

THE REMIGRATION: CAUSES AND SUSTAINABILITY (THE BULGARIAN CASE)²

The paper deals with the causes and sustainability of remigration, carried out by the Bulgarian migrants. It is focused upon the returnees' own interpretations of the reasons behind their migratory behavior and the subjective meaning of their migratory movements. Comparisons are made between the motives for departure, return and re-departure as components of the overall migration trajectories. The return is looked upon in the overall context of mobility either as a split moment within it, or as a final point. Diverse economic and non-economic motives for return are identified. The relationship between the sustainability of return and the causes of initial migration and subsequent remigration is analyzed.

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The paper is based on information received within the framework of the research project "Return Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility", lead by the author.³ It adopts the idea, that the traditional migration movement between "sending" and "receiving" countries is being transformed into various forms of multi-directional and permanent mobility. The report seeks a more nuanced explanation of both the causes of the fluid trajectories of modern international mobility ("departure – return – new departure") and the sustainability of the return.

Reasons for initial migration

The understanding of causes for migratory movements is central to the theoretical interpretations and empirical studies of migration (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouauci, Pellegrino, Taylor, 1993). The reasons for going abroad, return and new remigration vary

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and range from individual and family reasons to macroeconomic, social and political ones that are related to the situation in host and home countries.

The obtained empirical data⁴ supports the conclusion that economic reasons are leading to the initial departure, but social and family motives dominate the remigration process. Almost three-quarters of those returning to Bulgaria (73%) point to motives of an economic nature as the main reason behind their initial departure. They are mainly related to the triad "job-income-living standard": "to get higher payment" (33.1%); "I was unemployed in Bulgaria" (10.8%); "to find a better job" (10.1%); "to have a higher living standard" (8.8%).

The reasons for emigration are rather complex with 86.7% of the returning migrants pointing to the second motive and 69.7% to the third. Components of the motivational triad "job-income-living standard" again dominate among the three main reasons for initial departure – seeking for higher payment (69.0), finding a better job (38.4%) or any kind of job (19.5%), higher living standard (27.8%). Family reasons for migration are second in importance: "to support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria" (32.0%), "to join parents and/or relatives" (19.0%), "to accompany spouse, partner, parents, children" (7.0%), "marriage/partnership" (0.8%). Every tenth has pointed to an education related motive – "to provide better education/future to my children" (6.3%) and "to receive the desired education" (4.0%).

Reasons for return

The reasons for return are complex and are not associated with just one cause. King (King, 2000) distinguishes four main types of reasons for return:

1. Economic reasons. They relate to the possibility of receiving higher incomes, finding a better job, opportunities for professional realization, worsening of the economic situation in the host country, starting a business and/or investing in the country of origin and others.
2. Political reasons that also examine a wide range of possibilities: discriminatory attitude towards migrants and violations of their rights, implementation of active national return policies, voluntary return for participation in the political life, forced expulsions, etc.
3. Social reasons are no less diverse: difficulties in adapting and integrating in the host country, homeland nostalgia, involvement in public initiatives and projects, desire to contribute to the country, etc.
4. Family reasons related to the cycle of individual and family life and relationships such as: care for elderly or sick parents; search for a partner and/or marriage; desire to raise the children at home and/or receiving education in their native language, with the help of the parents; return after retirement and others.

⁴ All data cited in the report are obtained by a survey of returned migrants within the research project "Return Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility" carried out in 2018 among Bulgarian citizens (18+) who have worked at least once abroad for a minimum period of three months during the last 10 years (2008-2017)

There are significant discrepancies between the reasons for return and those for departure (Table 1). Family motives are among the three most important reasons for remigration: "affection for the family and my relatives in Bulgaria" (55.9%), "to raise and/or educate the children" (15.7%), "to care for an elderly or sick relative" (13.9%), "to marry in Bulgaria and live here" (5.5%), "retirement" (3.8%).

The role of social motives is also important both in terms of the growing attractiveness of the home country (pull factors) but also the role of push factors in the host country. Among the pull factors to Bulgaria, the most significant is the "home nostalgia" (25.5%) and among the push factors – the difficult adaptation in the host country (16.2%) and the reluctance to live abroad (15.9%). They are supplemented by reasons such as uncertainty for immigrants in the country of residence (10.3%), inability to legalize stay in the host country (5.5%), intolerance/discrimination in the country of residence (5.5%).

Economic reasons for return play a less significant role as compared to their importance for the initial departure. About 40% of respondents do not mention an economic motive for remigration. Among the economically motivated returnees, the share of the seasonal workers group is almost one third (32.0%). Almost equal is the share (about 40% of the respondents) of returnees facing problems in the host country, and those who see better economic opportunities in Bulgaria.

Table 1
Main reasons for initial migration and for return (% of all respondents)

Reasons for initial departure			Reasons for return		
<i>Three main economic reasons</i>	<i>Main reason</i>	<i>Amog the three main reasons</i>	<i>Three main economic reasons</i>	<i>Main reason</i>	<i>Amog the three main reasons</i>
To get higher payment	33.1	69.0	My job was seasonal/temporary	22.7	32.0
To find a better job	10.4	38.4	I expect living conditions in Bulgaria to improve	8.3	18.9
To have higher living standard	8.8	27.8	I lost my job/I was not able to find a job in the host country	6.5	12.7
<i>Three main family related reasons</i>	<i>Main reason</i>	<i>Amog the three main reasons</i>	<i>Three main family related reasons</i>	<i>Main reason</i>	<i>Amog the three main reasons</i>
To join parents and/or relatives	14.7	19.0	Affection for the family and my relatives in Bulgaria	34.9	55.8
To accompany spouse, partner, parents, children	4.3	7.0	To care for an elderly or sick relative	8.3	13.9
To support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria	4.1	32.0	To raise and/or educate the children	5.5	15.7

The "negative" economic motivation associated with push factors in the host country is due to reasons such as: "it is difficult to find legal employment (with official contract and

insurance) in the country of residence" (13.4%), "I lost my job/I was not able to find a job in the host country"(12.7%), "not worth it – higher incomes but higher spending in the country of residence"(10.8%), "I paid high taxes and social security contributions in the country of residence"(2.8%).

The economic attractiveness of Bulgaria is manifested in optimistic attitudes and several groups of positive motives for return: "I expect living conditions in Bulgaria to improve" (18.9%), "professional realization in Bulgaria" (8.6%), "opportunities for better job/business in Bulgaria"(7.1%),"to develop my own business here/to invest here"(5.3%).

For a specific event that affected the decision to return report 32% of the people surveyed. This event is primarily related to the need to take care of a family member (a parent, a child, a spouse, a relative) because of their worsened health or the need for special care. A common cause of return is also the deteriorated own health condition. The decision to return to Bulgaria is usually taken alone (53%) or together with the family (37%).

Over 90% of the respondents were not influenced by any specific policy measures implemented by the Bulgarian government. More than half (58%) of the surveyed have not needed any support after their return. The others needed the greatest support in terms of finding a job (25%), financial support (9%), psychological support (9%), housing support (4%), support for children education (1.3%). Zareva (2018: 79) also concludes that strategic goal to encourage the return of Bulgarian migrants has not been supported by specific measures and activities and tangible effect has not yet been achieved.

Reasons for subsequent migration

A summary of the three most important reasons for subsequent migration among respondents who are willing to emigrate again is presented in Table 2.

The reasons for subsequent emigration are complex and similar to those for initial emigration. The great majority (86.0%) of returning migrants wishing to emigrate again point to a second, and 70.9% – to a third motive for leaving the country. Components of the motivation triad "job-income-living standard" also dominate the willingness to leave again among the three main reasons for leaving the country – a desire for higher pay (64.6%), striving for a higher standard of living (44.8%), finding a better job (20.2%) or any job (10.7%). More than half of those willing to emigrate again (55%) refer to economic motives as the main reason for departure: "getting a higher payment" (32.5%); "I am unemployed in Bulgaria" (2.5%); "to find a better job" (5.8%); "to have higher living standard" (14%).

Table 2

Reasons for subsequent migration
(% of those willing to emigrate again temporarily or permanently)

	First place	Second place	Third place	Total
To join parents and/or relatives	11.1	2.4	1.2	14.7
To accompany spouse, partner, parents, children	3.3	0.4	1.2	4.9
Marrage/partnership	2.1	0.8	1.6	4.5
To acquire foreign citizenship for me and my family	0	0	0.4	0.4
To continue my education	0.8	0.8	0	1.6
To provide better education/future for my children	8.6	5.6	3.7	17.9
To have a higher living standard	14.0	22.2	8.6	44.8
To get higher payment	32.5	23.0	9.1	64.6
To find a better job	5.8	7.8	6.6	20.2
For better professional realization	4.1	4.5	9.1	17.7
To develop my own business	1.6	0.4	0.8	2.8
To support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria	4.1	8.2	9.1	21.4
Business trip	0.8	0	0.4	1.2
I am unemployed in Bulgaria	2.5	2.9	5.3	10.7
I have seasonal / temporary work abroad	2.9	4.5	1.2	8.6
Other reasons	5.3	2.9	2.5	10.7
No response	0.4	14.0	39.1	53.5

The second most important reasons for emigration are the family reasons: "to support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria" (21.4%), "to join parents and/or relatives" (14.7%), "to accompany my husband, partner, parents, children" (4.9%), "marriage/ partnership" (4.5%). Nearly every fifth pointed an education-related motif – "to provide better education/future to my children" (17.9%) and "to continue education" (1.6%).

The empirical data obtained supports the conclusion that economic reasons are leading both in the initial and the subsequent exits of the country, but social and family reasons dominate the remigration. Similar results from a qualitative study have been reported by Bakalova, Misheva (2018).

Sustainability of return

It is appropriate to interpret migration in the context of the overall life and migration cycle of returnees. Accordingly, several typical categories of migrants are distinguished, for which return has different meanings and is ambiguously assessed – such as success, failure or temporary condition. This subjective interpretation also affects the desire to remain within the country of origin or to remigrate temporarily or permanently.

Depending on the sustainability of return, several categories of migrants are usually identified:

- a) migrants permanently returned to the country of origin with the idea of remaining there for the rest of their lives;
- b) temporarily "returning" migrants who are planning to leave again;
- c) "circular migrants", who alternate between periods of stay abroad and remaining home.

According to the migrants' initial intentions, several categories are distinguished (King, 2000):

- "Migrants with a purpose" who are leaving their home country with the intention to return and who actually return. They have specific plans and return after achieving the goal placed behind their mobility (education, earning a certain amount of money, buying property, performing specific activities/tasks, etc.).
- Migrants with the intention of permanent emigration who nevertheless return. Reasons for remigration could be external and coercive, personal or family, favorable changes in the country of origin or deterioration of the situation in the destination country.
- Migrants who intend to stay abroad temporarily and who do not return (for example, students who remain in the host country or labour migrants who have not planned but have decided to stay permanently in the host country).
- Migrants who are leaving with the intention of not returning.

Empirical evidence confirms the existence of a relation between migrants' initial projects and the time horizon of return (Mintchev, Boshnakov, 2018, p. 56-62), but this relation shall not be read in absolute terms as some considerable discrepancies are registered between departure intentions and actual migratory behavior (Table 3).

Table 3

Initial migration projects and return sustainability (%)

	Initial intention- permanently	Initial intention- temporarily	No specific intention	Total
I would like to stay in Bulgaria	42.4	63.6	51.8	59.7
I would like to leave again permanently	36.4	7.1	20.5	12.1
I would like to leave again temporarily	21.2	29.4	27.7	28.2

Based upon the empirical data, several conclusions concerning the returning migrants' dilemma of "staying or going back" can be drawn:

First, returning migrants, who intend to remain permanently in Bulgaria prevail – their share is 59.7%. The share of returning migrants with the intention of remaining permanently in Bulgaria is the highest among those who were initially oriented to temporary emigration – 63.6%. Among those intending to leave forever, this share is by 21.2 percentage points lower (42.4%), and among those who did not have clear migration plans – by 11.8 percentage points lower (51.8%). However, it is noticeable that the original migration projects are subject to reconsideration and do not explicitly define subsequent migratory behavior.

Second, the stay in Bulgaria is only a phase of mobility for 28.2% of returning migrants who intend to leave again, but temporarily and without seeking to settle permanently abroad. The share of returnees who have seasonal employment is 22.7%. Attitudes to new temporary migration remain relatively stable among returning migrants, irrespective of their original projects. Their share ranges between 21.2% for people oriented towards permanent leave and 29.4% – towards temporary migration.

Third, the category of returnees who intend to emigrate permanently is 12.1%. The strongest desire for new and final emigration is registered among returning migrants who, still at the first migration, intend to leave the country permanently (36.4%). The most likely explanatory hypothesis for their return is the failure so far in the implementation of their migration plans or the emergence of specific circumstances that have imposed temporary residence in Bulgaria. For almost a third of the returnees (31.5%), remigration is caused by some objective economic, family or personal circumstances (migrant or relatives' disease, care for elderly parents, children or grandchildren, loss of work, termination or expiration of employment contract, expiry of a visa or a legal stay permit, etc.).

Forth, the category of "successful migrants" who have had specific plans (education, earning a specific amount of money, buying property, performing a specific activity/task, etc.) and return after their goals completion is markedly visible. Achieving the goals, which provoke initial migration, has been pointed as a motive for return by 40.7% of the remigrants (as the first reason – 21.2%, second – 12.9% and third – 6.6%). Almost three-quarters of the surveyed returnees (74.5%) respond positively to the question: "Did you manage to achieve the goals behind your decision to migrate?".

The data reaffirms the existence of a significant group of migrants who are not oriented towards an irrevocable exit from the country, but instrumentalize migration as a means of achieving certain goals ("migrants with a purpose", according to the King's above-mentioned typology). They largely represent the contingent of migrants who are likely to return to Bulgaria after accomplishing upward social and economic mobility.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn regarding the reasons and the sustainability of the remigration carried out by Bulgarian migrants:

Firstly, return increasingly becomes only a moment or phase of the migratory movements that can not be interpreted as one-way or final. At the same time, although many migrants prefer short-term, circular or temporary mobility, the majority of surveyed returnees express a desire for remaining permanently in Bulgaria.

Secondly, there are significant differences in motivation when it comes to initial migration and returns. The main reasons for the initial departure are mostly of an economic character and are closely related to the motivational set "jobs – income – living standard". Among the reasons for return, the family motivations are the most important – affection for the family in Bulgaria, desire to be with children and participate in their raising and education, care duties towards older or sick relatives and others. The social and emotional motives are also

relevant, both in terms of pull factors (mainly defined as “nostalgia”) and of push factors in the host country (such as difficulties in adaptation and the reluctance to live abroad).

Thirdly, significant is the share of "successful migrants" who have had specific plans and have returned after their accomplishment. Almost three-quarters of the returning migrants perceive themselves as having succeeded in achieving the goals that motivated their departure. For them, the undertaken mobility bears a positive personal meaning, leads to an upward social and economic mobility and increases the likelihood for a permanent return to Bulgaria.

Fourthly, the return has not been motivated by the governmental policies, which seem to be ineffective. Adequate policies for return and reintegration into the public, economic and political life of returnees still have to be developed and implemented.

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