

Problematic Issues Concerning the Bulgarian Cross-Border Labour Migration

Raya Ilieva*

South-West University 'Neofit Rilski' Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

**Corresponding Author:* Raya Ilieva, South-West University 'Neofit Rilski' Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, Email: raiailieva@abv.bg

ABSTRACT

Annotation: This study is focused on the cross-border labour migration. There are different theories of labour migration in the literature that try to explain how it starts, what supports it, what determines its consequences for the sending and receiving countries, and so on. This article aims to examine the reasons for the movement of migrants from Bulgaria to the richer countries, while pointing out the problems of the Bulgarians' escape from their homeland.*

Keywords: employment agency, human migration, workforce.

INTRODUCTION

After Bulgaria joined the EU, the Bulgarian citizens, as citizen of the EU may stay freely in each state – member of the union, as well as to work freely in these countries. According to Sec. 3 of the EC Treaty, the main objective is the establishment of an internal market characterized by the removal of all restrictions on the free movement of goods, people, services and capital between the member states. A single market is also mentioned in the Treaty itself after the adoption of the Single European Act. This happened as one more attempt for strengthening the European integration processes with the purpose of creating an entirely integrated economic space. Notwithstanding the clarity of the economic content of the Treaty's objectives, there still exists a kind of obvious pressure regarding the interpretation of its provisions concerning the freedom of movement. Uncertainties arise, on the one hand, from the need to encourage migration in response to shortages of skilled labour, demographic changes and competitiveness and, on the other hand, the seemingly imperative need to tighten borders and reject those who enter without state authorization. For the purposes of this study with the term **Bulgarian emigration** shall mean the demographic process of relocation of Bulgarian citizens from the Republic of Bulgaria and their settlement in other countries.

Bulgaria is the poorest country in the European Union, 27th out of 27 member states according

to the indicator gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP). Wages in Bulgaria, compared in euro, are also the lowest in the EU, with a huge difference compared to the old member states and not only in them. Even in countries as Macedonia and Serbia that are not members of the EU, wages are higher than those in Bulgaria¹. According to a statistics of Eurostat², in Bulgaria, the level of wages in industry and services is approximately 14 times lower than in the old member states.

The big difference in earnings between Bulgaria and the old EU member states is a powerful engine for the movements of migrants – from Bulgaria towards the richer countries. According to the latest NSI data, the number of Bulgarians who left the country in 2018 was 35 thousand people³, and for the last 20 years almost 2.00 million Bulgarian citizens left the country.

The majority of the Bulgarian emigration established over the years (including in the last twenty years) in the EU Member States, has

¹Further information can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Minimum_wage_statistics/bg&oldid=388735

²Further information can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Minimum_wage_statistics/bg

³Read more at: <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2018/09/22/pochti-2-mln-byulgari-napusnali-byulgariia-za-poslednite-30-g.388602>

kept its status of Bulgarian citizenship. The information about the numbers per state are not constant due to the corresponding mobility but as of the moment the following information may be given conditionally: Germany - over 50 thousand; Austria - around 25 thousand; Czech Republic - around 10 thousand; Italy - over 50 thousand; Slovakia - about 3 thousand; Hungary - around 5 thousand; Belgium - about 4 thousand; Greece - about 110 thousand; Great Britain - over 60 thousand; Sweden - about 2 thousand; France - over 15 thousand; Portugal - about 10 thousand; Spain - over 120 thousand; USA - about 200 thousand; Canada - about 45 thousand; South African Republic - 15-20 thousand; Australia - 15-20 thousand.

This study focuses on cross-border labour migration. There are different theories of labour migration⁴ in the literature that try to explain how it starts, what supports it, what determines its consequences for the sending and the receiving countries, and so on.

There is absolutely no doubt that emigration will continue also in future, not least because of the big pay difference, and the expectations that the crisis will attract emigrants back to the country have proved to be unjustified. Even the emigrants affected by the crisis, the greater part of them, continue to stay in the recipient countries because they do not expect to find better perspectives in Bulgaria. But money is not the only motive for emigration. Sociological surveys give a chance to peer beyond the macro-picture, and interviews with emigrants record the fear of poverty and unemployment in the background of poorly functioning social protection networks in Bulgaria. The lack of justice, security and order, the lack of healthcare and purely physical survival, the perception for a widespread corruption and the lack of any struggle with it are motives for emigration.

Regulation 862/2007⁵ sets common rules for gathering and compiling the statistics of the Community not only in regards to emigration and immigration of citizens of third countries towards the EU, but also in regards to the migration flows from the territory of one member state to another member state. The

⁴Markova, E., International migration theories, Bulgarian Emigration: Theories, policies, empiric studies, IKOPIS, Sofia, 2012, page 144

⁵Further information can be found at: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:199:0023:0029:BG:PDF>. Cancels Regulation (EEC) No. 311/76. Second part 26

Regulation provides also unified definitions about:

- ‘immigration’ means the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country; accordingly ‘immigrant’ means a person undertaking an immigration;
- ‘emigration’ means the action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his or her usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months; ‘emigrant’ means a person undertaking an emigration;
- ‘third-country national’ means any person who is not a citizen of the Union, including stateless persons.

Although many studies distinguish between mobility in the free movement of persons within the EU and the immigration of third country nationals to the EU, the definitions of the Regulation will be used for the purposes of this chapter.

Before we discuss the migration trends at national, European and global levels, we will address the factors that cause cross-border movement of people. The reasons for migration are most often related to better opportunities for professional realization and pay, seeking a better standard of living and security for the family. Other part of migration flows is due to the lack of work in the country of origin, military conflicts, natural disasters, political persecution and disregard of human rights. It should be borne in mind that the factors that motivate migration are diverse and complex. However, very often the global explanations may not apply to all individual situations and reasons for migration.⁶

There are five basic factors that motivate migration:

- Disparities in income and employment opportunities, especially between developed and developing regions - The failure of the global economic system to generate jobs

⁶International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 18.

where people live arises migration initiatives⁷. Very often people are forced to immigrate to ensure the economic security of the rest of their family in the country of origin by sending their savings in the form of money transfers.

- The increasing demographic imbalance on a global scale - There is also a difference between the average age of the population in more developed countries and less developed countries, with the former having ageing populations and the latter more youthful ones⁸. The proportion of the population aged over 60 in more developed regions is expected to grow from 20% in 2020 to 35% in 2060. Meanwhile the number of newborns for the same regions will drop from 17% to 15%. This means that as at 2050 in them there will be two times more people aged 60 than children.
- There is no doubt that one of the mechanisms to quickly tackle this demographic imbalance can be achieved by facilitating labour immigration.
- Liberalization of flows of goods, capital and services. Unlike the liberalization of flows of goods, capital and services, cross-border labour movement is still limited due to the diversity of immigration laws and policies at national level. However, in the context of globalization, the pressure to remove barriers to labour mobility will increase more and more. This is due to the fact that, because of the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), linkages between international markets are becoming more and more facilitated, the demand for highly qualified workers is increasing, creating more opportunities for cross-border work⁹. Increased the opportunities for outsourcing and more jobs in other regions. This expansion of the global economy provides access to much more opportunities for a better life for millions of people and their families, and migration is becoming a life strategy.

⁷International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 20.

⁸International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 21.

⁹International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 14.

- The increasing need of low-skilled workers in the developed and the developing countries with average income. According to Pritchett (2006) a migration factor is the increasing need of low-skilled workers (for example home care) in the developed countries in combination with increased productivity, increased access to higher education, the refusal of local citizens to take up jobs that are considered to be non-prestigious, the aging population and globalizing production¹⁰. Despite the technical progress, for example in automation, human resources cannot be replaced in sectors such as restaurants and hotels management, hospital staff, and so on.
- A decrease in job offering due to reduced non-renewable resources and climate change. Recently, more and more is increasing the pressure for migration from certain regions in developing countries. This is due to the significant drop in employment due to climate change, agriculture and the available resources.

The largest number of foreigners in absolute values reside in Germany, Spain, Great Britain, France and Italy. Foreigners in these countries represent 75% of the total number of foreign citizens in the EU. The country with the highest share of foreign population is Luxembourg - 42.5%, while Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and Slovakia have the smallest share - less than 1%.

The faster economy development will require more labour resources, immigrants. These immigrants will not only support the development of the economy, but they will also be very important in maintaining the sustainability of the pension system. According to the NSI, in 2060 the population of Bulgaria will be between 5 and 6 million people and the share of the working population will drop significantly at the expense of the increase of the people aged over 65.

Even at present, the ratio between working and retirees is unfavourable, but it will get worse over time, which will negatively affect the sustainability of the pension system and other aging-dependent systems. Immigrants' admittance is a realistic option for maintaining financial stability in these systems, as the ratio between working and non-working will be improved. Of course, the flow of labour migration to the country (including the return of Bulgarians from emigration) will happen only in

¹⁰ World Migration Report, 2008, p. 3.

case of steady growth of the economy and a solid process of incomes reaching the developed countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end are necessarily a compilation of what has been established with the tools of the different sciences.

The forecasts of Eurostat show that the increase of the population in the EU until 2025 will be due to the net migration, while the death rate will be higher than their birth rate. This net migration effect will not exceed the negative natural growth rate after 2025. This will have a serious impact on the number of the employed population in the Union, as the share of the working-age population in the community is expected to drop significantly - from 67.2% in 2004 to 56.7% in 2050, i.e. a decrease of 52 million. A significant reduction in the total population is expected by 2025 and the working age population by 2011. In Bulgaria, the negative demographic trends are much more expressed.¹¹

The common, framework directive will introduce a unified procedure for applying for a single document for residence and work. The main reason for introducing this horizontal instrument is to avoid the twenty-seven different application procedures and to guarantee a common framework of rights for all third-country nationals already admitted in a Member State but not yet granted long-term residence status.

In conclusion, it can be justified that labour migration is complex and depending on many factors process. Migration in the world has long since gained significant proportions with the globalization of economic and financial relations, with the progress in technologies and the liberalization. The good news in the numbers of the national statistics for Bulgaria is not much, but one of them is that in 2018 more Bulgarians are returning to Bulgaria.

The number of people settled in the country increases by almost 4,000 in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Thus, the number of people settled in the country in 2018 reaches 29.6 thousand people, with the share of people with Bulgarian citizenship increasing (up to 55%). However, it should be noted that the NSI statistics includes only the persons who have declared the change in their current address before the administrative authorities.

However, the forecasts are not rosy - according to the National Statistics Institute (NSI) the population decrease will continue. The most moderate of them shows that from 7.2 million people in 2015 the population will drop to 6.2 million by 2040 and to 5.1 million by 2070.

REFERENCES

- [1] Further information can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Minimum_wage_statistics/bg&oldid=388735
- [2] Further information can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Minimum_wage_statistics/bg
- [3] Read more at: <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2018/09/22/pochti-2-mln-byulgari-napusnali-bylgariia-za-poslednite-30-g.388602>
- [4] Markova, E., International migration theories, Bulgarian Emigration: Theories, policies, empiric studies, IKOPIS, Sofia, 2012, page 144
- [5] Further information can be found at: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:199:0023:0029:BG:PDF>. Cancels Regulation (EEC) No. 311/76. Second part 26
- [6] International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 18.
- [7] International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 20.
- [8] International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 21.
- [9] International Labour Migration. A rights-based approach. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010, p. 14.
- [10] World Migration Report, 2008, p. 3.
- [11] Bulgarian Emigration: Theories, policies, empiric studies, IKOPIS, Sofia, 2012, page 14

Citation: Raya Ilieva, "Problematic Issues Concerning the Bulgarian Cross-Border Labour Migration", *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, 6(7), 2019, pp. 38-41.

Copyright: © 2019 Raya Ilieva. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

¹¹ Bulgarian Emigration: Theories, policies, empiric studies, IKOPIS, Sofia, 2012, page 14