



Making migration and migration policy decisions
amidst societal transformations

***Research insights on
migration decision-making:
A case study of African
(transit) migrants in Slovakia***

Lucia Kováčová a Lucia Mýtna Kureková
Institute for Forecasting, Slovak Academy of Sciences

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Objectives and research questions

■ Objectives

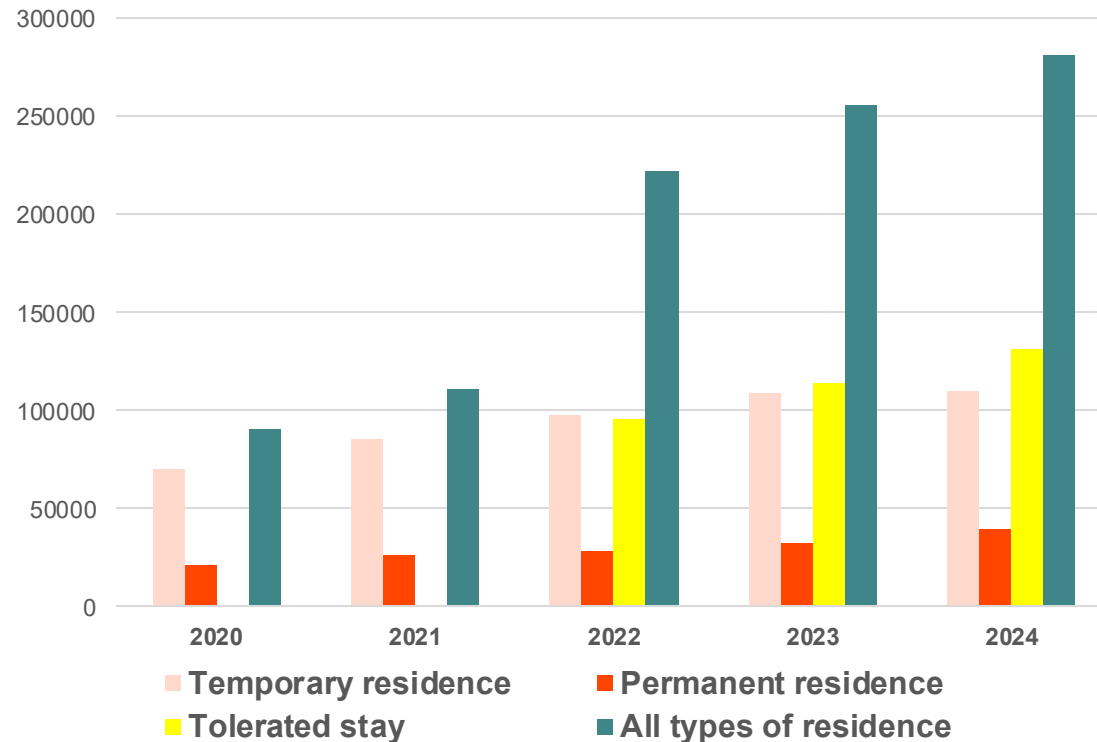
- To investigate and analyse the migration decisions of African migrants already in the EU, with a focus on better understanding the decision to stay and settle, to move onward (and where) or to return

■ Research questions

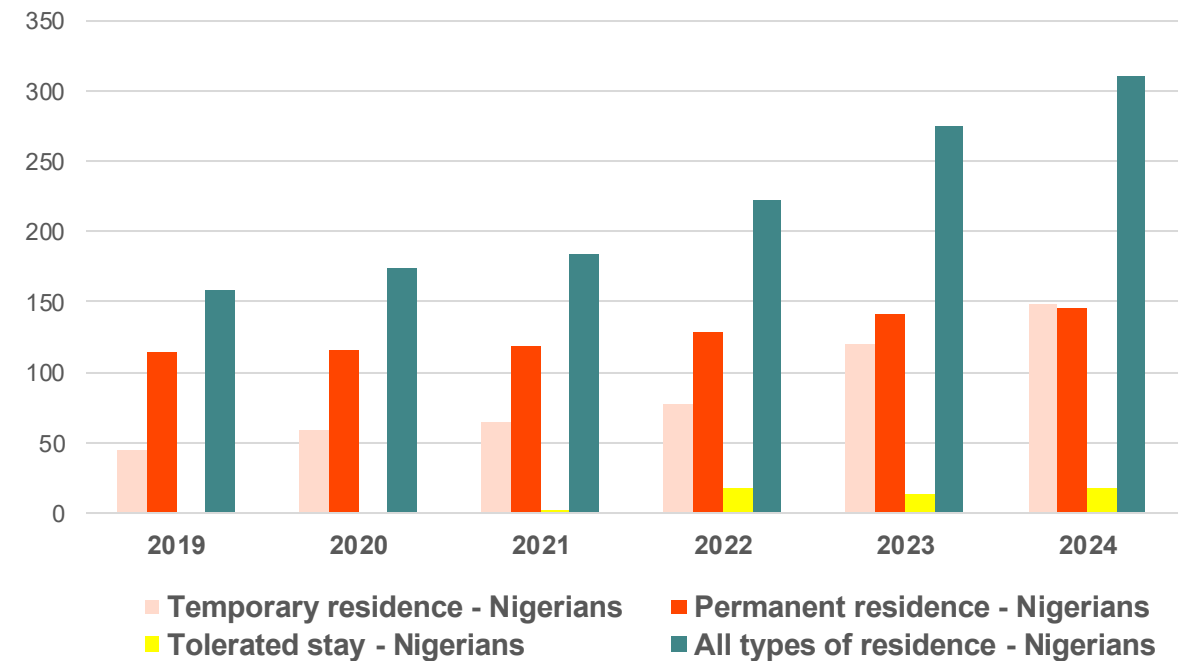
- How do migration decisions change along the migration journey?
- At what stage are policies (migration and non-migration) more likely to play a significant role in decision-making?
- To what extent are individuals aware of migration and non-migration policies and how do they influence their decisions to migrate further to another country, to return or to settle?
- How does access to social rights shape their decisions to stay in the host country, to migrate further or to return?

Non-EU migrants in Slovakia

Migration of Third Country Nationals to Slovakia (Source: Residence Permit Statistics)



Nigerian Migration to Slovakia (Source: Residence Permit Statistics)



Migration from non-EU countries, incl. Africa, on the rise

Methodology and data collection

- Methodology:
 - Semi-structured interviews, 34 in total (in-person (23) and online (11)),
 - Between September 2024 and March 2025, in English
 - Bratislava and Košice (and surrounding cities)
 - Mapping of African community
 - Recorded and transcribed
 - Analysis based on quantitative data organized in Kobo app, and open answers

Recruitment strategies:

- (I) Mareena: used contacts gathered via own activities and services provided to migrants
- (II) SAVBA team: dedicated search via social media and personal contacts
- (III) Snowball method

Direct experiences of African migrants ↔ non-EU migrants

Who are our research participants

African migrants in/to Slovakia – very selective group: highly skilled, more privileged.

Country of birth	No. of participants	Portion of participants
Nigeria	12	35%
Kenya	8	24%
Ghana	4	12%
Cameroon	3	9%
Tanzania	1	3%
Angola	1	3%
South Africa	1	3%
Sudan	1	3%
South Sudan	1	3%
Zimbabwe	1	3%
Kuwait/ of Egyptian origin	1	3%



41% single
53% in a relationship/married
6% divorced

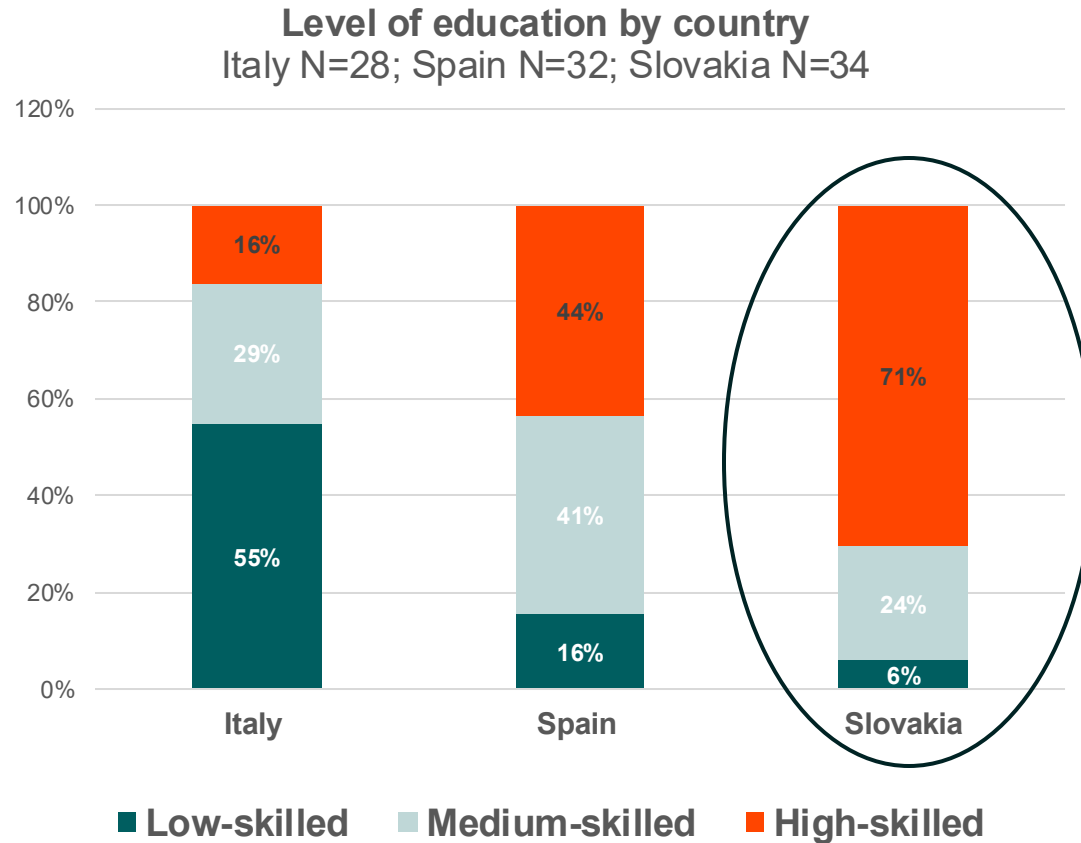
32% w/ children
50% living w/ children in the same household

Men 68%

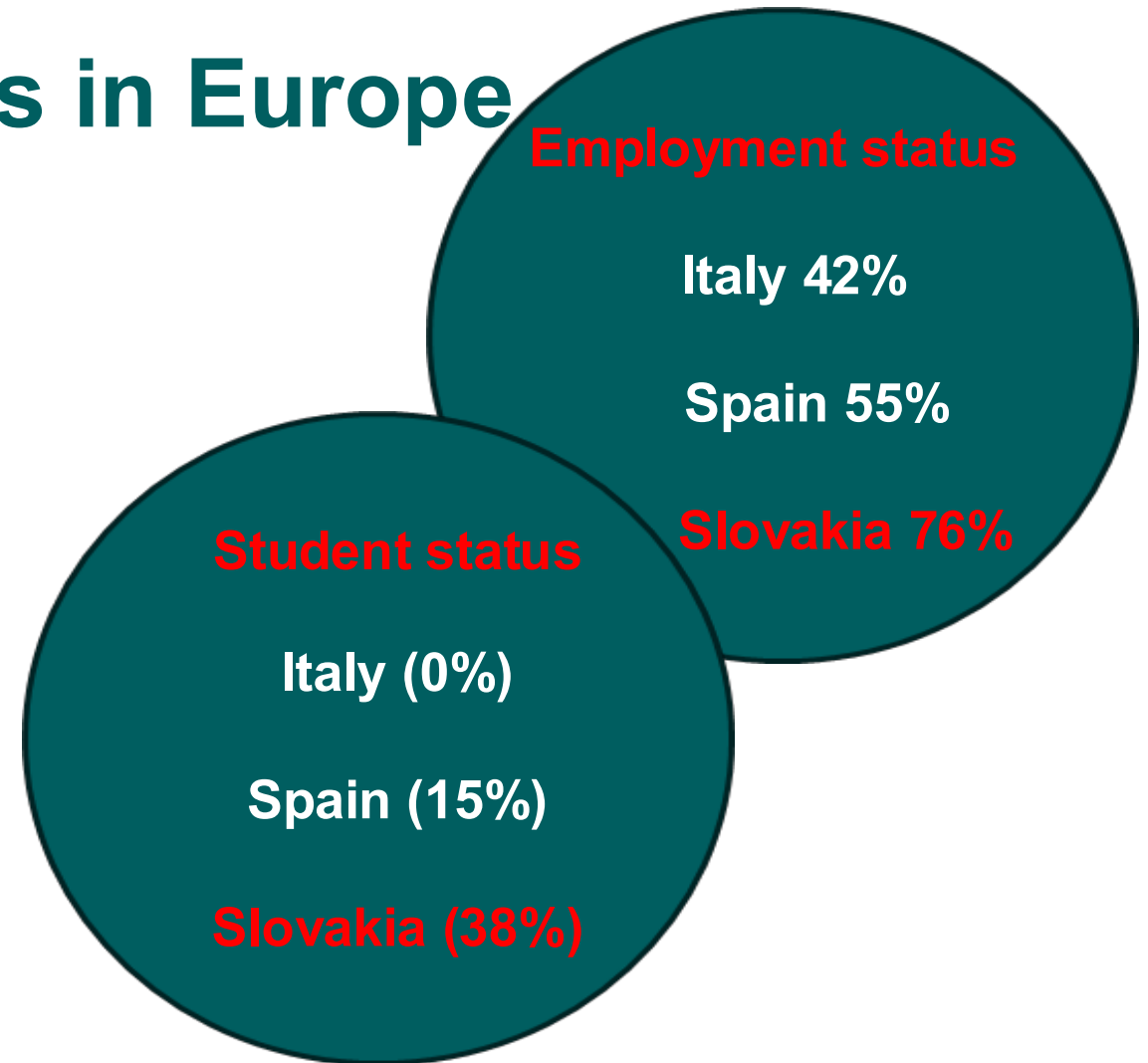
Women 32%

Average age: 33

Diverse immigrant groups in Europe



Note:
low-skilled: ISCED 2 and below
medium-skilled: ISCED 3 and 4
high-skilled: ISCED 5 and above



Differences between participants reflect migration pathways (asylum/refugees versus study/work), economic policies and structures, and geographical location.

Coming to Slovakia: motivations and trajectories (I)

- Using legal migration pathways

(1) High-skilled migration for work

- Seeking a job in Europe/the international job market, Slovakia was not a primary destination
- Often a limited knowledge about Slovakia
- Football career as a specific migration trajectory for Nigerians

(2) Study migration

- Growing interest in higher education, including doctoral programs - lower tuition fees and living costs (relative to Western European countries)
- Compared to other EU countries - attractive scholarships and less competitive PhD programs
- Migration through intergovernmental (development) scholarship programs (only selected countries e.g. Kenya)

Coming to Slovakia: motivations and trajectories (II)

- Most respondents came from their country of origin directly to Slovakia (by plane), a smaller part previously lived in another country (e.g. Italy, Norway, Turkey)
- 2/3 of participants have acquaintances abroad, 35% have/had acquaintances in Slovakia at the time of the interview
- Information via the Internet, sharing experiences within family, acquaintances
- Mostly low previous knowledge of Slovakia

„I've recommended for three people, who already came to Slovakia to study. And this is a nice place. There are many opportunities for everyone. Just come here, respect the law, do what you're supposed to do, don't engage in crime. Respect these people.“ [Male, 28, university student from Kenya, SK_19]

Role of policies (I)

The role of policies when migrating to Slovakia:

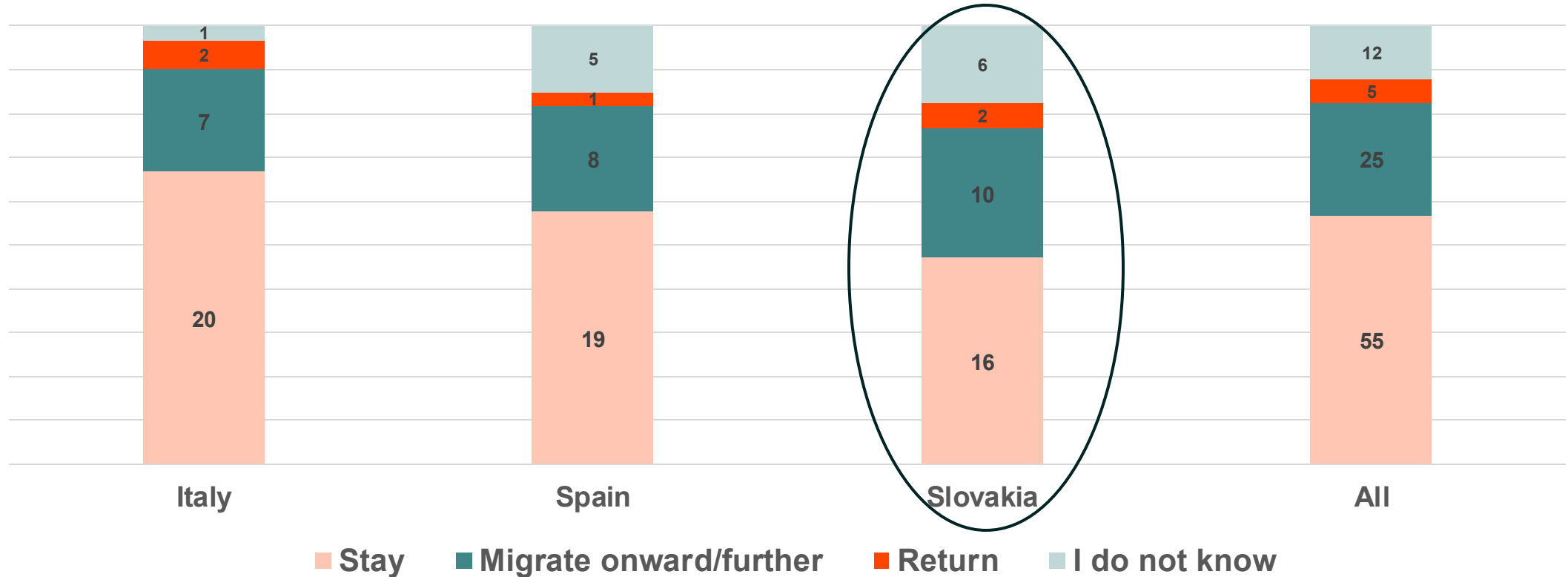
- Limited access to travel documents issued by Slovak embassies in Africa; lengthy and costly process (e.g. need to travel to Nairobi even for African migrants from West Africa)
- Problematic and lengthy procedures at the Foreign Police
- Limited opportunities for family reunification
- Government scholarship programs + cheaper educational (university) programs available in English

*Citizenship application: Because there is no one place where you can find out everything you need. ... So, it took me over six months just to collect my documents from Kenya. More than six months and **phenomenal cost**... [Male, 44, IT worker from Kenya, SK_25]*

... We're not just talking about Slovakia, but this is a general phenomenon in the Western countries. A lot of applications from the Africans are rejected. [Male, 40 entrepreneur from Kenya, SK_28]

Migration decision

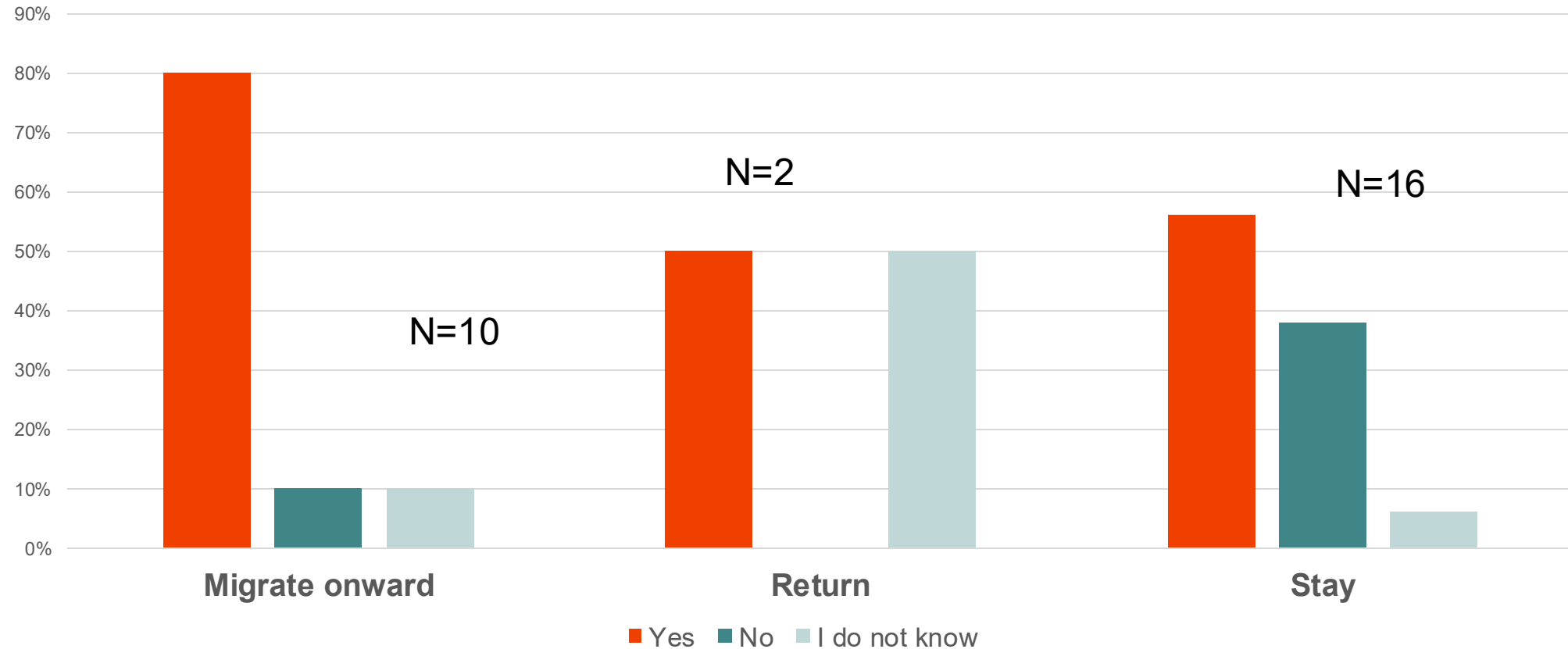
Q77: Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go somewhere else to live or work during the next five years, return to your country of origin or would you prefer to stay here?



Overall, more than 55% intend to stay, with significant intra-country differences. The migration policy context often shapes if/under what conditions/when migrants can stay or need to leave.

Slovakia: Less than half intend to stay, about 20 % are undecided.

Has the need for documents, visas, permits (migration policies) played a role in your decision to stay/migrate onward/return? (Q83, Q91, Q95)(N=28)

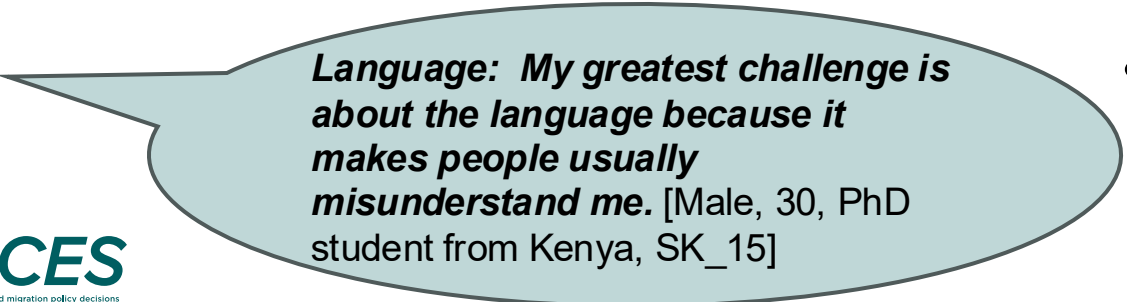


Migration policies (visas, permits, documents) a factor in onward migration decision.

Role of (non-migration) policies II: INTEGRATION

BARRIERS

- Lack of available Slovak language courses, poor access to housing and healthcare
- Lack of employment policies to support the transition from school to work and the integration of family members (especially women) even in sectors with staff shortages
- Students have relatively little information about certain social policies in Slovakia (housing market, job opportunities, social security, etc.)



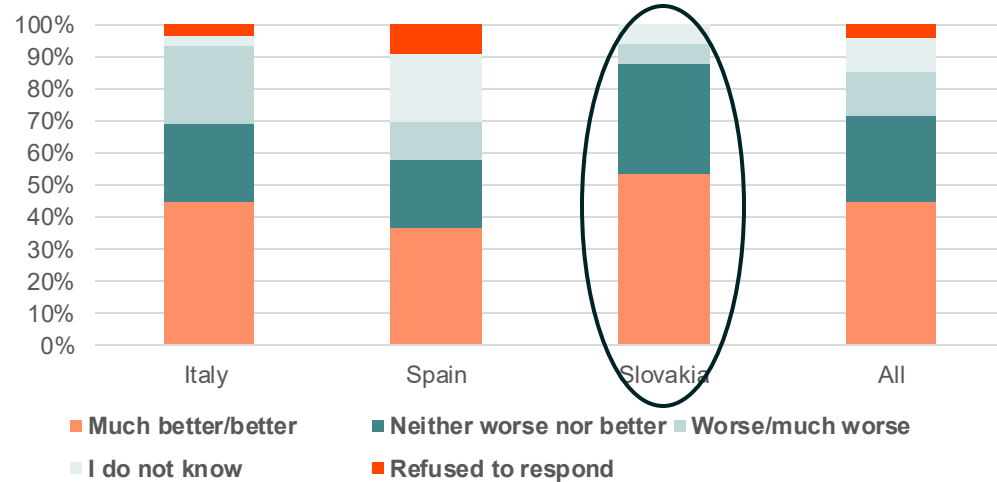
Language: My greatest challenge is about the language because it makes people usually misunderstand me. [Male, 30, PhD student from Kenya, SK_15]

OPPORTUNITIES

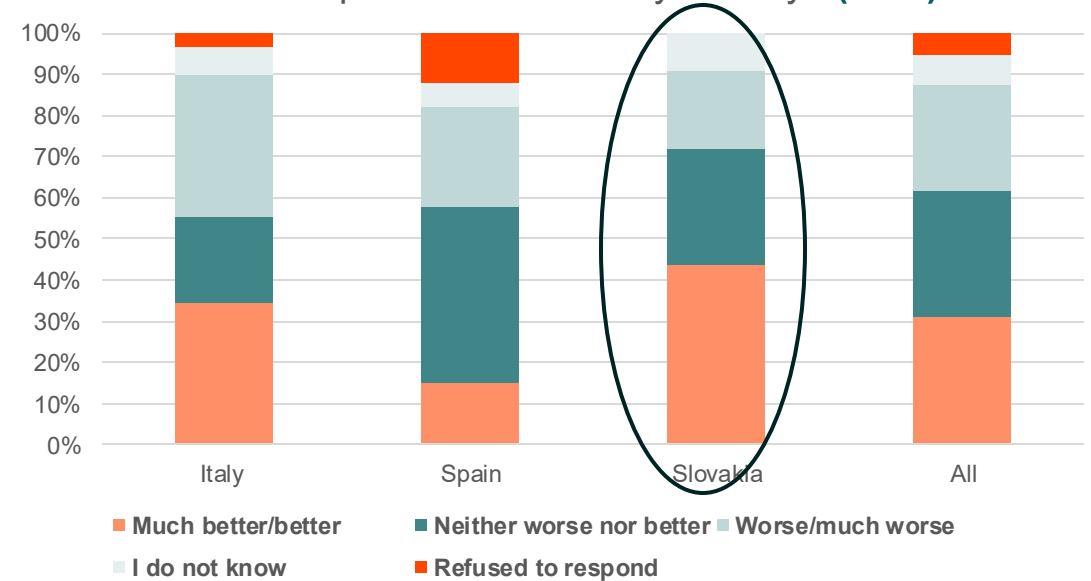
- Social protection related to employment perceived positively, especially maternity/parental leave
- Relatively good access to education
- Slovakia as a stable and peaceful country
- Information shared through the African/foreigners' community
- Support for social integration provided mainly by NGOs

Socio-economic standing at destination and at origin

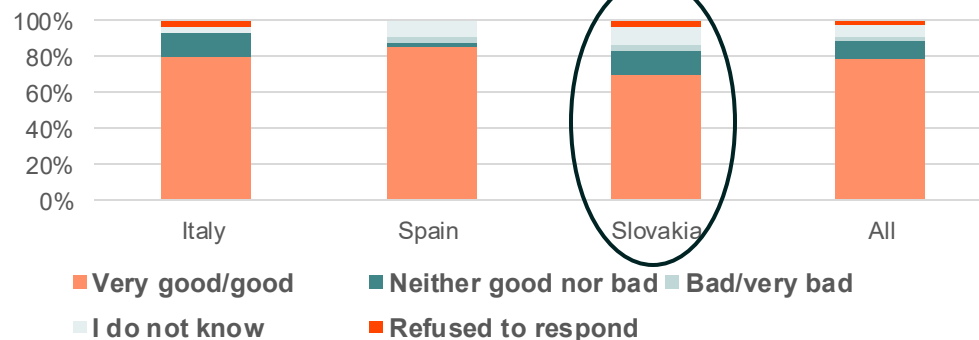
Q60. Where do you stand, in terms of your socio-economic standing, in relation to this community/country? **(Now)**



Q61. How was your socio-economic standing in your previous community/country? **(Past)**



Q62. What do you expect your socio-economic standing to be in the next 10-15 years if you stay in this community/country? **(Future)**



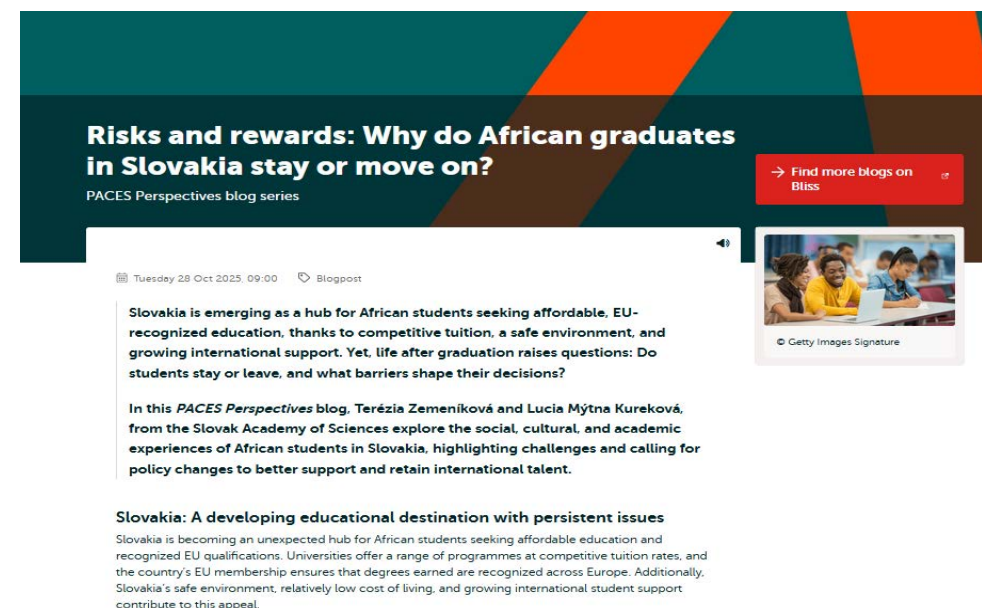
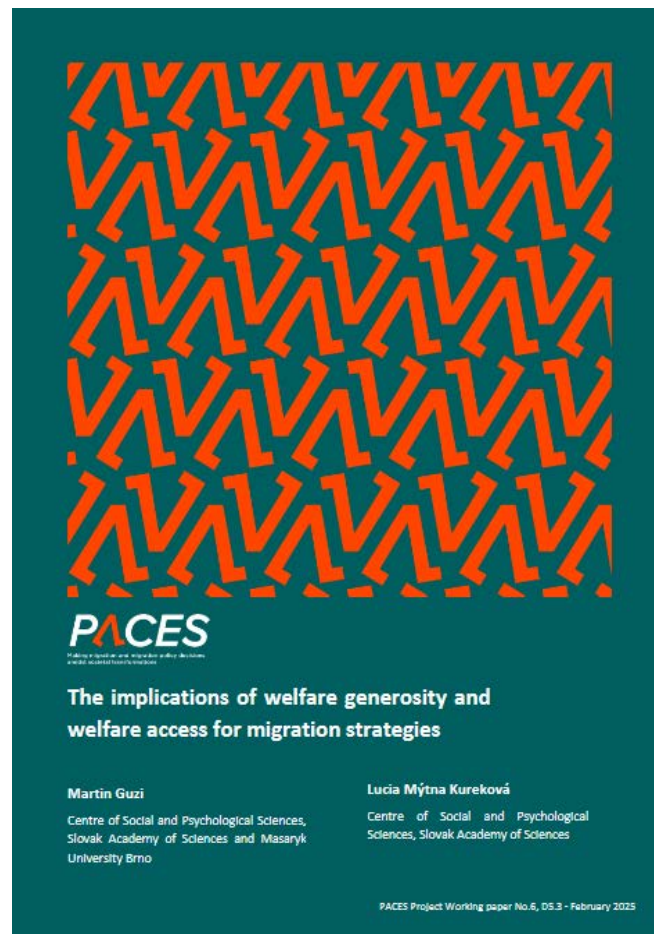
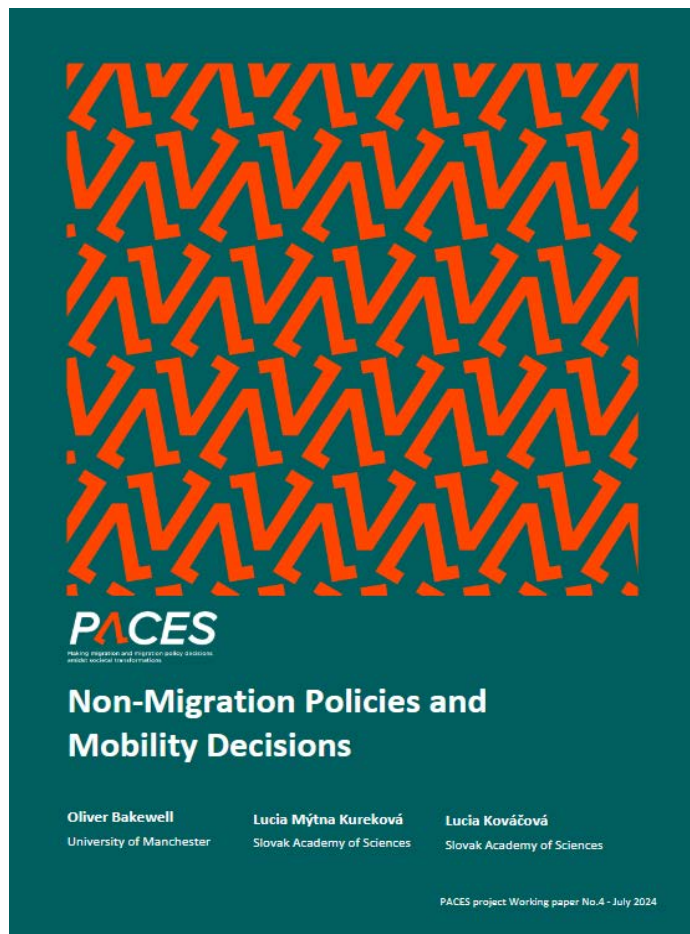
Migrants on average improved their socio-economic standing with migration. They are very optimistic about their future in Slovakia, if they stay.

What is Slovakia's potential?

- Highly qualified migrants coming for the purpose of study or work face major financial and procedural barriers to entry – legal migration is costly and its formalization often takes weeks and months
- Despite barriers to entry and integration, Slovakia has several qualities that foreigners from the African community appreciate
- In migration literature, the study path is considered the most successful form of migration in terms of integration potential and benefits - in the context of Slovakia, it is necessary to set up mechanisms for the transition from the education system to the labor market
- The need to strengthen the broader **integration ecosystem**, including access to social rights to support long-term integration and settlement

It is not always about the economy, it is also about peace. [Male, 30, customer service]

Information about the project and outputs



Thank you for your attention!