

# THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRANTS INTO THE PROFESSIONAL SPORTS SYSTEM

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*Highly skilled migrants in the professional sports system are circular migrants, who migrate repeatedly after each contract change. This article is based on ethnological field research with persons in the sports system (i.e. coaching staff), and analyses the challenges of their integration and well-being. The study shows that migrant sports professionals are not integrated into the host society, but rather into the club and live in a professional "bubble." Although they are privileged migrants, they often face emotional and social challenges. Each remigration brings new integration challenges, transnational families, "sacrificing" of their spouses' careers and their children's social life.*

*Keywords: highly skilled migrants, coaches, football, integration, professional integration, migrant professional networks, well-being*

*Visoko kvalificirani migranti v poklicnem športnem sistemu so potujoči migranti, ki se selijo po vsaki spremembi pogodbe. Članek temelji na etnološki terenski raziskavi z ljudmi v športnem sistemu (trenersko osebje) in analizira izzive njihove integracije in blaginje. Raziskava je pokazala, da niso vključeni v gostiteljsko družbo, temveč v športni klub, in da živijo v poklicnem »mehurčku«. Čeprav so privilegirani migranti, se pogosto spoprijemajo s čustvenimi in socialnimi izzivi. Vsaka ponovna selitev prinese nova integracijske zadrege in ustvarja transnacionalne družine, v katerih se žrtvujejo partnerjeva kariera in življenje otrok.*

*Ključne besede: visoko kvalificirani migranti, trenerji, nogomet, integracija, poklicna integracija, poklicne mreže migrantov, blaginja*

## INTRODUCTION

Football is one of the most popular sports worldwide, certainly the most popular in Europe, South America, and Africa, which is especially evident during the World Championships and European Championships. The success of a football club and top athletes rests on the support of teams of highly educated or highly qualified professionals (persons in the sports system, i.e., coaching staff). The number of staff depends on the club's funding. The team consists of a head coach, assistant coaches (additionally specialized as goalkeepers' coaches, fitness coaches, analysts), physiotherapists, doctors, etc. It is essential to point out that besides formal training, experience gained in practice is highly critical in this field of work. Clubs have been inviting international coaches since the beginning of the 20th century; it is now not uncommon for the entire staff to consist of people from different countries (Lanfranchi, Taylor, 2001: 15–36; Taylor, 2010: 143–145).

Relevant literature discusses football and migration – especially contemporary processes of international migration, exploring the role of established leagues in Europe and South America, migration in elite men's football, migration of professional female players, elite youth players, amateur players and their families (Elliott, Harris, 2015), foreign footballers/the migration of (professional) footballers (Lanfranchi, Taylor, 2001; Dietschy, 2006;

Taylor, 2006; Storey, 2011), integration through football (Ross, 2001; Dietschy, 2006), with a particular emphasis on “football’s positive influence on integration in diverse societies” (Zec, Paunović, 2015), integration of Muslim minorities (Al Ganideh, 2018) or/and the “integrative potential” and sociopolitical constraints of football for people seeking asylum (Jurković, 2021; Jurković, Spaaij, 2022). Furthermore, when it comes to coaches, there are the *Sport Coaching Review*<sup>1</sup> and scientific articles which discuss the dominant or legitimate forms of sports coaching knowledge (Bush et al., 2015), etc. However, I have not found any research on (the challenges of integrating) highly educated and highly qualified migrants, and these migrants include precisely football coaches, who are the focus of this research.<sup>2</sup>

Considering that coaches’ employment contracts are fixed-term (from one to three years) and that coaches are very well-paid and privileged circular migrants (on the typology of migrations, see Brettell, Hollifield, 2000: 1–26), this paper discusses their motivation to migrate, their expectations and their experiences, aiming to understand factors that influence their subjective perception of well-being (Grønseth, 2013; La Placa, McNaught, Knight, 2013; see *International Journal of Wellbeing*) and good life (Simoni, 2016). The conceptions of the “good life” are culture-specific; still, the shared notion focuses on the future and subjective evaluations of essential things in life (Fischer, 2014: 12). In the underlying anthropologic literature, inspired by humanistic (Raibley, 2018; Pigliucci, Skye, Kaufman, 2020) and philosophical questions (Bargdill, 2015; Forgas, Baumeister, 2018), well-being has been explored as a part of the broader notion of a good life, and it has been used to look into people’s notions of a fulfilled and meaningful experience in all spheres of life, and the activities undertaken to achieve it (Robbins, 2013; Fischer, 2014). The notion of well-being and good life has also been recognized as relevant and introduced into research on migrations (Gardner, 2015; Simoni, 2016; Vathi, King, 2017). However, it has only recently been included in research on highly skilled migrants, and it has been shown as the critical factor in their staying – rather than moving on (McGregor, 2018). It has been shown that the subjective perception of well-being in one’s professional life can be accompanied by feelings of loss and frustration in private life (Povrzanović Frykman, Mozetič, 2020). I will examine the well-being phenomenon across work/professional and non-work (family, social, and personal) domains of life (Languilaire, 2009). Considering that these migrants relocate because of pre-arranged jobs and are thus economically integrated,<sup>3</sup> this paper explores the above concepts (well-being and good life) in terms of information about experiences, i.e., the importance of social (Penninx, 2005) and interactive (social relations and networks)

<sup>1</sup> “A principal objective of the journal is to publish interrogative articles which engender debate on issues related to sports coaching theory and practice.” <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rspc20/current>.

<sup>2</sup> This research is a small part of a larger project entitled *Sport, Discrimination, and Integration: sport as a vehicle of social inclusion and participation*. For objectives of the project, see <https://integra.ffzg.unizg.hr/en/>.

<sup>3</sup> For different analytical dimensions of the integration process, see Penninx, 2005; Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, 2016.

dimensions of integration (see Esser, 2001: 16, according to Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, 2016: 13), at an individual level of the integration process, in order to gain insight into its constituent micro-interactions<sup>4</sup> (Garcés-Masareñas, Penninx, 2016: 17).

The research was conducted in the years 2020 and 2021. It is based on qualitative methodology (Zapata-Barrero, Yalaz, 2018), more specifically on the qualitative methodology of ethnology/cultural anthropology (Marcus, Fischer, 1999; Rubin, 2011). An analysis was done on the life stories of 12 migrants/coaches from Croatia (both families and individuals, in various age groups (35 to 62), who have had many years/decades of experience working in different football clubs, countries, and continents.<sup>5</sup>

Croatian coaches, and eventually other staff members as well, achieved a high demand (especially in the global East: Iran, the United Arab Emirates, China, Qatar, and Turkey) after the Croatian national football team won third place at the 1998 World Cup. That popularity has been growing further, especially with the squad's second place at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. My Croatian interlocutors discussed their experiences with migrant coaching during the past 20 or so years. They often spoke about the entire collective, having frequently worked in teams of two to four people from Croatia.

I met my interlocutors through a family member; they were very open and facilitated interesting ethnographic materials, which this paper presents but a minor part. The analysis of the materials shows that the most significant difference occurs between experiences in Western Europe (the article presents detailed material from Monaco only, as reported experiences from Italy, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, and Great Britain show many similarities) and those in Islamic countries of the Middle East and Asia (here, showcased is specifically material from Iran), so this disparity will be the focus of my presentation in the paper.<sup>6</sup> The reasons for this selection are the different cultural contexts and cultural distances (especially religious and language differences) that affect the establishment of social networks with domicile residents, not only for coaches/migrants but also for their families members (spouses and children), as well as geographical distances, lack of Croatian immigrants in those countries in general, and their perceived lifestyle appeal, all of which affects the research questions in this paper.

The paper aims to explore the motivations for migration and the expectations behind it, as well as the social and interactive integration process, especially observing the professional experience (work domain of life) and non-work/private dimension of life, and ultimately to examine how the above affects the subjective assessment of well-being and satisfaction with life/good life.

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<sup>4</sup> Integration occurs at individual, organizational, and institutional levels (Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, 2016: 17).

<sup>5</sup> The paper indicates the ordinal number of the coach and the country to which the data refers.

<sup>6</sup> The material for Turkey and China is also interesting, but an extended analysis would exceed the scope of a single paper.

## MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Coaches in professional football do not send out work applications – they accept jobs by invitation. All interlocutors had the experience of working in Croatia (in clubs or the national team). Their work was recognized by football scouts, managers, clubs, and other coaches who invited them to be part of their team. The following case shows how Croatian coaches have cooperated and invited each other for 20 years. My interviewee was an assistant coach, one of four Croatian staff members in Iran, in addition to the head coach, the goalkeepers' coach, and the fitness coach:

*[coach's name] took third place at the worlds in 1998 and then received an invitation to be the coach of the Iranian national team in 2002, taking [coach's name] with him as his assistant. [coach's name] finished that cycle, and in 2004, [coach's name] took over as the coach and selector of the Iranian national team, achieving Iran's qualification for the World Cup in Germany during 2004–2006. Based on this, he was declared an honorary citizen of Tebran and [...] was in 2015 invited to coach Persepolis, their most famous club. Half of Iran supports him – around 30–40 million people. [...] he asked me [...] if I would like to go there. (N1, Iran)*

From the example of the coach from Monaco, we can see a different professional experience:

*After leaving the Croatian national team, the coach was engaged in Frankfurt's Eintracht, where he achieved a top result with an average German team [...]. This was a stepping stone for him to progress to the best German club and one of the best clubs in the world – Bayern Munich. He was there for a year and a half, winning three titles with them [...] [but] he eventually lost his job. (N2, Monaco)*

After six months of unemployment, he was invited to Monaco as the head coach. He invited three coaches he had worked with in the Croatian national football team to join his staff.

The case of the following respondent shows that migrant professionals often change clubs and agree to a lower position or salary to work in a country where they had previously worked and lived:

*[coach's name] played football for Juventus in Italy. When he stopped playing, he worked as an assistant coach at Hajduk FC (Croatia) to a head coach from Italy who had known him as a player in Italy and invited him. After that, he was the head coach for various clubs: Hajduk FC, Udinese (Italy), and recently two clubs in Turkey for two-three years. Since the summer of 2020, he has been an assistant coach at Juventus [...]. In the meantime he had periods of unemployment while living in Croatia. (N3, Italy)*

Motivations and expectations for working abroad include:

- Financial gain. Compared to Croatia, salaries are about ten times higher (in addition to bonuses for victories) in Western European countries, and about 13 to 15 times higher in the Middle East and Asia, which provides great financial security (furnished housing, savings, an investment that brings additional sources of income (usually the purchase of business premises and real estate), independence from the Croatian pension system, security for their (adult) children, etc.);
- Establishing oneself professionally – gaining international experience (especially for younger coaches) so that they could progress professionally and train stronger football clubs in better leagues;
- Desire to experience work and life in another country (which implies getting to know another and different environment, the possibility of children attending high-quality private European schools);
- Satisfaction in private life (personal and family). Spouses/family decide which country/city they will move to and whether to live separately for a time. Some are willing to work in a lower and less-paid position to live in a place that suits everyone. Families might choose to live together in Western European countries, while the coaches might go to Middle Eastern countries alone and work abroad.

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (WORK DOMAIN OF LIFE), INTEGRATION, AND WELL-BEING

As can be seen from the interlocutors' examples, interviewed head coaches migrated for an extended time, eventually inviting their assistant coaches to join. Nowadays, a head coach more frequently selects a more significant number of staff, both for business and personal reasons:

*Coaches used to work with local experts they found in the club [...] These days, to achieve faster [...] and easier adaptation to the coach's requirements, their philosophy of work and [...] play style, it is common for the head coach to be accompanied by at least two-three of his assistants [...] They find a shared language much faster [...] when it comes to the work approach and strategy since they carry it over from their previous collaboration [...] When professional time ends and leisure time begins, it is likewise easier when one has someone they know around, someone they can talk to, rather than being a [...]. (N2, Monaco)*

As the advantages of working abroad, the interlocutors mentioned better salaries and working conditions: wealthy clubs have better-equipped clubs/camps, more staff, more analysts, better stadiums, buses/planes for away matches, and the staff stays in better hotels.

Talking about working in different countries and clubs, the interviewees pointed out the importance of knowing other cultures (especially customs and religions), as well as the mentality and willingness to adapt:

*We generally had to adapt quite a lot. You must follow some of their rules [...] Prayers during Ramadan and while training, avoiding food and water from morning till night [...] in Saudi Arabia, they [...] really respect this [...] and then they have night practices.* (N1, Iran)

*Real coaches [...] know how to balance [...], they find the right ways both in communication and in their demands, in everything [...] the four goalkeepers which I had in the staff this year [...] French [...] Polish [...] Italian and [...] Brazilian [...]. 36 different nations participate in the club's work. This included 15–17 nations among the players, which means there are various religious customs and restrictions [...] you must treat everyone equally, without offending or slighting anyone [...] you have to be up to the task.* (N2, Monaco)

*Our staff is the fourth staff in Monaco in the past five years [...] it is very important [...] for you to adapt to the environment you are coming to [...] if you are socially sensitive and socially intelligent enough to do so in a way to be received positively.* (ibid.)

Regardless of where the coaches work, their primary language of communication is English. They mostly have translators for English and local languages or the footballers' native languages. Depending on the length of their stay, some interlocutors have also learned some words in the local language, such as Persian (Farsi).

Coaches and staff are expected to keep the club winning and are constantly under great public scrutiny. One or a string of bad results can lead to the dismissal of the entire team (even after only a few months of work), non-payment of salaries, or disputes. Bad results/dismissals are followed by periods of unemployment or acceptance of lower-ranked employment, i.e., employment in a worse-ranking club. Naturally, good results are followed by better offers. Therefore, migrant staff members are permanently in the labor market. Some coaches have agents/intermediaries (managers) who search for a new club for them and negotiate their terms of employment.<sup>7</sup> Coaches have different experiences regarding the duration of unemployment (from a few months to two years) and how they spend it. Research shows that coaches experience the period of uncertainty differently, most affected by their age and amount of savings (younger people accept positions in less appealing countries in the Middle East, while older people are willing to take a lower-paid job in Croatia or stop working), family situation (moving is most difficult for families with children who go to

<sup>7</sup> We can see this as the meso-context of the migration process (Castles, de Hass, Miller, 2014: 26).

primary and secondary school; in these cases, the family lives separately until the end of the school year). The above also affects the willingness to compromise when choosing the country/club with which to sign a contract.

Interviewed coaches associated working in the countries of the Middle East exclusively with earnings. The “necessary” adaptations to Islamic culture (e.g., adaptation of practices to fasting and prayer times, (non)consumption of pork and alcohol, etc.) are considered part of the business environment in which they agreed to work for adequate compensation. Research shows the importance of exploring different professions/employment sectors and questioning the existing types of migration. Although the interlocutors are considered migrants according to the migration terminology (Brettell, Hollifield, 2000), answers to the question “Do you consider yourself a migrant?” show a subjective range of opinions, which depend on the country/city of work and are also related to the perception of the “good life” from: “Yes, we are essentially just *Gastarbeiter* [guest workers] who go there to focus on making money” (N1, Iran), to:

*If you are focused only on your environment [...] you lose touch [...] with the reaches of top-level football [...] All top coaches are inclined towards these migrations [...] [but] if we are talking about migrations in terms of migrants from Afghanistan, Africa [...] then I would be ashamed to say that we are migrants. I think this is too good of a life.* (N2, Monaco)

“What would you call yourself? Your work in Monaco?”: “We are professionals [...] Competitions are [...] all over the world, and you are practically forced to migrate, i.e., go to environments that will allow you to achieve maximum professional development” (N2, Monaco).

In European clubs, many players, coaching staff and owners are foreigners/immigrants:

*We have 36 different nations in the club, working at the club [...] The owner of 66% of the club is Russian, while 33% is owned by the Principality of Monaco [...] You have a Russian as the owner and as the executive president, an Englishman as the sports director and as a head scout, a Croat as the head coach. This staff includes Croats, Austrians, and Englishmen, and then you also have analysts who include Portuguese, Frenchmen, and Englishmen [...] Knowledge and professionalism are what counts, not nationality.* (N2, Monaco)

The relations between a (co)owner of a football club/employer and a coach/employee are exclusively professional. Coaches and football players of the same ethnicity do not socialize privately, as this is not recommended even in national clubs.<sup>8</sup> My sources explained that

<sup>8</sup> Considering the fact that many football players become coaches after their professional football career (at the age of about 35), interlocutors also looked back on these experiences during the research and

there must be a professional distance, that coaches must be a sort of authority, and that players might get the impression that coaches favor someone. If the coach and the player know each other from before, they can be in contact, but they should not socialize publicly.

## NON-WORK DOMAINS OF LIFE, INTEGRATION, AND WELL-BEING

For these migrants, it is complicated to reconcile the work/professional and private, non-work spheres of life (Languilaire, 2009). Not knowing how long they will work in a club, they often leave without their family members but in teams. The following quote describes the experience of such life and work:

*I went to a small club in the desert [...] a town of some 100,000 inhabitants, without any shopping centers [...] cafes, restaurants ... that classic provincial Saudi Arabia [...] five of us [from Croatia] went, five worked together [...] we cooked in turns [...] So we practically lived like a family for a year [...] You work three-four-five hours a day. The rest of the time you spend together with other staff members. This is how you function. (N4, Saudi Arabia)*

The club initially provides accommodation for most staff. Some live in a hotel or apartment during their stay, but some say that this is also a form of control over them:

*As for the apartments within a hotel where you live, you clean them on your own; you do everything yourself [...] It's another special role. Then, for instance, you have four police types here. There's the regular police [...] 'plainclothes police officers' [...] religious police, and [...] secret state police [...] you need to know that everyone is eavesdropping on everyone. (N1, Iran)*

All the interlocutors pointed out that a family compromise was necessary, i.e., “how you organized your marital union,” how old the children are, whether the spouse is employed, etc. In the countries of the Middle East, the coaches' wives could only stay as tourists for up to three months. Wives and children visited them (for a period of one to three months), but even during that short stay often found it difficult to integrate with the Islamic environment:

*The first huge problem is socialization [...] your social life is non-existent. This is a big problem for our wives [...] many of them (the local population) do not speak any foreign languages. Communication is kept to a minimum. (N5, Iran)*

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emphasized that they socialized with other football players from the region of former Yugoslavia when they played in the same club abroad. However, this is a topic for another article.



As an example, the interviewee described going to a hairdresser:

*I asked a friend from the club [...] to take my wife [...] to get her hair done, because she doesn't speak [the language], and he speaks English a bit [...]. He was surprised when I asked him, he felt like he shouldn't be taking her on his own. He was actually more embarrassed than my wife [...], and then he took her to the hairdresser [...]. You are lonely a lot; there is no social life [...], women are not allowed to walk around without a headscarf. (N1, Iran)*

Family members often accompany the coaches to European countries and then, with the help of the club, rent an apartment that suits the family's needs. Staff members try to live close to each other. Of the four Croatian coaches in Monaco, three have their families with them. Two coaches have accompanying minor children (aged 12 to 18), and all their children are with them. All the interlocutors are aware that their families have to adjust. As their stories show, some children often change schools, while the wives (some of whom are highly educated) become housewives:<sup>9</sup>

*Unfortunately, there is not much choice involved [...] It is much more difficult for [coach's name] because this is the third time they have moved in the last five-six years, so there are certain problems. But this is the first time for the [coach's name] girls, and they handled it well. (N2, Monaco)*

*We can say that the families make sacrifices, you can see that both [coach's name]'s wife and my wife quit their jobs. They had their careers, they had their lives at home [in Croatia]. However, I'd also say they decided to support us and accompany us due to the economic aspect. And the children [...] It is certainly at least 50% harder for them than if they had stayed in Croatia and finished school normally. Because of that gap in the language and the programs they attend [...]. [coach's name]'s daughter would now be a high school senior in Croatia, but there, she enrolled in the junior (third) grade instead and will not graduate before next year. (ibid.)*

When choosing a country, coaches with children in primary and secondary school move to cities with international schools, mostly English. On the one hand, the kids lose friends (which bothers teenagers and secondary school students the most), and they have to adapt to a new curriculum in a foreign language. On the other hand, they have the opportunity to continue their education at international universities. Due to the short-term employment contracts (mostly signed for one to three years) and their uncertainty, some

<sup>9</sup> Wives either pause or quit their jobs in Croatia. In the case of Monaco, the coach received a higher salary (due to tax benefits) when his wife was unemployed. This salary difference was higher than his wife's salary of a highly qualified person in the Croatian healthcare system.

families live separately, with the wife and children staying in Croatia. In one case, the wife and one secondary school child remained in the country of the husband's previous employment for a year until graduation.

## SOCIAL AND INTERACTIVE INTEGRATION

Although the coaches did not address cultural and religious differences in their formal education, they indicated in the interviews that they had learned about the customs, value norms, and similar before and after arriving in a new environment, especially an Islamic one. They wanted to learn about the country (history, culture) they came to, and the local population welcomed them and their family members well. This is reflected by occasional invitations to social gatherings, trips, and sightseeing, as well as celebrations of various annual and life customs:

*I have an exploratory spirit, I'm not exactly your traditional football player. I've been to their biggest shrine [...] Mashhad [...], I asked them if I could go there, and they were honored to take me there as a Christian, to those mosques [...] they are very proud of being Persians. Often they talk about their great Persian history [...] I organized this trip for my wife and daughters in particular. (N1, Iran)*

Regardless of the country where they lived and worked, interviewees tried to see the sights and consume the cultural content. They pointed out, though, that their wives have more free time at their disposal to fill with social activities. In European countries, spouses tend to experience far fewer problems with social and interactive integration, which also contributes to the subjective satisfaction with the quality of life of individuals and their spouses/families:

*My wife enjoyed long walks with the dogs around Monaco [...] spending time with other wives. [...] She managed to integrate even among people outside the club. She has two or three friends from Monaco, as well as some she met through people from the club, people who have been here for years [...] who are citizens, and so on; we are not isolated. (N2, Monaco)*

Coaches, especially head coaches, are public figures. They are popular, and the residents of their host country invite them to various gatherings, often as "guests of honor," as they say. The interlocutor who worked in Islamic states mostly referred to double standards when it comes to value norms and differences between the official "rules" in the public sphere (for example, the prohibition of the consumption of alcohol and drugs, headscarves for women, etc.) and the actual behavior of particular groups of people at private gatherings.

The examples they mention are descriptions of Iran's "Western-type" weddings and private parties attended by coaches in Iran:

*I remember a wedding for around six hundred people. You have two types of weddings there – 'Iranian', which they call a 'traditional' wedding, and [...] 'Western ceremony', which is generally forbidden and you cannot have it in a hotel [...] All those who are some type of businessmen [...] who have some level of independence organize Western weddings [...] in venues that are outside the city [...] hidden venues [...] I later realized they also bribed the police and whomever they needed to [...] Until they enter that space, all women traditionally wear headscarves, etc. [...] and when they go inside, the shorter their dress, the better! [...] They dance there to some Iranian techno music, they shake their bodies, guys throw money at them [...] So, an Iranian-type 'turbo-folk' wedding, speaking in Croatian terms [...] They like to drink vodka-juice very much because vodka has no smell. (N1, Iran)*

*You have the affluent youth there; I was at two or three parties. After that, I no longer wished to attend those private parties. They are like Sodom and Gomorrah! Whatever happens in our country when the blinds go down, also happens in theirs [...]. (N5, Iran)*

*You have a lot of staff and people who are also connected by class, and they marry and spend time together depending on class. Even today, the so-called officer class is very much represented [...]. They care a lot about maintaining that status. We were at a party organized by a wealthy man in a mansion [...] it was actually a hacienda [...] you can see guys leaving the room to snort cocaine. (ibid.)*

As football is a trendy sport, the players are public and viral figures, and so are the coaches. Some appreciate this popularity, while others are bothered by it:

*I know I have some 150,000 followers on my Instagram, while [head coach] has over a million [...] because football is mega popular. [...] When we go for a drink, he [head coach] goes shopping, and we go to the mall for a drink, people leap over the escalator – one goes up, another one comes down, people jump to take pictures with him. (N1, Iran)*

Despite being exposed to the media, regardless of the country they work in, they all pointed out that they find it difficult to integrate socially (Penninx, 2004) and interactively (Esser, 2001: 16 according to Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 13), and that they spend what little free time they have primarily with the people they work with or with family members: "You stick to a small circle of people, you cannot leave your circle and then over time

*this also started bothering me. That is why I wanted to come back, your mind becomes a bit numb*” (N1, Iran). The research shows that the social life of my interviewees in Croatia, i.e., their country of origin, is far more fulfilling and that integration into the domicile society is almost non-existent or is limited to the professional circle of people. A life dedicated to work and frequent weekend trips leave no free time for integration processes outside of work in Monaco either. The only difference compared to Iran is that family members are there with the coaches: *“Outside of work, this is again the same circle of people who work with you, there is no one else [...] You just dedicate a little more time to your family”* (N2, Monaco).

## WELL-BEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Research shows that the interviewees working in Middle Eastern and Asian countries are relatively dissatisfied with the quality of their professional and private life (Languilaire, 2009) and that the main reason for their migration is high earnings. On the other hand, the statement of an interviewed coach on the quality of life (cf. Robbins, 2013; Fischer, 2014) in Monaco shows the vital nature of the balance between the work and non-work domains of life:

*There are both positive and negative aspects to all this – I miss my children, I miss my granddaughter [...] One feels that life in Croatia would be more fulfilling from this perspective. However, I’m doing the job I love [...] at the highest possible professional level, and that’s something that fulfills you. Every workday we come to the club before 8 a.m., and we leave around 7 p.m. [...] My parents, thankfully, are still alive, sometimes I imagine how nice it would be to be with them. I had other things there, too [...] a house on Brač [an island in the Adriatic Sea] where I enjoyed going [...], and now it’s impossible. These are some negative aspects.* (N2, Monaco)

Given that anyone who has worked in Monaco continuously for more than ten years receives a minimum guaranteed pension of 5,000 EUR, I asked the 53-year-old interviewee whether he would stay for the full ten years if they offered him a contract extension. The reason why he would not is given thus: *“I think a three-year contract is optimal for me at the moment. I’m dealing with what I should be dealing with, and I don’t have to think about whether the pension system will endure”* (N2, Monaco). This answer shows a degree of satisfaction with the quality of life (well-being and good life, see Grønseth, 2013; La Placa, McNaught, Knight, 2013; Simoni, 2016). Family and personal reasons, age, and, of course, life goals are important factors for migrant professionals. The interlocutors love their jobs. They explained, *“They do not know life outside of football.”* Their well-being and meaningful life are made possible by the work sphere (i.e., a team victory), but they emphasized that the non-work sphere or private life during the season is almost non-existent and is postponed

for later. They associate a “good life” with financial security and spending time with family and friends. They need to fulfill specific financial goals (savings and/or investment that brings additional sources of income and security for their (adult) children). After fulfilling their individual goals, they tend to retire from an active coaching life abroad (some interlocutors achieved this already in their fifties).

## CONCLUSION

Our research shows that the experiences of migrant sports professionals in different countries are diverse. Though only a small part of the collected materials from different countries has been included in this paper, the following shared aspects are evident: (im)possibility of residence for unemployed family members, unclear boundaries between the working and non-working spheres of life, challenges of working and living in a multicultural environment, and compromise and “sacrifices” of the spouse and children.

The social (Penninx, 2005) and interactive (see Esser, 2001: 16, according to Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, 2016: 13) dimension of the integration of these migrants does not take place in the host society but in professional circles (“the bubble”). The research shows the emergence and perpetuity of migrant professional networks, the creation of “coaching communities” (Taylor, 2010: 156), and what I posit is a new dimension of integration – professional integration. Although we would agree that professional integration is a general fact and that it is important in the domestic culture, too, it primarily comes to the foreground in this context, given that the invitations/recommendations of other coaches are crucial for employment with a particular team, not only because of the professional quality of work but also because of spending free time together abroad, which is especially important when it comes to migration to countries in the Middle East where migrant sports professionals might live without family members.

Regardless of where migrant sports professionals work, they have the following in common:

- a. Although they are highly paid and privileged migrants, they point out that they find it necessary to look for work outside Croatia. In addition to good earnings, working abroad helps young coaches establish themselves professionally, after which they find work more easily in Croatia, too.
- b. Although they are public figures (have the status of celebrities):
  - they tend to lead a very isolated life (in a small circle of co-workers), often facing emotional and social challenges (loneliness),
  - they are invited to private gatherings in high societies and closed elite circles, and simultaneously subjected to supervision and control of behavior (in Islamic states).

Depending on age, family circumstances, time of migration, and place of employment, each remigration/change of club brings new integration challenges, as well as specific

phenomena of transnational families, the occurrence of having two homes, the “sacrificing” of the spouse’s career and children’s social lives. On the other hand, these migrations provide avenues into other/culturally distant cultures, something often framed as an exciting lifestyle (informal stories about these experiences were the reason for this research). Life in Western European countries enables the children of migrant sports professionals to receive an international education and their wives to enjoy a “comfortable” life. Although employment contracts are uncertain and coaches are at times required to change several countries in succession, this allows them to earn high wages, be financially secure, decide independently when they want to stop working, and be independent of pension systems; which ensures their subjective well-being and a good life in the long run. Since European football maintains a higher competitive quality standard than Asian, African, and North American football, these migrations between countries and continents will likely become increasingly more frequent.

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## IZZIVI INTEGRACIJE VISOKO KVALIFICIRANIH MIGRANTOV V PROFESIONALNI ŠPORTNI SISTEM

*Uspeh vrhunskih športnikov temelji na podpori moštev visoko izobraženih in usposobljenih strokovnjakov (osebe v sistemu športa oz. trenerji). Dandanes ni nenavadno, da celo moštvo sestavljajo ljudje iz različnih dežel (Lanfranchi, Taylor, 2001; Taylor, 2010). Ker se delovne pogodbe s trenerji sklepajo za določen čas (od enega do treh let) in so trenerji zelo dobro plačani in privilegirani večkratni migranti, so v tem delu obravnavane njihove motivacije za selitev, pričakovanja in izkušnje. S tem želimo razumeti dejavnike, ki vplivajo na njihovo osebno doživljanje blaginje (Grønseth, 2013; La Placa et al., 2013; gl. International Journal of Wellbeing) in dobrega življenja (Simoni, 2016). V raziskavi je obravnavana blaginja na delovnem, poklicnem in nedelovnem (družinskem, družabnem in zasebnem) področju (Languilaire, 2009). Trenerji se selijo zaradi vnaprej sklenjenega dela in so s tem ekonomsko integrirani; zato gre premislek omenjenima konceptoma blaginje in dobrega življenja v okviru družbene (Penninx, 2015) in interaktivne razsežnosti vključenosti v priselitveno okolje (Esser, 2001: 16, po Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 13).*

*Analiza etnografskega gradiva je pokazala na največjo razliko pri izkušnjah v zahodni Evropi (v tem članku je uporabljeno gradivo iz Monaka) in v islamskih deželah Bližnjega vzhoda in Azije (predstavljeno je gradivo iz Irana). Družbena in interaktivna razsežnost integracije migrantov v športu se ne dogaja v gostiteljski družbi, marveč v poklicnih krogih. Raziskava je opozorila na ustvarjanje in obstoj migrantskih poklicnih mrež in »ustvarjanje skupnosti trenerjev« (Taylor, 2010: 156), vendar tudi novo razsežnost vključevanja, tj. poklicno integracijo. Posebej v obravnavanem okviru je zelo izrazita, saj so vabila in priporočila drugih trenerjev odločilna za odhod v določen nogometni klub (državo), in to ne le zaradi poklicne kakovosti dela, temveč tudi zaradi skupnega preživljanja prostega časa. Slednje je še posebej pomembno, ko gre za selitev v dežele Bližnjega vzhoda, kjer trenerji živijo brez družinskih članov.*

*Čeprav so privilegirani migranti, se pogosto spoprijemajo s čustvenimi in družbenimi izzivi. Vsaka ponovna selitev prinese nove izzive, transnacionalne družinske prakse, (ne)zmožnost bivanja za nezaposlene družinske člane, »žrtvovanje« partnerjeve kariere in družabnega življenja otrok. Na drugi strani pa selitvene izkušnje trenerjem širijo pogled na druge, kulturno oddaljene kulture – o njih radi govorijo kot o zanimivem življenju. Življenje v zahodnoevropskih deželah njihovim otrokom omogoča mednarodno šolanje, soprogam pa »udobno« življenje. Čeprav so*



*delovne pogodbe negotove, jim visoke plače zagotavljajo finančno varnost, samostojno odločanje, kdaj želijo končati poklicno pot, in neodvisnost v pokojninskem sistemu, kar jim daljnosežno omogoča subjektivno blaginjo in dobro življenje.*

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