

Attitudes Towards Work in Visegrad Group Countries

Kamilla BAŠA* and Patrik BAŠA

J. Selye University, Komárno, Slovakia; basa.kamilla@student.ujs.sk; basa.patrik@student.ujs.sk

* Corresponding author: basa.kamilla@student.ujs.sk

Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine the similarities and differences in the attitudes of people living in the Visegrad Group (V4) countries towards work. In the introduction to the study, we briefly discuss the establishment of the Visegrad Group and the peculiarities of the labor market in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Our research was based on secondary data. We examined some questions of the European Values Survey related to the world of work and then compared the results in the four countries analyzed. The database contains a total of 6,109 responses from V4 countries. The hypotheses we formulated were tested using the Chi-square test in IBM SPSS statistical software. The country of the respondents was an independent variable in the analysis, and a dependent variable was the importance of work in people's lives, agreement with three job-related statements, and people's opinion about income equality. In the final chapter of the study, we summarize the conclusions drawn from the results.

Keywords: labor force; labor market; work; Visegrad Group; V4 countries

JEL Classification: E24; J20; J21

Introduction

The Visegrad Group was established through the political cooperation signed during the regime change of the 1990s. Václav Havel, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall and Polish President Lech Walesa signed the Visegrad Declaration on 15 February 1991 in Visegrad. This day was the historic day of the meeting of the Polish, Czech and Hungarian kings in the Visegrad castle in 1335. In the statement, politicians agreed that the three countries (now four since the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993) will work closely together on the road to European integration. Since then, V4 has become a recognized political "brand," and in the international literature, in international diplomacy, these four countries are called the Visegrad Four (Bernek, 2018).

Since the early 1990s, the Visegrad Group countries have opened up their economies and investors have shown increasing interest in locating foreign capital investment (FDI) in these areas (Dorozynski & Kuna-Marszalek, 2016).

The V4s achieved their goal formed in the 1990s, because they became members of the EU in 2004, and in 1999 the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary became members of NATO. Slovakia became a member of NATO five years later (Bernek, 2018).

In the literature, several authors mention the similarities and differences between the economies of the V4 countries. The economic situation of the V4s was already diverse at the time of the countries' accession to the European Union. This has been further strengthened

by the use of EU's Structural and Cohesion Funds. Cohesion between countries is growing nowadays, but more emphasis should be placed on country-specific challenges in the future (Poland: poverty, Hungary: early school leaving, Slovakia: poor R&D sector). There is a need to strengthen economic cooperation, harmonize national development priorities and develop cross-border cooperation (Káposzta & Nagy, 2015). According to Lipták (2018), in the labor markets of the V4 countries, the so-called anomalies are observed sometimes. Regional disparities already existed at the time of the change of regime, and have only increased since then. In the Visegrad Group countries, a long-term and lasting labor market solution could be a system of employment policy specifically tailored to these countries.

Morvay (2012) describes that the most commonly used rates in characterizing labor markets are the employment rate, the unemployment rate, and the inactivity rate. These three indicators (Table 1.) describe the evolution of labor market developments over time, focusing on closely related characteristics. The International Labor Organization also classifies people into these three groups for the purpose of compiling labor market statistics: the employed, the unemployed, and the economically inactive. The economically active population (also known as the labor force) is the sum of the employed and the unemployed. Inactive persons are those who are neither employed nor unemployed (Eurostat, 2021a). Unemployment rate is one of the most important macroeconomic indicators (Mura et al., 2020) that is often used to measure the health of an economy. Unemployment affects not only a country's economy but also the social and physical well-being of individuals (Machová et al., 2020). According to Kopackova (2019), in the cities of the V4 countries, education and retraining, investment, innovation, and the promotion of local products can be tools to reduce unemployment.

Table 1. Employment rate and unemployment rate 2017-2020 in Visegrad Group countries (Eurostat, 2021b; Eurostat, 2021c).

Country	Employment rate (from 20 to 64 years)				Unemployment rate (from 20 to 64 years)			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Czech Republic	78.5	79.9	80.3	79.7	2.8	2.2	2.0	2.5
Hungary	73.3	74.4	75.3	75.0	3.9	3.5	3.2	4.0
Poland	70.9	72.2	73.0	73.6	4.8	3.8	3.2	3.1
Slovakia	71.1	72.4	73.4	72.5	7.9	6.4	5.6	6.6

In the table, it is interesting that between 2017 and 2019, employment and unemployment increased in all Visegrad Group countries, and since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe in 2020, employment has decreased and unemployment has increased in all countries except Poland. Poland has been able to further increase employment and reduce unemployment. Czech et al. (2020) in their study pointed out that although there is a high degree of uncertainty in the economic forecasts, the year 2020 is expected to affect the economies of the V4 countries in an unprecedented way. It was predicted that this would be reflected, among other things, in the rise in the unemployment rate, but as can be seen in the table, this was not the case in Poland.

2. Methodology

The aim of our research was to examine whether there is a difference in attitudes to work in the Visegrad countries. For this, we used the results of the European Values Survey (EVS/WVS, 2021). The survey includes a number of questions, we examined differences and similarities between countries in some of the questions that concerned the world of work. The database contains a total of 6,109 responses from Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

The database was downloaded to the IBM SPSS Statistics software platform, where the details associated with each variable were already set. Of the variables we examined, the country of the respondents was a nominal variable and the others were all ordinal. The selection of the statistical analysis needed to test our hypotheses was based on the book of Sajtos and Mitev (2007). Based on this, if both variables examined are non-metric (nominal or ordinal), a cross-tabulation analysis should be used. To test the hypotheses, we performed a Chi-square test. The hypotheses we set up were as follows:

H1: In the Visegrad Group countries, work is of varying importance in the lives of the respondents.

H2: There is varying degrees of agreement in the Visegrad Group countries with the statement that people who do not work turn lazy.

H3: There is varying degrees of agreement in the Visegrad Group countries with the statement that work is a duty towards society.

H4: There is varying degrees of agreement in the Visegrad Group countries with the statement that work should come first, even if it means less spare time.

H5: Income equality is of varying importance in the Visegrad Group countries.

3. Results

Before presenting the results, we would like to briefly discuss what the European Values Survey really is, which served as a starting point for our research.

3.1. *European Values Survey*

The European Values Survey (EVS) is a large-scale, transnational and longitudinal research program that examines fundamental human values. The research provides insight into the respondents' ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values, and opinions. The research project sheds light on how Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society. The European Values Survey was launched in 1981. The first survey involved thousands of citizens of the then EU member states using standardized questionnaires. The survey is repeated every nine years (European Values Survey, online). The database on which our secondary research is based was developed by the collaboration of EVS and World Values Survey (WVS). The database can be downloaded from the GESIS (Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences) website (EVS/WVS, 2021).

3.2. *Work Related Questions in the Research*

The first job-related question from the European Values Survey that we examined was about the importance of work in respondents' lives (Figure 1).

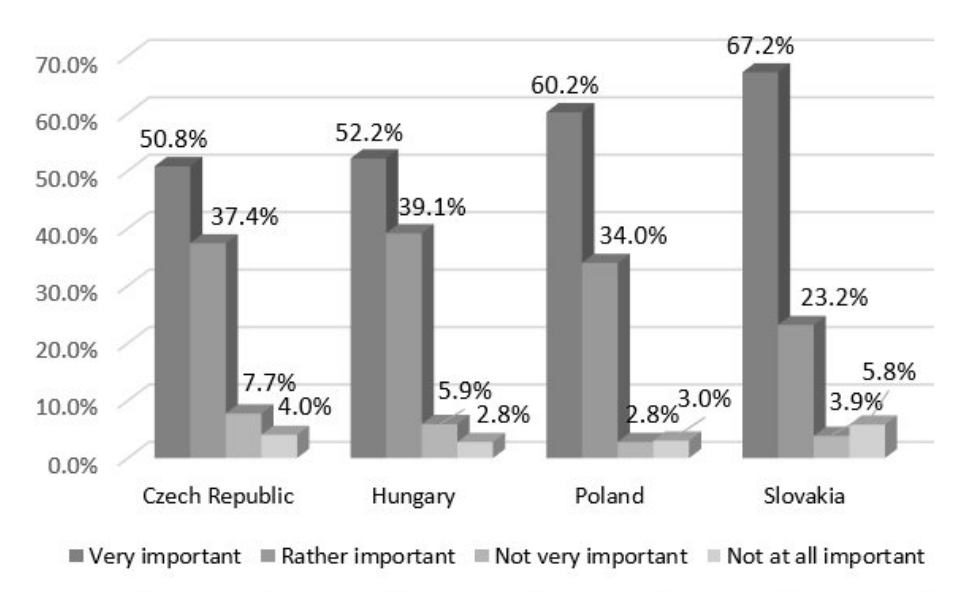


Figure 1. Importance of work in respondents' life

According to the results of the survey, in each of the V4 countries, the majority are those for whom work is very important or rather important. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, slightly more than half of the respondents indicated that work was very important to them. In Poland, the proportion has already reached 60%, and in Slovakia it has exceeded two-thirds. The proportion of those who consider work very important was the highest in Hungary, but it is also the country with the highest proportion of those for whom work is not important at all (5.8%). However, this is not yet enough to determine if the difference is significant. To determine this, a Chi-square test was performed (Table 2).

Table 2. Chi-Square Test: V4 countries and importance of work in respondents' life

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	173.680a	9	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	178.187	9	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	52.554	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	5,984		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 51.81.			

Based on the results of the analysis, the difference between the two variables is significant, so we reject the null hypothesis (i.e., that there is no relationship between the variables) and accept hypothesis H1.

The second work-related question, which we examined in Visegrad Group countries, dealt with the extent to which respondents agree with the statement that people who don't work turn lazy (Figure 2).

The strongest agreement with the statement is highest in Slovakia (45.5%). This is followed by Hungary and the Czech Republic. In Poland, only one third of those strongly agree. Almost half of Polish respondents, although not strongly, agree that those who do not work turn lazy.

In this question, we also performed the Chi-square test (Table 3) to determine if the difference between countries was significant.

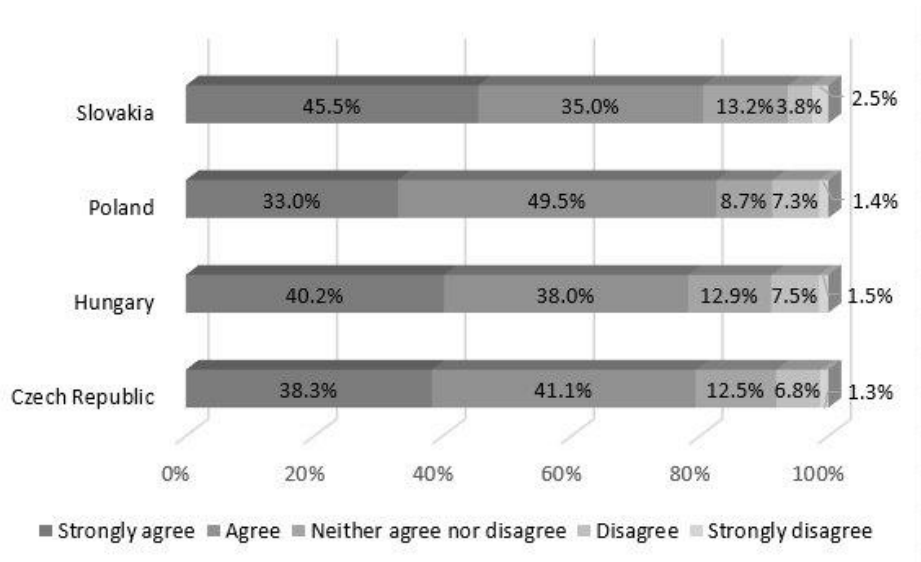


Figure 2. Agreement with the statement: People who don't work turn lazy

Table 3. Chi-Square Test: V4 countries and agreement with the statement that people who don't work turn lazy

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	111.856a	12	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	113.631	12	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.154	1	0.076
N of Valid Cases	6,039		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.02.

The result of the analysis is significant in this case as well, so the null hypothesis is rejected and hypothesis H2 is accepted.

The third question examined the extent to which respondents agree with the statement that work is a duty towards society (Figure 3).

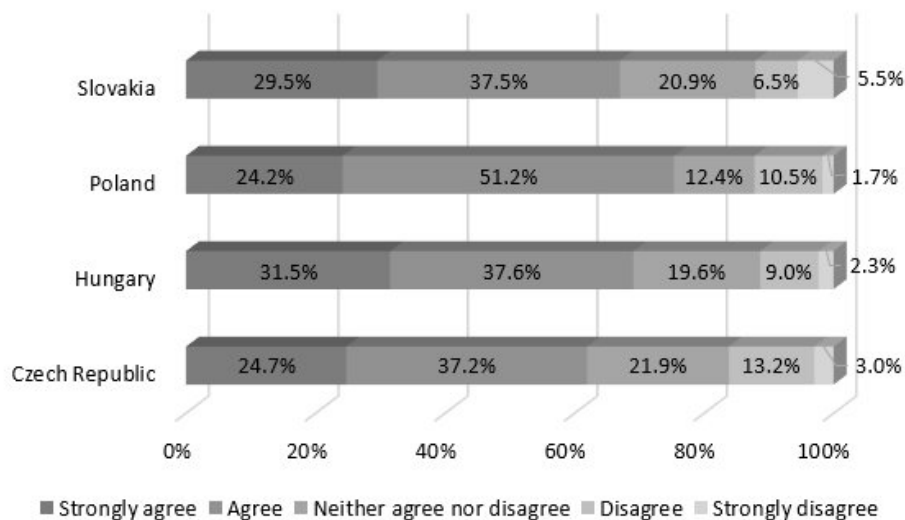


Figure 3. Agreement with the statement: Work is a duty towards society

The proportion of those who agreed with the statement was high in each of the countries examined. Of the four countries surveyed, Polish respondents agreed most strongly that work is a duty to society. They were followed by respondents from Hungary, Slovakia and then the Czech Republic. The proportion of those who disagree with the statement was highest among Czech respondents.

We also performed the Chi-square test for this question (Table 4).

Table 4. Chi-Square Test: V4 countries and agreement with the statement that work is a duty towards society

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	186.170a	12	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	185.083	12	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.960	1	0.002
N of Valid Cases	6,039		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 42.00.			

The difference between the countries also became significant in the analysis, so we again rejected the null hypothesis and accepted hypothesis H3.

EVS and WVS research has also examined the degree of agreement in each country that work is the first even if it means less spare time for the individual (Figure 4).

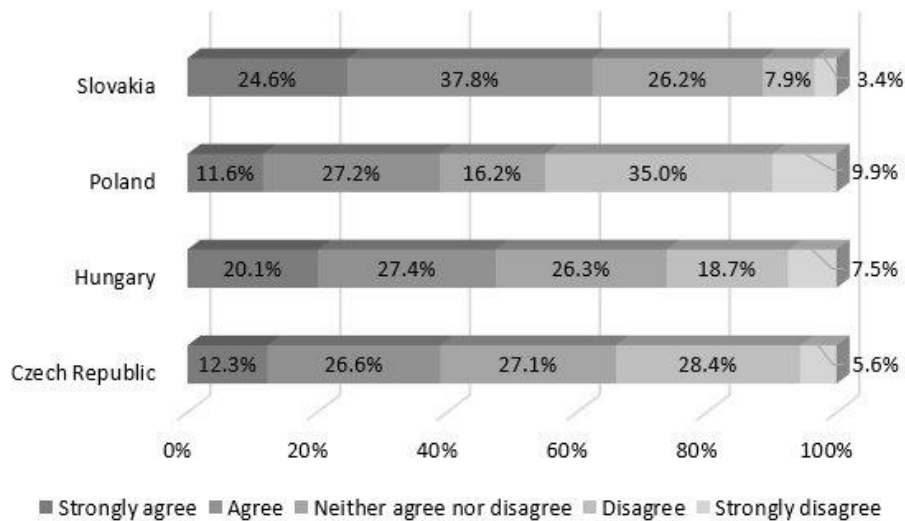


Figure 4. Agreement with the statement: Work should come first even if it means less spare time

Respondents in Slovakia and Hungary agree with this statement to the greatest extent. The proportion of those who disagree with the statement is the highest in Poland. Almost half of Polish respondents (strongly disagree: 9.9%, disagree: 35.0%) believe that it is not worth putting work ahead while reducing leisure time. There is a balanced proportion of Czechs who agree, cannot decide or disagree.

Despite the fact that the difference between the countries was already noticeable on the figure, we again performed the Chi-square test (Table 5.).

Since the result of the test is significant in this case as well, the null hypothesis is rejected and hypothesis H4 is accepted.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test: V4 countries and agreement with the statement that work should come first even if it means less spare time

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	504.103a	12	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	537.623	12	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	64.688	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	6,051		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 87.47.			

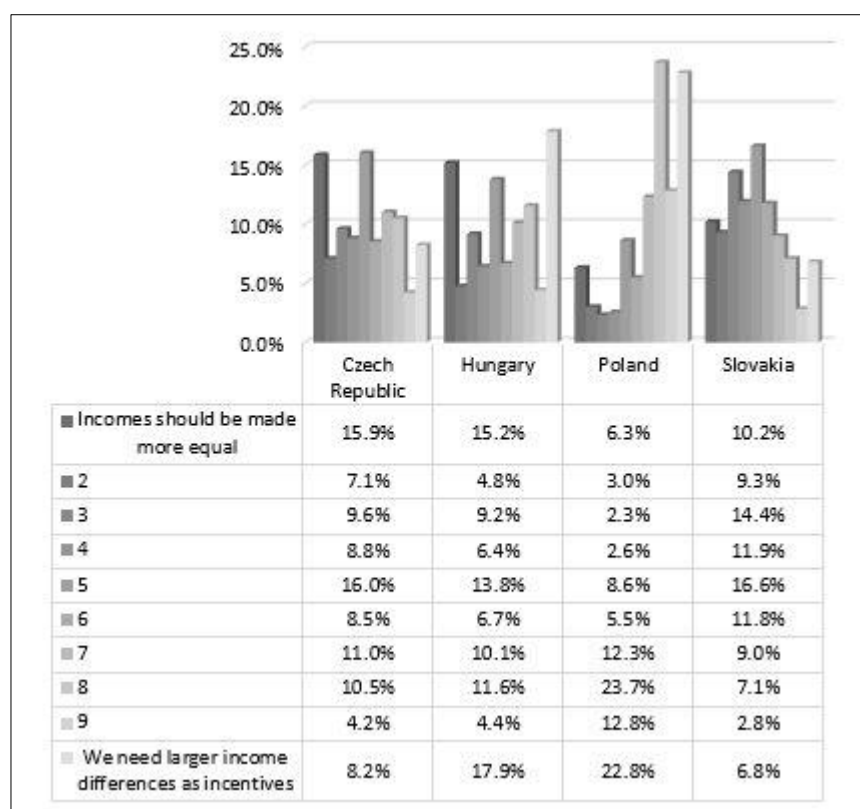


Figure 5. Importance of income equality

Table 6. Descriptive statistics: V4 countries and income equality

Country	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Czech Republic	1,758	5.07	5.00	2.804
Hungary	1,494	5.69	6.00	3.084
Poland	1,332	7.25	8.00	2.602
Slovakia	1,409	4.87	5.00	2.536

The fifth question concerned income equality (Figure 5). Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of one to ten how important they considered income equality to be. Value 1 meant that incomes should be more equal, and value 10 meant that greater income differences would be needed as an incentive.

Respondents in the countries surveyed differed on this issue. Almost a quarter of Polish respondents believe that a larger income gap is needed as an incentive. In Poland, higher values received more nominations. In Hungary, too, the proportion of those who marked 10 was relatively high (17.9%), but almost the same number (15.2%) were those who

marked 1, i.e. the need for greater income equality. The proportions were similarly distributed in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To better interpret the results, we examined some indicators (Table 6): mean, median, and standard deviation.

It is clear from the table above that in the case of Polish respondents, income disparities are most needed. This is supported by both mean and median values. Respondents in Hungary also received above-average (above 5) mean and median values. Respondents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic have similar results, and they consider income equality to be moderately important.

To determine if the difference between countries was significant, we performed the Chi-square test (Table 7).

Table 7. Chi-Square Test: V4 countries and importance of income equality

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	910.630a	27	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	914.672	27	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	48.485	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	5,993		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 78.01.			

As with the other hypotheses, the test result is significant here, which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected and hypothesis H5 accepted.

4. Discussion

The statistical analyzes presented in the previous chapter confirmed that there is a significant difference in the attitudes towards work in the five questions we selected in the EVS and WVS surveys in the Visegrad Group countries. All hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5) were accepted.

The first question assessed the importance of work in the lives of respondents. Most of the Slovaks were those for whom work was very important, but if we add up the strongly agreeing and rather agreeing answers, Poland and Hungary also reach 90%. Work is the least important for Czechs in the Visegrad Group countries (strongly agree: 50.8%, rather agree: 37.4%).

The second question assessed the extent to which respondents agree that people who do not work turn lazy. The proportion of those who strongly agreed with this was also the highest among Slovaks (45.5%). Here, however, it is important to point out that if we look at the proportion of strongly agreeing and agreeing respondents, the other three countries are not left behind (Slovakia: 80.5%, Poland: 82.5%, Hungary: 78.2%, Czech Republic: 79.4%). Based on this, there is no difference in the V4 countries in whether they agree that people who are not working turn lazy, but in whether they strongly agree with it.

In the third question, respondents had to express their agreement that work is a duty towards society. Respondents in Hungary (31.5%) and Slovakia (29.5%) strongly agreed with the statement to the greatest extent. If we add up the proportion of those who strongly agree or agree, the results for Hungary (69.1%), Slovakia (67.0%) and Poland (75.4%) are similar. The Czechs still have the lowest proportion (61.9%).

In the fourth question, respondents had to decide how much they agreed with the statement that work should be the first even if it means less spare time. The proportion of respondents who strongly agree with the statement was again the highest among Slovak respondents. If we add up the proportions of those who strongly agree or agree, Slovakia (62.4%) leads the way compared to the other three countries (Hungary: 47.5%, Czech Republic: 38.9%, Poland: 38.8%). It is also worth summarizing the proportion of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, as in the case of Poland this proportion (44.9%) exceeds the proportion of those who agree. Based on this, Poles do not like to prioritize work if it means less spare time. In the Czech Republic, this cannot be decided unequivocally, as the proportion of strongly disagreeing or disagreeing respondents (34.0%) is almost the same as agreeing. In the V4 countries, therefore, Slovakia and Hungary are the countries where respondents are most likely to prioritize work at the expense of leisure time.

The fifth question examined the importance of income equality. Equal income is most important for respondents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. According to respondents in Poland, larger income differences are needed for incentives.

5. Conclusions

According to the results, among the Visegrad Group countries, Slovakia is the one where people take work “most seriously”. They consider work to be very important in their lives and strong agreement with the statements examined was almost always the highest in their case. Based on the results, on the other hand, among the Visegrad Group countries respondents in the Czech Republic consider work to be the least important in their lives and they do not really like (along with Poles) to prioritize work if it means less spare time.

Lipták (2018) drew attention to the fact that the labor market of the Visegrad countries moves in four different directions, the differences between them can be clearly observed. In the labor market of the V4 countries, Mura et al. (2021) examined the emotional intelligence of employees, based on their research findings, there is no difference between these countries.

The limitation of our research was that our data are secondary, the research of EVS and WVS does not only measure work-related attitudes, so the number of questions related to this is relatively low. A possible future direction for our secondary research could be to make a cross-country comparison. This is conceivable by comparing the results of other European regions, but even by examining the results of countries on other continents.

Acknowledgments: This work was supported by the Collegium Talentum Programme of Hungary.

Conflict of interest: none

References

- Berneke, Á. (2018). *Közép- és Kelet-Európa a 21. század geopolitikai/geoökonómiai stratégiáiban*. Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Czech, K., Wielechowski, M., Kotyza, P., Benešová, I., & Laputková, A. (2020). Shaking Stability: COVID-19 Impact on the Visegrad Group Countries' Financial Markets. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 6282. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12156282>
- Dorozynski, T., & Kuna-Marszalek, A. (2016). Investment Attractiveness. The Case of The Visegrad Group Countries. *Comparative Economic Research*, 19(1), 119–140. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cer-2016-0007>
- European Values Survey. (2021, December 10). *About EVS*. <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/about-evs/>

- Eurostat. (2021a, December 10). *Activity rate by age*.
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_wc160/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat. (2021b, December 10.) *Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)*
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsa_ergan/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat. (2021c, December 10.) *Unemployment by sex and age – annual data*.
<https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>
- EVS/WVS (2021). *Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 Dataset (Joint EVS/WVS)* [Data set]. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7505 Data file Version 2.0.0. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13737>
- Ivanová, E., & Masárová, J. (2018). Performance evaluation of the Visegrad Group countries. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 31(1), 270–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2018.1429944>
- Káposzta, J., & Nagy, H. (2015). Status Report about the Progress of the Visegrad Countries in Relation to Europe 2020 Targets. *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 22(1), 81–99. <https://doi.org/10.1515/esrp-2015-0018>
- Kopackova, H. (2019). Reflexion of citizens' needs in city strategies: The case study of selected cities of Visegrad group countries. *Cities*, 84, 159–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.08.004>
- Lipták, K. (2018). A V4 országok régióinak vizsgálata munkaerő-piaci szempontból. *TAYLOR Gazdálkodás- és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: a Virtuális Intézet Közép-Európa kutatására közleményei*, 10(3), 25–33.
- Machová, R., Zsigmond, T., & Csereová, A. (2020). Implementation of Active Labor Market Policy Instruments in the Context of University Graduates in Slovakia. In P. Jedlička, P. Marešová, K. Firlej, & I. Soukal (Eds.), *Proceedings of the international scientific conference Hradec Economic Days 2020* (pp. 504–514). University of Hradec Králové. <https://doi.org/10.36689/uhk/hed/2020-01-000>
- Morvay, E. (2012). Sztochasztikus ciklikus munkaerő-áramlás a visegrádi országokban. *Statisztikai Szemle*, 90(9), 815–843.
- Mura, L., Zsigmond, T., Kovács, A., & Baloghová, É. (2020). Unemployment and GDP relationship analysis in the Visegrad Four countries. *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, 34, 118–134. <https://doi.org/10.24193/OJMNE.2020.34.06>
- Mura, L., Zsigmond, T., & Machová, R. (2021). The effects of emotional intelligence and ethics of SME employees on knowledge sharing in Central-European countries. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 12(4), 907–934. <https://doi.org/10.24136/oc.2021.030>
- Sajtos, L., & Mitev, A. (2007). *SPSS Kutatási és adatelemzési kézikönyv*. Alinea Kiadó.