

RETURNING MIGRANTS – SUCCESS OR FAILURE³

The article examines the returning Bulgarian migrants in terms of the net result of their migration movements, perceived as successful or unsuccessful. The main criterion for assessing the success of the migration is the self-assessment of remigrants for the degree of achievement of the initial departure goals. The understanding of their quantitative and qualitative dimensions is specified by taking into account the nature of the motives for the initial departure from the country, the reasons and the sustainability of the return. The factors for success or failure, as well as the social profile of successful and unsuccessful remigrants are analyzed. The accomplished upward or downward social mobility of the returned migrants is thematized, taking into account both subjective (self-perceptions of the returned migrants) and objective indicators for assessing the changes in their socio-economic status and quality of life.
JEL: A14; F22; J61

1. Research Methodology

This paper presents selected findings of an empirical study based on a national quantitative survey implemented within the scientific project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”. It was conducted among 604 migrants, who returned to Bulgaria at the age of 18 and higher in nine districts of the country: Sofia-city, Plovdiv, Varna, Pleven, Stara Zagora, Dobrich, Kardjali, Yambol and Montana, located in all administrative planning areas (South West, South Central, South East, North East, North Central, and North West) and in different types of settlements (capital city, district city, small town, village).

The scope of the survey population is determined by two main criteria: a) Bulgarian adults who have worked once or repeatedly abroad for three months or more in the last 10 years or have resided outside Bulgaria for the purpose of education, caring for the household of

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relatives abroad, caring for children, accompanying a family member; b) persons, who have returned permanently to Bulgaria or are returning periodically due to the nature of their work.

The method of collecting information is a direct standardized interview (face to face) at the respondent's home. The fieldwork was carried out in the period 28.10.2017 – 20.11.2017.

2. Achievement of Goals, Reasons for and Sustainability of Return

Returning from migration is considered in the overall context of international mobility either as a moment or as an end. Migration movements and return, in particular, are characterized by their complexity, diversity and dynamics. Numerous and sometimes contradictory theoretical explanations of migration attempt to capture the heterogeneity, overlap, and variability of both the reasons for migratory movements and their socio-economic effects (Krsteva, 2014). Despite the extreme diversity of migration processes, the return can generally be interpreted from two perspectives (Piore, 1979; Bartram et al., 2014, p. 121-124).

First, return as a success. Migrants go abroad with the intention of returning after having achieved the goals of their migration project. In this case, the return is an indication of its success.

Second, return as a failure. In cases when the goals of migration have not been achieved, the return to the country of origin can be perceived as a failure.

This distinction is also empirically registered in relation to migrants returning to Bulgaria. The motive for the return "I did what I left for" is indicated by 40.7% of the remigrants (as a first reason – by 21.2%, as a second – by 12.9%, and as a third – by 6.6%). Almost 3/4 of the respondents (74.5%) give a positive answer to the question "Did you manage to achieve what you went abroad for?". The remaining 26% are not satisfied with what they have achieved during their stay abroad. The category of "successful migrants" who had specific plans (training, earning a certain amount of money, acquiring property, performing a specific activity/task, etc.) and return after their completion stands out.

Estimates of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the "successful-failed" remigrants ratio can be refined, taking into account the objectives of the initial departure, the causes and sustainability of the return.

Objectives of remigrants on initial departure

The reasons for the initial migration of returned "successful" and "failed" migrants are presented on Table 1. **The main reasons for the initial departure for both groups of migrants are economic in nature, related to "Work – Income – Standard" triad ("WINS")** (Nonchev, Hristova, 2018, pp. 3-24). This motivational complex is more clearly expressed among those who perceive their migration as unsuccessful, especially when the complex nature of its causes is taken into account. Among those who assess their emigration as a failure, "to earn a higher remuneration" (74.7%), "to find a better job" (38.3%) or work

at all (22.7%), “ambition for a higher standard of living” (37%), dominate among the three main reasons for leaving the country initially.

Table 1
Reason for initial migration by the achievement of migration goals (%)

Reasons for migration	Success		Failure	
	First answer	Up to 3 answers	First answer	Up to 3 answers
To enjoy an environment of a higher standard of living	7.3	24.7	13.0	37.0
To earn a higher remuneration	34.0	67.1	30.5	74.7
To find a better job	9.6	38.4	13.0	38.3
I was unemployed in Bulgaria	10.4	18.4	11.7	22.7
For better professional development	3.1	14.7	1.9	12.3
To develop my own business	0.4	1.8	0.6	5.2
To support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria	4.2	33.3	3.9	27.9
To join parents and/or relatives	15.6	19.6	12.3	17.5
To accompany spouse, partner, parents, children	4.2	7.6	4.5	5.2
To be united in marriage/civil union	0.0	0.7	0.6	1.3
To receive desired education	3.3	4.4	2.6	2.6
To ensure better education/future for my children	2.4	6.2	3.2	6.5
To apply for foreign citizenship for myself and my family	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.9
Business trip / official mission	3.1	4.9	0.6	1.3
I felt discriminated in Bulgaria	0.2	2.7	0.0	3.2
I simply did not wish to live in Bulgaria any longer (due to lack of perspectives, unclear rules, poor social environment, crime, corruption practices etc.)	2.0	10.0	1.3	9.1
Did not respond	0.0	44.4	0.0	33.1

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Family reasons, which also have an economic dimension, are stated to a greater extent by those who assess their emigration as successful – “to support my family or other relatives in Bulgaria” (33.3%), “to join parents and/or relatives” (19.6%), “to accompany spouse, partner, parents, children” (7.6%), “marriage/partnership” (0.7%).

Those who define themselves as successful remigrants indicate more often reasons related to personal and professional development such as better professional realization or provision of desired education, as well as going on a business trip / official mission abroad. Achieving the goal of “starting my own business” is rather not fulfilled and is indicated mainly by those who declare their emigration unsuccessful.

About 12% of returned migrants have left the country due to reluctance to live in an atmosphere they perceive as intolerable.

The complex nature of the reasons for emigration of remigrants is presented on Table 2. Successful emigrants, who declare that they have fulfilled what they have left for, indicate as reasons for departure mainly the combination “WINS” – “Family” (40%), only “WINS”

(17.2%), “WINS” – “Personal development” (12.2%), only “Family” (11.3%), “Joy” – “Unbearable atmosphere” (5.9%), only “Personal development” (4.6%).

Table 2
Combined reasons for initial migration of “successful” and “failed” migrants based on the 3 answers (%)

Reasons	Success	Failure	All respondents
“WINS“ („Work-INcome-Standard“)	19.6	26.0	21.2
“WINS“ and family	40.0	42.9	40.9
“WINS“ and personal development	11.8	10.4	11.4
“WINS“ and unbearable atmosphere	6.7	8.4	7.1
Family	8.9	2.6	7.1
Personal development	3.1	0.0	2.3
Family and personal development	1.6	1.3	1.5
Family and unbearable atmosphere	1.1	0.0	0.8
Personal development and unbearable atmosphere	0.2	0.0	0.2
Other combinations	7.1	8.4	7.5

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

The general conclusion from the presented data is that the self-assessment of success or failure of migration is determined primarily by the achievement of its economic goals, which dominate the initial departure abroad. At the same time, **among the successful remigrants, the achievement of goals related to family, personal and professional development is more common.** These goals are much less likely to motivate the migration of the unsuccessful, for whom it is more of a forced economic nature, caused by the need to find (better) jobs, to provide higher incomes and a higher standard of living.

Reasons for return and success of the migration

The economic reasons for return play a significantly smaller role than in the initial departure of both successful and unsuccessful returned migrants.

Those who assess their emigration as unsuccessful indicate to a greater extent economic reasons for return. At the same time, more than 1/3 of them (37%) do not indicate an economic reason for return as a first main reason. Those who assess their emigration as unsuccessful declare a predominantly “negative” economic motivation related to “push factors” in the host country. They state reasons as “it is difficult to find a legal employment (with a formal contract and insurance) in the country of residence” (29.2%), “I lost my job/ could not find a job in the country of residence” (22.1%), “It was not worth it – higher incomes, but also higher expenses in the country of residence” (19.5%), “I paid high taxes and social security contributions in the country of residence” (3.2%). Returning migrants thus attribute their failure to external “objective” circumstances rather than about themselves.

The share of the declared reasons for return, related to the opportunity for professional growth and development of own business in the country, is larger among the successful remigrants:

“professional realization in Bulgaria” (9.3%), “opportunity for better job/business in Bulgaria” (8.4%), “to develop my own business/to invest here” (6.2%).

Table 3
Economic reasons for return of migrants by achievement of migration goals (%)

Economic reasons for return	Success		Failure	
	First answer	Up to 3 answers	First answer	Up to 3 answers
I expect living conditions in Bulgaria to improve	7.6	18.9	10.4	18.8
It was not worth it (higher incomes but higher spending in the country of residence)	3.1	7.8	8.4	19.5
I paid high taxes and social security contributions in the country of residence	0.7	2.7	0.6	3.2
I lost my job / I was not able to find a job in the host country	4.7	9.6	11.7	22.1
It is difficult to find legal employment (with official contract and insurance) in the country of residence	2.2	8.0	11.0	29.2
Opportunities for better job/business in Bulgaria	3.3	8.4	0.0	3.2
Professional realization in Bulgaria	3.1	9.3	1.9	6.5
To develop my own business / to invest in Bulgaria	3.1	6.2	0.6	2.6
I am sent on business trip in Bulgaria	0.7	0.9	0.0	0.0
Restoration/acquisition of property in Bulgaria	2.0	4.0	0.6	2.6
Deterioration of economic situation in the country of residence	2.4	8.0	1.9	8.4
My job was seasonal/temporary	25.6	34.0	14.3	26.0
Another economic reason	0.4	2.2	1.3	2.6
I did not come back for economic reason	41.1	45.8	37.0	44.2

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

A specific category of remigrants are the seasonal workers. Their share among economically motivated returnees who assess their emigration as successful is approximately 1/3 (34.0%), while among the unsuccessful it is 1/4 (26%). In this case, the very possibility of carrying out seasonal activity is probably important and can be assessed as successful or unsuccessful depending on the degree of achievement of the dominant economic goals.

The structure of the reasons for return differs significantly from that of the reasons for initial departure in both groups – successful and unsuccessful remigrants. The most important are the family motives – “attachment to the family and my relatives in Bulgaria”, “to be with my children in their upbringing or education”, “care for the elderly or a sick relative”, “I wanted to get married in Bulgaria and live here”, “I retired”. The family motives predominate among the three most important reasons for return.

More than half (53%) of successful emigrants reaffirm that they return because they have achieved what they have left for. The role of social and emotional motives is also significant, both in terms of the growing attractiveness of the home country (pull factors) and the role of “push factors” in the host country. Among the emotional factors attracting to Bulgaria, the most obvious is the effect of “nostalgia for the home country” in both groups (Bakalova,

Misheva, pp. 80-101). The difficult adaptation in the host country is declared almost twice as often as a reason for return by those who assess their emigration as unsuccessful (25%) than by those who consider it successful (13%). Reasons for return, such as “insecurity for immigrants in the country of residence” (23.4%), “impossibility to legalize stay in the host country” (13.0%), “intolerance/discrimination in the country of residence” (11.7%), prevail among the unsuccessful remigrants compared to the successful ones.

Table 4
Non-economic reasons for return of migrants by the achievement of goals (%)

Non-economic reasons for return	Success		Failure	
	First answer	Up to 3 answers	First answer	Up to 3 answers
Attachment to the family and my relatives in Bulgaria	33.6	56.4	40.3	54.5
Care for an elderly or sick relative	8.2	13.8	10.4	16.2
Continuing my education in Bulgaria	1.8	2.9	2.6	3.9
Being with my children in the period of their upbringing and education	6.0	16.9	5.2	16.2
I want to marry in Bulgaria and live here	2.9	5.8	2.6	6.5
I have retired	3.3	4.9	0.0	0.6
Impossibility of legalizing the stay in the country of my previous stay	0.7	2.9	4.5	13.0
Intolerant/discriminatory attitude in the country of previous stay	0.2	2.7	3.9	11.7
Insecurity for immigrants in the country of previous stay	0.9	5.8	5.8	23.4
Non-voluntary expulsion from the country of previous stay	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.6
Homesickness	5.3	25.8	3.2	24.7
Entry into politics and social life in Bulgaria	0.2	0.9	0.0	0.6
I have failed to adapt to the foreign country	2.2	13.1	7.8	25.3
I have accomplished all that I have had set out to achieve	27.3	52.9	3.2	5.2
I simply do not wish to live abroad any longer	2.9	15.3	3.9	17.5
Health related reasons (sickness, operation)	1.8	2.0	3.2	3.2
Other	2.7	4.7	3.2	5.8

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Sustainability of return

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, favourable 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 some relation between remigrants' initial projects and the sustainability of return (Mintchev, Boshnakov, 2018, pp. 45-64) (Table 5).

Table 5

Initial migration projects by the sustainability of return (%)

	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

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project "Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility".

The obtained data give grounds for several empirically substantiated statements:

First, returning migrants, who intend to remain permanently in Bulgaria, prevail (59.7%). It is noteworthy that their share is about 15 percentage points lower than that of those who indicated that they have achieved what they went abroad for (74.5%). This means that even for "successful" remigrants, the return is not always final. The highest is the share of returning migrants with the intention to remain permanently in Bulgaria among those who were initially oriented towards temporary emigration – 63.6%. Among those who intend to leave forever, this share is 42.4%, and among those who did not have clear migration plans – 51.8%. Those who left with the intention of their stay abroad to be temporary and at the same time have achieved the goals of their migration reach 79.0%.

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. 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. For remigrants with such an attitude, success is expected and/or partial rather than accomplished.

Third, the category of returnees who intend to emigrate permanently is 12.1%. For the most part, it can be argued that they failed to achieve their migration goals. Among them, 41% are disappointed that they have not been able to stay in the receiving country forever, linking this to the failure of achieving their migration goals. The strongest desire for new and final emigration is registered among returned migrants, who intended to leave the country permanently with their first migration (36.4%). The most probable explanatory hypothesis for their return is the failure in the implementation of their migration plans or the emergence of specific circumstances that have necessitated their temporary residence in

Bulgaria. For almost a third of returnees (31.5%), reverse migration is caused by some objective economic, family or personal circumstances (illness of the migrant or his relatives; care for elderly parents, children or grandchildren; loss of job, termination or expiration of employment contract, expiration of visa or legal residence permit, etc.). More than half of those wishing to emigrate again (55.0%) indicate mainly reasons for leaving, which are of an economic nature: “to receive a higher salary” (32.5%); “I am unemployed in Bulgaria” (2.5%); “To find a better job” (5.8%); “to live in a higher standard of living” (14.0%). This is a clear indicator that the economic goals of the initial departure abroad have not been achieved.

It can be concluded that the initial migration projects are subject to rethinking and do not explicitly define the subsequent migration behaviour. The sustainability of return depends on the degree to which the initial migration goals have been achieved, but is not explicitly determined by them.

3. Factors, Having Effect over the Success of Migration

The self-assessment of the returned migrants for the success of the migration is influenced by their socio-demographic profile, their migration experience, economic holdings (income, savings, and property) related to the implemented migration projects, as well as the specific circumstances of the return.

Socio-demographic profile of the “successful” and “failed” returned migrants

The data from the conducted national quantitative survey provide an opportunity to outline the socio-demographic profile of successful and unsuccessful remigrants (Table 6).

The socio-demographic characteristics of the returned migrants are not among the significant determinants that influence the self-assessment for the achievement of the initial migration goals. Only some generalized findings can be made, supported by the obtained empirical data:

- women are perceived as “more successful” than men among the returned migrants;
- older remigrants have achieved their migration goals to a greater extent than younger ones;
- the singles have achieved their goals to a lesser extent than the married ones;
- Bulgarians are more successful than people from other ethnic communities;
- people with higher and secondary general education have achieved their goals to a greater extent, and the most dissatisfied are people with primary and lower education – the share of those who have failed amongst them is the highest (32.2%);
- Achieving the initial goals is more successful for the retired and those engaged in their own business after returning to the country and most problematic for part-time employees and students.

Table 6
Socio-demographic characteristics of returned migrants by achievement of goals abroad (%)

	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	71.8	28.2
Female	77.7	22.3
<i>Age group</i>		
Up to 30 y.o.	71.1	28.9
31-40 y.o.	70.6	29.4
41-50 y.o.	72.1	27.9
51-60 y.o.	75.0	25.0
Over 60 y.o.	84.0	16.0
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	71.3	28.7
Married	74.1	25.9
Divorced	76.1	23.9
Widow/er	89.7	10.3
<i>Ethnical group</i>		
Bulgarian	75.3	24.7
Turkish	71.4	28.6
Roma	71.2	28.8
<i>Education level</i>		
Basic or lower	67.8	32.2
General secondary	78.6	21.4
Vocational secondary	73.5	26.5
Higher	78.6	21.4
<i>Employment status</i>		
Employed full time	71.8	28.2
Employed part time	57.1	42.9
Student	60.0	40.0
Retired	93.1	6.9
Businessman/entrepreneur	85.7	14.3
Freelancer/self-employed	71.4	28.6
Unemployed	72.4	27.6

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project "Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility".

Migration experience

The migration experience of the returned migrants is one of the factors that cause an effect over the success of migration. Its three dimensions (Table 7, Table 8) can illustrate it:

- Number of migration movements;
- Length of stay abroad;
- Migration trajectories.

Table 7

Migration experience of the returned migrants by the achievement of goals abroad (%)

	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
<i>Number of migratory trajectories</i>		
Resided in 1 country outside Bulgaria	73.8	26.2
Resided in 2 and more countries outside Bulgaria	80.3	19.7
<i>Length of stay abroad</i>		
Up to 1 year	68.2	31.8
From 1 to 3 years	73.3	26.7
More than 3 years	86.9	13.1

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Table 8

Migration trajectories of remigrants by the achievement of goals abroad (%)

Host countries	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
United Kingdom, Scotland	67.2	32.8
Germany	70.1	29.9
Greece, Cyprus	83.1	16.9
Spain, Portugal	73.1	26.9
Italy	77.1	22.9
USA, Canada	83.9	16.1
Another country in EU	77.2	22.8
Countries outside EU (Turkey, Russia, others)	77.3	22.7

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Remigrants who resided in more countries defined themselves in a greater extent as successful in achieving the goals of their migrations (80%). The number of migration movements and the countries of residence contribute to the perception of return as a success.

The share of “successful” remigrants reaches nearly 87% for long-term residents abroad for more than three years and drops to 68% for short-term residents abroad for up to one year. Obviously, the longer the stay abroad, the more likely it is that the migration goals will be accomplished.

Those who returned from the United States and Canada were most satisfied with their migration – 83.9% said they were able to achieve what they went abroad for. Residents in Greece and Cyprus also declare to a greater extent the achievement of their migration goals – 83-84%. Approximately three-quarters of returnees from Western Europe say they have achieved their goals. Disappointment and assessment of the failure of migration are more pronounced among residents in the UK and Scotland (32.8%), as well as in Germany (29.9%) – countries where about 40% of all respondents resided.

Incomes, savings and property

The structure of income and savings of returned migrants is presented in Table 9. The amount of income of returned migrants has an impact over the assessment of the success or failure of migration. The highest is the share (31%) of those who defined themselves as “failed” in their migration to the modal group – 1200-2000 BGN. Somewhat paradoxically, the share of those, who achieved their migration goals, from the lowest (up to 800 BGN) and the highest (over 2000 BGN) income segment of remigrants is the highest (approximately 82%). The phenomenon of “successful poor” could be explained by the relatively low levels of income and employment in Bulgaria, which increase significantly after going abroad.

Table 9

Gross monthly income and saving of returned migrants by achievement of goals abroad (%)

	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
<i>Income group</i>		
Up to 800 BGN	81.7	18.3
801 – 1200 BGN	76.2	23.8
1201 – 2000 BGN	69.3	30.7
Over 2000 BGN	81.6	18.4
<i>Saving amount</i>		
Up to 5000 BGN	63.2	36.8
5001 – 10 000 BGN	81.1	18.9
10 001 – 20 000 BGN	90.4	9.6
20 001 – 50 000 BGN	100.0	0.0
Over 50 000 BGN	100.0	0.0

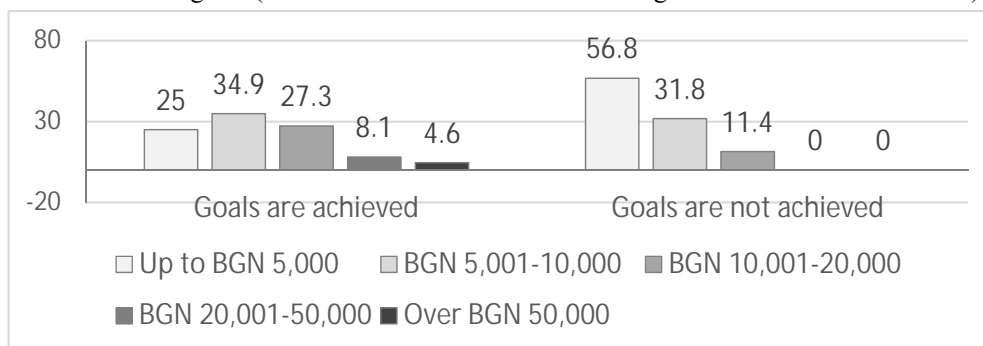
Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

The amount of savings also affects the self-assessment of the success or failure of migration. With the increase of declared savings received during the stay abroad, the share of those who assess their migration as successful also increases. Remigrants who claim to have achieved the goals of their stay abroad report a higher amount of savings than those who have failed to do so. More than half of those who did not achieve their goals (56.8%) saved up to 5000 BGN. Among these remigrants, there are no people who indicated savings over 20 000 BGN, while among those who achieved their goals, this share is 12.7% (Figure 1).

The property owned upon return to the home country also has a small effect on the self-perception of success from migration, as those who do not own such property declare to a greater extent that their migration goals have not been achieved.

Figure 1

Structure of savings accumulated during the stay abroad of returned migrants by the achievement of goals (% of those who disclosed their savings – a total of 216 individuals)



Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Table 10

Property owned by returned migrants by the achievement of goals abroad (%)

	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
Property		
Apartment	77.0	23.0
House	76.6	23.4
Does not own any	69.3	30.7

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Circumstance upon return

The circumstances upon the return to Bulgaria are also related to the self-assessment of the remigrants about the degree of success of their migration. Such surveyed circumstances are:

- existence of specific event that influenced the decision to return;
- job offer before returning to Bulgaria;
- receiving a pension from abroad;
- changes in employment of returning migrants;
- need for support upon return.

The presence of a specific event that influenced the decision to return to the country slightly increased the share of remigrants who are dissatisfied with their migration and have failed to achieve their goals in the migration movement. The share of successful remigrants among those who had a job offer before their return was higher (83.2%). The share of those who did not achieve their goals among those who did not have a job offer before their return was 28.4%.

Table 11

Circumstances upon return of returned migrants by the achievement of goals abroad (%)

	Goals are achieved	Goals are not achieved
<i>Existence of specific event that influenced the decision to return</i>		
Yes	71.6	28.4
No	76.1	23.9
<i>A valid job offer before returning to Bulgaria</i>		
Yes	83.2	16.8
No	71.6	28.4
<i>Receiving a pension from abroad</i>		
Yes	88.2	11.8
No	71.9	28.1

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”

The international mobility generate significant changes in the migrants’ labour status as well (Zareva, 2018, pp. 102-114) (Table 12).

Table 12

Dynamics of main employment of returned migrants prior to the initial departure, in the first destination country and upon the last return to Bulgaria (% of all respondents)

	<i>Employment prior to the initial departure</i>	<i>Employment in the first destination country</i>	<i>Employment after the last return to Bulgaria</i>
Employed full-time	52,0	72,8	47,0
Employed part-time	3,3	14,6	3,5
Student	7,1	1,2	2,5
Retired	5,1	0,8	11,9
Businessman/entrepreneur	2,0	0,7	5,8
Freelancer/ self-employed	1,7	2,8	3,5
Unemployed	27,8	6,1	25,2
No answer	1,0	1,0	0,7

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

After the initial departure abroad, there is a significant increase in the employment of migrants. The share of full-time employees increased in the first destination country from 52.0% to 72.8%, of part-time workers – from 3.3% to 14.6%, and the share of unemployed decreased from 27.4% to 6.1%. There is also a growing share of employees with an employment contracts – from 52.3% to 62.9%, but still every fifth (24.6%) worked without a contract. These findings confirm the conclusion that finding a job is a prime goal for first leaving the country to both unemployed and working Bulgarians before their first departure abroad. Achieving this goal is an important reason for the migration project to be perceived as successful.

Upon the last return to the country, the employment structure of remigrants has generally deteriorated compared to their stay abroad. One in four of them is unemployed, and the share of employed (full or part-time) decreases from 87.4% to 50.5%. The share of those engaged mainly in their own business increased, with 6% of all respondents stating that they had started their own business after returning to Bulgaria, and 6.5% of all migrants put their savings in it. The share of freelancers and self-employed also increased slightly to 3.5%.

Table 13

Support for the return of migrants by the achievement of goals abroad
(with the possibility of up to 5 answers)

Need for support	Goals are achieved		Goals are not achieved	
	First answer	Up to 5 answers	First answer	Up to 5 answers
Financial help	4.4	4.4	22.1	22.1
Support for accommodation	2.2	3.6	2.6	5.8
For the education of children	1.3	1.6	0.0	0.6
To find a job	19.6	21.6	28.6	36.4
Psychological support	6.2	8.7	7.1	13.6
Something else	1.3	1.8	0.0	1.3
No support is needed	64.9	64.9	39.0	39.0

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Among the returned migrants, the share of the retired is more than twice as high (11.9%) compared to the time before the first departure of the country. The possibility of receiving a pension from abroad increases the share of those who perceive themselves to have achieved their migration goals (88%).

Two-thirds of the remigrants (65%), who achieved their goals did not feel the need for support on their return. One in five of them needed help to find a job (21.6%) in the first place, which is two and a half times more than the next need for psychological support (8.7%).

About 60% of the returnees, stating that they have not achieved their migration goals, declare the need for various forms of support. The largest share of them needed help to find a job (36.4%), financial assistance (22.1%), and psychological support (13.6%).

4. Social Mobility of the Returned Migrants

Migration is defined as a spatial movement of people between countries, but it is related to the desire of migrants to achieve economic and social mobility, which cannot be accomplished in the home country or is much more feasible abroad. In this context, the success of migration is analyzed taking into account both some subjective (self-perceptions of returned migrants) and objective indicators for assessing changes in their socio-economic status and quality of life.

Socio-economic status of returning migrants

Socio-economic status may be interpreted as a summary dimension of various societal and economic inequalities (Stoyanov, 2016). Several categories of returning migrants are distinguished based on the self-assessment of their financial and social situation (Table 14).

Table 14
Self-assessment of the financial situation of returning migrants (% of all respondents)

Financial situation	%
1 – Poor	10.8
2	30.8
3	52.0
4	3.5
5 – Rich	0.2

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

In terms of their economic status, returning migrants, according to their own self-assessment, are concentrated primarily in the middle range of the financial hierarchy. One in ten perceives himself as “poor” and approximately one-third (30.8%) place themselves closer to this group. Those who perceive themselves as “rich” or above average are 3.7% and are not among the actively returning migrants.

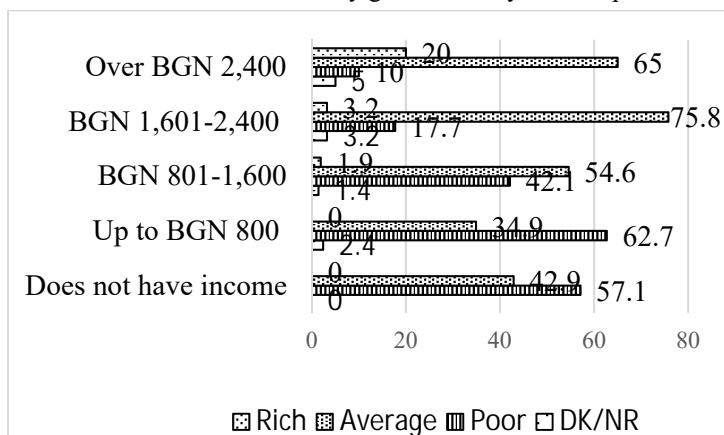
Given that three-quarters of returning migrants say they have achieved what they went abroad for, it can be concluded that the perceptions of success of remigrants and their financial aspirations are not very ambitious. This finding is also confirmed by the structure of the actual income received by the returned migrants, which to the greatest extent form their self-assessment of their financial situation (Figure 2). More than half of the surveyed persons, who at the time of the survey have no income or have such incomes up to BGN 800, self-identify themselves as “poor”. As incomes increase, so does the share of people who place themselves in the middle range of the financial social hierarchy and even perceive themselves as “rich”.

Circumstances related to the parameters of the migratory movements of the returned migrants, such as achieving the initial goals of emigration, length of their stay abroad or sustainability of their return, do not significantly affect their self-esteem regarding their financial status.

The more general self-assessment of returned migrants about their social status largely coincides with the self-perception of their financial status (Table 15). The share of remigrants who place themselves in the middle (by 3%) and higher (by 2%) range of the social status hierarchy is slightly increasing.

Remigrants, who defined themselves as “poor”, are also located mainly in a lower position in the social status hierarchy (79.3%), and 17.1% defined themselves as occupying a middle position in it. The self-perception of most “rich” respondents (72.7%) is that they have a high social status, and 22.7% – an average (Figure 3).

Figure 2
Self-assessment of financial situation by gross monthly income per household (%)



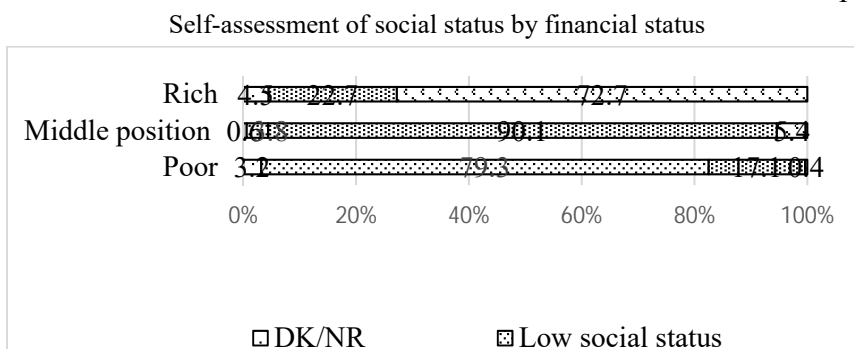
Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Table 15
Self-assessment of the social status of the returning migrants (% of all respondents)

Social status	%
Lowest social status	9.3
2	26.2
3	55.0
4	5.5
Highest social status	0.2

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Figure 3



Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Self-assessments of the financial and social status of remigrants overlap mostly in the intermediate strata – 90.1% of those who put themselves in the middle range of the financial hierarchy defined themselves in a similar way in the social status hierarchy.

The integral effect of the migration movements over the socio-economic status and the quality of life of the returning migrants according to their self-assessments is presented on Table 16.

Table 16

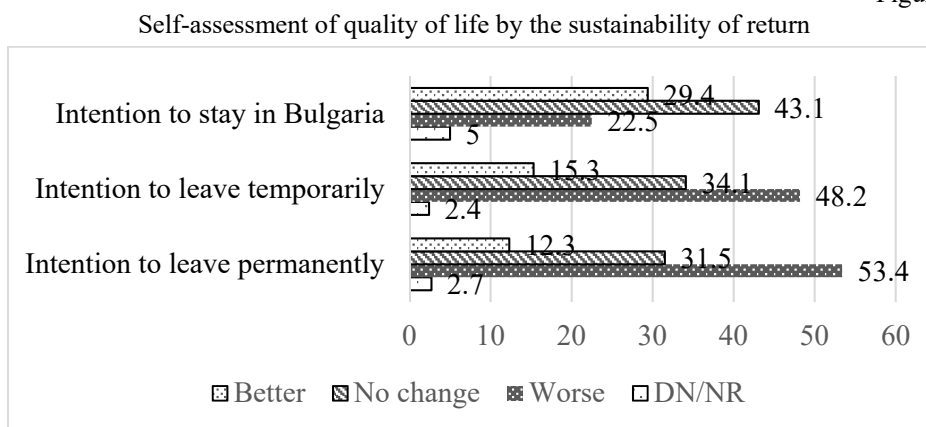
Overall self-assessment of the quality of life of returning migrants after their last stay abroad (% of all respondents)

Comparative self-assessment	%
Better	23.3
Worse	33.4
No change	39.2
No answer/ cannot assess	4.0

Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

Those who live better after returning to the country more often (79%) declare the achievement of the goals of their emigration. Despite the self-assessment that they are living worse than before, 77% of remigrants declare that they have achieved their migration goals. This share drops to 69% for those for whom there has been no change in their standard of living.

Figure 4



Source: Nationwide quantitative survey, as part of the project “Returning Migrants: Segmentation and Stratification of Economic Mobility”.

As a whole, returning to Bulgaria is more likely to be associated with a deterioration in the quality of life compared to the last destination country. Upward social mobility is subjectively perceived by approximately one-quarter of the returning migrants (23.3%) and downward –

by about one third (33.4%) of them. About 40% of returnees do not report any change in their standard of living upon return. **Based on these data, it can be stated that the share of “successful” migrants is lower than those declaring that they have achieved the goals for which they have gone abroad (74.5%).** This conclusion is also confirmed by the registered wishes of the migrants to go abroad again, regardless of whether permanently or temporarily. Short-term migrants evaluate their return neither as progress nor as a step back and believe that things are “as before” (Bakalova, Misheva, 2019).

The subjective assessment of the financial situation, the more general self-assessment of the social status and the assessment of the quality of life today compared to living abroad are components of the overall feeling of well-being of returning migrants, and they reflect the socio-stratification effects of migration movements carried out and are indicators of the success of the migration.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the empirical data on returning Bulgarian migrants in terms of the success of their migration movements, several main conclusion can be drawn:

First, the motive for the return “I did what I went abroad for” is indicated by 40.7% of returning Bulgarian migrants (as a first reason – by 21.2%, as a second – by 12.9%, and as a third – by 6.6%). Almost three-quarters of respondents (74.5%) answered in the affirmative to the question “Did you manage to achieve what you went abroad for?”. One in four remigrants (26%) is dissatisfied with what they have achieved during their stay abroad.

Second, the self-assessment of the success or failure of migration is determined primarily by the achievement of its economic goals, which dominate the initial departure abroad. At the same time, among the successful remigrants, the achievement of goals related to family, personal and professional development is more common. For the unsuccessful, migration is more of a forced economic nature, caused by the need to find (better) jobs, to provide higher incomes and a standard of living.

Third, the structure of the reasons for return differs significantly from that of the reasons for leaving the country in both groups - successful and unsuccessful remigrants. Of greatest importance are family motives, which predominate among the three most important reasons for return. The share of the declared reasons for return, which are related to the opportunity for professional growth and development of own business in the country, is larger among the successful remigrants: “professional realization in Bulgaria” (9.3%), “opportunity for better job/business in Bulgaria” (8.4%), “to develop my own business/to invest here” (6.2%).

Fourth, after the initial departure abroad, the employment of migrants has increased significantly. The share of full-time employees increased in the first country of residence from 52.0% to 72.8%, of part-time workers – from 3.3% to 14.6%, and the share of the unemployed decreased from 27.8% to 6.1%. Finding a job is a primary goal in the initial departure of both unemployed and working Bulgarians. Achieving this goal is an important reason for the migration project to be perceived as successful.

Fifth, returning migrants, who intend to remain permanently in Bulgaria, predominate (59.7%). However, their share is about 15 percentage points lower than that of those who indicated that they had achieved what they went abroad for (74.5%). This means that even for “successful” remigrants, the return is not always final. The highest is the share of returning migrants with the intention to remain permanently in Bulgaria among those who were initially oriented towards temporary emigration – 63.6%. Among those who intend to leave forever, this share is 42.4%, and among those who did not have clear migration plans – 51.8%.

Sixth, for the most part, it can be argued that the returnees who have not achieved their migration goals intend to emigrate again and permanently (12.1%). Among them, 41% are disappointed that they have not been able to stay in the host country, linking this to the failure to achieve their migration goals. The strongest desire for new and final emigration is registered among returned migrants, who intended to leave the country permanently with their first migration (36.4%).

Seventh, the socio-demographic characteristics of the returned migrants are not among the significant determinants that influence the self-assessment for the achievement of the initial migration goals. Some of the generalized findings on the socio-demographic dimensions of migration success are as follows:

- women are perceived as “more successful” than men among the returned migrants;
- older remigrants have achieved their migration goals to a greater extent than younger ones;
- the singles have achieved their goals to a lesser extent than the married ones;
- Bulgarians are more successful than people from other ethnic communities;
- people with higher and secondary general education claim that they have achieved their goals to a greater extent, than those with vocational secondary and especially primary and lower education.

Eighth, the amount of income of returned migrants has an impact on the assessment of the success or failure of migration. The amount of the savings generated during the stay abroad also has an effect on the self-assessment for success or failure of the migration. With the increase of declared savings received during the stay abroad, the share of those who assess their migration as successful also increases. At the same time, returned migrants, according to their own self-assessments, are concentrated primarily in the middle range of the financial social hierarchy. One in ten perceive himself or herself as “poor”, approximately one-third (30.8%) place themselves closer to this group, and only 0.2% of respondents perceive themselves as “rich”. **As three quarters of the returned migrants claim to have achieved what they went abroad for, it can be concluded that the perceptions of success of the remigrants and their financial aspirations are not very ambitious.**

Ninth, remigrants, who perceived themselves as “poor”, placed themselves primary in a lower position in the social status hierarchy as well (79.3%), and 17.1% of them – as occupying a middle position in it. The self-perception of most of those perceived as “rich” (72.7%) is that they have a high social status, and 22.7% – an average. Self-assessments of

the financial and social status of remigrants overlap mostly in the intermediate strata – 90.1% of those who put themselves in the middle range of the financial hierarchy defined themselves in a similar way in the social status hierarchy.

Tenth, return to Bulgaria is generally associated with a deterioration in the quality of life compared to the last country of residence. Ascending social mobility is subjectively perceived by approximately a quarter of returned migrants (23.3%), and descending – by about a third (33.4%). About 40% of remigrants do not report a change in their standard of living after returning. Those living better after returning to the country declare to a greater extent the achievement of the goals of their emigration (79%). Despite the self-assessment that they live worse than before, 77% of remigrants declare that they have achieved their migration goals. This share drops to 69% for those for whom there has been no change in their standard of living. Based on these data, it can be concluded that the share of financially and socially “successful” remigrants is smaller than that of those who declare that they have achieved the goals for which they went abroad.

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