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**THE ROLE OF  
STUDENTS'  
EXPERIENCES  
LIVING ABROAD  
AND DEMOGRAPHIC  
FACTORS ON  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
CULTURAL  
INTELLIGENCE**

9-25

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**::ABSTRACT**

SLOVENIAN STUDENTS ARE INCREASINGLY choosing to pursue their studies or apply for work placement abroad, and every year a number of young people decide to leave Slovenia permanently. This research focuses on ascertaining which demographic factors and other features related to the experience of young people abroad have an impact on the development of cultural intelligence, i.e. an individual's ability to work efficiently in culturally diverse situations. A total of 527 students from Slovenia completed the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) and shared their previous and planned intercultural experiences. The results show that both previous and planned intercultural experiences correlate to cultural intelligence (CQ), namely students with the most experience abroad, as well as students planning to move abroad, show higher scores for all CQ dimensions.

Key words: Cultural intelligence, Cultural Intelligence Scale, international experience, students, Slovenia

***POVZETEK******VLOGA MEDNARODNIH IZKUŠENJ TER DEMOGRAFSKIH DEJAVNIKOV ŠTUDENTOV PRI RAZVOJU KULTURNE INTELIGENTNOSTI***

*Slovenski študentje se vse pogosteje odločajo za študij ali študijsko prakso v tujini, nemale mladih pa se vsako leto odloči trajno zapustiti Slovenijo. V pričujoči raziskavi smo želeli preveriti, kateri dejavniki, tako demografski kot tudi dejavniki, ki so povezani s predhodnimi izkušnjami mladih v tujini, vplivajo na oblikovanje kulturne inteligentnosti, tj. posameznikove zmožnosti učinkovitega delovanja v kulturno raznolikih situacijah. Vprašalnik kulturne inteligentnosti (CQS) je izpolnilo 527 študentov iz Slovenije, opisali so tudi svoje pretekle in načrtovane medkulturne izkušnje. Rezultati so pokazali, da so tako pretekle kot načrtovane medkulturne izkušnje pozitivno povezane s kulturno inteligentnostjo. Študentje z največ izkušnjami v tujini, kakor tudi študentje, ki načrtujejo selitev v tujino, imajo v povprečju vse dimenzije kulturne inteligentnosti izražene močnejše.*

*Ključne besede: kulturna inteligentnost, Lestvica kulturne inteligentnosti, mednarodne izkušnje, študenti, Slovenija*

## ::INTRODUCTION

### ::The role of cultural intelligence in the internationalization of Slovenian citizens

Globalization promotes internationalization at the national, corporate and personal level. The Slovenian researcher Kohont (2011) argues that the internationalization of a company's business represents a challenge for its Human Resources function. This includes the need to make more demanding strategic decisions, which usually go hand in hand with an increase in the number of operational tasks, the need for standardization and localization of procedures, and transfer of practices and increased scope of change. It appears the most challenging of these issues are referrals and the preparation of domestic workers to work abroad, job seeking and working with foreign employees, and strengthening the common organizational culture. One of the most important factors that affect how well an employee adapts to work abroad, as well as the acceptance of various cultures in the home environment, are personality traits (e.g. Barrett & Pietromonaco, 1997; Caligiuri, 2000; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Teagarden & Gordon, 1995) and other specific personality factors, including cultural intelligence (e.g. Earley & Ang, 2003).

Cultural intelligence pertains to an individual's ability to deal effectively with situations characterized by cultural diversity (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Cultural intelligence includes four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural. The metacognitive dimension is described as an openness and awareness of differences between interactions with individuals from other cultural backgrounds. The cognitive dimension refers to a knowledge of norms, practices and conventions in various cultural situations. The motivational dimension includes the willingness and ability to direct attention to intercultural differences. The behavioural dimension represents the ability to use appropriate verbal and non-verbal forms of communication when interacting with people from other cultural backgrounds (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006).

Much of the research already conducted on cultural intelligence focuses on the causes of its emergence and development, as well as its consequences, especially in the field of organizational psychology. However, students have participated in some of these studies as well, suggesting that cultural intelligence can also be measured on a student sample. (e.g. Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, students in Europe often participate in student exchange programs, which makes research of this field even more relevant.

Previous findings suggest that experiences abroad increase one's cultural intelligence (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Wood & St. Peters, 2014). Experiencing their first international service assignment increases employees' cultural intelligence (Wilson & Stewart, 2009). Shannon and Begley (2008) found that the number of countries a person visits has an influence on predicted metacognitive and motivational cul-

tural intelligence. The research conducted on those with non-work related experiences (Crowne, 2008) revealed that the number of countries visited for educational purposes predicted cognitive and behavioural cultural intelligence, but the number of countries visited for vacation purposes predicted motivational cultural intelligence. Wood and St. Peters (2014) examined whether short international study trips enhance cultural intelligence. The results of their study demonstrated that participation in a short international study trip affects three out of the four CQ dimensions – metacognitive, cognitive and motivational. Similarly, Engle and K. Crowne (2014) studied the impact of short-term intercultural experiences on cultural intelligence and found that each of the four CQ dimensions increased significantly after experience abroad.

With the help of a cultural intelligence scale, it is possible to predict three forms of intercultural effectiveness: (i) cultural judgment and decision-making (Ang et al., 2007; Prado, 2006); (ii) sociocultural and psychological adjustment (Ng, Van Dyne, Ang, & Ryan, 2012); and (iii) task performance (Ang, Van Dyne, & Tan, 2012; Chen et al., 2010). A study involving students and informational technology professionals has demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of motivational and behavioural cultural intelligence exhibit better levels of adjustment generally, at work and in terms of interaction (Ang et al., 2007). Beyene (2007) found that cultural intelligence motivates non-native English speakers to engage in frequent interactions with native English-speaking colleagues.

The findings above prompted us to ask Slovenian students about their intercultural experiences and the plans they have regarding living and working abroad. We further wanted to evaluate how these experiences relate to cultural intelligence of Slovenian students, given that previous studies suggested a positive correlation between phenomena (e.g. Engle & Crowne, 2014; Wood & St. Peters, 2014). However, in order to make sound conclusions this issue needed to be further studied. This is also a rather new area of research in Slovene literature, since this is the first study of the relationship between intercultural experience and cultural intelligence conducted on the Slovenian youth population.

### **::Young adults in Slovenia, their mobility and exposure to other cultural influences**

The Slovenian government and other organizations are working hard to promote internationalization to the greatest possible extent, not only in terms of the economy but also student interaction, since this enriches, strengthens and encourages creativity and further economic development through gaining new knowledge and international experience. The Resolution on the National Higher Education Program 2011-2020 (ReNHEP, 2011) adopted by the Slovenian Parliament in 2011 introduced a comprehensive set of goals concerning the internalization of Slovenian higher education. Among these, several are directly compatible with the objec-

tives and measures of Erasmus, an European student exchange program, such as: (i) support for outgoing and incoming mobility; (ii) joint study programs established with foreign higher education institutions; and (iii) creating a general international culture in Slovenian higher education institutions with a significant percentage of foreign nationals in the overall population of students, higher education teachers, assistants and researchers.

In Slovenia the percentage of higher education students per thousand inhabitants rose from 19.1 % in 1991 to 41.1 % in 2005 (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2016). The number of exchange students increased from 227 outgoing and 62 incoming during the 2000/2001 academic year to 1,735 outgoing and 1,696 incoming in 2011/2012. Nevertheless, the share of outgoing students as a percentage of the entire student population in Slovenia remains relatively low: 1.03 % in 2007/2008 increased to only 1.51 % in 2011/2012, which is notably below the European average of approximately 4.5 % (Klemenčič & Flander, 2013). Despite this, however, Komljenovič (2012) argues that mobility is one of the best ways to open up Slovenian higher education institutions and facilities to the rest of the world.

At the end of 2017, there were a total of 207,552 individuals aged 18 to 27 living in Slovenia. During the 2016/2017 academic year, 68,156 individuals aged 18 to 27 were enrolled in tertiary education, of whom 28,652 were men and 39,504 were women (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2016). Since 2007, the youth unemployment rate has risen dramatically, and Lavrič (2014) concluded that the economic pressures exerted on the intra-national migrations of youth in Slovenia appear to be relatively low. Only one-quarter of Slovenian young people are willing to move to another location in Slovenia. Approximately one-third of young Slovenians are willing to live abroad. The most preferred destinations are Austria (especially the young people from the northern regions of Slovenia), the United States and Germany. On average, the economic reasons for international mobility are significantly more important for males, older age groups, and urban youth. All of this data points to the importance of political, social and cultural considerations for decisions made that are related to intercultural behaviour.

The issue of language skills is an important feature in any examination of cultural intelligence, because this is the main way that people communicate. Slovenians generally speak more than one language, whereas most popular foreign languages are English, followed by Italian and German, which tend to be spoken most often near the Italian and Austrian borders, respectively (Passport to Trade, 2014). Due to the above, and along with the accessibility of the Internet and world media, study material in foreign languages, opportunities to participate in student exchange programs and the affordability of trips abroad, Slovenian students are exposed to numerous foreign language influences in their day-to-day lives.

## **::Previous cultural intelligence studies in Slovenia**

Although Slovenia is a relatively small country with a population of 2 million people, it borders on four countries with very different historical and cultural backgrounds (Austria, Croatia, Italy and Hungary). In modern scientific literature, there is a dearth of studies designed to identify the characteristics of employees or students for intercultural adaptation, and a lack of research on how Slovenia compares to other countries in terms of cultural intelligence.

In recent years, some Slovenian students and researchers assessed the characteristics of students who had taken part in international exchanges (Lango, 2015; Vujašković, 2011) and compared them with students of other nationalities (Avram-ska, 2007). These researchers were looking for the qualities that an employee must possess to be successful when working abroad (Žišt, 2016). Others studied the relationship between knowledge and cultural intelligence (Goltnik Urnaut, 2014), and the focus of other research was on the role of cultural intelligence in creativity in a culturally diverse environment (Bogilović & Škerlavaj, 2016). For the purposes of this research, we focused on ascertaining which specific demographic and environmental factors (past and future experiences) influenced an individual's cultural intelligence.

The previous Eastern European studies focusing on the cultural intelligence of students found that male students obtained a higher score on the behavioural dimension (Brancu, Munteanu, & Golet, 2016), but there were no gender differences observed in the smaller Slovenian sample (Goltnik Urnaut, 2014). Students' language skills (if one speaks a foreign language) were positively related to higher cognitive dimension score (Goltnik Urnaut, 2014; Johnson, 2014), studying abroad or other international experiences was a significant predictor for all four dimensions of cultural intelligence in the study in Ukraine (Johnson, 2014), and Slovenia (Goltnik Urnaut, 2014) and was connected only with higher behavioural dimension score in Romania (Brancu, Munteanu, & Golet, 2016).

The purpose of the current study is to examine the role of different experiences and intentions that students had or plan to have in the future in the development of cultural intelligence. As we elaborated in our literature review, scholars have proposed and demonstrated that demographic and environmental variables have a significant role in predicting a level of cultural intelligence. All key factors included in our study are less connected with students' inner motivation (e.g. motivation, possibilities to earn money), but are oriented more toward situations where students could gain cultural exposure (e.g. nature of student experience abroad, level of contact with somebody abroad) – and thus possible antecedents are examined herein.

## ::METHOD

### ::Participants

Participants were invited via e-mail or social media outlets, resulting in a heterogeneous convenience sample of Slovene students. To be included in the study, potential participants had to study at one among Slovene universities. In-depth information about the data collection as well as anonymity and confidentiality of responses was provided in an e-mail in addition to informed consent at the beginning of the study. All data were collected through online questionnaires. Participants provided their responses by using a computer, tablet or smartphone.

The respondents were undergraduate students ( $N = 527$ ) from three Slovenian universities – the University of Ljubljana (55.1 %), the University of Maribor (35.6 %) and the University of Primorska (9.3 %). Among these, 37 % were first-year students, 38.1 % were second-year students and 24.9 % were third-year students. Of these, 114 (21.6 %) were men and 413 (78.4 %) were women. Their average age was 22.8 years ( $SD = 3.9$ ).

Only two people (0.4 %) had never been abroad, and 21.3 % had lived abroad for at least three months since they were 14 years old. 71.1 % of students reported that they have a friend who has moved abroad, 32.3 % have relatives abroad, while 63.9 % personally know someone who lives abroad and regularly communicates with them (at least once a month). Almost all participants of this research (97.9 %) speak at least one foreign language at a level that is sufficient for everyday communication.

When asked about their future plans, 51.6 % responded they intend to look for student work abroad, 53.1 % will look for a job there, and 40.6 % of the students plan to move to another country.

### ::Measures

We used the Slovene version of Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS; Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2007), a self-reported questionnaire that measures a person's ability to function effectively in culturally diverse situations. The results of confirmatory factor analysis supported the factorial validity of the Slovene CQS and the existence of a general (second-order) cultural intelligence factor. The four scales and the overall (general) CQS scale showed satisfactory internal consistency (Boštjančič, Komidar, & Johnson, 2018).

With 20 items, the CQS measures four dimensions of cultural intelligence: four items for metacognitive CQ (e.g. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.), six items for cognitive CQ (e.g. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.), five items for motivational CQ (e.g. I enjoy interacting with people from different cul-

tures.), and five items for behavioural CQ (e. g. I change my verbal behaviour when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.). The participants should select the response that best describes their capabilities, and choose answers (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). For each dimension, we summarize the answers to the corresponding items. A higher value for a dimension means a higher level of expressiveness.

In the second part of our research, we asked six questions about the participant's international knowledge and experience (Have you ever been in any country outside of Slovenia since you were 14 years old? Have you ever lived for at least 3 months outside of Slovenia since you were 14 years old? Do you have a friend who has moved abroad? Do you personally know someone who lives abroad and regularly communicate with him (at least once a month) by phone, messages or social networks? Do you have relatives abroad with whom you communicate regularly (at least once a month) by phone, messages or social networks? Do you speak at least one foreign language at a level that is relevant to everyday communication?) and three questions about their future plans, both in terms of student work and life and work abroad (e.g. Do you intend to look for a student work abroad? Are you going to move abroad? Do you intend to look for a job abroad?). They responded dichotomously (yes/no).

## **::Procedure**

This research was conducted in cooperation between researchers from the USA and Slovenia within the framework of the project titled "Cultural Intelligence (CQS): a Slovenian case study (2015-2016)".

First, the Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire was translated into Slovenian in accordance with the rules of double translation, and adjusted accordingly (phase 1). We then conducted an online survey (phase 2) to verify the reliability and structure of the Slovenian version as well as identifying some factors (experiences with living abroad and preferences for the future) that can influence the development of cultural intelligence among students. During the study, we also controlled the age, gender, years of study, origin of the university that he/she attends. All variables were self-reported.



## RESULTS

We prepared the descriptive statistics for the variables included (Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics of independent variables

	Students ( <i>N</i> = 527)
Gender (female)	413 (78.4 %)
Mean age ( <i>SD</i> )	22.8 (3.9 %)
University ( <i>N</i> = 514)	
Ljubljana	283 (55.1 %)
Maribor	183 (35.6 %)
Primorska	48 (9.3 %)
Year of study ( <i>N</i> = 343)	
1	67 (37 %)
2	69 (38.1 %)
3	45 (24.9 %)
Experience	
Being abroad since being 14	525 (99.6 %)
Lived abroad for 3 months since being 14	112 (21.3 %)
Friend living abroad	378 (71.7 %)
Monthly communication with someone living abroad	337 (63.9 %)
Monthly communication with relatives living abroad	170 (32.3 %)
Speaks a foreign language	516 (97.9 %)
Plans	
Student work abroad	272 (51.6 %)
Move abroad	214 (40.6 %)
Work abroad	280 (53.1 %)

Cultural intelligence is a multidimensional construct comprising four complementary ways of conceptualizing individual-level intelligence: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural. In accordance with previous studies, the reli-

ability results in Table 2 show high levels of consistency for the CQS scores (overall) and the four capabilities in particular. Ang and colleagues (2007), for example, report reliabilities 0.71–0.88 for individual dimensions across two large national samples, USA and Singapore.

**Table 2**

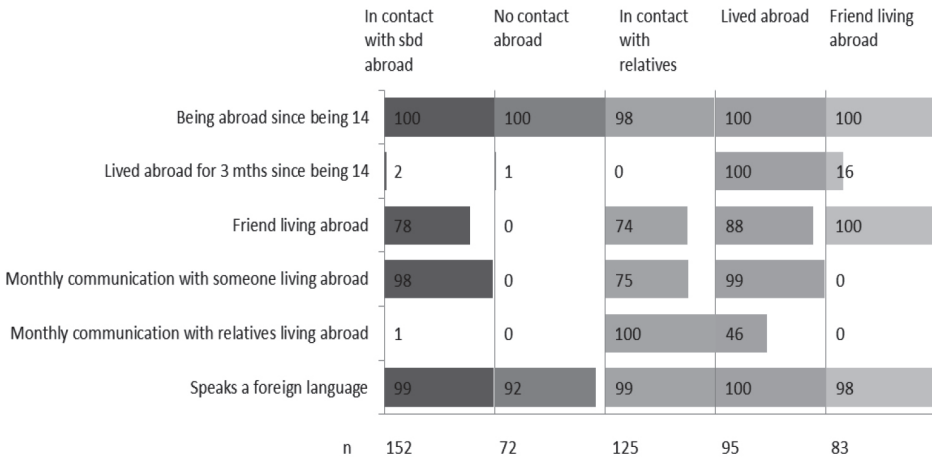
Descriptive statistics and reliability testing of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (N = 527)

	Mean score ( <i>M</i> )	Standard deviation ( <i>SD</i> )	Internal consistency ( $\alpha$ )
Cultural intelligence – overall	4.5	0.88	0.90
Meta-cognitive	5.1	1.08	0.76
Cognitive	3.9	1.00	0.74
Motivational	4.8	1.07	0.79
Behavioural	4.5	1.15	0.90

The hierarchical clustering method using Jaccard distance and within group linkage method was applied to obtain clusters of students according to the nature of their experience abroad. The method is used when there is a need to identify groups within which units are as similar as possible and at the same time differ from units in other groups. It is a hierarchical method starting with all units as separate groups and hierarchically combining units that are most similar until all units are combined in a single group. The researcher decides about the number of groups graphically, by inspecting the dendrogram (a graph showing the procedure of units' classification). In the current research, five clusters were obtained (Figure 1). Students in all clusters have in common an experience of being abroad since they were 14 years old and speaking a foreign language so well as to be able to manage everyday communication. The first cluster, which is the largest, comprises 152 students who have either a friend or someone they know living abroad and communicate with at least once a month. The second cluster, which is the smallest, comprises 72 students. These are students with no contacts (neither colleagues, friends nor family) abroad. The third cluster, which comprises 125 students, comprises those who communicate at least once a month with relatives and friends abroad. The fourth cluster comprises 95 students who had lived abroad for at least three months and are in regular touch with their family and friends abroad. The last cluster numbers 83 students. These are students with a friend living abroad who they contact regularly.

**Figure 1.**

The description of the five clusters of experience abroad (the names of the clusters are presented on the top of the figure; bars represent percentages within the cluster).



For the next step, a total of five multiple regression models were built to determine the key factors associated with each dimension and overall cultural intelligence (Table 3). The obtained clusters were included in the regression model as independent variables, so that the reference group were students living abroad. Beside the clusters also demographic variables and intention for studying or working abroad were included as independents in the regression model.

The nature of student experience abroad is one of the key factors influencing overall cultural intelligence as well as all individual dimensions. In contrast with the most experienced group of students, i.e. students who lived abroad for a while and maintain regular (monthly) relationship with family and friends abroad, all other experience groups have lower meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational and overall cultural intelligence. Lower behavioural cultural intelligence was found in the group with regular contacts with somebody living abroad and the group with no contact abroad. The group of students with relatives abroad or a friend living abroad does not statistically significantly differ from the most experienced group of students.

Men have lower cultural intelligence than women in all but the cognitive dimension. Students with plans to do student work abroad have higher cultural intelligence, not only in terms of each of the dimensions, but also overall. Students that intend to move abroad have higher cognitive, motivational and overall cultural intelligence. Age, type of university and intention of working abroad are not related to cultural intelligence.

**Table 3**

Factors associated with dimensions and overall culture intelligence  
(results of multiple linear regression analysis: regression coefficients and p-values)

	Meta-cognitive	Cognitive	Motivational	Behavioural	Total
Constant	4.9 (<0.001)	4.1 (<0.001)	4.8 (<0.001)	4.3 (<0.001)	4.5 (<0.001)
Men	-0.3 (0.013)	-0.1 (0.443)	-0.2 (0.015)	-0.3 (0.004)	-0.2 (0.008)
Age	0 (0.069)	0 (0.274)	0 (0.503)	0 (0.336)	0 (0.163)
University of Ljubljana	0.2 (0.116)	-0.1 (0.646)	0 (0.980)	0.1 (0.672)	0 (0.690)
University of Maribor	0.1 (0.605)	-0.1 (0.355)	-0.1 (0.382)	-0.1 (0.513)	-0.1 (0.489)
University of Primorska	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
In contact with somebody abroad	-0.7 (<0.001)	-0.6 (<0.001)	-0.5 (<0.001)	-0.3 (0.046)	-0.5 (<0.001)
No contact abroad	-1.1 (<0.001)	-1.2 (<0.001)	-1.1 (<0.001)	-0.6 (0.003)	-1.0 (<0.001)
In contact with relatives abroad	-0.6 (<0.001)	-0.4 (<0.001)	-0.4 (0.001)	-0.2 (0.218)	-0.4 (<0.001)
Living abroad	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Friend living abroad	-0.6 (<0.001)	-0.7 (<0.001)	-0.6 (<0.001)	-0.2 (0.170)	-0.5 (<0.001)
Student work abroad	0.3 (<0.001)	0.3 (0.006)	0.3 (0.002)	0.3 (0.007)	0.3 (<0.001)
Move abroad	0.2 (0.164)	0.3 (0.035)	0.5 (<0.001)	0.2 (0.243)	0.3 (0.005)
Work abroad	-0.1 (0.285)	0 (0.898)	0 (0.914)	0 (0.968)	0 (0.786)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.17	0.20	0.26	0.09	0.24

## ::DISCUSSION

As cultural intelligence influences successful adaptation to new cultural environments, we wanted to determine which factors related to experiences of Slovenian students' life and work abroad affect the development of their cultural intelligence. Results showed adequate internal consistency of the questionnaire as well as internal consistency of individual factors. These findings are consistent with results from other countries (Al-Dossary, 2016; Brancu, Munteanu, & Golet, 2016; Johnson, 2014; Ward, Fischer, Lam, & Hall, 2008).

The Cultural Intelligence Scale measures four primary dimensions – metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural. Slovenian students scored the highest results in the motivational and metacognitive dimension. People with high motivational CQ are capable of directing effort and energy toward functioning in different cultural settings, meanwhile people who are high in metacognitive CQ tend to question their cultural beliefs and adjust their knowledge when they interact with people from foreign cultures (Ang et al., 2010). On average, Slovenian students achieved the lowest results on the cognitive dimension that reflects knowledge about norms, habits and customs in other cultures (Ang et al., 2010). The results thus show a positive attitude exhibited by Slovenian students towards gathering experience in foreign cultural environments, as well as openness to intercultural differences in interaction with individuals from other cultures. However, it is important to consider the possible bias of our sample, since there is a possibility that those students participated in the research who are initially more interested in traveling and acquiring intercultural experiences.

The results have confirmed our expectations and showed that more culturally experienced students have higher cultural intelligence compared to less experienced students. The most experienced group of students consists of students who have lived abroad for at least three months and are in contact with someone abroad at least once a month. This is the group with the highest average results in all four dimensions of cultural intelligence. On the other hand, the group with the lowest average results in all four dimensions is the group with no contact abroad whatsoever. Thus, our results are in line with the findings of prior studies, which have shown that having experiences abroad increases one's cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008; Engle & Crowne, 2014; Wood & St. Peters, 2014).

Students who intend to do student work abroad or move abroad for personal interest have on average higher cultural intelligence than other participants. To some extent, we can conclude that these are the students who are already more interested in traveling and getting to know people from other cultures. It is also very likely that these students have travelled more in the past, so such results are not surprising. However, what we find especially interesting is that those students who intend to move abroad merely for work do not have higher cultural intelligence. This could be due to finding migration as inevitably because of the lack of opportunities to

work in Slovenia (and not because of the personal interest in moving).

As it seems, among demographic variables, only gender is associated with cultural intelligence, as men have a lower cultural intelligence in all four dimensions. This finding is not in line with a previous Slovene study (Goltnik Urnat, 2014) where no significant differences between men and women were confirmed. Although age did not appear to be associated to cultural intelligence, we must take into consideration that students of a similar age ( $SD = 3.9$ ) participated in our study.

## **::Limitations and further research**

The study was carried out on a sample of Slovenian students, so the findings cannot be generalized to the rest of the population, such as members of other cultures and employed adults. The questionnaire was applied online, which means that those students who are initially more interested and self-motivated participated in the survey.

The results of the current study showed the appropriate psychometric characteristics among student population, but for further research, it would be necessary to evaluate psychometric characteristics of the sample of employees, given that cultural intelligence is an important concept in organizational psychology.

Further research might involve a baseline study among Erasmus student alumni and a comparison of the results with the current sample. It would be reasonable to conduct a national study of CQS in Slovenia and compare the results of the youth sample with the overall Slovenian sample. Future research might examine other factors, such as personality traits of Slovenian students that affect both decisions related to living and working abroad, as well as one's cultural intelligence.

It is important to note that the data collection process took place in 2015, when the economic situation in Slovenia was still somewhat different from how it is today. Some of the results, such as the proportion of students who intend to move abroad merely for work, would be different today.

## **::Practical implications**

Our findings offer practical implications for student advisors and their students because they show how important practical experiences are in terms of developing cultural intelligence. This study indicates that providing students with the opportunity to study, work or undertake student work abroad tends to empower them to take further steps towards gaining higher values of CQ. Although high individual cultural intelligence does not emerge automatically (Engle & Crowne, 2014), students can improve and develop their cultural intelligence. Students' advisors could identify the gaps and guide students who are interested in gathering experiences in culturally diverse environments to attend cross-cultural trainings, seminars, conferences and workshops for youth in order to increase CQS competences and skills for

future employment. Based on the findings, that the more prolonged employees remain in foreign countries, the more individual cultural intelligence they may develop (Shannon & Begley, 2008), their enrolment should be focused on gathering diverse activities, and also their living or studying abroad should be long enough to maximise gathering a broad scope of information about a particular culture.

## ::Conclusions

Our study confirmed that there is a positive correlation between experiences abroad and cultural intelligence. Since there is great interest among Slovenian youth when it comes to working abroad, this suggests that it is important to provide practical content for students in order to help develop their cultural intelligence and ability to work abroad.

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