

## THE CHOICE OF BULGARIAN MIGRANTS – STAY OR LEAVE AGAIN?

*This article reviews issues related to re-migration/return of Bulgarian migrants and its sustainability. Information is provided about the scale of re-migration to Bulgaria. An assessment is made of the possibilities of the local labour market to provide incentives for returning from abroad. Based on an empirical sociological survey conducted in 2017 (as part of the project “Return Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility” financed by the National Research Fund) categories of return migrants are differentiated based on their plans for the future – whether to stay or to leave Bulgaria again. The profile of the individual categories of return migrants is presented summarizing their socio-demographic characteristics and prior migration experience. Applying a binary logistic regression the social and demographic factors as well as the factors based on migration experience, that induce the attitudes toward staying or moving again, are identified.*

*JEL: F22; O15*

### 1. Introduction

The debate and the first publications on the return of migrants date back to the beginning of the 1980s, when serious attention was devoted to the voluntary return of the so-called migrants from third countries and the connection of this phenomenon to developments in the countries of origin (Ruspini, Richter and Nollert, 2016). Usually, it is assumed that the return depends on the original intentions to migrate, the length of the stay abroad and the conditions in which this is taking place (Ghosh, 2000). This is supplemented by the possibilities for mobilization of capacity and resources by the returning individuals themselves (Cassarino, 2004).

Migrants are returning as a result of the success or failure of the migration they undertook. A mass return from abroad indicates that the conditions in the country of origin have changed. The migrants may be motivated to return as a result of the opening of new

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opportunities back home or simply because they have achieved their financial (in most cases) goals. On the other hand, the issue remains open – nobody is sure whether a person returns for good or is going to leave again, thus becoming a “circular” migrant. In this sense, the people who have migration experience are usually classified as “returned”, irrespective of whether they are returning permanently or temporarily.

Returning migrants may be quite different. The distinction most frequently drawn in the receiving countries is between forced and voluntary return. The distinction among the various types/categories of return migrants is also being followed up depending on the intention stated – definitive return (e.g. upon expiry of bilateral agreements for exchange of workforce), return upon retirement or following completion of studies, circular migration (Glorius, 2013).

What concerns the issue of *sustainability of return*, it is most frequently discussed in connection with the voluntary return of refugees or asylum-seekers to the countries of origin (incl. on the Balkans – for example, in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Kosovo, after the end of the conflict in former Yugoslavia). This issue is in the focus of the report “Understanding Voluntary Return” (Black et al., 2004).

Table 1

Elements and potential measures of the sustainability of return

	Physical	Socio-economic	Political-security
Subjective perception of return migrants	(Lack of) desire to re-emigrate	Perceived socioeconomic status	Perception of safety, security threats
Objective conditions of return migrants	Proportion of return migrants who (do not) re-emigrate	Actual socio-economic status of return migrants	Actual persecution or violence against return migrants
Aggregate conditions of the home country	Trends in levels of emigration and asylum-seeking abroad	Trends in levels of poverty and well-being	Trends in levels of persecution, conflict and violence

Source: Black, R., Koser, K., Munk, K. (2004). *Understanding Voluntary Return*. Sussex Centre for Migration Research: Home Office Online Report 50/04, p. 25.

The conceptual framework of the report is shown in table 1. The so-called physical and socio-economic sustainability of return may be reviewed more generally outside the context of the voluntary return of asylum-seekers and refugees. The return may be evaluated from the point of view of subjective perceptions or of attitudes of the return migrants themselves, as well as from the point of view of the conditions which they have to face following their return – both at individual and macro-level. Hence, the proposals of the authors concern indicators for measurement of all three aspects of the sustainability of return – physical, socio-economic, and political. Of interest for us are the indicators for measurement of the subjective perceptions, relevant to the so-called physical sustainability (which evaluate the attitudes in favour of staying or a new departure) as well as the indicators for the objective condition upon return, relevant to the so-called socio-economic sustainability (such as employment status and income after the return).

Return is deemed “unsustainable” not only if the individual (or a group of return migrants) emigrates again, but also if he/she has the desire (and plans) to do so. Return, in addition, may turn out to be unsustainable also if there are no jobs, income levels and adequate services in the country of origin, which has to be accessible and acceptable for the return migrants. Thus the factors, leading to “sustainability of return”, depend not only of the specific conditions in the receiving country, but also on the conditions in the country of origin (legislative framework, labour market situation, etc.) (Zareva, 2018). No doubt, they are also closely related to the social and demographic characteristics of the return migrants – gender, age, family status, level of education and qualification, employment status, etc. (Bakalova, 2018).

The scale of the return migration to Bulgaria may be assessed based on data from the sample surveys of potential migration and of returned migrants conducted in sequence in the years 2007, 2011, and 2013 (table 2). The number of households with return migrants was estimated at nearly 300 thousand in 2007, reaching 411 thousand in 2011 and over 470 thousand in 2013. This corresponded to 10% of the households in the country in 2007, to nearly 14% in 2011 and to over 15% in 2013. Having in mind the number of return migrants per one household, their total number in Bulgaria may be estimated from 380 thousand in 2007 to more than 690 thousand in 2013 respectively (Mihailov et al., 2007; Mintchev et al., 2012; 2017).

Table 2

Estimates of the number of return and current migrants in/from Bulgaria

Annual average (last 5 years)	2007	2011	2013
Relative share of households with return migrants*	10,1%	13,7%	15,5%
Number of households with return migrants	294345	411896	470783
Return migrants per 1 hh	0,133	0,158	0,229
Number of return migrants	384494	474304	693745
Relative share of households with current migrants**	7,4%	7,1%	10,7%
Number of households with current migrants	213908	212189	326285
Current migrants per 1 hh	0,097	0,090	0,159
Number of current migrants	280435	269604	483990

\*Return migrant is an individual who has resided abroad for a period at least 3 months during the last five years, and at the time of the survey is located in Bulgaria.

\*\*Current migrant is an individual who, at the time of the survey, resides abroad.

Source: UNFPA sample survey 2007; ERI at the BAS sample surveys 2011 and 2013.

The relatively high share of households with a return migrant and the doubling, in practice, of the estimated number of individuals returned are in effect indicating a significant scale and dynamics of the circular migration. It is no coincidence that among the respondents with migration experience who are located in the home country, the majority would like to leave again for various periods of time or even for good. Against this backdrop, the possibilities of the Bulgarian labour market to offer options for return of Bulgarians abroad appear modest, to say the least. This is evident from the comparison of the number of job vacancies (NSI, 2010) and the breakdown by occupations of Bulgarians abroad (based on data from OECD, table 3). In 2010 the registered job vacancies were 19-20% of the number

of Bulgarians employed abroad as Professionals and Technicians and associate professionals and between 12 and 14% of those employed as Managers, Clerical support workers, and Plant and machine operators.

Table 3

Job vacancies and Bulgarian migrants by occupations

	BGR migrants by occupation, 2010-2011 (Nr)	Job vacancies by occupation in Bulgaria, 2010 (Nr)	Job vacancies by occupation in Bulgaria, 2015 (Nr)	JV as a share of migrants by occupation, 2010 (%)
Managers	7406	1034	891	14.0
Professionals	22545	4494	5274	19.9
Technicians and associate professionals	14027	2661	1504	19.0
Clerical support workers	11409	1341	923	11.8
Service and sales workers	38695	1900	2793	4.9
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	8575	115	83	1.3
Craft and related trades workers	30686	1466	1478	4.8
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	20882	2667	2953	12.8
Elementary occupations	72413	1496	1684	2.1
Total	226638	17174	17583	7.6

Source: OECD-DIOC (Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries: DIOC, [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)); NSI, Bulgaria

For the other professions, the relative share of job vacancies is even lower (2-5%). This indirectly confirms that a deficit of professions requiring higher or medium-level qualification has gradually formed, and this limits the options for employment of individuals with lower qualifications – that also seek professional accomplishment abroad.

In this article we share the idea that the heterogeneous nature of re-migration/return may be interpreted using the notions of “segmentation” and “stratification” of the return migrants (Nonchev, 2018; Nonchev and Hristova, 2018)<sup>3</sup>. The segmentation is based on numerous criteria and results in various categorisations of return migrants. One of the basic among them is formed depending on the “sustainability of return” assessed in accordance with the purely subjective attitudes in favour of subsequent migration. In line with this, the following are differentiated:

<sup>3</sup> This approach is developed, among others, within the research project “Return Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility” funded by the Bulgarian National Research Fund, Contract No. DN 05/6 of 14.12.2016.

- individuals returned to Bulgaria permanently, i.e. who have no intention for new migration move;
- individuals returned to Bulgaria temporarily, who intend to migrate again (for a period up to one year or a longer period);
- individuals that have returned home and intend to leave Bulgaria permanently (i.e. to settle in another country).

Hereafter we review these categories of return migrants in a comparative aspect in terms of their socio-demographic profile and capacity for migration, as well as from the point of view of their previous migration experience and the degree of integration in the host society (table 4). The analysis is based on data from a quantitative nationwide representative survey among return migrants in Bulgaria in 2017<sup>4</sup>.

Table 4

Research questions	
Topics	Indicators
Sustainability of return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals returned to Bulgaria permanently, i.e. who have no intention for new out-migration;</li> <li>• Individuals returned temporarily, who anticipate a short- or long-term migration (3-12 months, or a period over 1 year);</li> <li>• Individuals returned temporarily, who intend to leave the home country for good (to settle in another country).</li> </ul>
Socio-demographic profile and capacity for migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Family status</li> <li>• Ethnicity</li> <li>• Educational qualification</li> <li>• Occupation taken, following the return</li> <li>• Income level, following the return</li> </ul>
Previous migration experience and the degree of integration in the host society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplishment of the goals of migration (success/failure)</li> <li>• Self-assessment of the social status following the return</li> <li>• Duration of the last stay abroad</li> <li>• Presence of relatives/friends abroad</li> </ul>

The target group comprises of individuals, who are Bulgarian citizens that in the previous 10 years (the period 2008-2017 inclusive) have worked at least once abroad for a period of at least three months. The group includes also persons who have stayed outside Bulgaria in order to accompany a family member abroad (e.g. taking care for the household of their relatives, or for children of relatives or acquaintances, etc.).

The survey was conducted in nine districts of the country – Sofia-city, Plovdiv, Varna, Pleven, Stara Zagora, Dobrich, Kardjali, Yambol and Montana – spreading across all NUTS-2 administrative regions and comprising of various types of settlements (capital; regional centre cities; small towns; villages). The sample was performed in two steps: first,

<sup>4</sup> The survey is conducted in the framework of the research project mentioned above.

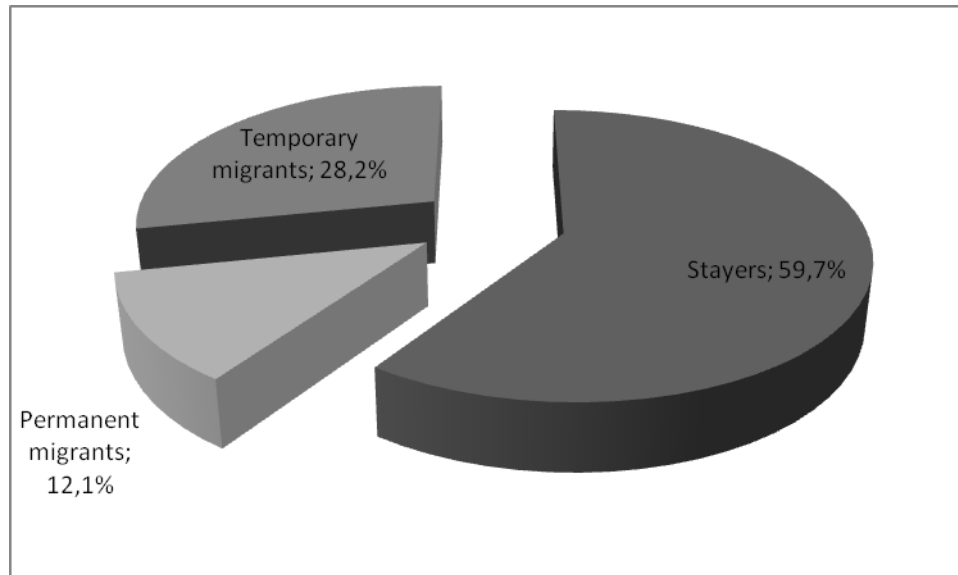
a random selection of addresses with return migrant(s) chosen by a random starting point (random route); second, a version of the snowball method in which the respondent selected at first stage directs the interviewer for the next contact: an individual from the target group. The planned sample size was 600 individuals where interviews have been accomplished with 604 respondents. The information collection method was a personal standardized interview (face to face) at the respondent's home; the period for conducting the field work was 28 October – 20 November 2017.

## **2. Socio-demographic profile of the return migrants**

The segmentation (categorization) of return migrants, from the point of view of the sustainability of return, is based on their attitudes: (1) whether to remain in Bulgaria, (2) whether to leave again temporarily, and (3) whether to settle abroad permanently. Thus, three types of return migrants are grouped: stayers, temporary migrants and permanent migrants. The respondents who prefer to stay in the home country predominate – nearly 60% of those who responded. Those who would like to leave again for a short period (3 – 12 months) or for a long period (longer than 1 year) come next – 28.2% of the responded; one in eight respondents would like to leave Bulgaria for good.

Chart 1

Types of return migrants in Bulgaria according to their future plans, 2017



The scope of the socio-demographic characteristics, the capacity and prior migration experience evaluates at each individual category of return migrants, enables us to

understand more precisely who are those willing to leave again temporarily or permanently. In what way are they similar and how do they differ from those who choose to stay?

#### *Socio-demographic characteristics*

It is assumed that gender, age, and the family status are of principal importance for the formation of attitudes in favour of migration. The same holds true also for the members of any minority community in the country.

Table 5

Socio-demographic characteristics of return migrants according to their future plans (1)

Future plans	Stay in BG permanently	Leave BG, temporarily	Leave BG, permanently	Total
Gender				
Male	55.0%	52.9%	57.5%	54.7%
Female	45.0%	47.1%	42.5%	45.3%
Age				
Up to 30	16.7%	20.6%	26.0%	18.9%
31-40	19.4%	28.2%	24.7%	22.6%
41-50	19.2%	26.5%	20.5%	21.4%
51-60	19.4%	12.4%	12.3%	16.6%
Over 60	25.3%	12.4%	16.4%	20.6%
Family status				
Single	22.8%	24.1%	27.4%	23.7%
Married	61.4%	57.6%	53.4%	59.4%
Divorced	11.4%	10.0%	17.8%	11.8%
Widow/er	4.2%	7.6%	1.4%	4.8%
N/A	0.3%	0.6%	-	0.3%
Ethnicity				
Bulgarian	79.7%	85.3%	87.7%	82.3%
Turkish	9.4%	7.1%	4.1%	8.1%
Roma	9.4%	7.6%	6.8%	8.6%
Others	1.4%	-	1.4%	1.0%

#### Gender

Unlike the results obtained in previous studies (Mintchev et al., 2017), the present data does not indicate any major differences based on gender among the categories returned: (1) wishing to stay in the country, and (2) planning to leave again temporarily or (3) permanently. Yet, a certain difference is noted in the gender structure between those planning to go abroad temporarily (53% of whom are men and the rest – women) and those planning to emigrate (57.5% compared to 42.5%).

#### Age

The breakdown based on the age of return migrant categories confirms once again the increased propensity of the younger population, but also of the population of middle age, to

leave the country again. The share of respondents aged up to 50 is over 75% of those who would leave temporarily and 71% of the intending to settle permanently abroad. This share declines to 55% among the “stayers”.

#### Family status

Married individuals predominate among the return migrants – 59.4% in total for the sample. Their share however surpasses 61% of the return migrants planning to stay permanently in Bulgaria and drops to 53.4% of those planning to leave permanently the country.

#### Ethnicity

The breakdowns based on ethnicity do not confirm the expectations of increased propensity to move again among the Turkish and Roma communities. Their relative shares are higher among the stayers, compared to the share in the sample; it is found lower among the respondents with attitudes for repeat migration. On the other hand, the share of ethnic Bulgarians among the people who would migrate again (85.3% and 87.7% for the circular and permanent migrants, respectively) is somewhat higher than the share in the total sample (82.3%).

#### *Capabilities characteristics*

The educational level, the employment status, and the income received are indicators of capability of the individuals to mobilize resources necessary for implementing the migration intentions.

#### Education

The most frequently encountered educational degree among the three types of return remigrants is “vocational secondary education”. Among the stayers and the permanent migrants, the relative share of respondents with such education is higher than their share in the total sample (40-41% compared to 38.8%). The situation is different for the individuals with university degrees. The share of higher educated among the stayers and particularly among the permanent migrants is lower than their share in the total sample; however, in the case of temporary migrants this share is slightly higher (albeit only by 1 percentage point) – i.e., it could be expected that among higher education graduates preferences exist for some sort of temporary mobility, while among the people with vocational secondary education an interest in a permanent move is also maintained.

Regarding the share of the respondents with general secondary education, among the temporary and especially among the permanent migrants it is significantly greater than their share in the total sample (24 and 25% respectively, compared to 18.8%) whereas their share among the stayers is lower by some 4 percentage points. The situation is quite the opposite



among the respondents with basic or lower education. Their share among the individuals planning to move again is lower in comparison to their share in the sample as a whole, while the respective share among stayers is 2 percentage points higher than in the total sample. In this connection, it may be expected that the attitudes in favour of repeat migration are highest among the individuals with general secondary education and lowest among the individuals with basic or lower education.

#### Employment status

The modal group for all three types of return migrants is “employed full time”. They account for nearly half (47%) of the respondents in the sample. It is worth noting that their share among the stayers is slightly over 2 percentage points higher, compared to their share in the total sample (49.4% compared to 47.1%), but significantly lower among those contemplating temporary migration (41.8%). On the other hand, if one-fourth of the respondents in the total sample are unemployed, this share among the circular and permanent migrants is significantly higher – over 37%. The share of unemployed among the stayers, respectively, is clearly lower (16.9%). Obviously, the availability of full-time employment after return keeps the working-age migrants in the country, while the absence of such is a serious incentive to repeat migration.

#### Income

The data presented hereafter concerns the average monthly income per household. The modal group of the respondents quoted the income segment of BGN 1,200-2,000 which accounts for 23.2% of the respondents in the sample. The share of individuals in the higher-income segment (above BGN 2,000) was nearly half that (12.6%) while the share of those in the lower-income segment (up to BGN 800) was almost equal to that of the modal group (20.9%).

The fact that the share of individuals in the higher-income segment among the permanent migrants (17.8%) exceeds the respective share in the total sample – while in the case of circular migrants it is only 8.8% – suggests that higher income may be a disincentive for a circular migration; however, on the other hand, it may be assumed that it can stimulate (to some extent) a willingness to a permanent migration. Since the share of the lower income segment among the temporary migrants is higher than that in the total sample (while conversely, lower among those planning to settle permanently) leads to the conclusion that lower income may be an incentive for temporary (circular) migration, and conversely – a deterrent for a permanent migration.

Table 6  
Socio-demographic characteristics of return migrants according to their future plans (2)

Future plans	Stay in BG permanently	Leave BG, temporarily	Leave BG, permanently	Total
Education				
Basic or lower	21.9%	17.1%	13.7%	19.6%
General secondary	14.7%	24.1%	24.7%	18.6%
Vocational secondary/postsec.	40.6%	34.7%	39.7%	38.8%
Higher	22.8%	24.1%	21.9%	23.1%
Labour status (What was your employment upon your last return to Bulgaria?)				
Employed full time	49.4%	41.8%	47.9%	47.1%
Employed part-time	4.4%	1.2%	4.1%	3.5%
Student	3.3%	1.8%		2.5%
Retiree	15.3%	8.2%	2.7%	11.8%
Own business	6.7%	4.7%	4.1%	5.8%
Liberal profession (self-employed)	3.3%	4.1%	2.7%	3.5%
Unemployed	16.9%	37.6%	37.0%	25.2%
Didn't know/Not responded	0.6%	0.6%	1.4%	0.7%
Income				
Up to 800 BGN	20.6%	23.5%	16.4%	20.9%
Over 800 to 1200 BGN	19.4%	21.2%	21.9%	20.2%
Over 1200 to 2000 BGN	25.8%	18.2%	21.9%	23.2%
Over 2000 BGN	13.3%	8.8%	17.8%	12.6%
Not responded	20.8%	28.2%	21.9%	23.1%

#### *Migration experience*

The migration experience of the respondents (migrants currently in Bulgaria) is described by several indicators – achievement of the goals of previous migration, self-assessment of the personal living standard in Bulgaria following the return (compared to that in the last host country), duration of the last stay abroad, and finally – the presence of relatives/friends abroad.

Table 8

Migration experience of return migrants

Future plans	Stay in BG permanently	Leave BG, temporarily	Leave BG, permanently	Total
Did you achieve the goals, in pursuit of which you left for abroad?				
Yes	73.3%	80.0%	67.1%	74.5%
No	26.7%	20.0%	32.9%	25.5%
As a whole, how do you live since you are back in Bulgaria, compared to the country of your last stay abroad?				
Better	29.4%	15.3%	12.3%	23.4%
Worse	22.5%	48.2%	53.4%	33.5%
No change	43.1%	34.1%	31.5%	39.1%
Didn't know/ Not responded	5.0%	2.4%	2.7%	4.0%
Duration of the stay abroad				
up to 6 months	32.5%	32.4%	13.7%	30.2%
7 to 12 months	20.0%	21.2%	20.5%	20.4%
over 1 to 3 years	18.6%	23.5%	31.5%	21.6%
over 3 to 6 years	14.2%	12.4%	16.4%	13.9%
over 6 years	14.7%	10.6%	17.8%	13.9%
Did you have any relatives in the first country				
Yes	63.1%	70.0%	64.4%	65.2%
No	36.9%	29.4%	35.6%	34.7%
Different in the various stays?	-	0.6%	-	0.2%

Achievement of the goals of migration

As a whole – more than 74% of individuals state that they have achieved the goals for which they left. It is noteworthy however that the share of “successful returnees” reaches 80% of the circular migrants and declines to 67% for the permanent ones. The original intentions of the respondents were to a greater degree related to temporary, rather than permanent migration – hence, the higher share of “successful” individuals among the circular migrants is observed, compared to those planning to emigrate. And the willingness to search a temporary (mainly seasonal) employment abroad seems much more realistic than to leave the country for good.

Self-assessment of the personal living standard in Bulgaria following the return

The self-assessment of the personal living standard in Bulgaria after the return clearly differentiates the types of return migrants into stayers in the country, circular migrants (individuals wishing to leave again temporarily), and permanent migrants (individuals planning to leave for good). For a large part of the respondents (39%) their living standard in the country after return does not differ from the one that they enjoyed abroad. Those who believe that their standard is inferior to the one they had abroad account for 1/3 of the total sample; however, this is the case respectively for 53% of the permanent and 48% of the

circular migrants. Regarding those who report a higher living standard in Bulgaria after return (compared to what they had abroad), their relative share among those desiring to repeat the migration is only between 12 and 15%, given 23% on average for the sample, and respectively over 29% among the stayers.

#### Duration of the stay abroad and presence of relatives/friends abroad

The data regarding the length of stay abroad confirms that longer stays are a motive for decisions for a next permanent migration. A half (49.4%) of the participants in the total sample had stayed abroad for more than 1 year; however, among the individuals planning a permanent migration the share of such respondents exceeds 65%. As regards the presence of relatives/friends abroad, on the other hand, there are no significant differences among the various types of return migrants. Obviously, all of them have their contacts abroad (i.e. migrants' networks) – between 63 and 70% of both stayers and movers have relatives and friends abroad.

### **3. Assessment of the determinants of re-migration intentions**

The explorative analysis of the types of potential re-migration is hereafter augmented by results obtained from a binary logistic regression analysis conducted in the following research framework. The binary logistic regression utilizes sample micro-data to estimate a multivariate causal model with a binary dependent variable. This variable can take 2 possible values (outcomes) which contrast one specifically defined target group of observations (in our case, individual respondents) to another one chosen as a comparison (base) group.

The regression model links the predicted probabilities for classifying any observation in the target group as a function of a set of independent variables. These variables are in fact treated as determinants (i.e. causal predictors of the outcome) according to the conceptual reasoning outlined above – they are expected to correlate with the binary outcome. This way, the impact of each determinant of interest should be estimated on a net basis, i.e. as a *ceteris paribus* marginal effect. The general model of the logistic regression has the form (Greene, 2003):

$$P_{[Y_i=1]} = \frac{\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \dots + \beta_k X_{ik} + \varepsilon_i)}{1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \dots + \beta_k X_{ik} + \varepsilon_i)}$$

where:

- “P” is the probability by which observation “i” should be classified in the target group given the values of the independent variables for this observation;
- “exp()” is the exponential function (using Napier’s constant “e” as a basis);
- $X_j$  ( $j=1, \dots, k$ ) are independent variables (determinants);

- “epsilon” is a random residual variable;
- “betas” are model parameters (to be estimated).

The model is empirically estimated after a transformation which results in a linear model with the “log-odds ratio” as a dependent variable:

$$\text{Log}\left(\frac{P_{[Y_i=1]}}{P_{[Y_i=0]}}\right) = \text{Log}\left(\frac{P_{[Y_i=1]}}{1 - P_{[Y_i=1]}}\right) = \beta_0 + \sum \beta_j X_{ij} + \varepsilon_i$$

The odds-ratio measures the degree to which the chance for being classified in the target group (Y=1) outweighs the chance for classification in the base group (Y=0). This model is estimated by a maximum likelihood method which maximizes the probability of observing the actual outcomes for Y given the fitted regression coefficients.

In order to facilitate the interpretation of empirical results, each determinant has been represented by a set of binary indicator variables using a traditional coding scheme. All quantitative variables have been transformed into ordered categories by defined numerical intervals. For each variable, a choice has been made about the reference category of individuals (serving as a basis for interpreting the marginal effects of this variable). The strategy for choosing the reference category is related to the general expectation about how each variable is linked to the willingness to move. This way, the reference category for each attribute is chosen to be the value which is expected to have a “holding” (pull-down) effect to the out-migration inclination of the individual. This coding strategy leads to the identification of the expected “initial profile” of the potential stayer (individual with the lowest expected chance for re-migration) – it is an artificial individual who possesses as personal traits all reference categories of the independent variables.

Hereafter we present the selection of independent variables along with the categories for which indicator variables have been defined.

Socio-demographic profile:

- gender (reference category: females; one indicator variable: male=1 for a man, 0 otherwise);
- age (reference category: 61 or higher; four indicator variables: (1) age up to 30; (2) age 31-40, (3) age 41-50; (4) age 51-60; each of them takes 1 if the individual’s age is in the respective interval: (up to 30], [31-40], [41-50], [51-60], otherwise 0);
- marital status (reference category: married; one indicator variable: single=1 for singles; 0 otherwise);
- education level (reference category: secondary general; three indicator variables: (1) basic or lower; (2) secondary vocational; (3) higher; each of them takes 1 if the individual has the respective degree, 0 otherwise);
- children (reference category: an individual with 1 or more children; one indicator variable: nochild=1 if there are not any children in the family, 0 otherwise);

- ethnic group (reference category: Bulgarian; two indicator variables: (1) turkish; (2) roma; each of them takes 1 if the individual is in the respective group, 0 otherwise);
- employment status (reference category: employed; 2 indicator variables: (1) unemployed, (2) self-employed /running own business practice or freelance profession/; each of them takes 1 if the individual falls in the respective category, 0 otherwise);
- income level (reference category: individuals form a household with income over 2000 BGN monthly; 3 indicator variables: (1) income up to 800 BGN; (2) income 801-1200 BGN, (3) income 1201-2000 BGN; each of them takes 1 if the household income is in the respective interval, 0 otherwise).

Here a set of proxy variables have been extracted in order to explore the expected effects of the migration experience which are of special interest to our study. At first, a positive migration experience is traditionally considered as a very influential determinant which is (in most cases) expected to induce consecutive attempts of the individual “to get back in the game”. The success of the last stay abroad has been captured by an attitudinal question: “*Did you succeed to achieve the goal/s/ for which you went abroad?*” – a binary variable is defined to take a value of 1 if the respondent has answered “Yes” to this question. Next, the migrant networking factor is included in the model by one binary variable (famfr abroad) – it takes a value of 1 if the respondent’s household has declared that at least one household member (or close family friend) resides abroad at the time of survey (otherwise 0).

A special aspect of the self-assessed wellbeing after the return is captured by the question “*How do you live in Bulgaria after you came back, in comparison with the life you had abroad?*”. Two binary variables are defined to take a value of 1 if the respondent has chosen the answer „better” or “worse”. This way we expect to capture the perceived relative position of the individual in respect to the household wellbeing. The reference category here is the answer “no change” to this question. Finally, an important variable reflecting the migration experience has been included – namely, the length of stay during the last stay abroad. The reference category here is “up to 6 months” which contains the respondents that have experienced short periods abroad; all other cases have been coded into 4 groups for which indicator variables have been defined: (1) length 2=1 if the length of stay is 7-12 months, otherwise 0; (2) length 3=1 for 1 to 3 years, otherwise 0; (3) length 4=1 for 3 to 6 years, otherwise 0; (4) length 5=1 for over 6 years, otherwise 0.

The categorization of respondents into non-overlapping subsamples – potential permanent re-migrant (settlers), temporary (circular) migrants, and stayers – provides an option to construct the dependent variables (DV) of interest. Here we suggest two such variables: for the permanent migrants contrasted to the stayers, and for the circular migrants contrasted again to the stayers.

DV1. The first dichotomous variable is coded by “1” for each respondent with clearly expressed preference to leave temporarily Bulgaria. We expect that such kind of individuals have been guided by willingness to circulate. All potential stayers (non-migrants) are coded by “0”, and the observations for potential permanent migrants are ignored by DV1.

DV2. The second dichotomous variable is coded by “1” for each respondent with clearly expressed preference to leave Bulgaria and to settle in another country. We assume that

these individuals wish to out-migrate for good. Again, all potential stayers are coded by “0”, and the observations for the circular migrants are ignored by DV2.

This strategy provides an opportunity to estimate marginal effects of the independent variables on the willingness to move, however, separately for the two types of re-migration intentions. In any of these two cases (DV1 and DV2), the comparison group consists of stayers (potential non-migrants) – this way we can distinguish between the target group (coded by DV=1) and the base group (coded by DV=0) in respect of the attributes incorporated as determinants variables. The following categories of respondents constitute the “synthetic” profile of the “reference individual”, each of which is expected to have a pull-down effect on the willingness to move:

- gender: females;
- age: 61 or higher;
- marital status: married;
- educational level: secondary general;
- children: yes;
- ethnical group: Bulgarian;
- employment status: employed;
- income level: household income over 2000 BGN monthly;
- achievement of goals abroad: no;
- family member or friend residing abroad: no;
- self estimated welfare status (compared to the life abroad): no change;
- length of stay (during the last stay abroad): up to 6 months.

#### *Socio-demographic variables*

Only part of these variables showed the expected impact on the probability for categorization in the respective target group (willing to circulate or to emigrate permanently). However, the adverse effect of multicollinearity could have caused the loss of significance for some of the parameters as far as many of the independent variables entered together are correlated.

Gender does not differentiate between respondents expressing a willingness to re-migrate and a willingness to stay. The parameter of “male” variable is statistically insignificant in both models, so the survey provides evidence that the willingness to leave again is not different for men and women concerning either temporary or permanent intentions.

Table 9

Binary logistic regressions for the likelihood to re-migrate

	DV1. Circular vs. Stayers		DV2. Permanent vs. Stayers	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Gender (male)	-0,234	0,791	-0,074	0,929
Age up to 30	1,855 ***	6,393	1,847 ***	6,338
Age 31-40	1,860 ***	6,426	1,363 **	3,909
Age 41-50	1,366 ***	3,918	0,640	1,896
Age 51-60	0,376	1,456	0,182	1,199
Single	-0,631 *	0,532	-0,608	0,545
Basic	-0,812 *	0,444	-1,134 *	0,322
Secondary vocational	-0,555 *	0,574	-0,581	0,560
Higher education	-0,344	0,709	-0,392	0,676
No children	0,149	1,161	-0,043	0,958
Turkish	-0,038	0,963	-0,341	0,711
Roma	-0,848	0,428	-0,865	0,421
Unemployed	0,808 ***	2,243	0,776 **	2,172
Self-employed	0,731	2,077	-0,105	0,900
Income up to 800 BGN	0,269	1,309	-0,013	0,987
Income 800-1200 BGN	0,217	1,243	0,083	1,086
Income 1200-2000 BGN	-0,309	0,734	-0,179	0,836
Achieved goals abroad	0,578 **	1,783	-0,491	0,612
HH member/friend abroad	0,339	1,403	0,139	1,150
Welfare status- better	-0,755 ***	0,470	-0,840 *	0,432
Welfare status- worse	1,119 ***	3,062	1,275 ***	3,579
Length of stay (7-12 m)	0,250	1,283	1,236 **	3,442
Length of stay (1-3 y)	-0,099	0,906	1,318 ***	3,734
Length of stay (3-6 y)	-0,194	0,824	1,011 *	2,749
Length of stay (over 6 y)	-0,230	0,795	1,497 ***	4,470
Intercept (beta-0)	-2,367 ***	0,094	-2,816 ***	0,060
No. of observations	531		434	
Nagelkerke R square	0.263		0.265	

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: Wald test significance levels: \* 0.10; \*\* 0.05; \*\*\* 0.01. Exp(B) estimates the odds ratios.

The most significant results (also with highest odds ratios) were obtained in regard to the age variable – the initial expectations for a high inclination of the younger people to leave Bulgaria for a short-term or to emigrate for good were confirmed. The net effects of the indicator variables for the youngest respondents (up to age 30) were highest but not much different from the estimates about the next two age group, as compared to the reference category “age 61+” – the odds ratios are 6.4 for the age groups “up to 30” and “31-40” and 3.9 for age group “41-50” in model 1 (intentions to circulate). Significant results for the first two age groups are obtained also in model 2 (willingness to emigrate), albeit not so strong: odds ratios 6.3 and 3.9 respectively.

No effect is observed about the marital status in model 2 which shows that living in a family neither stimulates nor obstructs the formation of intentions to leave Bulgaria



permanently. Surprisingly, the hypothesis for a stronger attitude of the singles (as compared to the reference category: married) towards temporary re-migration has been rejected. The negative sign of the parameter (significant at 1% risk) shows that, other things equal, not the singles but the married respondents are more likely to leave again, however, for a short period of time.

Greater re-migration attitudes of higher educated Bulgarian migrants are not observed, considering the regression results. Negative signs of the parameter estimates for “higher” variable are observed in model 1 and model 2, however, both of them are not significant. Due to this, we can conclude that higher educated respondents do not differ significantly from those with general secondary education regarding their intentions to re-migrate. The situation is not the same with the respondents having a secondary vocational education – the parameter for this education variable is found to be significant only in model 1 which shows that, *ceteris paribus*, there is a lower willingness with these migrants to circulate, as compared to the reference category (secondary general). Interesting result is obtained regarding the migrants with basic or lower level of education. The parameter for this variable is found to be significant in both models. The negative sign of this parameter reveals that the migrants with lowest education express a higher willingness to stay (as compared to the reference category).

No significant results are found in respect of ethnicity of the respondents. The situation is similar regarding the availability of children in the family of the respondent. Although, the divergence of the signs (positive in model 1 and negative in model 2) provides some indication that respondents with children show somewhat higher propensity to emigrate for good. This can be explained by the general attitude of potential emigrants to leave with the whole family in order to provide a better life for their children abroad.

In general, controlling for the level of income did not show any significant results for the intentions to neither circulate nor emigrate. No significant difference is observed in the likelihood for re-migration between the individuals in the reference category (with the highest household income) and those in any lower income stratum. This provides evidence in support of a new hypothesis that re-migration intentions are neither stimulated nor constrained by the level of income received at home after returning from abroad.

A feasible explanation of this result could be a technical reason – multicollinearity with the income and, possibly, labour status variables have caused the statistical insignificance of the income effect. However, we can still postulate an alternative explanation – the willingness to move is not systematically concentrated mainly to low-income strata; still, many individuals with migration experience and medium to higher income level do not see their future in the country and would opt to re-migrate.

The labour status variables have shown the expected results, especially regarding the unemployed respondents. In general, the self-employed do not differ substantially from the full-time employed (reference category) regarding their propensity to leave again in both models. However, both perspectives (temporary and permanent) are significantly preferred by the unemployed contrasted to the employed – for example, the odds ratio for the unemployed shows a twice higher chance for them to be categorized in the target group (potential emigrant or circular migrant) than in the base group (potential stayers) as compared to the reference category.

#### *Migration experience variables*

The range of attributes involved in the migrants' profile provides opportunities for evaluating the impact of migration experience as a factor of re-migration intentions. One of these attributes, namely the availability of household member or family friend abroad, did not show any significant effect in both models. A plausible explanation is the fact that the any of three groups (potential stayers, circular, and permanent migrants) has a very high share of respondents having such acquaintances abroad (63-7%), i.e. they practically do not differ at all in respect of this attribute.

On the other hand, there is a strong effect of the self-evaluated current wellbeing (after the return in Bulgaria) on the willingness to re-migrate (short-term or permanent move). The parameters of the two proxy variables – indicating perceptions of being better- or worse-off after return, compared to the living standard experienced abroad has been estimated as statistically significant in both models. Even more, the signs of these effects confirm the initial expectations – those with higher self-assessed wellbeing express a lower likelihood to leave again: both in short or long-term perspective. On the contrary, those with a worse material status clearly indicate a higher willingness to remigrate. Both perspectives (temporary and permanent) are strongly preferred by these respondents – the odds ratio shows over 3 times higher chance for them to be categorized in any re-migration group (circular or permanent) than in the base group (stayers) as compared to the reference category (respondents with “no change” in the wellbeing after their return).

The results obtained for the other two determinants – achievement of goals and length of stay abroad – reveal particular divergence between the two types of re-migration intentions. The length of stay abroad showed the expected stimulating impact only for those who wish to leave Bulgaria for good – the longer the period of stay, the higher the willingness to emigrate. For example, the estimate of the odds ratio for individuals with the longest length of stay (over 6 years) shows that the chance for having a disposition to permanent out-migration is 4.5 times higher than the chance for staying in Bulgaria. On the contrary, such effects are not found regarding the individuals with intentions to circulate where we do not observe any differences between individuals with longer or shorter periods of stay abroad. Although not statistically significant, the negative parameter estimates for the long-period variables (e.g. “3-6 years” and “over 6 years”) indicate that individuals with such migration experience would rather stay in the country than choosing to circulate.

The self-assessed achievement of goals with the last migration move has proved to have the expected direction of its effect only for those intending to circulate. A statistically significant effect of this variable has been estimated by model 1 where the chance for re-migrating temporarily is 1.8 times higher (for those declared an accomplishment of migration goals) than the chance for staying in Bulgaria. The odds ratio seems not so high but it is still quite indicative that the achievement of particular migration goals significantly induces a propensity to move again temporarily. On the other hand, such an effect is not statistically significant with model 2, i.e. regarding the individuals with intentions to move permanently. Nevertheless, the negative sign of the parameter estimate for the achievement variable suggests that respondents not confirming to have achieved their migration goals (i.e. not satisfied with their last migration experience) would rather opt to leave for good.

#### 4. Conclusions

Having in mind the abundant tradition in the literature on external migration, the issues related to the return migration and its sustainability have long been on the sidelines of the research interest. The globalization, the innovations in transport and communications, and expanding migration pressures are changing the course of migration processes worldwide. Currently, increasing attention is being devoted to short-term forms of transborder mobility of individuals.

The assessments of return migration in Bulgaria are based on sample surveys attesting the increase of the relative share of households having a return migrant. Nevertheless, the capacity of the local labour market to attract the migrants back into the country can be evaluated as humble.

The segmentation of return migrants depending on their attitudes to a repeat migration enables the formation of three migration types: stayers, temporary and permanent migrants. On the basis of data from an empirical survey conducted at the end of 2017, the socio-demographic profiles of each of these three types of return migrants is presented. Applying the method of binary logistic regression, the factors facilitating the formation of the attitudes to stay in the country or to re-migrate have been assessed. The analysis confirms the importance of the “age” factor – other things equal, the older the returnee, the lower his/her chances to undertake a new move (either temporary or permanent). The likelihood of individuals with basic or lower educational level to stay is higher, as compared to the reference category (the respondents with general secondary education) – concerning both temporary and permanent migrants. The likelihood to stay is higher also among those with vocational secondary education, but only if confronted to the option of circular migration (model 1). On the other hand, the unemployed individuals reveal clearly a greater attitude for re-migration in comparison to the reference category (the full time employed). The self-assessment of the living standard after return shows the expected significant effect: the higher the self-assessed living standard, the greater the willingness to stay, and *vice versa* – the more unfavourable standard, the greater the likelihood of re-migration.

The family status and the achievement of the goals of previous migration show significant impacts only when differentiating the temporary migrants from the stayers. The married individuals – as well as those who declared to have accomplished their migration goals – are more inclined to a temporary re-migration than single individuals or those who did not achieve their goals. And lastly – the longer a stay abroad, the more likely it becomes for the individual to leave the country permanently.

The results presented above do not surprise, in most aspects they confirm the findings of a range of similar empirical studies (Mintchev and Boshnakov, 2006, 2007; Mintchev, 2016). It should be noted, however, that a more precise assessment of the effects of variables such as “family status”, “educational degree earned”, and “achievement of the goals of migration” requires additional efforts in a future research.

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