Employment and Income Satisfaction of Students Working Abroad

Income comparison between foreign and native conditions

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Abstract: In this paper are presented the results and conclusions from my own survey, held in Blagoevgrad municipality, Bulgaria, between the years 2011 and 2013. It concerns the typical native phenomenon “student’s working trips abroad”. The attempt is to reveal why these travels are necessary, why they even appear and why are they preferred as a summer job opportunity for Bulgarian youth. Own collected information is used, as well as official statistical data. A comparison between the working conditions here and abroad is applied.

Keywords: students, job, abroad, income, satisfaction, conditions

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last 5 years we live in the conditions of a global economic and financial crisis. Student’s work journeys are a new way of creating opportunities for Bulgarian youth and their families. They represent seasonal migrations, which are not seriously researched so far. Their importance is obviously notable for many students and for Bulgarian economy as a whole. They serve as an “invisible” export of labor forces and import of financial funds. During such seasonal works young people meet different obstacles and difficulties. They work in a completely new surrounding with its native laws, language and rules. Students sacrifice their deserved summer vacation in order to work and become more sustainable and self-dependant. In some favorable cases they can collect small financial capital for their own business at a later stage. Their enthusiasm and efforts are admirable, and the positive effect they cause, upon the national and regional economy is obvious for all.

This survey examines unique problems and phenomena. They are observed in a small number of countries in the world. These are the countries with well developed educational systems and at the same time with low values of Gross Domestic Product. It is limited predominantly to the following countries: Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Belarus,
Turkey, Albania, Macedonia. These are mainly some Central and Eastern European countries, without the Third world countries.

The present survey was anonymous for increasing the honesty of participants and to encourage them to share additional information if necessary.

2. METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research is based on the highly reliable statistical method, the method of sample-size surveys and the method of comparison. To achieve the best results, the most accurate sources of information are used. These are the data-bases of National Statistic Institute of Bulgaria. A sample size survey was held among 80 students, studying in Blagoevgrad and their families. Participants come from the whole country, living in villages, small and big towns. They live under the same legislative, tax, and social circumstances as all other Bulgarian people, which allow accepting the results as representative at a national level. This survey was anonymous and paper-based.

3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

At the first stage we determined the participant’s profile. The answered the question: “In which university in Blagoevgrad do you study?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In which university in Blagoevgrad do you study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>SWU &quot;Neofit Rilski&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUBG</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of tourism</td>
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Fig. 1 “In which university in Blagoevgrad do you study?”

1 According to the company “Integral Work and Travel”, 03.10.2011, http://wat.integral.bg/
We choose the participants proportionally to the total number of students, educated in the 3 institutions in Blagoevgrad (Fig. 1). Their capacity is as following: SWU “Neofit Rilski” has approximately 12 000 students, American University in Bulgaria – 1127, and The College of tourism – 750.

At stage two, through the method of comparison we compared:

- The predominant economic activity of the students working abroad
- The longevity of a working day abroad
- The average monthly income for the same jobs in Bulgaria
- The average hourly income for the same jobs in Bulgaria

We took into consideration also:

- the amount needed to support one person per month in Bulgaria
- duration of the stay of students working abroad
- the savings from one student brigade averagely

Then we calculated how much the students would have saved, if they were working for the same period under the same workload hours per day / week in Bulgaria.

We determined the predominant economic activity of the students, working abroad in stage 3. The results are shown at Figure 2

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2 Data from our own survey October 2011
3 Average monthly salary in Bulgaria for October 2011, National Statistical Institute, www.nsi.bg
Next stage (stage 4) was to figure out the average longevity of a working day abroad. The results are summarized at Figure 3.

**How many hours do you work daily (first, second job etc. – total)?**

- 20% Less than 6
- 48% From 6 to 10
- 28% From 10 to 12
- 4% Over 12

Fig. 2 “How many hours do you work daily (first, second job etc. – total)?”

After that we summarized data for the total duration of stay for students' work abroad. The results are shown on Figure 3.

**What is the total duration of your job residence abroad?**

- 31% Up to 3 months
- 60% 4 months
- 5% 5 months
- 4% 6 months and more

Fig. 2 “What is the total duration of your job residence abroad?”
Fig. 4 “The average hourly income for the same jobs in Bulgaria, Oct. 2011”

Fig. 5 “The average monthly income for the same jobs in Bulgaria, Oct. 2011”
We applied the data from the official national sources. It revealed the average levels of payment monthly and hourly in Bulgaria for October 2011\(^2\). The results are shown on Figures 4 and 5.

The next step was to examine the amount of financial funds, students saved during their working abroad. This was a delicate question, so it was marked as optional. Unexpectedly high number of participants answered the question – about 84% of all. The results are shown on Figure 6.

![What is the amount of money you saved/expect to save from your work season abroad?](image)

Fig. 6 “What is the amount of money you saved/expect to save from your work season abroad?\(^2\)

Meanwhile in Bulgaria:

- Poverty line for 2011, according to the NSI Confederation was 185. 21 BGN (125.99 USD) / Person
- Average maintenance for 2011, according to the NSI Confederation was 494.36 BGN(336.30 USD) / Person
- 1 USD = 1.46889 BGN at Bulgarian National Bank fixings to 11/2011

For a period of 4 months in Bulgaria:

- In a 12-hour day - general average incomes - 2874.00 BGN (1955.10 USD)
- Poverty line – 740.84 BGN (503.97 USD)
- Average maintenance - 1977.44 BGN (1345.20 USD)

The conclusions are notable. The calculations reveal that:

For a period of 4 months in Bulgaria:
• Savings at greatest possible scarcity - 2133.16 lev (1451,13 USD)
• Savings during normal maintenance - 897,00 lev (610,20 USD)

These results are evidence that the data obtained in our study in 2011 are real, and that participants are satisfied with the right of participation in employment programs abroad in the summer! They are summarized and shown on Figure 7.

To what extent are you satisfied with your rate of pay?

Satisfactory (I would earn the same in Bulgaria) 8%
Good (better than a summer job in Bulgaria) 37%
Very good (I cover my expenses for the trip and residence and I save a good amount of money according to Bulgarian standards) 45%
Excellent (I cover my expenses for the trip and residence and I save an excellent amount of money for my future needs) 10%

Fig. 7 “To what extent are you satisfied with your rate of pay?”

The conclusions from this paper undoubtedly proved, that at the present stage abroad-working programs don’t have alternatives according to the rates of incomes and work duration, compared to the native conditions. In the future, Bulgarian government together with the academic councils and the business must develop strategies to attract young people to stay in the country contributing the national economy, instead of working abroad. This could be achieved after a thoroughgoing analysis and adequate governmental measures.
4. REFERENCES
