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STAY OR LEAVE AGAIN? NEW EVIDENCE FOR BULGARIAN RETURN MIGRATION¹

The paper focuses on the “stay or leave again” dilemma of Bulgarian return migrants. Data from a unique representative survey among households and their members who had been abroad during the period 2001-2005 is utilized. Special attention is paid on the satisfaction from the stay abroad and on the inclination of return migrants to leave again. Two binary regression models are estimated for this purpose. The independent variables reflect the socio-demographic profile and foreign experience of return migrants. Satisfaction is related to age, duration of the stay abroad, qualified job under official contract, and employment in services. Clear differences in satisfaction levels are found with respect to the region of stay: almost each fourth respondent returned from Southern Europe was not satisfied. Nevertheless, the majority of return migrants express a high likelihood to go abroad again. The availability of acquaintances residing abroad is found to be a strong determinant of the re-migration likelihood. The *leave again* question has a clear positive answer for return migrants satisfied with their foreign experience. However, Bulgarian labor market faces a serious deficit in a range of professions which is supported by the finding that educational level acts as a hold-up factor regarding return migrants’ likelihood to leave again.

JEL: F22, J61.

In the last twenty years Bulgaria was a country generating emigration. This process was induced rather by economic than demographic or political circumstances. Bulgarian population decreased by about 13% for the 15 years of transition (1989-2004) or 1.2 million in absolute figures, about 500 thousand of which due to natural decrease and 700 thousand due to emigration (Mansoor and Quillin, 2007). Currently, unofficial estimates claim that the total Bulgarian diaspora (old and newly generated) amounts to about 2.5 to 3 million and 7.5 million Bulgarians live in the country. According to National Statistical Institutes (NSI) estimates about 22 thousand on average emigrated annually in the period between the last two censuses – 1992 and 2001 (Kaltchev, 2002; Mintchev et.al., 2004).

It was found that a high proportion of early transition emigrants are highly skilled which seems to be an important signal for the loss of human capital and development potential in the country (Minkov, 1994; Gachter, 2002). However,

¹ This paper was prepared with the financial support of a GDN-SEE research grant under the supervision of WIIW-Vienna. We are grateful to our discussant Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah as well as to Vladimir Gligorov, Prof. Michael Landesmann, Anna Iara and other participants in GDN-SEE workshop, May 2006, Vienna, for their helpful comments and suggestions. Acknowledgements are due to Prof. Robert Lucas, Danny Sriskandarajah and the other participants in the GDN Impact Workshop, 8th Global Development Conference, January 2007, Beijing.

there are various arguments asserting that after 2001 a tendency towards seasonal rather than permanent migration took place related to temporary mobility of low-skilled labor force. Analogous situation was observed in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries but the Bulgarian case is rather comparable to the other countries of European South-East – Romania, Albania, countries of former Yugoslavia, Turkey and even Greece before 1981.

Micro-surveys are considered as the only relevant source of information on the issues of out-migration intentions and potential emigration. Such studies are conducted in Bulgaria regularly by international institutions (as IOM) and occasionally by national statistical offices or research teams. Yet, issues related to the return of migrants were in fact set aside from the research focus. Sample surveys among return migrants would provide a detailed picture of the migrant community as well as of their various remittances-related attitudes. The deficiency of empirical information on these issues for Bulgaria motivated us to direct our research interest particularly to this topic drawing on the strengths of a questionnaire survey instrument.

In both sending and receiving countries a wide range of viewpoints, some of them even contradictory in nature, on the advantages and disadvantages of trans-border mobility of population can be found. Bulgarian society is not an exception in this respect and is undergoing a severe debate on migration issues especially from the perspective of the European Union labor market. This motivated us to search for particular evidences at the micro-level, provided by a survey among return migrants, which could allow a feasible evaluation of particular costs and benefits of recent Bulgarian emigration. Apparently, the assessment cannot be ultimately exhaustive as such an approach could provide evidence mainly for participants in the short-term mobility (i.e. temporary or seasonal migrants with periods of stay abroad up to one year). The consequences from permanent migration for the sending country could hardly be evaluated this way, especially after initial moves of whole families or family unification accomplished abroad.

This approach is justified by the rise in circular (repeated) economic migration during the transition to market economy in CEE. The observed circular migration increased after Bulgarians received the opportunity to stay in Schengen area for 3 months without visa (Markova and Reilly, 2007; Guentcheva et.al., 2003). In this way, one may argue that the short/medium-term migration predominated during the pre-EU membership period when remittance inflows were to a large extent interrelated to return and circular migration. This is confirmed by a limited number of publications that reveal a range of specifics of East European cross-border mobility (e.g. prevalence of temporary/seasonal labor mobility and sporadic usage of remittances for small business development) (Piracha and Vickerman, 2003). International migration of Bulgarians is to a large extent within the frame of intra-European cross-border mobility – a phenomenon intensely revitalized in the continent during the

reforms in CEE countries and especially after the lifting of the visa regime within the Schengen countries. There is also noteworthy evidence for a hypothesis that Balkan transition country's migrants (from "new emigration" countries as Albania, Bulgaria and Romania) are oriented towards "new immigration" EU member countries of the Mediterranean (Mintchev, 2006).

The major subject of our study is oriented to Bulgarian return migrants profile, remittance behavior, and attitudes to leave again. It is known that migration decisions are induced by an inclination to minimize income and welfare risks in an unstable socio-economic environment (Taylor, 1999; Stark, 1993; Stark and Lucas, 1988). Migration is "recognized as an informal familial arrangement, with benefits in the realms of risk-diversification, consumption smoothing, and intergenerational financing of investments, and remittances are a central element of such implicit contracts" (Rapoport and Docquier, 2005:10).

Studies on East-European migration are usually at a disadvantage because of the scarcity of information which is particularly valid for the analyses of return migration. Analyzing the contribution of return migrants to the development after transition, Leon-Ledesma and Piracha (2004) provide macro-econometric tests showing that the return of migrants has had a positive and significant effect on source country level of productivity. Remittances contributed considerably to increases in investment in these countries. The consumption was also positively affected though this effect was found not as intense as on investment.

Empirical studies on return migrants' behavior are definitely a challenge for East European migration research (for instance, econometric evidence on employment performance of return migrants in Hungary is provided by Co et.al (2000). The main obstacles to such a study in Bulgaria are essentially (i) the lack of reliable information and previous studies on this issue in the country, and (ii) the ambiguity of any estimates given the highly volatile out-migration processes and the unclear patterns of spending and remitting behavior (Mintchev, 2006). So far as such studies exist, they only assess the subject indirectly – mainly on the basis of in-depth interviews among migrant community abroad in order to study Bulgarian emigrants' performance, and among households in high-emigration-rate settlements, in order to explore particular cases of households whose members have found employment abroad (Markova and Sarris, 1997; Markova and Reilly, 2007; Guentcheva et.al., 2003; Alexandrova, 2003).

Rarely an overall evaluation of Bulgarian return migrants on the basis of micro-studies has been performed in detail till date. Hence, this paper attempts to make an evaluation of the profile and experience of Bulgarian return migrants, the pattern of remittances behavior, and particularly their likelihood to leave the country again. A representative survey among Bulgarian households and their members who had been abroad during the period 2001-2005 is used for this purpose (section 2). Section 3 presents return migrants' profile evaluated at the end of 2005; section 4 discusses how the emigration was organized; section 5 observes

return migrants experience, e.g. destination countries, length of stay abroad and employment opportunities. Spending and saving patterns are discussed in section 6; section 7 presents some assessment of the satisfaction from the stay abroad and the final section (8) focuses on remigration attitudes of return migrants.

Sample Survey and Data Issues

The paper is based on empirical data collected from a representative sample survey² among 1000 Bulgarian households. The sample design is a version of the two-stage cluster model typically used by the National Statistical Institute and professional agencies in Bulgaria. Census enumeration clusters of households are used as primary sampling units and in each selected unit 20 households from an urban cluster and 15 from a rural one were randomly chosen and interviewed. Each household member who had stayed abroad at least once during the last 5 years (2001-2005) for a period of 3 months or longer, and who was currently residing in Bulgaria had been identified as "return migrant".

In the initial sample 136 households had at least one return migrant (return migrant household) but in only 110 of the target respondents were reached for interviewing. Since return migrants were of particular interest for the study, additional 52 such households were selected (and return migrants interviewed respectively) on the basis of data from former random sample surveys conducted by team members. Chi-square tests were performed in order to assure that the added 52 cases were not significantly different from the initially interviewed 110 respondents – this was confirmed by the results obtained for the distributions by gender (at 0.884 significance level), age (0.255), family status (0.157), labor experience (0.998) and the length of stay abroad (0.311). So we consider that the information received from the observed return migrant households is reliable for the purposes of our study.

The survey questionnaire contained five separate sections. The first two and the last one (A, B and E respectively) registered data at household level whereas sections C and D were designed to collect data for a household member categorized as return migrant vis-à-vis the period covered by the survey (2001-2005). If there were more than one such member, the data was collected for the person with the longest period of stay abroad (assumed to have more experience gained abroad). The main goals of the survey were to provide information for the profile of Bulgarian return migrants, their expenditures and savings abroad, as well as for their satisfaction from the foreign experience and remigration inclination.

² The sample survey was conducted in November 2005 by a research team consisting of experts of the Center for Comparative Studies – Sofia, the Institute of Sociology at BAS, and the National Statistical Institute. Acknowledgements are due to Dr. Emilia Chenguelova (IS at BAS) and her team as well as Dr. Yordan Kaltchev (NSI) for questionnaire and survey design as well as the field work organization.

Table 1

Distribution of households in the sample by the number of return and current migrants

Return migrants:	Current migrants:				Total
	None	1	2	3	
None	821	30	12	1	864
1	71	27			98
2	16	8	11		35
3	2				2
4		1			2
<i>Total</i>	<i>910</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1000</i>

In the most recent population census 2.922 million Bulgarian households were enumerated. For the purpose of our analysis we assume a total of 2.9 million at the end of 2005. We assess the *relative share of households with one or more return migrants* (who have been abroad after the census) at about 13.6%³, i.e. almost in one of seven Bulgarian households at least one of its members has stayed abroad during the period of 2001-2005 for at least 3 months (see Table 1). Given the assumed number of Bulgarian households at the end of 2005 the *total number of return migrant households* could be estimated approximately at 394,000. Additionally, if the households with at least one current migrant are taken into account, the *share of households with at least one return or current migrant* would reach 17.9%. In other words, roughly 519,000 Bulgarian households have participated (or were involved) in international migration through their member(s) who have been or are currently residing abroad for at least 3 months. Keeping in mind the relative share only of those households where at least one person is currently staying abroad (about 4.3%) their total number could be estimated at about 124,000.

Another key parameter is the *average number of persons per household* who have stayed abroad in 2001-2005 for a period of at least 3 months, which was estimated at 0.178 (or 178 persons per 1000 households). Using this figure we estimate the *total number of migrants* returned during the period of interest at about 516 thousand. The estimate for the number of *persons staying abroad* is 115 per 1,000 households (0.115) or about 334 thousand individuals were residing abroad at the end of 2005.

In order to perform an exploratory study of Bulgarian return migration we searched for answers to the following questions:

- What are the main socio-demographic characteristics of Bulgarian return migrants?
- How their departures were prepared and financed?

³ Only point estimates are presented in the study although the variation of the sample estimates that are of main interest to remittance parameters evaluation is by no doubt important.

- Which were their main destinations and sectors of employment?
- What were their expenditure patterns abroad and what fraction of their earnings was saved (and presumably remitted)?
- Are the return migrants satisfied from their stay abroad?
- And finally, what are their migration intentions – to stay or to leave again?

Socio-demographic Profile of Return Migrants

The distribution of respondents by gender, age, educational level, marital status and sector of employment reveal particular details of the socio-demographic profile of return migrants compared with their counterparts employed in Bulgaria (Table 2). There is clear evidence that young and middle-aged persons (aged 25-44 years) prevail among return migrants interviewed; however, about half of the women were up to 34 years of age.

Table 2

Demographic profile of return migrants compared to domestic employed structure for 2005 (%)

	Sample		Employed in BG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	62.3	37.7	53.4	46.6
<i>Age</i>				
16-24	9.0	3.3	7.9	7.2
25-34	26.0	44.3	24.9	22.9
35-44	33.0	23.0	27.1	30.1
45-54	21.0	18.0	25.8	29.3
55 or more	11.0	11.5	14.3	10.4
<i>Education</i>				
Basic or lower	18.8	26.2	19.7	32.4
Secondary general	18.8	31.1	48.7	32.6
Secondary vocational*	43.6	18.0	11.6	19.5
Higher	18.8	24.6	20.0	15.6
<i>Marital status</i>				
Single	22.0	13.3	–	–
Married	71.0	66.7	–	–
Divorced / Widower	7.0	20.0	–	–
<i>Sector of employment</i>				
Agriculture / forestry	20.0	13.1	10.8	6.9
Industry	38.0	3.3	38.9	28.9
Services	42.0	83.6	50.3	64.3

* Secondary vocational education provides specific professional skills and technical knowledge with regard to former Bulgarian industrial specialization.

Source: Author's calculations and National Statistical Institute (2005) "Employment and Unemployment", quarterly issues. The total number of return migrants in the sample is 162 (non-weighted). The average annual number of domestic employed in 2005 is 2,981 million.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning several specific traits of return migrants' profile:

- About two thirds of all return migrants were men. Simple comparison among the share of men and women return migrants with the respective figures for employed in Bulgaria shows that men are more mobile than women.

- The majority of respondents were married; the share of married men exceeded women's share by over 4%.

- There is important difference among the share of women return migrants (25-34 years old) in comparison with the respective figures for the women employed in Bulgaria: 44.3% of female return migrants are 25-34 years old versus 22.9% for the same age group of the women employed in Bulgaria. And from the other point of view, the share of women over 45 years of age employed in Bulgaria is higher in comparison with the share of women return migrants from the same age group. So the young women are much more mobile in comparison with the women from upper age interval.

- The share of return migrants with at least secondary education was over 80%; whereas the share of respondents with some secondary professional (vocational) education was almost 40%. Almost half of the men had such educational background; unlike this, women with similar education were lower by more than twice the men's share. A similar pattern was observed among return migrants with general secondary education, but gender-reversed – the share of women in this category was nearly twice higher than that the same share within men. It seems that in this very moment (a year before the EU membership of the country) labor force with better secondary general education and higher education indicator prefer to stay back instead of going abroad. From the other point of view, the share of male return migrants with secondary vocational education was much higher in comparison with men employed in Bulgaria with similar education. In the case of female return migrants with university degree, the share was much higher in comparison with women domestically employed.

- Data shows some re-orientation of Bulgarian labor force's occupational profile abroad. Higher occupation in agriculture and forestry may be noted. Women are employed in industry more frequently abroad than in Bulgaria. In the case of services – women are less employed in services abroad than in Bulgaria, and at the same time – men have higher rates of employment in services abroad. Obviously these results show the beginning of important changes of occupational profile of Bulgarian labor force due to the cross border mobility.

How the Departure Was Prepared and Financed?

A set of questions from section C allowed the identification of the methods of departure, the degree of preparedness regarding the accommodation and employment in the destination country, and the costs associated with departure

arrangements. Despite the relatively high educational level of return migrants, a large share of them have left the country *without any knowledge of the language* spoken in the host country. Almost half of the respondents did not have any command at all (44%) and about 31% had only elementary knowledge of the respective official language. Every seventh individual, however, have spoken the language fluently (14%) or at least at an intermediary level (11%) at the time of his/her departure. About two thirds of respondents have used bus transportation (53%), airplane and automobile were preferred by about 25% and 14% of return migrants. This is feasible because of the geographical proximity and the availability of inexpensive transport services that have developed over the years facilitating emigration. Not surprisingly, the average price of departure (estimated below) is comparable to *the average monthly expenditure* in the host countries.

It should be noted here that the information obtained from the return migrants interviewed soundly indicate the existence and operation of migrant networks. About 75% of respondents declare that they had already arranged for their accommodation in the host country prior to departure. In more than one third of the cases housing was provided by compatriots who had already settled in the host country, and in the remaining cases – by the intermediary company or person arranging the employment (16%) or by the employer (22%). However, one of four individuals had left without having assured some accommodation in the target country in advance; this ratio is somewhat lower for the women where the share is about 13%. At the same time, almost half of the women had arranged housing through their acquaintances, mainly members of their family who had already settled in the host country; in the same category the number of male migrants is however less than 30%.

Table 3

Distribution of respondents by provision of a workplace

Did you already have a job in the foreign country at the time of your departure?	Male	Female	Total
No	25.7	29.5	27.2
Yes, by a formal contract with an employer	31.7	11.5	24.1
Yes, by an oral arrangement with an employer	6.9	6.6	6.8
Yes, by a contract with a liaison/intermediary firm or person	7.9	13.1	9.9
Yes, by an oral arrangement with a liaison/intermediary firm or person	5.0	4.9	4.9
Yes, by an arrangement provided by relatives/friends in the country	16.8	27.9	21.0
Yes, other	5.9	6.6	6.2
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Similar situation is observed regarding the prior arrangement of a job – over 70% of return migrants declared that they had arranged for a workplace before leaving Bulgaria (Table 3). They relied mainly on contracts with employers or assistance from acquaintances residing in the respective host country. There are however significant gender differences in this respect. While 30% of female migrants did not have any arrangements for a job at the time of their departure, in the case of male migrants this share was about one fourth.

Almost two thirds of the respondents had spent up to 500 EUR on their departure and at least 700 EUR were necessary only for one of each five migrants to finance their travel. *The average price of departure* per return migrant is estimated by a sample average of about 390 EUR. Having in mind that nearly 516,000 persons have been abroad for some time during the last five years, they have spent over 200 million EUR for their departure as an initial investment. This way the direct cost of Bulgarian emigration could be evaluated at 40 million EUR annually as a sample estimate.

Migration Experience – Destinations, Length of Stay and Employment Opportunities

Specific set of questions in section C were utilized to reveal the main destinations, the duration of stay preferred by return migrants and the economic sectors where they found employment. The EU member states were found to be the leading destinations of Bulgarian return migrants during the period of interest (Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of respondents by countries of their stay abroad (%)

Country, region	Men	Women	Total
Germany	18.4	13.1	16.4
Greece	11.2	23.0	15.7
Spain	12.2	9.8	11.3
Italy	12.2	6.6	10.1
Other EU/ CE country	23.5	24.6	23.9
Turkey	5.1	8.2	6.3
US, Canada, Australia and NZ	7.1	9.8	8.2
Other countries (Russia, Israel, ...)	10.2	4.9	8.2
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Southern EC	39.8	45.9	42.1
Other EC and Western Europe	42.9	39.3	41.5
Other countries	17.3	14.8	16.4
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Germany remains the most attractive country especially for male migrants. It is noteworthy, however, that the Mediterranean EU states (Greece, Spain and Italy) *have attracted about 37%* of Bulgarian return migrants. And if some other countries (Portugal, Cyprus and Malta) are added to this group it is found that almost 42% of return migrants had preferred South-European destinations (considered as “new immigration” countries).

Table 5

Distribution of respondents by duration of their
stay abroad

Duration of the stay abroad	EU-Southern	Other EU	Turkey & RoW	Total
Not more than 3 months	24.6	17.3	24.2	22.0
Over 3 to 6 months	30.8	19.2	12.1	22.7
Over 6 to 12 months	20.0	21.2	24.2	21.3
Over 1 to 2 years	7.7	3.8	18.2	8.7
Over 2 years	16.9	38.5	21.2	25.3
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Average duration of stay abroad: 17.3 months (1.5 years)				

Note. Calculations are based on 152 responses, non-weighted. “EC-Southern” includes Greece, Italy Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta; “Rest of World” includes USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Russia and other countries.

The average duration of stay of return migrants is over one year – about 1 and a half year (Table 5). About 2/3rd of them had resided in the respective countries for up to 1 year. Particularly, in Southern EU countries short-term temporary migration prevails to a large extent (75%) compared to other European destinations (57%) where 38.5% of the respondents had stayed for more than 2 years.

A plausible explanation of the preferences for these destinations and the length of stay abroad can be found when the employment of return migrants by economic sectors is considered. Almost 17% of respondents were employed in agriculture, each seventh in the transport sector, and each sixth – in tourism; the same share is observed also for the employment in construction (Table 6). The majority of women were employed mainly in various jobs in housekeeping and social care (38%) and in tourism services (28%), and to a lesser extent in agriculture, industries, education, etc. Male return migrants have found jobs mainly in agriculture, transport, construction, and to some extent, tourism services. It should be noted that about 36% of respondents that have been in South European countries were employed in agriculture. At the same time about 43% of return migrants who have been in other EU member states had jobs in construction and tourism.

Table 6

Distribution of respondents by sector of employment (%)

In what sector did you work there?	Men	Women	Total
Agriculture	20.0	13.1	17.4
Construction	28.0	–	17.4
Industry, Crafts	10.0	3.3	7.5
Transport	22.0	3.3	14.9
Tourism (Bars, Hotels, Restaurants)	10.0	27.9	16.8
Housekeeping	–	11.5	4.3
Childcare, Healthcare	–	9.8	3.7
Care for the elderly/ill/disabled	–	16.4	6.2
Science/Education	1.0	4.9	2.5
Others	9.0	9.8	9.3
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

It is worth mentioning here that most of return migrants (78%) *had no direct contacts* with the local labor administration. This however could hardly serve as a basis for conclusions regarding the scale of undocumented Bulgarian emigration. The main reason for this is the fact that contacts with labor administration are usually a prerogative of employers themselves. The majority (two thirds) of those return migrants who had such contacts, however, underline the supportive attitude of local labor officials towards them. Most likely, these respondents might be predominantly people holding official work permits who were in a position to contact the local labor offices in case of losing their jobs or on other circumstances. Thus, it becomes clear that the services offered by labor administration and social systems in the host countries generally satisfy the emigrants. This could act as an additional incentive for subsequent departure for the same target country.

As stated above, the typical Bulgarian return migrant was employed in a low-paid job close to the description of the so-called “3-d jobs” (Martin, 2003) unattractive to local workers. Obviously, the structures of the economy and the labor market in Southern Europe *allow more flexible absorption* of the labor and qualifications supplied by the new East-European emigration, than other regions of the continent. At the same time, however, more than half of the respondents (52%) categorize their job abroad as qualified. The vast majority (83%) of the respondents asserted that they were employed full-time, and almost half of the return migrants (48%) declared that they had entered into an official contract with their respective employer.

Spending and Saving Pattern of Return Migrants

Another major goal of the survey was to evaluate the spending and saving behavior of return migrants during their stay abroad. In this respect, the amount and structure of expenses of Bulgarian emigrants incurred in host countries were explored in order to obtain variables for their individual earnings and savings. The

latter can be treated as a proxy for the amount of remittances transferred (or brought personally by migrants) to Bulgaria.

Table 7

Amount and structure of expenses in the host country

Approximate average monthly amount of current expenses during the stay abroad	Housing (%)	Food (%)	Transport (%)	Social contacts (%)	Other (%)
No such expenses reported by:	32.7	16.0	22.2	24.1	56.2
Up to Euro 50	19.1	16.0	38.9	39.5	12.3
Euro 50-100	13.6	17.3	20.4	15.4	13.6
Euro 100-150	8.6	19.1	8.6	10.5	8.0
Euro 150-200	8.6	14.8	4.9	6.2	3.1
Over Euro 200	17.3	16.7	4.9	4.3	6.8
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Monthly average (EUR)	79.8	104.3	55.6	55.1	44.0

It is not surprising that about half of Bulgarian citizens who have stayed abroad in 2001-2005 have spent up to 100 EUR per month on foodstuffs (Table 7). The same share of respondents report paying none or insignificant (under 50 EUR) amounts for housing; twice less are those who spent more on the same items (over 150 EUR per month, per person). It is however important to note that the levels of expenditures on transportation and social contacts are not insignificant compared to those on food and housing. However, almost 18% of the respondents announced that they have spent on average an extra 100 EUR per month on other costs that are not directly subsistence-related. The very moderate expenditure levels are explained by the predominant occupations of the majority of Bulgarian emigrants (construction, agriculture, social work, i.e. care for elderly or children) where they usually obtain some in-kind remuneration. In any case, the average monthly expense of Bulgarians abroad is about 360 EUR.

Table 8

Share of current expenditures abroad

What share of your monthly earnings you had to spend abroad?	Length of stay abroad		Total
	Up to 1 year	More than 1 year	
Up to 1/4	57.4	34.0	49.3
About 1/3	22.3	30.0	25.0
About 1/2	17.0	12.0	15.3
About 2/3	1.1	10.0	4.2
About 3/4		4.0	1.4
Almost all of it	2.1	10.0	4.9
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

About half of all return migrants spent abroad not more than 1/4 of their earnings. It could be assumed that 75% of the respondents succeeded to save about two thirds of their earnings (Table 8). Furthermore, the vast majority (about 90%) of Bulgarian return migrants had spent not more than half of the funds earned in the respective host country. The results in Table 8 support the expected difference in the spending pattern between short term (up to 1 year) and long term (more than 1 year) return migrants. Almost all of the short term migrants have spend not more than half of their earnings, whereas this share among long term migrants is about 3/4; in the same time, 10% of them have spend all of their income. Besides, there was no significant difference in the shares of income spent between male and female migrants. However, differences are identified in respect of migrant destinations – South European return migrants were more likely to limit their expenditures in comparison to those returned from other EU countries. On the basis of the aggregated expenditures and estimated earnings we conclude that return migrants have spent in the host country a substantial share (34.8%) of their earnings abroad (Table 9).

In order to evaluate the level of income of Bulgarian return migrants we have adopted an indirect approach for earnings approximation. This approach is based on a plausible assumption that asking direct questions about personal income and money transfers cannot provide reliable information and is highly likely to cause considerable underreporting. The approximation is achieved for each return migrant: (i) who has answered the question about the relative share of his/her monthly expenses and (ii) who has responded to respective questions on expense items. Thus, average monthly earnings of the return migrant abroad is estimated as a ratio of the average absolute amount of his/her monthly expenditure and the share of this expenditure declared by the respondent.

Table 9

Estimated earnings of return migrants for the period of stay abroad

Average monthly earnings (EUR)	Cases	Percent
Up to 500	36	24.2
500 – 1000	58	38.9
1000 – 1500	19	12.8
1500 – 2000	24	16.1
Over 2000	12	8.1
<i>Total:</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Average earnings per return migrant (EUR)	1035.9	
Coefficient of variation (%)	70.2	
Average expenditure per return migrant (EUR)	360.2	
Share of expenditures in earnings(%)	34.8	

Table 9 presents the distribution of return migrants by their monthly earnings. Having in mind the Eurostat data for 2005, the average monthly earnings of Bulgarian return migrants is close to the monthly minimum wage for EU-15.⁴ However, almost two thirds (63%) of return migrants have worked for much lower remuneration in respective host countries. At the same time, the return migrants' earnings abroad are about 6.5 times higher than the average monthly wage in Bulgaria. Apparently, the typical Bulgarian migrant enters the lower-wage segment of the host countries labor markets. However, having in mind the large income gap between EU-15 and Bulgaria one could expect quite high satisfaction of return migrants from their stay abroad.

Satisfaction from the Stay Abroad

The survey information obtained regarding the respondents' satisfaction from their stay abroad provides valuable insights on particular factors of successful emigration. It is noteworthy that unquestionable satisfaction – complete or to a certain degree – is reported by over 84% of all respondents. The highest satisfaction relates to the occupation of a qualified job as well as for jobs under official contracts with the employers (Table 10). It should be noted here that strong interaction (Cramer's $V = 0.765$ at 0.01 level of significance of the Chi-square test) between these two characteristics is observed because of the fact that qualified jobs were predominantly under official contracts, and vice versa.

Table 10

Satisfaction of return migrants

Personal assessment of main job characteristics		C21. Are you satisfied by your stay abroad regarding your professional advance (acquired valuable skills/experience helpful to you in Bulgaria)?			
		Yes, completely	Yes, in some extent	No	Total
		31.1	53.4	15.5	100.0
Full-time job:	No	27.3	45.5	27.3	100.0
	Yes	30.8	55.4	13.8	100.0
Qualified job:	No	20.0	54.3	25.7	100.0
	Yes	40.5	53.2	6.3	100.0
Official contract:	No	20.3	58.2	21.5	100.0
	Yes	40.8	50.0	9.2	100.0
Average monthly net earnings (EUR)		754.1	715.3	376.1	674.4

⁴ Eurostat data is obtained from the online data portal, data for labor markets and minimum wages in EC countries (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>).

As it was initially expected, the level of professional satisfaction is related to particular sectors of employment in the host countries. The most satisfied from their workplaces abroad are those who had jobs in industries, transport and tourism. Significant shares (30-40%) of definitely not content return migrants are observed for those employed in agriculture, care for elderly, and housekeeping. Clear differences in satisfaction levels are found also according to the region of stay of return migrant. Almost each fourth respondent returned from Southern Europe was not content. On the contrary, almost all migrants who have been in other EU states are more or less satisfied; similar distribution is found for those respondents that have returned from non-European destinations. It was also expected that the variation in income level should influence the satisfaction from their stay abroad. The observed differences in the average monthly earnings (net of expenditures incurred abroad) are found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level while comparing non-satisfied with completely or partially satisfied return migrants.

In order to identify the net effects of several attributes assumed to be determinants of the satisfaction a binary logistic regression model is estimated. The dependent variable differentiates the completely satisfied respondents (coded by 1) from those who were to some extent satisfied or not satisfied at all (coded by 0). The set of independent variables reflects the main characteristics of the job occupied abroad (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

Table 11

Binary logistic regression for the satisfaction from the job abroad

Independent variables	B	Exp(B)
Gender	-0.315	0.730
Age	0.062***	1.064
Duration of stay	0.038***	1.039
Job arrangement prior to departure	-0.697	0.498
Employment in Agriculture	0.077	1.080
Employment in Services	1.084*	2.956
No contacts with labor offices	0.168	1.183
Full-time job	0.548	1.729
Qualified job	1.013*	2.754
Job under official contract	0.895*	2.447
Monthly net earnings (€)	-0.000003	1.000
% of correctly predicted cases	79.9	
Cox & Snell R sq.	0.252	
No. of observations	139	

Note: (*) significant at 0.10 level; (**) significant at 0.05 level; (***) significant at 0.01 level.

Statistically significant net effects are found for the age, the length of the stay abroad, occupation of a qualified job under official contract with employer, and employment in services (Table 11). Interesting result is observed for return migrants' age – older emigrants tend to be more satisfied from their job abroad than younger ones. The duration of stay, qualified labor and the possession of a job contract were expected to substantially induce job satisfaction, which was confirmed by their positive net effects. Unlike agriculture, the employment in services showed higher satisfaction in contrast to jobs in industry. This could be explained by the prevailing share of construction where (similarly to agriculture) mainly low-skilled jobs with unfavorable work conditions are available to guest workers in the host countries. Net effect however is not obtained for the income level that was also supposed to influence the job satisfaction. There is no doubt that the factors related to increased satisfaction, and especially the persistent wage gap, will act as a stimulus regarding the out-migration attitudes of Bulgarian return migrants even after the EU integration of the country.

Re-migration Attitudes of Bulgarian Return Migrants

The likelihood to re-migrate again is evaluated on the basis of the answers to the following two questions: "D1. How likely is it for you to go abroad again?" and "D2. What is the desired length of the intended stay abroad?" Estimates obtained for return migrants only are much higher in comparison to the standard evaluation of emigration potential (as in Mintchev et.al., 2004). About 59% of the respondents expressed willingness to leave again, and only one fourth are not likely at all to do it. Unlike this, the shares of Bulgarian population willing to emigrate were estimated at 18-20% in 2001 and 2003 (Mintchev, 2006). It is interesting to note that almost 60% of return migrants with the highest likelihood to re-migrate intend to leave for not more than 1 year, and 40% – for a longer period and even to emigrate for good.

Table 12

Likelihood of re-migration

D2. What is the desired length of the intended stay abroad?	D1. How likely is for you to go abroad again?				Total
	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Little likely	Not likely	
	37.7	21.0	17.9	23.4	100.0
Few months	39.3	32.4	55.3	–	41.5
About 1 year	21.3	41.2	37.9	–	30.1
Few years	26.2	20.6	3.4	–	19.5
Emigration for good	13.2	5.8	3.4	–	8.9
Total:	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note. All 162 respondents had answered to the question about the likelihood to leave again. The cross-table is obtained for 124 respondents that have expressed some re-migration likelihood.

For assessing the effects of various potential determinants of re-migration likelihood another binary logistic regression model is estimated. The dependent variable of this model is obtained from the question “How likely is for you to go abroad again?” where 1 stands for “very likely” or “somewhat likely” and 0 for “little likely” and “not likely”. The mean values and standard deviations of the independent variables are presented in Table A2 (Appendix). Highest differences between the target and reference groups are observed in respect of:

- gender (women are 43% in the reference and 33% in the target group);
- education (27% higher educated of those unlikely to re-migrate, versus 17% of those who are likely to leave again);
- marital status (88% and 56% married respondents in the respective groups);
- “complete” satisfaction from the job abroad (21% versus 37%);
- income level (about 600 EUR versus 730 EUR average net monthly earnings);
- availability of relatives abroad (13% versus 28%).

Table 13

Binary logistic regression for the likelihood to re-migrate

Independent variables	B	Exp(B)
Gender	-0.607	0.545
Age	-0.038*	0.963
Education (higher)	-1.263**	0.283
Family status	-1.830***	0.160
Number of children	0.156	1.169
Household size	0.313	1.368
Duration of stay abroad	0.001	1.001
Satisfaction	1.335***	3.802
Monthly net earnings (€)	0.001**	1.001
Availability of relative abroad	1.176**	3.242
% of correctly predicted cases	73.8	
Cox & Snell R sq.	0.266	
No. of observations	145	

Note: (*) significant at 0.10 level; (**) significant at 0.05 level; (***) significant at 0.01 level.

Half of the six socio-demographic variables have shown significant effects on the re-migration likelihood (Table 13). Older migrants as well as the married ones are less willing to leave the country again. Those with higher education however are less likely to leave again, perhaps perceiving some better opportunities on the eve of the EU integration. There is no gender difference in this likelihood, as well as the presence of a large family or dependent children is neither stimulating nor discouraging the willingness to move again.

The most noticeable effects (with odds ratios higher than 3) are obtained for the satisfaction and the availability of a relative abroad. The presence of a household member currently residing abroad is found to be a strong determinant of the re-migration likelihood. Along with this, return migrants who are completely satisfied from their previous stay abroad are most likely to leave the country again, other things being equal. It is important to remind here the fact that, in most cases, satisfied migrants had qualified jobs with official contracts with employers.

The expected positive net impact of the duration of previous stay abroad however is not confirmed by this model. Nevertheless, the occupation of a better remunerated job abroad is found to positively influence the intentions to re-migrate, albeit its effect is minor (the odds ratio for the income variable is close to one).

*

The recent cross border mobility was expected to influence significantly the structure and qualification status of Bulgarian labor force. Substantial divergence in respect of labor experience and educational background is observed between return migrants and domestically employed labor resources. EU-15 labor markets still attract the largest share of Bulgarian emigration. It should be noted that the satisfaction of migrants returned from countries like Germany and UK is much higher in comparison with those returned from South European destinations. Most unsatisfied are migrants that have found employment in agriculture and social care services.

At the same time, Bulgarian labor market experiences a serious deficit in professions requiring particular vocational training (Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria, 2007; Bulgarian Industrial Association, 2007). This supports the unexpected assertion that educational level becomes gradually a hold-up factor regarding return migrants' likelihood to leave again. However, the answer to "stay or leave" dilemma is unambiguous – return migrants express much higher willingness to move in comparison with Bulgarians without foreign labor experience. The high satisfactions from their previous stay abroad, as well as the availability of acquaintances in host countries, are among the leading motives for such an attitude.

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Appendix

Table A1

Description of variables

Gender	1 for "female", 0 for "male"
Age	Number of years
Family status	1 for "married"; 0 otherwise
Education	1 for "higher"; 0 otherwise
Children in the household	Number of children
Household size	Number of household members
Duration of stay abroad	Number of months
Arrangement of a job abroad prior to departure	1 for "yes"; 0 for "no"
Employment in agriculture	1 for agriculture; 0 for services or industry
Employment in services	1 for services; 0 for agriculture or industry
No contacts with the local labor administration (assumed as a proxy for un-documented employment)	1 for "no contacts"; 0 otherwise
Job on a full-time basis	1 for "yes"; 0 for "no"
Job self-assessed as qualified	1 for "yes"; 0 for "no"
Job under official contract with employer	1 for "yes"; 0 for "no"
Monthly earnings abroad	Average monthly earnings abroad, net of current expenditures (EUR)
Satisfaction from the job abroad	1 for "completely"; 0 for "in some extent" or "not"
Availability of relative/s/ abroad	1 for "at least 1", 0 for none

Table A2

Descriptive characteristics

Variables	Likelihood to leave again:				Total	
	little / not likely		very / somewhat likely		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Gender (female)	0.433	0.499	0.330	0.473	0.373	0.485
Age	41.4	11.3	38.0	11.0	39.4	11.2
Education (higher)	0.269	0.447	0.170	0.378	0.211	0.409
Family status	0.879	0.329	0.559	0.499	0.692	0.463
Number of children	0.836	0.863	0.832	0.953	0.833	0.914
Household size	3.52	1.21	3.73	1.28	3.64	1.25
Duration of stay	14.6	15.7	19.0	19.4	17.2	18.0
Satisfaction	0.212	0.412	0.372	0.486	0.306	0.462
Monthly earnings	599.0	543.6	729.6	575.0	674.4	563.8
Relative/s/ abroad	0.134	0.344	0.284	0.453	0.222	0.417

10.IV.2007