



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 26

MIGRATION INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

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To what extent are migration intentions followed by actual migration? Can we regard these intentions as predictors of subsequent migration behaviour? These are recurring questions in the field of migration potential research that could be answered only by follow-up surveys.

According to a panel survey conducted in 2006 and 2009 among the Hungarian-speaking population of Transylvania (Romania) aged 20–45, 17% of the migration plans were followed by migration during the three-year period between the two waves. Nevertheless migration intention proved to be a statistically significant predictor of migration. Those who had a migration plan of any kind during the first wave were almost three and a half times more likely to move than non-planners. Migration most likely occurred for those who had long-term plans (working abroad for a few years) or even permanent emigration plans. Migration willingness, which can be considered a weaker indicator than intention, also significantly increased the chances of subsequent migration, although to lesser degree (see Table). The variables of migration plans and willingness were included one by one in the final model of our multivariable analysis beside several control and explanatory variables (see the Note of the Table.)

Another important question, based on Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour, is what role the migration-related expectations and perceived external norms play in migration behaviour. Migration-related expectations were measured by the assessment of advantages and disadvantages associated with migration, while perceived external norms by the perceived pressure from significant others (friends, parents, relatives) towards migration. Adding these variables separately to our existing models, we found that both have a significant effect on subsequent migration behaviour. Those who, in the first wave expected a positive change (improvement) by way of migration in more than half of the areas listed, were more likely to move (controlled for all variables presented earlier). Perceived external pressure also increased the chances of movement (though this only had an influence on the model of subjective well-being). These effects, however, disappeared in both cases after involving previous migration intention (plan) as an explanatory variable. These findings confirm that migration-related expectations and perceived external norms, in accordance with Ajzen's theory, influence migration behaviour only indirectly via migration intention.

Table Role of previous migration willingness and migration intentions in migration behaviour (odds ratios of logistic regression models)

Source of data: Turning points of the life course – Transylvania (1st wave: 2006, 2nd wave: 2009).

Note: Final model included variables of living conditions, unemployment experience, job satisfaction, housing condition, household member living abroad, subjective well-being, as well as sex, age group, level of education, employment status, marital status. Significance: *** p<0.001; ** p<0.01; * p<0.05.

Explanatory variables (migration willingness, and intention in 2006)	Migration behaviour (0 – no, 1 – yes)		
	Model 1: Final model + migration willingness	Model 2: Final model + migration plan	Model 3: Final model + type of migration plan
Migration willingness (ref.: not had)	2.299***		
Migration plan (ref.: not had)		3.474***	
Type of migration plan (longest planned duration)			
had no plan (ref.)			1
short-term at most (a few weeks/months)			3.126***
long-term at most (a few years)			3.752***
even emigration			3.849***
Nagelkerke R ²	0.158	0.189	0.190