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YOUTH IN THE BALTIC STATES – LEAVING OR NOT?

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Abstract

According to statistics, the number of young people aged 15 to 29 in the Baltic States has decreased considerably in the past decade. As this age group is around one sixth of the population in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, this trend is significant, and represents a risk from a demographic, nationality, security, and financial point of view. The population of the Baltic States is currently subject to a higher risk of multidimensional poverty than the populations of other EU countries (Voronov et al., 2020). Moving out of these countries is not forbidden, but in an ideal world young people would return, which is not always the case. As migration processes can be influenced proactively, in this article the authors analyze the situation and consider what could be done to maintain wellbeing, to keep the younger generation in their home countries, and/or to attract them to return. Empirical data comes from secondary data analysis: the authors conducted a content analysis of two published reports. The aim is to focus on wellbeing and social-pedagogical prevention to find answers to two questions: what influences emigration readiness, and can certain activities prevent emigration? As a conclusion of our analysis, the following is stressed: sometimes leaving is a tool for hope/attaining something better – for higher quality of wellbeing, for example; however, some people just want to get away – they leave for the sake of leaving. Both cases may be problematic – a social pedagogical preventive consultation could avoid larger crises. The proactive approach may help to keep younger generations in the home country and/or support their readiness to come back after study abroad.

Keywords: *the Baltic States, emigration, social problems, wellbeing, youth.*

Introduction

In a world full of crises, taking care of human resources is especially important. Societies exist with and for people, relying on various resources. The current article focuses on human resources, which face problems in the Baltic States. For example, in Estonia, the number of inhabitants is projected to decrease by 11% over the next 60 years (Statistics Estonia, 2019). The Latvian population is now 30% smaller than it was in the 1990s (Henley, 2022). In Lithuania, the population in 2022 is approximately 200,000 inhabitants smaller than it was in 2012. In the 1990s, the population of Lithuania was around 1 million inhabitants more than it is now (CEIC, 2021). The question thus becomes about perspective: should one simply observe the situation and follow the trend, or take action to influence it? In other words, should one wait or act?

According to statistics, the number of young people aged 15 to 29 in the Baltic States has decreased over the past decade. In Estonia, for example, between 2014 and 2019 there were approximately 5,000 fewer young people (Maasing, 2020). As this age group constitutes around one sixth of the population of the Baltic States, the scale of this problem cannot be underestimated. The outflow of young people from the country poses risks from

various aspects, including demographic, nationality, security and financial perspectives. For instance, small schools in rural areas may close due to a lack of young families, and taxes may increase in the near future as there are not enough taxpayers. Furthermore, local languages are in danger, too. Voronov and colleagues (2020) found that in 2018, the population of Lithuania and Latvia were most susceptible to the risk of poverty and social exclusion, with 794,000 people (29.6%) and 543,000 people (28.4%), respectively, at risk. In Estonia, the situation was slightly better, with 318,000 people, or 24.4%, at risk. The AROPE Multidimensional Poverty Index, which reflects trends in poverty measurement among the population of the Baltic States, varied dramatically in 2005, ranging from 25.8% in Estonia to 45.3% in Latvia. Since 2005, there has been a general downward trend in the number of people at risk of poverty in these countries and the European Union (EU). On average, 21.8% of the EU population were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2018 (Voronov et al. 2020).

Poverty and emigration are connected – when one is poor it is easier to leave, because there is not much to lose. Moving out of these countries is not forbidden, of course; being abroad temporarily is even useful, as it gives a different perspectives and new knowledge. In an ideal world, young people would come back, but this is not always the case, and migration readiness can be influenced proactively. The object of this article is the factors determining youth (non)emigration. The article raises two questions: what influences the emigration readiness of youth; and/or can certain activities prevent youth emigration? Empirical data comes from the secondary data analysis of open access reports.

1. Theoretical background

According to Kenny (2001), in the concept of human wellbeing, there are three distinct elements: contentment, welfare and dignity. Contentment is closest to the utilitarian idea of happiness: it must be an enduring and stable state, not mere temporary euphoria or a glow of satisfaction. Welfare, in the most obvious sense of material welfare, consists in the satisfaction of one's animal needs for food, drink, shelter, and the other things that are conducive to bodily flourishing. Dignity is a more complicated notion to define, but we may say initially that it involves control of one's own destiny and the ability to live the life that one chooses. Because dignity concerns, among other things, one's relationships to other people, there cannot be absolute and objective measurements of dignity as there can of welfare (Kenny, 2001). The hope of controlling one's own destiny is the impulse of emigration, which has a multi-dimensional background. According to Voronov and colleagues, the concept of multidimensional poverty, for example, as a manifestation of various aspects of the basic material (income, employment) and non-material (health, education, security) needs of people, was first introduced in August 1976 within the framework of the International Conference on Employment (Voronov et al., 2020). Poverty is not just about lacking money; it is also about hopelessness, prejudice, and discrimination. For example, without a good education, one is likely to

be discriminated against and unable to find a decent-paying job. Also, poorly educated people are less likely to be well-informed citizens compared to those who are educated, especially about their basic rights or entitlement (Duffy & Wong, 2000). Kawachi and colleagues demonstrated that income inequity, or the Robin Hood Index, is negatively related to one's level of trust in other people. In addition, social trust is positively related to one's quality of life. In other words, increases in the income gap might influence social trust, which, in turn, affect health outcomes or status (Duffy & Wong, 2000). Hope, trust, and readiness to change the situation are connected. Social psychologists know that individuals may be resistant to change, one of the causes of which is mere cognitive laziness or the desire not to have to think too hard. Most humans are cognitive misers who take the path of least resistance in terms of decision-making and thinking. Other individuals are also closed-minded or dogmatic; they conserve their old ways and shun new ideas because of rigidity in their thinking. Some individuals resist change for the same reasons as groups – because they feel that change threatens their reputation, job security, and wellbeing. (Duffy & Wong, 2000).

To stay or to leave the home country can be considered from different points of view. Philosophical background is connected with optimism/pessimism, value system, and/or the hope of creating a better life. The fact is that leaving and success are not synonyms. Bauman (1996) uses concepts of tourists (who are wealthy enough to go where they want) and vagabonds (who simply move from one place to another depending on the possibilities). Bauman also stresses that all human beings are drawn on a continuum stretched between the poles of the “perfect tourist” and the “vagabond beyond remedy” – and people's respective places between the poles are plotted according to the degree of freedom they possess in choosing their life itineraries. The more freedom of choice one has, the higher their rank is in the social hierarchy (Bauman, 1996). Leaving creates an additional place: one has a home country and a new country. Does this add happiness? Living somewhere else often means homesickness, whereas staying in the home country may raise the question of *what if?*

There is no certainty of happiness in either case, because coping takes energy everywhere. Bauman wrote that tourists become wanderers and place the dreams of homelessness above the realities of home – because they want to, because they consider it the most reasonable life strategy under the circumstances, or because they have been seduced by the true or imaginary pleasures of a sensation gatherer's life. However, not all wanderers are on the move because they prefer to be on the move rather than staying put. Many would perhaps refuse to embark on a life of wandering were they asked, but they were not asked in the first place (Bauman, 1996).

Life has several dimensions to consider. According to McCready (2001):

Things that happen to us – especially anything so remote as the moral decisions of strangers or the policies of governments – seem to have little lasting effect on how we feel. More strongly correlated with happiness than anything else is personality, how easily you find it to enjoy other people's company, or how easily bothered you

are by life's irritations. We are affected by good or bad luck, but after getting used to a change of luck, we all seem to have our own natural level of happiness to which we return, more or less. The factors in our environment that make the biggest lasting difference are ones that depend on us – we become happier by forming successful relationships, finding our work interesting, or doing something really satisfying as a leisure pursuit. (p. 16).

The question is: what really makes us happy? This appears to be a simple question, but it is not. Discovering one's own personality should be the aim of childhood, and, besides parents, educational institutions have responsibilities in this context.

When talking about coping with life, a social-pedagogical approach is needed, because it supports socialization. The sustainable version of this is prevention: proactive social pedagogy in the community can avoid serious problems. In the context of leaving or not leaving the country, a significant element is critical thinking. According to Eriksson and Winman (2010), if social is understood as something common (also including culture) and pedagogy as learning, this means that social pedagogy is about supporting people in their development towards becoming independent participants in a democratic society. Social pedagogy is a tool for understanding societal changes in the evaluation of individuals in order to offer them the opportunities/education needed to change their current situation. Social pedagogy is part of various social practices and is used as an intellectual tool for thinking, development, mobilization and learning (Eriksson & Winman, 2010). Social pedagogy can be translated into teaching for coping with life in society; or the social aspect of teaching. In general education, young people could learn something about their personality: for example, introverts and extroverts have different strengths and weaknesses. When talking about the cost of leaving or staying, the emotional aspect is at least as important as the financial. Here, Hamilton's equation of inequality is suitable:

$$B * r > C,$$

where B = benefit, r = the coefficient of relatedness, and C = cost (Bierhoff, 2002).

The problem is that, in the context of costs, people usually mean material values. Emotional aspects, such as soft values, seem to be underestimated. Are we tourists or vagabonds? Who has more resources: a happy vagabond or an unhappy tourist? In reality, mental health is significant: homesickness, depression, stress, etc. destroy a person, even if their financial situation is quite stable. Starting from the general educational level, students should know more about themselves – do they have a high activity level; low or strong rhythmicity; are they optimistic or pessimistic, etc. Webb (2006) wrote that calculative reasoning is purposeful, practical, and is based on attempts to predict, estimate, or count up definite results that are routinised in the social world. The logic of security should be stretched to include safety, vulnerability, coping strategies, social support, and protection. Giddens addresses this important inter-subjective dimension in his discussion of ontological security (Webb, 2006).

Feeling safe is part of wellbeing. Safety is a complicated concept, which needs special logistics and resources. Simply going away is not enough; some critical thinking is obligatory. Critical thinking is a part of social pedagogy, as it supports socialization. So far, this is not an official part of the curriculum of general education, but it should be. One could even be critical in context of emotions. Feeling and thinking are different competences, but both need attention. Rosling (2019) stresses the role of emotions: what are people thinking when they say *the world is getting worse*? They are not thinking. They are just feeling. When people wrongly believe that nothing is improving, they may conclude that nothing we have tried so far is working and lose confidence in the measures that actually work (Rosling, 2019).

Emotional literacy prevents social problems. People who emigrate hope to achieve a better life, but hope alone is not enough. Every wish has a prize: for example, moving out of a country may (or may not) bring a better salary, but it often brings homesickness. Staying home may (or may not) keep one poor, but often one keeps thinking: *What if I would have tried to live somewhere else?*

Here, personal responsibility is the most significant factor – people must know their type of personality, strengths and weaknesses, level of energy, etc. So far in the general education system this field has been underestimated; social pedagogy could be a useful compensatory tool. According to Storø (2013), social-pedagogical practice means a visible intervention in people's daily lives to support development, participation, and learning. Education regarding personality aspects and emotions could avoid unhappy emigration attempts.

2. Research methodology

To create a picture of the situation for the youth in the Baltic States, the authors chose the secondary data analysis method. Statistics were derived from two published texts: Yusupov (2022), and Eiduka, Klāsons and Saarnik (2019). Sources were selected according to the following criteria: they are relevant to the specific objective of the study, they are based on empirical research, they analyze the situation in the three Baltic States, and their research data is not older than five years.

Research procedure 1 (Yusupov, 2022). In the summer of 2021, around 3,900 young people aged 14–29 from the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – participated in a survey of seven countries covering a broad range of issues that concerned their experiences and aspirations in different realms of life. The sample size in each country was around 1,300 respondents (Yusupov, 2022).

Research procedure 2 (Eiduka et al., 2019). The research methodology included the following research methods: (1) compiling statistical data from sources such as Eurostat, Eurofound, the United Nations, and the OECD; (2) conducting a quantitative survey of young people aged 15 to 25 in Latvia (with 1005 respondents), Estonia (with 485 respondents) and Lithuania (with 887 respondents); (3) conducting focus group discus-

sions with young people in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania; (4) obtaining opinions and evaluations from experts on the indicators to be included in the monitoring; and (5) summarizing international practices (Eiduka et al., 2019).

The procedure of the content analysis. The authors selected statistics regarding financial and social capital from the reports mentioned above. Table 1 summarizes statistics of the two studies: Yusupov (2022) and Eiduka et al. (2019).

Table 1. Summarized indicators and statements from two studies of young people in the Baltic States (% agreement among youth/indicator value)

Statement/indicator	EE (%)	LV (%)	LT (%)
Satisfaction with the quality of education	72	31	26
Material or social deprivation	10	25	25
Little chance of success in life	20	24	33
Little chance of financial success in life	28	41	47
Youth unemployment rate	18	15	20
Shortage of space in accommodation	28	33	25
Possibilities to influence decisions at their school	2	29	27
Possibilities to influence decisions at the municipal level	21	12	9
No. of persons who post their opinion on civic or political issues on social networks or elsewhere on the Internet	15	9	14
No. of persons who do not have adequate possibilities to receive help in difficult, problematic situations	24	36	37
Possibilities to find peers	33	25	46
Regularly feel downhearted and depressed	7	11	5
Getting married is important	39	48	52
Do not identify with any religious community	77	44	58
Suicide rates in the age group of 15–19 years old, per 100,000 young people in this age group	14	11	13
Suicide rates in the age group of 20–24 years old, per 100,000 young people in this age group	15	16	24
Frequently bullied students (15 years old)	10	18	10
Not satisfied at all with the quality of education	12	26	37
Have all possibilities to get the education they want	86	70	63
Have possibilities for improvement, attending various courses, training, seminars	66	68	52
Possibilities to find a job that they like	40	52	64
Possibilities of doing business	46	35	20
The future of their country will be better than now	47	36	47
Working hours per week	35,3	36,2	37,5
Desire to emigrate (very strong + strong)	27	26	18
Ready to leave the country in 2 years	15	17	24
Ready to leave the country in 5–10 years	34	28	24

Statement/indicator	EE (%)	LV (%)	LT (%)
Must live with parents because of lack of money	46	35	34
Societal future among youth in the Baltic States will be worse than now	24	30	24

After reading the reports, the authors identified the sub-themes that are significant to the research problem.

The study follows the *ethical principles* of secondary data analysis: the data analyzed were already depersonalized in the primary analysis, the data were selected from publicly available sources, the analysis did not require the consent of the authors, and the results do not have a negative impact on a particular group or community.

3. Results of the research

We found that at least three factors have an important influence on emigration readiness: poverty; a feeling of not belonging, and problems with education/employment. The next step is to describe the sub-categories of our content analysis.

3.1. Poverty

According to the data, approximately one in five young people aged 16 to 29 in the Baltic States are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Yusupov, 2022). In Lithuania, the percentages of respondents in the least well-off categories were highest, with 5% of households not having enough money to pay for basic bills like electricity and heating, and 12% not having enough money for clothes and shoes on top of basic bills and food (Yusupov, 2022).

Many young people in the Baltic States declare the difficulty of making ends meet in their household. There is a high rate of young people who assess that they have little chance of success in life (33% in Lithuania, 24% in Latvia, and 20% in Estonia) or little chance of financial success in life (47% in Lithuania, 41% in Latvia, and 28% in Estonia) (Eiduka et al., 2019). The rate of housing deprivation, which is lowest in Estonia and highest in Latvia, reveals significant differences between Baltic young people. The most significant changes were registered in Latvia, where this share has declined by 20.2 percentage points since 2011. In Lithuania and Estonia, it has decreased by 11.6 and 5 percentage points, respectively (Eurostat, 2021a).

Of all Baltic countries, Latvia (14.9%) had the lowest youth unemployment rate (Statistics Latvia, 2020), followed by Estonia (17.9%) and Lithuania (19.6%) (Yusupov, 2022). Unemployment is negatively connected with living conditions: every third young person in Latvia, every fourth in Lithuania, and 28% in Estonia indicate that there is a shortage of space in their accommodation (Eiduka et al., 2019). According to Lokenbaha (2019), Latvia is the third-poorest country in Europe. The gap between rich and poor people has

also risen, as tax policy remains very much like it was in Soviet times. Because of social services, living conditions and health care problems, youth in Latvia meet difficulties in coping every day, which contributes to their readiness to leave the country.

To sum up: unemployment, insufficient living conditions, poverty, and difficulties in coping mean material and social deprivation. This supports hopelessness when it comes to future life success. This is a kind of closed circle, which is difficult to break. It is therefore little wonder that there is a dream of a magical wonderland somewhere else, where well-paid jobs are waiting for everyone. One may think, in the context of emigration, that even if there is nothing in particular to gain, there will not be much to lose.

3.2. The feeling of belonging (or lack of it)

The feeling of belonging at school is lower in all the Baltic States than the average level of the OECD countries. Particularly worrying are the data indicating that Latvia has the highest rate among other OECD countries in regard to frequently bullied students (other students make fun of them, threaten, hit or push them around, etc.). Moreover, 33% of Estonians, 25% of Latvians, and 46% of Lithuanians recognize that they have no possibilities to find peers. The data also show that in Estonia and Latvia there is a larger proportion of young people who regularly feel downhearted and depressed than the EU average (7% and 11%, respectively, while in the EU 5%, in Lithuania 3%) (Eiduka et al., 2019). In research from 2008 conducted both in Latvia and Lithuania, it was indicated 30% in Latvia felt that they were victims of bullying at school, but in Lithuania this number was as high as 52%. This is a significant reason for health problems and lack of wellbeing (Gobina et al., 2008). Also, COVID-19 influenced this situation: in the 18–25 years age group, there was 9% more loneliness than in the age group of 65 and above (Baarck et al., 2022).

Youth suicide rates are particularly alarming: for all of the Baltic countries, these rates are among the highest in Europe. In the age group of 15–19 years, the suicide rate in Estonia is 14 suicides per 100,000 people (the second highest rate in Europe); Lithuania – 13; while Latvia – 11. Higher suicide rates are evident in the 20–24 years age group – Lithuania has the highest rate in Europe (24), but it is also high for Latvia (16) and Estonia (15). These figures largely correspond to the data on the emotional wellbeing of young people (Eiduka et al., 2019). Estonians are more individualistic than Latvians and Lithuanians, so children are taught to be strong and think of their personal financial situation. According to Lu and colleagues, this individualistic culture supports materialism and also personal coping strategies (Lu et al., 2021).

More than a quarter of Baltic young people do not plan to have children. This finding is particularly concerning in light of the fact that the populations of the Baltic countries are shrinking. The proportion of Lithuanian young people who do not plan to have children is even higher (31%), which is somewhat surprising given the catholic culture still prevalent in the country (Yusupov, 2022).

In Europe, the highest proportions of people who do not identify with any religious community are in Estonia (77%) and the Czech Republic (73%). According to statistics, Lithuania has more secular young people (58%) than Latvia (44%) (Yusupov, 2022). The higher secularity of Baltic societies can be explained by the long experience of living under anti-religious communist rule (Rezsohazy, 2001).

The fact that most young people are still not interested in politics has been confirmed by various studies (Kalmus & Beilmann, 2019), and lack of interest in politics has been explained by both post-communist disappointment (Howard, 2003) and by the democratic immaturity of the countries in question (Kitanova, 2020). Only 21% of young people in Estonia, 12% in Latvia and 9% in Lithuania think they have a chance to influence decisions at the municipal level (Eiduka et al., 2019). In addition, only a small part of young people feel they have possibilities to influence decisions at their school or university – in Estonia, 42% of young people, and in Lithuania and Latvia only 27%–29% of young people think that they have such possibilities (Eiduka et al., 2019).

According to the statistics of the OECD (2021), 51.9% of the youth in Estonia trust the government. In Lithuania, this number is 30.4%, and in Latvia only 29.5%. In Estonia, among youngsters in the 15–18-year age group, being too active on social media is not a sign of quality anymore: comments about everything should be avoided, if one wants to be respected (Sukk & Soo, 2018). Less words mean less mistakes, so the wise person thinks twice before commenting on the Internet, because everything stays there forever.

To summarize: material and emotional deprivation is connected. Being poor is depressing, and without money it is hard to raise children. However, without a family and children, one is even more alone. If it is difficult to find peers; if, instead of friendship, bullying dominates; if one cannot influence anything; if one doesn't believe – then it is little wonder that the suicide rate is high. One group changes the situation through emigration: in the unknown future somewhere else, everything seems possible.

3.3. Unsuitable education/unhappy employment

One third of young people in Latvia (31%) and only one quarter in Lithuania (26%) are content with the quality of education. Lithuania has the highest number of young people not satisfied at all with the quality of education (37%), followed by Latvia (26%), while Estonia has the lowest percentage of young people with this assessment (12%) (Yusupov, 2022).

The absolute majority in Estonia (86%) suggest that they have all possibilities to acquire the education they want, but in Latvia 70% and in Lithuania only 63% of young people have a similar opinion. Young people are even more critical about the possibilities for improvement by attending various courses, training, and seminars – 66% in Estonia, 68% in Latvia, and only 52% in Lithuania express positive views (Eiduka et al., 2019).

A potentially problematic finding is that some 37% of young people in the Baltic countries do not work in a job matching the profession they have been trained for; only

one third (31%) work in their profession and one fifth (19%) in a job close to their profession. Lithuania has the highest share of those who report such a qualification mismatch.

Despite the skills mismatch, young people in the Baltic countries are actively employed on average 35 to 40 hours per week. Even while studying, young people work a great deal: the average number of hours worked per week by those in higher education and other forms of education and training is between 21 and 37 hours. Lithuanian students seem to be the most hard-working among the three countries (Yusupov, 2022). Young, uneducated people perform the lowest-paid jobs – it is logical that they do not like them, because they are hard and their salaries are small. Lack of wellbeing is not good for health, hence it is easy to emigrate because there is not much to lose.

The necessity of having a paid job whilst studying is an undeniable reality for many Baltic students. Young people need to work to cover their living costs; otherwise, many of them would not be able to afford to study. Eurostudent data demonstrate, however, that a higher share of students identify foremost as employees rather than as students in Estonia and Lithuania (Maseviciute et al., 2018; Hauschildt et al, 2021).

The statistics mentioned here explain this situation: young people who are leaving the country do not do so for fun. According to Voronov and colleagues, in modern economically developed societies the concept of poverty cannot be limited only to indicators of the income level of the entities mentioned previously. Within the framework of a multidimensional approach to determining the level of poverty, not only the lack of financial resources of an individual is considered, but also limitations in terms of access to education and healthcare, as well as difficulties associated with housing conditions, food, health, and other survival needs (Voronov et al., 2020). Estonian youth are happier about the general education system than their neighbors. Perhaps this is because Estonian schools want to integrate the academic success into the individual aims of life in general. In every step of the schooling process, both teachers and children have a strong perspective – the next step is constantly prepared (Ploom & Haldma, 2013). In general education, the temperament of every student must receive attention (Keltikangas-Järvinen & Mullola, 2016).

More critically, young people estimate the possibilities of finding a job that they like poorly (64% of Lithuanians think that they do not have such a possibility, 52% in Latvia, and 40% in Estonia). Even worse prospects relate to the possibility of doing business – only 20% of Lithuanian, 35% of Latvian and 46% of Estonian young people consider this option (Eiduka et al. 2019).

3.4. The readiness to emigrate

Less than half (44%) of Baltic young people expect that the future of their country will be better than now. Latvian young people stand out for their more pessimistic view than their peers in Estonia and Lithuania, with only 36% answering that they believe the future will be better. For Estonian and Lithuanian young people, the share of optimists reached

47% (Yusupov, 2022). The financial environment in the Baltic States does not support hope. In Vilnius, the prices of flats in 2021 rose by 23.3%, and they now cost more than at any point in history. In Riga, this number was 11%, and in Tallinn 15% (Ober-Haus, 2022). Youth in Estonia find it hard to move out from their parents' household. The most likely reason is money: in 2022, the price of one m² in Tallinn was 2,646 EUR; in Riga 1,317 EUR; and in Vilnius 2,224 EU (Swedbank, 2022). Rent is also expensive: during 2010–2020 in Europe, rent has risen by 14%; but, in Estonia, it has risen by 145% (Eurostat, 2021b). Therefore, even if young people would like to live separately, this is not always possible because of financial reasons.

According to Voronov and colleagues, people compare themselves with other people in the same reference group. The more importance they attach to the weakness of their positions in the general set of non-monetary objects of deprivation in their reference group, the higher their sense of risk of poverty is. This differentiation of indicators has a certain impact on the measurement of multidimensional poverty in each country and the social groups within it (Voronov et al., 2020). The demographic situation during the last decade is problematic because of emigration. In Latvia and Lithuania, around one third of young people live outside of the home country; in Estonia this figure is around one tenth. The main reason for this is to receive a higher salary. It is interesting to add that only 33% of Estonians feel that education and/or work experience is a significant factor which helps to find a job in another country (Kaprāns et al., 2022).

Loneliness supports emigration readiness, with 24% of young people in Estonia and 36%–37% in Latvia and Lithuania declaring that they do not have adequate possibilities to get help in difficult and problematic situations (Eiduka et al., 2019). A cross-country analysis indicates that migration expectations are much stronger among Latvian and Estonian young people. Meanwhile, the determination to emigrate immediately – within the next six months – is more pronounced among Lithuanian young people. Latvians are more often determined to stay abroad permanently (Yusupov, 2022).

Estonian students use Erasmus opportunities quite actively (Tamtik & Kirss, 2016). This also supports the feeling that it is possible to live outside the home country. As Estonians are quite individualistic, they are ready to break previous networks. According to Hofstede, the level of individualism in Lithuania is rather low (Rybnikova & Lang, 2022). Estonian children under 18 years of age were not allowed to receive psychological consultation without the permission of their parents – only in 2019 did the situation change (Madise, 2019).

To summarize: young people work hard to cope, and 24%–37% of them cannot get help from anyone when in difficulty. They work hard even during study, and often their job is not tied to education. After all this, they are still rather poor, without the prospect of a better future. Many of them do not have children and/or even hope/wish to have them in the future. Therefore, it is easier to move out – maybe their luck will turn somewhere else. Readiness to emigrate is the sum of different aspects.

According to Allardt (1993), having, loving, and being are catchwords for the central

necessary conditions of human development and existence. It is clearly assumed that there are both material and non-material basic human needs, and that both types of need have to be considered in indicator systems designed to gauge the actual level of welfare in a society.

Having refers to those material conditions which are necessary for survival and for the avoidance of misery. It covers the needs for nutrition, air, water, and for protection against the climate, environment, diseases, etc. Material conditions may, in the different countries, be measured by indicators denoting: *economic resources* such as income and wealth; *housing conditions*, measured both by space available and housing amenities; *employment*, usually described in terms of the occurrence or absence of unemployment; *working conditions*, such as noise and temperature at workplace, physical work routine, measures of stress; *health*, including various symptoms (or their absence) of pain and illness, availability of medical aid; and *education*, involving years of formal education.

Loving stands for the need to relate to other people and to form social identities. The level for need satisfaction can be assessed by measures denoting attachments and contacts in the local community; attachments to family and kin; active patterns of friendship; attachments and contacts with fellow members in association and organizations; and relationships with work-mates.

Being stands for the need for integration into society and to live in harmony with nature. The positive side of being may be characterized as personal growth, whereas the negative aspect stands for alienation. Indicators measure, for instance: to what extent a person can participate in decisions and activities influencing their life; political activities; opportunities for leisure-time activities (doing); opportunities for a meaningful work life; and opportunities to enjoy nature, either through contemplation or through activities such as walking, gardening, and fishing (Allardt, 1993). For tourists and vagabonds, these concepts have different content, but having/loving/being influence all decisions, even if one does not think about them.

4. Discussion

The statistics used for this article give the impression that a lack of money supports eagerness to leave the country. However, according to Bauman, poor people cannot be tourists. This is a paradox: sometimes people who are vagabonds in reality consider themselves tourists. This crisis of identity cannot have a happy ending.

There is nothing wrong with being a vagabond – as Bauman wrote: “the vagabonds, the victims of the world that made tourists into its heroes, have their uses, after all; as the sociologists love to say – they are “functional.” It is difficult to live in their neighborhood, but it is unthinkable to live without them. It is their evident unhappiness that inspires the rest to thank God daily for having made them tourists” (Bauman, 1996). He continues: “The difference between getting lost and arriving was made of knowledge and determination: the knowledge of the time-space structure and the determination to follow, be what

may, the chosen itinerary. Under those circumstances, freedom was indeed the known necessity, plus the resolve to act on that knowledge” (Bauman, 1996).

Leaving just for moving is a vagabond-like activity. Moving for a better life somewhere else is a tourist-like activity. Who leaves as a vagabond hardly arrives in foreign countries as a tourist – the explanation of this rule should be part of socialization. Real life is not a fairy tale.

Moving out of a country gives an additional place: one has a home country, and a new country. Does this add happiness? Living somewhere else often means homesickness; staying at home may raise a question: *what if?* No guarantee of happiness exists in either case. According to the statistics analyzed in this article, financial background seems to be significant. However, McCready (2001, p. 16) stresses: “Though the genuinely poor is less happy than average, there is not much difference between the amounts of happiness felt by people at widely divergent levels of income in the remaining social strata. Even lottery winners are no happier, within a year or so, than they were before they win.” Thus, once again, it is crucial to know oneself at first – what really is important for each individual.

At school, this field should be analyzed from different aspects: personal happiness in the context of temperament; the role of critical thinking in real life; and that everything in life has a material, moral, and emotional price. These themes are related to social pedagogy in the community, which should be taught to both social pedagogues and teachers. As this problem is multi-dimensional, its solution should be, too: different activities are needed for different age groups. Starting from childhood, knowledge about the personality/temperament are needed. Critical thinking is also an important subject in the context of wellbeing: one must know the background of happiness – at least in theory. Besides social pedagogy, there are other preventive possibilities to support wellbeing. For example, Gomółka and colleagues (2020) suggest the development during youth of new methods of training in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation, preparing more graduates for setting up businesses and quickly adapting to market changes. This is extremely important because most of the countries in the Baltic region are small, with small domestic markets. For most countries, their major trade partners are their neighbors. Another action designed to combat or at least reduce youth unemployment on the small market involves a parallel system of vocational training and education, combining tertiary education and vocational training in Denmark, Finland and Germany and serving as a model for other regions (Gomółka et al., 2020). A network could be developed within one region for the youth, as it is emotionally easier and financially cheaper to practice emigration near the home: in case of success, the world would be open, or at least home would not be very far away.

Conclusion

Leaving home is not easy. Every story is different, all problems have several aspects, and people’s backgrounds are unique. One group of emigrants Bauman would likely call vagabonds – with a lack of money, no place to live, and problems with employment. If a

vagabond wants to become a tourist, a lot of work should first be done in the home country. Wishful thinking is not enough: changing the country does not give higher status automatically. During and after the moving process, some critical thinking is obligatory: what is good for what? A vagabond in one country hardly achieves the position of a tourist in a foreign country quickly. Some are ready to work for a better future, some are not. To change the place of living needs special logistics, which is not the strongest competence of vagabonds. If one cannot cope in one's home country, it will hardly be possible outside with the same level of education and finances. Romantic movies and fairy tales perhaps give an incorrect picture about miracles, which happen always and only somewhere else. Moving seems to be a secret to success: if one just leaves, leaving all of their old problems behind, then a new, happier page will open, with bright possibilities and none of the previous difficulties. In reality, this is not the case – moving requires complicated planning and though, which should be practiced before. This problem is exacerbated if person does not know their type of personality. There is a price for everything: staying or leaving need recourses – material, social and emotional capital. Having, loving and being are connected both for vagabonds and tourists. It is easy to count finances; emotions are a private field. In reality, wellbeing starts from emotions: one can have material security, but still not be happy – in case of homesickness, for example. It is important to know about aspects of one's personality. This wisdom may help to make the right decision. Here, social pedagogy – as a tool for socialization – can help. One of the methods of prevention of social problems is critical thinking, which is based on relevant information. In the context of emigration-readiness, people should first know themselves, because their style of coping depends on subjective aspects. Negative aspects from different fields support readiness to leave. Social pedagogy cannot change the facts: salary, size of accommodation, etc., but relations and attitudes can be influenced through prevention.

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YOUTH IN THE BALTIC STATES – LEAVING OR NOT?

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Summary

In a world full of crises, taking care of human resources is especially important. Societies exist with and for people, relying on various resources. The current article focuses on human resources, which are facing problems in the Baltic States. Poverty and emigration are connected – in case of being poor it is easier to leave, because there is not much to lose. Moving out of the country is not forbidden, of course; being out temporarily is even useful, as it gives a different perspective and new knowledges. In an ideal world young people are coming back, which is not always the case. But migration-readiness can be influenced proactively. In this article, authors analyze the social-pedagogical point of view in the context of wellbeing. Empirical data comes from the secondary data analysis: authors conducted an analysis of two published reports, found on the Internet. The aim is to focus on wellbeing and social-pedagogical prevention, to find answers for two questions: what influences emigration readiness; and/or can certain activities prevent emigration?

To get a picture about the situation of the youth in the Baltic States, the authors chose the secondary data – the statistics from two published texts: Yusupov (2022), and Eiduka, Kläsons and Saarnik (2019). Content analysis was used for secondary data analysis. It was found that at least three factors have an important influence on emigration readiness: poverty; a feeling of not belonging, and problems with education/employment.

Leaving from home is not easy. Every story is different; problems have several aspects; people's backgrounds are unique. During and after the moving-process some critical thinking is obligatory: what is good for what? Vagabond in one country hardly gets the position of the tourist in foreign country very soon. Some of them are ready to work for a better future, some are not. To change the place of living needs special logistics, which is not the strongest competence of vagabonds. If one cannot cope at home country, hardly it will be possible outside – in the case of the same level of education and finances. There is a price

for everything: staying or leaving need recourses - material, social and emotional capital: Having, Loving and Being are connected both for vagabonds and for tourists. Easiest is to count finances, emotions are kind of private field. In reality wellbeing starts from emotions: one can have material security, but is still not happy – in case of homesickness, for example. It is important to know about personality aspects. This wisdom may help to make the right decision. Here, the social pedagogy – as a tool for socialization, can help. One of the prevention of social problems is critical thinking, which is based on relevant information. In the context of emigration-readiness, people should know at first themselves, because the style of coping depends on the subjective aspects. The negative aspects from different fields support the readiness to leave. Social pedagogy cannot change the facts: salary, size of flat etc., but relations and attitudes can be influenced through prevention.

Keywords: *the Baltic States, emigration, social problems, social pedagogy.*

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