



Research Project

Expatriation in the Mediterranean

Preliminary Report – November 2018

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sebastian Stoermer

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Executive Summary

Focus

- Underinvestigated group of expatriates in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain
- How satisfied and happy are expatriates with their life and job in the Med.?
- Which personal and organizational factors help expatriates integrate into the host organization and host community and what are the related outcomes?

Expatriate characteristics

- Middle-aged, majority is male, highly educated, main industries: information and communication, and education services, highest group employed by private-owned companies (76%)
- 86.4% self-initiated expatriates

Key findings

- 67.2 % of surveyed expatriates are generally satisfied with their life, and 72.6% are in general satisfied with their job, however, less pronounced satisfaction when it comes to specific career-related aspects, such as pay and promotion
- Overall, little disparities across countries, however, expatriates in Portugal show noticeably higher turnover and relocation intentions. Further, establishing organizational embeddedness appears to be more difficult in Portugal
- Personality variables, e.g. cultural intelligence, proactive personality, critical to integration
- Non-Western expatriates indicate higher levels of exclusion/harassment at work

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Research Background

- Expatriates as a central group of the globally mobile workforce
- Prior research primarily concerned with (assigned) expatriates in prospering regions, e.g. North America, Central/North Europe, or Asia-Pacific
- Expatriates often face difficulties in foreign environments, e.g. lack of support from locals/parent company, low cultural embeddedness, discrimination experiences, problems with different work values, challenges for private relationships
- Failure of expatriation detrimental to hiring companies and expatriates and their families

➤ What is the situation of expatriates in the economically struggling countries of the Mediterranean?

Research Project Overview

General research questions:

Find out about:

- Expatriate experience in the Mediterranean
- Drivers and barriers to integration in the Med. at work and outside
- Investigate potential spillover effects between work and non-work domain (dichotomy between quality of life and career prospect?)
- Examine long-term outcomes of successful integration, e.g. work engagement, knowledge sharing (T2)

Data collection

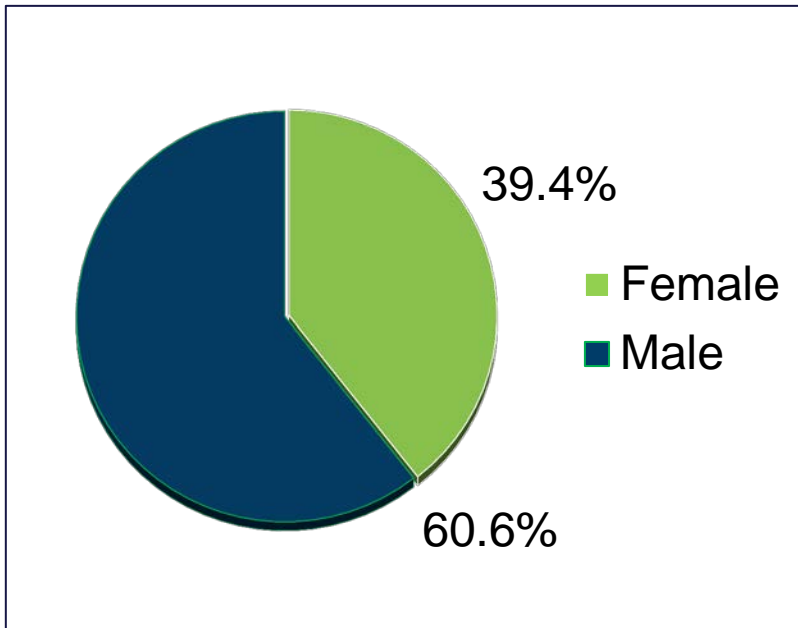
- Quantitative: Web-based questionnaire
- Two time-waves
- Items/scales (selection): demographics & constructs: cultural intelligence, proactive personality, resilience, embeddedness, job, pay, promotion satisfaction,, inclusive workplace environment, ethnic harassment experiences (all 7-point-scales)
- Complimentary: Interviews with expatriates in target countries to obtain deeper understanding (in the making)

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- Main leg of study in March – September 2018
 - Identification via LinkedIn and Internations
 - Personal survey invitations by email and provision of a link to send to fellow expatriates

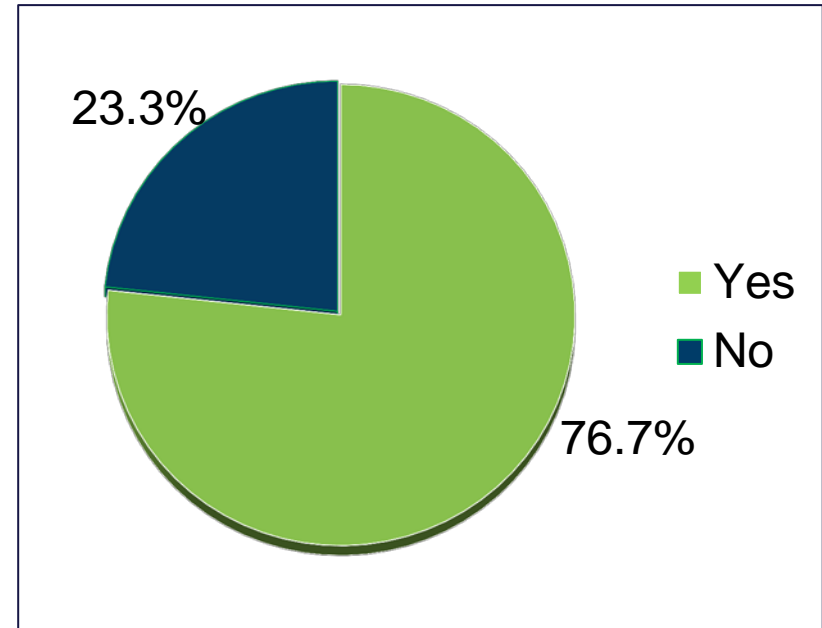
Sample Characteristics

- N = 317
- Ø Age: 36.5 years
- Ø Tenure: 5.2 years
- Ø Time in host country: 6.8 years
- 70.7% Westerners
- 58.4% married/long-term partnership
- 36.6% are parents
- 93.7% with university degree
- Work in a variety of industries

Ratio women/men

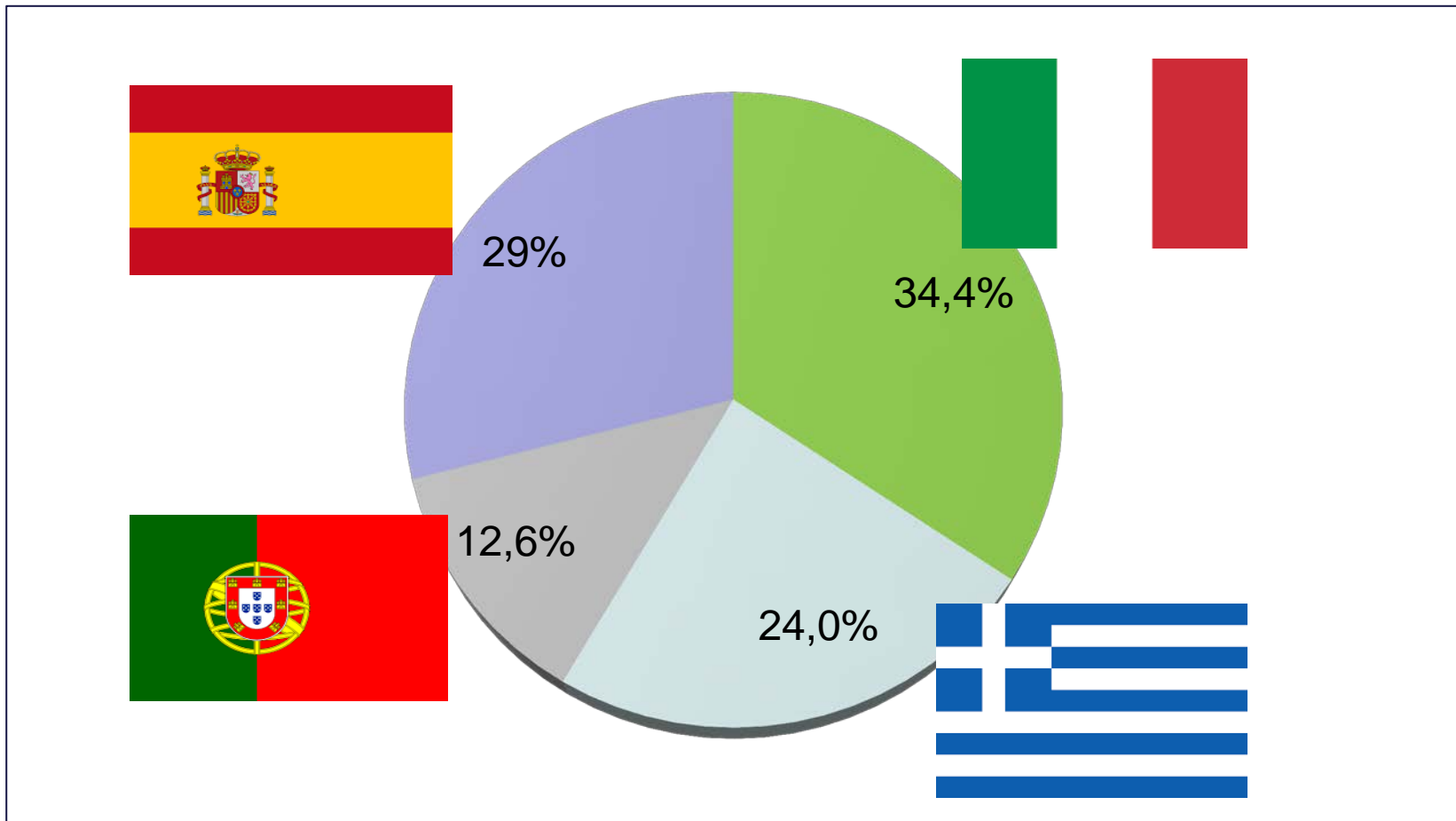


Accompanied by partner



Sample Characteristics

Representation of host countries



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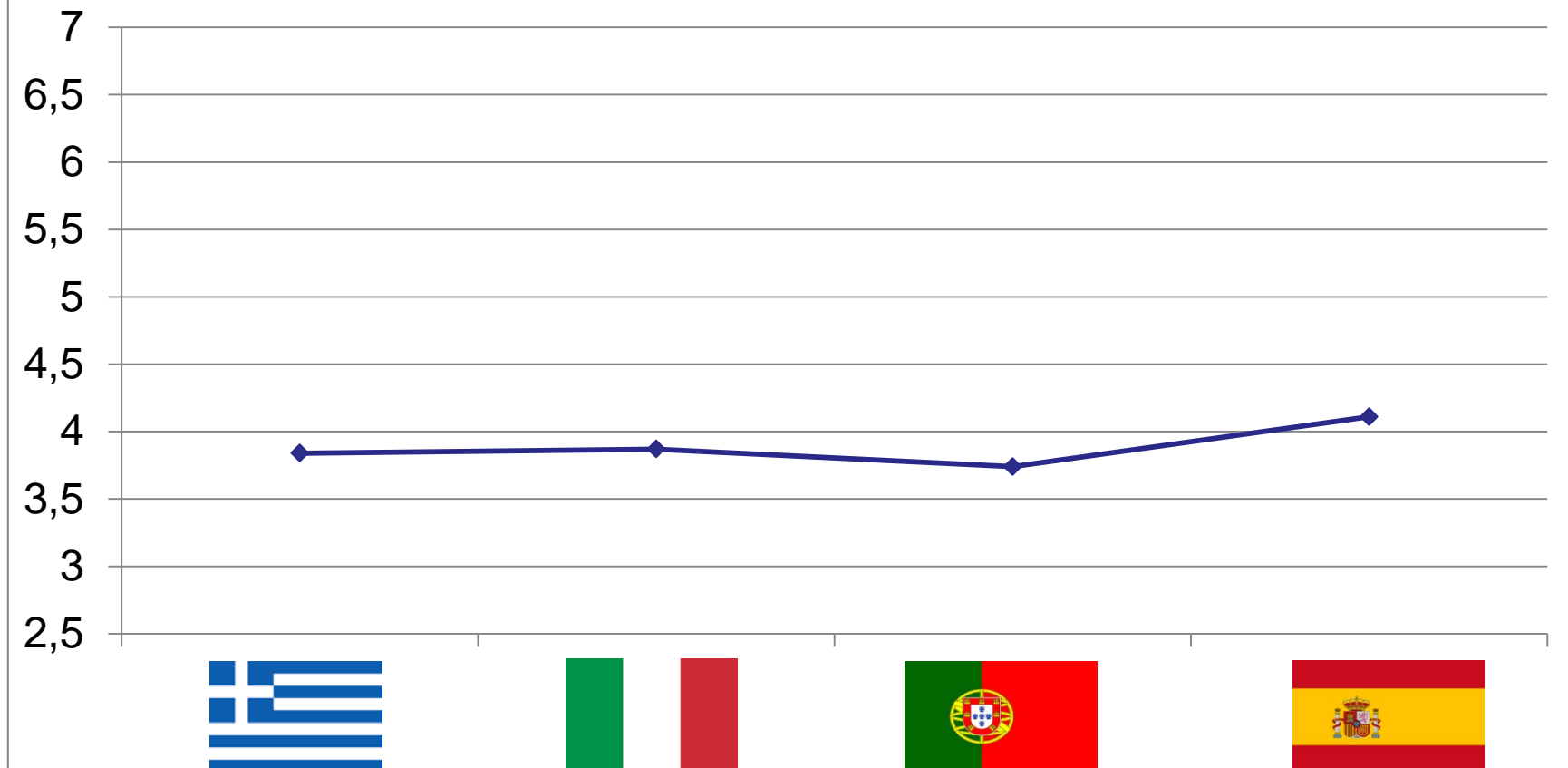
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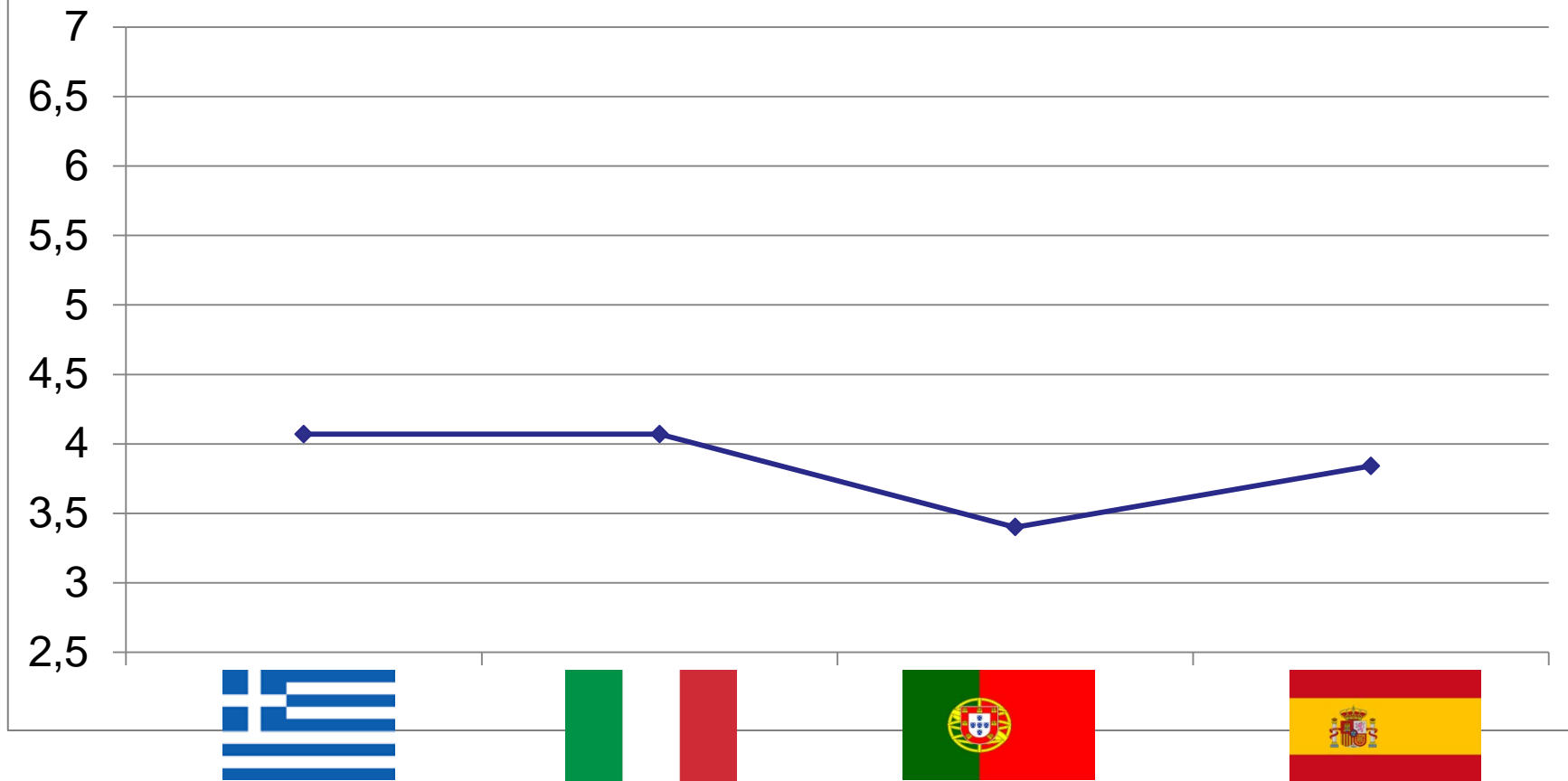
Community Embeddedness across Countries

Community embeddedness: The extent to which an individual feels enmeshed in the host community.
Medium levels across all four countries.

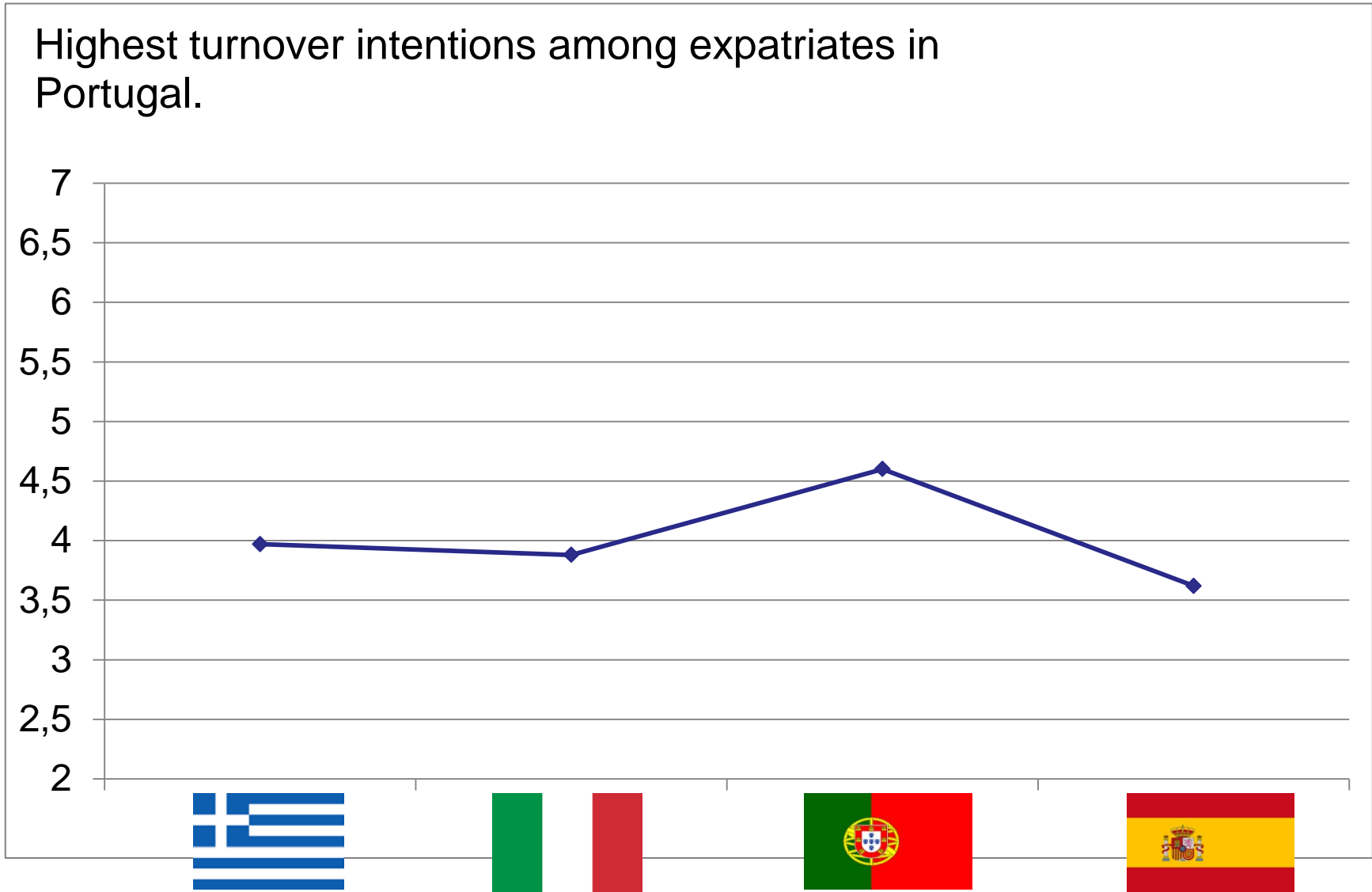


Organizational Embeddedness across Countries

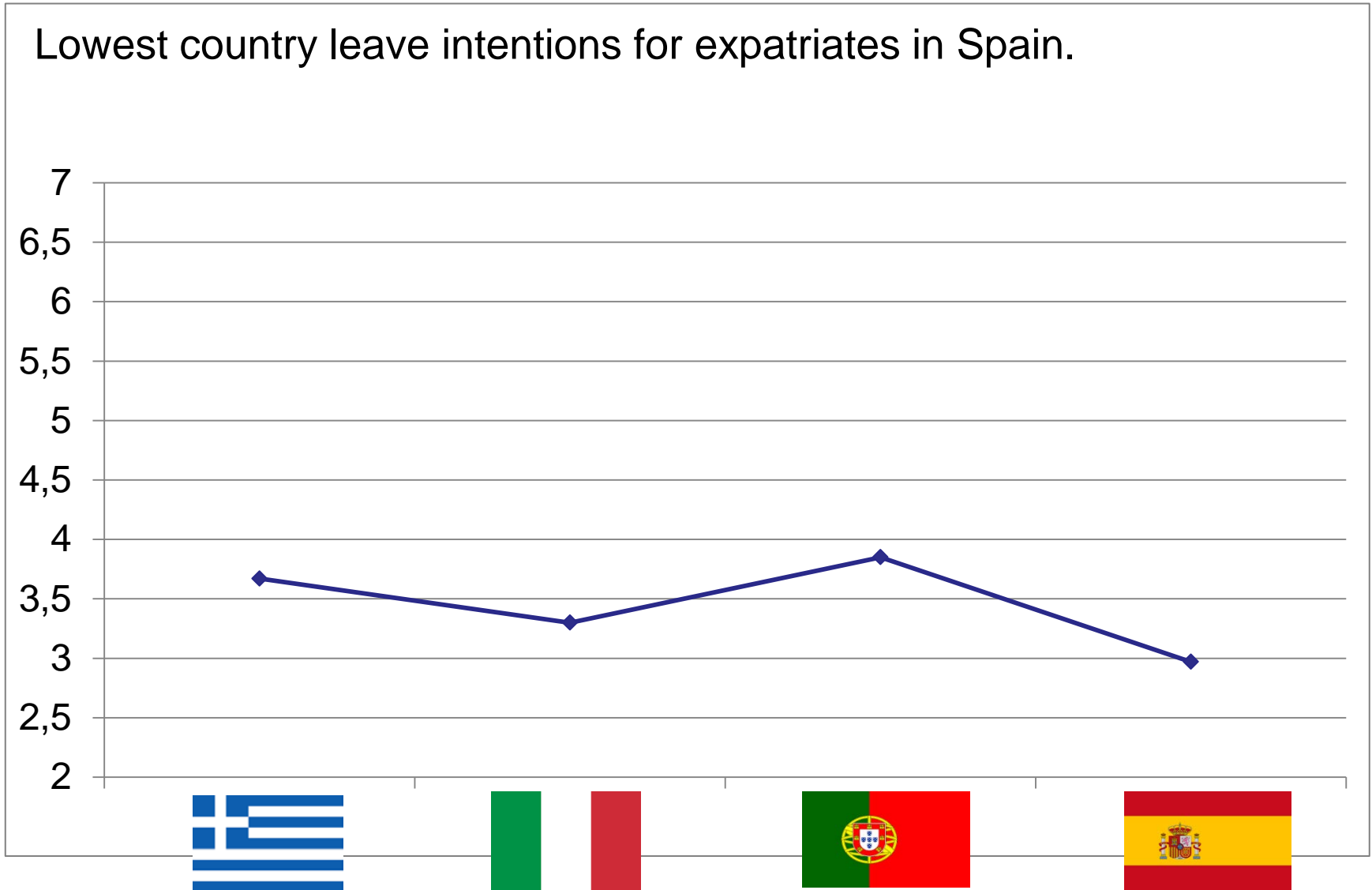
Organizational embeddedness: The extent to which an individual feels enmeshed in the host organization.
Again, medium levels across all four countries. Lowest value for Portugal.



Turnover Intentions across Countries



Country Leave Intentions across Countries



Further Findings

- Expatriates across all four countries are in general satisfied with their job: Mean = 5.13
- Less satisfaction in terms of promotion opportunities: Mean = 3.35; and pay: Mean = 3.60
- Expatriates are in general happy with their life: Mean = 5.00
- Overall, expatriates possess high levels of cultural intelligence: Mean = 5.57; and can be characterized as proactive: Mean = 5.17
- While expatriates do not find the climate in the workplace to be highly inclusive: Mean = 3.65; experiences of forthright ethnic harassment at work are not frequently reported: Mean = 1.98. However, if exclusion and harassment take place, Non-Western expatriates appear to be more prone to be the target of exclusion/harassment
- When it comes to language, expatriates in Greece indicate to struggle most with the Greek language: Language proficiency: Mean = 3.28

Further Findings: Impressions from our Comment Box

The career/work situation:

“The Spanish job market has never recovered from the last economic crisis, unemployment and job insecurity are terrible social problems, which makes the working and living experience quite negative, at least in the short run (...).” Expatriate in Spain.

“I LOVE living and working in Spain, but my compensation has changed minimally in five years and the cost of living has increased drastically. I would be interested in staying here long term, but to be financially responsible I should have left two or three years ago.” Expatriate in Spain.

“From my personal experience and the experiences of my girlfriend, work schedules are quite tough. It's far from unusual to work several to many hours of unpaid overtime.” Expatriate in Greece.

“The weather is nice and the pay is lousy.” Expatriate in Portugal.

Further Findings: Impressions from our Comment Box

Everday life chores and the pleaseantries of working in the Mediterranean:

"The European Mediterranean area (or at least, Italy) offers great landscape, shockingly rich culture and history, and outstanding gastronomy. The critical drawback here for me is the extremely low social efficiency and heavy, inexplicable bureaucracy that is reflected not only in official matters but also in everyday life. The organizations hosted in this area are inevitably influenced by this "culture" and don't perform as well as they are expected to. In fact, they miss the expectations very much." Expatriate in Italy.

"Although it is hard to work because of decision making problems and hidden social hierachy levels, the life style makes it attractive to work here." Expatriate in Italy.

"Portugal is a very nice and safe country. Climate is the best and people are kind. This all is a perfect reason to live here." Expatriate in Portugal.

"The lifestyle here is a lot more relaxed than in Sweden." Expatriate in Spain.

Further Findings: Impressions from our Comment Box

Experiences of being a foreigner:

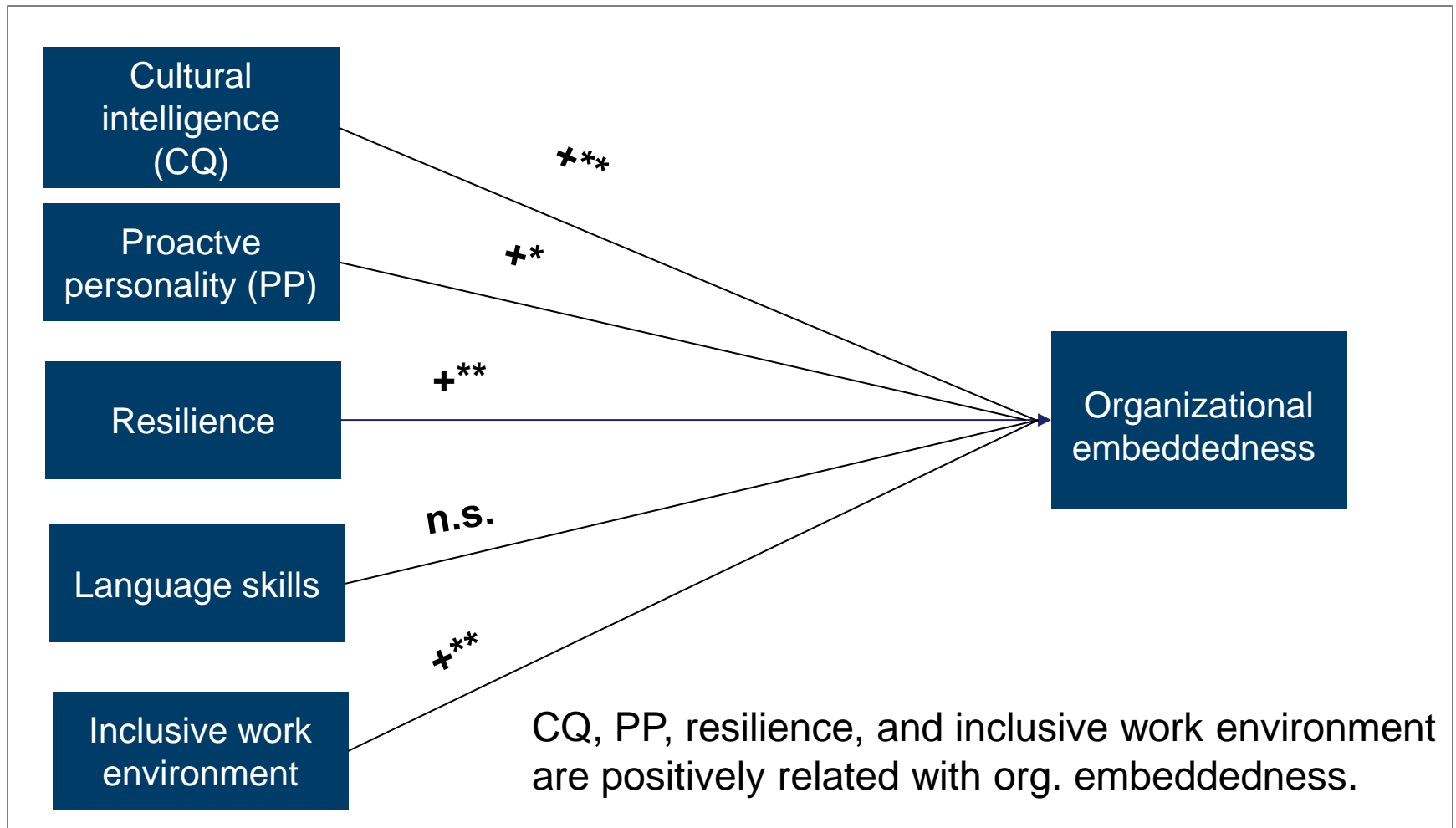
“Although I learned their language, a lot of people exclude me because I don't speak it proficiently. Some colleagues use strange words and sentence constructions while speaking to me, I have a reason to believe it's on purpose. In general, I don't feel very welcomed here, my knowledge is not appreciated just because I am not able to explain everything perfectly in their language (...).”
Expatriate in Italy.

“It is very tough as the attitude of locals is quite xenophobic.”
Expatriate in Greece.

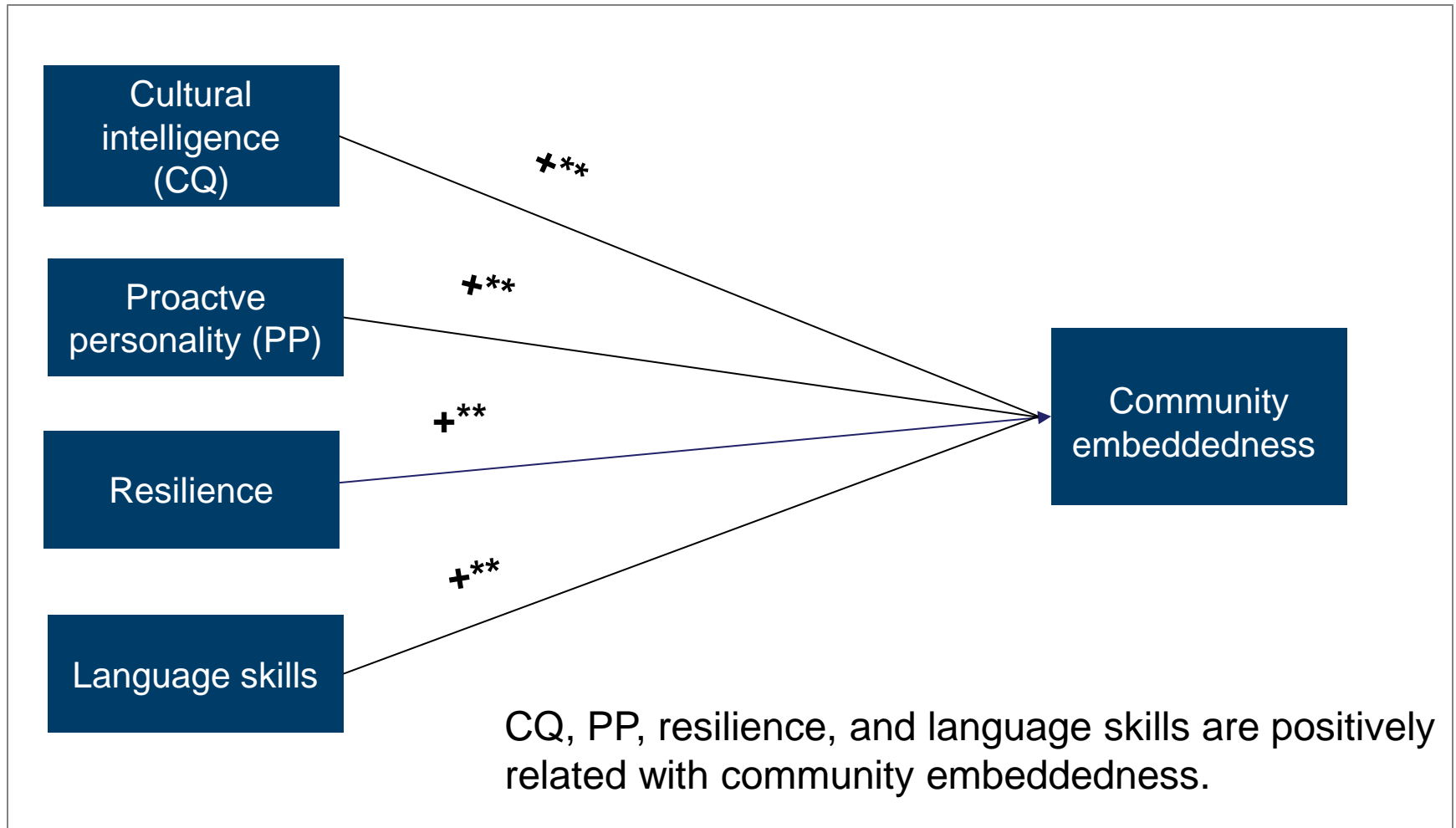
“I never felt discriminated or not welcomed in Portugal, but it happened several times that I felt excluded, especially in the beginning when I didn't speak the language. People didn't want to speak English and often left me out. Not on purpose, but also didn't feel the need to integrate me.” Expatriate in Portugal.

“Friendly people, very helpful, distressed, funny”. Expatriate in Portugal.

First Analyses: Factors associated with Organizational Embeddedness

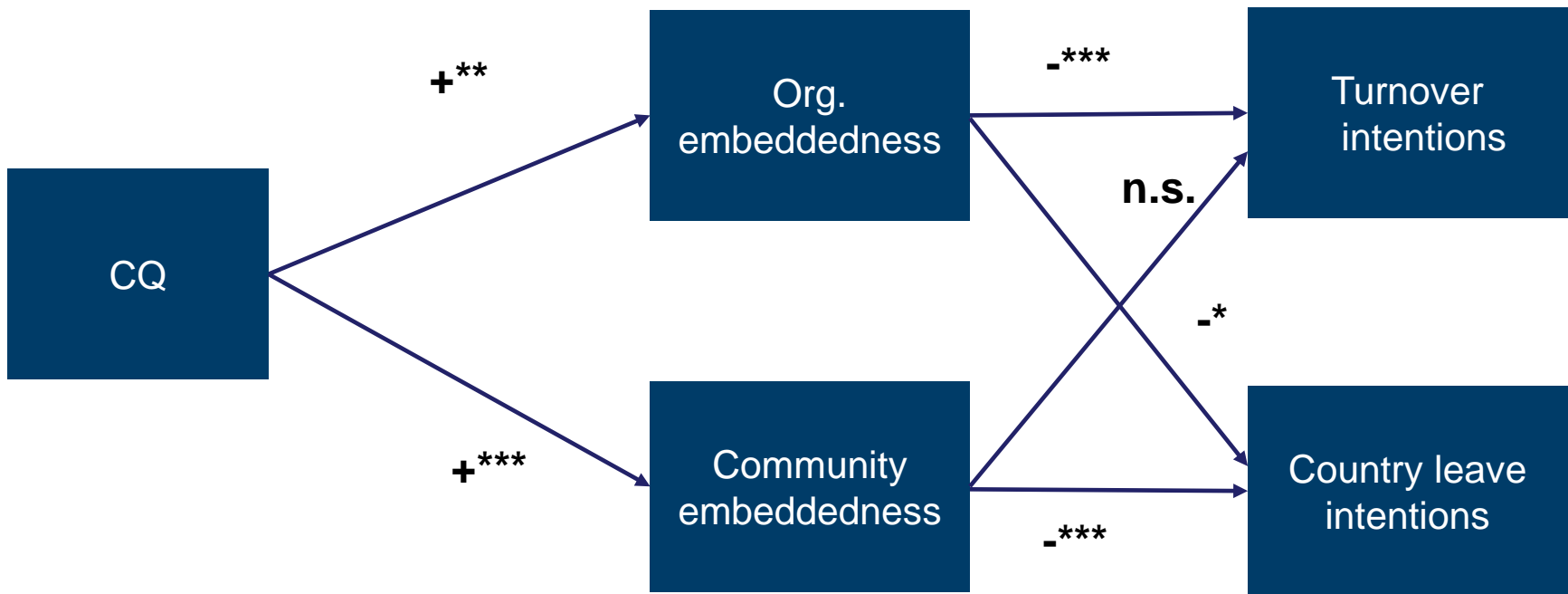


First Analyses: Factors associated with Community Embeddedness



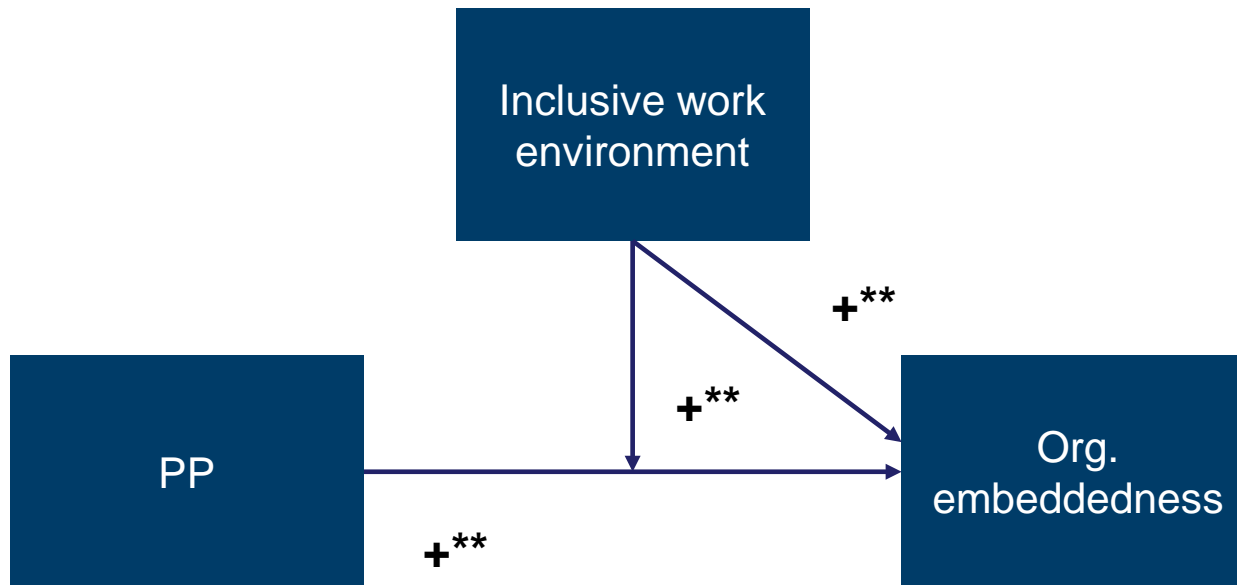
First Analyses: The Critical Role of Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) as a facilitator of org. embeddedness and comm. embeddedness, which in turn reduce turnover and country leave intentions (depiction of a mechanism, and spillover).



First Analyses: Proactive Personality and Inclusive Work Environments

The effects of PP are reinforced when individuals work in inclusive environments. In other words, proactive personality can unfold best when expatriates are actively integrated and their opinion sought after.



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Conclusion

- Expatriates in the Mediterranean are in general happy with their job and their lives; low pay and suboptimal opportunities regarding promotion and career progress are aspects on the downside of working as an expatriate in this region
- Higher turnover and country leave intentions and lower organizational embeddedness with expatriates in Portugal as compared to the other three countries
- Exclusion and discrimination at work occur rarely across the sample. However, if it happens, there is a greater chance of Non-Western expatriates being the target. We will investigate this in greater depth. Further, personal accounts suggest that future research should center on exclusion outside of work
- Climate, culture, and good quality of life are some of the perks of living in this region
- Individual as well as organizational factors vital to integration (embeddedness) with positive effects on, for instance, stay intentions – both in terms of work and country

Looking Forward

- Implement follow-up survey to obtain a fuller understanding of the investigated variables and their consequences, e.g. in terms of work engagement, or knowledge sharing
- We will conduct more sophisticated data analyses, e.g. moderated mediation analysis, that allow us to further probe into the data
- Conduct more interviews to compliment the findings of the surveys

Thank you so much from Goettingen!!! Sebastian on behalf of the Team



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