

(RE) INTEGRATION OF RETURNING MIGRANTS INTO THE ECONOMIC LIFE IN BULGARIA

The paper addresses issues related to the impact of external migration on the labour market in Bulgaria, with a focus on returning migrants and their participation in the labour market in the country. The study is based on data from a representative national survey conducted in 2017. Characteristic of the labour status of migrants as a whole and by separate groups is made. A comparative assessment of the employment status before the first departure and after the last return is done. Main problems for the participation of migrants in the labour market in Bulgaria and the need to support their reintegration into the economic life in the country are identified.

JEL: J62; J24

There are a number of studies in the literature on the problems, related to returning migrants, various aspects of which became an object of study in the 1980s, including such, concerning their reintegration upon return. Since the beginning of this century, more attention has been paid to the impact of external migration, including that of the returning migrants, on the development of the sending countries.

The results of theoretical and empirical studies show that external migration processes have both positive and negative effects on the labour market in the sending countries. Returning migrants can affect the size of the labour force. The return of skilled migrants can increase the human capital and the transfer of knowledge and skills, while that of low-skilled and de-qualified (who have lowered or have lost qualification abroad) has the opposite effect and creates a need for their additional training in order to participate in the local market. Many migrants have problems finding a job on their return. Some of them start their own businesses or become self-employed. In a number of cases, however, the amount of their savings is not sufficient to take larger initiatives in this direction.

Important for the impact of returning migrants on the local labour market is the type of migration – whether it is long-term or short-term. Long-term migrants are more likely to accumulate savings and acquire new skills abroad. In many cases, however, upon their return, they look for a job in another economic sector than the one in which they were employed

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before leaving, often becoming self-employed. Short-term migration can also lead to negative effects on the balance of the labour market, both in terms of supply and demand.

Various investigations, conducted during the last years by Bulgarian researchers, based on the results of representative surveys, are dedicated to the issues of returning Bulgarian migrants. Some of them are focused on the reasons behind the migratory behaviour and outline economic and non-economic motives for departure and return, as well the future plans of migrants (see for example Nonchev, 2019; Boshnakov, 2019; Bakalova, Misheva, 2018). Others examine the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants (Mintchev, Boshnakov, 2018). The effects of migrants return on the labour market in Bulgaria, and the policies for encouraging the return are also a subject of investigation (including by the author of this article). The studies demonstrate that returnees often have difficulties to integrate into the labour market in the country. With the existing regulatory framework, priorities and policies outlined in the strategic documents regarding the return and (re)integration of Bulgarian migrants into the economic and social life in the country, they are not sufficiently supported by concrete activities for effective implementation.

The goal of this paper is to elucidate the integration of returning migrants into the economic life in Bulgaria and to outline some of the main problems for their participation in the labour market based on analysis of official statistical data and of results of a representative national survey, conducted in 2017.²

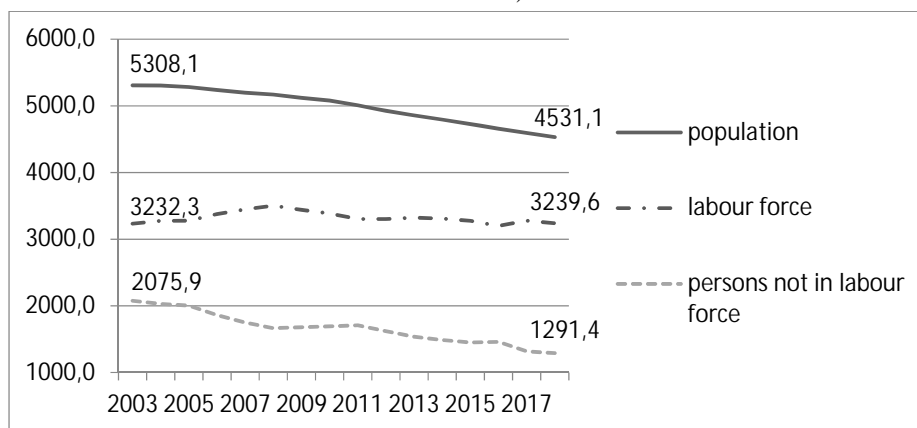
Economically active population, labour force and migration

According to NSI data, for the period 2003-2018 the number of working-age population in Bulgaria has decreased by 545.6 thousand persons – from 4.75 to 4.2 million, with the increase of the upper age limit for women by 4 years and 2 months and for men – by 2 years and 1 month.

There has been a decrease by 777 thousand persons in the last 15 years in the population aged 15-64 – from 5.3 to 4.5 million, and in that aged 15-34 – by 601 thousand (from 2.1 to 1.5 million). Despite the observed fluctuations, the number of the labour force remains almost unchanged over the period, staying at about 3.2 million people. This is due to the drop in the number of persons outside the labour force by more than 784 thousand (Figure 1). After the economic crisis, since 2013, the rates of economic activity and of employment in the country have been increasing constantly. However, the labour force below the age of 35 has decreased by nearly 265 thousand persons – from 1.1 to 0.87 million. The increase in the rates of economic activity and of employment of young people under 35 is more unstable.

² The survey was conducted within the framework of the project "Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility", funded by the Scientific Research Fund, Fundamental Scientific Research Funding Competition – 2016, implemented by a team of researchers, a member of which is the author, from the Economic Research Institute at BAS and the University of National and World Economy.

Figure 1
Population aged 15-64, labour force and persons outside the labour force (number in thousands)



Source: NSI.

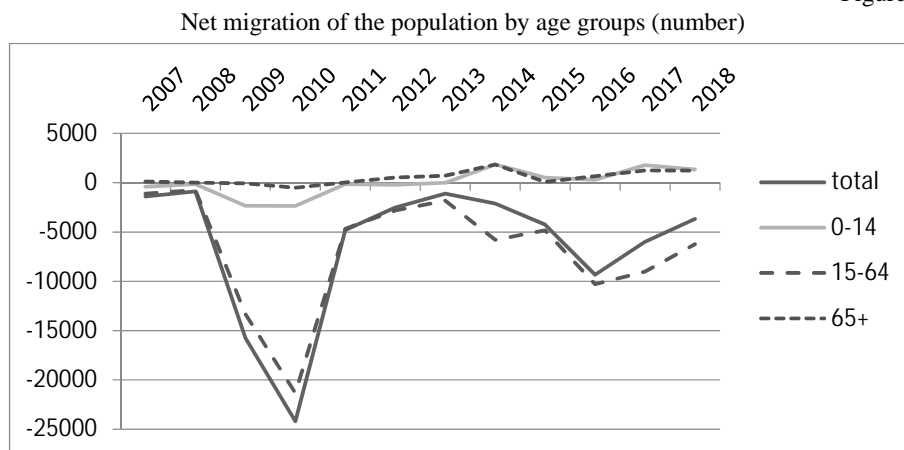
The decrease in population is determined to a greater extent by the negative natural growth, but also by the negative net migration. Bulgaria is a country characterised by continuous negative net migration over the last more than ten years. It is expected that this trend will continue. According to Eurostat forecasts, a reversal of the trend and achievement of positive net migration is expected by 2030.

According to current NSI statistics³, for the period 2007-2018, the country has lost about 82 thousand persons from the economically active population aged 15-64 as a result of the negative net migration. A positive net migration is observed in the population aged 65 and over (leaving the labour market) almost throughout the period. A positive tendency, after the reversal of the trend in 2014, is the positive net migration of children up to the age of 14, as a potential labour force (Figure 2).

Due to negative net migration, Bulgaria has lost over 93.7 thousand Bulgarian citizens for the period 2012-2018, despite the growing number of Bulgarians returning to the country (over 68 thousand persons in total for the period) and their rising share in the total number of immigrants in the country – from 35 to 55% (Figure 3). Unfortunately, national statistics do not provide information on the socio-economic characteristics of this group of migrants.

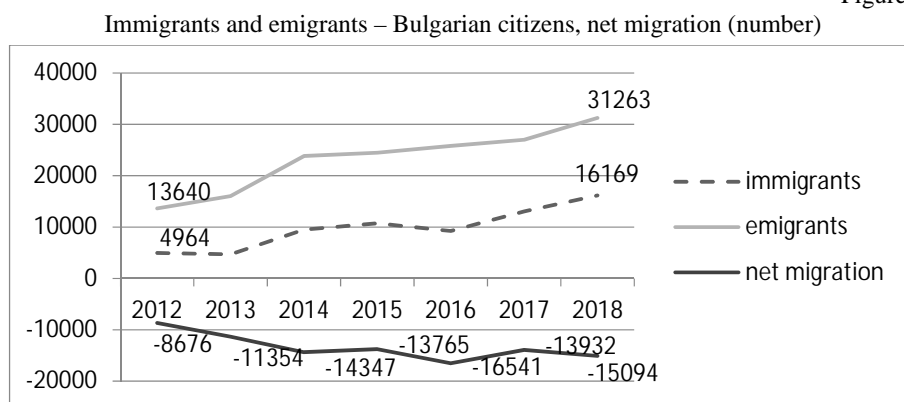
³ Data only on persons who have declared change of their present address in the country for a new one outside it or change of an address abroad for a new one in the country.

Figure 2



Source: NSI, current statistics.

Figure 3



Source: NSI, current statistics.

The number of settlers with Bulgarian citizenship has increased in recent years from 4 to nearly 13 thousand persons annually. This change, however, does not have any significant impact on the country's labour force, as it can be seen from the table below, due to their small number (Table 1).

Table 1
Population aged 15-64, labour force and settlers with Bulgarian citizenship aged 10-69*
(number in thousands)

Indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Population	4923.6	4859.2	4795.6	4726.6	4658.8	4595.2	4531.1
Labour force	3303.9	3322.7	3308.7	3276.0	3199.6	3277.5	3239.6
Settlers	4.2	4.1	8.4	9.5	7.9	10.4	12.7

* the interval 10-69 for settlers is because data on the settlers are reported by age groups of ten years

Source: NSI.

The net migration of Bulgarian children aged 0-9 was negative until 2016. It has already been positive over the last two years of the period, due to the more significant increase in the number of children that have settled. As a whole, 8766 children have settled in the country and 8924 have moved out. Further increase in the number of settling children and the maintenance of positive net migration would have a favourable impact both in demographic terms and on the country's labour force.

As a result of external migration processes and long-term negative net migration, Bulgaria is losing a significant number of its economically active population. The positive net migration of the population over 65 has an impact not so much on the labour market but on the social system of the country. The net migration of the Bulgarian citizens who have settled in Bulgaria has remained negative in recent years. Despite the increasing number of settlers with Bulgarian citizenship, it is not yet large enough to have a tangible impact on the country's labour force.

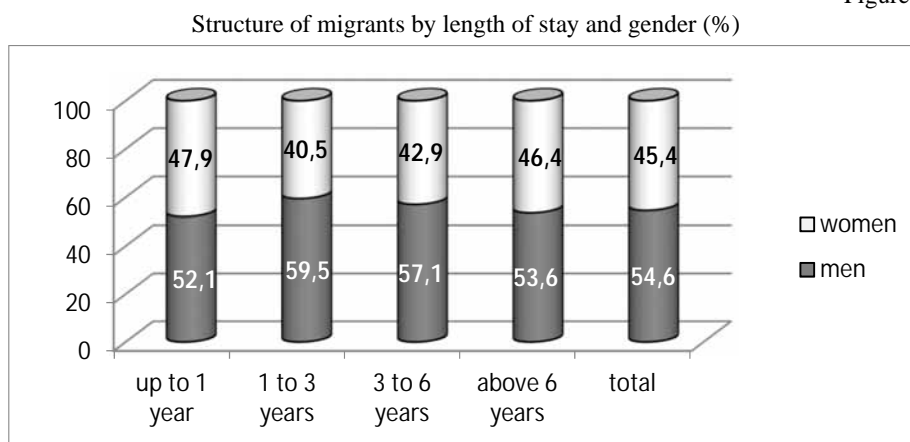
Returning Migrants in the Labour Market in Bulgaria – Empirical Evidences

The results from the quantitative survey conducted in 2017 within the framework of the project "Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility" show that the majority of persons who have resided abroad for more than three months are economically active (about 90%), with about one-third of them under 35 years of age. Over the age of 65 are 9.6%.

The larger share of returning migrants have resided abroad for less than 1 year – about 60%, among which prevail those aged up to 35, with completed vocational and higher education, men. The characteristics of long-term migrants, with some specifics, are similar. About half of those who have resided abroad between 3 and 6 years are of the age group 46-65 (52.4%), and with over 6 years stay – are of the age group 56 and over (48.8%).

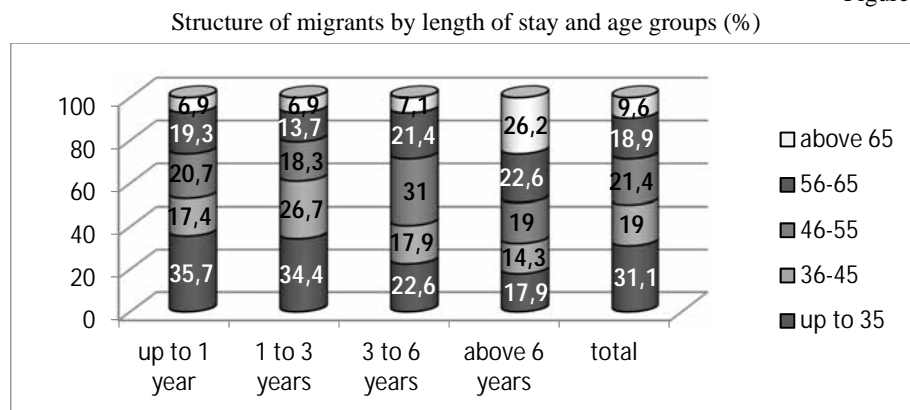
The majority of migrants are men, the share of which is obviously larger among the long-term migrants (Figure 4).

Figure 4



Largest is the share of migrants under the age of 35. However, with the increase in the length of stay abroad, the share of the older age groups rises. One explanation for this phenomenon is that some of the young people resided abroad for the purpose of education and training. Just over 3% of all respondents claim that the reason for their first departure abroad was to get the desired education. The majority of people over 45 have resided abroad for more than 3 years (Figure 5). The return of young people to the country, if permanent, would have a positive effect on the economically active population and the labour force.

Figure 5

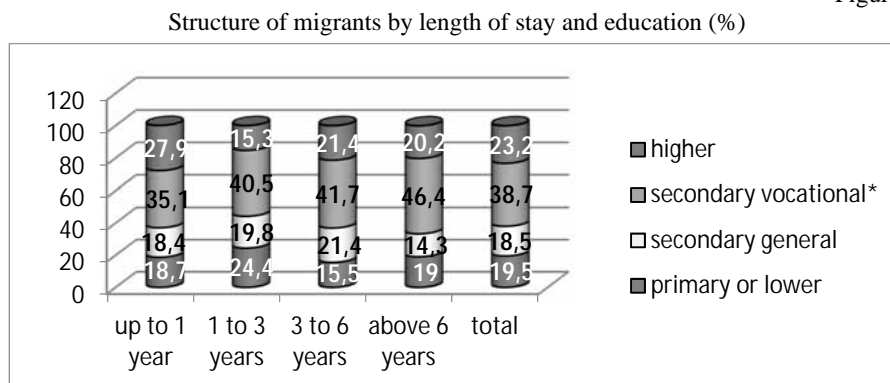


Nearly two-thirds of migrants have completed vocational and higher education (Figure 6). There are no significant differences in their educational structure before the first departure from the country and after their last return. The share of higher education graduates has

increased by 3.3 percentage points at the expense of the decrease in the share of persons with secondary education, which is determined by the residence of some of the respondents abroad for the purpose of education.

The migration of persons with such education has an unfavourable effect on the quality of the labour force in the country and on the balance of the labour market in this respect. Their short-term migration implies that there is no adequate employment to their qualification and payment in the country, which in turn is a condition for subsequent migration. Leaving the country for a long time is, on the one hand, an evidence that there are greater opportunities for realisation abroad of such educated people, but on the other hand, it is a prerequisite for lowering/losing qualifications of some migrants or for its inadequacy to the current market demand in Bulgaria. With a predominant share of returning migrants with secondary vocational and higher education, a number of studies among employers show that they face serious difficulties in finding the skilled professionals they need.

Figure 6



* including education after high school (semi-higher)

On their return to Bulgaria, the majority of migrants are employed, mostly full-time or part-time, and about 9% start their own business or become self-employed. However, a quarter of them remains unemployed.

Among the returnees, the share of employed men – hired or self-employed, is higher than that of women. Among women, the share of pensioners is much higher and the percentage of unemployed is more significant compared to those of men (Table 2).

Characteristic of the employment status of migrants by age groups is the decrease in the share of employees over 55 and the increase in the number of pensioners. Largest is the share of persons with their own businesses and self-employed aged 36-45. The percentage of the unemployed increases with the increase of age up to the group 56-65 years, where it starts to decrease. For persons over 65, the share of pensioners exceeds 72% and there are no self-employed or persons with their own business among them.

Table 2
Labour status of migrants upon their return to Bulgaria by gender, age groups, education and length of stay abroad (%)

Labour status Group of migrants	Hired full- time	Hired part- time	Student	Pensioner	Own business	Self- employed	Unemployed	No respond
Total	47.0	3.5	2.5	11.9	5.8	3.5	25.2	0.6
Man	52.7	2.1	3.0	5.2	7.6	4.8	24.2	0.3
Woman	40.1	5.1	1.8	20.1	3.6	1.8	26.3	1.1
Up to 35 years	52.1	4.3	7.4	-	5.9	3.2	27.1	-
36-45 years	53.0	4.3	0.9	-	8.7	5.2	27.8	-
46-55 years	52.7	3.1	-	3.1	7.0	4.7	28.7	0.8
56-65 years	42.1	2.6	-	22.8	4.4	2.6	23.7	1.8
Above 65 years	15.5	1.7	-	72.4	-	-	8.6	1.7
Primary or lower education	37.3	4.2	0.8	16.9	-	3.4	36.4	0.8
Secondary general education	38.4	3.6	4.5	10.7	6.3	3.6	32.1	0.9
Secondary vocational education*	51.7	3.0	2.6	10.3	8.1	3.8	20.1	0.4
Higher education	54.3	3.6	2.1	11.4	6.4	2.9	18.6	0.7
Up to 1 year stay abroad	53.4	3.6	4.6	9.2	3.3	3.0	22.0	1.0
1 to 3 years	43.5	5.3	-	7.6	6.9	4.6	31.3	0.8
3 to 6 years	44.0	1.2	1.2	13.1	11.9	3.6	25.0	-
More than 6 years	32.1	2.4	-	27.4	7.1	3.6	27.4	-

* including education after high school (semi-higher)

Migrants with secondary vocational and higher education have the best opportunities to participate in the labour market in Bulgaria; among them, the share of the employed (hired, persons with their own business and self-employed) is largest and of the unemployed – smallest. Highest is the percentage of the unemployed among persons with primary or lower education.

With the increase in the length of stay abroad, the share of hired returnees decreases, but that of persons with their own businesses and self-employed, as well as of pensioners and unemployed increases. For migrants with over 6 years stay abroad, the share of hired persons is the lowest – below 35%, of self-employed and of those with their own businesses – just over 10% in total, and pensioners and unemployed have equal shares (27.4% each). More than a quarter of the long-term migrants return when they retire and another quarter of them cannot find a job in Bulgaria after they return.

The comparison between the labour status of migrants before their departure and after their return provides a more complete picture of changes in their employment/labour realisation and the effects of migration on it. The prevailing part of those who were hired (full or part-time) before their departure, remain so after they return. Not a high percentage of them develop their own businesses or become self-employed (just over 7% in total). About one-fifth remain unemployed. Of the students, about a quarter continue to study and as many become unemployed. Of the unemployed, one-third manage to find a job, 10% start their own business or become self-employed, and over 45% remain unemployed (Table 3).

Table 3
Labour status of migrants before their first departure and upon their return to Bulgaria (%)

Labour status before the first departure	Labour status upon last return to Bulgaria								Total
	Hired full-time	Hired part-time	Student	Pensioner	Own business	Self-employed	Unemployed	Not responded	
Hired full-time	65.9	1.3	0.3	7.0	5.4	1.9	17.5	0.6	100.0
Hired part-time	35.0	40.0	-	5.0	-	-	20.0	-	100.0
Student	30.2	4.7	25.6	-	9.3	7.0	23.3	-	100.0
Pensioner	3.2	-	-	96.8	-	-	-	-	100.0
Own business	16.7	-	-	-	41.7	-	33.3	8.3	100.0
Self-employed	30.0	10.0	-	10.0	10.0	40.0	-	-	100.0
Unemployed	29.2	3.0	1.8	10.7	4.8	4.8	45.2	0.6	100.0
Not responded	33.3	16.7	-	-	-	-	50.0	-	100.0

The data show that a significant percentage of those who were employed, as well as of those who were students before departure, remain unemployed after their return. The share of the unemployed who after their stay abroad cannot find a job in Bulgaria is also considerable. Some of the returning migrants start their own businesses or become self-employed.

The comparative analysis highlights another characteristic of migrants who, upon their return, start their own businesses or become self-employed. Most of them were hired or unemployed, as well as students prior to their departure. Only 14.3% of start-ups and 19% of those who are self-employed had the same employment before leaving (Table 4). Such changes in employment are another evidence of the problems for the reintegration of returnees. Having difficulty finding a job, some of them try to start their own business or to become self-employed.

In regard to the field of employment (economic activities), upon their return, migrants mainly work in trade, construction, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing and transport (Table 5). Significant discrepancies are observed in the employment of migrants by economic activities in Bulgaria – before departure and after their return, and abroad. The share of employed persons abroad in construction, agriculture, hotels and restaurants, as well as in the activities of households is significantly higher compared to their employment in Bulgaria before the first departure and after their return. The share of the employed in manufacturing, agriculture,

transport, as well as in education and healthcare upon their return to the country is lower than that before their first departure.

Table 4
Labour status before the first departure of migrants who have their own business or become self-employed on their last return (%)

Labour status before the first departure	Labour status upon last return to Bulgaria	
	Own business	Self-employed
Hired full-time	48.6	28.6
Hired part-time	-	-
Student	11.4	14.3
Pensioner	-	-
Own business	14.3	-
Self-employed	2.9	19.0
Unemployed	22.9	38.1
Not responded	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 5
Structure of employment of migrants by economic activities upon their return to Bulgaria (%)

Economic activities	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1.0
Mining and quarrying	0.3
Manufacturing	5.5
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0.2
Construction	8.8
Trade, repairs	9.6
Hotels and restaurants	6.0
Transportation, warehousing and postal services	5.1
Information and communication	2.2
Financial and insurance activities	1.0
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2.8
Administrative and support service activities	1.8
Public administration	0.5
Education	1.8
Human health and social work activities	1.3
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2.0
Other activities	1.2
Housekeeping activities (care for elderly, ill persons and children against charge)	0.8
Not defined	7.9
Did not work	39.4

As concerns migrant occupations, largest is the share of those who work as service and sales workers, followed by the one of craft and related trade workers and of elementary occupations – low-skilled personnel, without a specific occupation (Table 6).

Table 6

Structure of returning migrants by occupation (%)

Occupation	Upon the last return to Bulgaria
Did not work	40.0
Managers	6.3
Professionals	6.1
Technicians and associate professionals	5.3
Clerical and support workers	4.3
Service and sales workers	14.1
Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers	1.2
Craft and related trade workers	10.8
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	4.1
Elementary occupations (low-skilled personnel, without a specific occupation)	7.8

Some peculiarities can be outlined from the comparison of migrants' occupations before departure and after their return. One-fifth of those who were managers before departure are non-working upon their return and as many work as service and sales workers. Highest is the percentage of non-working persons, and lowest is the level of correspondence between the occupations of persons who were skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers. Highest is the level of correspondence for professionals as well as for craft and related trade workers (Table 7).

Other specifics that emerge from such a comparison are that 31.6% of the respondents, who stated that they are managers after their return, did not work before leaving the country, 15.8% were service and sales workers, and as many (15.8%) – managers. Of those who are employed as skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers, 42.9% did not work before leaving Bulgaria, and only 14.3% held the same position. Of the persons without a specific occupation, 51.1% were employed on the same position before departure, and 30% did not work.

More than a quarter of the respondents claim that they have worked abroad in jobs that do not correspond to their qualification, i.e. their qualification was higher than required for the job (Table 8). The discrepancy between acquired qualification and occupied position is a prerequisite for a decrease/loss of qualification, which presupposes difficulties for the participation of migrants in the labour market in Bulgaria and necessity for additional training, leads to negative consequences for the quality of the labour force and the balance of the labour market in Bulgaria.

Table 7

Structure of returning migrants by occupation before the first departure and upon last return to Bulgaria (%)

Occupation before the first departure from Bulgaria	Occupation upon last return to Bulgaria										Total
	Did not work	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and associate professionals	Clerical and support workers	Service and sales workers	Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers	Craft and related trade workers	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Elementary occupations	
Did not work	61.0	5.2	4.3	2.2	2.2	9.5	1.3	6.9	1.3	6.1	100.0
Managers	20.0	40.0	-	6.7	6.7	20.0	-	6.7	-	-	100.0
Professionals	16.7	8.3	63.9	-	5.6	5.6	-	-	-	-	100.0
Technicians and associate professionals	22.9	8.6	5.7	42.9	8.6	2.9	2.9	-	-	5.7	100.0
Clerical and support workers	23.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	42.9	9.5	-	-	4.8	4.8	100.0
Service and sales workers	30.0	6.7	1.1	2.2	5.6	44.4	-	2.2	4.4	3.3	100.0
Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers	44.4	11.1	-	11.1	-	11.1	11.1	-	-	11.1	100.0
Craft and related trade workers	32.3	-	-	4.8	-	4.8	1.6	56.5	-	-	100.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	20.5	9.1	-	6.8	2.3	4.5	-	15.9	36.4	4.5	100.0
Elementary occupations	30.0	3.3	-	1.7	-	15.0	1.7	6.7	1.7	40.0	100.0

Table 8

Conformity of migrants' qualification to the work they perform on their last return to Bulgaria – structure by gender, education, age groups and length of stay abroad (%)

Groups of migrants	Yes	Qualification is lower	Qualification is higher	Not working	No respond
Total	51.0	3.0	8.9	34.3	2.8
Man	57.6	3.6	7.9	27.3	3.6
Woman	43.1	2.2	10.2	42.7	1.8
Primary or lower education	39.8	8.5	1.7	48.3	1.7
Secondary general education	45.5	1.8	6.3	41.1	5.4
Secondary vocational education	56.4	2.1	9.8	29.1	2.6
Higher education	55.7	0.7	15.7	25.7	2.1
Up to 35 years	50.5	3.2	11.7	31.4	3.2
36-45 years	60.0	5.2	9.6	23.5	1.7
46-55 years	54.3	3.9	10.1	26.4	5.4
56-65 years	53.5	0.9	6.1	37.7	1.8
Over 65 years	22.4	-	1.7	75.9	-
Up to 1 year stay abroad	55.4	2.3	8.2	31.8	2.3
1 to 3 years	51.1	4.6	6.9	35.1	2.3
3 to 6 years	47.6	3.6	11.9	32.1	4.8
More than 6 years	38.1	2.4	11.9	44.0	3.6

Although to a much lesser extent, there is also a discrepancy between the qualification acquired and the position held by migrants after their return to Bulgaria. Such discrepancy is observed more frequently among women, persons of lower age groups and long-term migrants – with a stay abroad for more than 3 years. Men and migrants with shorter stays abroad – less than 3 years, have a more adequate participation in the labour market. For persons with secondary vocational and higher education, the share of those whose qualification corresponds to the work performed is highest, but the share of workers in places requiring lower qualification is also significant (Table 8).

Nearly 28% of migrants claim that they have not acquired any skills during their stay abroad or have even lost them, which does not lead to positive effects on the quality of the labour force in Bulgaria upon their return. At the same time, half of them have learned a foreign language, almost 20% say they have improved their qualification, and 30.2% believe they have learned to work better in a team.

Higher is the share among migrants, who consider themselves to have raised their qualification, of men, people with higher education, aged between 36 and 55 years, with a length of stay abroad exceeding 3 years. Those who claim that they have not acquired any skills are mostly women, over 45 years of age, with primary and secondary general education, with a stay abroad of less than 1 year. The share of young people and respondents with secondary vocational and higher education, however, is also significant (Table 9). Business contacts are mainly created by highly educated migrants, under 45, with a stay abroad of more than 3 years.

Table 9

Skills acquired by migrants broad –
structure by gender, education, age groups and length of stay abroad (%)

Groups of migrants	Learned foreign language	Raised qualification	Improved education	Created new business contacts	learn to work better in a team	Other	Did not acquire any skills	Not only did not acquire skills but even lost them
Man	48.8	24.8	1.8	11.2	34.2	3.3	25.2	0.9
Woman	51.3	12.5	3.3	10.3	25.3	6.2	28.2	1.5
Primary or lower education	47.0	16.2	0.9	2.6	35.0	0.9	29.9	0.9
Secondary general education	42.9	9.8	0.9	9.8	33.0	4.5	30.4	1.8
Secondary vocational education	57.3	18.8	0.0	8.5	26.9	4.3	26.9	0.0
Higher education	45.7	30.0	9.3	22.1	29.3	8.6	20.0	2.9
Up to 35 years	44.7	20.7	5.9	13.3	41.5	6.4	21.3	2.7
36-45 years	51.3	22.6	2.6	13.9	33.0	4.3	25.2	0.9
46-55 years	54.3	21.7	0.0	9.3	24.8	3.1	31.8	0.0
56-65 years	53.1	14.2	0.0	8.8	23.9	3.5	26.5	0.0
Over 65 years	48.3	12.1	1.7	3.4	12.1	5.2	34.5	1.7
Up to 1 year stay abroad	33.4	12.8	0.7	8.9	23.3	4.9	38.7	2.0
1 to 3 years	59.5	19.1	3.1	9.9	42.7	3.8	18.3	0.0
3 to 6 years	71.4	28.6	3.6	13.1	35.7	2.4	13.1	0.0
More than 6 years	73.5	33.7	7.2	16.9	30.1	7.2	8.4	1.2

The new knowledge and skills acquired by migrants, on the one hand, would have a positive impact on the labour force and the labour market if implemented in Bulgaria. On the other hand, they create better opportunities for future realisation of migrants abroad and are a prerequisite for a subsequent new departure – 40% of the respondents would like to leave again permanently or temporarily abroad.

Problems for the participation of migrants in the labour market are also caused by the fact that upon their return, they do not have a pre-arranged job. Nearly three-quarters of them had no proposals for suitable work before returning to the country. The majority of migrants who received a job offer are men, with vocational and higher education, and with a shorter stays abroad – less than one year (Table 10).

Table 10

Share of migrants who received a job offer in Bulgaria before their last return – structure by gender, education, age groups and length of stay abroad (%)

Groups of migrants	Yes	No	No respond
Man	60.8	52.7	50.0
Woman	39.2	47.3	50.0
Primary or lower education	10.5	22.0	30.0
Secondary general education	12.6	20.2	25.0
Secondary vocational education	40.6	39.1	20.0
Higher education	36.4	18.6	25.0
Up to 35 years	25.9	32.0	50.0
36-45 years	21.0	18.6	10.0
46-55 years	24.5	21.1	5.0
56-65 years	24.5	17.3	15.0
Over 65 years	4.2	10.9	20.0
Up to 1 year stay abroad	62.2	47.0	40.0
1 to 3 years	21.0	22.0	20.0
3 to 6 years	11.2	15.2	5.0
More than 6 years	5.6	15.7	35.0

Due to lack of a pre-arranged job, the discrepancy between acquired qualification and labour market demand in the country, decrease in qualification abroad and other reasons, over a quarter (25.4%) of migrants need help finding a job on their return in Bulgaria. More than one-third of the respondents claim they have no savings from their stay abroad, which is likely to cause 9% of them to need financial support, and 10% need psychological support.

Mainly persons with low education, aged 46-65, and long-term migrants are in need of assistance in finding employment. More women and persons who resided abroad for a short-term need financial support, and women and long-term migrants need psychological help (Table 11).

Table 11

Need for support upon the last return of migrants to Bulgaria – structure by gender, education, age groups and length of stay abroad (%)

Groups of migrants	Financial	For housing	For education of children	For finding a job	Psychological support	Other	I didn't need any support
Man	6.7	3.0	1.5	24.5	8.2	2.4	61.8
Woman	11.7	5.5	1.1	26.4	12.1	0.7	54.2
Primary or lower education	8.5	5.1	1.7	34.2	9.4	0.9	54.7
Secondary general education	7.1	1.8	1.8	20.5	10.7	0.0	65.2
Secondary vocational education	9.8	3.8	0.9	27.8	8.1	2.6	54.3
Higher education	9.3	5.7	1.4	17.9	12.9	2.1	62.9
Up to 35 years	11.7	6.4	0.0	21.8	10.6	1.6	57.4
36-45 years	7.0	4.3	0.9	27.8	8.7	2.6	58.3
46-55 years	7.0	3.1	3.9	31.8	8.5	0.8	55.8
56-65 years	12.4	3.5	1.8	31.9	11.5	1.8	50.4
Over 65 years	1.7	0.0	0.0	5.2	10.3	1.7	82.8
Up to 1 year stay abroad	13.8	3.9	1.0	21.6	8.2	1.6	61.3
1 to 3 years	3.1	3.1	0.0	35.1	12.2	0.8	51.1
3 to 6 years	6.0	7.1	4.8	32.1	6.0	2.4	53.6
More than 6 years	3.6	3.6	1.2	16.9	16.9	2.4	63.9

In general, women, low-educated persons, persons in pre-retirement age and long-term migrants with a stay of more than 6 years abroad are more in need of support upon their return to Bulgaria. These groups face greater difficulties in their reintegration into economic and social life in the country.

Conclusions

The majority of Bulgarian migrants are economically active persons, a large share of which are under 35 years of age. Their departure abroad creates prerequisites for a reduction in the labour force and in labour supply – for long as it concerns long-term migration and for a certain period of time in respect of short-term migration. The return of economically active persons would have a positive impact on the labour force, in case it is permanent. However, a large share of returnees, mainly economically active persons, intend to go abroad again.

According to the results of the empirical study, the majority of migrants have a short stay abroad – less than one year. The highest share of migrants is under 45, with a stay abroad of less than three years. The problems with the adequate realisation of young people in the

labour market in Bulgaria, including university graduates, are one of the main reasons for their departure abroad, as well as a barrier to their return. A shorter stay abroad, however, also unfavourably affects the balance of the labour market as well as the long-term one.

Upon their return to Bulgaria, one-quarter of the migrants identify themselves as unemployed, including persons with secondary vocational and higher education. Long-term migrants are more affected in this respect. Difficulties in their realisation in the labour market are created by changes in their employment by economic activities in Bulgaria and abroad; loss of qualification abroad due to employment in jobs that do not correspond to their qualification; lack of a pre-arranged workplace upon their return; and others. These problems force some of the returnees to work without a labour contract or in jobs that do not correspond to their qualification.

Not a small share of migrants claim that they have not acquired any skills abroad and even that they have lost, which makes it difficult for them to find a suitable job in Bulgaria. Some of them manage to improve their qualification abroad, to gain new knowledge and professional experience, which, if properly implemented in Bulgaria, would have a positive impact on the quality of the labour force and the balance of the labour market in the country. A large share of returning migrants, however, state they would like to go abroad again. These are predominantly persons under the age of 40, with secondary vocational and higher education.

Due to the problems with their reintegration into the labour market and the economic life in Bulgaria, not a small share of the returning migrants need job-finding assistance, as well as financial and psychological support.

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