Influence of household incomes on the students’ summer work programs participation

Vladimir Karadzhov
South-West University, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences,
Department of Geography, Ecology and Environmental Protection,
Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Abstract: This article represents the results of a survey focused on the economic aspects of the students’ summer work and exchange programs abroad. The author’s interest was pointed on the connection: household incomes – students’ participation in summer work programs. This survey is based on both: official statistical data from national institutions and research information gathered by the author in previous researches on similar topics.

Keywords: household incomes, student work and exchange programs, youth economic activities, social effects, student economic contribution

1. INTRODUCTION

This survey attempts to reveal the potential connection between the average household incomes in Bulgaria with the intensity of students’ participation in work-and-travel (WAT) programs. The data presented here is both authors and governmental. Some of the statistical results are being collected by the researcher during his previous surveys. The other data is used by the National Statistical Institute’s official annual reports.

The methods of research are statistical, sociological and analytical

2. EXPERIMENTAL WORK

The foreign students work trips, also known as work-and-travel programs are a major event in the youth lives in Bulgaria in the recent years. These big scale labour migrations occur every year during the summer season. This phenomenon is not world widely spread. It is typical for 9-10 countries in Eastern and Central Europe. Estimated data from the US embassy in Sofia show that since 2001 when these practices emerged to the year
2014 nearly 80,000 students participated in WAT programs only in US. According to my previous surveys\(^1\) nearly 68% of all the participants choose USA, which means that another 32% travel to other countries in search of summer job. We can assume, that the total number of young people from Bulgaria, involved in WAT programs worldwide for the last 13 years is over 100,000 persons.

According to the US Embassy in Sofia\(^2\), cited by Darik News, nearly 6000 students travelled to the US in 2012, 6500 in 2013 and nearly 7000 in 2014.

The main goal of this survey is to reveal how the household incomes affects the activity of the students to participate in summer work programs abroad. The monthly household income per capita for the participants is shown on Fig. 1. This information is collected in 2011 during one of my previous surveys\(^3\). It is connected with the average monthly minimum wage in the country. The results reveal, that the majority of participating students have incomes average or higher than average for the country.

\(^{1}\text{Karadzhov Vl. 2011, Master thesis, SWU “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, p. 32}\\^{2}\text{US Embassy in Sofia, cited by Darik News, „In session: 3-4% of students participated in a brigade, will stay in the US”, 2012, Sofia, Bulgaria}\\^{3}\text{This revealed that relatively wealthy students are travelling in WAT programs, rather than those who are in need.}
The main thesis here is that if the students can earn for a summer job (period of 3-4 months) the same income, as the average person in the country for 1 year, the WAT programs will be more and more attractive every year. The participants' number will continue to grow. If the incomes decrease to a 6-months equivalent there will be a stagnation in the WAT activity. And if the income for a program falls below the psychological barrier of a 6-month-income in Bulgaria it will lead to permanent reduction of the students activity and potential extinction of the WAT programs.

The average summer work program duration is between 3 and 4 months. This is shown on Fig. 2.

![Bar chart showing the duration of WAT programs]

Fig. 2: Average duration of a work-and-travel program

Meanwhile in Bulgaria the average incomes for a household are shown on Figures 3 and 4, as revealed by the data of the official annual report of the National Statistical Institute.

Every average household in Bulgaria consists of 2.4 persons, which means that this total sum must be divided by 2.4 to receive the personal income for a year.

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As shown on Figure 4 the income of one person for one year in the year 2011 is 3,937 BGN.

In the same year the WAT participants managed to spare the average sum of 3,631 USD for one summer. This is shown on Figure 5. As the USD/BGN exchange rate is 1.71:1 today, it means that the students, who worked in the USA managed to save nearly 6,209 BGN for one summer, while here they would earn 3,037 for the whole year. This result is more than double the sum, because they managed to spare that money, which means that they must have earned much more.

The average sum needed to participate in the program is 2,200 USD. It has raised since the beginning of the programs nearly 2 times, but still it seems much more appropriate to pay the higher program taxes and to participate, instead of staying home during the summer season.

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What amount of money have you saved from your last brigade / expect to save the current (in USD)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up to 3000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000–5000</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000–10000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 10000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not answered</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5: Average spared money, received by one-season WAT program

3. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey are more than obvious. Student participants in work-and-travel programs manage to earn for one summer twice as much as they would earn here for one whole year. This makes the WAT programs irreplaceable at the present stage of economic development of the country.

These facts also explain why the number of participants is constantly increasing. Even the fact that the price of a program are growing there are still raising number of candidates. Nowadays, there are no adequate alternatives here for a summer job.

My prediction is that in the near future there would be observed any decrease or stagnation it the students work-and-travel programs participation activities. The levels of development show, that the process is far from reaching the barrier of a 6-month local income per one summer brigade.

4. REFERENCES


http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3223/%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8

[4] National Statistical Institute, Household incomes by districts, Annual report
http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3274/%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8