

## **TOWARDS INCOMPLETE MIGRATION: ESTONIAN MIGRATION TO FINLAND**

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**Abstract.** For a comprehensive understanding of the changing and complex migration patterns in Europe, both quantitative and qualitative analyses are needed. In this paper we complement the studies on migration patterns of East-West migration by qualitatively analysing Estonian migration to Finland. The aim of the paper is to analyse the migration histories of Estonian migrants in Finland with a focus on the meaning and consequences of these patterns on an individual level but also on the effect of geographical proximity on migration patterns. The results bring forth the individual level gains and losses of migration and show that geographical proximity between the home and host country is conducive to more incomplete migration patterns. Our results also suggest that incomplete migration may have a positive effect for the home country as migrants continue to be consumers in their home country and relieve the pressure on its social system.

**Keywords:** migration patterns, East-West migration, incomplete migration, transnational commuters, Estonia, Finland

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### **1. Introduction**

The central and eastern European (henceforward the CEE) countries have become a hotbed of the new European migration, changing its nature in several aspects. First, there is an increase of temporary migrants (Fihel et al. 2006), the so-called European citizens who do not know in which country they are going to live in, for example, two or three years. This has been facilitated by the opening of the free labour market for the citizens of the new member states of the EU since 2004. Second, the new technologies as well as accessible and cheap international transportation allow migrants to retain strong ties with the country of origin while building their lives in the host country (Horst 2006, Jordan and Düvell 2003). Third, the concurrence of the former and the latter, e.g. the decreasing restrictions

on the free movement of people and progress in technology and transportation have helped increase transnational commuting in Europe. It is becoming less unusual that if people spend their workweek in one country and for the weekend they go back to their families in another.

The free movement of people, a distinctive feature of the EU, has significantly changed and diversified the migration patterns of the East-West migrants (Krings et al. 2013). There are several studies on migration patterns of the East-West migrants primarily considering migrants' ties with the country of origin and with the host country, and their intentions to return (Düvell and Vogel 2006, Engbersen et al. 2013). However, less attention has been given to understanding what conditions make migrants follow one or another migration pattern and what the personal costs of migration are.

Migration patterns and conditions affecting them differ between migrants originating from the different CEE countries. For example, the study of Engbersen et al. (2013) confirms differences in the most preferred migration patterns between Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in the Netherlands where Poles are more likely to follow temporary migration patterns and Bulgarians and Romanians more permanent migration patterns. Engbersen et al. (2013) suggest that geographical distance between the origin and destination countries might be behind these differences with migrants from countries closer to wealthier destination countries preferring more temporary migration patterns.

Due to Estonia's geographical proximity to Finland and Sweden, Estonian migrants may prefer to follow migration patterns specific to the CEE countries that border wealthier countries. The most popular host country for Estonian migrants is Finland which has been a destination for more than a half of all Estonian migrants (Statistics Estonia 2015). The short distance between the two countries – only 80 km or two hours by ferry – allows commuting and regular, tight contacts with the country of origin. In addition, Estonian and Finnish languages are very similar belonging to the same Finno-Ugric language group. This may also affect cross-border migration between these two countries. Therefore, Estonian migration to Finland provides an interesting case study of how geographical and linguistic proximity affect East-West migration patterns.

Previous studies on Estonian emigration have mainly relied on statistical information and several surveys on migration flows between Estonia and Finland (Anniste et al. 2012, Anniste and Tammaru 2014, Kaska and Paas 2013). However, not all aspects of migration are reflected by statistical information and quantitative analysis, as they do not provide sufficient information for fully understanding the reasons and consequences of different migration patterns.

The aim of this paper is to bring forth the consequences and results of East-West migration patterns on an individual level by analysing the migration histories of Estonian migrants in neighbouring Finland. Based on qualitative analysis we elaborate the new, more temporary migration patterns which developed in Europe during the past 25 years with a focus on the background and reasoning behind these patterns and the possible influence of geographical and linguistic proximity

on them. By opening up how the different migration patterns affect the migrants' lives we supplement the general image of people moving freely in contemporary Europe.

## **2. The new migration patterns**

The CEE countries that have stepped on the stage of European migration since the 1990s have significantly changed its nature due to the new migration patterns appearing beside the traditional ones – circular migration for seasonal work and permanent migration (Engbersen et al. 2013, Massey and Taylor 2004, Morokvasic 2004). Already at the beginning of the 2000s Okólski (2001) introduced the concept of incomplete migration as a form of new mobility for East-West migrants, suggesting that the traditional view of migration as documented long-term residence in another country has become more and more obsolete. According to Okólski the incomplete migration has a quasi-migratory nature, where migrants live so-called split lives, being economically active in the host country and maintaining their family lives in the country of origin. These migrants work abroad in order to become economically better off and spend their earnings mainly in the cheaper home country. Further, Engbersen et al. (2010) have introduced the concept of liquid migration. Liquid migration is temporary and transitory, it is uncertain of the future and due to its short-term nature immigrants have a weak or non-existent residence status in the host country.

Migration patterns have thus become more diverse with new, more fluid patterns appearing next to the traditional ones. Several authors have categorized the migration patterns of East-West migrants (Düvell and Vogel, Engbersen et al. 2013). As these typologies are often based on the migrants' integration and intentions to stay in the host country and their ties to the country of origin the results of the different studies largely coincide.

For example, Düvell and Vogel have qualitatively studied the migration patterns of Polish migrants and defined four patterns based on the intended duration of stay and on family ties. The first category is return-oriented migrants who stay in the host country on a temporary basis and retain strong ties with the country of origin. Engbersen et al.'s (2013) categorization, drawn from quantitative analysis and based on migrants' attachment to the destination country and to the country of origin, call them circular migrants. Circular migrants are, both culturally and economically, integrated in the host country's society to a small degree, they have often migrated at an older age, and often have partners in the country of origin. These migrants take the most advantage of the wage differentials in Europe; they often move repeatedly and for short time periods with the aim to help finance their life at home (Düvell and Garapich 2011).

The second group by Düvell and Vogel are migrants who wish to settle, i.e. emigrants/immigrants. These are migrants who have long-term or permanent settlement intentions and establish strong links with the host country. Engbersen

et al. (2013) add that the settlement migrants are culturally and economically integrated in the host country, are often highly educated and have relatively high incomes.

The third group is transnational migrants who establish strong links with the host society but also retain close ties with their home country. Engbersen et al. (2013) have named them bi-national migrants, and note that they are often highly skilled and tend to have higher incomes. This group is the most affected and in a sense an outcome of the progress in transportation and communication technologies that has fundamentally changed the frequency and intimacy of contacts with sending communities (Levitt 2001).

The last group by Düvell and Vogel are so-called global nomads. These are highly mobile migrants who live in several countries, do not intend to stay nor return but to move forward wherever work opportunities arise. By Engbersen et al. (2013) they are often low-skilled labour migrants who have short-term migration intentions and weak ties both to the host and the origin country.

Migration patterns have thus become more complex and also less predictable. The borderlines between different migration patterns are often blurred (King 2002) and migration patterns are no more static, migrants can change them repeatedly in time (Massey and Taylor, Morokvasic). Migrants react and constantly need to adapt to the changing labour market (Hooghe et al. 2008) and are therefore uncertain about their future. They also accumulate certain migration experience abroad that changes them and their motivation may change together with longer and more frequent stays abroad (Massey and Taylor). The short-term labour migration at the beginning is easily altered into circular or seasonal migration or even into transnational commuting where migration or mobility becomes a lifestyle (Morokvasic). Thus, migration patterns have become more dynamic and have gradually moved towards greater transnationalism.

The concept of transnationalism, most broadly speaking, means migrants' simultaneous life in the host country while keeping strong ties with the country of origin (Glick Schiller 1997, Tsuda 2012). By maintaining family, economic, social, religious and other relations in the home country transnational migrants create social fields that cross state borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). As they distribute their resources between the home and the host countries and remain loyal to the home country, some sending countries, instead of hoping for migrants to return, have increasingly started to see transnational migrants as resources (Glick Schiller 1999, Levitt). Guarnizo (1998) also stresses that in addition to the positive effect of remittances on the economy of sending countries, these countries have started to acknowledge the money migrants spend and invest there.

In brief, the open borders and open labour market of the EU have widened the East-West migrants' opportunities to live and work in wealthier EU member states. Due to the high wage differences between eastern and western Europe the East-West migration is largely driven by economic reasons (Krings et al.) and this mobility tends to be often temporary, circular and transnational (Favell 2008). However, there are also differences among the East-West migrants. Firstly, there

are differences between the pre- and post-enlargement (of the EU in 2004) migrants where the post-accession migrants tend to be more mobile and more uncertain of the future than the pre-accession migrants (White and Ryan 2008). Secondly, there are some differences in the most preferred migration patterns between the East-West migrants from different countries. For example, the study by Engbersen et al. (2013) confirms differences in the most preferred migration patterns between Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in the Netherlands where Poles are more likely to follow temporary migration patterns and Bulgarians and Romanians more permanent migration patterns. Engbersen et al. (2013) suggest that the greater geographical distance between the origin and destination countries may imply the higher preference of permanent migration among Romanians and Bulgarians in the Netherlands.

### **3. Emigration from Estonia**

Estonia, similarly to other CEE countries, became a country of emigration after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Tammaru et al. 2010). In the 1990s, the emigration from Estonia was mainly in the form of return migration by Russians and other nations of the former Soviet Union to their ethnic homelands while emigration to the West was modest (Anniste and Tammaru 2014). Westward emigration intensified in the 2000s and especially since Estonia joined the European Union in 2004. Similarly to other new member states, the EU-15 countries became the most attractive destinations for Estonian migrants (Anniste and Tammaru). Since 1991 to the present day the most popular destination country for Estonian westward migration has been Finland with more than 60,000 migrants (Statistics Finland 2015).

Although the general emigration numbers in Estonia have been relatively low, the number of transnational commuters per 1,000 inhabitants is one of the highest in the EU, reaching 15.8 (MKW Wirtschaftsforschung 2009). Paas and Kaska (2015) have studied statistical portraits of transnational commuters from Estonia, but this does not provide sufficient information on how the geographical and linguistic proximity of the destination country affects the chosen migration pattern and what personal toll is paid by the people who are involved in the migration processes. Therefore, in this study we qualitatively analyse the histories of Estonian migrants in Finland with a focus on the role of geographical and linguistic proximity on the chosen migration patterns and also on the possible consequences of migration for the individual's life.

### **4. Data and methods**

Our study relies on in-depth interviews with Estonian migrants in Finland (23 interviewees) and Estonian return migrants from Finland (9 interviewees) con-

ducted in autumn 2012. Including return migrants in the study was important in order to take hold of those who have not only an intention to return but who have actually moved back to Estonia.

The interviewees were found through combined snowball and purposive (maximum variation) sampling. We started with snowball sampling which is a form of sampling where existing participants recommend other individuals from among their acquaintances. In order to capture a wider range of migration patterns we proceeded with maximum variation purposive sampling, where participants are picked according to predetermined criteria relevant to particular research objective (Guest et al. 2006) with an aim to identify central themes and common patterns across variations (Patton 1990). Düvell and Garapich have suggested that migrants with different occupation levels tend to follow different migration patterns. Therefore, in order to capture a wider range of migration patterns the participants in our study were selected from different levels of occupation (managers, specialists, skilled workers, unskilled workers). In addition, the sample includes migrants from both genders and from the periods of pre- (9) and post-enlargement (23) of the EU in 2004, thus enabling to detect different viewpoints of pre- and post-enlargement migrants<sup>1</sup>.

At the time of the interview most of our interviewees were living (current migrants) or their last place of residence in Finland (return migrants) used to be in the Helsinki metropolitan area which is part of the Uusimaa region. Uusimaa is the most popular destination for Estonian migrants in Finland with 62 per cent of all Estonian migrants in Finland living in this densely populated region (Statistics Finland). Concentrating on the migrants of the Helsinki region enabled us to put a special focus on the migrants who have the easiest access to the direct transportation means to Estonia, and therefore to better understand the effect of the neighbouring countries on migration patterns.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used in the study, because they allow prepared questions that are necessary for identifying one's migration pattern but also allow the interviewer to be flexible and to deviate and probe further if needed (Gall et al. 1996). The interviews covered topics as migration motives, Finnish life experience, accumulation of knowledge and experience, attitudes towards the home and the host country, actual or expected terms of return<sup>2</sup>. On average, the interviews lasted between one and two hours.

Similarly to previous studies (Düvell and Vogel, Engbersen et al. 2013) we determined the migration pattern by analysing his or her migration history in three main aspects: 1) the migrant's socio-cultural and structural integration in Finland – this includes the migrant's personal assessment of his or her level of integration, the frequency of socializing with Finns, proficiency of the Finnish language, whether the migrant follows Finnish media, and the extent of using services in Finland; 2) the migrant's connections to the country of origin – this includes topics such as the frequency of visits to Estonia, frequency of virtual contacts with

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<sup>1</sup> The description of the main characteristics of the interviewees is available on demand.

<sup>2</sup> The interview plan is available on demand.

friends and relatives in Estonia, whether the migrant follows Estonian media, whether the migrant owns real estate in Estonia, and whether the migrant uses services in Estonia; 3) the migrant's intentions for the duration of stay (for migrants) or the fact of returning (for return migrants), i.e. whether he or she wishes to return to Estonia and if so, when.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss the problem of data saturation with the purposive sampling i.e. what is the adequate sample size for our study? In accordance with Morse (1994), Guest et al. (2006) suggest that for analysing high-level, all-encompassing themes a sample of six interviews may be sufficient. However, Guest et al. also argue that "If the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behaviour among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient". In our study we analyse three migrant groups, each with its specific migration pattern: transnational commuters (eleven respondents), circular migrants (seven respondents) and bi-national migrants (13 respondents). Thus, we have reached the data saturation proposed by Guest et al. with the sample of bi-national migrants, but have only come near with the samples of transnational commuters and circular migrants. We consider, however, the number of interviewees for circular migrants and transnational commuters close enough to the point of saturation for capturing the generic aspects of these patterns. Therefore, we will continue with our analysis by bearing in mind the data limitation that may affect the variability of these patterns.

After determining the migration patterns of Estonian migrants in Finland we used thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns within the migration patterns across our interviews. As the focus of our study was set before analysing the data we used the theoretical approach of thematic analysis where coding is done for quite specific research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006). We explored the role of geographical and linguistic proximity of the two countries on migration patterns and also the characteristics of these patterns, such as reasons of migration, intentions to return and what the migrants have to gain or lose from their cross-border mobility.

## **5. Results**

In our study, the interviewees were divided into migration patterns and the patterns were named after the same migration patterns as in the work of Engbersen et al. (2013). We followed the typology of Engbersen et al. (2013) that largely coincides with the one presented by Düvell and Vogel because it is based on migrants' attachment to the host and home country – topics that were also covered in depth in our interviews. We did not use our own designations as the objective of our study was not to derive new migration patterns, but to contribute to the existing discussion on the East-West migration patterns, and for doing that comparable concepts are necessary. However, due to the peculiarity of migration patterns of Estonian migrants in Finland our categorization has some important

differences from the one of Engbersen et al. (2013). Namely, among circular migrants, i.e. people with low or non-existent integration intentions in Finland and high return intentions to Estonia, we detected a distinct group who are constantly mobile and who consider Finland solely as a place of work while the social and family life remains implicitly in Estonia. As these migrants spend all their free time in Estonia, their integration in Finland is non-existent and they do not even consider themselves as migrants, we call them transnational commuters. Therefore, in order to better grasp this migration pattern we have separated transnational commuting from circular migration as a distinct pattern.

In addition, as none of our interviewees follow the settlement migrants' pattern and only one of our interviewees follow a footloose pattern by Engbersen et al.'s categorization (2013), we exclude these patterns from our further analysis. It is important to note, however, that it does not mean that the settlement migrants are non-existent among Estonian migrants in Finland, but they may have simply not happened to be part of our sample. Therefore, in our further study we analyse the following three migration patterns: transnational commuting, circular migration and bi-national migration (see Table 1). The main keywords by which the interviewees are categorized are: 1) integration in Finland; 2) contacts with Estonia; 3) return intentions.

Interestingly, all three migration patterns discussed in the study are represented among both pre- and post-EU enlargement migrants of our study. However, there are important differences in the experiences of arrival and adjusting to life in Finland between those who emigrated at the beginning of the 1990s and those who emigrated in the 2000s. At the beginning of the 1990s there were very few Estonians in Finland, the country faced recession with unemployment rates rising up to 18 per cent by 1994 (Statistics Finland) and the means of keeping connections with relatives in Estonia were scant and irregular – all this made adjusting to life in Finland rather difficult and long-term. For those who arrived in Finland in the 2000s integration (if desired) was easier as the network of Estonian migrants was already in place, unemployment had decreased and the means of communication had developed.

**Table 1. Elements describing interviewees' migration patterns (based on the categories of Engbersen et al. 2013, modified by authors).**

Migration pattern	Elements describing migration patterns
Transnational commuters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No integration in Finland</li> <li>2. Strong relations with Estonia</li> <li>3. Continuous mobility</li> <li>4. High return intentions; short-term plan to stay</li> </ol>
Circular migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low integration in Finland</li> <li>• Strong relations with Estonia</li> <li>• High return intentions; short-term plan to stay</li> </ul>
Bi-national migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High integration in Finland</li> <li>• Relatively strong relations with Estonia</li> <li>• Long-term plan to stay</li> </ul>

### 5.1. Transnational commuters

Transnational commuters are migrants who work in Finland, but remain simultaneously active in their social and family lives in Estonia. The total ‘incompleteness’ of this migration pattern makes it rather exceptional among the other migration patterns and sometimes transnational commuters do not even see themselves as migrants. Although they spend a bigger part of their life working in Finland, their home and loved ones remain in Estonia and they do not consider Finland as a new country of residence.

*I never left [Estonia]. Well, I have never thought of actually migrating to Finland.* (Rahel, 52)

An important premise for deciding in favour of commuting between the two countries is the geographical closeness of Estonia and Finland. Transnational commuting is largely possible because of the short distance and good transportation connections between the two countries that allow frequent visits and to simultaneously maintain work and family lives in different countries. As an average ferry ride from Tallinn to Helsinki takes about two hours the transnational commuting is seen as being no different from commuting between Estonian cities.

In addition to the short distance that enables frequent commuting, modern means of communication such as Skype and Facebook allow migrants to maintain their everyday contacts with friends and family.

*You log on to Facebook and it's like you've never left home.* (Sander, 26)

Transnational commuters are connected to the host country solely through work. Work and more specifically the higher income in Finland is thus the most important migration motive for them. The higher salaries allow Estonian migrants in Finland to earn more and work less than they did in Estonia. However, work and salary related migration motives can be sometimes mixed with other motives such as a wish to relax or to change the current lifestyle. The Finnish salaries and more relaxed work environment can be seen as an escape from stressful work and from working overtime in Estonia. For example Armin (44), a former manager who is now working as a clerk at a grocery store says:

*I had great stress regarding my position as a manager [in Estonia] and if I can do an elementary job in Finland and earn the same amount of money, then why should I bother to strain myself?*

Migrants’ expectations in integration prospects in the host country can also have an effect on their migration decision (Haug 2008). Prior knowledge that the integration process in the host country will be smooth and fast gives an additional boost for the decision to migrate. Estonian migrants in Finland have a significant integration advantage – as the Estonian and Finnish languages are very similar it is easy for Estonians to master Finnish. Many interviewees said that even if they did not know any Finnish language before migrating, it was easy for them to learn it.

*In a month I understood more or less everything.* (Marek, 48)

Thus the fast and easy acquisition of Finnish is another factor pulling Estonians to work in Finland. They do not need to invest long hours nor large sums into language trainings, and if the work allows, they can often start working immediately after arrival.

Some knowledge of Finnish, however, is the only instrument of integration for transnational commuters in Finland. Transnational commuters who see Finland solely as a place of work are not interested in integrating. Spending every vacant moment in Estonia, they usually do not have the time or desire to make an effort to find local friends nor to take an interest in Finnish culture or politics. Transnational commuters keep themselves informed only through the Estonian media with Estonian news. They often share a rental apartment or a house with other foreign (Estonian) workers. They spend their incomes mainly in Estonia where goods and services are cheaper. They also spend their vacations in Estonia or travel to a third country.

One of the objectives of our interviews is to analyse the cost of migration for the migrants. What do migrants have to gain and lose from this lifestyle? For the transnational commuters the first and the most obvious benefit of working in Finland is the higher salary. However, in addition to money there are other benefits. For example, Estonians – irrespective of the migration pattern – value very highly the general working environment in Finnish companies. They admire that competition is considered normal, that team work is more common than individual work, and that workers are regularly sent to additional training, including language schools in Finland. Compared to Estonia they find that relations between colleagues and work management are better which makes their work in Finland less stressful.

*My job in Finland is only to drive the bus, nothing else. In Estonia you need to do more. You need to clean the bus, wash the bus, and refuel the bus. You don't have these problems here. (Bus driver Marko, 48)*

However, transnational commuting also has some important downsides. First, adapting to the life of an immigrant may be hard. Sometimes immigrants are paid less than the locals and some employers try to take advantage of the fragile situation and scarce knowledge of the new arrivals.

*The first four-five months were absolute hell. There was no place to live. (...) My boss just used me. There are many scams around. Either they didn't pay you for the overtime or they didn't pay you at all. (Armin, 44)*

Second, working abroad and staying away from home for most of the time has serious effects on split families. The absence of one of the parents affects the children, depriving them of role models. One of our interviewees also raises the question of trust between family members that is seriously tested with this lifestyle. Third, migrants sometimes encounter negative attitudes by fellow Estonians in Estonia. For example, Marek (48) tells how in Estonia he is sometimes considered as a person who has betrayed his country. Last but not least are the homesickness and constant concern for the family and home left behind.

As the nonmonetary cost of this lifestyle is high, especially for the migrants who have a family in Estonia, the transnational commuters we interviewed have a relatively firm intention to eventually put an end to commuting. However, due to the short distance between the two countries that makes commuting easy and relatively cheap, the initial short-term commuting often gets extended. Estonian transnational commuters in Finland tend to have a steady job and they have often lived this dual life for years. For example, one of our interviewees, a 43-year-old scientist, has commuted between Tallinn and Helsinki for 22 years. Thus, although return migration is always in the minds of transnational commuters they often postpone it indefinitely.

## 5.2. Circular migrants

In terms of integration in the host country and the intention to return, circular migration and transnational commuting are rather similar migration patterns. The main aspect for distinguishing the two are the degrees of mobility and personal life brought along to the host country. Whereas transnational commuters are constantly on the move and for them mobility is more of a lifestyle (Morokvasic 2004), circular migrants are less mobile. Whereas the keyword for transnational commuters is mobility or simultaneity, circular migration can be better characterized by temporality.

Similarly to transnational commuters the circular migrants of Estonia usually migrate for reasons related to work and a higher salary. The salary-related motive that has already been discussed in the previous section is important, but certainly not the only attraction that pulls Estonian circular migrants to Finland. For the circular migrants prospects related to career and education also play an important role in deciding to temporarily move abroad. Estonia with its population of 1.3 million is a small country with a small economy which means that pursuing a professional career in specific fields may be complicated or even impossible.

Similarly to transnational commuters the short distance and linguistic and cultural similarities between Estonia and Finland are important pull-factors for the circular migrants. The proximity of Estonia is especially important for families with children.

*I had several offers from different countries, for example, from the US and Scotland, but as my child was 11 months old and I had a good offer from Finland and as it was the closest. I can go there and come back if necessary and in terms of adapting it is the easiest if you go with your family. (Jane, 32)*

Social integration in Finland for the circular migrants, however, tends to be complicated. As circular migrants have short-term intentions to stay they do not invest much effort into establishing new friendships. Their contacts with Finns are mostly work-related and their leisure time in Finland is usually spent with their families or sometimes with other Estonians. As they often visit Estonia, a part of their social life is still spent there.

The lack of integration causes stress and loneliness. Due to the physical absence the personal relationships in Estonia suffer and may not be the same when returning. Thus the circular migrants do not easily make new relations in Finland and at the same time lose sight of some relationships in Estonia.

*You feel lonelier (...) and the circle of friends in Estonia naturally decreases. This is the price. (Mihkel, 50)*

Thus the higher salary, pursuing a career and acquiring international experience often come at the cost of forsaking part of a migrant's personal relations and happiness.

As one of the main characteristics of circular migration is temporality, return migration is already a presumption of this pattern. Nevertheless, although migration is seen as short-term by the migrants, returning can be postponed, sometimes for several years.

The reasons to return are often related to the migrant's family. For example, some migrants combine their return migration with the time of schooling their children as they are concerned that Finnish schools will turn their children into Finns. Others return because a family member has difficulties adapting to life in the new country. A reason to return can also be a migrant's unwillingness to pay the price of migration – loneliness, loss in quality of personal relationships, etc. Interestingly, the reasons to return for the circular migrants tend to be better formulated than for the transnational commuters who sometimes do not consider themselves as migrants and thus there is nowhere to return from.

### 5.3. Bi-national migrants

Out of the three migration patterns in our study the bi-national migrants most resemble traditional permanent migrants. The bi-nationals have either stayed in Finland for many years and/or have long-term intentions to stay. Therefore, they are relatively well integrated, both culturally and economically, in Finnish society or at least do their best to be so.

For the bi-national migrants the reasons for migration are more varied than for transnational commuters and circular migrants and their reasons are, in general, less connected with the fact that Estonia and Finland are neighbouring countries. Work (including career prospects) and higher salary remain as important motives, but reasons such as love, following a family member who lives in Finland, a wish to live abroad, etc. are also common and sometimes get mixed with financial or career-related reasons. Sometimes emigration becomes an option when there are troubles in one's personal life and migrating is seen as a step in turning a new page in life. Laura (50) explains her migration motives that are a mix of personal and work-related reasons:

*When I got divorced I had to find myself a new home. I bought an apartment [in Estonia] and thought that I could manage but then there was an offer to come here [to Finland]. If I had stayed in Estonia I would have had to pay the mortgage and could have ended up in [financial] collapse.*

Some of the bi-national migrants in our study migrated already at the beginning of the 1990s. At that time travelling was not as easy and cheap as today, thus the reason for migration was sometimes a desire to see and experience the world. Some migrants also escaped from the unstable political and economic situation in Estonia

For the bi-nationals integration in Finland is important and wanted. Depending largely on the length of stay our interviewees assess their integration differently: the long-term migrants are relatively well integrated whereas the more recent migrants admit to some difficulties. Naturally, integration is the hardest in the first few years since arrival when homesickness, loneliness, language problems, bureaucracy and possible unemployment make adapting difficult.

For bi-nationals integrating in Finland is the easiest for families with young children. Parents communicate with other (Finnish) parents at playgrounds, in kindergartens and schools. Still, migrants admit that their social life in Finland is less intensive than it used to be in Estonia but they compensate for it during their visits to Estonia.

Migrants who have migrated to Finland for higher salaries or for career prospects have a direct and obvious monetary or professional gain from their migration decision. However, there are other benefits that can be as important. These reasons may not directly draw migrants to Finland, but may postpone their return, sometimes indefinitely. Similarly to the transnational commuters and circular migrants the bi-national migrants value the working and living environments and the social care system in Finland. They mention the big disparities between Estonia's and Finland's social care systems, for example in availability of kindergarten places, children's education and the retirement system. They also value the general living environment, such as opportunities for sports, the abundance of children's playgrounds and good transportation connections. They refer to Finland as a stress-free environment where people are generally nice to each other.

The short distance between the two countries is less important for the bi-national migrants than for the circular migrants and transnational commuters, but it does have its effect on the migrants' lives. First, the Estonian bi-national migrants in Finland quite actively use Estonian services. It is common that they connect their visits to Estonia with a visit to the dentist, hairdresser and other beauty services, car repair etc. Second, it is also quite common for bi-national migrants to own real estate in Estonia, for example second homes. They often spend their vacations in Estonia and stay in their Estonian home during their visits. Finally, some bi-nationals would have already returned to Estonia if they had lived in some more distant country.

*It was the best option because if it had been a more distant country, then I probably would not have stayed for so long. (Martin, 46)*

Bi-national migrants usually do not have clear intentions to return to Estonia. Some of them, however, have returned and some of them think about the idea of returning at the time of retirement and enjoying the benefits of spending their Finnish pension in much cheaper Estonia.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper contributes to studies of the migration patterns of East-West migrants by qualitatively analysing migration histories and the possible consequences of different migration patterns on individuals' lives. We bring geographic proximity into the discussion of migration patterns and while supporting the argument of Engbersen et al. (2013) argue that geographical proximity to Finland has significantly affected migration patterns of Estonian migrants. Without the opportunity to frequently visit home migration would not be an option at all. The results of our study confirm that besides geographic proximity, linguistic proximity, which is helpful in finding work also plays an important role in choosing destination countries and migration patterns. In addition, the geographic proximity of Finland also becomes a remarkable argument when prolonging the stay in Finland as homesickness can be relieved by a short ferry ride to Estonia.

However, it needs to be emphasized that geographical and linguistic proximity are not the only components that form Finland's attraction to Estonian migrants and make it simply the most logical choice for many of them. The attraction of Finland is an accumulation of the proximity discussed above, existing social networks, work opportunities and also the free labour mobility within the EU that has simplified access to the labour markets of other EU countries.

Our study shows that Estonian migrants in Finland, irrespective of the chosen migration pattern, spend and invest a considerable part of their income in Estonia and in accordance to the study of Levitt (2001) remain loyal to Estonia. Thus, diminishing barriers enable migrants to be involved and active in more than just one country. In addition, migrants who maintain their family, economic and social relations in Estonia have created a transnational social field between Estonia and Finland, as also described by Glick Schiller et al.

The results of our analysis confirm that compared to traditional permanent migration, the new migration patterns have become more dynamic, incomplete and unstable than in the past, and that the borders between the migration patterns are often arbitrary. Moreover, we find that the temporality of migration is increased by geographic proximity between the host and sending countries and the low travel costs that derive from it, also creating premises for a genuine incomplete migration pattern – transnational commuting.

The study also expands the understanding of how mobility affects CEE migrants on an individual level. In line with Morokvasic, Estonian transnational commuters in Finland settle within mobility in order to improve or maintain the quality of life at home. By taking advantage of the wage differentials and free movement of labour within the EU – they work in Finland where the salaries are higher, and due to the fast and cheap transportation connection preserve their personal life in Estonia – these migrants achieve a perceived 'win-win' situation for themselves. First, geographical mobility helps to significantly improve the migrants' economic well-being. Higher salaries earned in Finland are mainly spent in cheaper Estonia, enabling the migrants to save money and not depend too much

on the next payday. Second, they retain their personal lives, including family and friends in Estonia. Commuting over national borders to Finland is not seen as very different from commuting within Estonia. Therefore, transnational migrants often do not perceive themselves as migrants.

By qualitatively dissecting the migration patterns of Estonian migrants in Finland we widen the knowledge of contemporary Europe's freely moving citizens and thus enable to better understand the background and characteristics of East-West migration. For instance, migration motives are more varied than just the obvious increase in migrants' income. In small countries like Estonia with small labour markets emigration is often inevitable as working in some specific occupations is hard or impossible and for pursuing one's a career it is important to gain some international experience. Thus, the free movement of labour in the EU offers migrants from smaller member states career-enhancing opportunities that would not be possible at their own countries. However, as noted by Bartram (2010), our study confirms that mobility has its price as migration often has a negative effect on migrants' personal relations and happiness. First, it takes a lot of effort to keep the quality of relations in both countries. Homesickness, broken families, children left behind are possible downsides of migration. Moreover, transnational migration affects not only the migrant, but also the stayers. The emergence of transnational families where one parent spends most of the time abroad is evident. Second, creating new relations and finding friends in a host country is not always smooth and fast for migrants, even when the host society is linguistically and culturally close. Therefore, on an individual level migration offers opportunities for economic and career-related betterment on one hand but may lead to a loss in the quality of personal relations on the other.

Although for Estonia or any other CEE country the loss of labour force is an inevitable negative outcome of migration the incompleteness of migration also indicates some positive effects. First, the migrants who return, bring along knowledge, experience, and networks picked up abroad – brain circulation. As transnational and circular migrants express a strong wish to return the task for the home country is to implement measures that promote returning. Examples of such measures, drawn from our study, could be support for returning families in finding child care, employment and a place of residence. Second, Estonian migrants in Finland are frequent consumers in Estonia, spending and investing a considerable amount of their Finnish salary and future pension in Estonia thereby stimulating its economy. Third, incomplete migration can be a temporary solution for the unemployed who wish to retain their home and family life in Estonia. Thus, migrants can be seen as resources by the sending country, as Glick Schiller (1999), Guarnizo and Levitt (2001) have stated. The sending countries need to be aware of this and establish sufficient conditions for achieving the possible positive effects of migration.

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