

## Discovery restrained: Reactions to planned DiscoverEU trips affected by COVID-19

The DiscoverEU program periodically offers young Europeans a chance to win one of 15,000 month-long Interrail passes, allowing them to travel free for one month on Europe's railway network. The purpose of the program is to facilitate intercultural communication and understanding within Europe. Like almost all types of planned travel, plans to undertake DiscoverEU trips have been canceled, delayed, or thrown into question by the COVID-19 pandemic. As both intercultural understanding (Wagner 2015) and leisure travel (Mitas and Kroesen 2019; Nawijn et al. 2010; Uysal et al. 2016) contribute to quality of life, we argue that the planning and realization of DiscoverEU experiences is a quality of life issue. More specifically, we sought to determine the effects of confirmed COVID-19 case and death rates on anticipatory emotions and life satisfaction of DiscoverEU Interrail pass winners, and to assess the role of travel risk perception in this relationship.

We distributed an online questionnaire to two Discover EU Facebook groups, resulting in 125 valid responses across 22 countries. While there were no relationships between national differences in confirmed death and case rates and participants' positive emotions or life satisfaction, these differences were negatively related to the emotion "afraid." This relationship was mediated by feeling nervous about traveling at the present moment. These effects may be explained by differing government or media approaches to the pandemic, wherein high death or case rates may reflect better-organized testing or more transparent communication about the pandemic, leading to less "fear of the unknown" among participants.

### References

- Mitas, O., & Kroesen, M. (2019). Vacations Over the Years: A Cross-Lagged Panel Analysis of Tourism Experiences and Subjective Well-Being in the Netherlands. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1-20.
- Nawijn, J., Marchand, M. A., Veenhoven, R., & Vingerhoets, A. J. (2010). Vacationers happier, but most not happier after a holiday. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 5(1), 35-47.
- Uysal, M., Sirgy, M. J., Woo, E., & Kim, H. L. (2016). Quality of life (QOL) and well-being research in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 53, 244-261.
- Wagner, A. (2015). Measuring intercultural policies: the example of the intercultural cities index. In *Interculturalism in Cities*: Edward Elgar Publishing.