In an era of globalization, when mobility becomes more and more common, understanding the mechanisms by which migrations are governed becomes increasingly more important. This is true for both the determinants of migration behavior (actual movements), as well as the determinants of intentions to relocate, that is: plans, aspirations or desires. According to the received theory, intentions are the best predictor of future actions, although, obviously, not all migratory plans will translate to physical mobility. Therefore, in order to be able to understand (and further: predict or control) migration processes, one must know, on the one hand – what are the mechanisms shaping migration intentions, and on the other – what are the mechanisms of transmission of plans into actions.

The aim of the project is to widen the knowledge of relationships between migration plans and behavior. An analytical framework for a decision model will be proposed, bridging two theories most commonly used in this context (i.e., the theory of planned behavior and the theory of random utility maximization). The type of the analyzed movement will be formally taken into account in the model, since one can reasonably expect that the mechanisms governing such processes as the decision to leave the home country and the decisions regarding the return from emigration will be different. This stems from the fact that the contexts of both types of decisions are different, and other factors may play the decisive role in translating plans to actions. Meanwhile, both types of flows may be crucial for the shape of the age structure of a population, and in consequence – for the economy and other fields of life.

Two types of fieldwork are planned in the project. The first type will be an application of experimental (laboratory) research to the analysis of the process of intention formation for migrations, in a study conducted with Warsaw University students. The second type is going to be an on-line survey with respondents in Poland and abroad. In the latter survey, the first group is going to be asked about emigration plans; the second group – about plans regarding returning. All of the participants of the two studies will be approached one year after the initial study, in order to determine whether they followed through with their migratory plans. This follow-up phase will allow to determine what factors shaped the transition from intentions to actions, and whether the way in which the migration intentions questions were phrased had any impact on the accuracy of the obtained predictions.

Apart from analyses based on data collected in the project, the study also aims at analyzing secondary (existing) data. Both individual (micro-level) data (in particular, data collected in the Social Diagnosis project as well as by the National Bank of Poland with Polish migrants abroad) and macro-level statistics will be analyzed. In macro-level explorations, figures from available research and reports on intentions will be compared with data regarding flows. The aim of this exercise will be to determine which of the many intention-question phrasings used in existing studies fares best at predicting actual flows. This will allow to complement and generalize the analyses conducted on primary data collected in the project.