

## Family Attitudes towards International Migration: The Case Study in Latvia\*

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### Abstract

Latvia's economic development depends on its demographic future. Due to low fertility and high mortality rates, as well as to notable population decline in the result of emigration, it is considered a "disappearing nation" whose need for additional labour force is increasing. The aim of the study is to analyse the attitudes of young people, their parents and grandparents towards emigration, return migration and immigration in the context of their impact on family and cultural identity while focussing on family history, present life style, and future expectations and visions. Intergenerational attitudes towards migration were examined via in-depth semi-structured interviews carried out in 2019–2020 in ten families representing geographical differences, various degrees of openness, and socio-demographic variability. The analysis of the empirical data allows concluding that poor economic conditions and poverty leading to emigration, as well as growing immigration and cultural fusion tendencies, are seen as main threats for the existence and development of culture. International migration is perceived by the interviewees as a feature of a democratic and open society, indication of humans' rights and freedom, however, growing transnational migration is seen as a phenomenon that may result in long-reaching consequences and endanger the existence of the small nation, significantly hamper its economic development, and leave negative impact on national cultural heritage, values and identity. Emigration causes reduction or discontinuation of traditional culture and customs, whereas immigration, as seen by the interviewees, is an inevitable phenomenon of Latvia's future, which to some extent can influence Latvia's cultural landscape due to the cultural and religious diversity it might bring, thus, it is mainly perceived reservedly. There is a need for a stronger family support policy with a particular focus on large and families at risk of poverty. For the formation of inclusive identities, integration and preservation of cultural values and traditions, functional migration and cultural policies should focus among others on the promotion of tolerance and diversity of cultural traditions. This article is based on research which has been conducted within a framework of the international project "Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future" (CHIEF), funded from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 770464.

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