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**Izabela Grabowska\***

Kozminski University

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7957-4901>

e-mail: [igrabowska@kozminski.edu.pl](mailto:igrabowska@kozminski.edu.pl)

**Agata Jastrzębowska\*\***

Kozminski University

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8739-6797>

e-mail: [ajastrzebowska@kozminski.edu.pl](mailto:ajastrzebowska@kozminski.edu.pl)

**MOBILE TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD AND SOFT  
SKILLS OF POLISH AND LITHUANIAN RETURN  
MIGRANTS\*\*\***

MOBILE TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD AND SOFT SKILLS OF  
POLISH AND LITHUANIAN RETURN MIGRANTS

**Keywords:** mobile transitions to adulthood, soft skills, return migrants.

The main aim of this article is to analyse the interplay between international migration, life events related to transition to adulthood and the acquisition of soft skills as a result of working and living abroad. The article is based on an online survey conducted in spring and summer 2020 among 740 Polish

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\***Izabela Grabowska** – Full Professor social science; scientific interests: the impact of migration on human capital, social remittances, return migration, labour market integration.

\*\***Agata Jastrzębowska** – Ph.D. in psychology; scientific interests: psychological impact of migration experience, psychosocial human capitals, job competency fit.

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and Lithuanian return migrants from the UK who returned to Poland and Lithuania. International migration helped them, above all, to acquire both English language communication skills and to learn teamwork - soft skills which are important for career development. In both groups of Polish and Lithuanian return migrants, international migration accelerated three key processes: 1. starting to make independent decisions, 2. becoming financially independent from their parents and 3. finding stable employment. In both groups, becoming financially independent was linked significantly to the high level of soft skills acquired abroad.

## MOBILNE WCHODZENIE W DOROSŁOŚĆ I KOMPETENCJE MIĘK- KIE POLSKICH I LITEWSKICH MIGRANTÓW POWROTNYCH

**Słowa kluczowe:** mobilne wchodzenie w dorosłość, kompetencje miękkie, migranci powrotni.

Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza zależności między migracją międzynarodową, wydarzeniami życiowymi związanymi z wchodzeniem w dorosłość i nabywaniem kompetencji miękkich w wyniku pracy i życia za granicą. Artykuł powstał na podstawie ankiety internetowej przeprowadzonej wiosną i latem 2020 roku wśród 740 polskich i litewskich migrantów powrotnych z Wielkiej Brytanii, którzy wrócili do Polski i na Litwę. Migracje zagraniczne pomogły im, przede wszystkim, w nabyciu zarówno kompetencji komunikacyjnych w języku angielskim, jak i pracy zespołowej - kompetencji miękkich, które są ważne dla rozwoju kariery. W obu grupach migrantów powrotnych z Polski i Litwy migracje zagraniczne przyspieszyły trzy kluczowe procesy: 1. rozpoczęcie samodzielnego podejmowania decyzji; 2. uniezależnienie się finansowo od rodziców oraz 3. znalezienie stabilnego zatrudnienia. W obu grupach usamodzielnienie się finansowo wiązało się istotnie z wysokim poziomem kompetencji miękkich nabytych za granicą.

### Introduction

International mobility is in the “DNA” of young adult Europeans from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Through their experiences of international migration, we try to understand being a young adult from Central and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 21st century. They consciously do not remember communism in this part of the world. They

were in college or were taking their first steps in the labour market when Poland joined the European Union (EU) in May 2004 and open borders became a norm. They know that their experience of international migration is not only about earning money, it is also about getting to know the world and develop themselves. Their parents often did not understand their constant being on the move.

The enlargements of the European Union (EU) of 2004 and 2007 have evoked the accelerated mobility of young Central and Eastern Europeans below 30 years of age, so called ‘generation on the move’ (Robertson et al. 2018; Szewczyk 2016; Grabowska, Jastrzebowska 2021). Since May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, Poles and Lithuanians have started enjoying a full freedom of movement of persons and unrestricted rights to be employed in the UK, Ireland and Sweden. Other EU countries introduced various restrictions which were gradually waived in due course. The reasons and motives of these moves, especially for young adults, were not fortunately simple and straightforward at all, although many studies underline mainly the economic factors, followed by other factors. Among interconnected factors one needs to consider (cf. Sawulski 2018): wage differences, wage purchasing power (what money can buy), housing situation, especially the communal housing and its availability to young adults, employment opportunities, their varieties and conditions of life balance.

According to *Intra-EU Mobility Report* (Triesch et al. 2021) Poland was among five most important sending countries of the EU, next there was Lithuania. Poland has sent or rather has put on the move around 2.5 million migrants in the course of fifteen years (Statistics Poland). Around half of all EU movers, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe reside in either Germany or the UK and every fourth mover resides in Spain, Italy or France. The share of those who returned in the entire EU compared to those who left in 2017 increased to 72 per cent (66 per cent in 2016), meaning that for every four persons who leave, three return. Return mobility increased in 2017 and amounted to around 723,000 nationals returning to their country of origin. Compared to the number of nationals who left their country in 2017, return mobility amounts to a ratio of 72 per cent.

Regarding the mobility spells, data of the European Labour Force Survey shows that among those movers who stayed in their host country for at least one year (‘long-term movers’), over 50 per cent stayed only between one and four years. Mobility of a few years (1 to 4 years) has increased significantly since 2004. EU-13 countries were the countries that had the highest share of returnees in among inflows – Romania (86%) and Poland (52%) and six other countries had rates between 45% and 50%

(Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia). In Poland, two – out of four persons leaving – return. Several other countries of origin saw even lower proportions of return mobility: Lithuania (24%), Latvia (33%), Slovenia (29%) and Slovakia (33%), the proportion is 33% or less.

Today, in 2022, 18 years after the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU, it is justified to study return mobility. The *Annual Report on Intra-EU Mobility* (Fries-Tersch et al. 2021, p. 45) informs us that that “return mobility constitute an important part of intra-EU mobility flows”. In 2018, the total EU return flow was at the level of 738,000 annually and it has been growing by 2% when compared to the previous years and has also been on an upward trend since 2015/6 which might be also connected with the UK’s decision to leave the EU. When we look at inflows to EU-28 countries – Romania, Lithuania and Bulgaria’s return inflow of nationals is at the level of over 50% while Portugal, Greece, Hungary and Poland’s is slightly below 50%. The authors of the *Annual Report on Intra-EU Mobility 2020* (Fries-Tersch et al. 2021, p. 45) state also that “returning movers will generally have gained more work experience during their stay abroad and may therefore bring both skills and human capital with them upon their return, to the benefit of their country of origin”. Against the backdrop of the above findings, it is worth studying the effects of these return flows especially of its tacit outcomes, especially in relation to the development of professional life by young adults.

Therefore, the main aim of this article is to analyse the interplay between international migration, life events connected to transition to adulthood and acquiring soft skills as a result of working and living abroad.

The article consists of five parts, including this introduction. The theoretical part discusses an interplay of mobile transitions, markers of transitions to adulthood and soft skills in the context of international migration undertaken by young adults. The third part of the article describes and justifies the use of quantitative method, the research technique of web survey, the channels of recruitment of Polish and Lithuanian returnees and steps of data analysis. In the findings section we present the results of the quantitative analysis. Firstly, we show the possible interplay between international migration and life events connected to transitions to adulthood in two subpopulations – Polish return migrants and Lithuanian return migrants. Secondly, we formulate a *Migratory Soft Skill Acquisition Index* and juxtapose it with life events connected to entering adulthood in order to check if intangible resources such soft skills facilitate the process of starting their own independent lives.

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**Theoretical approach: Mobile transitions to adulthood and soft skills**

The transition to adulthood is marked by new roles and responsibilities in such interrelated domains as education, employment, and family formation and it can be magnified by an experience of international migration. The article is based on three theoretical approaches: mobile transitions, markers of the transitions to adulthood and soft skills.

Robertson, Harris and Baldassar (2018) in their seminal work underlined the conceptual framework of *mobile transitions* to describe “transition pathways under the condition of mobility, but also as a framing concept for a broader research agenda that can build on current critical interventions around youth, transition and mobility from both youth studies and migration studies perspectives” (2018, p. 2). They also develop the argument that the process itself and its outcomes are best seen through three intersecting domains: economic opportunities, social relations, and civic practices rather than stable employment and independent living. We build our argument on this legacy but we also would like to step back and focus beforehand on *turning points (trigger points)* rather than immediately on mobile transitions.

We refer also here to a notion of *mobile transition turning point* as an umbrella term to capture the scope of “critical events, defining moments, interactions or epiphanies that can act as mechanisms or triggers of change” (Neale 2019, p. 39; Kupferberg 2012, p. 227) in young lives, especially in these who have experienced international mobilities. Turning points are often viewed in an instrumental way as something ephemeral, for the moment. Elder et al. (1985, p. 35) claims that they ‘redirect the path’. Neale (2019) summarizes that more recently they have been described as “fateful and critical moments”, “highly consequential for a person’s destiny” (Giddens et al. 1991, p. 112; Holland, Thomson 2009). Conversely they can be also socially constructed, prescribed and carefully planned and connected to markers of transition to adulthood: going to a university, getting married, obtaining a degree but maybe also going abroad. The idea that turning points have instrumental efficacy is persuasive in the literature (Neale 2019).

During the transition from adolescence to adulthood, maturity comes with expectations that a person will become responsible for themselves, make independent decisions, and become self-sufficient (Arnett 2000). Individual pathways of development in life are determined by decisions regarding education, employment, residential arrangements, marriage, and parenthood (Shanahan 2000) (cf. Keller et al. 2007). Benson and Furstenberg (2006) summarised and tested a number of markers of adult

status. There are five markers of the transition to adulthood present in the literature: leaving school, leaving home, working full-year full-time, finding a conjugal partner and having children.

In order to explain mobile transitions into adulthood we also need to bring into the conceptual framework soft skills which have been discussed multiple times in relation to international migration as a unique space for their acquisition (cf. Williams et al. 2004; Baláž, Williams 2004; Dustman 1999). Williams et al. followed by Polanyi (1966) brought the concept of tacit knowledge. Based on the philosophical understanding of tacit knowledge that we know more than we are able to articulate, they adapted and transferred to migration studies tacit skills and key competences elaborated by Evans (2002) as well as Evans and Kerh (2004). Evans (2005, pp. 88-89) developed a ‘starfish’ model distinguishing transferable and non-transferable, context-specific skills. They include (cf. Baláž, Williams 2004): 1. Content related and practical competences: being responsive to the need to carry out a variety of tasks, and to update skills; 2. Competences related to attitudes and values: responsibility, reliability, and resilience; 3. Learning competences: perceptiveness, and ability to learn by reflecting on experience; 4. Social and interpersonal competencies: communication, creativity and ability to encourage others; 5. Methodological competencies: being able to handle complex tasks through organisational abilities and networking. Williams and Baláž posit acquiring and transferring tacit skills and key competences into adult learning, in a migration process.

The main research questions of this article are: 1. What is the impact of international migration on life events connected to the transition to adulthood among Polish and Lithuanian returnees from the UK?; 2. How does the acquisition of soft skills through international migration impact on life events connected to transition to adulthood of Polish and Lithuanian returnees?

We hypothesise that international migration has the strongest impact on being independent and making independent decisions in life (cf. Robertson et al. 2018). Having high level of soft skills acquired as a result of international migration correlates strongest with acting an independent in life.

### **Methodology**

Our dataset was obtained through web survey with returnees to Poland and Lithuania who lived and worked in the United Kingdom during the Brexit process<sup>1</sup>. The online study was conducted for the research project

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<sup>1</sup>Brexit process was the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European

$\chi^2$ , between May and August 2020 mostly during the first wave of global pandemic of COVID-19. The recruitment procedure was made through combined channels with the most effective use of social media, mostly Facebook-dedicated campaigns, based on a dedicated algorithm capturing the return migrants to Poland and Lithuania from the UK. Apart from the ads in migrants' and returnees' Facebook groups, we also used targeted ads shown to Facebook users in their feeds. Those were targeted especially at those users who were likely to be UK return migrants – had changed their localization from UK back to the country of origin. Ads specified the aims of the project as well as the silhouette of the respondent we were looking for.

We managed to survey a total sample of 740 returnees to Poland and Lithuania where we managed to approach 215 Lithuanians and 525 Poles. The sample was feminised and the mean age for Poles was 36 years of age and 35 for Lithuanians. They spent on average between 7.5 and 8 years in the UK, which means that bearing in mind their average age they transitioned to adulthood abroad (cf. Robertson et al. 2018). The sample was feminised which is in line with the general tendencies in social sciences as women are more responsive and more eager to share their experience than male respondents. Over half of the sample with higher education degrees. Over 30% of returnees in the Lithuanian sample and over 40% of the Polish sample are married. In the Lithuanian sample, fewer respondents are parents (33%) than in the Polish sample (60%).

In this article, we conduct our analysis in three steps. In the first step we consider an influence of international migration on seven life events connected to transition to adulthood among Polish and Lithuanian returnees: 1. moving out of the parents' home; 2. becoming financially independent; 3. starting to make independent decisions; 4. finding stable employment; 5. finding a partner; 6. having children; and 7. purchasing property. Respondents had three options to choose: 1. migration delayed an event; 2. migration had no effect on an event; 3. migration accelerated an event. In the second step we present *Migratory Social Skill Acquisition Index* (cf. Grabowska, Jastrzebowska 2022) and in the third step we put all the variables and index together in order to check among which migrants

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Union (EU) at 23:00 31 January 2020 GMT. The UK is the first and so far only country to have left the EU, after 47 years of having been a member state of the EU and its predecessor, the European Communities (EC), since 1 January 1973. Under the terms of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, Northern Ireland continues to participate in the European Single Market in relation to goods, and to be a *de facto* member of the EU Customs Union.

<sup>2</sup>About project DAINA 1 funded by the National Science Center.

who acquired low and high migratory social skills international migration accelerated, delayed and had no effect on various aspects of transition to adulthood.

## Findings

In this part of the article we are going to study empirical connections between international migration, markers of transitions to adulthood and migratory soft skills acquired by Polish and Lithuanian returnees from the UK.

Table 1  
Migratory Skill Acquisition Index for Polish and Lithuanians migrants

	Migration delayed...		Migration had no effect		Migration accelerated...	
	PL	LT	PL	LT	PL	LT
Moving out of the parents' home	23 (4.8%)	7 (3.6%)	251 (52.5%)	107 (54.9%)	204 (42.7%)	81 (41.5%)
Becoming financially independent	7 (1.4%)	12 (6.1%)	173 (33.5%)	59 (29.9%)	321 (62.2%)	126 (64.0%)
Starting to make independent decisions	10 (2.0%)	3 (1.5%)	158 (31.8%)	68 (34.2%)	329 (63.8%)	128 (64.3%)
Finding stable employment	29 (6.0%)	13 (6.7%)	192 (39.6%)	74 (38.1%)	264 (54.4%)	107 (55.2%)
Finding a partner	49 (10.9%)	18 (9.9%)	320 (62.0%)	125 (60.7%)	82 (15.9%)	38 (18.4%)
Having children	93 (20.9%)	27 (16.9%)	295 (66.3%)	120 (75.0%)	57 (12.8%)	13 (8.1%)
Purchasing property	56 (10.9%)	33 (21.2%)	242 (46.9%)	72 (46.2%)	131 (25.4%)	51 (32.7%)

\* Formulation of the survey question: *Do you think you delayed or accelerated any of the following events in your life because you moved to the UK?*

Source: own elaborations based on the comparative Polish-Lithuanian survey with return migrants conducted in May-July 2020 within the DAINA-1 international research project (CEEYouth); total  $n_{PL} = 516$ ;  $n_{LT} = 206$ ; only completed questionnaires.

Below we describe the impact of migration to the UK on life events connected to transition to adulthood in the sample of Poles and Lithuanians (Table 1). In both groups – Poles and Lithuanians, the experience of migration helped the most in *becoming financially independent* and *starting to make independent decisions*. Interestingly, looking at the answers regarding the delay in life events, in the group of Poles, migration delayed *having children* more than in the group of Lithuanians, while in the group of Lithuanians it delayed more *Becoming financially independent* and *Purchasing property*.



Table 2

The impact of migration to the UK on life events connected to transition to adulthood  
– Poles

	Migration delayed...	Migration had no effect	Migration accelerated...
Moving out of the parents' home	23 (4.8%)	251 (52.5%)	204 (42.7%)
Becoming financially independent	7 (1.4%)	173 (34.5%)	321 (64.1%)
Starting to make independent decisions	10 (2.0%)	158 (31.8%)	329 (66.2%)
Finding stable employment	29 (6.0%)	192 (39.6%)	264 (54.4%)
Finding a partner	49 (9.5%)	320 (71.0%)	82 (18.2%)
Having children	93 (20.9%)	295 (66.3%)	57 (12.8%)
Purchasing property	56 (13.1%)	242 (56.4%)	131 (30.5%)

\* Formulation of the survey question: *Do you think you delayed or accelerated any of the following events in your life because you moved to the UK?*

*Source:* own elaborations based on the comparative Polish-Lithuanian survey with return migrants conducted in May-July 2020 within the DAINA-1 international research project (CEEYouth); total  $n_{PL} = 516$ ;  $n_{LT} = 206$ ; only completed questionnaires.

Table 3

The impact of migration to the UK on life events connected to transition to adulthood  
– Lithuanians

	Migration delayed...	Migration had no effect	Migration accelerated...
Moving out of the parents' home	7 (3.6%)	107 (54.9%)	81 (41.5%)
Becoming financially independent	12 (6.1%)	59 (29.9%)	126 (64.0%)
Starting to make independent decisions	3 (1.5%)	68 (34.2%)	128 (64.3%)
Finding stable employment	13 (6.7%)	74 (38.1%)	107 (55.2%)
Finding a partner	18 (9.9%)	125 (69.1%)	38 (21.0%)
Having children	27 (16.9%)	120 (75.0%)	13 (8.1%)
Purchasing property	33 (21.2%)	72 (46.2%)	51 (32.7%)

\* Formulation of the survey question: *Do you think you delayed or accelerated any of the following events in your life because you moved to the UK?*

*Source:* own elaborations based on the comparative Polish-Lithuanian survey with return migrants conducted in May-July 2020 within the DAINA-1 international research project (CEEYouth); total  $n_{PL} = 516$ ;  $n_{LT} = 206$ ; only completed questionnaires.

Among the key soft skills acquired by Polish and Lithuanian returnees was the English language (Table 4). The second most important skill was teamwork in both groups. More Lithuanians than Poles developed leadership skills and the ability to show initiative. On the other hand, more Poles than Lithuanians developed entrepreneurship skills while abroad. This might have to do with the general high rates of entrepreneurship in the population of Poland since the 1990s.

Among both Polish and Lithuanian migrants, the majority of soft skills were best acquired and developed through a medium-duration stay abroad, between five and ten years. These include teamwork, leadership skills, resilience to stress and entrepreneurship in the case of Lithuanians. However, some soft skills required more time; one example of such a skill is entrepreneurship, where ten years spent abroad are more than five. On the other hand, duration of stay was less important for language skills – staying and working abroad for any period exceeding one year was shown to affect language acquisition and the development of communication skills.

Table 4

Acquisition of soft skills by Polish and Lithuanian returnees (multiple choice question)

	PL		LT	
	n	%	n	%
Knowledge of English	323	62.6	130	63.1
Teamwork	248	48.1	107	51.9
Stress resilience	195	37.8	85	41.3
Taking the initiative	169	32.8	95	46.1
Leadership skills	140	27.1	85	41.3
Entrepreneurship	126	24.4	45	21.8

\* Formulation of the survey question: Which of the following skills have you developed while working in the UK?

*Source:* cf. Grabowska, Jastrzebowska (2022) based on the comparative Polish-Lithuanian survey with return migrants conducted in May-July 2020 within the DAINA-1 international research project (CEEYouth); total  $n_{PL} = 516$ ;  $n_{LT} = 206$ ; only completed questionnaires.

The *Migratory Soft Skill Index* was created by summarising the six types of soft skills included in the survey question: “Which of the following skills have you developed while working in Great Britain?” The respondents could select the following mind and soft skills: teamwork, leadership skills, knowledge of English, resilience to stress, entrepreneurship, and taking

initiative (cf. Grabowska, Jastrzebowska 2022). The Migratory Social Skill Acquisition Index is an additive index that only presents how many (nominal) skills were marked by the participant. However, their rank and role (e.g. related to work or personal development) cannot be defined directly.

Migrants more often acquired interpersonal soft skills, such as language skills or teamwork, than intrapersonal ones, e.g. resilience to stress or showing initiative. While analysing the acquisition of individual soft skills by citizens of Poland and Lithuania, we found that a significantly higher percentage of Lithuanians acquired leadership skills (41.3%; PL = 27.1%) and the ability to show initiative (LT = 46.1%; PL=32.8%).

The *Migratory Soft Skill Index* ranges from 0 to 6. Slightly over 67 percent of Poles and 64 percent of Lithuanians declared that they had acquired at least one of the six mind and soft skills mentioned. More than 30 percent of Poles and 35 percent of Lithuanians did not mark any soft skills from the list of skills that were acquired during stay abroad. The acquisition of mind and soft skills was lower among Polish migrants ( $M = 2.33$ ;  $SD = 2.08$ ) than Lithuanians ( $M = 2.66$ ;  $SD = 2.31$ ). The difference is significant at the level of the statistical  $t(344.96) = 1.773$ ;  $p = 0.073$ .

Table 5

Migratory Skill Acquisition Index for Polish and Lithuanians migrants

	PL		LT	
	n	%	n	%
0	166	32.2	73	35.4
1	51	9.9	8	3.9
2	57	11.0	14	6.8
3	75	14.5	21	10.2
4	77	14.9	31	15.0
5	37	7.2	30	14.6
6	53	10.3	29	14.1
<i>M</i>	2.33		2.66	
<i>Me</i>	2.08		2.31	
<i>Mo</i>	0.33		0.06	
<i>SD</i>	-1.21		-1.57	
<i>Min</i>	0.00		0.00	
<i>Max</i>	6.00		6.00	

*Source:* cf. Grabowska, Jastrzebowska (2022) based on the comparative Polish-Lithuanian survey with return migrants conducted in May-July 2020 within the DAINA-1 international research project (CEEYouth); total  $n_{PL} = 516$ ;  $n_{LT} = 206$ ; only completed questionnaires.

The low and high *Migratory Soft Skill Index (MSSI)* variable was added to the data presented above (Tables 6 and 7). We used the median to divide the variable – data below the median is low, and data above the median is high. As shown above, in both groups, the events most influenced by migration are: becoming financially independent and starting to make independent decisions. By adding the *Migratory Soft Skill Index* to this analysis, we see that there are no differences between the low and high MSSI groups in Polish group (Table 6). It is different in the group of Lithuanians. Here, both *becoming financially independent* and *starting to make independent decisions* are higher in the group with high MSSI (Table 7). Looking at events delayed by the experience of migration, we see that having children is a bigger issue in the group of Polish return migrants who have high MSSI. In the Lithuanian group of return migrants, becoming financially independent is lower in the group with low MSSI.

Table 6

The acquisition of soft skills as a result of migration to the UK – Poles

	Migration delayed...		Migration had no effect		Migration accelerated...	
	Low MSSI	High MSSI	Low MSSI	High MSSI	Low MSSI	High MSSI
Moving out of the parents' home	14 (5.6%)	9 (4.0%)	123 (49.0%)	128 (56.4%)	114 (45.4%)	90 (39.6%)
Becoming financially independent	5 (1.9%)	2 (0.8%)	94 (36.2%)	79 (32.8%)	161 (61.9%)	160 (66.4%)
Starting to make independent decisions	7 (2.7%)	3 (1.3%)	79 (30.4%)	79 (33.3%)	174 (66.9%)	155 (65.4%)
Finding stable employment	20 (7.3%)	9 (3.9%)	92 (36.5%)	100 (42.9%)	140 (55.6%)	124 (53.2%)
Finding a partner	17 (7.1%)	32 (15.2%)	176 (73.3%)	144 (68.2%)	47 (19.6%)	35 (16.6%)
Having children	43 (18.4%)	50 (23.7%)	151 (64.5%)	144 (68.2%)	40 (17.1%)	17 (8.1%)
Purchasing property	26 (11.7%)	30 (14.5%)	128 (57.7%)	114 (55.1%)	68 (30.6%)	63 (30.4%)

\* MSSI – *Migratory Soft Skill Index*.

Source: own elaborations based on DAINA 1 CEEYouth survey data.

Table 7

The acquisition of soft skills as a result of migration to the UK – Lithuanians

	Migration delayed...		Migration had no effect		Migration accelerated...	
	Low MSSI	High MSSI	Low MSSI	High MSSI	Low MSSI	High MSSI
Moving out of the parents' home	2 (2.3%)	5 (4.6%)	53 (61.6%)	54 (49.5%)	31 (36.0%)	50 (45.9%)
Becoming financially independent	7 (8.0%)	5 (4.6%)	26 (29.5%)	33 (30.3%)	55 (62.5%)	71 (65.1%)
Starting to make independent decisions	2 (2.2%)	1 (0.9%)	34 (37.0%)	34 (31.8%)	56 (60.9%)	72 (67.3%)
Finding stable employment	7 (7.8%)	6 (5.8%)	31 (34.4%)	43 (41.3%)	52 (57.8%)	55 (52.9%)
Finding a partner	5 (6.2%)	13 (13.0%)	60 (74.1%)	65 (65.0%)	16 (19.8%)	22 (22.0%)
Having children	10 (13.9%)	17 (19.3%)	59 (81.9%)	61 (69.3%)	3 (4.2%)	10 (11.4%)
Purchasing property	16 (21.6%)	17 (20.7%)	38 (51.4%)	34 (41.5%)	20 (27.0%)	31 (37.8%)

\* MSSI – *Migratory Soft Skill Index*.

Source: own elaborations based on DAINA 1 CEEYouth survey data.

To sum up, in this analysis, we obtained the following results. Firstly, the experience of migration helped the most in *becoming financially independent* and *starting to make independent decisions* in both groups – Poles and Lithuanians. Secondly, migration delayed *having children* in the group of Poles more than in the group of Lithuanians, while in the group of Lithuanians migration delayed *becoming financially independent* and *purchasing property* to a greater extent. Thirdly, key soft skills acquired by Polish and Lithuanian returnees are: the English language and teamwork. Fourthly, a significantly higher percentage of Lithuanians acquired leadership skills and the ability to show initiative. Fifthly, acquisition of mind and soft skills was lower among Polish migrants than Lithuanian ones. Sixthly, there are no differences between the low and high MSSI (*Migratory Soft Skill Index*) groups in the Polish group. It is different in the group of Lithuanians. Here, both *becoming financially independent*

and *starting to make independent decisions* are higher in the group with high MSSSI. Seventhly, having children is a bigger issue in the Polish group who have high MSSSI. Eighthly, becoming financially independent is lower in the group with low MSSSI in the Lithuanian group. To sum up, the presented results show a different lens Polish and Lithuanian return migrants have for migration. Family needs appear more often in the results of Polish returnees, and financial independence is more important for Lithuanian returnees.

### **Conclusions**

The main aim of this article was to analyse the interplay between international migration, life events connected to transition to adulthood and acquiring soft skills as a result of working and living abroad in two populations of Polish and Lithuanian returnees from the United Kingdom. We managed to establish some connections. We learned that international migration helped predominately to acquire both English language communication skills and teamwork – soft skills which are important for developing a career. In both groups of Polish and Lithuanian returnees international migration accelerated three key events: 1. starting to make independent decisions, 2. becoming financially independent and 3. finding stable employment. In both groups, becoming financially independent was linked significantly with a high level of soft skills acquired abroad.

The article also contributes to the discussion on mobile transitions (cf. Wyn et al. 2011) by adding two aspects to it: 1. an assessment of the function of international migration (delay, acceleration, no effect) and 2 a contribution of soft skills acquired abroad to the process of transition to adulthood, although the last point clearly opens new avenues for future research.

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