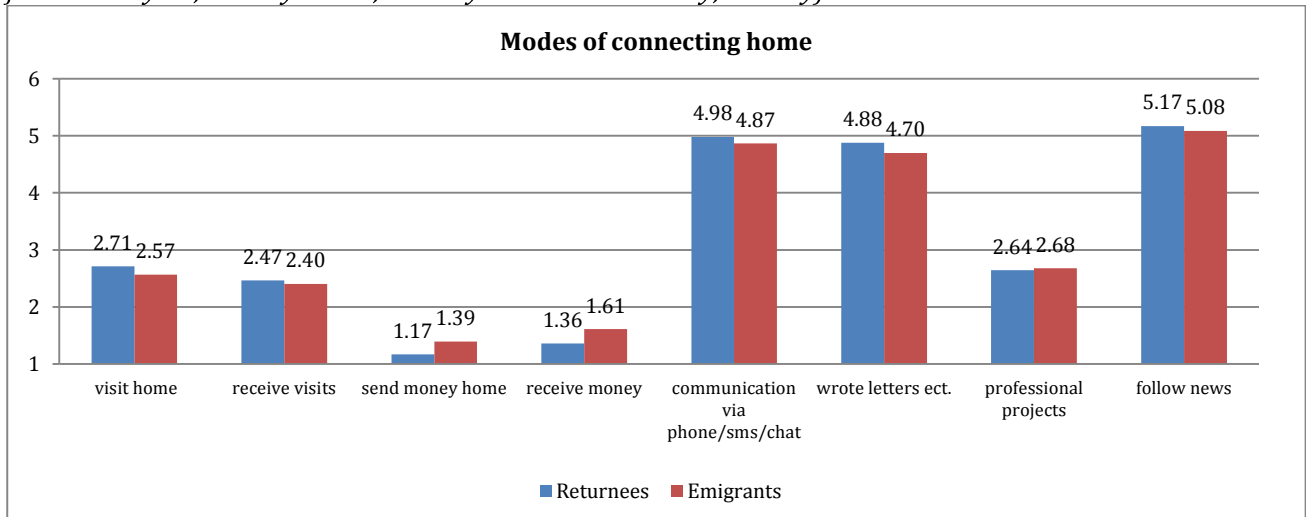
Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad."



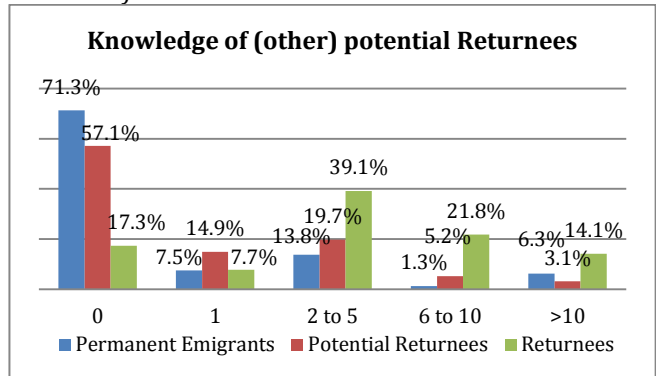
"How many people do you know who have returned to Austria from abroad?"



"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)

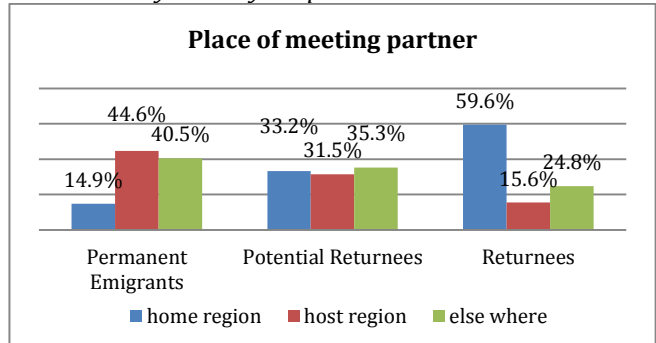


"How many people do you know who consider returning to Austria from abroad?"



- There are statistically significant differences among the groups → Returnees know more other Returnees and Potential Returnees. ~71% of the Permanent Emigrants know nobody who currently lives abroad and is willing to return to Austria.

"Where have you met your partner?"

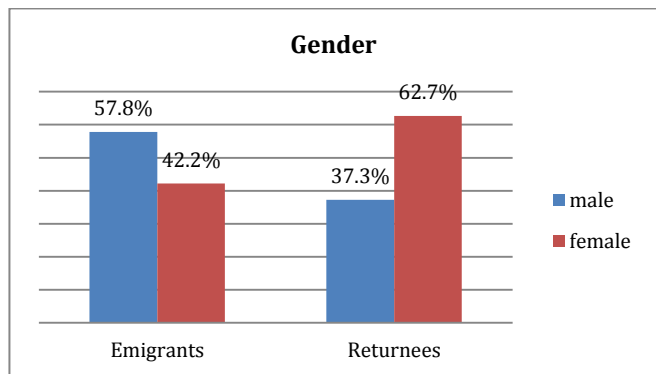
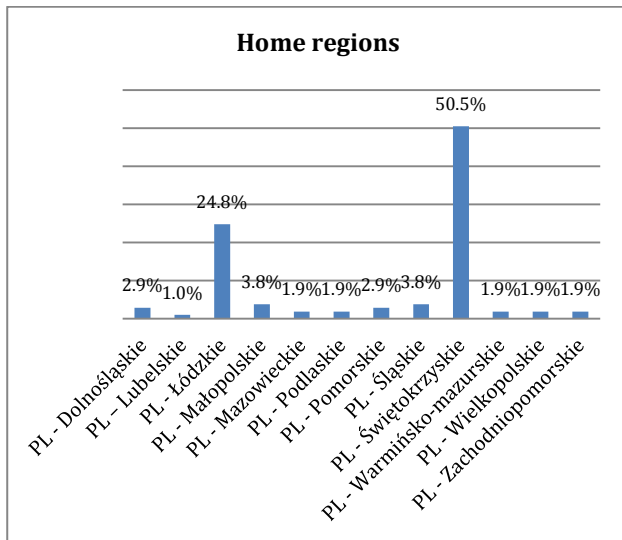
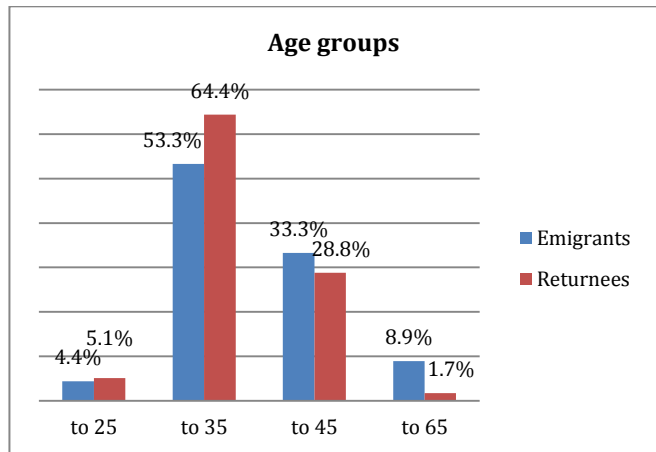


- Significant differences: Returnees met their current partner more often in the home region. ~85% of the Permanent Emigrants met him/her in the host region or elsewhere.

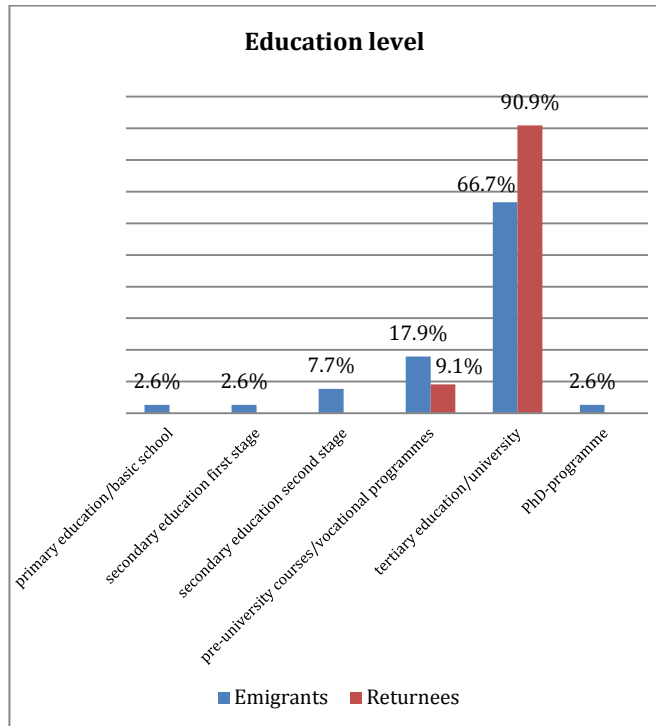
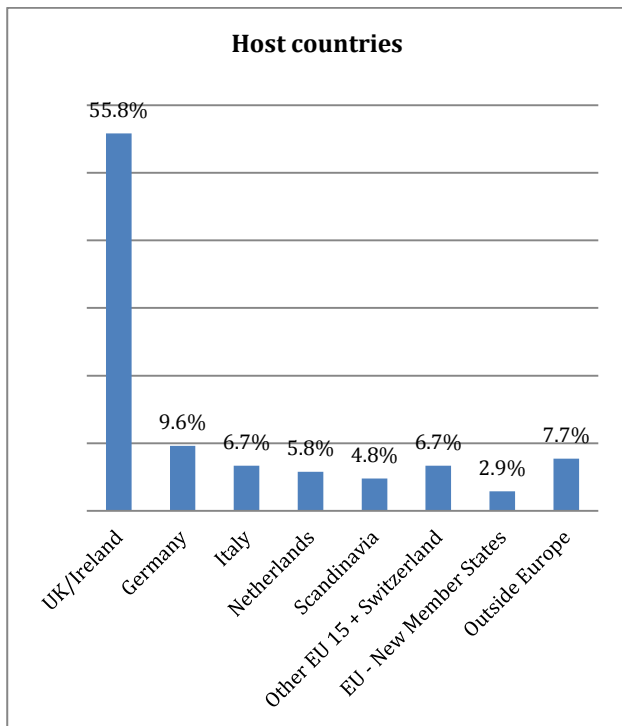
Poland

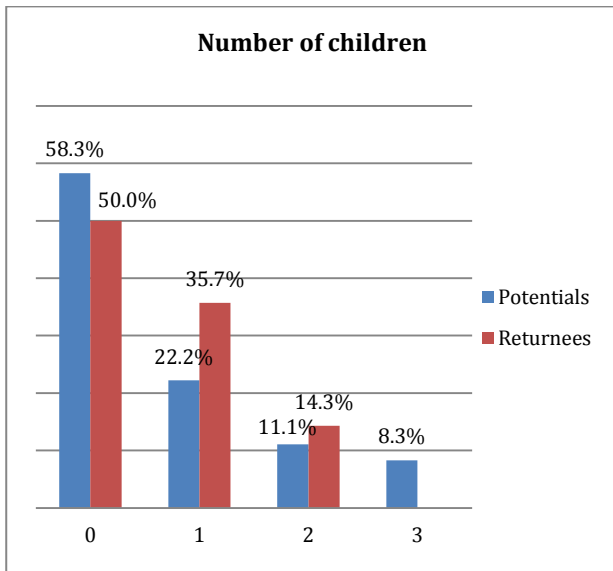
Populations, geography, key descriptors

	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	45	42.9	Potential Returnees	24	55.8
			Permanent Emigrants	19	44.2
Returnees	60	57.1	Region Returnees	59	98.3
			Country Returnees	1	1.7
Total	105	100			

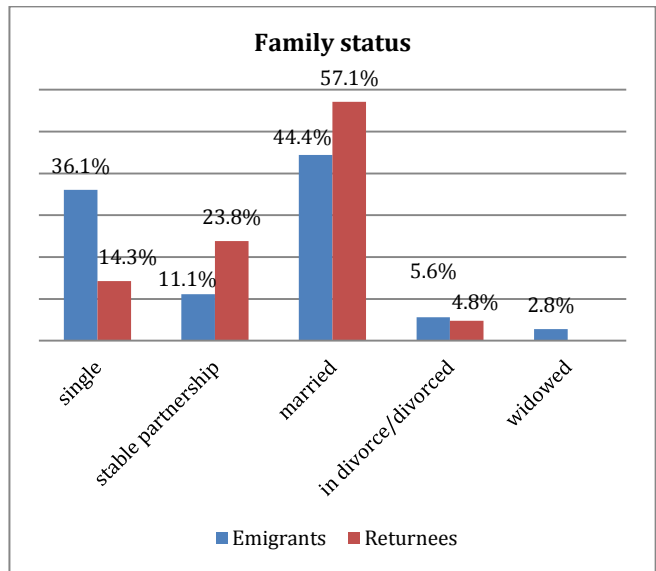


➤ The Polish sample consists of more women than men (~54% Women vs. ~46% Men).





➤ There is no statistical difference in the number of children between Emigrants and Returnees.

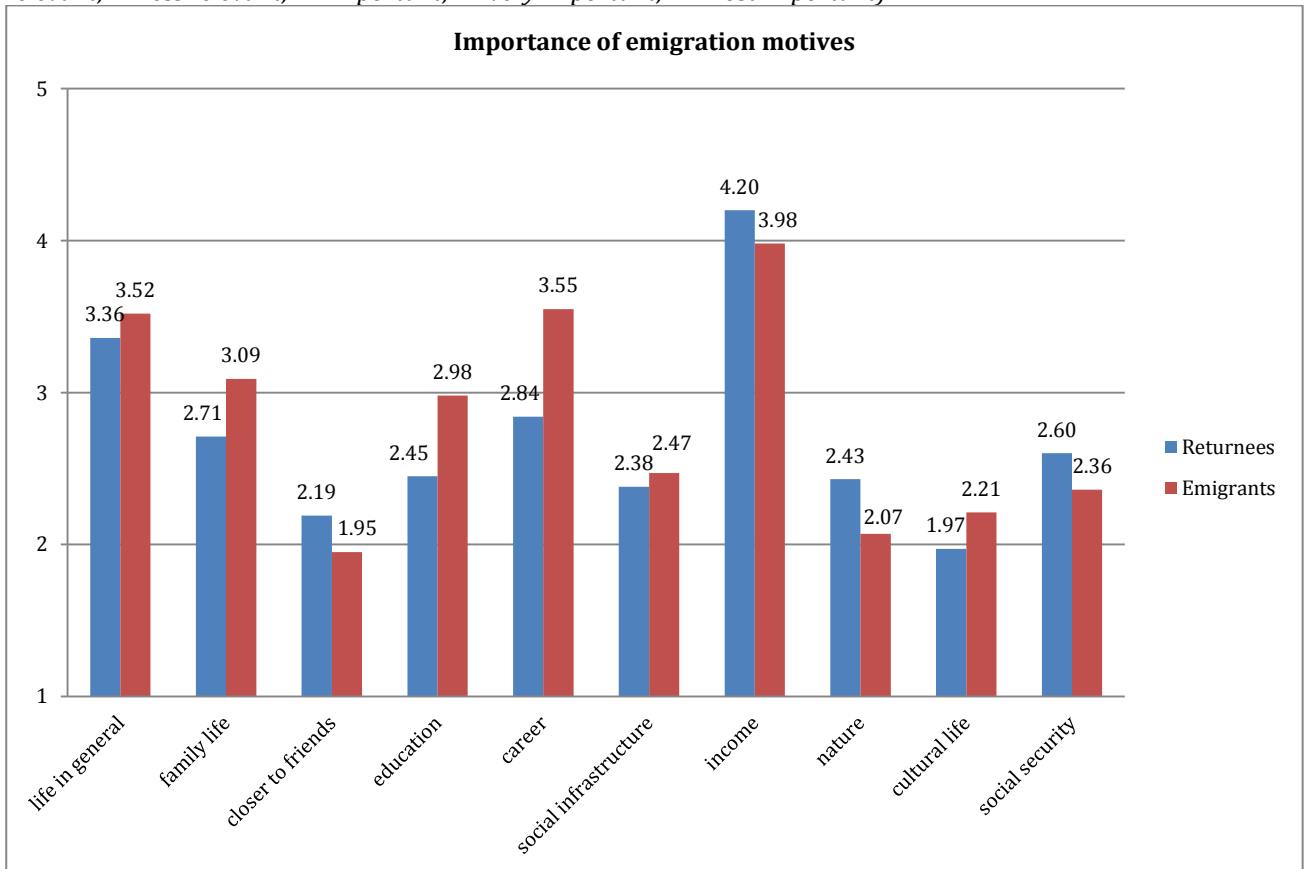


➤ Emigrants are more often singles.

Thematic analysis

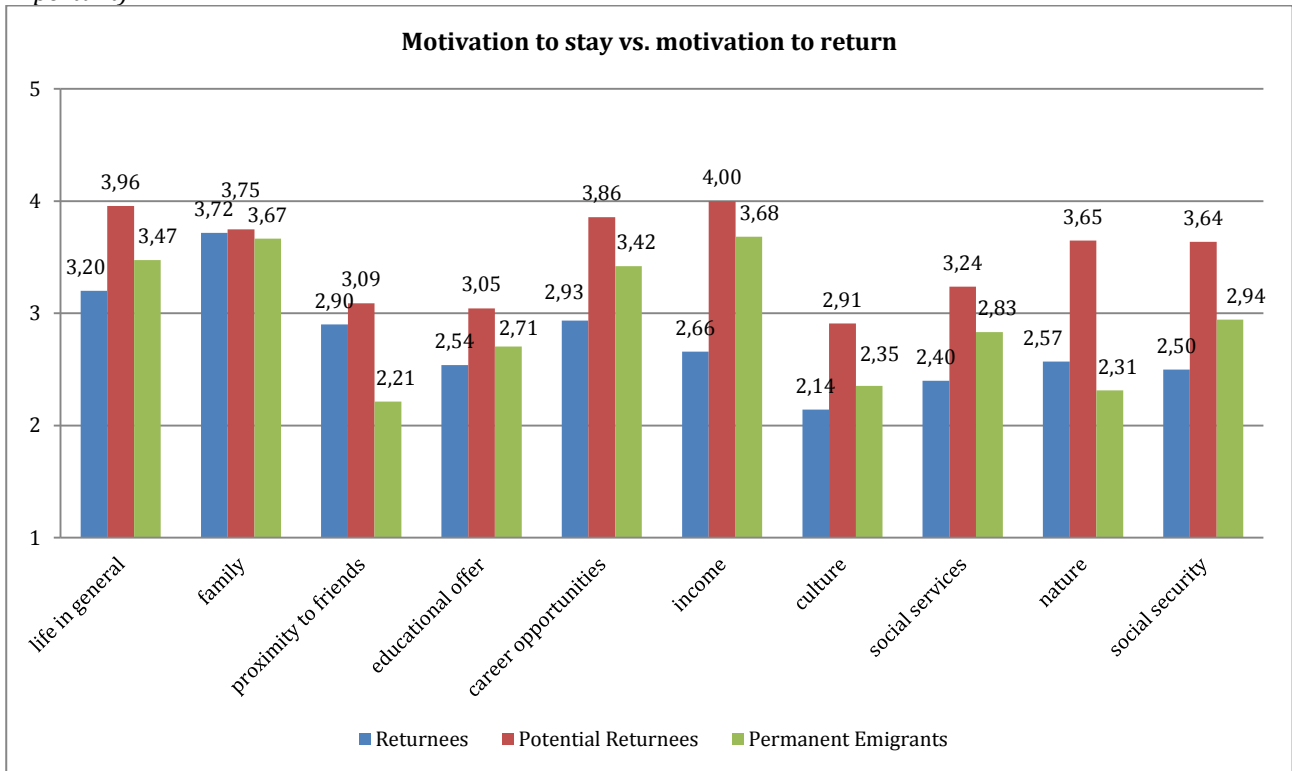
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?" (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



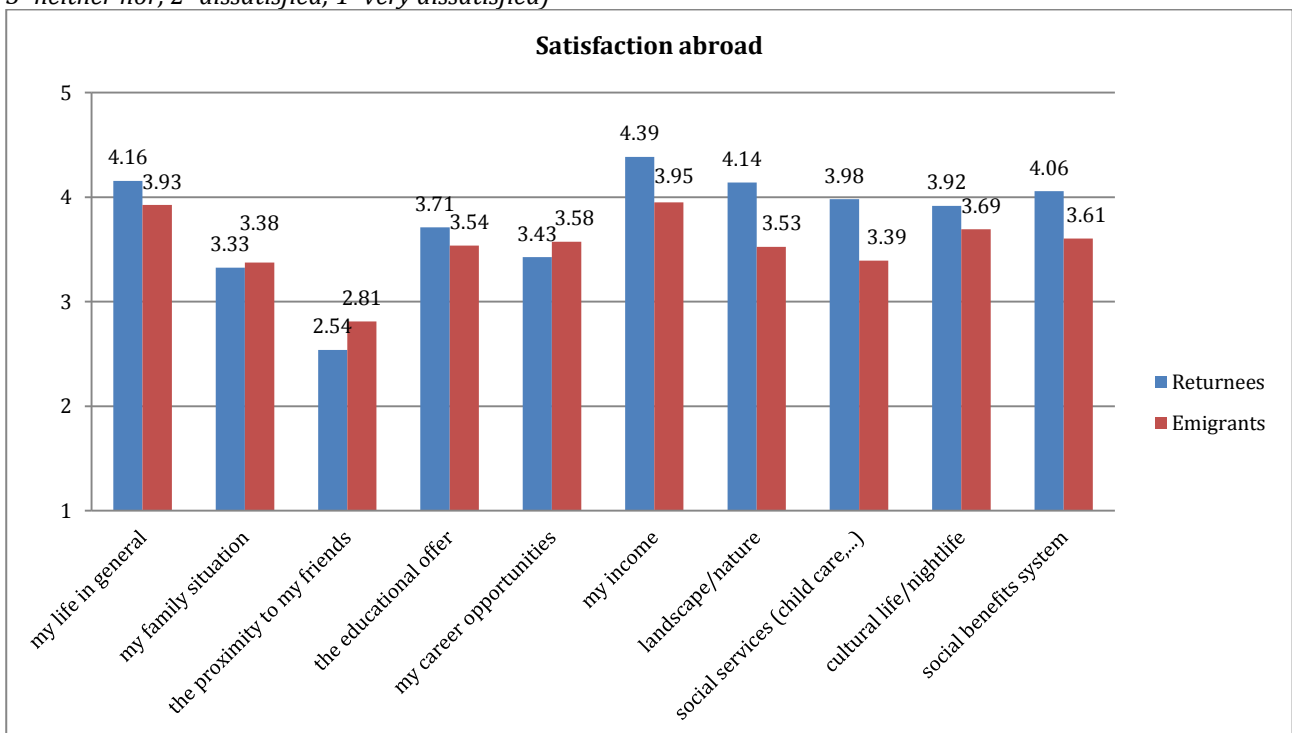
➤ There are no statistically significant differences between Emigrants and Returnees in the importance of most motives except for education and career, which seem to be more important as a motive for Emigrants.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to Poland?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to Poland?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



- For Returnees: The proximity to friends was a main aspect influencing their motivation to return home. Permanent Emigrants see the income as the most important factor for their decision to stay abroad.

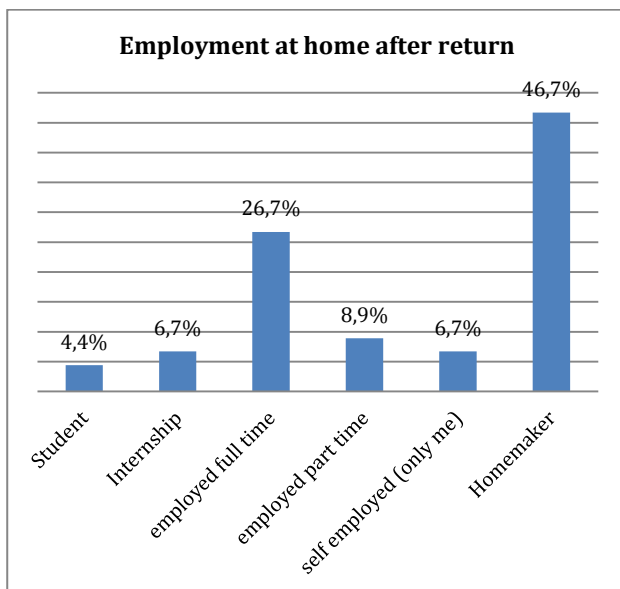
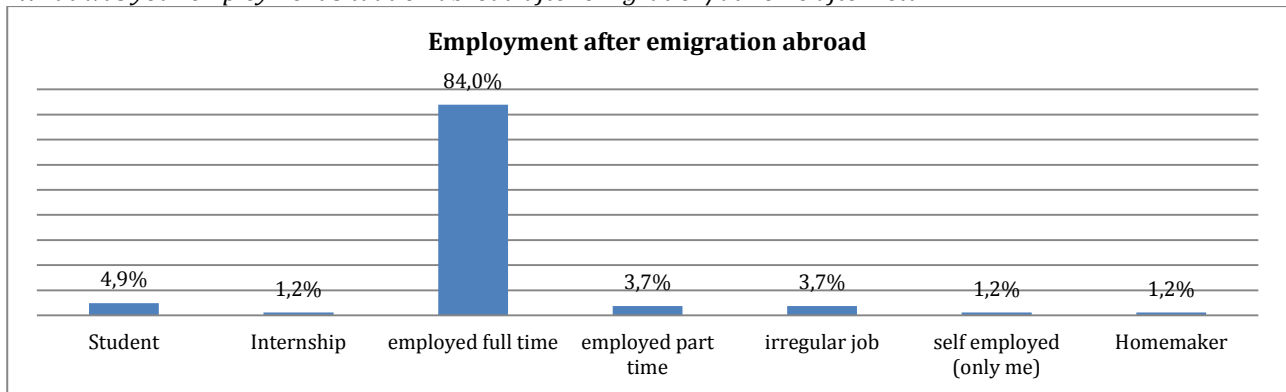
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5=very satisfied; 4=satisfied; 3=neither nor; 2=dissatisfied; 1=very dissatisfied)



- Statistical significance is found for Emigrants being less satisfied with their income, nature and landscape, social services and the social benefits system in the host country.

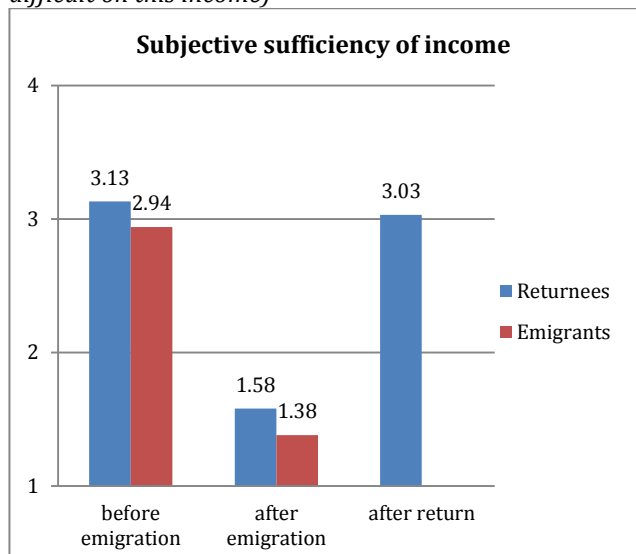
Employment and income

“What was your employment situation abroad after emigration/at home after return?”



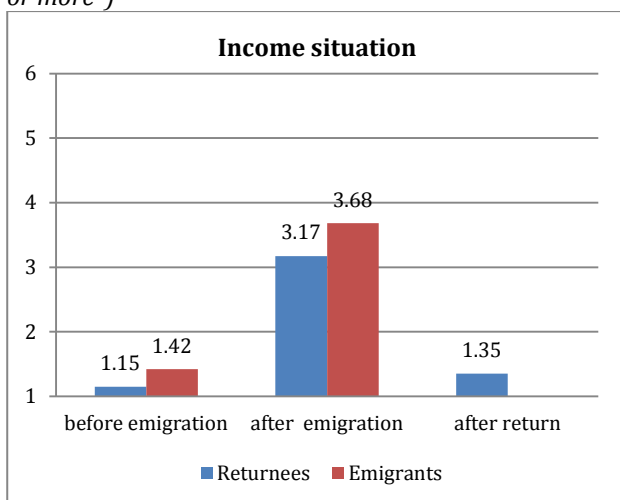
- Returnees earned less money after emigration → evidence that people with less success in the host country are returning to Poland. However, the importance of emigration motives has shown that career and education weren't so important for Returnees. Returnees already earned less money before emigration.

“How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?” (1=living comfortable on this income; 2= coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



- ~47% did/does housework after return → Returnees are less active on the home job market after return.

“What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?” (mean values; 1=“<500€”; 2=“500-999€”; 3=“1000-1999€”; 4=“2000-2999€”; 5=“3000-4999€”; 6=“5000€ or more”)



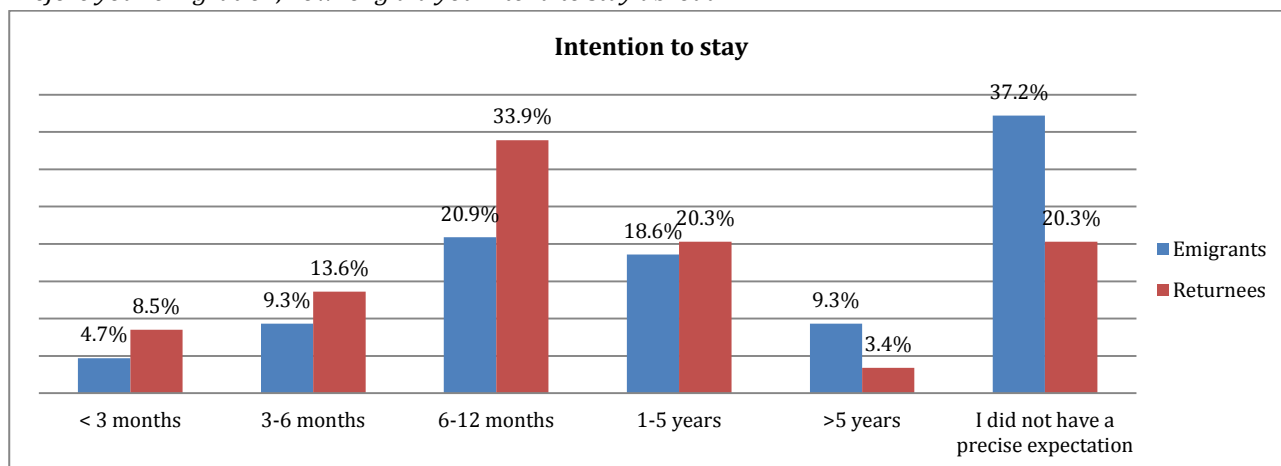
- There is a statistically significant difference for the subjective sufficiency of the income abroad after emigration → Returnees lived more comfortable in the host region.

“While being abroad, were you working in a relatively/completely new professional field compared to your previous jobs or education?”

yes	90.9%	no	9.1%
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Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

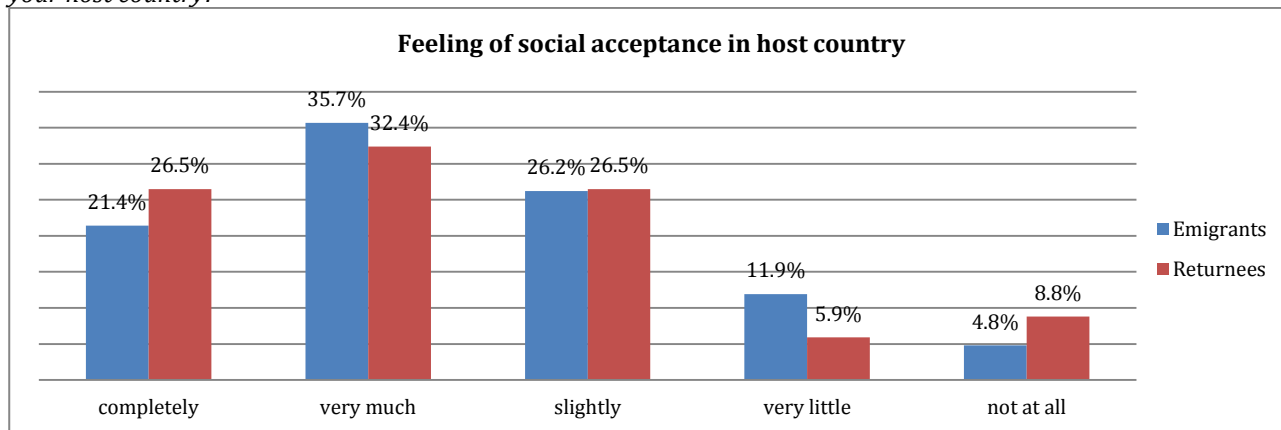
“Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?”



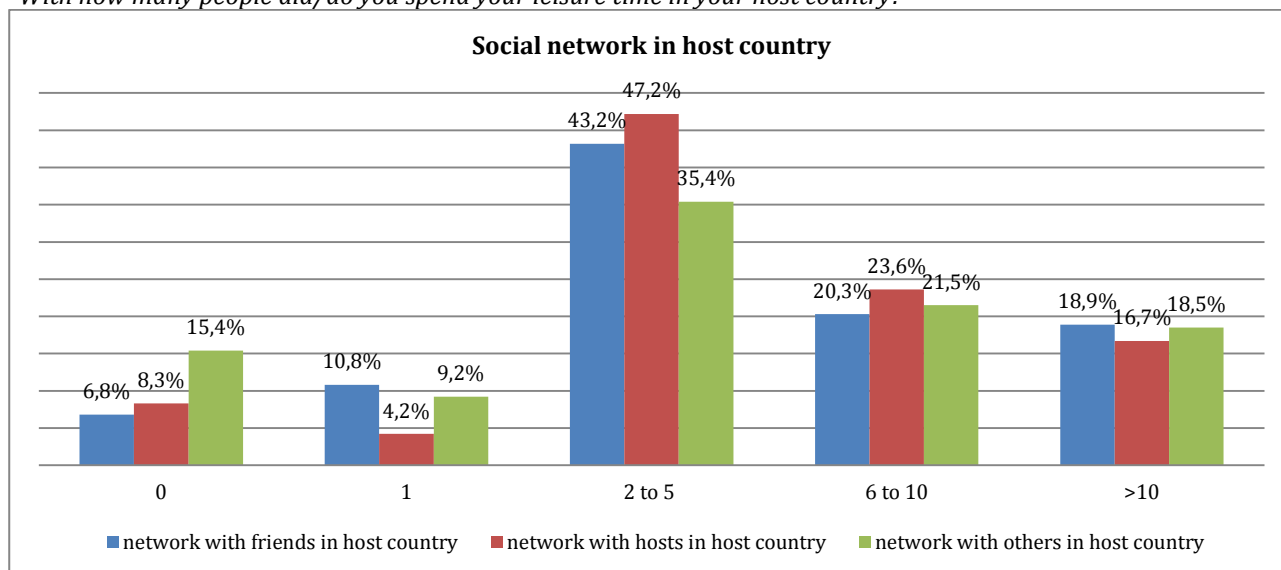
➤ Emigrants were far more vague in their intended length of stay abroad.

Returnees: “How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?”

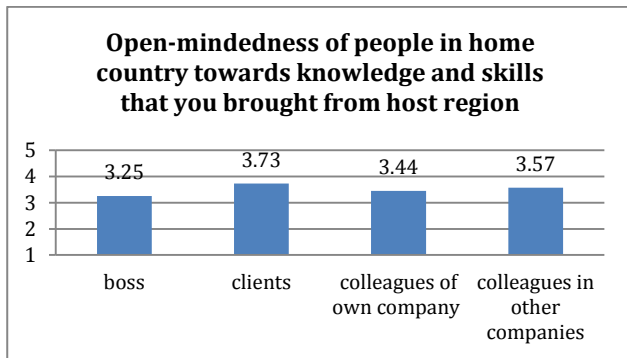
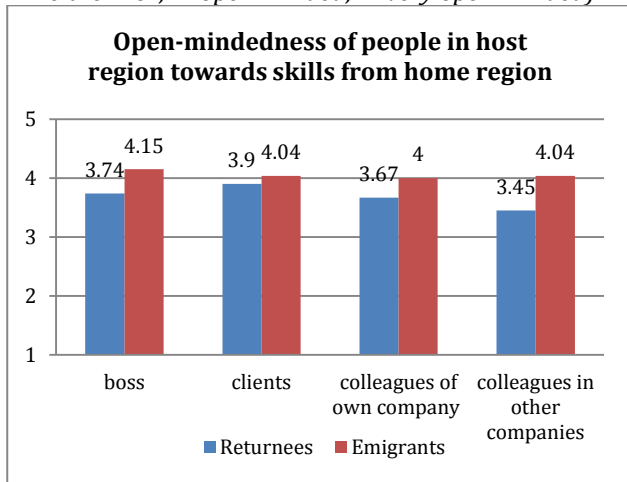
Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: “How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?”



“With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?”



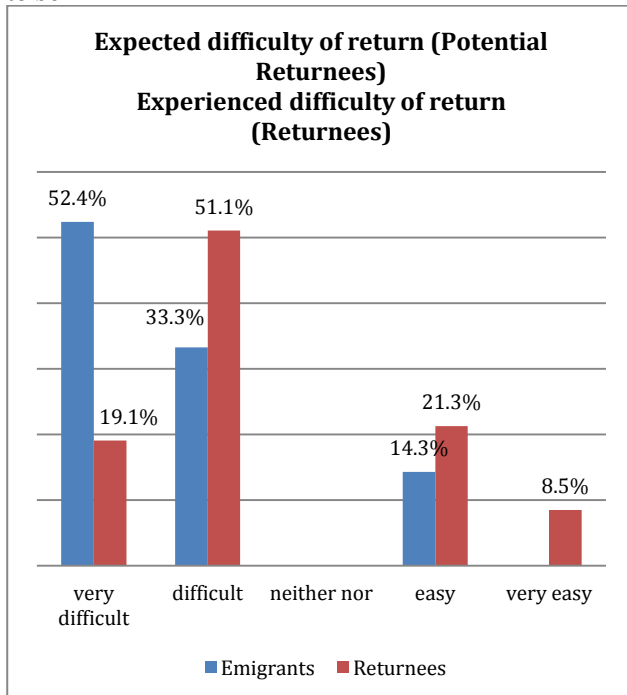
"How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?" (mean values; 1=very rejecting; 2=rejecting; 3=neither nor; 4=open-minded; 5=very open-minded)



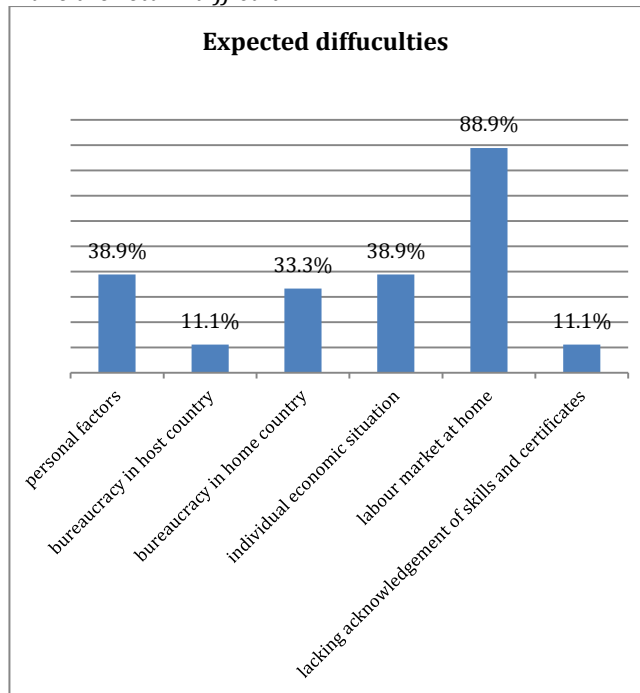
Obstacles of a (potential) return

Returnees: "How easy was it for you to return home?"

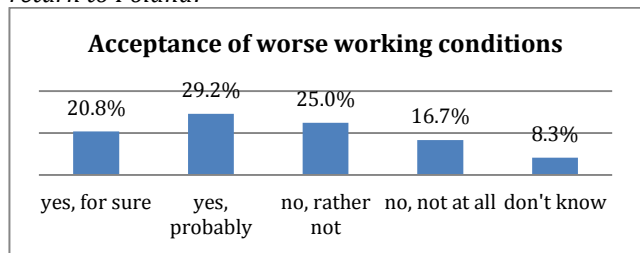
Potential Returnees: "How easy do you expect the return to be?"



Potential Returnees (those who expect the return very difficult or difficult): "Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?"



Potential Returnees: "Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realise your wish to return to Poland?"

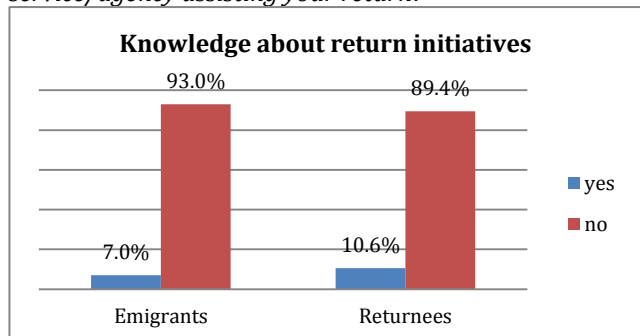


- 50% of the Potential Returnees would also accept worse working conditions at home in order to realise their wish to return.

Potential Returnees: "Have you already made plans for your return?"

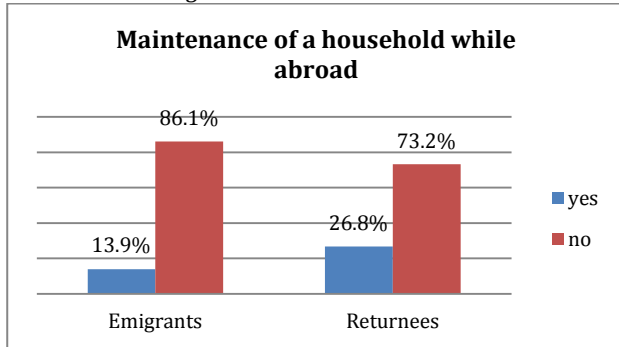
yes	43.5%	no	56.5%
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"Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?"

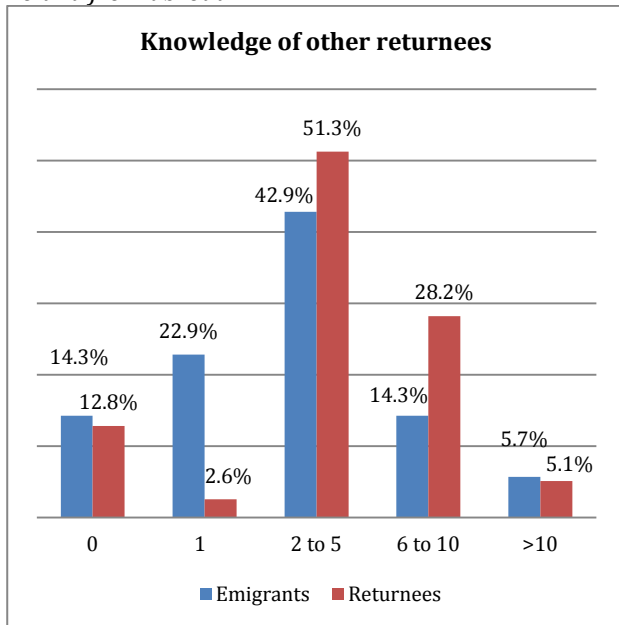


Social factors and the decision process

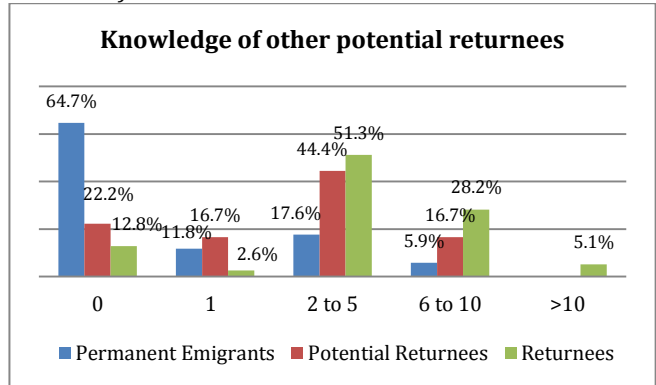
Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad."



"How many people do you know that have returned to Poland from abroad?"

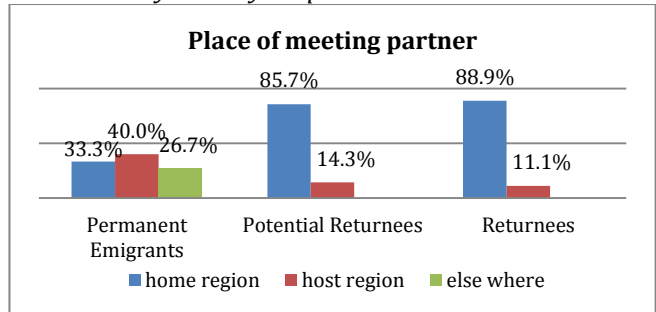


"How many people do you know who consider returning to Poland from abroad?"



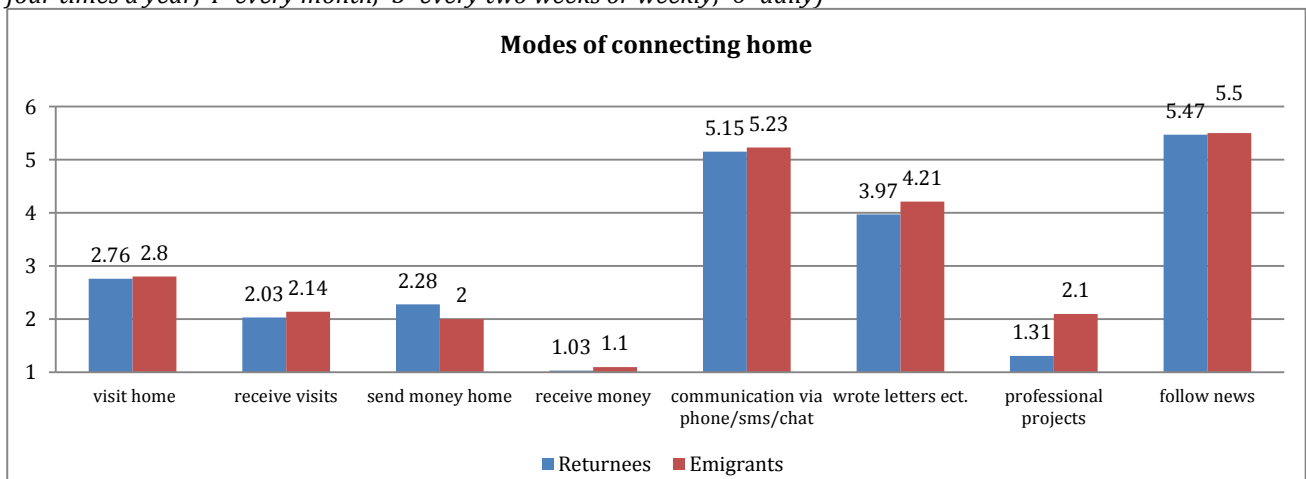
- Returnees know more other Potential Returnees. ~65% of the Permanent Emigrants know no other Potential Returnee who is willing to return to Poland.

"Where have you met your partner?"



- There is a statistically significant difference among the groups concerning the place of meeting partner → Returnees and Potential Returnees having met their current partner most often in the home region; ~67% of the Permanent Emigrants in the host region or elsewhere.

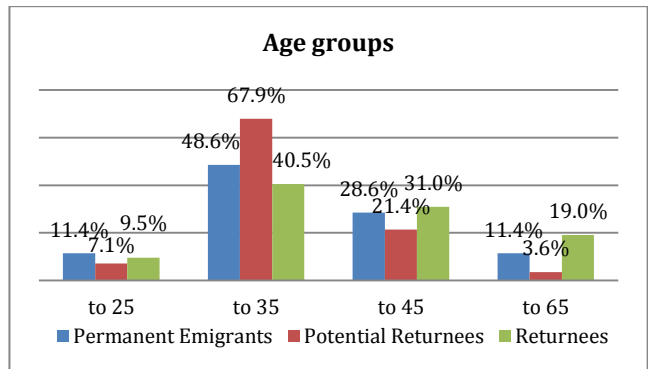
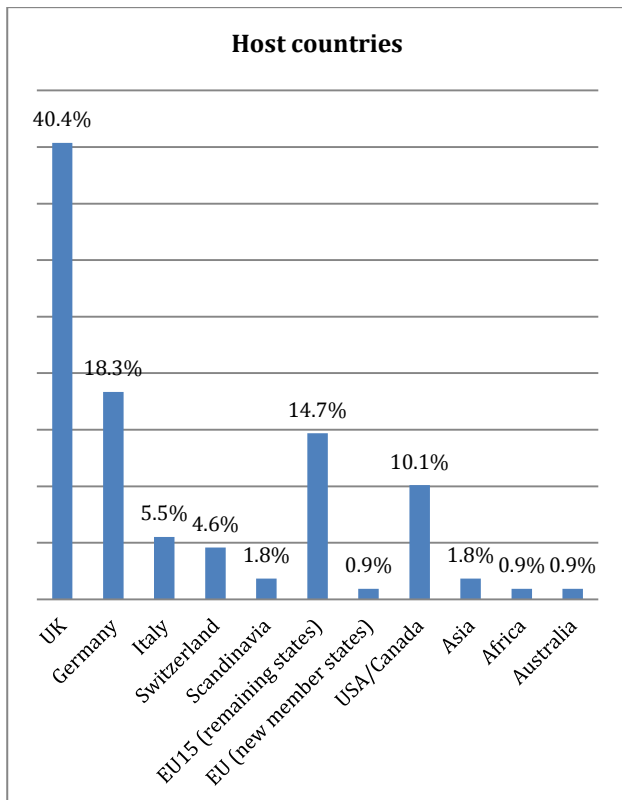
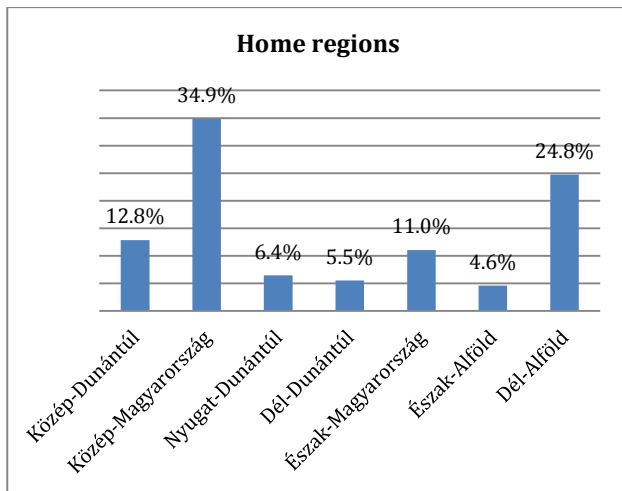
"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)



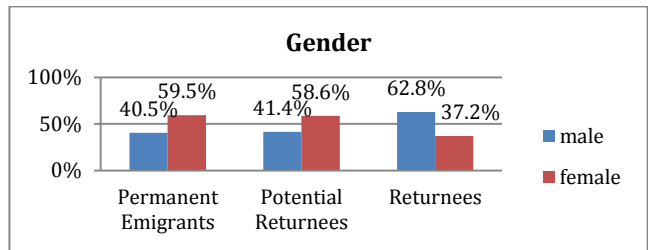
Hungary

Populations, geography, key descriptors

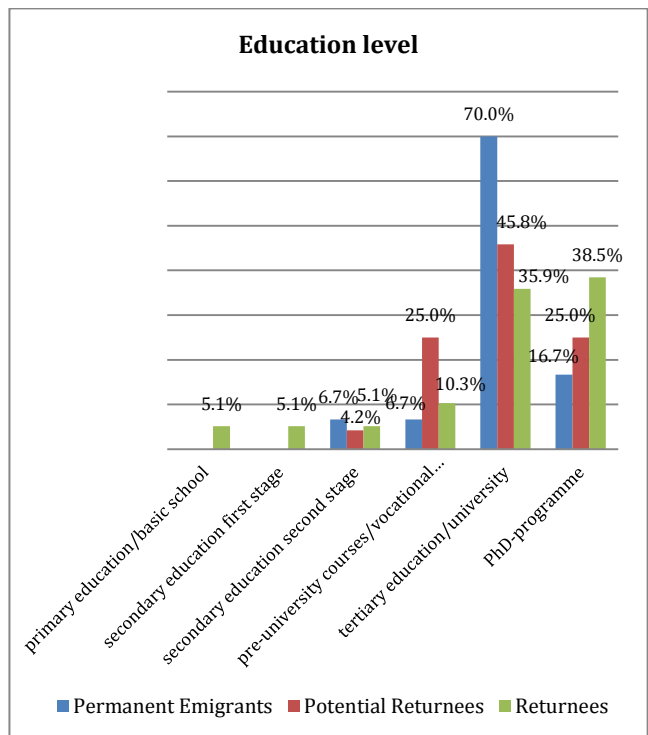
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	66	60.6	Potential Returnees	29	43.9%
			Permanent Emigrants	37	56.1%
Returnees	43	39.4	Region Returnees	24	55.8%
			Country Returnees	19	44.2%
Total	109	100			

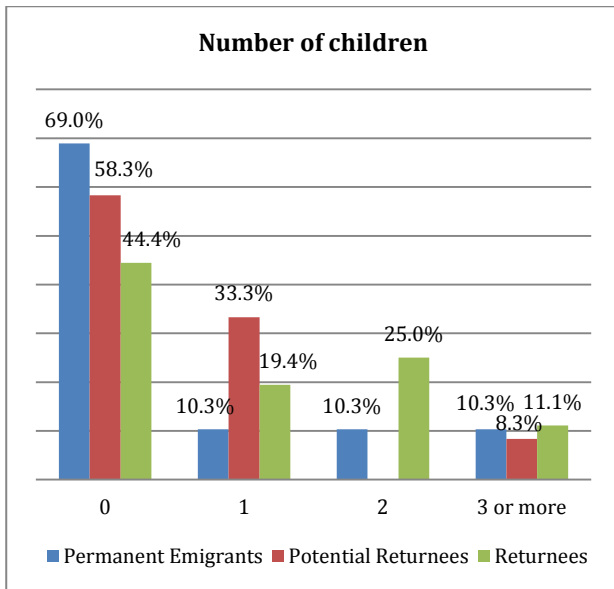


➤ There is only a slight difference among the three groups concerning the age (mean values: Permanent Emigrants: 35.4; Potential Returnees: 33.1; Returnees: 37.4 years).

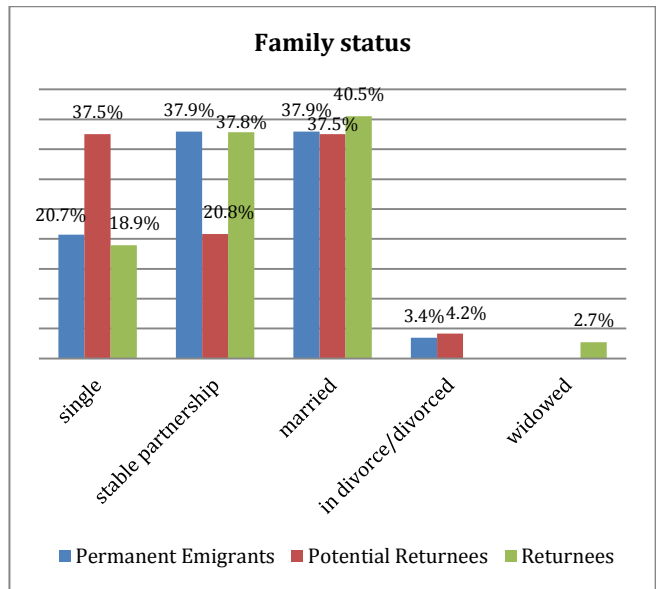


➤ The Hungarian sample is nearly balanced concerning the gender ratio (50.5% women vs. 49.5% men). Regarding the different return-types, there are significant differences to find → Returnees are more often male, Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants female.





➤ There is a significant difference between Permanent Emigrants and Returnees → Permanent Emigrants more often have no children.

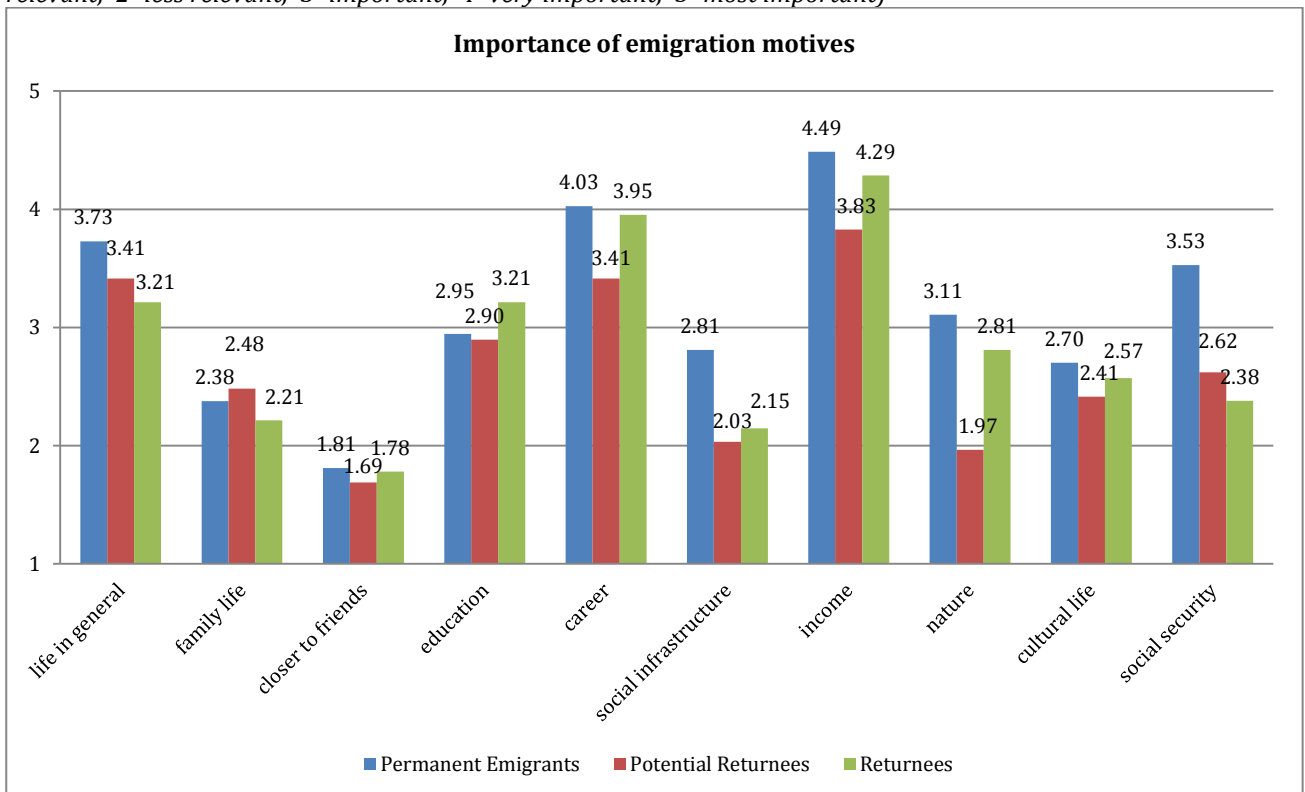


➤ Returnees are more often in a stable partnership or married. Potential Returnees are more often single.

Thematic analysis

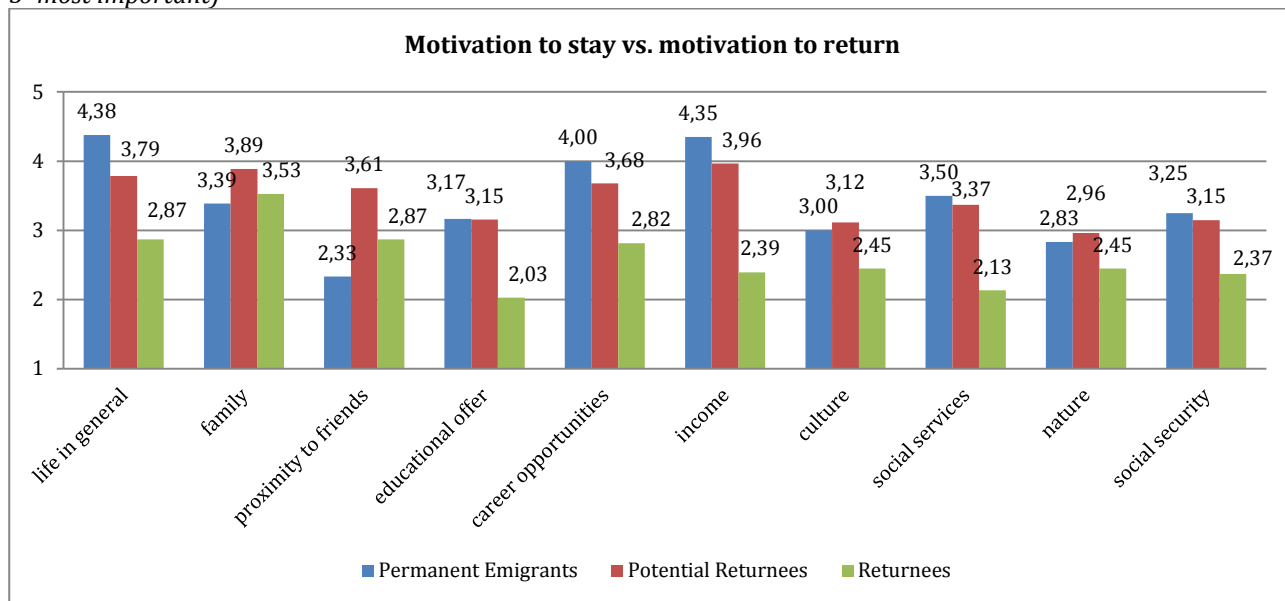
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?" (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



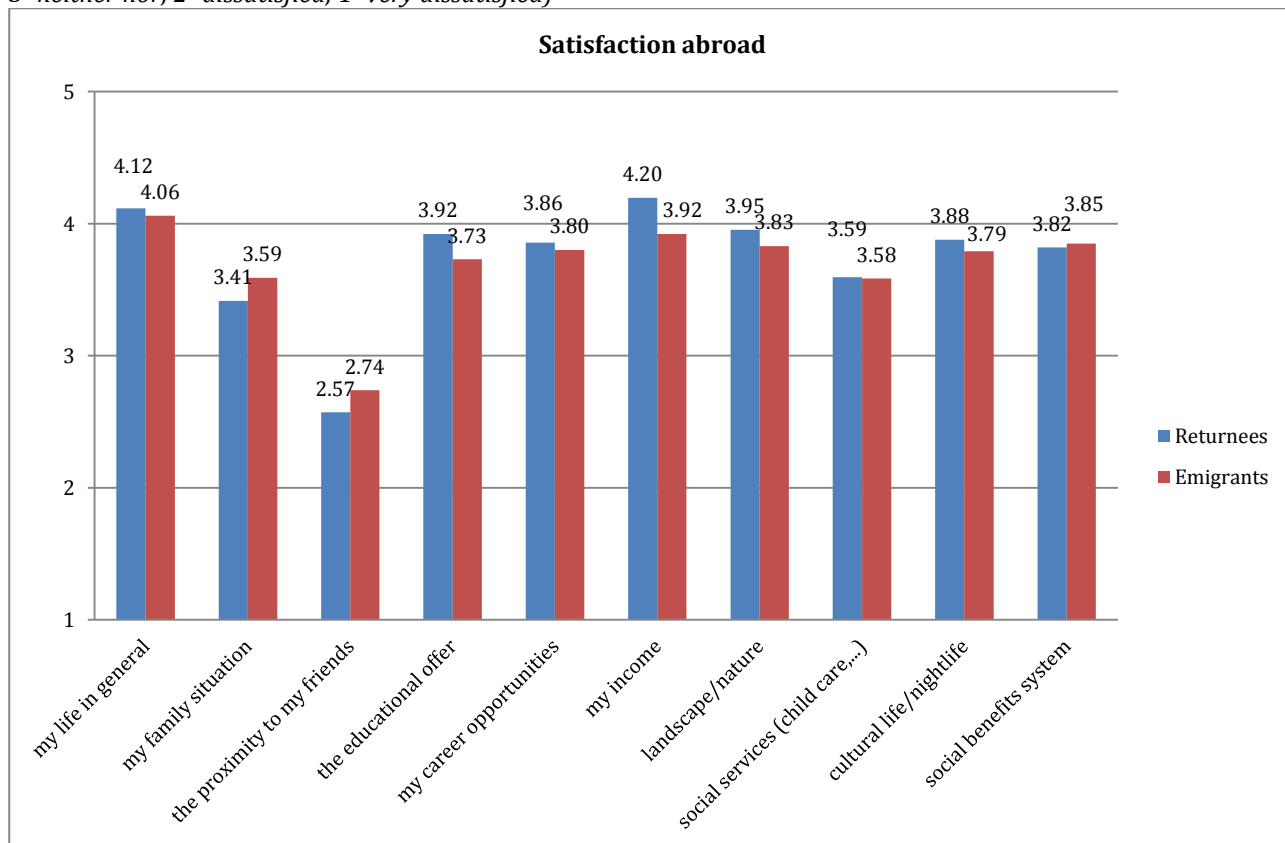
➤ For all three groups the income was the main factor influencing their decision to emigrate. There are significant differences among the groups concerning the motives nature, social security and social infrastructure → more important for Permanent Emigrants.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to Hungary?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to Hungary?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



➤ There are statistically significant differences among the groups in all factors except culture, nature and family. Permanent Emigrants: The aspects life general, income and career opportunities were the most important factors which influenced their decision. For Returnees: The factor family was the most important one.

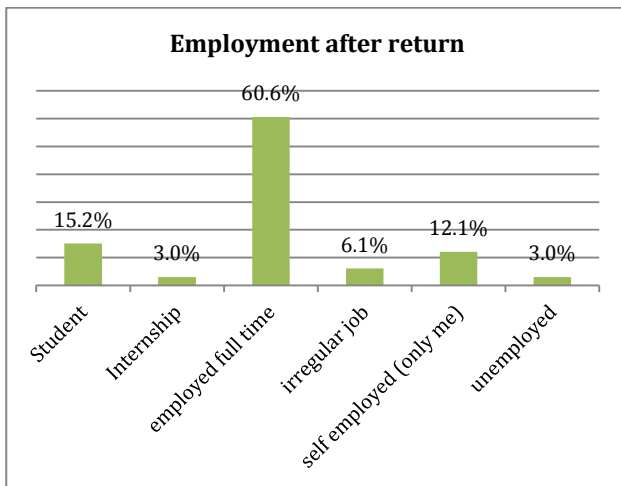
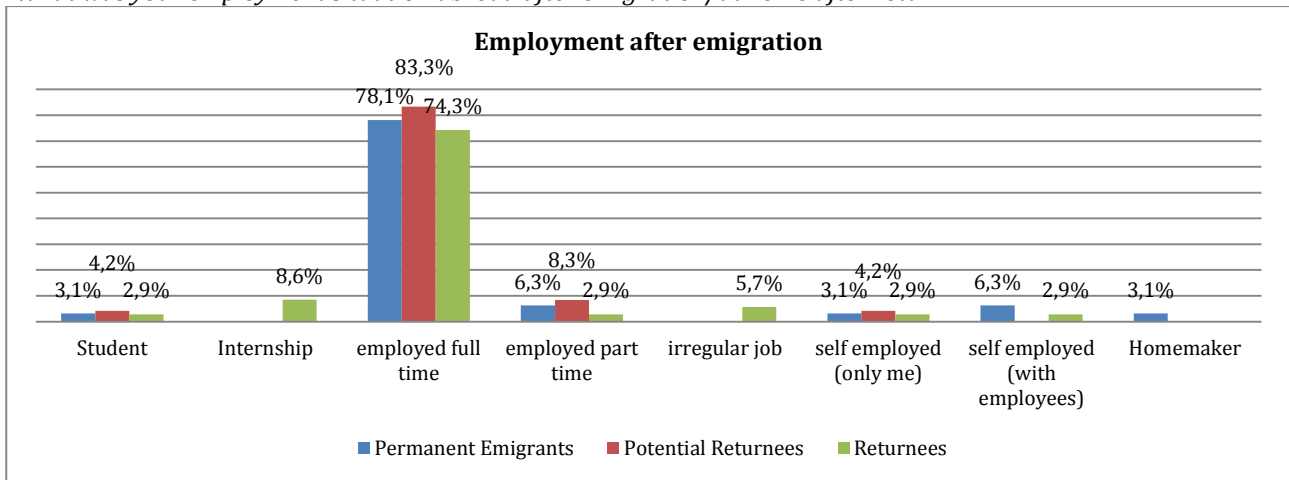
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5=very satisfied; 4=satisfied; 3=neither nor; 2=dissatisfied; 1=very dissatisfied)



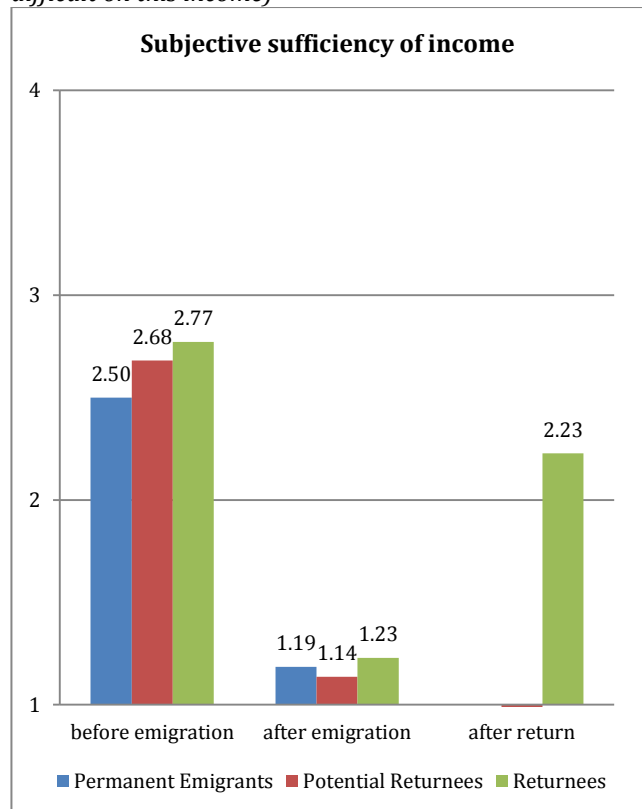
➤ There are no statistically significant differences between Returnees and Emigrants regarding the factors of satisfaction.

Employment and income

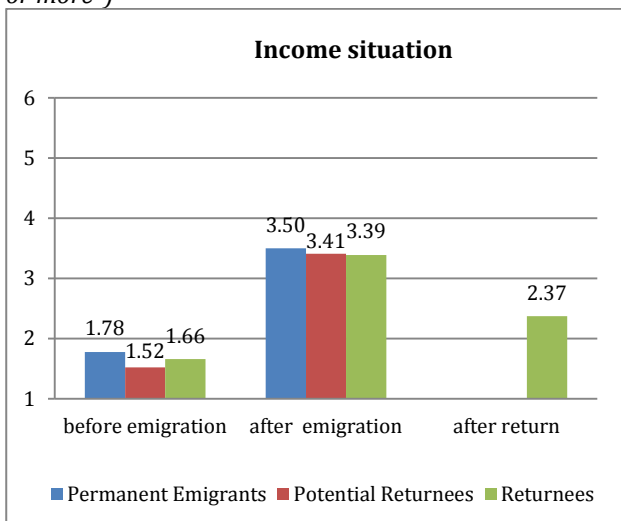
“What was your employment situation abroad after emigration/at home after return?”



“How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?” (1=living comfortable on this income; 2= coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



“What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?” (mean values; 1=<500€”; 2=“500-999€”; 3=“1000-1999€”; 4=“2000-2999€”; 5=“3000-4999€”; 6=“5000€ or more”)

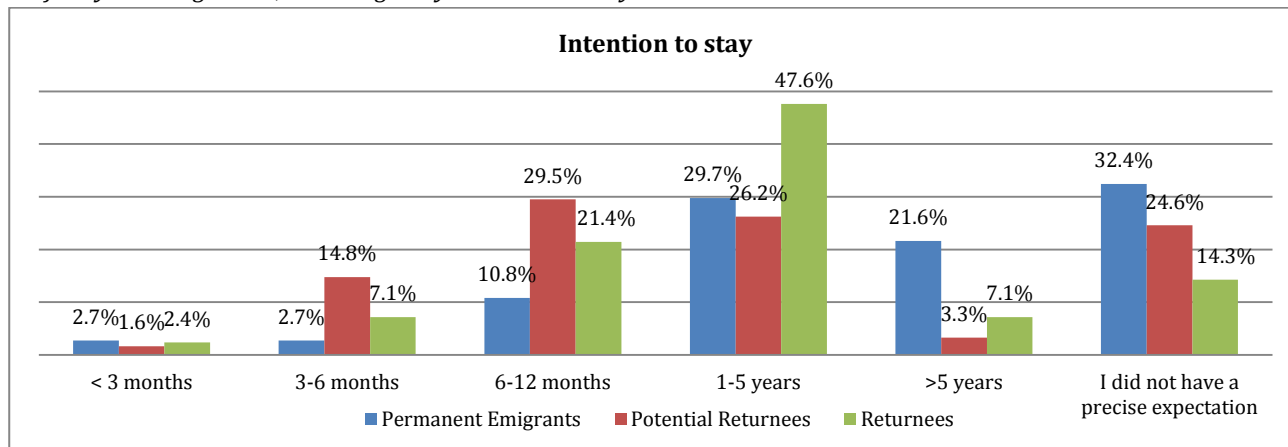


“While being abroad, were you working in a relatively/completely new professional field compared to your previous jobs or education?”

yes	42.3%	no	57.7%
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Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

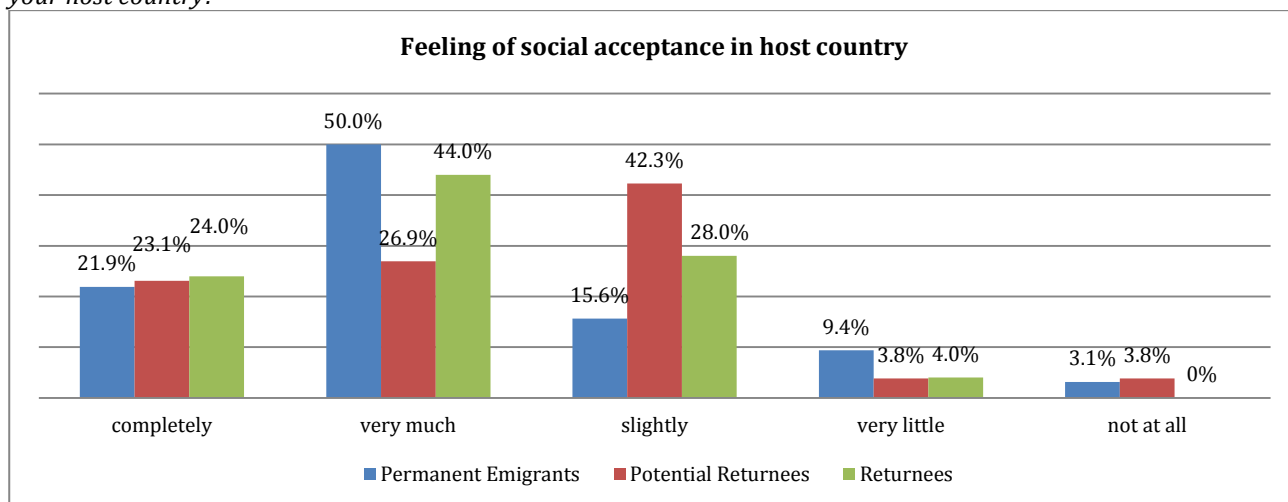
"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"



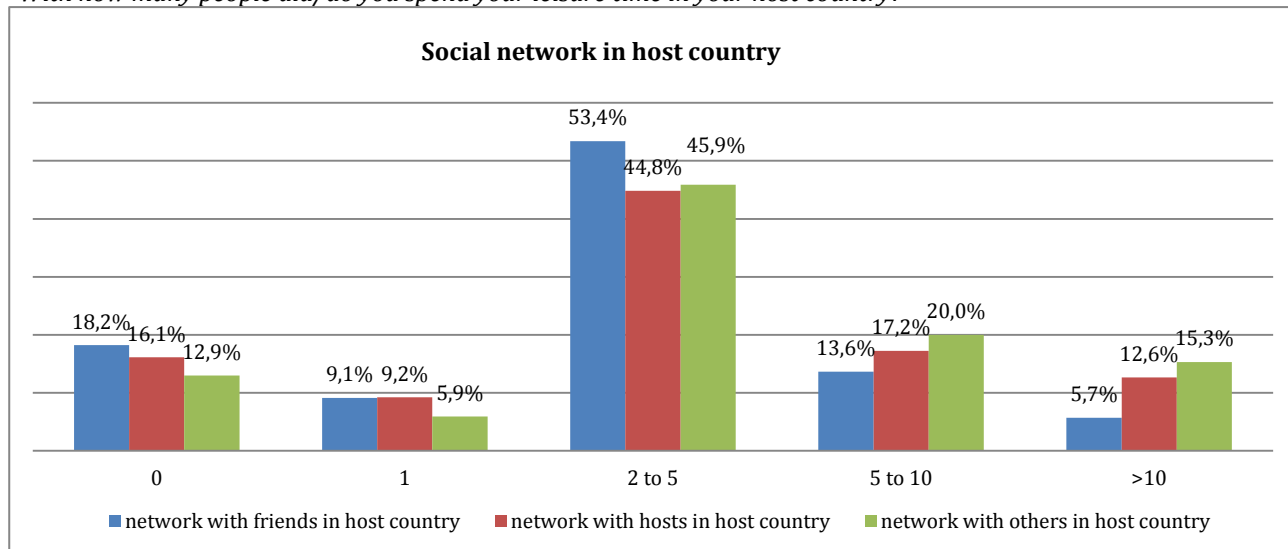
- Statistically significant: Permanent Emigrants more often had no precise expectation concerning their length of stay abroad. Almost half of the Returnees planned to stay abroad between 1 and 5 years.

Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"

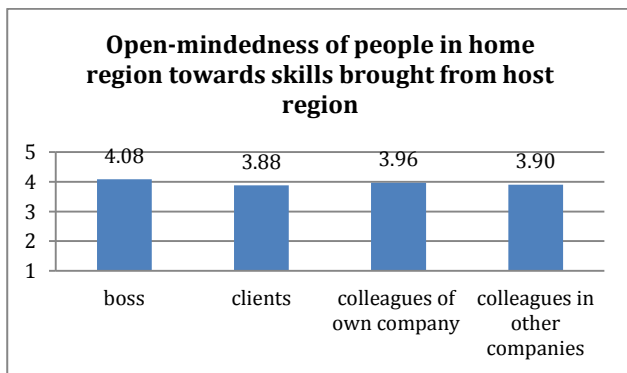
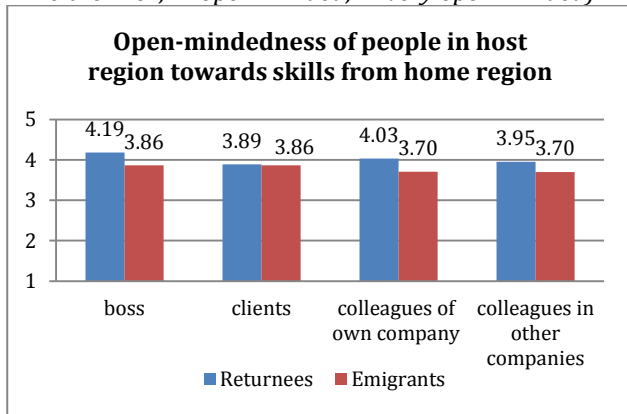
Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"



"With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?"



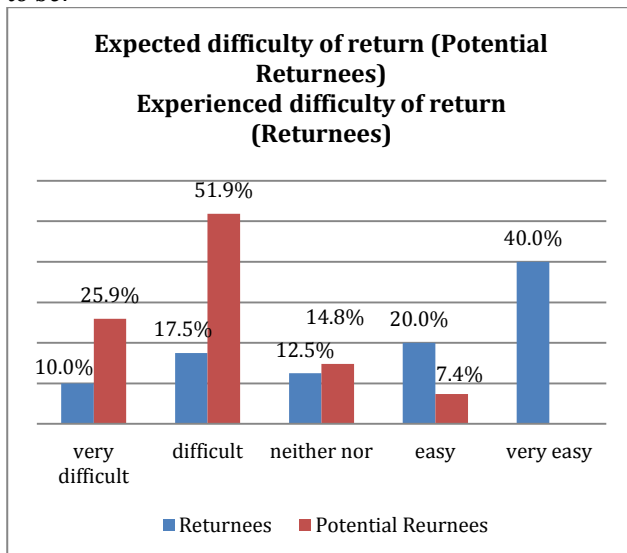
“How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?” (mean values; 1=very rejecting; 2=rejecting; 3=neither nor; 4=open-minded; 5=very open-minded)



Obstacles of a (potential) return

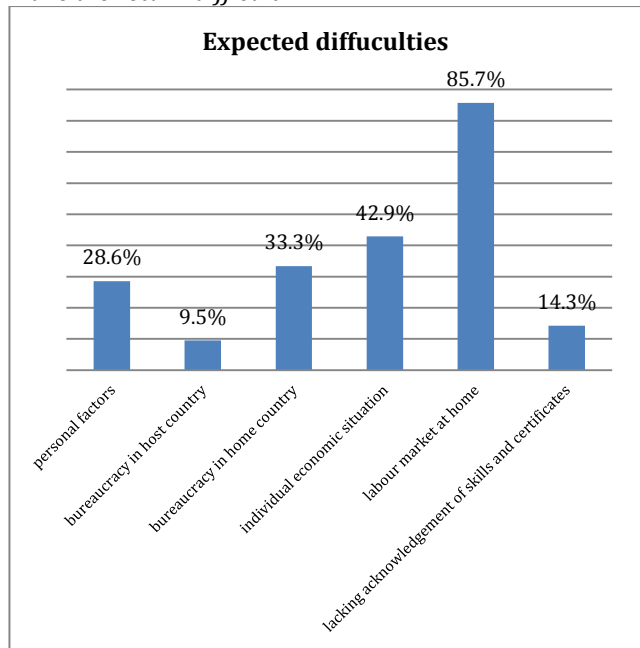
Returnees: “How easy was it for you to return home?”

Potential Returnees: “How easy do you expect the return to be?”

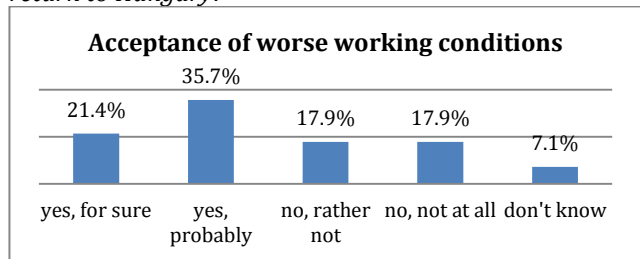


➤ There is a mismatch between the expected difficulties of the Potential Returnees towards the experienced difficulties of the Returnees → Potential Returnees expect the return more difficult than Returnees experienced.

Potential Returnees (those who expect the return very difficult or difficult): “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”



Potential Returnees: “Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realise your wish to return to Hungary?”

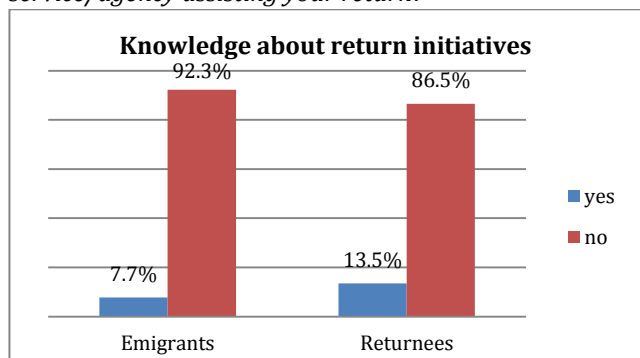


➤ ~57% of the Potential Returnees would accept worse working conditions at home to realise their return.

Potential Returnees: “Have you already made plans for your return?”

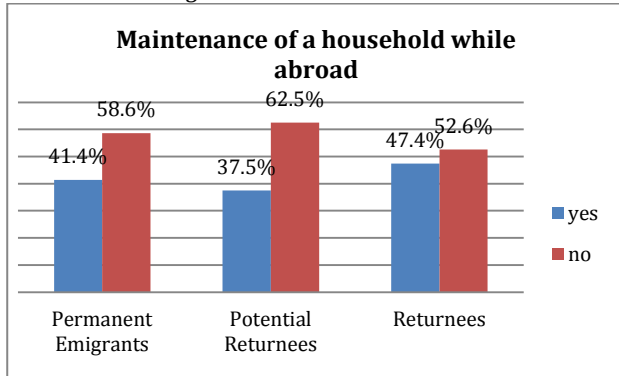
yes	34.4%	no	65.6%
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“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?”

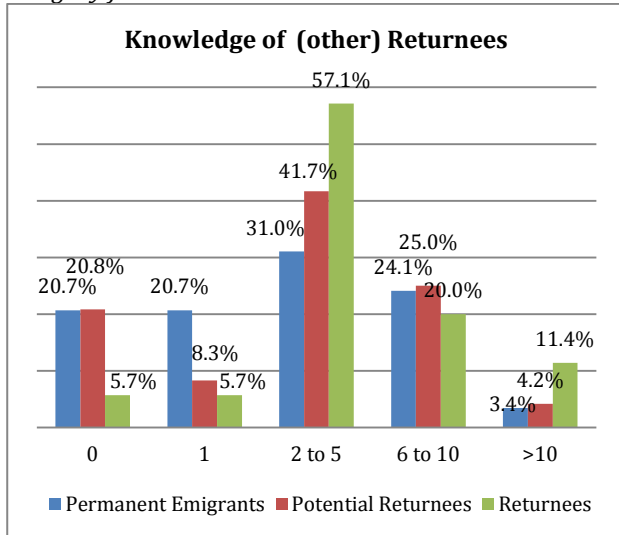


Social factors and the decision process

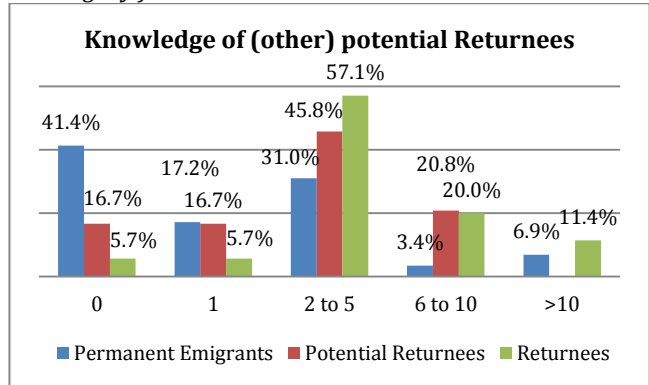
Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad."



"How many people do you know that have returned to Hungary from abroad?"

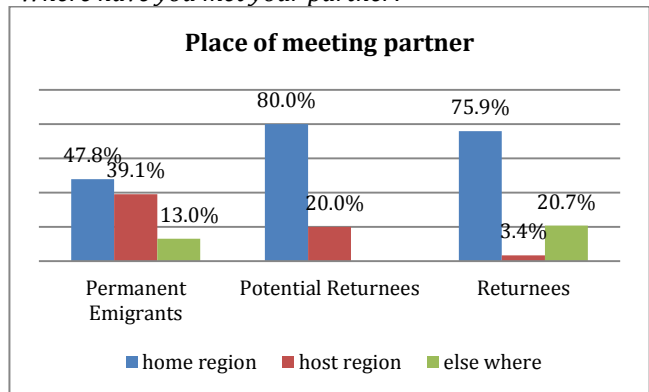


"How many people do you know who consider returning to Hungary from abroad?"



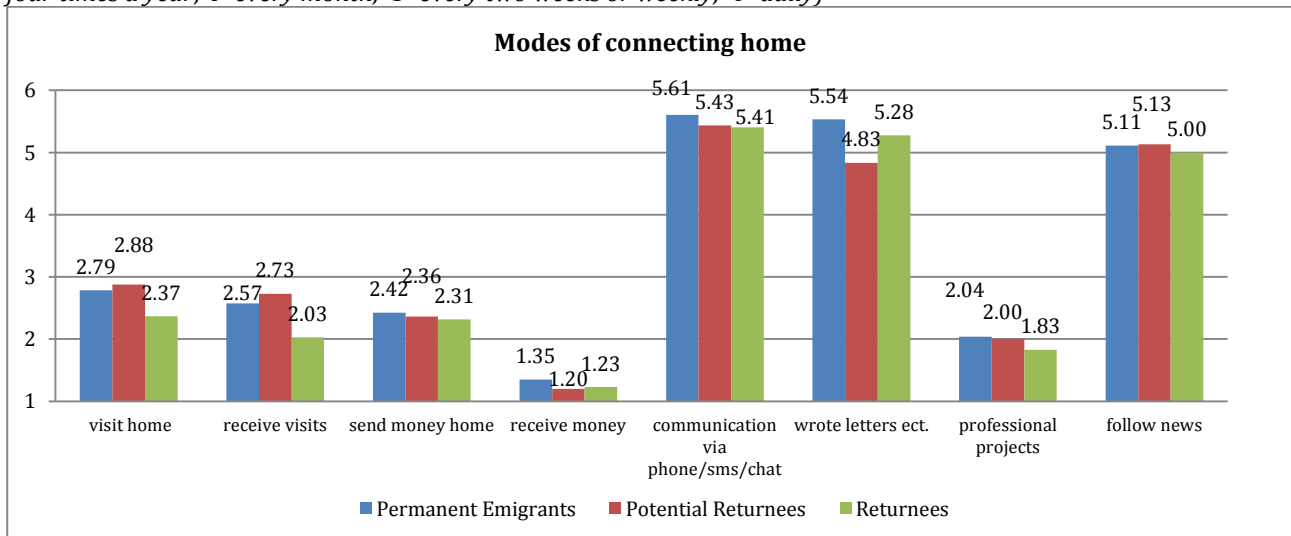
➤ Statistically significant: Returnees know more Returnees and other Potential Returnees.

"Where have you met your partner?"



➤ Statistically significant: Returnees and Potential Returnees have met their current partner more often in the home region than Permanent Emigrants.

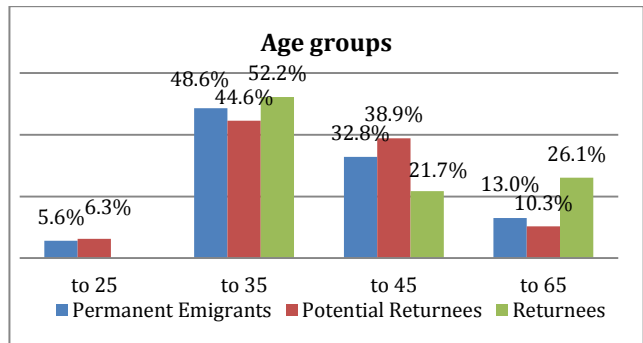
"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)



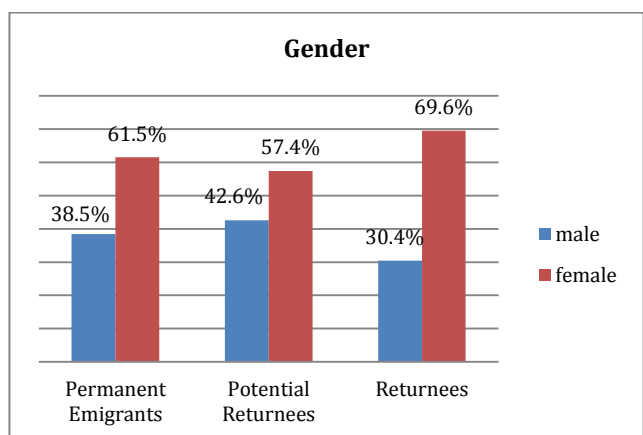
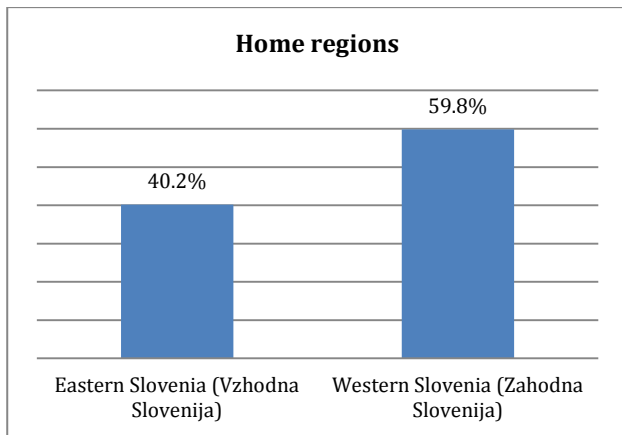
Slovenia

Populations, geography, key descriptors

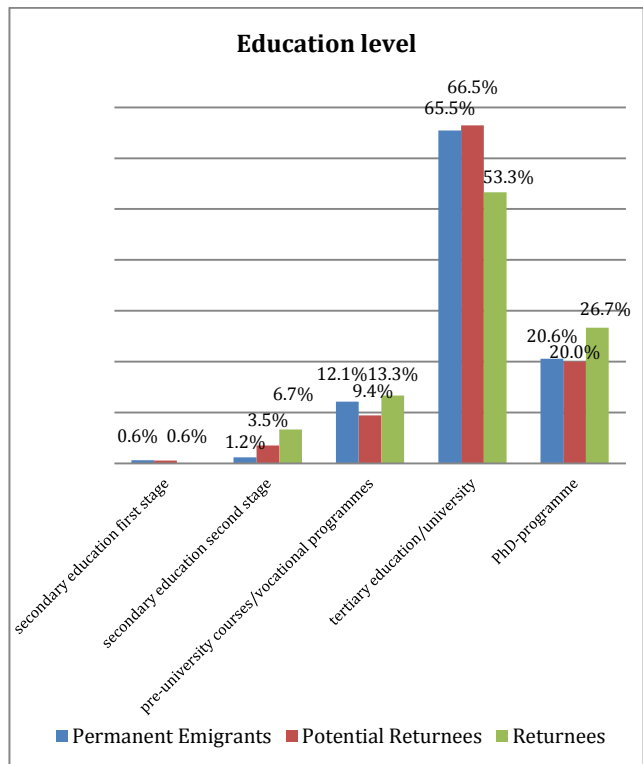
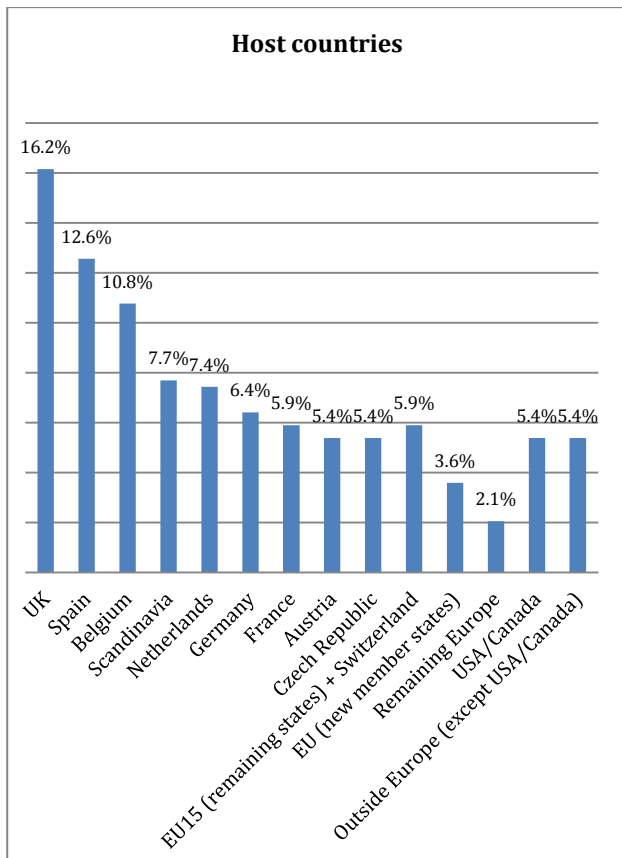
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	375	94.2%	Potential Returnees	18	50.0%
			Permanent Emigrants	18	50.0%
Returnees	23	5.8%	Region Returnees	14	60.9%
			Country Returnees	9	39.1%
Total	398	100			

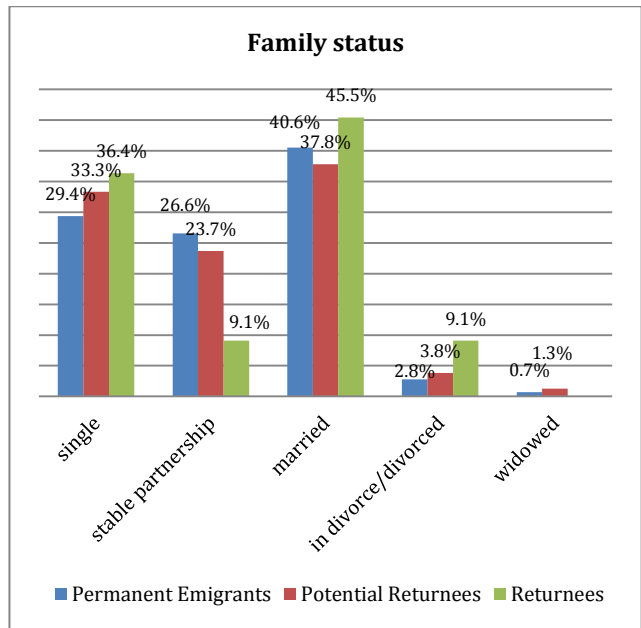
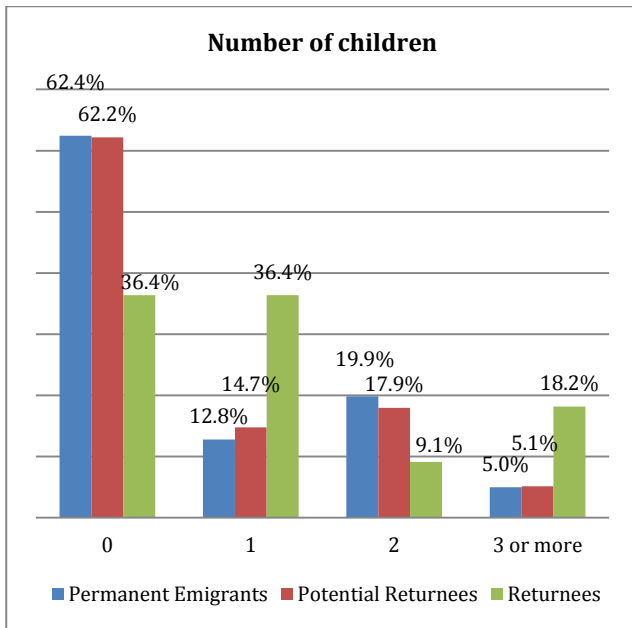


➤ There is no statistically significant difference among the three groups concerning the age.



➤ The Slovenian sample consists of more women than men (~60% women vs. ~40% men). For Returnees the share of women is ~70%.

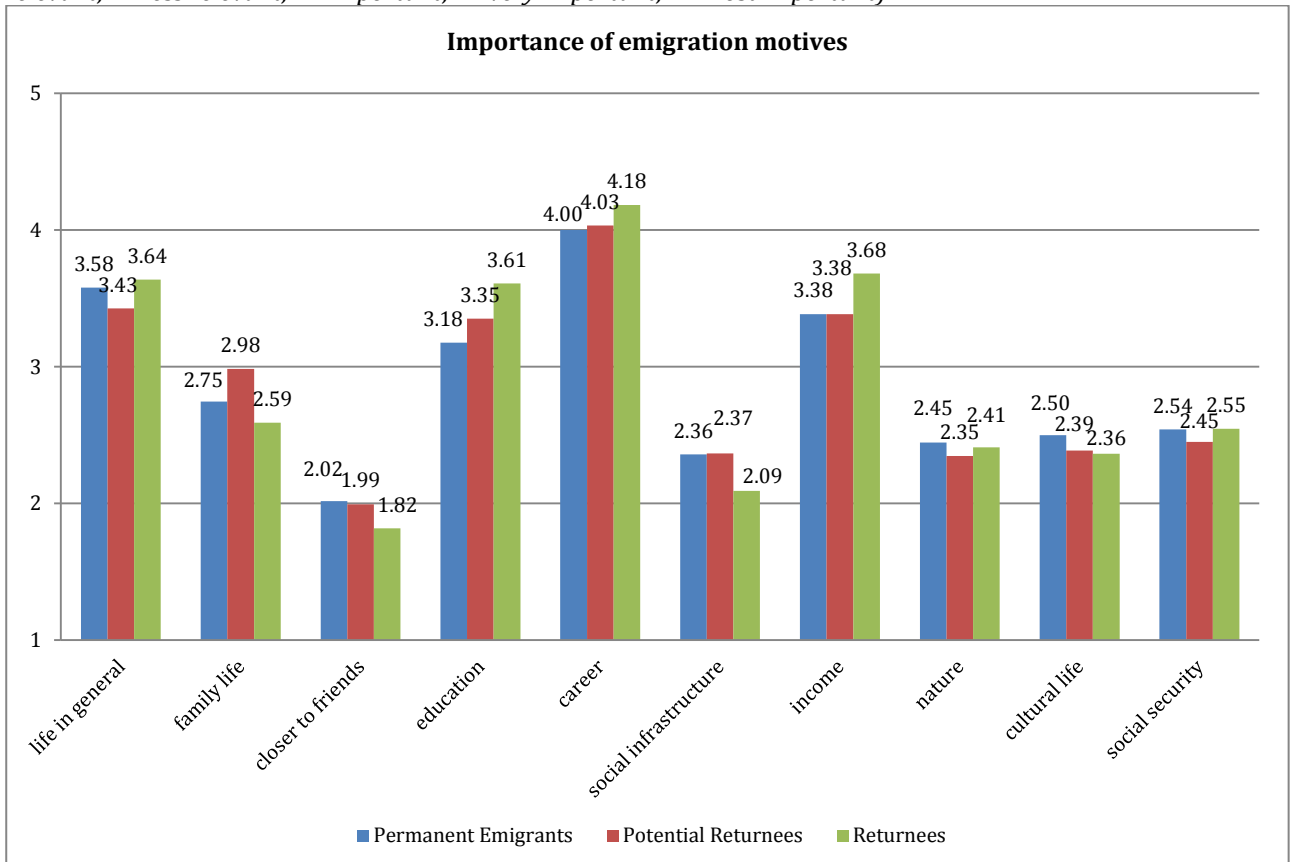




Thematic analysis

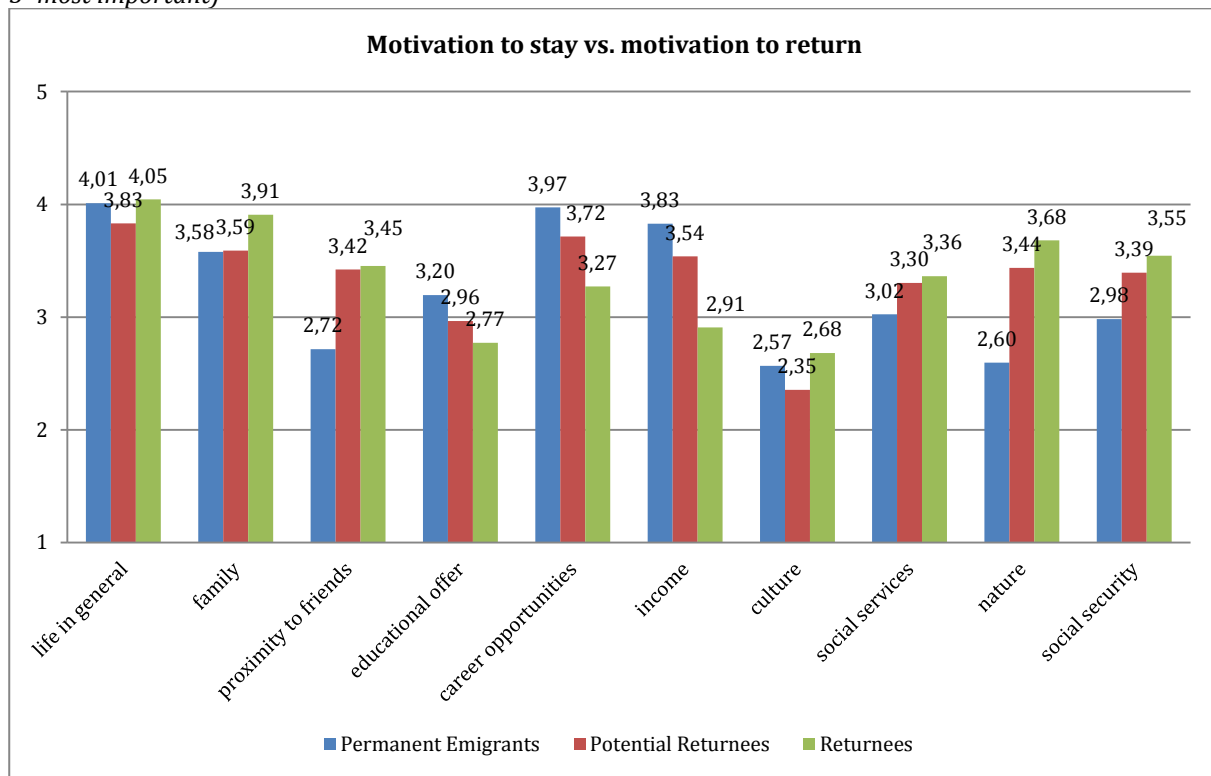
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

“How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?” (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



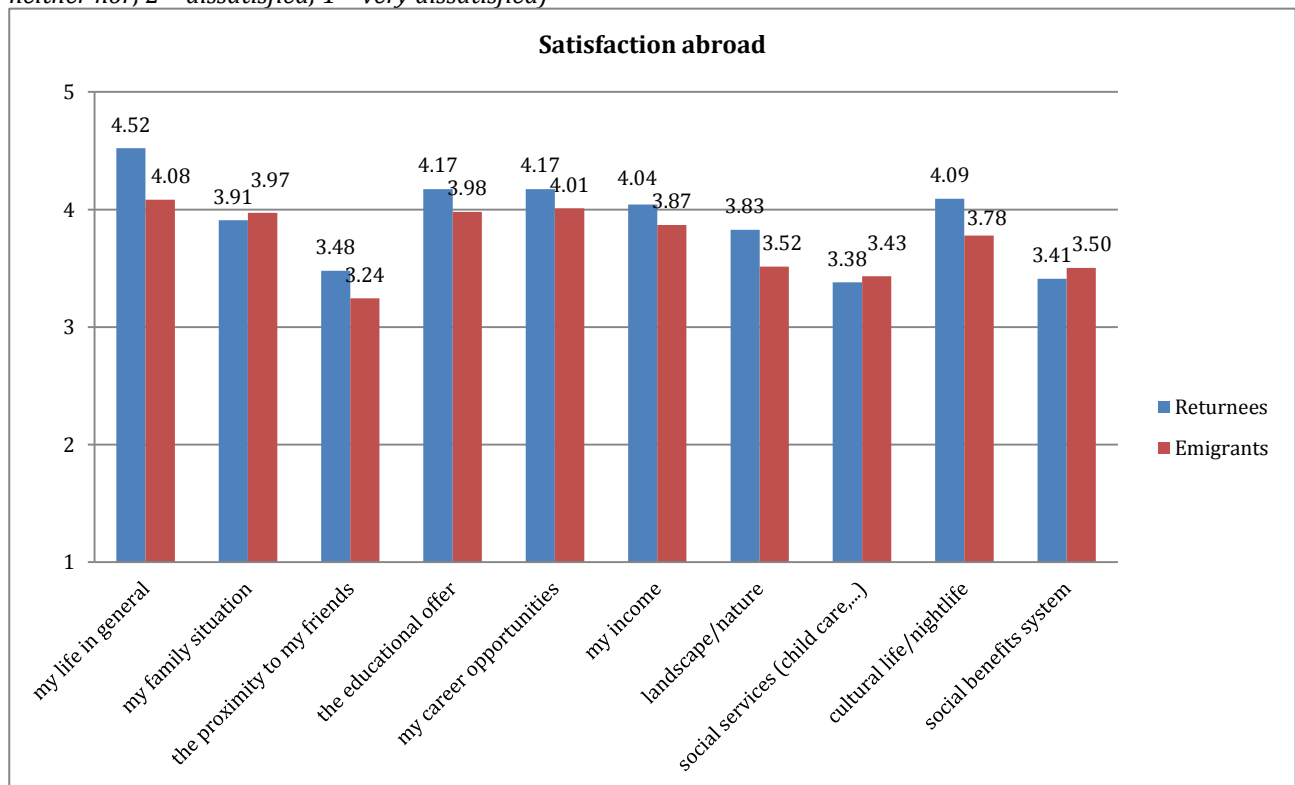
➤ For all three groups: The career opportunity was the main motive to emigrate.

Returnees: "How important are the following factors in your decision to move back to Slovenia?"; Potential Returnees: "How important is it for you to improve the following factors with your return to Slovenia?"; Permanent Emigrants: "What factors are important in your decision to stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=not at all important; 5=most important)



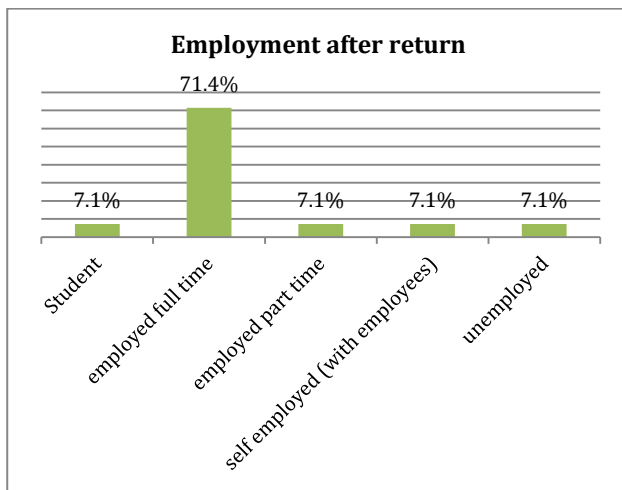
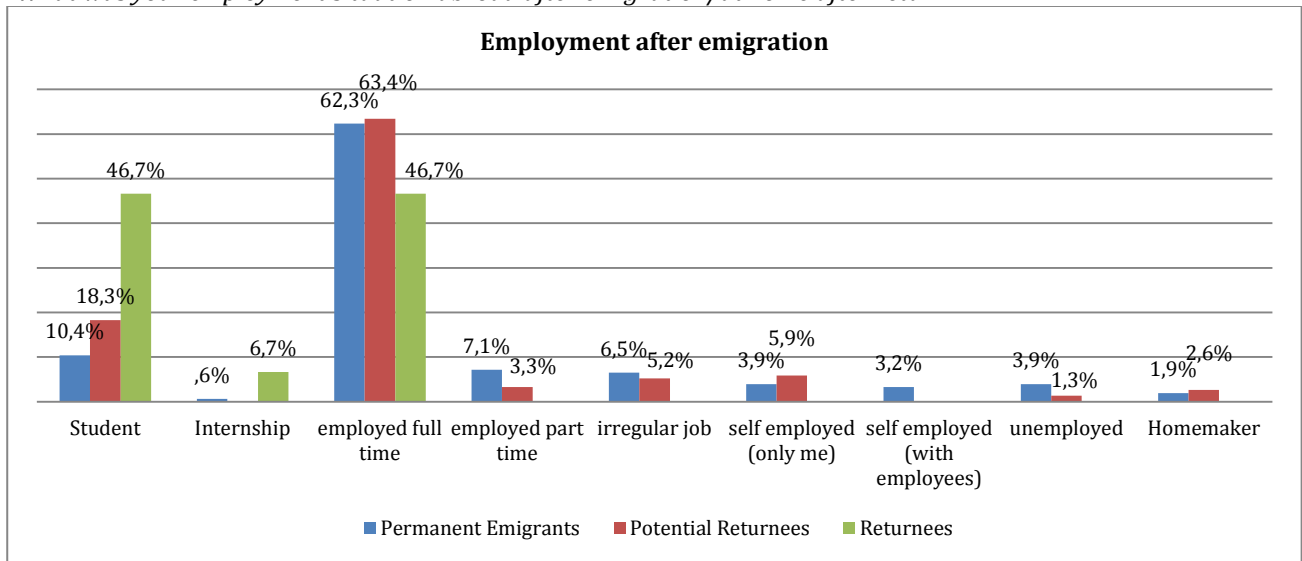
➤ For Permanent Emigrants the career opportunities and the income were the two main aspects influencing their motivation to stay abroad. For Returnees these aspects were less important in context of return.

Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?" Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither nor; 2 = dissatisfied; 1 = very dissatisfied)



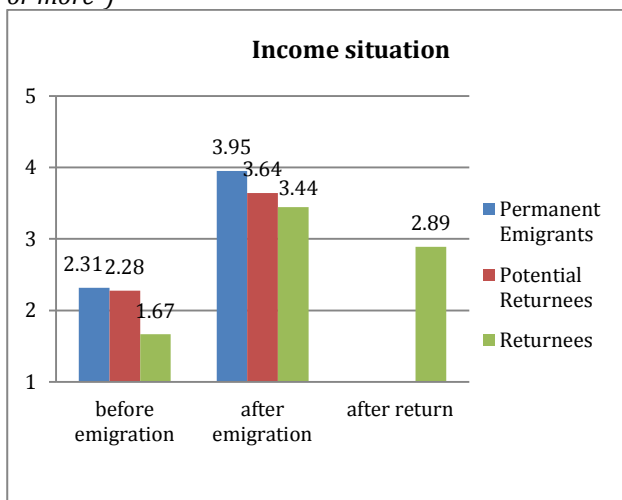
Employment and income

"What was your employment situation abroad after emigration/at home after return?"

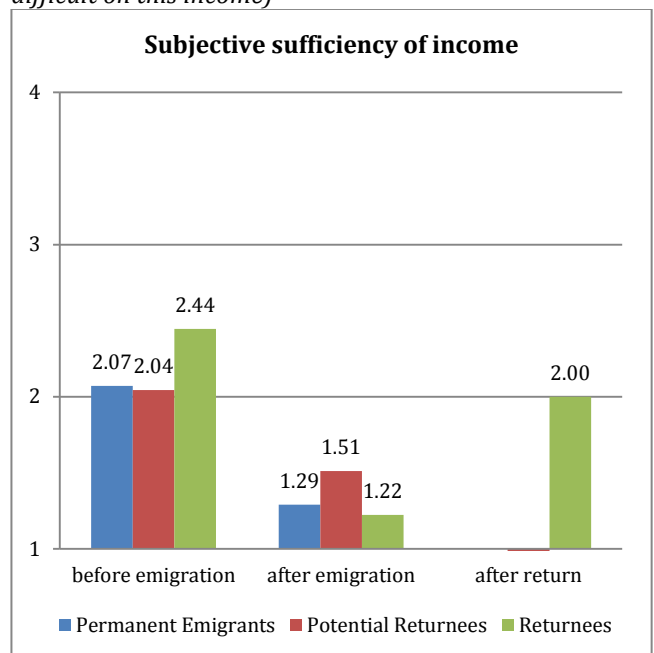


➤ Returnees → (!!N=14!!)

"What about your average monthly household income before emigration, after emigration and after return?" (mean values; 1="<500€"; 2="500-999€"; 3="1000-1999€"; 4="2000-2999€"; 5="3000-4999€"; 6="5000€ or more")



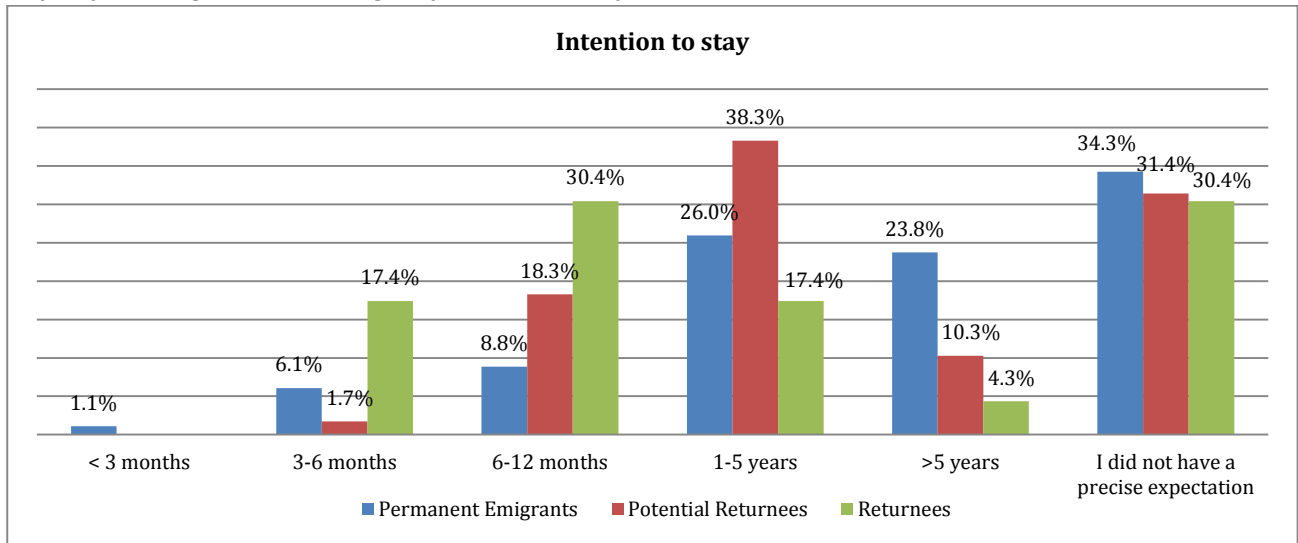
"How good could you live on your income before emigration, after emigration and after return?" (1=living comfortable on this income; 2=coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)



➤ Returnees → (!!N=8/9!!); Permanent Emigrants earned a higher income after going abroad than Potential Returnees and Returnees. Although Returnees earned the lowest income of all, they lived most comfortably during their stay abroad.

Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

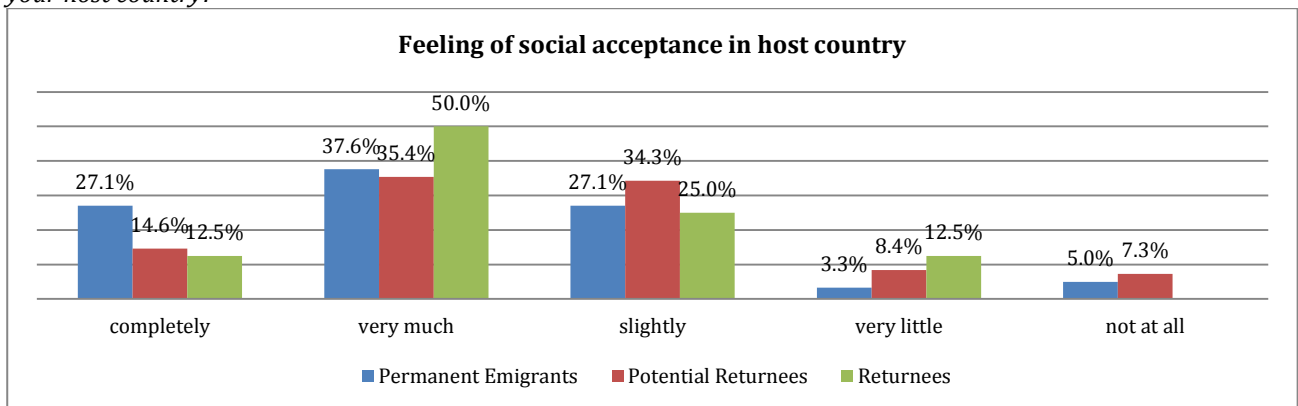
"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"



- ~48% of the Returnees intended to stay less than one year abroad (for Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees the share is >20%).

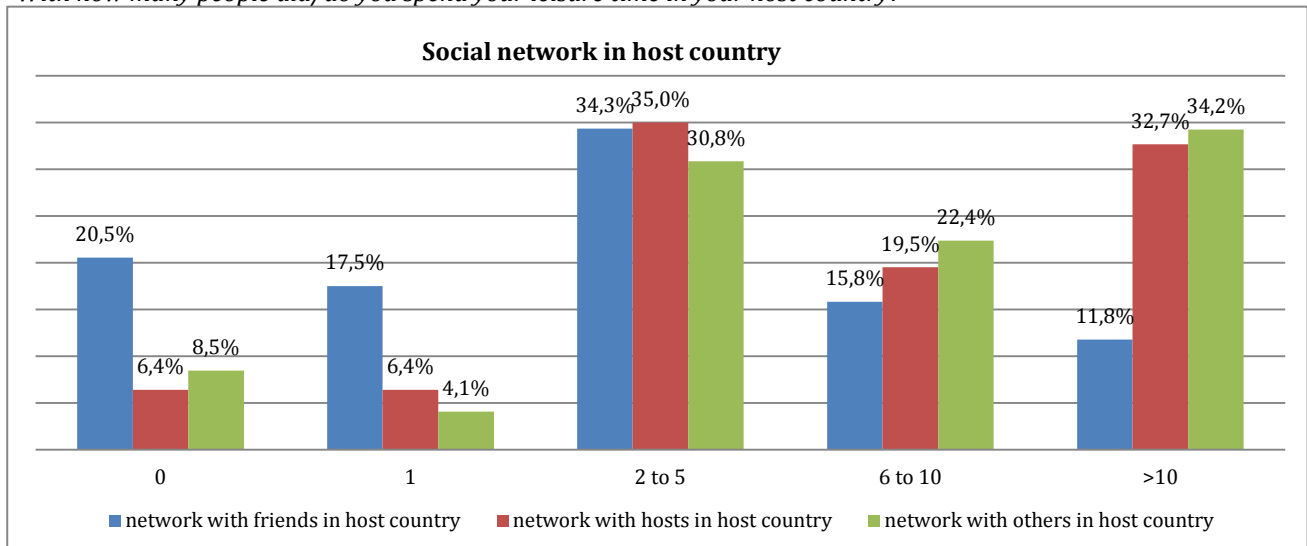
Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"

Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"

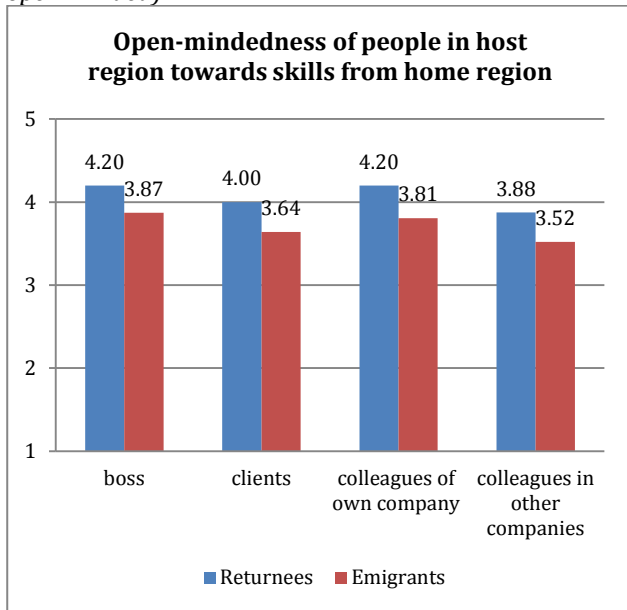


- There exist significant differences among the three groups → Permanent Emigrants feel more accepted in host country (65% completely or very much) than Potential Returnees feel and Returnees felt.

"With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?"



“How open-minded are/were people in your professional environment towards knowledge and skills that you brought in?” (mean values; 1 = very rejecting; 2 = rejecting; 3 = neither nor; 4 = open-minded; 5 = very open-minded)

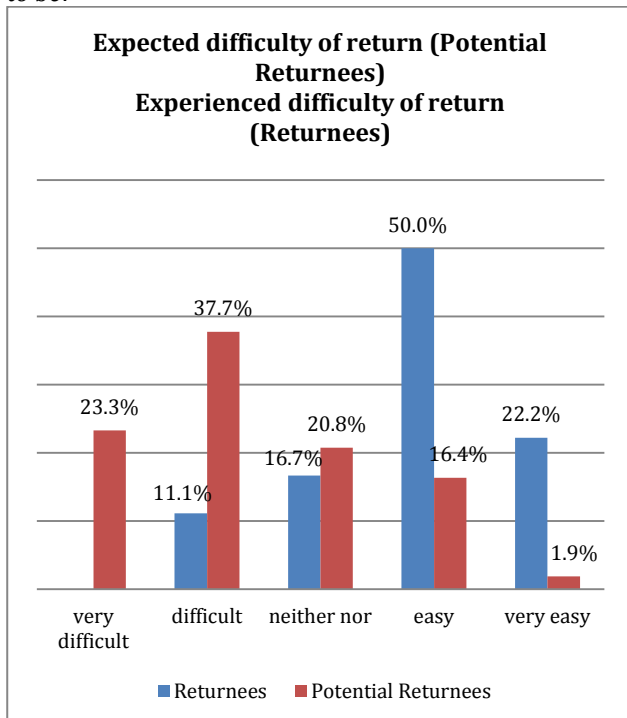


➤ Returnees → (!!N=10!!)

Obstacles of a (potential) return

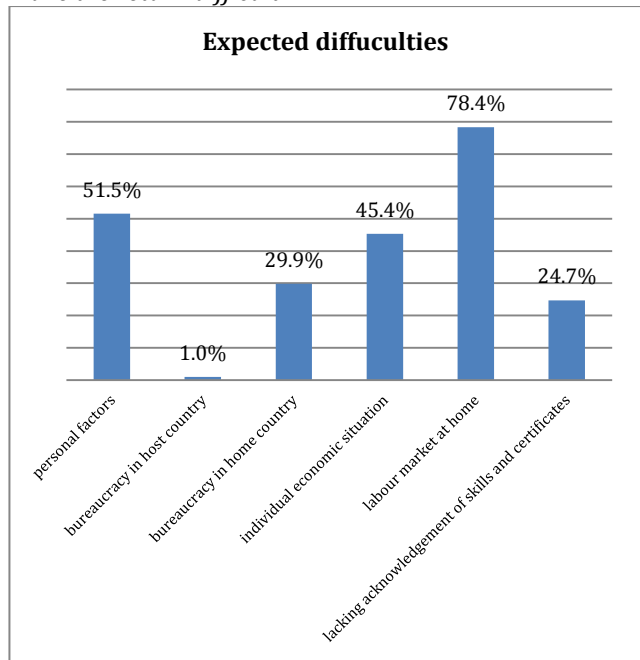
Returnees: “How easy was it for you to return home?”

Potential Returnees: “How easy do you expect the return to be?”

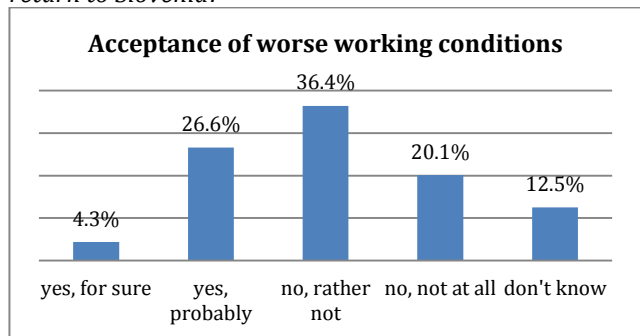


➤ There is a mismatch between the expected difficulties of the Potential Returnees versus the experienced difficulties of the Returnees → Potential Returnees expect the return to be more difficult than Returnees experienced.

Potential Returnees (those who expect the return very difficult or difficult): “Which factors do you expect to make the return difficult?”



Potential Returnees: “Would you accept worse working conditions (e.g. a lower salary, a less skilled position, a different profession) in order to realise your wish to return to Slovenia?”

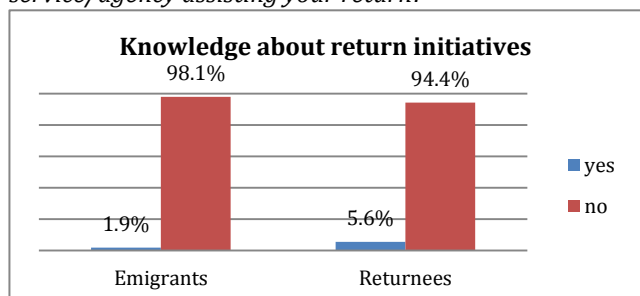


➤ Only ~31% of the Potential Returnees would accept worse working conditions to realise their wish to return.

Potential Returnees: “Have you already made plans for your return?”

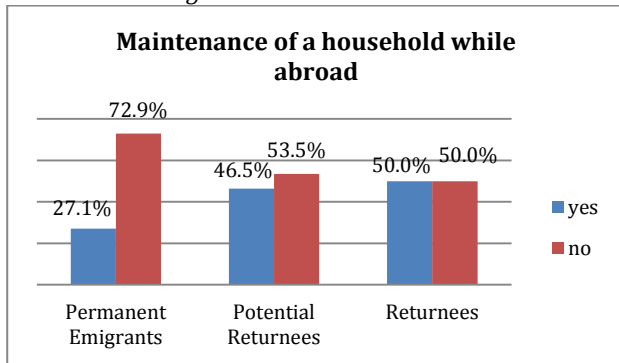
yes	22.6%	no	77.4%
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“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?”

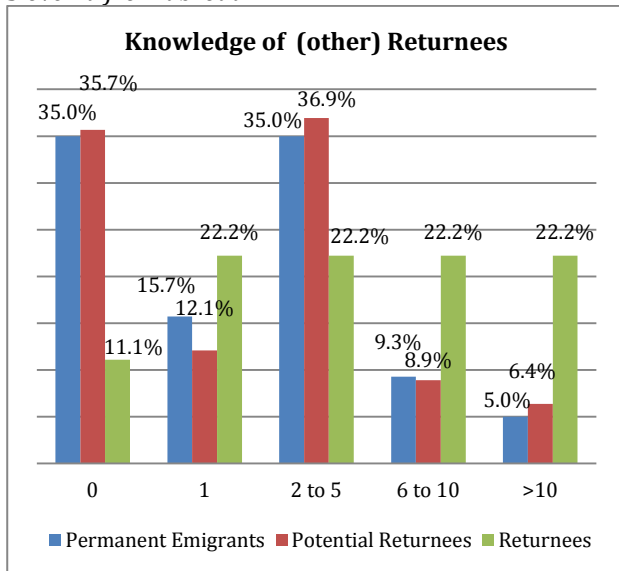


Social factors and the decision process

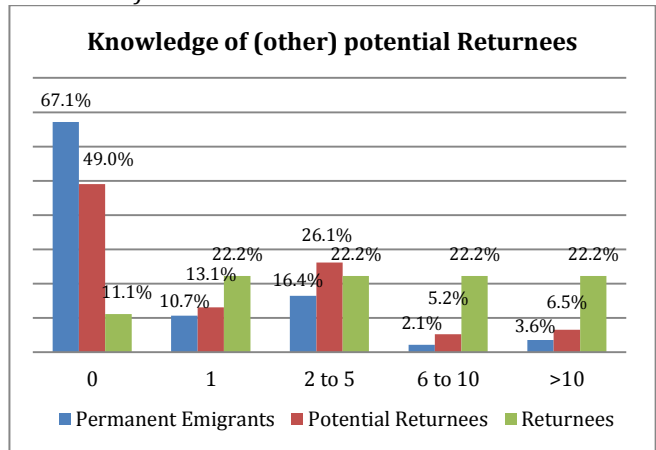
Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad."



"How many people do you know that have returned to Slovenia from abroad?"

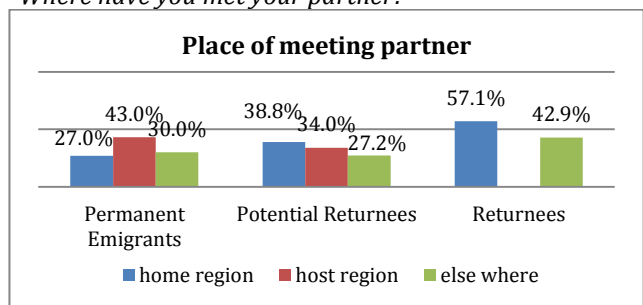


"How many people do you know who consider to return to Slovenia from abroad?"



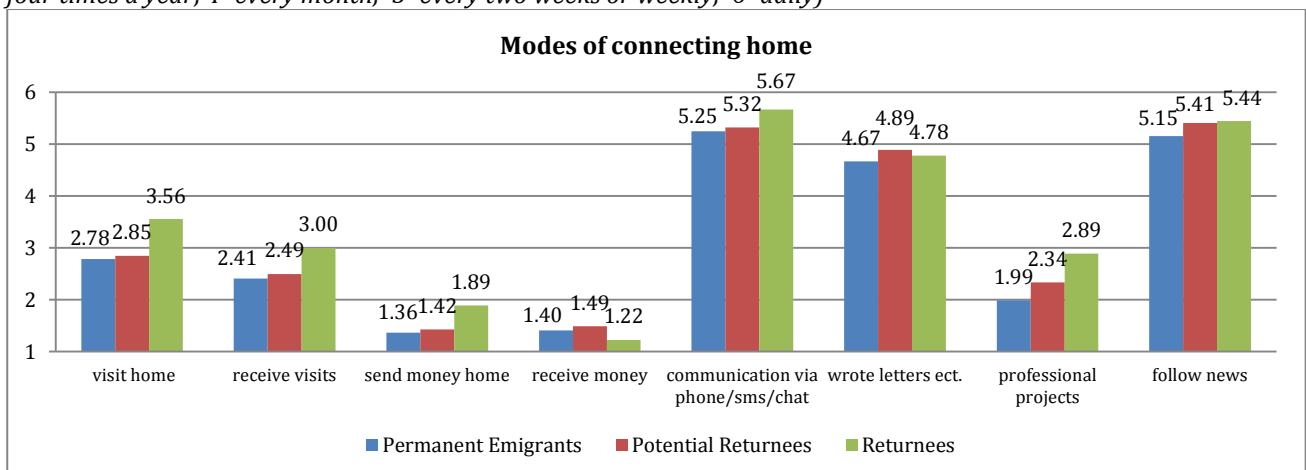
- Returnees → (!!N=9!!). There are significant differences among the groups. Returnees know more other Returnees and Potential Returnees. ~67% of the Permanent Emigrants know nobody who currently lives abroad and is willing to return to Slovenia.

"Where have you met your partner?"



- Returnees → (!!N=7!!). Returnees met their current partner more often in the home region than Permanent Emigrants and Potential Returnees.

"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)

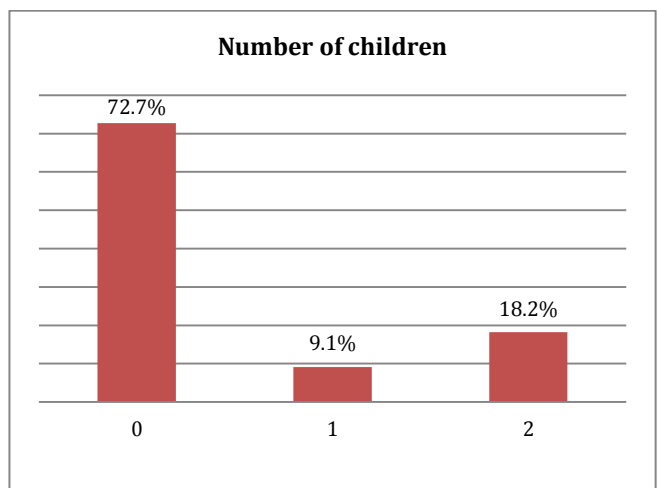
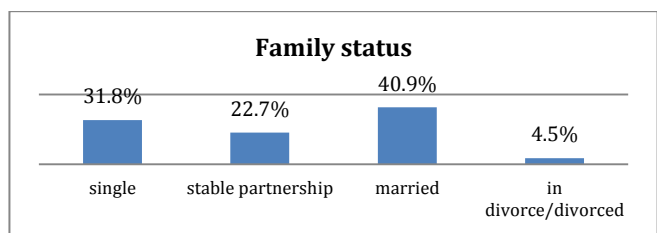
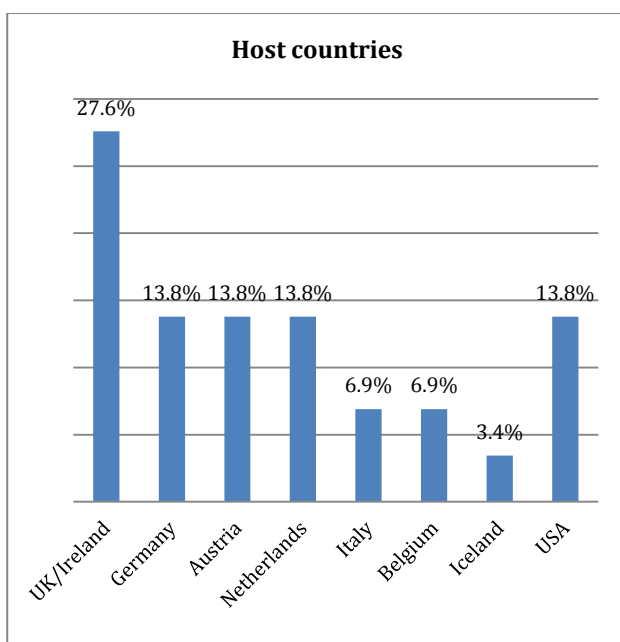
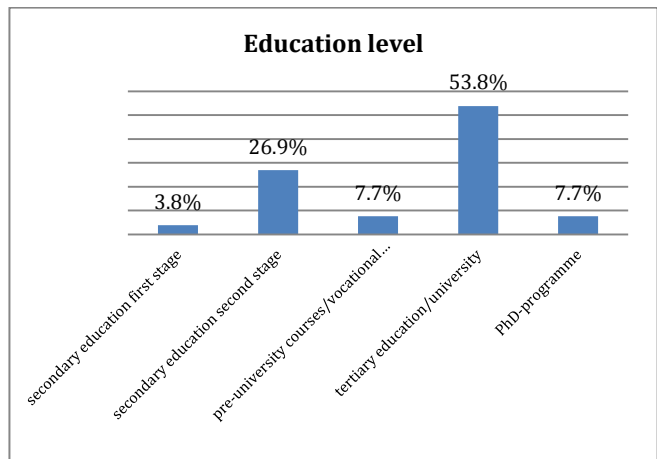
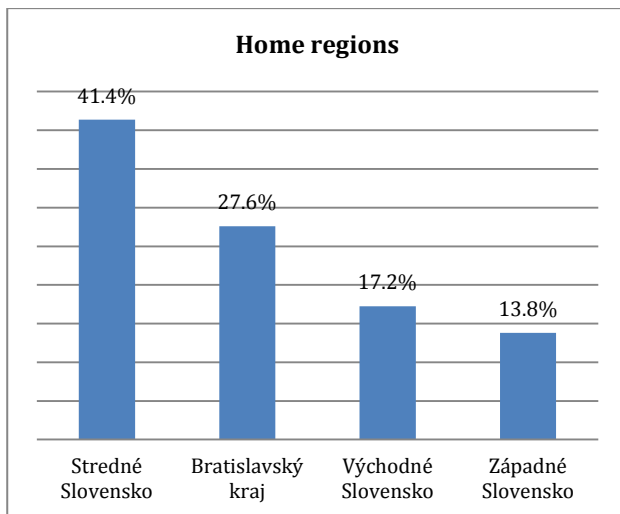
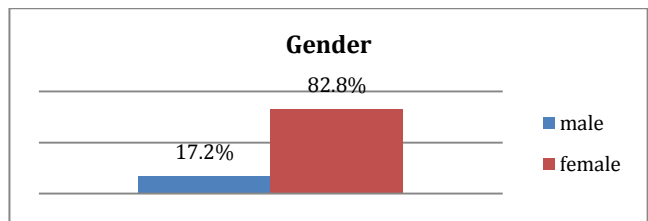
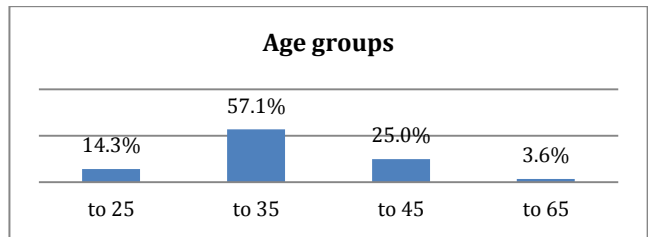


Slovakia

Populations, geography, key descriptors

General information: Because of the small number of the Slovakian sample (N=29!), this report provides only a marginal analysis. Therefore, the validity and the representativity of the outcomes are highly restricted.

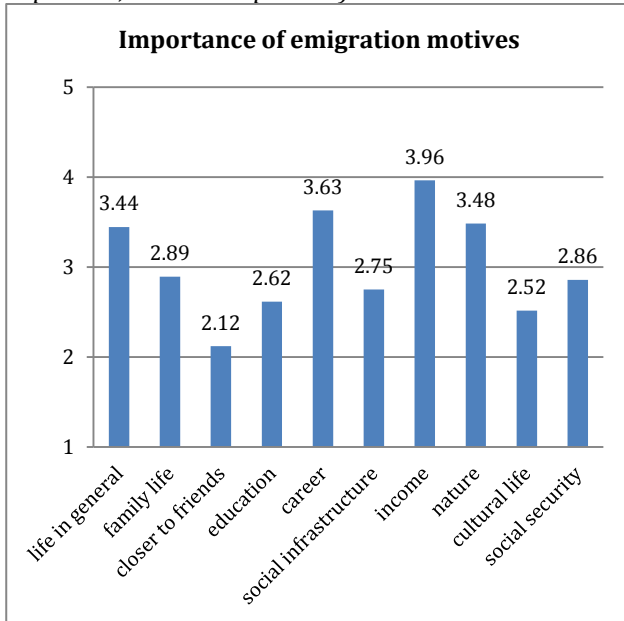
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	23	79.3	Potential Returnees	9	39.1%
			Permanent Emigrants	14	60.9%
Returnees	6	20.7	Region Returnees	6	100.0%
			Country Returnees	0	0.0%
Total	29	100			



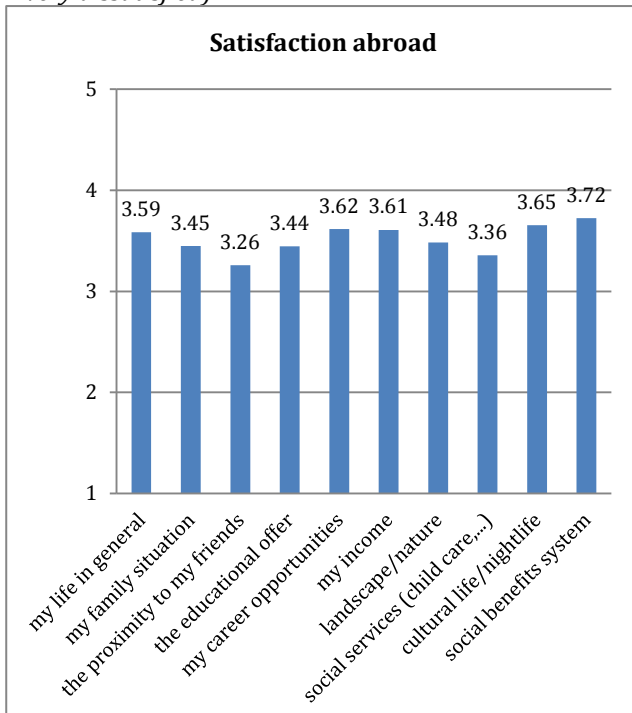
Thematic analysis

Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

“How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?” (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)

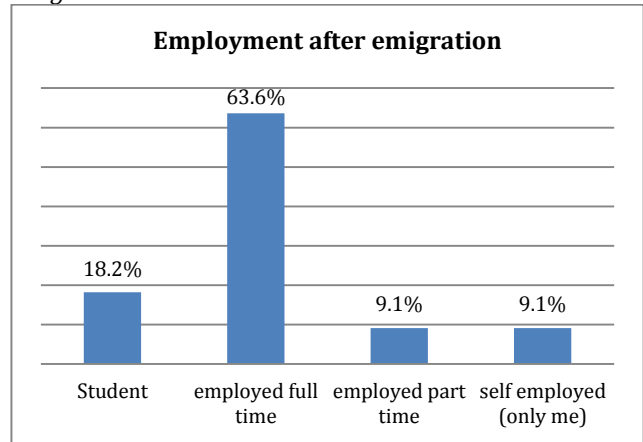


Returnees: “How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?”
 Emigrants: “How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?” (mean values; 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither nor; 2 = dissatisfied; 1 = very dissatisfied)

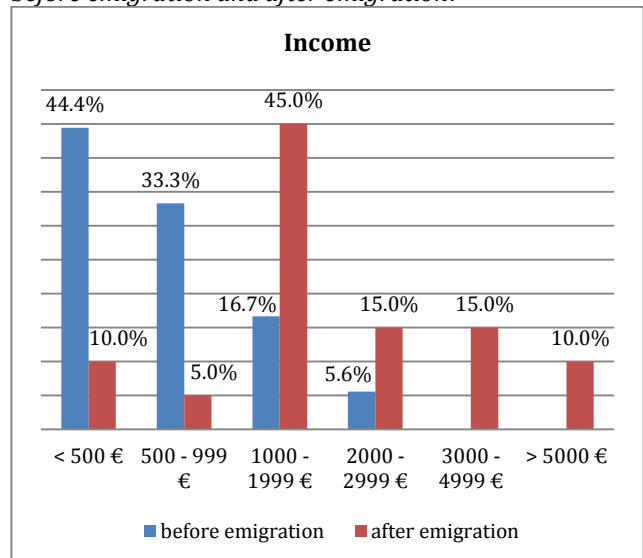


Employment and income

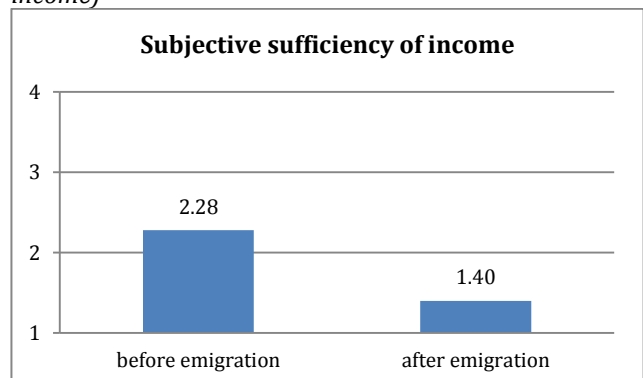
“What was your employment situation abroad after emigration?”



“What about your average monthly household income before emigration and after emigration?”

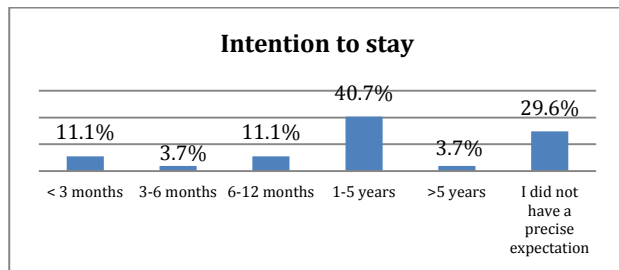


“How good could you live on your income before emigration and after emigration?” (1=living comfortable on this income; 2=coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)

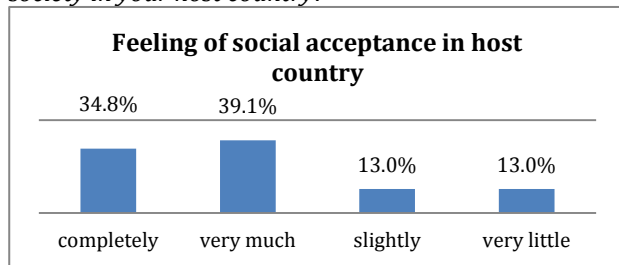


Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

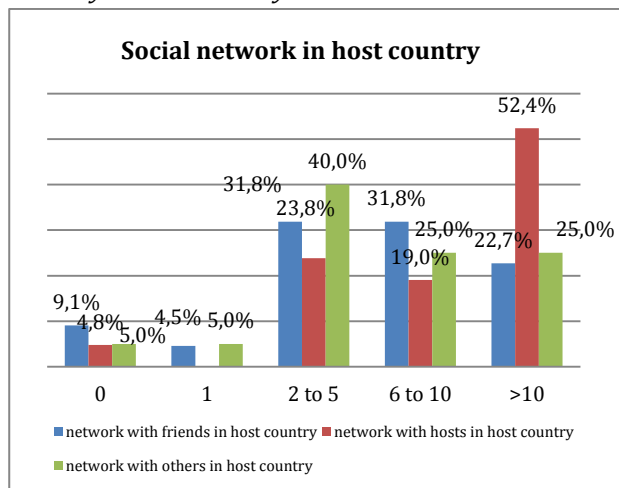
“Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?”



Returnees: “How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?”
 Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: “How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?”

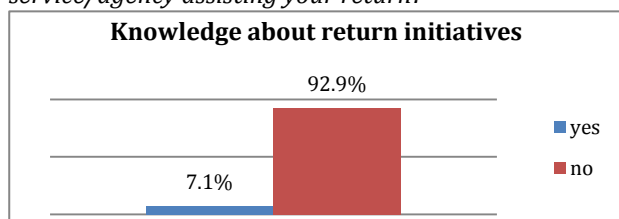


“With how many people did/do you spend your leisure time in your host country?”



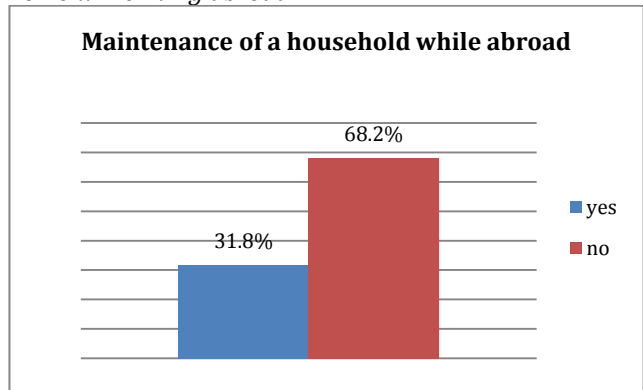
Obstacles of a (potential) return

“Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?”

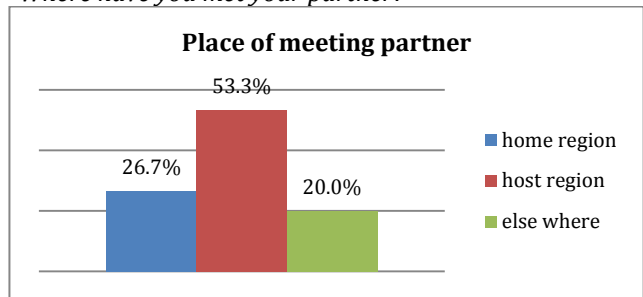


Social factors and the decision process

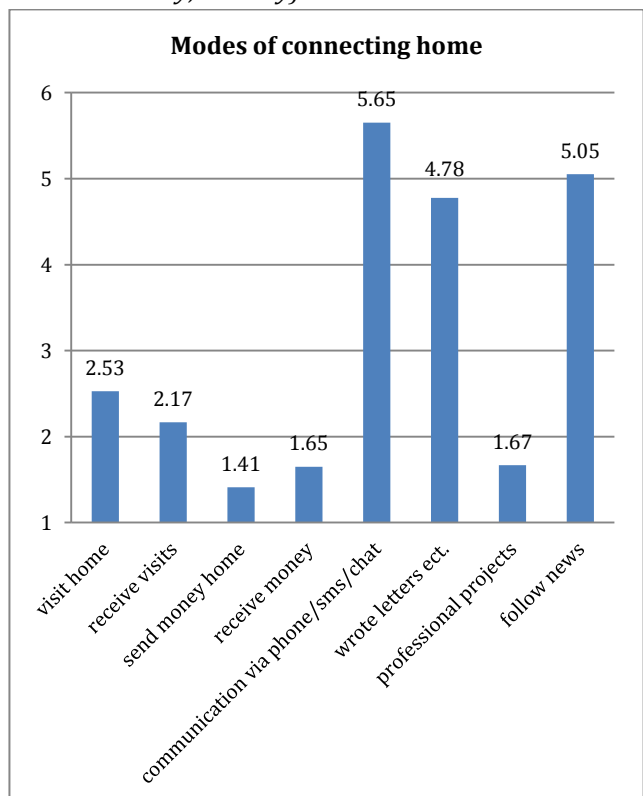
Returnees: “I maintained a household home while living abroad”; Emigrants: “I am maintaining a household home while living abroad.”



“Where have you met your partner?”



“How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?” (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)

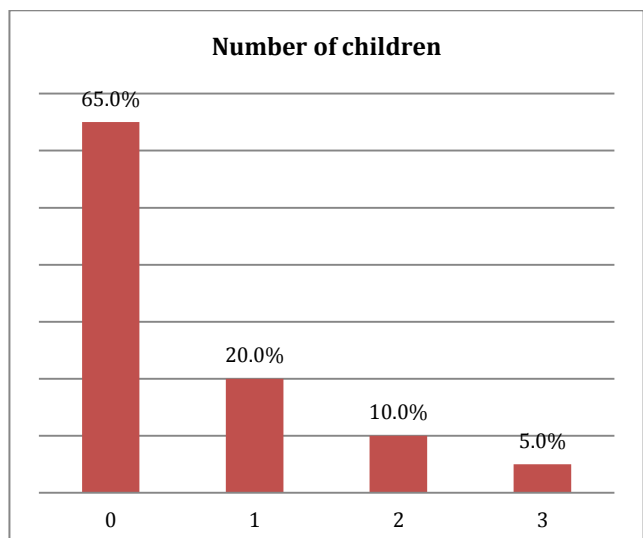
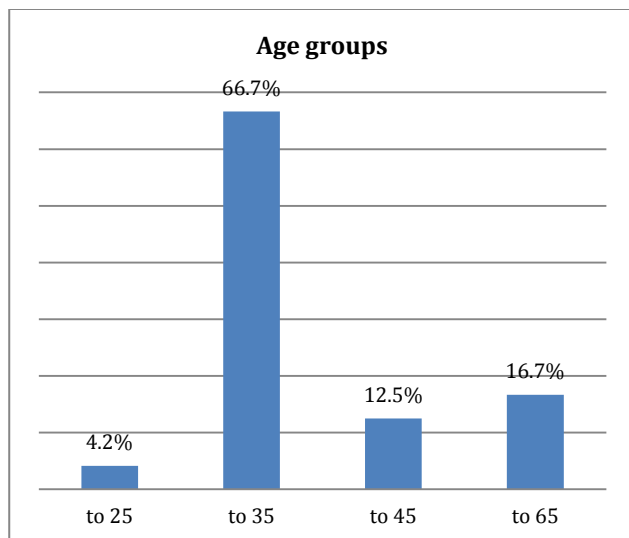
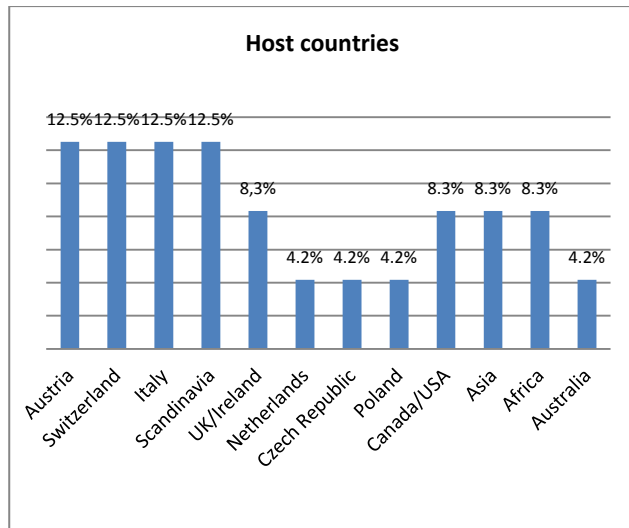
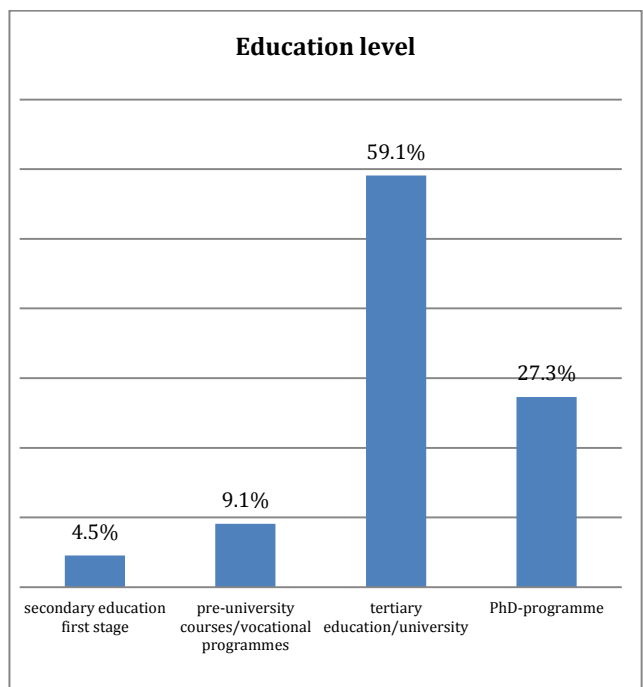
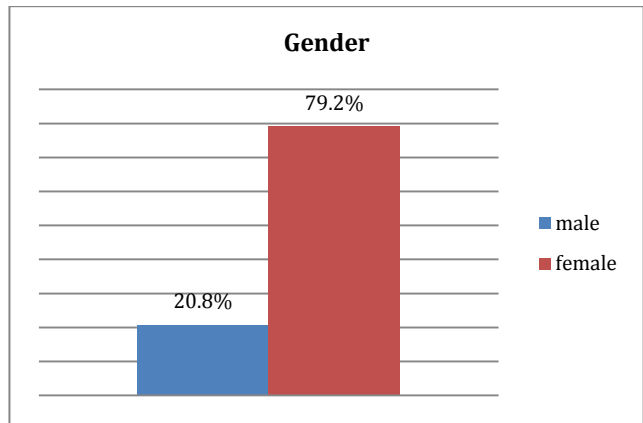


Western Germany

Populations, geography, key descriptors

General information: Because of the small number of the Western German sample (!!N=24!!), this report provides only a marginal analysis. Therefore, the validity and the representativity of the outcomes are highly restricted.

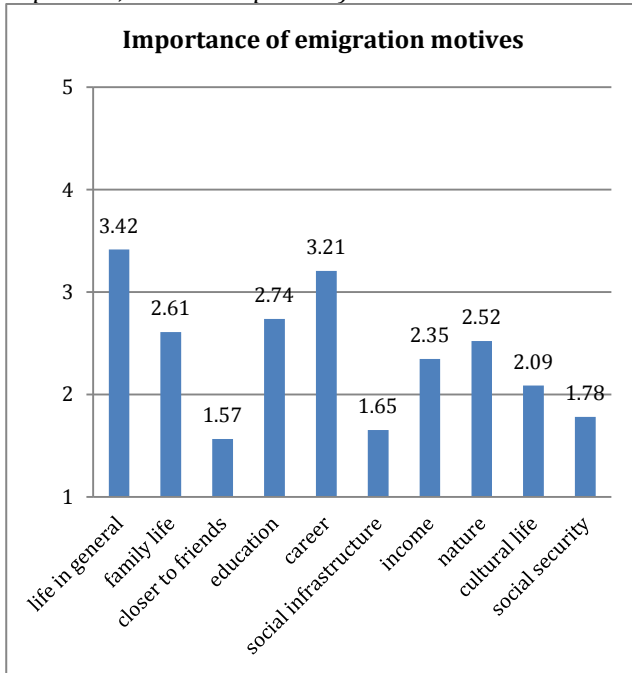
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	17	70.8	Potential Returnees	12	70.6%
			Permanent Emigrants	5	29.4%
Returnees	7	29.2	Region Returnees	2	28.6%
			Country Returnees	5	71.4%
Total	24	100			



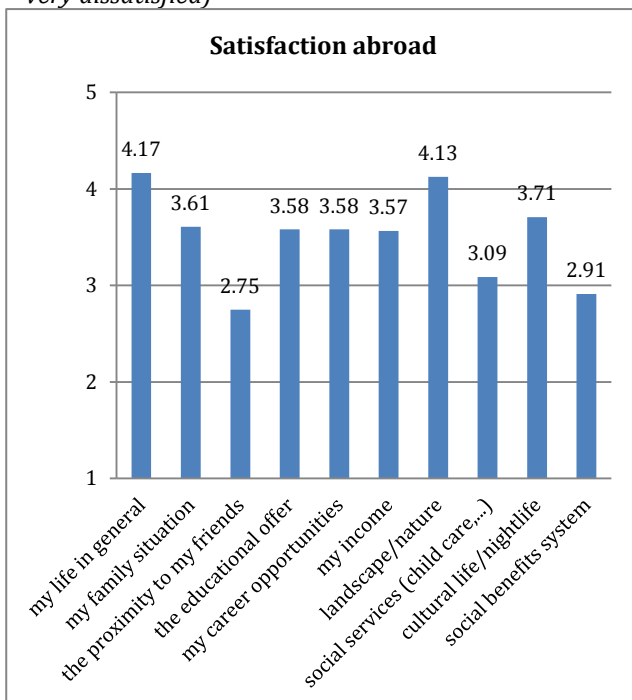
Thematic analysis

Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?" (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)

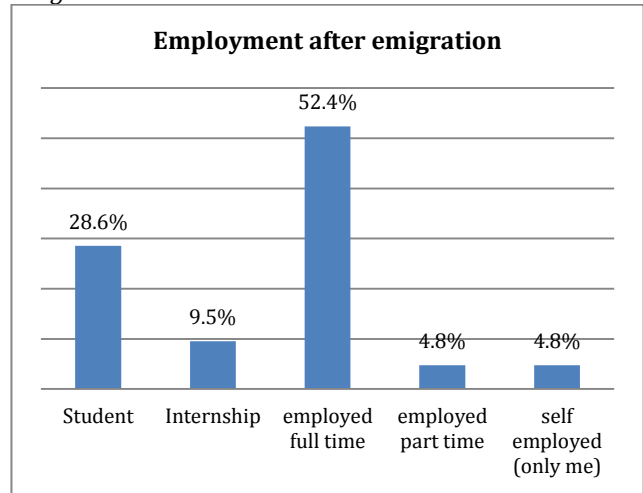


Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?"
Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither nor; 2 = dissatisfied; 1 = very dissatisfied)

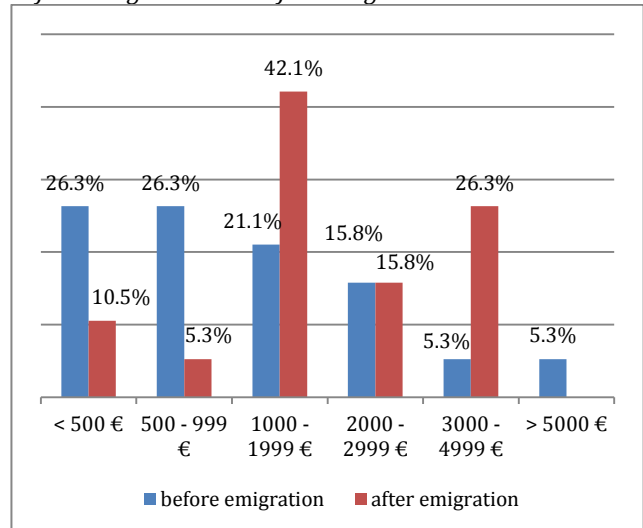


Employment and income

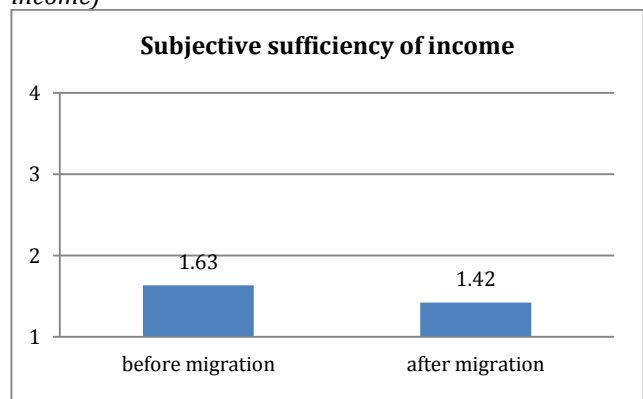
"What was your employment situation abroad after emigration?"



"What about your average monthly household income before emigration and after emigration?"

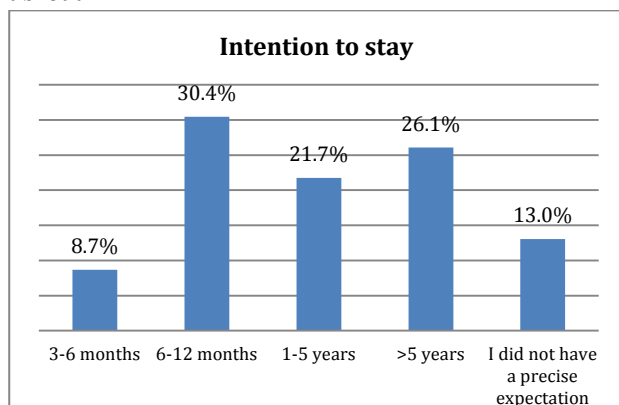


"How good could you live on your income before emigration and after emigration?" (1=living comfortable on this income; 2=coping on this income; 3=finding it difficult on this income; 4=finding it very difficult on this income)

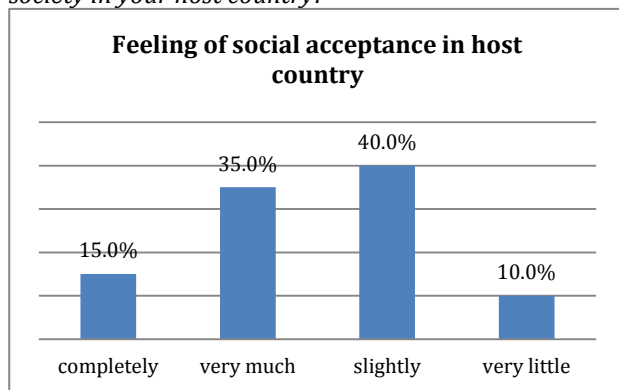


Intention to stay and social acceptance abroad

"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"

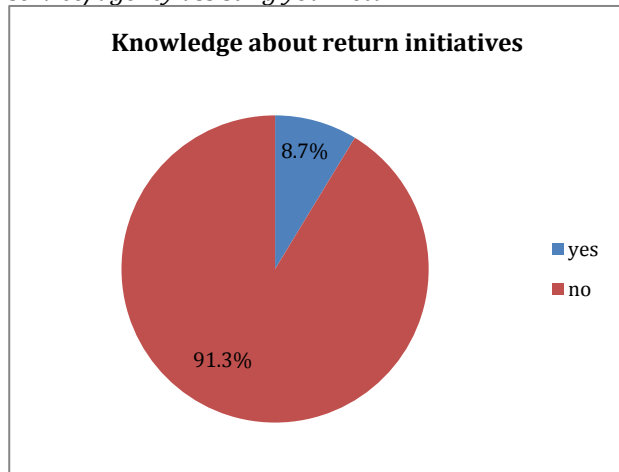


Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"
 Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"



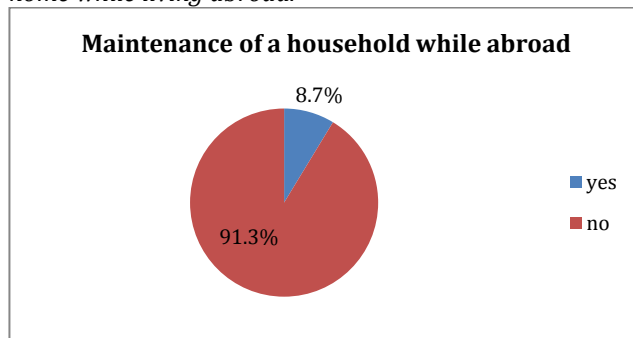
Obstacles of a (potential) return

"Did/do you know about any initiative/support service/agency assisting your return?"

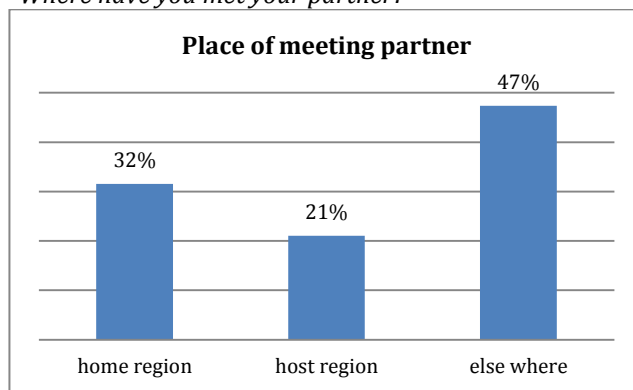


Social factors and the decision process

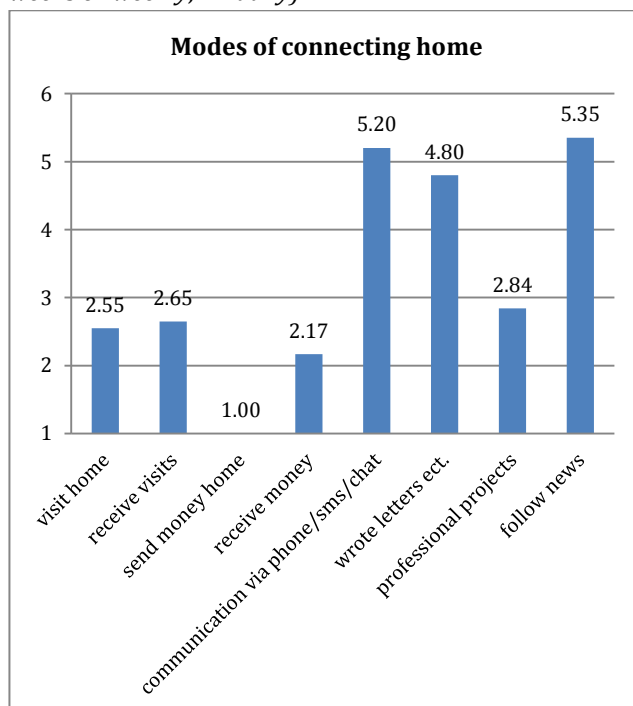
Returnees: "I maintained a household home while living abroad"; Emigrants: "I am maintaining a household home while living abroad."



"Where have you met your partner?"



"How did/do you connect home during your stay abroad?" (mean values; 1=Never; 2=once a year or less; 3=up to four times a year; 4=every month; 5=every two weeks or weekly; 6=daily)

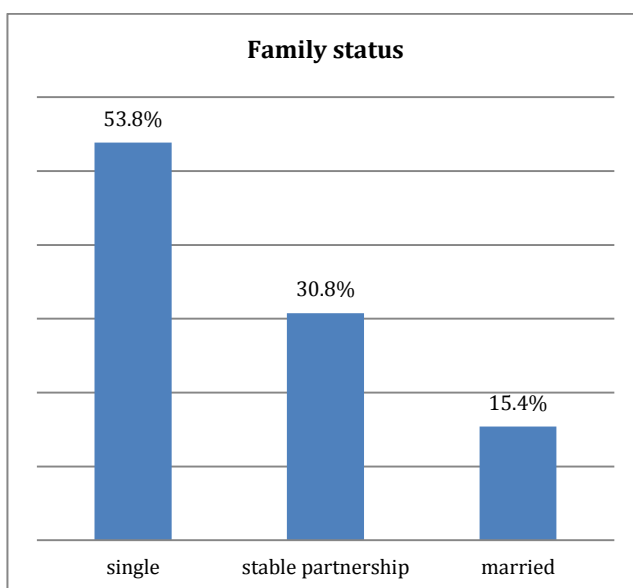
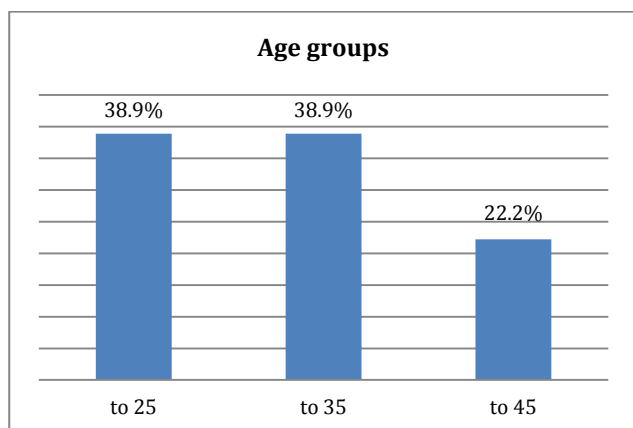
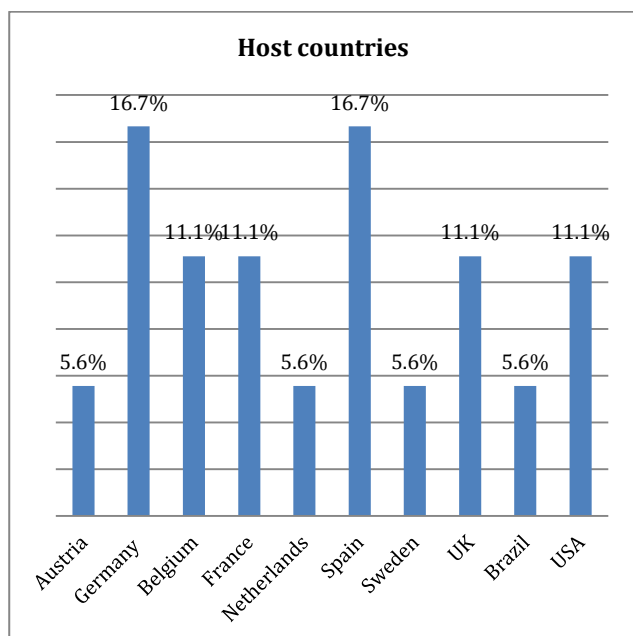
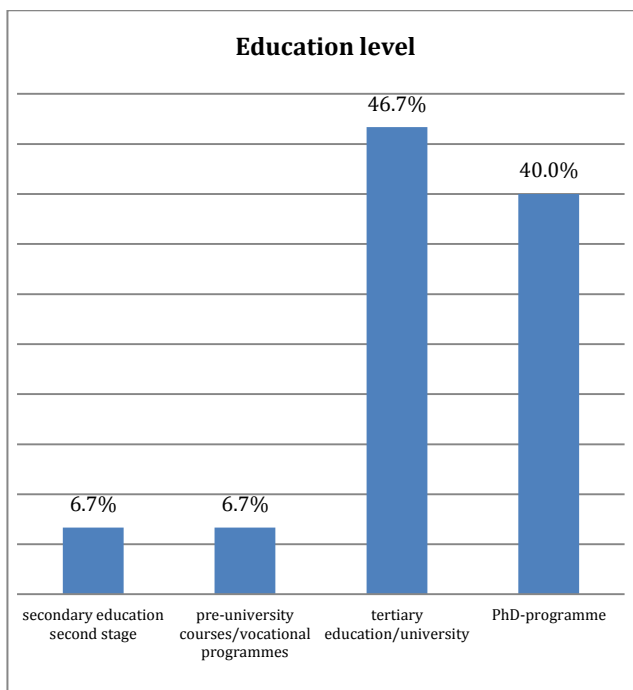
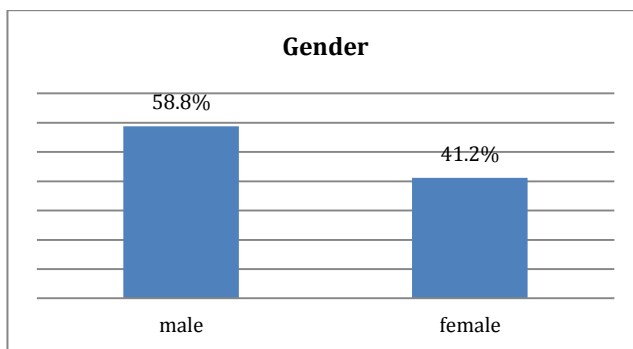


Italy

Populations, geography, key descriptors

General information: Because of the small number of the Italian sample (!!N=18!!), this report provides only a marginal analysis. Therefore, the validity and the representativity of the outcomes are highly restricted.

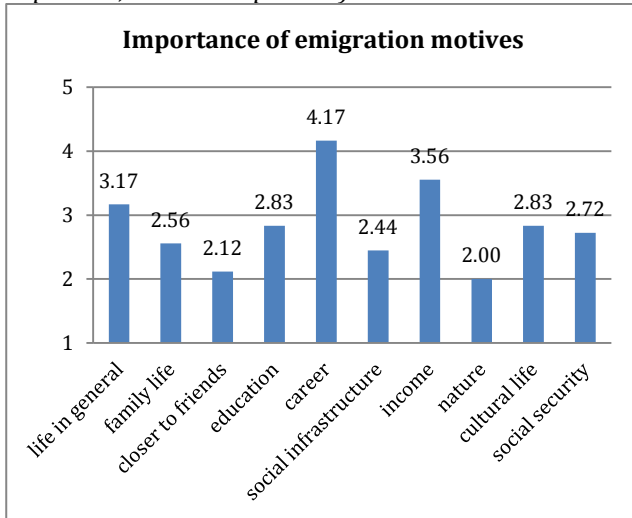
	n	%	out of which	n	%
Emigrants	11	61.1	Potential Returnees	6	54.5
			Permanent Emigrants	5	45.5
Returnees	7	38.9	Region Returnees	6	85.7
			Country Returnees	1	14.3
Total	18	100			



Thematic analysis

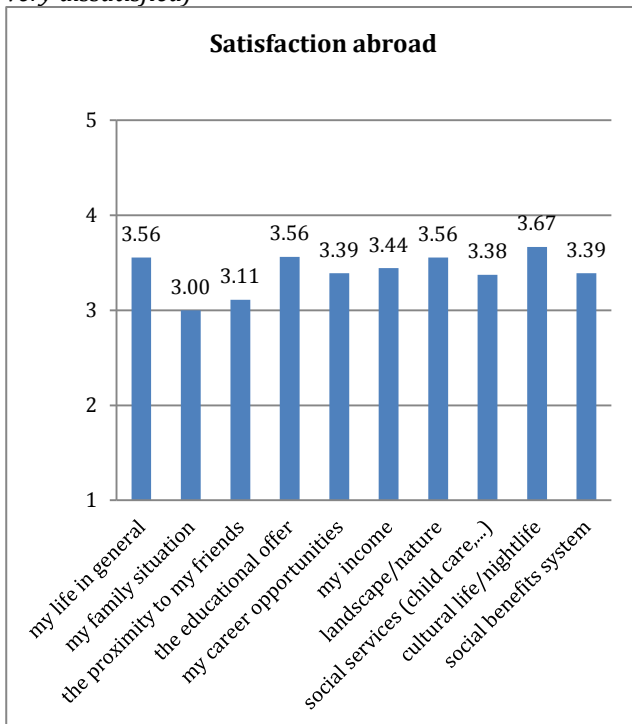
Migration motives and satisfaction abroad

"How important was it to improve the following factors when you decided to move abroad?" (mean values; 1=not relevant; 2=less relevant; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=most important)



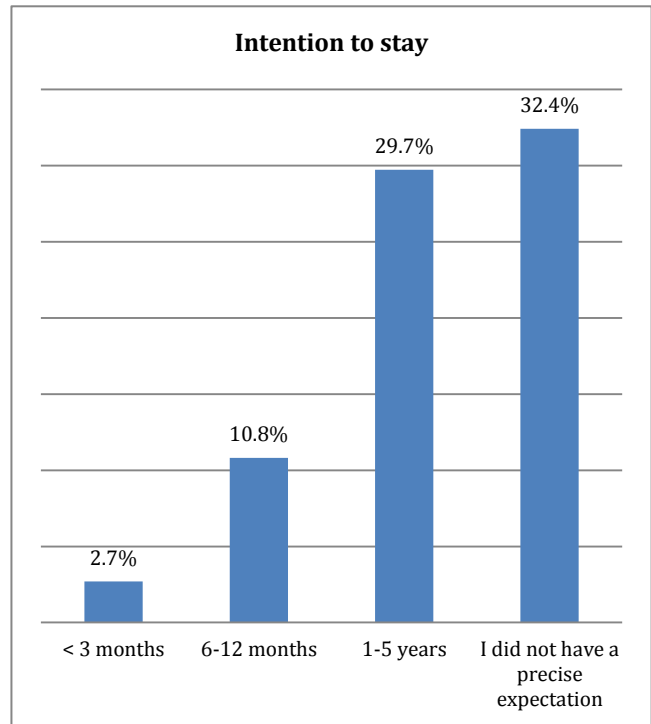
Returnees: "How satisfied have you been with the following factors abroad once you had moved there?"

Emigrants: "How satisfied are you today with the following factors abroad?" (mean values; 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither nor; 2 = dissatisfied; 1 = very dissatisfied)



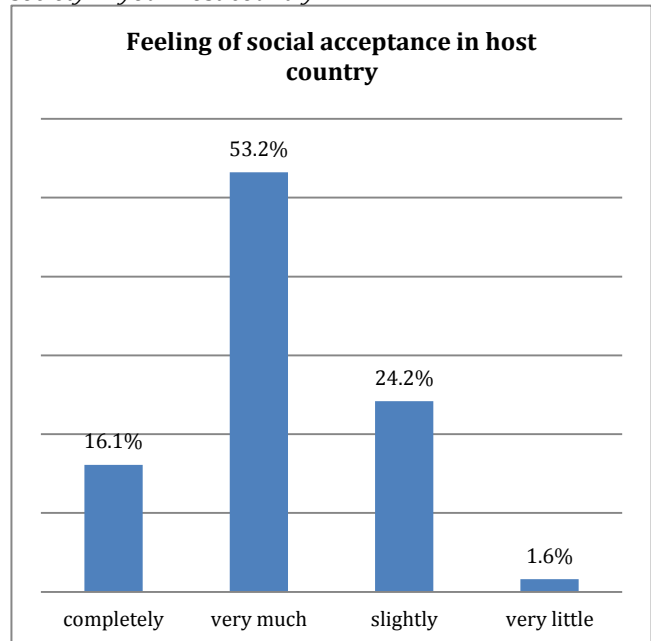
Employment and income

"Before your emigration, how long did you intend to stay abroad?"



Returnees: "How much did you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country abroad?"

Potential Returnees and Permanent Emigrants: "How much do you feel being accepted as a member of the society in your host country?"



Annex II: Business Survey - Questionnaires

Questionnaire guideline Multipliers - Face-to-face interviews

Introduction text:

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for _____. Thank you very much for being available for this interview today. As you know, I'm conducting interviews in the scope of the European Project "Re-Turn". This project's main activities are linked to the development and implementation of services needed to support skilled migrants in their wish to return. The interview will be about human capital strategies to secure skilled personnel in companies and will last about 40-60 minutes. It would be very important to digitally record this interview to guarantee a thorough analysis of the data. We respect confidentiality issues and have prepared an informed consent form in which we guarantee proper use of information. Shall we briefly have a look at this and sign it?

The content of the interviews will be summarised and only used in an anonymous format. Recordings will be deleted after the project's end.

Do you have any questions?

OK, then let's start!

1. Thanks for being available for this interview. Could you please tell us a little about your activities at [name of organisation] and about your personal background?
2. What are - from your perspective - the biggest challenges and opportunities for companies within [name of region]?
3. In what way do you expect problems in the future to attract qualified personnel to the region?
4. In what way do companies here in [name of region] secure the availability of highly qualified personnel? Are there any explicit strategies of the region or of particular companies and what are their key messages?
5. How does your organisation support companies to keep highly qualified staff in the region?
6. How easy or difficult is it for companies in [name of region] to find new staff on a qualified position? What is your experience in this respect?
7. What are your key strategies to support companies to find appropriate staff?
8. Does your organisation support the internationalisation of human capital by sending staff abroad? Why?

Opinion cards:

Instruction: Next, I will present you with three statements which employers have said. Please tell me what you think about them. [Read out statement 1 and show the corresponding card. Wait for an answer. Then go on with statement 2 and 3, applying the same method.]

Statement 1: Local knowledge and company specific competences are much more relevant to us than work experience abroad.

Statement 2: Intercultural competences and foreign language skills are more and more important in professional life. We try to prefer new staff with such competences.

Statement 3: I often ask myself why local people return to their home regions. Did they fail abroad? Are they too risky? I am not sure if I can trust these people.

Current strategies:

Instruction: Now I would like to know more about current personnel strategies and how you would evaluate them.

9. Would you suggest companies to employ more people with experience from being abroad? Why?

10. In our project we are focusing on emigrants and returnees in particular. How do you value their experience from abroad?

11. Are you aware of any difficulties which returnees were facing when returning to the region?

12. Are you aware of any offers in the region to give returnees additional support (e.g. relocation allowances, professional development courses)?

Final part:

Instruction: We are close to the end.

13. Do you have any issues which you deem relevant, but which we didn't get to speak about? Any comments or remarks?

14. Can you name companies which could be interesting for our project and we could come in contact with?

15. Do you have any questions for us?

Farewell:

This was the final question. Can we check some general information about your organisation? [Please verify your data.]

If you are interested in the results, we could send them to you. If you have any questions, you can contact me or our project leader [name of institution /or name of project responsible] at any time. [Please provide project flyers and contact data.] Thank you very much for your participation.

Questionnaire guideline Businesses - Face-to-face interviews

Introduction text:

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for _____. Thank you very much for being available for this interview today. As you know, I'm conducting interviews in the scope of the European Project "Re-Turn". This project's main activities are linked to the development and implementation of services needed to support skilled migrants in their wish to return. The interview will be about your human capital strategies to secure skilled personnel in your company and will last about 40-60 minutes. It would be very important to digitally record this interview to guarantee a thorough analysis of the data. We respect confidentiality issues and have prepared an informed consent form in which we guarantee proper use of information. Shall we briefly have a look at this and sign it?

The content of the interviews will be summarised and only used in an anonymous format. Recordings will be deleted after the project's end.

Do you have any questions?

OK, then let's start!

1. Thanks for being available for this interview. Could you please tell us a little about your activities in the company and about your personal background?
2. What are - from your perspective - the biggest challenges and opportunities of your company at this location?
3. In what way do you expect problems in the future to attract qualified personnel to your company?
4. How does your company secure the availability of highly qualified personnel? If there are explicit strategies, what are the key messages of these strategies concerning personnel?
5. How do you manage to keep highly qualified staff in your company?
6. Have you recently looked for or are you currently looking for new staff for a qualified position? Which field? What is your experience in this process?
7. What are your key strategies to find appropriate staff? Do you cooperate with further institutions in recruiting?
8. Are you sending your own staff abroad? Why? How do you support them if you do?

Opinion cards:

Instruction: Next, I will present you with three statements that employers have said. Please tell me what you think about them. [Read out statement 1 and show the corresponding card. Wait for an answer. Then go on with statement 2 and 3, applying the same method]

a) Local knowledge and company specific competences are much more relevant to us than work experience abroad.

b) Intercultural competences and foreign language skills are more and more important in professional life. We try to prefer new staff with such competences.

c) I often ask myself why local people return to their home regions. Did they fail abroad? Are they too risky? I am not sure if I can trust these people.

Current strategies:

Instruction: Now I would like to know more about current personnel strategies and how you evaluate them.

9. Would you suggest other companies to employ more people with experience from being abroad? Why?

10. In our project we are focussing on emigrants and returnees in particular. What interests you when you lead job interviews with returnees? In what way do you judge their experience from abroad?

11. Are you aware of any difficulties returnees were facing when returning to the region?

12. Did you offer returnees additional support (e.g. relocation allowances)?

Final part: We are close to the end. I have just three questions left.

13. Do you have any issues which you deem relevant, but which we didn't get to speak about? Any comments or remarks?

14. Do you have any questions for us?

Farewell:

This was the final question. Can we check some general information about your company? [Please verify your data.]

If you are interested in the results, we could send them to you. If you have any questions, you can contact me or our project leader [name of institution /or name of project responsible] at any time [Please provide project flyers and contact data.]

Thank you very much for your participation.

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