Students summer work programs as a way to permanent emigration in the USA

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Abstract: This survey attempts to reveal if the students summer work programs abroad, also known as work-and-travel (WAT) programs influence the potential emigration of Bulgarian students in the US. For the purpose of the survey data has been collected from participants, as well as received by official institutions.

Keywords: students, WAT programs, emigration, summer job

1. INTRODUCTION

The summer work programs are important issue for all students in the Eastern and Central European countries and especially in Bulgaria. This topic is of major interest for me since years, so here I will use data from my previous researches as well as new one.

The main topic in this research is: “Do more students emigrate in USA after participating in work-and-travel programs or not?” Compared to the rest of the population of the country.

This topic is very sensitive for the majority of Bulgarian people. Most of the families have one or more family members involved in these processes one way or another. This makes the problem very important. It requires further observations and comparison for knowing the structure of events in more details as well as to propose solutions and suggestions to the country and the institutions to overcome it in the near future.

The methods of research are statistical, analytical and sociological trough specialized surveys. The method of comparison is also used in this survey.
2. EXPERIMENTAL WORK

In order to investigate the present levels of student emigration to the US we used data from the US Embassy in Sofia. According to them, every year nearly 3 to 4 % of the students, who participated in work-and-travel programs decide to stay permanent in the USA after finishing the program.¹

Also according to their statistics the number of students, who participated in WAT programs since the beginning of the process in 2001 is app. 80 000. This means that in the last 14 years it is estimated that between 2 400 and 3 200 students became permanent residents of the US after participating a summer-job program.

Considering the data from my survey in 2011 the majority of the students travel to a summer work program once (51%), the participants who take part of a second program decrease in half (28%) and about 20 % go to 3 or more summer brigades².

![Which consequitive work trip is this for you?](image)

Fig. 1: Number of travels of Bulgarian WAT participants

In order to calculate the emigration activity to the US for the rest of the population of the country I used the official data from the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad (ABA).

¹US Embassy in Sofia, cited by Darik News, “In session: 3-4% of students participated in a brigade, will stay in the US” 2012
They estimate the number of Bulgarian citizens who immigrated permanently to the USA to 250,000 people. The average population number of Bulgaria for the last 25 years is 7,500,000 people. This makes the permanent emigrants about 3.4% of the total population.

In other words – the average emigration rate for the total Bulgarian population to the USA is 3.4% of the people, according to the ABA agency.3

The average emigration level for students, who participated in work-and-travel programs in USA is the same – between 3 and 4%, according to the US Embassy in Sofia.

Tab. 1: Comparison between average and students emigration to the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Emigrated to the USA (number)</th>
<th>Emigrated to the USA (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>7,500,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(last 25 years – average)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students participating in work-and-travel programs</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>2,400 to 3,200</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results are shown on Table 1. According to statistical data it is absolutely obvious that the work-and-travel programs DO NOT increase the level of emigration among the students. They are exactly the same as the results for the rest of the population in general.

In this context we cannot blame the WAT programs for the emigration of young people. Of course, this is a way for them to observe and get known to an entirely new culture, and most importantly – to a new way of organization of a country. This is the so called cultural shock most of all.

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3 States Agency for Bulgarians abroad, Database of SABA to the number of Bulgarian communities abroad
3. CONCLUSIONS

There are many new things that Bulgarian WAT students meet when they arrive in the US. In most cases what they see there is a much better function of all institutions, better protection of human rights, compliance with laws and a peaceful way of life.

This is what must be understood by our local politicians and legislators. We must improve the economic, legislative and public order conditions here, to avoid further emigration of young people.

As revealed by the statistical data, simply traveling or working in the USA does not affect or increase the desire for emigration. The problem is our own organization of life, not the work-and-travel programs.

4. REFERENCES


[3] States Agency for Bulgarians abroad, Database of SABA to the number of Bulgarian communities abroad http://www.aba.government.bg/?show=38&nid=997