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Tolerance and Sensitivity in the Context of Civic Education: Results of an Empirical Survey

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Abstract

In the 21st century there is an exponential increase in global workforce mobility that results complex, multinational and multicultural workplace relationships where many nations have to work together, as active, global citizens, 'mobile' professionals who improve their learning abilities and their capacity to transfer their skills into new areas, have to be ready to work in various fields and accept that challenges require flexibility, adjustment, adaptivity and investment in human capital. The level of tolerance and sensitivity among employers and employees certainly affects the labour market, attitudes and negative stereotypes in connection with the 'others' usually makes the entering to a workplace, the everyday working activities, the integration relatively hard and in certain cases almost impossible. The main aim of our empirical research in 2017 and 2018 was to get up-to-date and relevant information about tolerance and sensitivity in Hungary focusing on the present situation and emerging issues about social and cultural diversity challenges of the region.

Key words   Migration, attitudes, citizenship, Hungary

JEL Codes: M31

1. Introduction and literature review

The issues of citizenship, several aspects of the European migrant-crisis are frequent topics for everyday discussions in Hungary. This is a regular subject for private conversations and a fashionable one for the mass media as well. Our research on tolerance and sensitivity was inspired by several discussions or even disputes on these topics with our colleagues and students during the years. As we decided to work together with our international partners from the other three Central-European countries within the framework of the "Social, Cultural, Ethical and Politics Aspect of Migration in the Context of Civic Education" V4 (Visegrad Group) project, we started to assemble a team of experts on various scientific fields. For the pilot research our target group were the students of the Faculty of Culture, Education and Regional Development at the University of Pécs, Hungary and later we conducted a nationwide survey.

We are aware of the fact, that the research topic for this study gives the opportunity to formulate even extreme opinions. The various participants of the Hungarian politics and civil society have their own very different or even distinct opinions. Sometimes they think they do not only have opinions, but certainty. Often the voice of the power or the power of the voice suppresses common sense, the *"vox humana"* – making it very hard or even impossible to formulate objective judgement. To demonstrate the complexity of the research topic we need to admit, that even the authors of this paper did not fully agree on the assessment of all the issues covered. Despite the differences in our opinions we compiled our research questionnaire and evaluated the results together. An important historical example was at the heart of our thinking. The "result" of collective guilt and punishment has always led to the tragedies of mankind. It is enough to look at the European history of the 20th century, where the persecution of Jews before the Second World War led to the horror of the Holocaust. Or after the Second World War, the stigmatization of Germans as a "fascist nation" led to the deportation of millions to the Soviet Union. These, together with other historical examples, as an eternal memento, warn every one of us on the misinterpretation of collective judgment.

We are convinced that only the recognition of objective opinions and an honest dialogue about these opinions can solve the important questions of our time. As academics, teachers of the future intellectuals we can only be guided by this goal. The level of tolerance and sensitivity certainly affects the labour market, attitudes and negative stereotypes in connection with the 'others' usually makes the entering to a workplace, the everyday working activities, the integration relatively hard and in certain cases almost impossible (Nemeskeri and Zádori, 2016). On the other hand, in the 21st century there is an exponential increase in global workforce mobility that results complex, multinational and multicultural workplace relationships where many nations have to work together, as active, global citizens, 'mobile' professionals who improve their learning abilities and their capacity to transfer their skills into new areas, have to be ready to work in various fields and

accept that challenges require flexibility, adjustment, adaptivity and investment in human capital. Although Central-Eastern Europe has very stormy history with its permanently changing regimes, economic performance, geostrategic position, control and borders, countries of the region basically face the same or very similar challenges: socialism, challenges of political changes of the 1990s, challenges of transition economy, challenges of social changes, globalization and European integration (Csiszár, 2017). Countries of this region have been traditionally and historically multicultural and multinational. The level of tolerance in the past and certainly in the present basically depends on the state of the economy and cultural similarities: if economic activities make countries wealthy and wide social groups have realistic chance to realize a certain level of welfare, the level of tolerance is certainly higher and the acceptance of social cultural diversity is more intensive (Huszár and Várnagy, 2016). At the same time, if the population of a given country shares common cultural values, tolerance and acceptance of differences are higher as well. If the above-mentioned conditions are not stable, challenges of migration, Roma population, prejudice, lack of acceptance, anti-Semitism are real challenges for these societies to cope with.

2. Methodology of research

The main aim of our research in the framework of Social, Cultural, Ethnical and Politics Aspect of Migration in the Context of Civic Education project, V4 countries (Project ID 21610139) has been to get up-to-date and relevant information about tolerance and sensitivity in Central-Eastern Europe focusing on the present situation and emerging issues about social and cultural diversity challenges of the region. As a first step, we were focusing on the attitudes, opinions and feedbacks of higher education (students/staff) in Hungary, and conducted a research between 1-31 March 2017, and we have repeated our research between 1-31. March, 2018 on a nationwide sample. We used an online questionnaire and we had 162 respondents in 2017 and 218 in 2018 (see the questionnaire in the appendix). For the evaluation of the results we used Likert-scale and the data were based on the simple mean of the given values. Our respondents were almost exclusively from representatives of the age group of 20-40 years, most of them were still attending universities or received diplomas in higher education. Our questions were focusing on the next five topics:

– Attitudes about tolerance, sensitivity, fundamental rights, freedoms and principles (knowledge and importance);
– Willingness to help the others and involvement in protecting others' rights;
– Support of equal opportunities of different social groups;
– Involvement, concern to the respondents/ to others;
– Support of statements/institutions.

3. Results

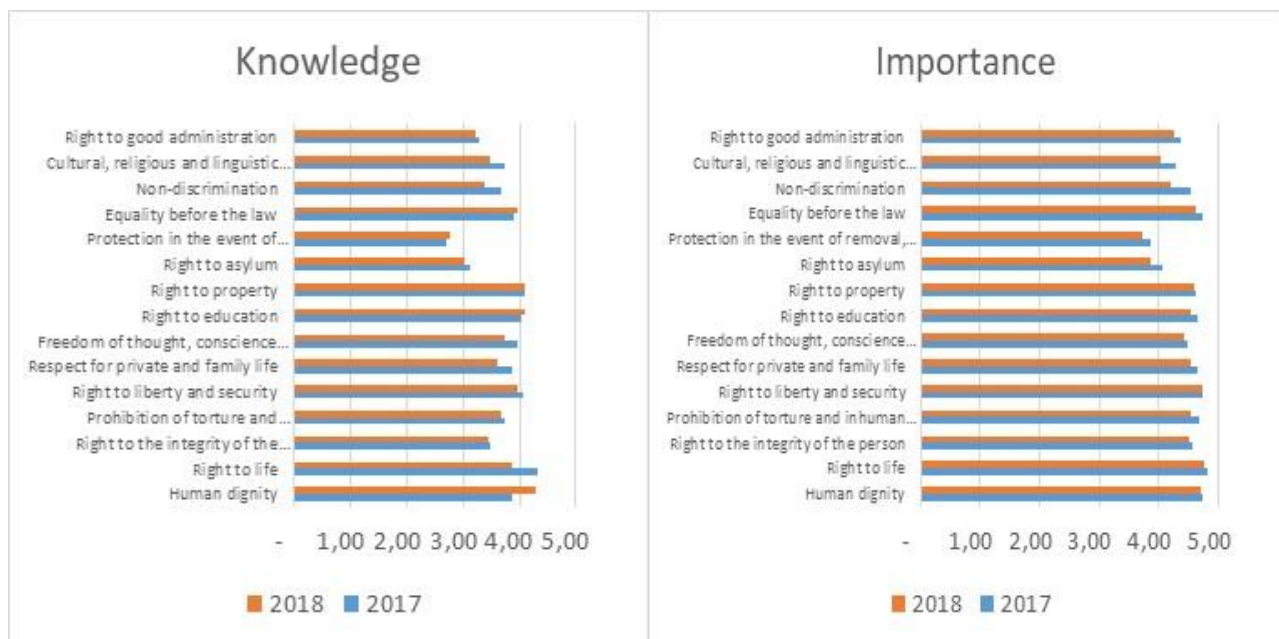3.1. Attitudes about tolerance, sensitivity, fundamental rights, freedoms and principles (knowledge and importance)

Figure 1. Fundamental Rights, Freedoms (Knowledge/Importance)

Source: own research (n=162 in 2017, n=218 in 2018)

In the first group of questions we wanted to get information about the knowledge and significance, relevance and importance of fundamental rights, freedoms and principles. According to the results, there are very similar patterns, where relevance and importance is greater than knowledge. This particular phenomenon is also reflected in 2017 and 2018 data. Examining our data, it is still remarkable that the 2018 averages show almost everywhere lower values (in case of "importance" for each request, in case of "knowledge" almost everywhere). This phenomenon goes through the whole research, so in a year the value judgement of the respondents shows significant changes, attributing lesser importance to the issues and phenomena examined. Of course, there are relatively 'popular' and well known rights, freedoms and principles in 2017 and 2018 as well where we can see that the respondents seem to have more information about them, and there are some topics (like expulsion, deportation, extradition, right of asylum) where the knowledge and importance are both lower than the other results, as it can be seen in the next graph (Figure 1). Our results in 2018 slightly outweigh the 2017 data in the category of knowledge (equality before the law; protection in the event of removal, expulsion, or extradition; right to education), and in one case to a greater extent (human dignity).

3.2. Willingness to help the others and involvement in protecting others' rights

The next question was focusing on the willingness to help the others and the involvement in protecting others' rights (Figure 2). The respondents had to value on a Likert-scale the different types of help for different social groups and their opinion about protecting others' rights. According to the answers, the less supported activity in 2017 is collecting clothes for refugees, and, on the other hand, the most welcome method of help is collecting gift for children. The results of 2018 essentially follow similar pattern to that of 2017 in this group of questions, but there a 20-30 percentage point drop in individual opinions and value judgments. Exceptions are the voluntary border protection, where there is almost a 10 percent increase comparing with the previous year's results, and a slight, percentage point increase in case of the dissemination of anti-infringement leaflets.
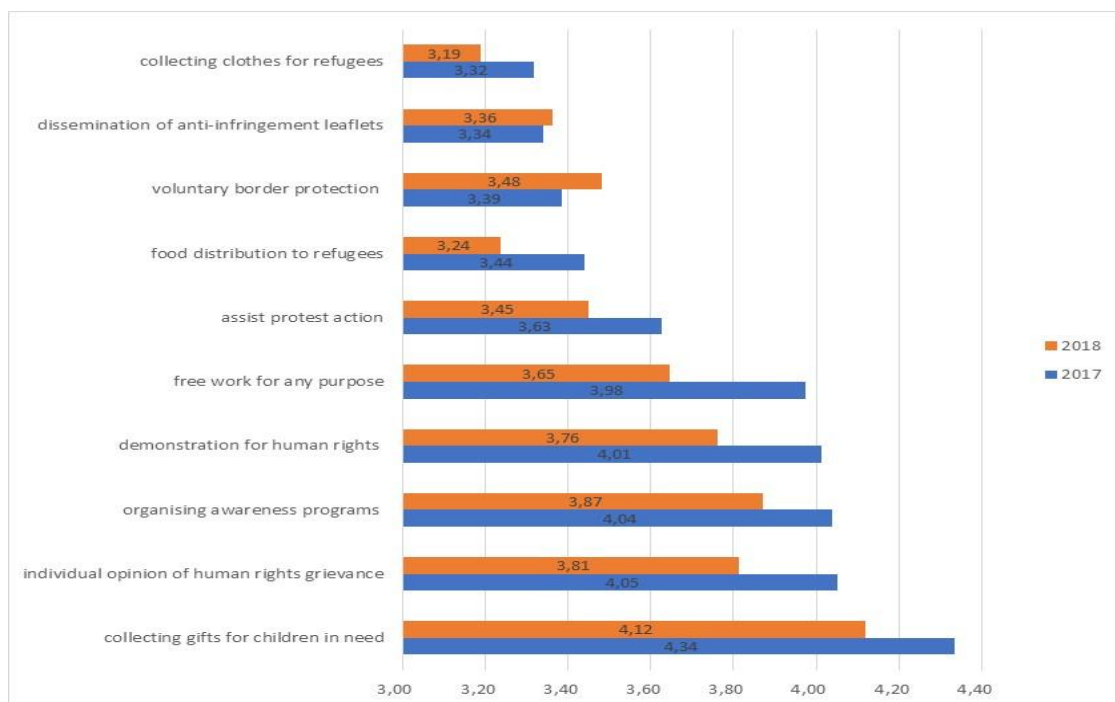

Figure 2. Help for others and involvement in protecting other's rights

Source: own research (n=162 in 2017, n=218 in 2018)

It is important to point out that in the last years there is an intensive official government communication campaign against refugees although right now there are just a few hundred migrant people in Hungary. Of course, in 2015-2016 there was a great pressure at the southern borders of the country and there were huge numbers of refugees who came to Hungary, but the large share of them just crossed the country, and tried to get to the more developed parts of the European Union instead of Hungary. Despite of the fact that right now this small number of migrants does not cause real social, demographical or economic problems, relatively large share of the population is susceptible for the official government messages. The good position of children is basically not surprising; children are worth supporting any time, independently from social or political attitudes.

3.3. Support of equal opportunities of different social groups

The next set of questions was focused on the support of equal opportunities of different social groups (Figure 3). It is important to note that while supporting children living under subsistence level in both years, or help the blind, disabled people get high values, Roma people, refugees; women are the social groups that not really have the possibilities to receive help or support in the country. According to the above mentioned 'official' attitudes towards refugees the results are certainly not unintentional. Similarly to our previous results, this group of questions also shows a downturn between 5 and 20 percentage points observed in other groups of questions, which reflects well the changes in values over one year.
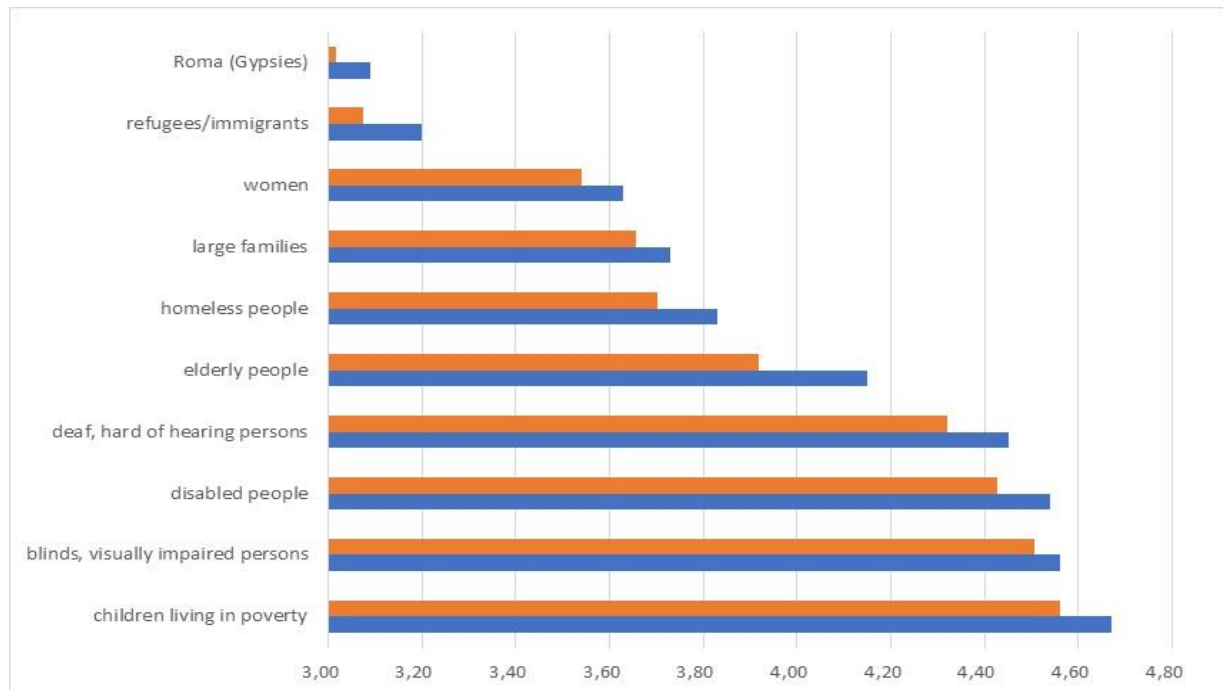

Figure 3. Support of equal opportunities of different social groups

Source: own research (n=162 in 2017, n=218 in 2018)

Challenges about the Roma population are relatively remarkable. Despite of the intensive attempts and initiatives in the last decades, the social integration of this part of the Hungarian population does simply not work, most of the Roma people are among those who have a very minimal level of access to resources, large share of them are living in extremely bad conditions and it does not seem that this situation is going to change in the next years, as the majority of the population of the country has relatively strong negative preconceptions, stereotypes and attitudes towards this part of the population. One of the most surprising results of our questionnaire is the support of equal opportunities of women. According to our results, respondents are not supportive, which certainly means that there is still a lot to do to change these types of negative attitudes in the future.

3.4. Involvement, concern to the respondents/ to others

Our next question was focusing on the personal concern about different social phenomena, and we were also interested in the opinions of the respondents how they adjudicate the level of concern about others (Figure 4).

Our results show very similar patterns, relieving that the level of concern of the 'others' is lower than the personal concern, *except the discrimination against Roma people and illegal migration* – in these cases personal opinion is stronger than respondents level of assuming others in 2017. In 2018, the exceptions are the illegal immigration, homelessness and the chances of integration of disabled people. The results show basically the same reactions we have seen in the previous answers: there is a relatively intensive opposition against Roma people (2017) and migrants (2017, 2018) in the Hungarian society. If we examine the opinions, the highest results are about the different qualities of education, social insecurity, freedom of expression and air pollution, and there are also some topics where concern is not very intensive, like homelessness or death penalty. Comparing to the figures for 2017 and 2018, the previously observed decline is to some extent seen in the opinion of others (except in the case of disabled people), and for respondents' own opinion, the 2018 values exceed the averages measured in 2017 (equal rights for women, domestic violence, freedom of expression, unequal opportunities, discrimination against Gypsies).
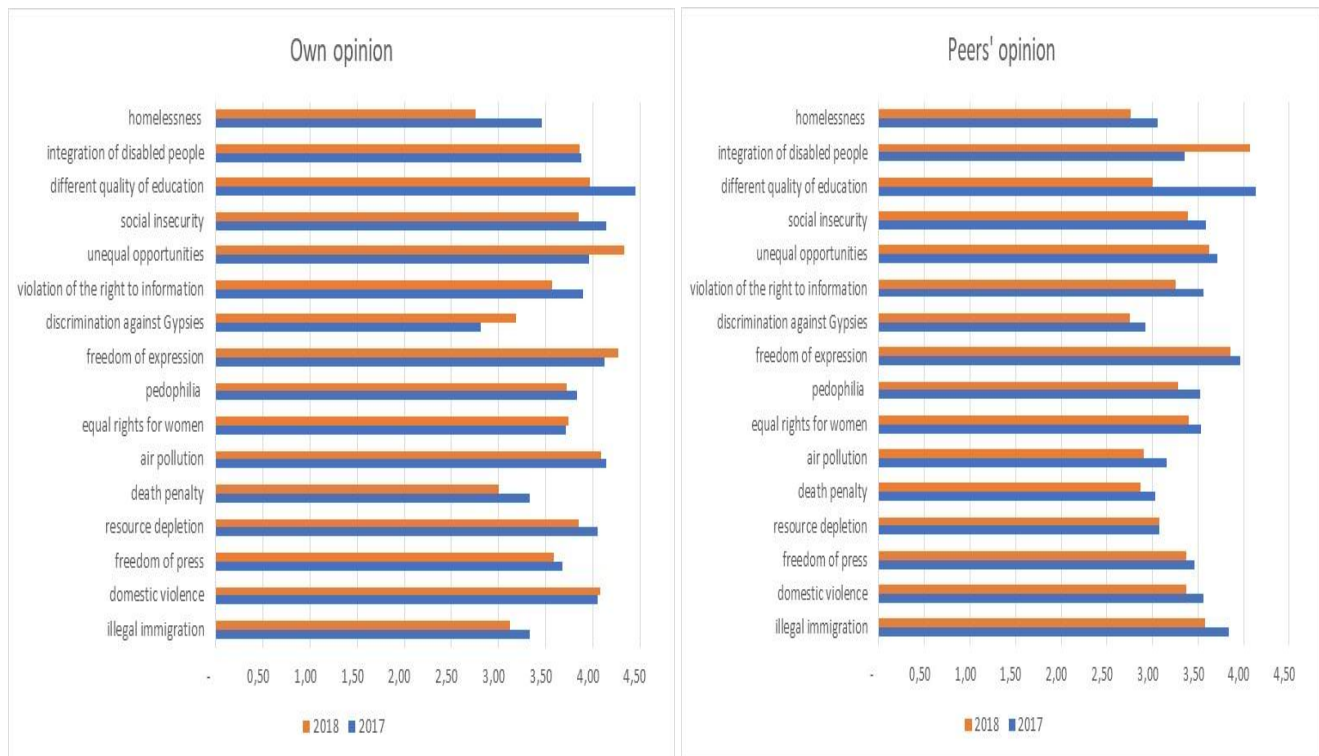
Figure 4. Personal concern/concern to others

Source: own research (n=162 in 2017, n=218 in 2018)

These changes suggest a more pronounced wording of the respondents' views on the issues and challenges examined (the changes observed in the data are likely not completely independent from the roughness of the 2018 spring campaign period of the Hungarian parliamentary elections, which resulted in a stronger opinion formulation of respondents).

3.5. Support of statements/institutions

In the last set of questions, we wanted to know how intensively our respondents support some statements and institutions (Figure 5). The most important part of the reactions are the opinions related to other nationalities: we have tried to map these attitudes with asking the respondents' opinion about how they accept that their (future) child is going to attend the same class with classmates from other nationalities. According to our earlier results, the answers have similar patterns: respondents do not really like Arabic, Muslim, Roma, African and Jewish children in the class, on the other hand, outcomes show that respondents have certainly less problems with Central-European nationalities with relatively similar patterns.

Comparing the 2017 and 2018 data, the previously observed decrease in values can be seen in more than half of the results, but in some cases the increase appears in values (legal use of soft drugs, immigrant people move to my neighbourhood, possible choice for abortion of pregnancy, institution of free and public worship).

To explore relationships more systematically, we also used cross queries. The most important outcomes are the next:

- In case of older generations: knowledge and relevance of fundamental rights and freedoms is growing;

- Higher educational level means that sensitivity is growing in the examined fields;

- Women who filled in our questionnaire show more sensitivity and acceptance with lower percentage points than men.

4. Main findings

Global economic, social and environmental processes of the second half of the 20th century have resulted in a new understanding of citizenship, people are not just members of a given nation state but the members of the human (global) community, responsible for the condition of the planet, and have competencies to cope with the challenges wherever they are in the world. On one hand, to 'get' this global citizenship people need information and knowledge that education could ensure. On the other hand, this practically means that people have the possibility to move to other parts of the world, there is an exponential increase in global workforce mobility and the increasingly complex workplace relationships certainly produce active, global citizens.
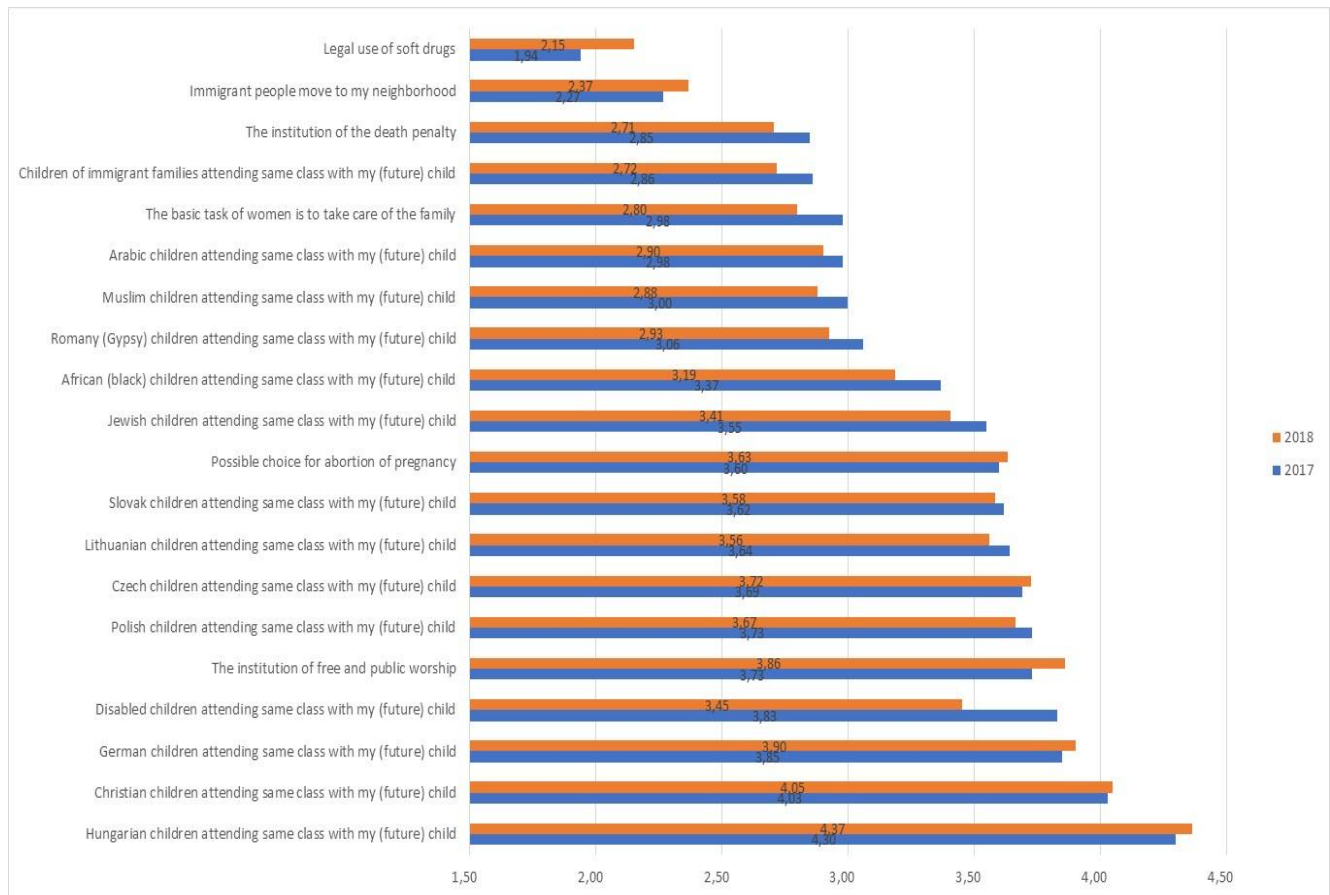
Figure 5. How intensively are you supporting the next statements or institutions?

Source: own research (n=162 in 2017, n=218 in 2018)

These "mobile" professionals improve their learning abilities, their capacity to transfer their skills into new areas, they should be ready to work in various fields, and accept that this process requires flexibility, adjustment, adaptiveness and investment in human capital. Of course, the 'old' understanding of citizenship and nation states still exist and makes this process difficult. Migration challenges have become one of the top priorities at European level and are also affecting countries in Central-Eastern Europe. The possible integration of migrants into and/or their inclusion in a society is an excessively complex process, and it requires efforts from the individuals and institutions in many different fields.

Today in the European Union more than 30 million people – the 6.4% of the total population - are not EU citizens. Two-third of them are citizens of developing countries (this rate has significantly grown since 2015). On one hand, migration certainly can contribute to the solution of European economical, demographical and competiveness problems, on the other hand, comprehensive and effective political framework is needed to manage this great challenge. To integrate the migrants into the society is a very complex process and a new perspective is needed in the European and national policy.

Data proves that the disadvantages in migrant groups are passing from generation to generation. In certain situations, even the second and third generations of migrant families face discrimination on the labour market, and in their access to products and services (Eurobarometer, 2015). At the same time the successful integration has great importance in terms of the European social cohesion, and it is closely related to the future of the European welfare systems. (EB79.5, 2013, EUB83, 2015) The realization of the Europe 2020 strategy for social cohesion and inclusion certainly depends on the success of the harmonization of the national migration policies of the member countries in the next years (Senses-Ozyurt, *et al.*, 2016). Our results show that the reactions and feedbacks in the examined topics have relatively strong opposition against some social groups in Hungary. The results are also remarkable concerning the fact that our respondents are attending higher education institutions, working in higher education and have diplomas, so reality could be much worse if we examined samples with lower educational background. Of course, it is also an important question what we will do, or if we should do anything against this type of negative attitudes, or whether this type of opinion is acceptable. Is this the situation in Hungary in the 21st century?

In the evaluation of responses, the 2018 values follow a similar pattern, but in most cases they are lower than the results in 2017. This phenomenon goes through the whole research, and illustrating well that the values of respondents show substantial changes over a year, giving less and relatively moderated importance to the issues and phenomena we examined. The changes observed in our data are, in our view, not completely independent from the present, rougher Hungarian parliamentary election campaign and the intensive political communication of the recent years, which results a decreasing interest in the regular political topics in the examined 20-40 years old and well educated group. At the same time, for some questions, as we have seen in the analysis, within a year a stronger opinion formulation of respondents is also remarkable.

5. Conclusions

Right now almost 800.000 Hungarians are working outside of the country (8-10% of the population), these employees are forced to deal with migration challenges where they work (Sebők, 2016). Data shows that relatively large share of students are planning to work outside of the country after they finish their studies, but their "Hungarian socialization" would influence and effect their attitudes in connection with migrants. This process is also affected by the present Hungarian immigration policy is influenced by (actual) political aims instead of systematic policies and results relatively strong rejection and resistance of migrants and intensifying negative attitudes against the "others".

On the other hand, there are several fields and jobs in Hungary where there is basically no labour supply. According to the present low fertility rates of the country in some sectors employees outside of the country could be needed in a long run. Within the country negative attitudes could result relatively strong rejection of labour force from other countries. To get a clearer picture of the real situation, we are planning to continue our work using greater samples, and we also would like to get comparative information, and compare the Hungarian situation to other countries of the region in the future.

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