

LOCAL STATUS QUO ANALYSIS

YOUMIG - *Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration*

Activity 3.2: Local status quo analysis of youth migration with involvement of stakeholders

YOUMIG
Transnational Youth Migration in Burgas: processes, effects and policy challenges

Haralan Alexandrov
Burgas municipality

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Executive Summary

This report presents a case study on youth migration in the municipality of Burgas, Bulgaria. It is based on policy-oriented research, using multiple methods of data collection and analysis.

The report starts with a methodological introduction and proceeds with a general presentation of Burgas municipality with a special focus on local development. Burgas is a significant regional centre with growing importance for the national economy. After a period of decline, in the last decade Burgas has undergone considerable progress and it is now considered one of the best developing cities in Bulgaria, especially in terms of public infrastructure. The local economy is in constant demand for qualified workforce, but still the incomes of the employees remain rather low, which demotivates young people and encourages emigration.

The third chapter is a description of the migratory processes in the 1990-2016 period from a quantitative perspective, based on available statistical and survey data. As elsewhere in Bulgaria, the population of Burgas municipality is aging due to the decline in birth rates and emigration to the capital city and abroad. On the other hand, a steady growth of the population is witnessed as a result of internal and international migration to Burgas, with immigrants mostly from Russia and Ukraine.

The fourth and fifth sections present the results of qualitative research based on interviews with institutional actors and young migrants as well as focus groups and migration forums. The sixth part presents typical biographies of young return migrants, which are representative of the emerging worldview of a highly mobile generation that perceives migration as a normal episode of their personal careers.

The predominant perceptions of youth migration in Burgas are construed in dramatic terms: as a “massive exodus” of the young and educated Bulgarians towards the developed European countries, which affects the development of the municipality unfavourably, and the country as a whole, by exhausting its demographic and economic potential. Return migration, on the contrary, is perceived as possible and highly desirable, and as something which inspires hopes and policy ideas. This perception does not entirely correspond with reality, as it is revealed by the statistical data and the municipality level population projection, which presents a more balanced trend of migration. However, the popular perceptions gauge the general attitudes in the community, and the strategy of the municipal administration, respectively, and the latter emerges in response to those attitudes.

The seventh section presents the major policy challenges the local authorities face in respect to youth migration and its effects on local development. The municipal leadership plans to launch a broad youth-oriented policy, meant to keep young people in the community by providing them with better career prospects, as well as to bring back as many of the emigrants as possible. These intentions, however, face some serious challenges, due to the lack of relevant information and experience at the local level, as well as the disempowering institutional culture of the centralized state bureaucracy.

The last section contains concluding remarks and policy recommendations. It suggests that Burgas municipality needs to undertake a comprehensive policy approach in order to put youth migration under control and to attract educated young emigrants back to the home country.

Project Description

YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/youmig/>

This Local Status Quo Analysis on Transnational Youth Migration was prepared in the framework of the **“YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration”** project, in a series of seven similar analyses prepared in Burgas (Bulgaria), Graz (Austria), Kanjiža (Serbia), Maribor (Slovenia), the Rača district of Bratislava (Slovakia), Sfântu Gheorghe (Romania) and Szeged (Hungary). These analyses provide an overview of the main trends and challenges of youth migration, based on a common methodology. The aim of the papers is to enable YOUMIG project partners to better understand the local processes linked to youth migration, and respond better to its challenges.



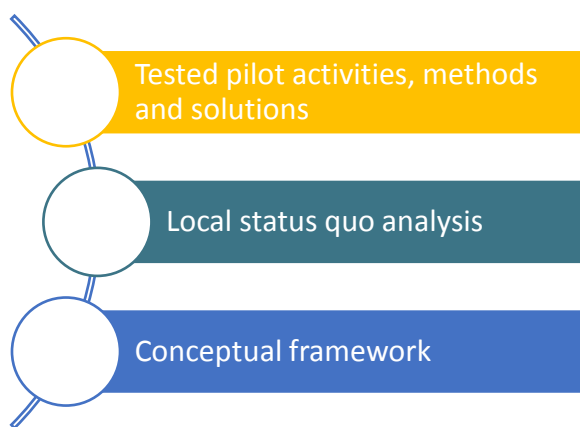
YOUMIG Partners in the Danube region. Cartography: University of Vienna

YOUMIG is a strategic project of the European Union’s Danube Transnational Programme, in which 19 partners from 8 countries work together. The objective of the project is to support local governments in tackling the challenges and exploiting the developmental potential of youth migration, leading to a better-governed and more competitive Danube region. The project aims at improving institutional capacities to measure and manage the immigration, emigration and return migration of young people

(aged 15-34). Statistical offices and academic organizations teamed up with local governments for creating local developmental strategies based on improved impact indicators of youth migration, administrative capacity building and pilot activities.

YOUMIG's work is structured in six work packages (WPs). Besides management (WP1) and communication (WP2) issues, thematic work is distributed as follows:

In WP3, a Conceptual Framework provides the theoretical background of the project. In addition, all partners contribute to the better understanding of youth migration and its developmental impacts on the municipality level by elaborating local status quo analyses. This Local Status Quo Analysis is also a part of WP3.



In WP4, a comprehensive evaluation of the locally available statistical data and indicators related to youth migration is carried out. Shortfalls of measuring local challenges are identified and new or improved indicators of youth migration are elaborated and tested.

In WP5, the project improves local administrative capacities to manage the migration-related processes identified by the Local Status Quo Analyses by jointly testing and introducing good practices as pilot activities, and institutional solutions based on a one-stop-shop approach.

In WP6, the project concludes by providing transnationally tested tools for all governance levels contributing to better strategies, policies and services related to the issue of youth migration.

The project runs between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2019. The Local Status Quo Analysis was finalized in December 2017.

YOUMIG PROJECT at a glance

Full name: YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration

A project of the

Danube Transnational Programme

Start date: 01-01-2017

End date: 30-06-2019

Budget: 2,718,853 EUR (of which: ERDF Contribution: 2,055,179 EUR, IPA Contribution: 255,846 EUR)

Call number: Call 1

Priority: 4. (Well-governed Danube region)

Specific objective: 4.1. (Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges)

Project partners:

Lead partner: Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HU)

Work package leaders: University of Vienna (AT), Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (DE), Maribor Development Agency (SI), INFOSTAT - Institute of Informatics and Statistics (SK)

ERDF partners: Municipality of Szeged (HU), City of Graz (AT), Institute for Economic Research (SI), Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (RO), Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (RO), National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria (BG), Burgas Municipality (BG), Municipality of the City district of Bratislava- Rača (SK)

ERDF partners: Municipality of Szeged (HU), City of Graz (AT), Institute for Economic Research (SI), Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (RO), Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (RO), National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria (BG), Burgas Municipality (BG), Municipality of the City district of Bratislava- Rača (SK)

IPA partners: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RS), Institute of Social Sciences (RS), Municipality of Kanjiža (RS)

Associated Strategic Partners: Statistics Austria (AT), City of Karlsruhe (DE), Federal Institute for Population Research (DE)

Other YOUMIG Local Status Quo Analyses are available at the project's website:

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/youmig>

YOUMIG news: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/youmig/news> and

<http://www.facebook.com/youmigproject>

1. Introduction

The Local Status Quo Analysis provides an overview of the trends in youth migration and of the related social phenomena, respectively. The study is based on policy-oriented research. The first aim is to synthesize the findings of the YOUMIG research activities concerning youth migration. In this respect we want to characterize and typify the municipalities according to the migratory trends they experience. The second aim is to understand the effects of youth migration, and to identify policy challenges related to it. Through our applied research we also wanted to provide a brief look into the responses given by local authorities to challenges related to the in- and out-migration of young people. A related goal was to identify the management and capacity gaps in the institutional mechanisms of the local authorities to deal with youth migration and related phenomena.

The level of the analysis is the municipality and each of the Local Status Quo Analyses can be perceived as detailed case study using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. These case studies cover local administrative units being in quite different position in the system of international migration and of the socio-economic interdependencies. Some of our municipalities receive; some of them send migrants while others are both targets and starting points of the transnational migratory flows. The municipality of Burgas, for instance, is predominantly at the sending end of migration, but the study identified a comparatively new trend of attracting immigrants from countries outside the EU. Some of our municipalities are small or medium-sized towns with an economically peripheral position, others, like Burgas, are important regional centres. In spite of these significant differences, both the data collection and analysis was based on jointly used concepts, uniform methodologies and previously agreed processes. The main focus of the investigation was on emigration, immigration and return migration. In some municipalities we also included commuting; however, internal migration (even if important in some cases) was not in our focus. The conceptual and theoretical framework of the analysis was provided by the University of Vienna team while the methodological tool by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities. By using these tools, the comparison of the results will be possible in a further phase. Nevertheless, at the level of the present case study we also tried to reveal the specificities of our municipality.

The research activities were closely connected to other work packages and activities. The results of the present analysis enable local municipalities to elaborate evidence-based strategies to deal with the impact of youth migration. This will be of key importance during the implementation of WP5, where a pilot project concerning the management of the effects of youth migration will be launched in each municipality. One important finding of our case study was that in the municipality of Burgas the central concern is the brain drain due to the emigration of young and educated people, and accordingly, a pilot project targeted at potential return migrants is being considered. The strategy building activities of WP6 will also be based on the exploratory activities synthesized in this report.

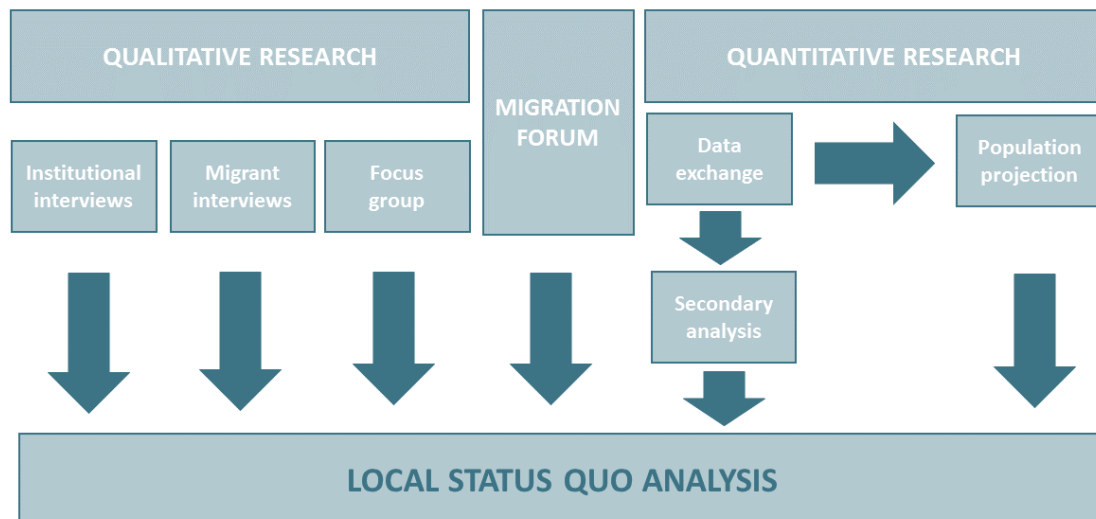
The report is organized into eight chapters. First, we present briefly the methodology of the investigation. The second part is a general presentation of the municipality of Burgas with a special focus on local development. The third chapter is a description of the migratory processes and related phenomena from a quantitative perspective, relying on available statistical and survey data. The timespan of this analysis is the 1990-2016 period. In this chapter a municipality level population projection provided by the INFOSTAT team is also included. The fourth and fifth section focuses on the results of our qualitative investigation based on interviews with institutional actors and young migrants, as well as on focus groups and migration forums. We present the characteristics of youth migration, and some typical migrant biographies based on these sources. The sixth part presents the

major policy challenges the local authorities have to face and their policies concerning the effects of youth migration. The last section contains our concluding remarks and recommendations.

2. Methods

As mentioned already, the Local Status Quo Analysis was based on research activities using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Figure 1 synthesizes the data sources and research activities, which fed into the present report.

Figure 1. Methods used to collect and analyse data



Most importantly, a complex qualitative research activity was carried out by the Burgas team of local experts.

- (1) First, we conducted interviews with institutional actors (e.g. leaders or employees of institutions engaged in tackling with the effects of youth migration). This phase had manifold aims. It was an explanatory research concerning the patterns and variations of youth migration. We tried to identify the general position of our locality in the system of transnational migration and the general trends of immigration, emigration and return migration. We also wanted to reveal local discourses concerning migration, and the way local stakeholders think about the relationship between migration and development. Nevertheless, the main aim of this phase was to map the existing policies (measures and activities) focusing on migration and youth. On the one hand, we were interested in concrete measures, activities, projects or permanent programmes run by institutional actors. On the other hand, we wanted to know whether the interviewed stakeholders and institutional actors thought that they had the institutional capacities to alter (or affect) the migratory behaviour of young people and to deal with the (already known and possible) consequences of migration. The semi-structured

interviews were carried out according to a previously elaborated guide. A total number of nine interviews were conducted.

- (2) In a next phase we carried out narrative-biographical interviews with young migrants. We used only partially the narrative-biographical method. The second part of the interviews can be conceived as a semi-structured interview, as we asked questions according to a previously elaborated guide. The narrative-biographical method (which was used in the first phase of the interview) provides a rigorous and previously fixed technique of conducting and interpreting interviews. It is important that through using this technique we will not subordinate the stories (meaning the self-representation) of migrants to our own scientific or political narratives. The interviewed young migrants had the opportunity to present their stories in a less constrained way. The semi-structured phase was used to obtain additional data concerning the migrants, namely to test some previous hypotheses concerning them. We tried to select young migrants with “typical” life trajectories. As in general during the research, our main focus was on migration patterns in the Danube region (especially Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania). This focus was taken into account in the selection of interviewees as well as in the questions that were to be asked during the interviews. Nine interviews with young migrants were conducted.
- (3) Focus groups were also conducted according to a previously fixed guide. The focus group method is a par excellence qualitative research method, suitable primarily for mapping people’s attitudes, opinions, experiences, or the discourses that are in use regarding a certain topic or phenomenon. One of the most important advantages of the method is its interactive nature, the fact that participants actively participate in the interactive and collective process of the construction of meanings. Our focus-group session focused on the experiences of young people with migration, paying special attention to the administrative aspects of the migration process (i.e. their contacts with the local and other levels of administration, the problems they encountered, their opinions about the policies employed by the relevant authorities etc.). Our goal was to obtain in this way information that can be useful for local decision-makers, policy-makers, stakeholders. The Burgas group consisted of young return migrants from different ethnic origins and focused on the challenges faced by return migrants.
- (4) Migration forums were also used to identify the challenges connected to the transnational migration of young people. The quantitative research was based on secondary analysis of existing statistical sources and it was conducted at the level of municipality. Quantitative data, incomplete as they are, provide a framework for the qualitative analysis, which constituted the major focus of the investigation and are the primary sources of the present report.
- (5) The collection and acquisition of statistical data took place in the framework of the so-called data exchange exercise. This was based on a common template provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and carried out by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria. These data were used in the secondary analysis carried out by the local expert with the help of the NSI team.

- (6) The quantitative analysis presents the demographic and migratory trends forecast by a population projection based on the cohort-component method provided by the Institute for Informatics and Statistics (INFOSTAT) team. This forecast can also be useful for local level stakeholders.

3. The municipality of Burgas

3.1. General presentation

The municipality of Burgas is the largest municipality located in southeastern Bulgaria and extends over an area of 514,362 acres, representing 0.43% of the country territory. The Municipality includes 14 settlements, the city of Burgas and the small town Balgarovo, and 12 villages. The city of Burgas is the largest and most important industrial, commercial, transport and cultural centre in south-eastern Bulgaria. It is administrative centre of the municipality and one of the largest districts of Bulgaria (the country is divided in 28 districts). In terms of population, Burgas is the fourth biggest city in Bulgaria after the capital Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna, the other big city at the Black Sea. What is relevant to this study is that Burgas is considered one of the cities with best living conditions in Bulgaria.

According to the data of the National Statistical Institute at 31.12.2016, the overall population of Burgas municipality is 209 331. The large majority of the population (more than 200 000) lives in the city of Burgas. In the last years there is a clear tendency for progressive urbanization of the municipality, which is both economically and politically driven. For instance the villages situated close to Burgas were given the status of town neighbourhoods with a decision of the municipal council in response to the appeal of the local inhabitants. This “promotion” provided them better access to public services, especially in terms of transport and infrastructure, and higher symbolic status, but in reality many of the settlements remain villages. Like in the rest of the country, the population of Burgas municipality is aging – about 77 000, or approximately 37% of the total population, are over 50 years of age. The reason is both the decline in birth rates and the migration of the population to the capital and to other countries, mainly to EU members. On the other hand, Burgas is one of the cities in Bulgaria, which is characterized by mechanical growth of the population as a result of internal and international migration, with immigrants mostly from Russia and Ukraine.

The municipality is run by a local government with a classical structure: a municipal council and a mayor, elected every four years, and an administration of about 400 public servants structured in several directorates. Under the Bulgarian legislation, the mayor is quite an empowered figure and has the discretion to launch a broad range of municipal policies and local initiatives. For instance, the municipal leadership of Burgas is considering an ambitious strategy for attracting investment by creating opportunities for youth entrepreneurship and innovation. Efforts are being made to enhance the quality of life by investing in healthcare and diversification of social services, as well as improving the urban infrastructure and sport facilities.

The city has an extended educational network, consisting of municipal kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, as well as several higher education establishments – a medical and nursing college, the Higher Chemical Institute and the Free University of Burgas. Still, most of the high school graduates

prefer to continue their studies either in Sofia or abroad. The municipality strives to improve the school facilities and to secure broad access to education. In response to the school dropout of children from impoverished minority communities, the municipality has launched a targeted policy for inclusive education.

3.2. Local development

In terms of economic and social development, Burgas is well positioned geographically and politically. It has a favourable geostrategic location, natural biodiversity, fine seacoast, highly productive farmland, modern infrastructure and considerable human potential, which is a prerequisite for economic prosperity. The region around the city has preserved a variety of cultural and historical monuments and diverse cultural traditions. As an important commercial, industrial and tourist centre, the city has a well-developed transport system and is easily accessible by sea, air and land. Burgas has the biggest port in the country, the second busiest airport with a capacity of two million passengers per year, and the only oil port in Bulgaria.

For decades, the economic landscape of Burgas was dominated by the chemical industry. Near the city operates the largest chemical and oil refinery in southeastern Europe, which used to be the major employer of the local population. In the 70s and 80s of the last century, when the chemical industry was on the rise, it attracted workers from all over the country and contributed to the fast growth of the population. The manufacturing of various oil products, plastics and other chemical products is still vital for the local industry, along with shipbuilding, ventilation and climatic equipment, cargo carriages and fish processing.

The macro political developments, however, had a lasting negative effect on the local economy: with the downfall of the centralized economy of the former communist state in the 90s, the city suffered considerable deindustrialization, and still has not fully recovered from this decline. Unlike in other regions, only a few new enterprises emerged to replace the old ones that were closed down. The boom of the tourist industry about the turn of the century generated short-term demand for labour force in construction (hundreds of hotels were built along the coast near Burgas), and in the seasonal jobs related to tourist services. This created, for the time being, an appearance of economic invigoration, and attracted migrants from the inland regions in southeast Bulgaria, which were suffering even deeper economic depression. In both cases, however, these developments were not sustainable and did not provide lasting prosperity and security for the employees. These circumstances explain the considerable dissatisfaction with the local economic development, and respectively with the opportunities provided by the labour market, expressed by the participants in this study.

According to NSI data, the number of enterprises on the territory of Burgas municipality in the period 2012 – 2015 has increased from 14 546 to 15 473, but their total turnover has decreased from 15.677 billion in 2012 to 12.478 billion in 2015. The number of employed persons increased from 68 207 in 2012 to 70 775 in 2015, but in 2016 declined slightly compared to the previous year. It should be mentioned that the number of hired persons during these years remains relatively the same – from 57 677 in 2012 to 59 859 in 2015. The largest share of the local economy is trade, followed by construction, transport, and various professional activities, including research and education.

Unsurprisingly, the ups and downs of the economic developments during the last decades resulted in considerable social inequalities and developmental imbalances. As usual at times of political and economic transition, the most vulnerable members of society found themselves at the losing end of the changing social hierarchy. In Burgas there is a large Roma neighbourhood, which is comparatively poor and underdeveloped, although the people there enjoy equal access to municipal public services.

This district is less segregated and impoverished than the Roma neighbourhoods in other Bulgarian cities, but it still has some of the characteristics of a ghetto – higher unemployment rates due to educational failure and lack of proper qualification, lasting dependency on social welfare, early marriage and unstable families, higher school dropout, etc.

It is worth mentioning that not long ago another district in Burgas was considered an industrial ghetto, not much better than the Roma neighbourhood. It was populated with workers and their families, who migrated to Burgas when the local industry flourished and attracted work force. The ensuing industrial decline deprived these people of employment and work prospects, yet they preferred to stay in city rather than to return to the depopulated rural areas they have left behind. The quality of life rapidly deteriorated and for about two decades, the neighbourhood had the fame of a violent and desperate place where nobody would live if one has a choice. In the last years however, the municipality managed to change entirely the image of the neighbourhood by building new infrastructure and transport services, and by encouraging private investments.

In spite of the deficiencies and disproportions of the local economy, by and large Burgas is considered as one of the best developing cities in Bulgaria, especially in terms of public infrastructure. This view is broadly shared by all participants in the study and in particular by the interviewed officials. According to the prevailing opinion, after a long period of stagnation, in the last years Burgas has undergone considerable progress due to the active policy of the municipality and the charismatic mayor. The secret of this revival is the ability of the municipal administration to utilize all available possibilities for funding projects and initiatives, provided by the national government and the European programs.

This strategy, however, can hardly compensate the chronic deficiencies, created by the fiscal centralization, as well as the rigid and bureaucratized decision-making process under the control of the central government. Another major challenge for local development are the structural disproportions of the regional economy, dominated by the tourist industry, which provides volatile seasonal employment and distorts the labour market. The interviewed officials shared their concern about the short-term strategy of the local business, which prefers to profit from the cheap labour force instead of investing in innovation. Apparently, at this point the driving force of development of Burgas is the municipal government rather than the local economy.

The interviewed young people from Burgas unanimously declare that the most attractive thing about their city is the proximity to the sea, the good climate and the intense social life they enjoy. They value the warm and friendly relations between people and the spontaneity of communication within the community. Indeed, Burgas has preserved some of the charming characteristics of a smaller, face-to-face community, where people know each other and use to greet one another at the street. The young also appreciate the modernization of the material infrastructure of the city and the accessibility of public services. However, they enumerate a number of deficits that make the life of the young precarious and foster emigration.

At the top of the problems are the poor economic prospects for the young and the general economic insecurity, which depresses people and deteriorates social life. Indeed, the incomes of the employees are quite modest compared to the rising cost of living, which is pushed up by the inflow of tourists. Burgas is often depicted in paradoxical terms: an expensive city whose citizens feel poor. Some of the interviewed explain the stagnation with the lack of entrepreneurial passion and underdeveloped business culture in the community. Others are convinced that the major employers have established a collusive cartel for keeping the salaries down. Corruption is rarely mentioned as a problem, but the rigid bureaucracy is considered a major setback for local development. The quality of higher education, offered by the local universities and institutes, is also evaluated as unsatisfactory.

The findings of the study suggest that the uneven developments in Burgas (infrastructural and policy revival in the context of ongoing economic stagnation) foster higher expectations about social promotion (work career, income, status, etc.) than the local economy is ready to meet. This discrepancy generates frustration and discontent among upward striving young people, who fail to achieve according to their own standards and turn towards emigrations as the obvious solution of this dilemma.

4. Migratory and demographic processes in quantitative perspective

4.1 Population change and migratory processes at national level

The population change in Bulgaria after 1989 is characterized with significant and permanent decline due to decreasing fertility and increasing mortality. The tendencies in fertility and mortality led to a negative natural increase of population since 1990 onwards, reaching its lowest value in 1997 – minus 7.0‰. As a result, the population of the country has melted with about 20% in the last 25 years. The main factor is the negative birth rate, followed by emigration. From 8 595 465 in 1991, the population has declined to 7 101 859 according to the last census data from 2016.

Total fertility rate in the country is 1,54 in 2016, and in 1991 it was 1.65. At municipal level, the fertility rate is 1.63. Life expectancy data is only available at country and gender level: 74.65 years for 2016, which is significantly lower than the EU average life span – 80.6 years. This places Bulgaria, along with Lithuania, at the bottom in EU on this benchmark. Compared to 1991, however, life expectancy has increased significantly – in 1991 it was 71.22 years.

Demographic data for the Bulgaria in 1989-2016 period

Years	Population as of 31.12. - number	Total fertility rate- ‰	Life expectancy at birth (years)
1989	8767308	1.90	71.40
1990	8669269	1.81	71.33
1991	8595465	1.65	71.22
1992	8484863	1.54	71.13
1993	8459763	1.45	71.08
1994	8427418	1.37	70.91
1995	8384715	1.23	70.64
1996	8340936	1.24	70,58
1997	8283200	1.09	70.48
1998	8230371	1.11	70.48
1999	8190876	1.23	71.01
2000	8149468	1.27	71.70
2001	7891095	1.24	71.80
2002	7845841	1.21	71.87
2003	7801273	1.23	72.07
2004	7761049	1.29	72.43
2005	7718750	1.31	72.55
2006	7679290	1.38	72.61
2007	7640238	1.42	72.67

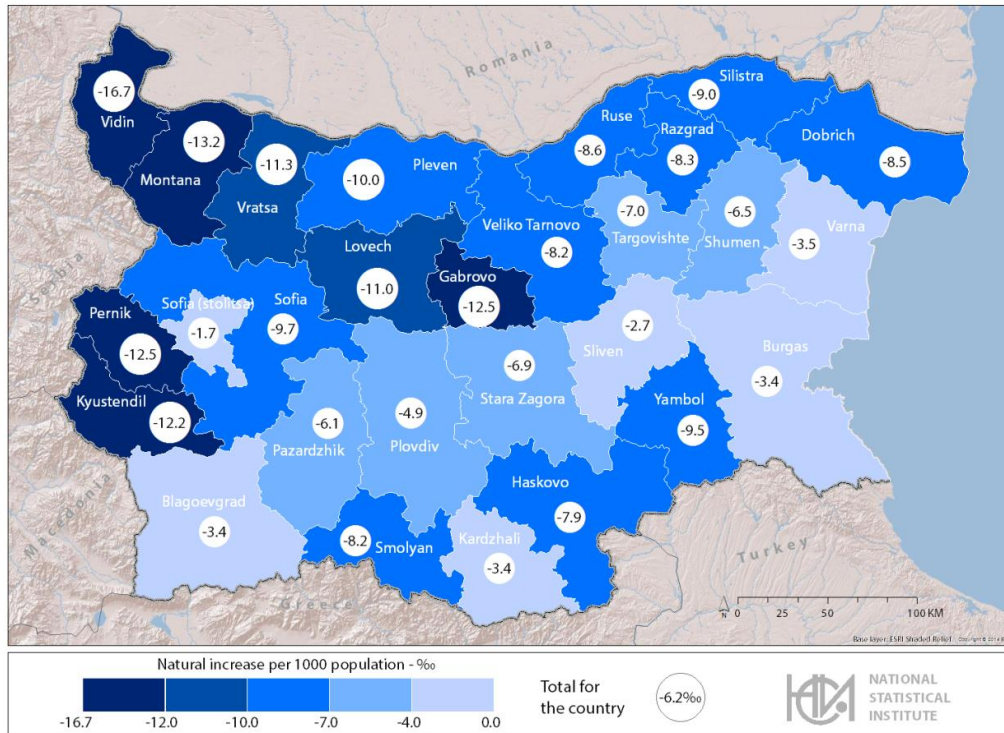
2008	7606551	1.48	73.01
2009	7563710	1.57	73.43
2010	7504868	1.49	73.58
2011	7327224	1.51	73.83
2012	7284552	1.50	74.02
2013	7245677	1.48	74.45
2014	7202198	1.52	74.69
2015	7153784	1.53	74.50
2016	7101859	1.54	74.65

Considerable changes are observed in the age structure of the population. A clear tendency of population ageing is observed, characterized by a decrease of share of population up to 15 years of age and increase of population aged 65 and more.

Population by age as of 31.12 for the 1989-2016 period

Years	Total	Age - Number			Age %		
		0-14	15-64	65+	0-14	15-64	65+
1989	8767308	1800967	5830075	1136266	20.5	66.5	13.0
1990	8669269	1743346	5764956	1160967	20.1	66.5	13.4
1991	8595465	1684404	5722879	1188182	19.6	66.6	13.8
1992	8484863	1614895	5661518	1208450	19.0	66.7	14.2
1993	8459763	1573277	5652656	1233830	18.6	66.8	14.6
1994	8427418	1528118	5647618	1251682	18.1	67.0	14.9
1995	8384715	1481345	5630874	1272496	17.7	67.2	15.2
1996	8340936	1437527	5624252	1279157	17.2	67.4	15.3
1997	8283200	1387538	5601526	1294136	16.8	67.6	15.6
1998	8230371	1340726	5584542	1305103	16.3	67.9	15.9
1999	8190876	1300907	5565165	1324804	15.9	67.9	16.2
2000	8149468	1266533	5551767	1331168	15.5	68.1	16.3
2001	7891095	1181356	5374224	1335515	15.0	68.1	16.9
2002	7845841	1143438	5366102	1336301	14.6	68.4	17.0
2003	7801273	1105761	5361782	1333730	14.2	68.7	17.1
2004	7761049	1073211	5357021	1330817	13.8	69.0	17.1
2005	7718750	1047051	5343220	1328479	13.6	69.2	17.2
2006	7679290	1031915	5322628	1324747	13.4	69.3	17.3
2007	7640238	1023409	5293641	1323188	13.4	69.3	17.3
2008	7606551	1021594	5261118	1323839	13.4	69.2	17.4
2009	7563710	1026200	5211619	1325891	13.6	68.9	17.5
2010	7504868	1032440	5141057	1331371	13.8	68.5	17.7
2011	7327224	979956	4966189	1381079	13.4	67.8	18.8
2012	7284552	989989	4899092	1395471	13.6	67.3	19.2
2013	7245677	996144	4831866	1417667	13.7	66.7	19.6
2014	7202198	998196	4763673	1440329	13.9	66.1	20.0
2015	7153784	998206	4693792	1461786	14.0	65.6	20.4
2016	7101859	1001019	4628724	1472116	14.1	65.2	20.7

Changes of the demographic tendencies resulted in changes in the territorial distribution of population: it increasingly concentrates in the capital and two-three of the bigger regional centres at the expense of the depopulated rural areas. As the map shows, the district of Burgas is among the least affected by depopulation.



As there was no detailed data existing on the international migration up to 2007, the population censuses were used in order to estimate the volume of international migration. In addition, representative sample surveys were used for estimation of the migration behaviour and attitude of population, as well as the profile of migrants. Since 2007, NSI of Bulgaria started reporting of the documented migration.

Emigrants with Bulgarian citizenship by years and ages

Year	Age								
	Total	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
2007	2925	447	403	917	768	223	100	13	54
2008	2109	309	254	660	581	159	65	28	53
2009	19037	1894	2093	4633	5186	2877	1688	462	204
2010	27701	1890	2279	5172	8014	5354	3316	1235	441
2011	9496	691	497	2402	2702	1700	957	379	168
2012	13640	1160	768	3777	3241	2108	1384	901	301
2013	16036	1121	1436	5168	3471	2097	1320	904	519
2014	23849	865	2397	6714	6294	3920	2216	1202	241
2015	24487	1625	3078	5719	4494	3413	2770	2410	978
2016	25795	1152	2819	7776	6098	3892	2054	1226	778

Population number and structures in the observed period were influenced by intensive emigration. The number of emigrants was highest in 1989, when 218,000 persons from Turkish ethnic origin left the country to reside in Turkey as aftermath of the policy for ethnic assimilation, launched by the communist regime in the 80es. During the next years, the emigration was determined by conditions and factors of economic nature. The size and intensity of emigration decreased and new destinations appeared at the same time. Throughout the period, return migration was also observed, mostly at retirement age. However, the available data does not suggest that a transition process from emigration to immigration is under way. Quite to the contrary, the annual number of emigrants tend to grow over the period with some fluctuations: after a peak of 27 701 in 2010 following the financial crisis it falls to 9 496 in 2011, and then steadily grows each year, reaching 25 795 in 2016. From 2012 on, the largest number of emigrants falls in the age group 20-29. As the data for 2016 demonstrates, Germany and UK are the most preferred destinations for migration.

Emigrant stock by countries for 2016

National level												
	Total				Male				Female			
	0-14	15-34	35+	Total	0-14	15-34	35+	Total	0-14	15-34	35+	Total
Total	2011	13090	10694	25795	1012	6402	5001	12415	999	6688	5693	13380
Germany	527	3340	2634	6501	274	1640	1229	3143	253	1700	1405	3358
United Kingdom	353	2543	1720	4616	176	1245	758	2179	177	1298	962	2437
Spain	275	1887	1472	3634	137	881	625	1643	138	1006	847	1991
Italy	162	1166	942	2270	82	568	385	1035	80	598	557	1235
France	93	664	470	1227	50	314	220	584	43	350	250	643

The major factors affecting population processes are the macroeconomic changes that took place after the downfall of the communist regime in 1989, and their repercussions on the daily life of ordinary people. The transition of the political system in the country from totalitarian to democratic one enabled the development of market economy, growing of private enterprise, and free movement across the boundaries. These phenomena strongly influenced not only the economy, but also the overall demographic development, and the number and directions of emigration flows in particular. The transformation of the political, economic and social systems led to considerable changes at the labour market – from a situation of state secured full employment up to 1989, the country entered into period of scarce and uncertain employment opportunities and growing unemployment, especially for certain categories: low educated persons, young people, persons just before the retirement age. For the period concerned, the highest fall in the unemployment was between 2006 and 2007, and the highest rise was between 2009 and 2010.

From the perspective of quality of human life, the Bulgarian transition from planned economy and centralized state government to what claims to be market economy and liberal democracy was a

disaster. The annual UN human development index, which considers various indicators such as income, health status, educational opportunities, access to quality services, security, community participation, etc. demonstrates steady deterioration throughout the 90s, stabilization about the turn of the century and fragile improvement in the last decade. The average income in Bulgaria is still lower than in most countries from the former Central and Eastern Europe. A poverty culture has emerged in the depressed suburban areas and the impoverished rural areas, but it has not been profoundly studied. An estimate of 'minimal income' is used to set benefit levels for social support payments, but this is based on the support capacity of the state rather than on a measure of actual needs. Malnutrition of the population is not considered a problem in Bulgaria, although the average monthly income of a large section of the population in the country (retired people, unemployed, etc.) is beyond the minimum required for maintaining a reasonable daily living. Homelessness has not been adequately studied either. It is believed that rates are low and homelessness is not seen as a priority concern of social policy. Understandably, these dire circumstances, affecting whole categories of people, provide powerful incentive for emigration.

4.1. Population change and migratory processes at municipality level

The data on population change and migratory processes in Burgas municipality is based on the national statistics, collected and processed by NSI, because the municipalities in Bulgaria do not collect their own population data. For the period between 1996 and 2016, the overall development of the population of Burgas municipality follows the national trend of steady decrease and progressive aging. The fluctuation in 2011, when the population abruptly increases, is due to mechanical administrative intervention – the accession of several settlements from a neighbouring territory. Like in the rest of the country, the population of Burgas is aging – about 77 000, or approximately 37% of the total population, are over 50 years of age.

Population by age for the 1996 – 2016 period in Burgas municipality

Years	Total	Age			Age		
		0-14	15-64	65+	0-14	15-64	65+
1996	213099	37182	154591	21326	17.4	72.5	10.0
1997	211639	35851	153664	22124	16.9	72.6	10.5
1998	212594	34803	155047	22744	16.4	72.9	10.7
1999	212067	33796	154546	23725	15.9	72.9	11.2
2000	211234	33008	154033	24193	15.6	72.9	11.5
2001	209727	31109	152511	26107	14.8	72.7	12.4
2002	209487	30091	152705	26691	14.4	72.9	12.7
2003	207424	29146	151509	26769	14.1	73.0	12.9
2004	206414	28494	151258	26662	13.8	73.3	12.9
2005	206110	28100	151236	26774	13.6	73.4	13.0
2006	205691	28131	150649	26911	13.7	73.2	13.1
2007	204175	28449	148754	26972	13.9	72.9	13.2
2008	205467	28966	149065	27436	14.1	72.5	13.4

2009	206343	29637	148916	27790	14.4	72.2	13.5
2010	206700	30293	148024	28383	14.7	71.6	13.7
2011	212032	29626	150136	32270	14.0	70.8	15.2
2012	211535	30006	148469	33060	14.2	70.2	15.6
2013	211764	30503	147017	34244	14.4	69.4	16.2
2014	211033	30969	144856	35208	14.7	68.6	16.7
2015	209613	31195	142015	36403	14.9	67.8	17.4
2016	209331	31550	140670	37111	15.1	67.2	17.7

For municipal level, there is reliable data on internal migration from 1995 and on international migration from 2007 on and 2016, collected by NSI. There is no data available on suburbanization and there are no local level surveys concerning youth migration. The picture of the migratory processes in Burgas municipality for the period between 1995 and 2016 follows a pattern of oscillation between successive waves of predominant inflows and outflows, whereat the immigration largely compensates the emigration, and in effect, a comparatively stable population is sustained.

Net migration in Burgas municipality

Years	Net migration (number)
1995	-138
1996	-1008
1997	-1360
1998	1255
1999	-397
2000	-573
2001	399
2002	141
2003	-1747
2004	-735
2005	-141
2006	-357
2007	-1465
2008	1239
2009	723
2010	-226
2011	-557
2012	-108
2013	598
2014	-371
2015	-935
2016	258

Internal migration in Burgas municipality

Years	Immigrants	Emigrants
1995	4124	4262
1996	2302	3310
1997	2010	3370
1998	5717	4462
1999	2551	2948
2000	4028	4601
2001	5065	4666
2002	3101	2960
2003	2205	3952
2004	2562	3297
2005	3487	3628
2006	3227	3584
2007	3896	5361
2008	3900	2661
2009	8116	7393
2010	4633	4859
2011	2198	2755
2012	2667	2775
2013	3338	2740
2014	3444	3815
2015	3486	4421
2016	3495	3237

Interestingly, the picture of international migration in the municipality is rather balanced as well – immigration is comparable in size with emigration and in some year, including 2016, even prevails.

International migration in Burgas

Years	Immigrants	Emigrants
2007	26	59
2008	14	30
2009	50	436
2010	37	488
2011	104	263
2012	342	442
2013	786	392
2014	834	1305
2015	899	986
2016	924	813

Apparently, Burgas has become attractive for immigrants, mostly from non-EU countries, as the data on foreign-born population suggests. Most pronounced is the immigration from the countries of the former Soviet Union: for instance in 2016 out of 738 non-EU newcomers to the municipality, 442 are from the Russia federation, 161 are from Ukraine and 65 from Kazakhstan. Still, the native-born citizens of Burgas prevail by far.

Foreign-born population by countries

	Municipality of Burgas	0-14	15-34	35+	Total
2016	Total	31550	47023	130758	209331
	Native-born	30227	46161	127821	204209
	EU	830	92	329	1251
	Non-EU	493	770	2608	3871
	Russian Federation	203	342	1447	1992
	Ukraine	55	128	366	549
	Germany	163	28	46	237
	Kazakhstan	40	49	140	229
	United Kingdom	180	5	39	224

4.2. Presentation of the results of the population projection

According to the NSI population projections, the demographic developments in Bulgaria are far from optimistic: in 2025, the population of the country will reach 6 734 989 persons and in 2050 – 5 748 061 or a decrease of almost one million persons is expected. The tendencies at municipal level are similar, although less dramatic: in 2025 the inhabitants of the municipality are expected to be 413 993 and in 2050 - 396 753. Apparently, the population on Burgas is dwindling slower than the population of the country as a whole, largely due to the mechanic growth as a result of internal migration. Yet, according the NSI population projection for Burgas, the negative tendency is clearly pronounced:

Years	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Burgas	416 066	415 734	413 993	411 505	408 614	405 286	401 364	396 753
Male	202 942	202 170	200 928	199 501	198 067	196 570	194 840	192 728
Female	213 124	213 564	213 065	212 004	210 547	208 716	206 524	204 025

The population projection estimated by the INFOSTAT team suggests similar developments (Annex 1). Under the medium projection, the population of the Burgas municipality is decreasing over the years due to negative natural increase, which is only partly compensated by immigration. Even the optimistic prediction envisages slight decrease of the population after a period of temporary growth. In both cases, immigration is crucial for the sustaining of the fragile balance.

Live births	Deaths	Natural increase	Net migration	Total increase	Population 31.12.
1824	2355	-531	687	156	209487
1770	2305	-535	687	152	209639
1716	2282	-566	687	121	209760
1674	2274	-600	687	87	209847
1625	2263	-638	687	49	209896
1585	2273	-688	687	-1	209895
1549	2268	-719	687	-32	209863
1523	2288	-765	687	-78	209785
1502	2308	-806	687	-119	209666
1481	2330	-849	687	-162	209504
1475	2355	-880	687	-193	209311
1471	2390	-919	687	-232	209079
1475	2425	-950	687	-263	208816
1484	2460	-976	687	-289	208527
1499	2493	-994	687	-307	208220
1518	2540	-1022	687	-335	207885
1539	2573	-1034	687	-347	207538
1563	2614	-1051	687	-364	207174
1585	2654	-1069	687	-382	206792

A key factor for understanding the dramatic demographic changes at both national and municipal level is the increase of mortality and youth migration. While the decrease of fertility that started after the political and economic changes in 1989 shows some fluctuations (predictably fertility increases in the periods of economic growth and decreases in the periods of decline), the mortality remains high during

the whole period. Crucial for the increase of mortality are the ageing of population and emigration processes. Admittedly, the population ageing inevitably leads to increase of mortality due to the physiological characteristics of each individual. On the other hand, the still intensive emigration processes influence the mortality, because the youngest and middle age people emigrate most frequently. Therefore, even if the fertility remains unchanged, the ageing of population will continue if the intensity and structure of emigration do not change. At the same time, mortality will stay at relatively high level due to the population ageing and all these will lead to decrease of population number.

Certainly, the increase of fertility is a good reserve for improvement of population age structure. In a long-term perspective, if higher number of young generations is achieved, the population age structure will be improved considerably. Besides the direct increase of share of young population within the total population, the increase of fertility would lead to increase of the fertile contingent and thence prerequisites for future higher fertility will be created. However, at present the data on the dynamics of the total fertility rate far from optimistic. Within the period 2001-2011, the TFR remained quite below the necessary for simple reproduction of the population - 2.1 children.

5. Characteristics of youth migration in the municipality

5.1. General characteristics

This study was conducted in an interesting moment of the migratory history of Burgas. Although the municipality and the county in general, is broadly perceived as an exclusively sending territory in terms of migration, there is evidence that this perception is misleading. While the outflow of people, typical for the transition period (from the downfall of the communist regime in 1989 to the acquisition of EU membership in 2007) still continues, in the last decade the city has become a receiving destination for an increasing number of immigrants. In the case of Burgas the main sending countries are Russia, Ukraine, and, somewhat surprisingly, Kazakhstan. Out of 738 non-EU immigrants to the municipality in 2016, 442 are from the Russia federation, 161 are from Ukraine and 65 from Kazakhstan. After an inquiry, it turned out that all Kazakhstan immigrants are ethnic Russians and pertain to the Russian immigrant community. One of them, a young woman with a prospering business, was interviewed at length.

The Russians immigrants in Burgas form a diaspora with clearly delineated, but not rigid boundaries. They live close to one another, usually in a large apartment building where they own their flats, but in mixed neighbourhoods, which are not segregates the way the Roma ghetto is. Yet, local people address the buildings inhabited primarily with immigrants as “the Russian blocks”. According to their neighbours, the Russians are nice and polite people with good social position, but keep apart from the local people and prefer to communicate within their own community, speaking in Russian. They are perceived as socially active and entrepreneurial people with considerable financial resources, who preserve strong links with their country of origin. They maintain strong national identity and take pride with their cultural traditions. In one of the neighbourhoods they have established a Russian kindergarten and have approached the municipality with the initiative for a Russian school. The Russian women in Burgas have registered a foundation with the mission to sustain the cultural identity of the community and to foster cultural exchange with the mainstream Bulgarian society.

The attitude of the local people to the growing Russian community is ambivalent. On the one hand they are perceived as contributing to the local development as long as they bring in it considerable resources – they buy property and invest in start-up businesses. On the other hand, some concerns

were voiced about the growing influence of the Russian community in the context of the tensions between Russia and EU and the memory of the decades of Soviet domination: “They are forming a fifth column in Bulgaria”, “They are haughty and behave not as immigrants, but as colonizers.” Overall, the local people are much happier with the “Russian invasion” than with the “proliferation of the Gypsies”, which, along with the emigration of the young Bulgarians, is perceived as a major threat for the country.

Interestingly, the Ukrainian community, which is comparable in size with the Russian one, is almost invisible and arouses less excitements and concerns. This might be explained with the fact that the local people hardly differentiate Ukrainians from Russians and tend to construe them as part of the Russian diaspora (as in the good old times of the Soviet Union), which, for that reason, appears to be bigger and more homogenous. At closer scrutiny, however, a different picture emerges: there is a deepening alienation between the Russian and the Ukrainian community in Burgas, mirroring the deteriorating relations between the two countries. In this respect, the two groups behave asymmetrically: while the Russians restrain from hostile statements and express pity about “the failed brotherhood” with Ukraine, the Ukrainian immigrants are more bitter and straightforward in their comments and express indignations if they are mistaken for Russians.

5.2. Perceived characteristics of youth migration in Burgas

The predominant pattern of migration (in the perception of interviewed public officials and the participants in the migration forum) is massive and persistent emigration of young and educated Bulgarians towards the developed European countries, mostly Germany and the United Kingdom. From their perspective, this pattern of migration affects directly, and most unfavourably, the development of the municipality, and the country as a whole, by exhausting its demographic and economic potential. Emigration, both educational or in pursuit of professional career, is deemed as a choice for life rather than as temporary training or work experience, although a few cases of return migration were mentioned. Hence, emigration is construed in negative and even catastrophic terms: as a constant brain drain and a pending disaster for the local community.

While the emigration of young professionals and students, who tend to remain in the host country after graduating, is construed in strictly negative terms, that of unskilled workers and undereducated Roma is perceived as something normal and even desirable: the costs for their qualification and welfare will be shared with the prosperous economies and thus the pressure on the local economy and welfare system will be reduced. This appears somewhat unfair and egoistical from an observer’s perspective – why should Germany pay the cost of the failed integration of Bulgarian Roma? It makes sense in the context of a popular perception of the European Union in terms of a zero-sum game, embedded in an egalitarian patriarchal culture, which assumes that the better off members of the community are obliged to take care for the less successful.

The predominant explanation for youth emigration is the drive towards better life in the prosperous European countries, providing lucrative job opportunities and higher living standard. The great majority of the interviewed officials believe that the reason for leaving Bulgaria and Burgas in particular, are the limited options for work career and decent earnings. Burgas is considered a relatively prosperous town nationwide, but the overall disproportions between Bulgaria and the leading economies in EU, especially Germany, are seen as insurmountable, providing strong incentives for emigration of the young and ambitious. This predominantly economic explanation largely corresponds to the findings from the narrative interviews, yet it tends to blur a more complicated and nuanced picture by reducing the motivation of emigrants to strictly materialistic drives.

The interviewed officials and the participants in the forum were very positive about return migration, which, according to them, it is possible and highly desirable. They are convinced that under certain conditions considerable number of the young Bulgarians, educated in Europe, would choose to return and contribute to the community by working and developing business. Although they were able to enumerate just a few cases of return migration, they prefer to believe that the educational migration has come to a point of saturation and the Bulgarian students are ready to come back in case they see career opportunities at home. Two major reasons for return migration were suggested: the growing demand for qualified labour force, which is expected to attract back some of the educated emigrants; and the fact that among the students in Europe there are many children of successful entrepreneurs, who are expected to come back and work in the businesses of their parents. It is difficult to say whether these expectations are realistic or are a case of wishful thinking, fostered by feelings of failure and guilt on the part of the parental generation.

Unlike emigration, immigration is not seen as a considerable problem. It is associated with newcomers from Russia and Ukraine and to certain extent with refugees and immigrants from Africa and Asia. While the Russian and Ukrainian inflow is evaluated in positive or neutral terms, the immigration from “the third world” is regarded as highly problematic. There is a broad consensus among the interviewed institutional actors, and in the local community in general, that potential immigrants from the third world present a threat rather than opportunity, and their inflow should be strictly limited, if not entirely stopped. These defensive attitudes are fostered by mainstream media and by the government itself, which proudly reports how illegal migration from Turkey is put under control.

5.3. Results of the interview with young migrants

As already mentioned, the major concern of the Burgas municipal leadership in regard to youth migration is the brain drain of young and educated people, and their political priority is to encourage as many of them as possible to return and contribute to the development of the municipality. We responded to this interest by placing such migrants in the focus of the study: two out of nine interviews are with students, who are currently studying in European universities, and another five are with a variety of return migrants. One interview is with a commuting migrant and another one with an immigrant from Kazakhstan. An attempt was made to reach immigrants from the Middle East countries – there are few of them living in Burgas – but they all refused to be interviewed, no matter how carefully were approached. One of them, originally from Iraq, hinted that he had problems with the authorities and is afraid that anything he says can be used against him.

The first interviewed is a female student in Denmark, who has not yet decided whether she will return home or will choose to live abroad. She is single and has modest experience at the labour market, working from time to time to support herself while studying.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	
	Female	X
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	
	Short term migrant	X
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	X
	Employed	
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Denmark	

The second interviewee is an interesting case of a young man, whose parents have migrated to Germany when he was a child. Educated in Germany, he has chosen to return in Bulgaria to study in the university and to develop his own business. He is single and has no children.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	X
	Female	
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	X
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Germany	

The third interview is with a young male student in London, who does not plan to return and is determined to make an international career. He has no family or work experience.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	X
	Female	
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	
	Short term migrant	X
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	X
	Employed	
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	United Kingdom	

The fourth interviewee is with a highly educated and highly skilled commuting migrant, working for a German company, who lives part time in Burgas and part time in Frankfurt.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	X
	Female	
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	X
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Germany	

The fifth interview is with a female returning migrant with higher education, who spent five years working in Germany. She is not married and has no children.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	
	Female	X
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	X
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Germany	

The sixth interviewed is a male returning migrant with higher education, who spent about a year in Germany at a job far below his qualification. He is divorced with one child.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	X
	Female	
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	X
	Without children	
Type of migration	Returning migrant	X
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Germany	

The seventh interviewed is a female immigrant from Kazakhstan, who moved to live and work in Burgas with her husband and three children. She has higher education and runs a family business.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	
	Female	X
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	X
	Without children	
Type of migration	Returning migrant	
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	X
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of origin	Kazakhstan	

The eighth interviewee is a female returning migrant, who studied and worked in Germany as well as in USA. She is currently working and living in Burgas and has no family.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	
	Female	X
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	X
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	X
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Germany, USA	

The ninth interviewed is a male returning migrant with secondary education, who spent two years working in Spain and now commutes to work in Burgas from another town in Bulgaria.

Variable	Category	Position
Gender	Male	X
	Female	
Educational attainment	Primary education	
	Secondary education	X
	Tertiary education	
Family status	With children	
	Without children	X
Type of migration	Returning migrant	X
	Short term migrant	
	Commuter	
	Emigrant	
	Immigrant	
Employment status	Student	
	Employed	X
	Unemployed	
Country of destination	Spain	

The pattern of student migration that emerges from the study is related to individual professional career, on the one hand, and to family social status, on the other. From the perspective of the students, the education abroad is an investment in their personal development and a guarantee for successful career. They believe, and for good reasons, that the diploma from an established European university would provide them with better work opportunities and would open broader possibilities than the graduation of a Bulgarian higher school. From the perspective of the parents, the support of their offspring to study abroad is not only pragmatic, but also prestigious choice as well. In the last decades in Bulgaria, it became almost obligatory to send your children to study in Europe or in USA in order to sustain the status of upper middle class, not to speak about the elites.

The educational institutions in Burgas play an important role in the process of educational migration, as long as they are a necessary step in the typical student's trajectory. Some of the most prestigious secondary school in the town, which provide excellent training in foreign languages, function increasingly as a transitional stage to education abroad. The students consider this a normal development, while teachers and directors see it as a loss for the community, since they believe that the mission of the elite schools is to educate the future leaders: "Our education, as good as it is, is subsidizing the economy of the developed European countries, because our best students work there. There is a paradox – the better and more prestigious a school is, the more it facilitates the emigration of its students."

Apart from social promotion, the students share a variety of other motives to choose education abroad, such as living on their own, learning about different cultures, enhancing their future choices, and last but not least, postponing the often traumatic encounter with the labour market. A common theme in all interviews is the dream to keep the future open, to avoid as long as possible the depressive

closure of economic necessity, which channels life in a predetermined direction. Apparently in the value system of this generation the freedom to make choices on and on, without commitment to an ultimate choice, takes priority over the security and predictability of a settled life.

Hence, the central dilemma, encountered by the young and educated Bulgarian migrants after finishing their studies – the *sine qua non* of economy is the subordination of personal choice to the requirements of the market or the other functional systems, through which modern societies operate. Half of the interviewed shared the insight that the prosperity of the European societies, Germany in particular, is based precisely on their ability to structure individual choices in institutional patterns and streamline individual plans in organizational agendas, and thus utilize them for the common good. This is, more or less, what integration is about, and the drama is that the young Bulgarians, for reasons that need further exploration, experience this aspect of integration as painful limitation of their freedom.

These ambivalent attitudes to the receiving countries and the requirements of their labour market explain to certain extent the idea of returning home, entertained by all young emigrants. The possibility for coming back is construed as an ever-open option, which helps to sustain the belief that one has the ultimate freedom to make choices. In a similar fashion, those who have returned, declare that they can always go back to the original country of migration or somewhere else. Whether these are potential cases of re-emigration is difficult to tell, but certainly the notion that one is free to move around and make choices again and again, is an important aspect of the identity and self-perception of this generation.

While the children of the higher classes in Burgas perceive educational migration as an integral part of their life trajectory and eagerly embrace the cosmopolitan identity of European citizens, a growing number of young people from the poor hinterland come to the city and the neighbouring resorts in search for better earnings. Seasonal work in the construction and tourist industry has become a typical pattern for the local economy, which affects the labour market by keeping low the price of unqualified labour. Only one of the interviewed in the study pertains to this category, but his case is quite typical: after spending two years working in Spain he discovers that he can do almost the same by commuting to Burgas from his native town. Here he earns much less than in Spain, but the price of life is lower as well, so in both cases he has a similar standard of life. The working conditions in Spain are estimated as better than those in Burgas, but the proximity to home and the advantages of native culture weigh down the choice in favour of Burgas.

While age is definitely an important factor for taking a decision to emigrate, gender appears to be of minor relevance. Both boys and girls are eager to continue their education abroad and are encouraged by their families irrespectively of their gender. In most cases, the move happens in the late teenage years and coincides with the transition from secondary school to university education. In Bulgarian culture, this is also the age of transition to maturity, when the young person is expected to start making his or her own choices, but not without parental consent and support. Indeed, all the interviewed students declare that they can rely, in one way or another, on the unconditional support of their parents. Another source of support are the networks of relatives and family friends, which spread far beyond the boundaries of the country. However, most of the interviewed quickly established networks of their own in the host community. Only in one case – the labourer in Spain – the contacts were limited to the confines of the Bulgarian diaspora.

All narratives of migration are structured, explicitly or implicitly, around the comparison between the native and the host society, and the notion of development is pivotal element of this comparison. Typically, the changes in the society of origin, in this case Burgas, are perceived and evaluated through the experience from the receiving country. From the young emigrants' perspective, Burgas is

developing well in terms of material infrastructure and cultural life, but is lagging behind in terms of economic opportunities and social welfare. The major setbacks for development are the rigid and inefficient bureaucracy, the chaotic and disorganized administration and the corrupt politics. Yet, Burgas is very attractive with its natural givens – the mild climate and the location at the sea, as well as with the intense and friendly social life: “In Burgas in particular, life is colourful and people are more spontaneous. The relations between them are warm and friendly.”

A curious pattern emerges in the interviews: whereas the economic organization and the material culture of the west European countries are unanimously appreciated as superior and suggested as a role model, the social life and interpersonal relations are estimated ambivalently. On the one hand, the security and predictability of the organized western societies is seen as a major advantage, on the other hand these same characteristics are experienced as confining limitations. The classical dichotomy between organized work and pleasant life is evoked to explain the discontents of living in a structured and regulated environment: “There is no life in Germany, there is just work”; “What is less attractive in Germany is the boring way of life. Life is somehow rigid, too regulated and orderly, it lacks colour.” Burgas, to the contrary, is typically depicted as a place deprived of job opportunities, but rich in possibilities for pleasant life. The splitting between work and life, or toils and pleasure, is being narratively attached to geographical spaces. This construction suggests predisposition both for return migration after retirement, as well as potential choice for circular migration, facilitated by the open economic space of EU.

6. Typical biographies of young migrants

In this chapter three interviews with young return migrants from Burgas are summarized and partly analysed. To what an extent their biographies are typical is difficult to say, because the sample is too small. However, the tendencies that are manifested in these stories are certainly representative for the emerging worldview of a generation that perceives migrations as a normal part of life.

6.1. Migration as pursuit of freedom

This is the story of a young man, who migrates to Germany as a child and in his late teenage years, returns back to Bulgaria to complete his secondary school so that he can continue with his education in Germany. Already a German citizen, he takes the decision to study law and psychology in a Bulgarian university, instead of going back to Germany. This is the second turning point in his biography (the first being his move to Germany), and the first time he makes a decisive choice on his own: “For a first time I was able to make my own choices... Up to this moment I followed other peoples’ choices that were imposed on me.”

The story continues with his educational and work experience in Bulgaria and abroad. His first job is in the municipality of Munich as part of his training in public administration. After graduating law, he works for German and Swiss companies who explore the Bulgarian market. He manages to utilize his knowledge of German language and culture by positioning himself as a mediator between the potential investors and the Bulgarian administration. He quickly gains experience and self-confidence of an expert in the peculiarities of the Bulgarian market: “I learned how to capitalize my transcultural experience for the purpose of business development. The ability to link different components in complex systems is valued in the corporate world.”

This newly acquired self-assurance encourages him to undertake an entrepreneurial venture: he establishes his own company, recruiting IT specialists from Bulgaria for international corporations. This is still another turning point in his career: “We are embarking on an ambitious project with a Belgium company for an academy for young IT specialist from Bulgaria, who will be provided with good

opportunities to work for international companies.” He would not dare such a risky step, however, without the advice and support of an older man, an experienced and successful Bulgarian entrepreneur from Burgas, who takes the role of his business angel. In the narrative the acquaintance and the ensuing friendship with this man, who becomes an important parental figure, is the next turning point in the agent’s career.

The narrator reflects at length on the differences between his native country and the receiving country. From his perspective, while Germany has the advantage of orderly and well-structured society, Bulgaria has the advantage of providing freedom for individual choices and experimenting: “In Germany the leading issue is security, it defines people’s perspective on life. They look for security in everything – health insurance, pensions, etc. Each and every aspect of life is related to security. Everything is being planned ahead... On the one hand this is good, because you know what is going to happen to you, but on the other it is not, precisely because you know what is going to happen – exploration and creativity disappear.”

This interview is remarkable with the explanation, or may be rationalization, of the life choices of the actor thorough his pursuit for freedom. Freedom is a high value and the driving force behind his parent’s emigration, at the first place. His father, an orthodox priest, was treated as dissident in communist Bulgaria and craved to live in a free society. Initially he wanted to live in America and escaped from Bulgaria illegally. After two years in Germany he managed to get to USA, but was bitterly disappointed and returned to Germany, where he settled. “The migration of my parents was not about work at all, my father wanted to live in a free country... It was all about freedom... So I am genetically destined to look for freedom and it is a high priority for me.”

The ideas of free will and self-realization play a far greater role in this narrative than the structural restraints, set by the environment. The narrator presents himself as an active agent of his live, making bold choices, inspired by emotional experience and informed by the reflections on this experience. Freedom to choose and learn from experience is pivotal for his identity and he is ready to pay a price to live up to this value. Indeed, the pursuit of freedom is the espoused motive for his return: “What we have here in Bulgaria, and what I like most about Bulgaria, is freedom. The freedom to choose what you want to be. This is not possible there, at certain point, they channel you into the mainstream, you cannot function individually, and you cannot say ‘now I want to be this and that’. There is some sort of procedure for everything.”

6.2. Migration in search for calling

This is the story of a young woman, who craves from childhood to work in the sea and pursues her dream throughout her life. She graduates the Naval Academy in Varna as ship engineer and for some time works as volunteer in the Institute of Oceanology at the Bulgarian Academy of Science, where she develops lasting academic interests. Dissatisfied with the situation in the institute, she tries to find a job in the fleet, but fails because of her gender. A young woman in a predominantly male vocation, she looks in vain for work corresponding to her qualification. “At the labour office, when they looked at my diploma, they said ‘it is useless to look for job here, we don’t have jobs that correspond to your qualification’ I realized it is up to me to find proper job.”

This bitter realization is the first turning point in her life, when she decides to look for opportunities abroad. She easily finds a good in a German company for river transport and spends five years on passenger ships sailing along the large rivers of Europe. She is quite happy with the possibility to practice her profession and to earn decently, and feels well integrated in the micro society at the ship: “My company was the crew... As you sail along the rivers all the time, the crew is your community, and

it is a reliable one.” Due to her diligent work, she is promoted and becomes the chief mechanic of the ship, which is the highest position she can reach at this job. Here is the next turning point in her life, when she decides to return back: “I reached a position beyond which I could not develop further... In fact, I stated to feel too comfortable – there were no challenges. You cannot reach the top of your professional career at 28. Another reason was my wish to live in Bulgaria.”

Her decision to return to Bulgaria is not an easy one. She values highly her German colleagues and is grateful to the company for the work opportunity she was presented, and she is well aware of the imperfection of the Bulgarian labour market: “The biggest disadvantage of Bulgaria is the low payment and the exploitative attitude of the employers – people are expected to work 10-12 hours a day.” The work culture in Germany, and especially the attitude towards employees, is appreciated as civilized and ethical: “They don't make people work to the point of exhaustion. Moreover, they have respect for the individual and his problems. For instance if you ask for extra leave for personal reasons you will get one, this is something normal. And you can always rely on your superior for advice and support. There is genuine interest to your opinion and expectations for the future.”

The decisive argument for her choice to return is the opportunity to fulfil her dream to pilot the only research submarine in Bulgaria, which she considers a rare professional chance and a privilege: “I decided to return mainly because I was offered to take again my job in the Institute of Oceanology, at the same position – pilot of the submarine.” At the moment of the interview she has settled in Burgas in order to proceed with her professional qualification and take the job she has been craving for years. Thus, the story comes to a happy end – a return home and a professional dream fulfilled after a long migrant journey. As the story unfolds, the vicissitudes of migrations acquire the meaning of trials the agent has to pass in order to prove worthy for the ultimate success.

In this narrative, the drive towards self-actualization triumphs over the structural restraints encountered by the agent. Her work career, including her migratory trajectory, is presented as a purposeful and stubborn pursuit of professional realization. She has a clearly defined goal, set quite early in life, which escapes her for years, but she refuses to give up her dream: “I have always had a drive to the sea. My dream from childhood was to become a sailor.” Her identity is construed in terms of her calling. Her appeal to the sea is presented as a kind of destiny she cannot resist: “My father was a diver as well; he used to teach me how to dive. I have inherited from him the passion to the sea.” Like in the first story, a parental figure is evoked to explain, and reinforce, the difficult choices made by the young migrant.

6.3. Getting the best of both worlds

This is the story of a highly qualified IT specialist with remarkable educational record and impressive CV, who wants to live and work in Bulgaria, but is compelled by the circumstances to operate at the international labour market. He got his primary and secondary education in Burgas and continued in computing college. His skills were highly appreciated because as a student, he contributed to the building of the new computer infrastructure of the college, and after graduating, he was offered a teaching position there. Here comes the first turning point in his career – he declined the offer and instead decided to go back and try to establish a filial of the Luton college in Burgas. This enterprise failed because it was not supported by local authorities, but he did not give up and organized courses in LINUX providing international certificates. He was successful in that but could not earn enough, so he took a promising job as key expert in the IT department of a big plant in another town in Bulgaria. In a few years he came to another turning point in his life – he decided to leave his job after a conflict with the management and to find a new one. Thus, he started work for a Frankfurt based German company, which was looking for an employee with his qualification. In the meantime, he pursues with

his professional qualification, as well as with his academic interests. Recently he graduated a master program in computer systems in the University of Burgas and is considering the option to enrol a PhD programme in computer science and artificial intelligence in the university of Edinburg.

This narrative is remarkable with the outspoken refusal of the agent to comply with the realities of the immigrant's life: "From a first sight I disliked Frankfurt. This city was too urbanized, too hasty, too much concrete buildings. I told to myself: 'Here one comes only to work, not to live.' From work to home, from home to work. I was not used to such life, I needed my friends, my free time, and I love lingering around. I realized that I would not integrate in this multicultural urban environment, that I would hardly make friends. I decided however to stay and see how long I can bear such life." He presents himself as a talented and highly qualified, but wayward employee, who expects the employers to agree on his terms instead of vice versa. Interestingly, this strategy proved successful in the case of his current German employers who granted him a special status: "After several months I suggested to my employers the option to work primarily from Bulgaria and to travel for long business trips of several weeks, or months, if necessary. They accepted my terms, I was too valuable for them – they have been looking about a year for a person with proper qualification for this position. I was offered I higher salary to stay there permanently, but I preferred to work from home."

His distaste for the immigrant's life does not mean that he dislikes his job, his colleagues and employers in Frankfurt, quite to the opposite: "Everybody was very kind and polite – the typical German politeness. I am English speaking and they helped me with some documents in German and with administrative issues. I got quickly integrated in the working environment. At the moment you learn how the coffee machine works you become part of the company." He expressed his respect and sympathy for the owners of the company whom he met in person and liked very much for their warm and friendly regard. Yet he thinks that immigrants are expected to integrate only in the labour market, not in the community: "In Germany you feel you would be never really integrated in society, you are nothing but work force. You will be perfectly integrated in the economy, and will be rewarded for that, but this is something different." This verdict sounds unjust vis-à-vis his own account of the way he was greeted in Frankfurt. Apparently, his convictions contradict his own experience, and this is just one of the incoherencies in this narrative. Beliefs and assumptions often prove stronger than evidence.

The self-identity constructed by the narrator is also quite ambivalent. On the one hand he presents himself as an active agent of his life who embarks on entrepreneurial ventures and makes atypical choices, motivated by his peculiar values: "The material things are no longer of high value for me. Material acquisitions don't make me feel happy." On the other hand, he pictures himself as somewhat lazy and spoiled person, who refuses to toil and relies upon his talents and good luck. His story suggests that his achievements have come to him easy, as a gift of fate rather than as a result of systematic efforts. He declares that what he values above all is the easy-going lifestyle he can have in Burgas with his big German salary: sleeping until noon and a lot of free time to linger around with friends. In his understanding his native town is by far preferable place to live compared to Frankfurt: "Burgas is a great place to live if one has good job and decent earnings. It is on the seaside, it has good climate, quick Internet and friendly community." His current status of commuting migrant seems to fit perfectly to his idiosyncrasy – after all, he has attained the privilege to selectively enjoy the advantages of two societies.

7. Challenges connected to youth migration and policies aimed to deal with them

7.1. *Young migrants on policy challenges*

The focus group consisted mostly of return migrants and included two main categories: young people educated in European universities, who came back and joined the administration and the private sector, and people from Roma origin with modest education, who used to work in the agricultural and tourist industry in Greece and Italy. Interestingly, these two distinct groups share some common problems, which pose serious policy challenges before the municipal and the central government.

A common problem that was shared was the discontinuity between the Bulgarian social and health security system and these of the other European countries. Since pension and health insurance is obligatory in most countries, the result is that some of the migrants have to contribute to more than one system. A typical situation, faced by the return migrants in Bulgaria, is the pressure to pay large amounts of money, covering the sum of their contributions for the years they were abroad, namely for a particular case in which the receiving state was covering the health insurance while the person stood unemployed. Unsurprisingly, this problem affects especially the more vulnerable people with modest social background and lower incomes. In some cases, however, it turns out to be an advantage in a perverse way: “I have health insurance both in Greece and here in Bulgaria. And thanks God, because I have diabetes and our system does not cover the cost of my medicine, so I have to travel each month to Greece to buy it from there. Isn't this absurd?”

A typical problem for students who have studied abroad is the long and heavy procedure for recognizing their diplomas in Bulgaria. One of the participants in the focus group failed to legalize her diploma from the filial of an American university in Europe, because this case proved to be too complex for the bureaucrats in the accrediting agency and they simply rejected it. Another participant shared that she postpones this traumatic procedure on and on with the silent consent of her current employer, who is happy with her diploma from a French university. Probably the most creative solution was shared by a young woman working for the municipal administration, who simply refuses to legalize her diploma and refers instead to the international agreements, signed by Bulgaria, who stipulate automatic recognition of the diplomas issued by the EU member counties.

Surprisingly, no one reported problems related to the legal status or work conditions in the receiving country (housing, taxation, access to health care, etc.) The explanation is that in most cases the formal interactions with the authorities, required by the legal stipulations of the receiving country (immigration office, employment office, social services responsible for work and housing conditions, etc.), were mediated by the employer, or respectively by the educational establishment. Thus, the immigrants were spared to need to communicate with the authorities on their own and in the rare occasions they had to do so, the attitude was friendly and supportive. As a matter of fact, both areas that were defined as problematic – health insurance and legalization of diplomas – result from the insufficient compatibility between the respective systems, rather than to prejudiced attitude towards immigrants in the receiving country.

Remarkably, all reported problems with one exception were encountered by the young migrants in Bulgaria after their return and were result of the inadequate and alienated bureaucratic system in their home country. The exception is a case of a child with a cerebral paralysis, which cannot get immunization for health reasons, and hence cannot attend school in Greece, because of a legal requirement. This is the reason for the family to return to their native village near Burgas, where the child is able to attend school with some support. It should be noted that most of these problems

pertain to domains, which are responsibility of the central government, but have repercussions on the municipal government as well – the municipality is expected to respond with policies in order to compensate the dysfunctional arrangements and institutional practices of centralized governmental agencies.

This mismatch between power and responsibility affected the way the young migrants responded to the invitation to formulate relevant policy measures. What was most important for them was to secure that the health insurance contributions in the receiving country would be recognized in the country of origin, as well as the diplomas, obtained in European universities. The participants in the group were well aware that most of the problems they shared are beyond the competences of the municipality of Burgas, and therefore their policy suggestions were addressed to the national government. However, they believe that municipal authorities can take the role of mediator, or rather advocate, for the return migrants in front of the omnipotent central government, which they perceive as distant, inaccessible and at times openly hostile. One policy measure was proposed, however, whose realization is in the discretion of the municipal government. The idea is to provide an electronic system for announcement of work and business opportunities in Burgas, targeted at young migrants. For this purpose the municipality needs to explore the existing possibilities for qualified jobs or start-up business and advertise them before the diasporas abroad, thus facilitating those, who are willing to make a second try in their native town.

7.2. Policy competences, institutional actors involved

The central finding of this study is that there is neither public office nor local NGO in Burgas, committed to work with migrant communities and with young migrants in particular. Youth migration is not on the agenda of any of the approached institutions, and they are concerned with it only marginally. Only the Ministry of Interior maintains some sort of regulation by allocating different status to the foreigners abiding the territory, but only from the perspective of the duration of their stay and their legal status. The Bulgarian legal system operates with several generalized categories, which fail by far to capture the diversity of the migration phenomena. On the one hand, it differentiates between Bulgarian citizens, EU citizens and citizens of other countries; and on the other hand between people with address registration in the municipality and everybody else. Foreigners are expected to apply for residence permit within 90 days of their arrival in Bulgaria at the National Migration Directorate in Sofia or the immigration department of the local Police station at the place of residence. European citizens who intend to stay in Bulgaria longer than three months are issued residence certificates. Once their status is settled, foreigners are treated by Bulgarian institutions according to their internal regulations in each particular case. Their access to public services depends on the compatibility of the respective system (health insurance, welfare, etc.) in the country of origin with its Bulgarian counterpart, arranged with international agreement.

Thus in the institutional landscape at municipal level youth migration does not emerge as a category of its own, and respectively is not addressed by specific policies. A possible explanation for this institutionalized disengagement is that migration is perceived as something that concerns the developed countries with long history of immigration, rather than Bulgaria, which is labelled as a sending or transitional territory. A more plausible explanation however is the structure and culture of Bulgarian governance. The state administration is quite centralized and although it operates via its local offices, they have limited capacity to respond flexibly to local issues. The deconcentrated structures of the central government are subordinated in a rigid hierarchy and are expected to follow strict rules, and in effect respond only to instructions from above. Although they operate with large budget, they are structurally disempowered and have scarce possibilities to act on their own discretion. The municipal governments, on the other hand, have the authority to respond to local

issues by designing and launching their own policies, but often lack the financial resources to do so. The problems of youth migration appear lost in these bureaucratic hurdles and disowned by the mainstream institutions.

In the context of the research, however, all approached institutional actors were genuinely concerned with the emigration of young people, although it was not easy to differentiate when they were speaking in their institutional capacity and when they were sharing private opinions. According to the interviewed officials, the major challenge posed by youth emigration is the brain drain and the ensuing enervation of the local economy: “The better educated and motivated are leaving and Bulgarian enterprises have to comply with the second best.” Constant emigration causes chronic lack of qualified specialist for the economy, which hinders local development and deteriorates the career options of the remaining young people, which on its turn spurs emigration, and thus the vicious circle is closed: “The investments are insufficient because of the lack of high quality specialists. On the other hand, many qualified people leave because they do not find good jobs. This is a sort of vicious circle.”

This concern is shared by the leaders of the educational establishments in Burgas (the local university and the language schools) who were approached with the assumption that they keep track of their alumni and can provide data on the educational and work careers of the young people. They witnessed that educational migration is on the rise and that after graduating high school the best students go to study in colleges and universities in Europe, although they could not tell the exact numbers: “I can say for sure that considerable part of the graduates of our best schools continue their studies abroad. We need to establish closer cooperation with the universities in order to trace their trajectory.”

Apart from being detrimental for the economy and the local development in general, the emigration of the young is seen as inherently unjust to the Bulgarian society: “We have always suffered from brain drain. Our education is good, but it subsidizes the economy of the developed countries, where our best students work”. What is worse, emigration harms both the community and the young emigrants themselves. Many are lured by the prospect of getting good education in a European university that would provide them with competitive skills at the global labour market, but this promise is rarely fulfilled: “Most of the young migrants go with the idea to study, not to work, but what happens in fact is that they have to work whatever they find in order to support themselves and thus turn into unskilled immigrants... Many Bulgarian students terminate their studies and never graduate. The ratio between the graduates and the dropouts is about 20 to 80... Yet everybody remains there and joins the ranks of the guest workers or the clients of social welfare.”

Youth migration is experienced as a pending threat for the local culture as well – due to the continuous drain of the young and educated the city cannot form viable social and cultural elite: “The cultured ones are leaving, the illiterate remain. We are not fully aware what is awaiting us as a society, what sort of people are going to govern in future.” This degrading effect for the community is most painfully visible for the educators: “The mission of our school was originally to train educated professionals and responsible citizens, a sort of local elite. Now we are in the business of training future migrants.” Last but not least, emigration of the young affects the personal life of many people, whose families are separated: “Emigration has marked the whole transition period. Everybody has a relative or friend living elsewhere.” The imminent departure of the young generation is experienced not only as communal deprivation, but as personal loss as well: “My own son is a student in the elite high school of mathematics. He stated firmly that after graduation he is going to Germany.”

Still, some of the institutional actors share a more optimistic outlook on youth migration: “Migration is not a bad phenomenon. It enables people to acquire first-hand experience about the world.” “Youth migration has many positive aspects. It stimulates the young to travel, and broadens their worldview.” However, these voices are clearly in minority. Only one of the interviewed officials was able to point some positive aspects of migration for the local economy: “Emigration is a positive process because it reduces the level of unemployment in the region.”

7.3. Policies aimed to deal with the consequences of youth migration

The interviewed representatives of the institutions agree that some sort of targeted policy is needed concerning youth migration, yet none is aware of such a policy being currently pursued by the institution he or she represents. There is an attitude of passive acceptance of the unfortunate circumstances, as if nothing depends on the respective institutional actor. This feeling of being doomed has to do with the general understanding that migratory flows are driven by powerful market forces, operating far beyond the reach of local politics: “The economies of the developed countries are insatiable for qualified workforce. There always will be demand for highly skilled specialists, and the open boundaries make migration flows irreversible.”

Under such dire circumstances, the hope for change is placed in the economy rather than in local government: “Only accelerated economic growth, and respectively higher incomes, might turn the trend and pull back Bulgarian emigrants.” The local business, however, is seen as most unreliable partner in such a communal effort, since it is preoccupied with egotistical pursuit of private profits: “Instead of investing in innovation, our entrepreneurial class still pays tribute to the primitive notion that the exploitation of cheap labour is the way to success.” The interviewed educators share with bitterness how their reformist efforts are being failed by the indifference and short sightedness of the business class: “Everybody says that professional training needs to be related to the needs of economy. But what if the economy demands mostly cheap labour? Professional education has to be enhanced along with the businesses, aiming at higher added value.”

In spite of these discouraging realities, the higher-ranking officials, such as deputy mayors and members of the city council, stated the intention of the municipal leadership to design and integrate relevant measures within a broader youth-oriented policy, meant to keep young people in the community by providing them with better career prospects: “Recently there is some activity in relation to youth policy. For instance we are providing bursaries for IT students since we want to encourage the IT sector.” From the perspective of the municipal authorities youth migration will be a decisive factor for the future development of the territory and therefore needs to be explored: “We don’t know much about youth migration and have not seen it as an area of targeted municipal policy. Let’s hope that this project will provide data and insight.”

The municipal officials are aware of the dubious effect of some of the currently pursued policies, such as facilitating student exchange and work in Europe: “On the one hand we are concerned about young people leaving the town, on the other we are contributing to this process by launching initiatives such as the exchange project with Degendorf... In the last 5 years, we have sent about 60 students to be trained in Germany. 32 of them have remained there.” At the time of the study, certain ambivalence was expressed as to whether the local authorities should further encourage the young to spend time in west European countries or should rather try to prevent them from leaving. The option to encourage return migration by attracting graduates of European universities is seen as the best solution of this dilemma: “For generations young Bulgarians have travelled to study to Europe with the idea to come back and contribute to their community. The problem is that now they rarely return.” However, there is no much hope that such a fundamental turn in the direction of migration flows might occur: “There

would be positive consequences of migration only if some portion of the young migrants, even a small one, return back. But nothing suggest this will happen.”

What makes strong impression to the observer is that institutional actors prefer to speak about migration mostly in general terms, and respectively to look for universal instead of contextual solutions. Typically, the authority and responsibility to provide solutions to the migration challenges (and to gather reliable data concerning those issues) is allocated elsewhere, most often to other agencies, to the business or to the national government: “We have neither the power, nor the practice to collect, store and process data related to migration.” This might be due either to the lack of relevant information and experience at the local level, or to the disempowering institutional culture of the centralized state bureaucracy, or both.

8. Outlook, conclusions and recommendations

Burgas municipality is a significant regional centre with growing importance for the national economy. After a period of decline, in the last decade Burgas has undergone considerable progress and it is now perceived as one of the best developing cities in Bulgaria, especially in terms of public infrastructure. The local economy is in constant demand for qualified workforce, but still the incomes of the employees remain rather low, which demotivates young people and encourages emigration. Like in the rest of the country, the population of Burgas municipality is aging. The reason is both the decline in birth rates and the migration of the population to the capital and to other countries, mainly to those of the EU. On the other hand, Burgas is one of the cities in Bulgaria, which is characterized by a steady growth of the population as a result of internal and international migration, with immigrants mostly from Russia and Ukraine.

The predominant perceptions of youth migration are construed in dramatic terms: as a “massive exodus” of young and educated Bulgarians towards the developed European countries, which affects directly, and unfavourably, the development of the municipality, and the country as a whole, by exhausting its demographic and economic potential. Return migration, to the contrary, is perceived as possible and highly desirable, and as something that inspires hopes and policy ideas. This perception does not entirely correspond with reality, as revealed by the statistical data, which presents a more balanced picture of youth migration. However, the popular perceptions gauge the general attitudes in the community, and the strategy of the municipal administration, respectively, and the latter emerges in response to those attitudes.

The municipal leadership plans to launch a broad youth-oriented policy, meant to keep young people in the community by providing them with better career prospects, as well as to bring back as many young emigrants as possible. These intentions, however, face some serious challenges, due to the lack of relevant information and experience at the local level, as well as the alienating institutional culture of the centralized state bureaucracy. This study produced enough evidence to suggest a course of action that Burgas municipality needs to take in order to put under control the emigration of educated young people and at the same time to attract back some of those who have already left. Several interrelated policies appear which are relevant to this challenging task:

Preventive policies

The study identified the elite language schools in Burgas as a major pathway of youth migration – it is highly probable for the graduates of such schools to migrate to the country of the respective language (German, English, French, Spanish), initially as students, and then as economic immigrants. The study indicates that many of the potential emigrants have inflated expectations about the host country and experience disappointment and frustration when faced with reality, which sometimes results in return

migration. In this respect, the municipality can organize some sort of information campaign about the challenges of an immigrant's life, targeted at the graduates of these schools. Return migrants can be invited to contribute by sharing their experience with the potential young emigrants and answer their questions, so that they can make informed choices regarding such an important decision in their life.

Building communication infrastructure

Unsurprisingly, the study discovered that the public authorities have limited knowledge about the situation of young emigrants from Burgas. The families, of course, maintain close ties with their children, but so far, the task of keeping in touch with young emigrants is confined to the private sphere, and has not entered the domain of public policy. When the young want to learn what is going on in their hometown, they rely on information and advice from their parents and their friends' networks, rather than on official sources. This severely restricts the possibilities of the municipality to address them and influence their choices. In order to launch relevant policies, the municipal administration has to establish some sort of communication infrastructure that reaches as many of the young people living abroad as possible. Such an ambitious project could build upon the already existing communication structures: the cultural centres in large European cities, working with Bulgarian diasporas, the networks for educational exchange and cooperation, various social networks, etc.

Encouraging return migration

In order to attract educated young emigrants, the municipality has to provide for them options to work and live in Burgas under similar or better conditions than those in the host country. This is not an easy task and the municipality can hardly cope on its own, it has to work in close partnership with the business sector. Universal approaches are likely to prove irrelevant here, because the situation of the Bulgarian immigrants varies considerably from country to country and within each country, too. What seems feasible for the municipality is to explore the trends of the labour market, preferably sector by sector, and to find out what sort of qualifications are in demand in Burgas, or are likely to be in demand in the near future. These findings should be presented to the emigrants via the existing communication infrastructure (networks, community centres, etc.). In this way, those who are considering the option to return would be facilitated to make an informed choice.

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Institutional and personal interviews and focus group results for the purpose of the present analysis – YOUMIG, 2017

ANNEX 1: Table with interviews with institutional actors

Institution	Person
Local Labour Office – Burgas	Director
Burgas Free University	Deputy rector
Local administration	2 vice-mayors and one director
NGO - support for victims of domestic violence, family counselling	director
Secondary Language School in Burgas	Headmaster
Agency for youth and student exchange – Burgas	director
Municipal Council	Councillor, community leader

ANNEX 2: Table with interviews with young migrants

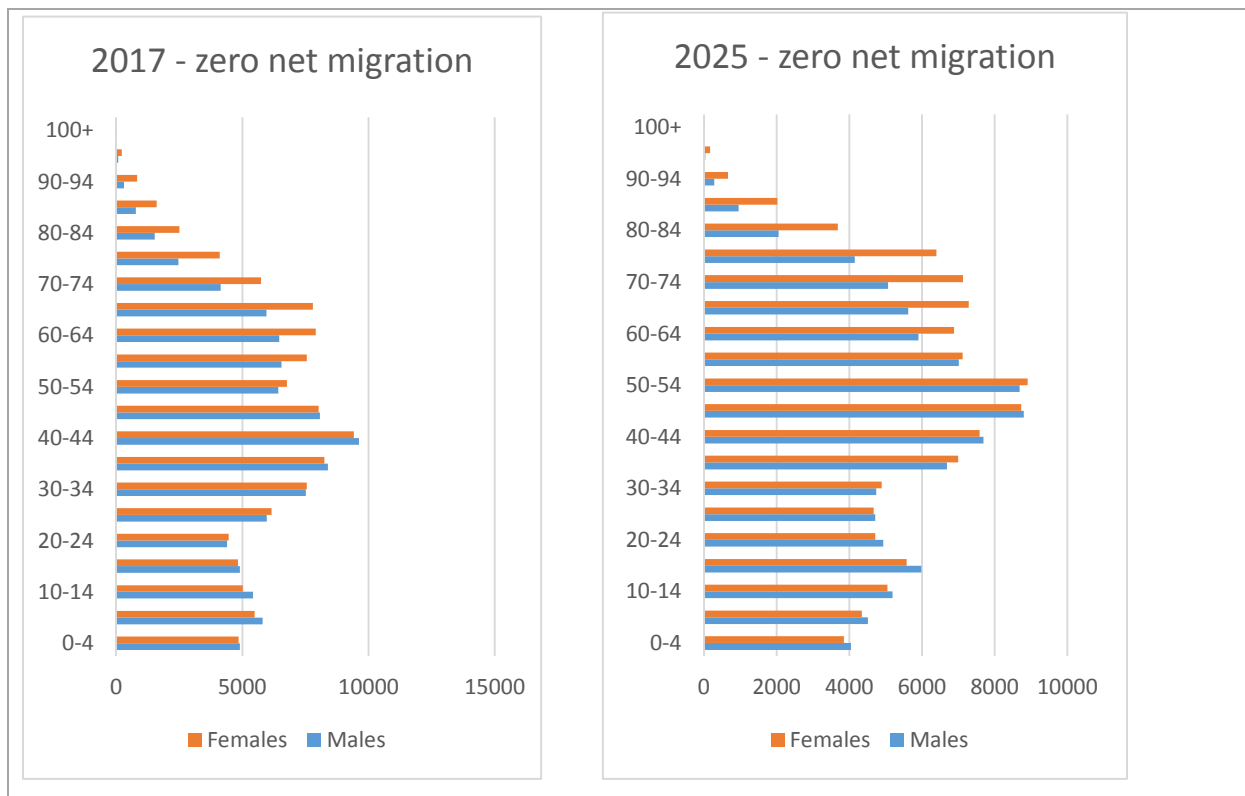
<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	5
	Female	4
Educational attainment	Primary education	0
	Secondary education	1
	Tertiary education	8
Family status	With children	3
	Without children	6
Type of migration	Returning migrant	6
	Short term migrant	1
	Commuter	0
	Emigrant	2
	Immigrant	0
Employment status	Student	2
	Employed	8
	Unemployed	0
Country of origin/destination	UK, Denmark, Germany, Kazakhstan, Spain	

ANNEX 3: Focus group, characteristics of participants

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Position</i>
Gender	Male	1
	Female	6
Educational attainment	Primary education	2
	Secondary education	0
	Tertiary education	5
Family status	With children	7
	Without children	0
Type of migration	Returning migrant	7
	Short term migrant	0
	Commuter	0
	Emigrant	0
	Immigrant	0
Employment status	Student	0
	Employed	7
	Unemployed	0
Country of origin/destination	Greece, Italy, USA, France, Sweden, Belgium	

ANNEX 4: Population pyramids according to the projections

Figure 11. Population pyramids in 2017, 2025, 2030 and 2035 in case of zero net migration



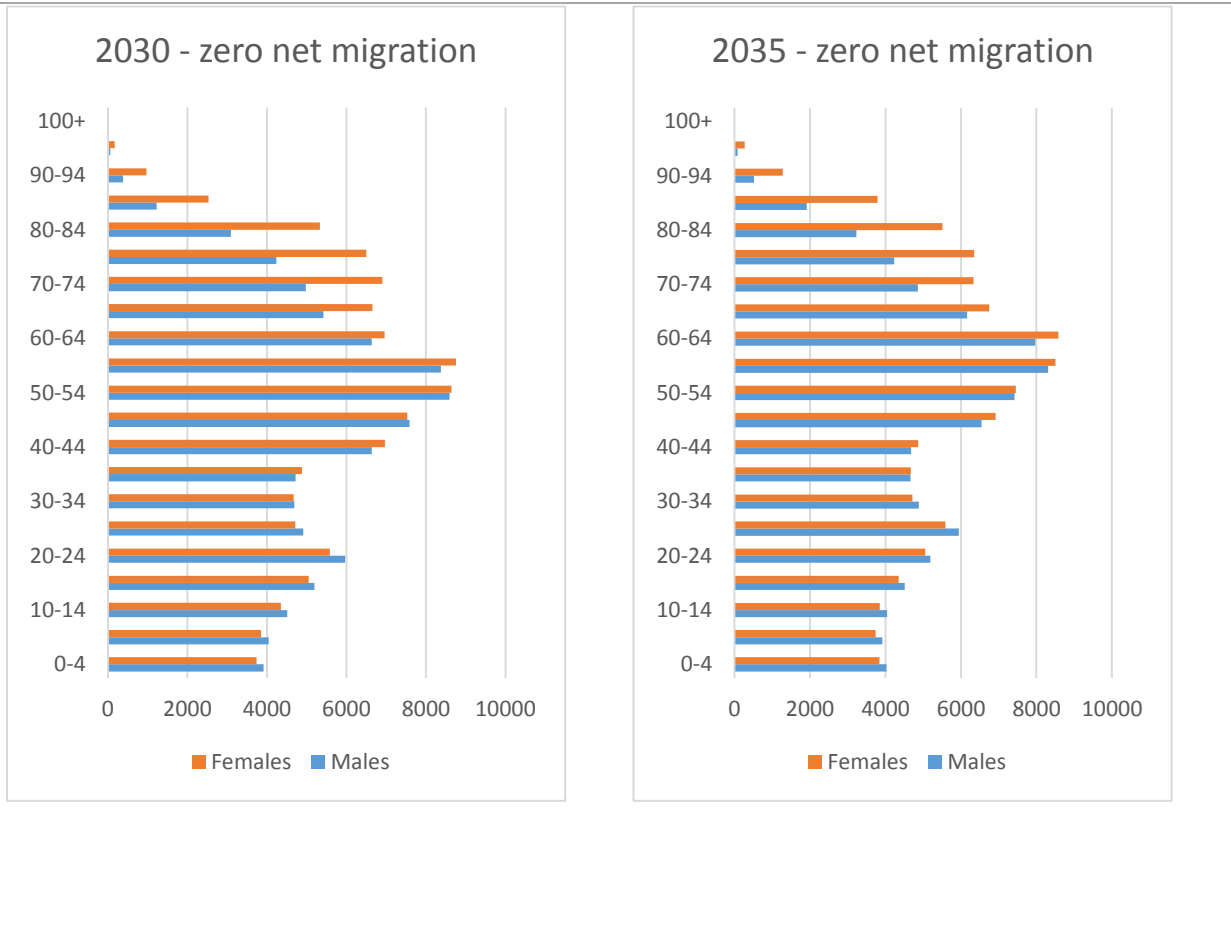


Figure 12. Population pyramids in 2017, 2025, 2030 and 2035 in case of low net migration

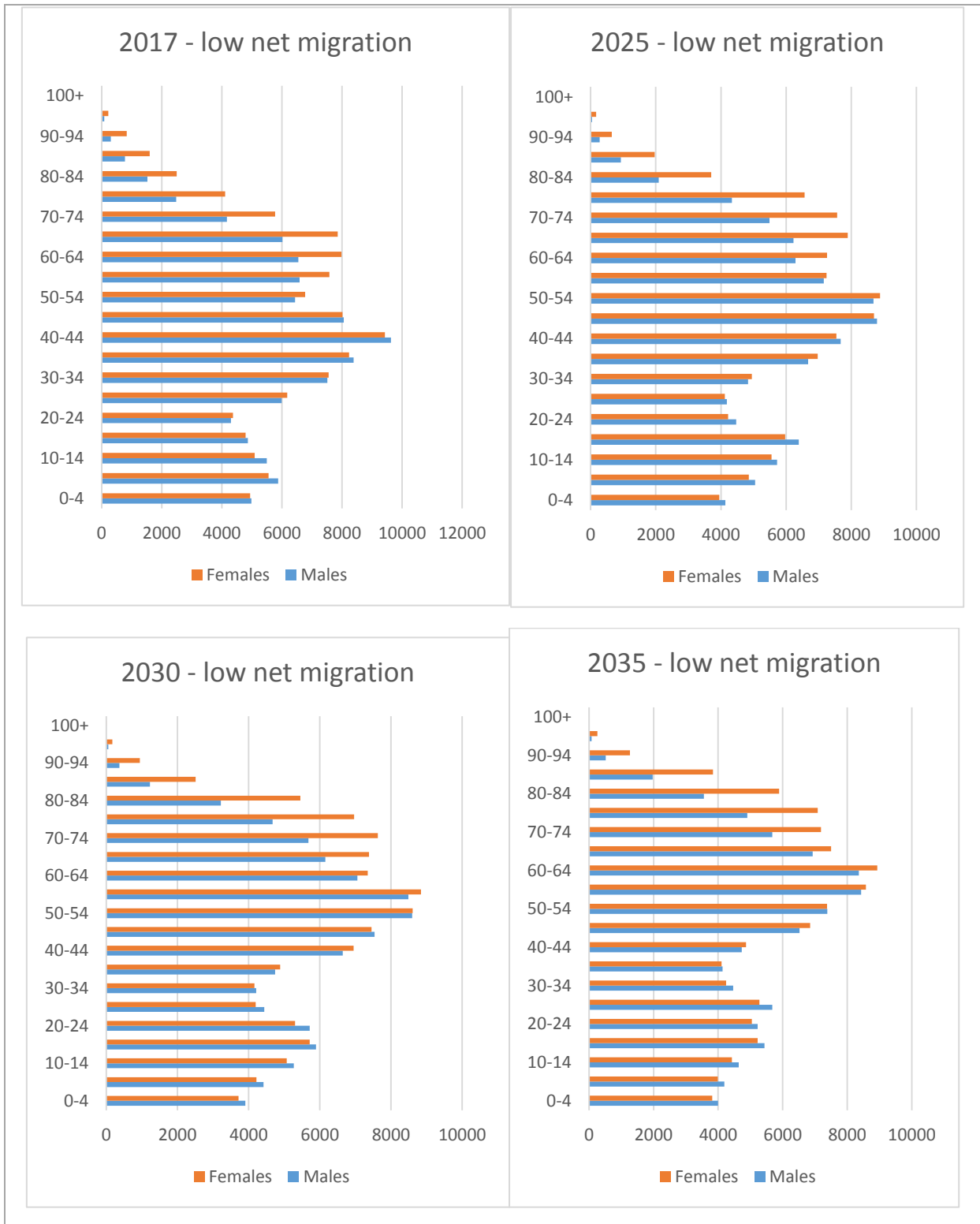
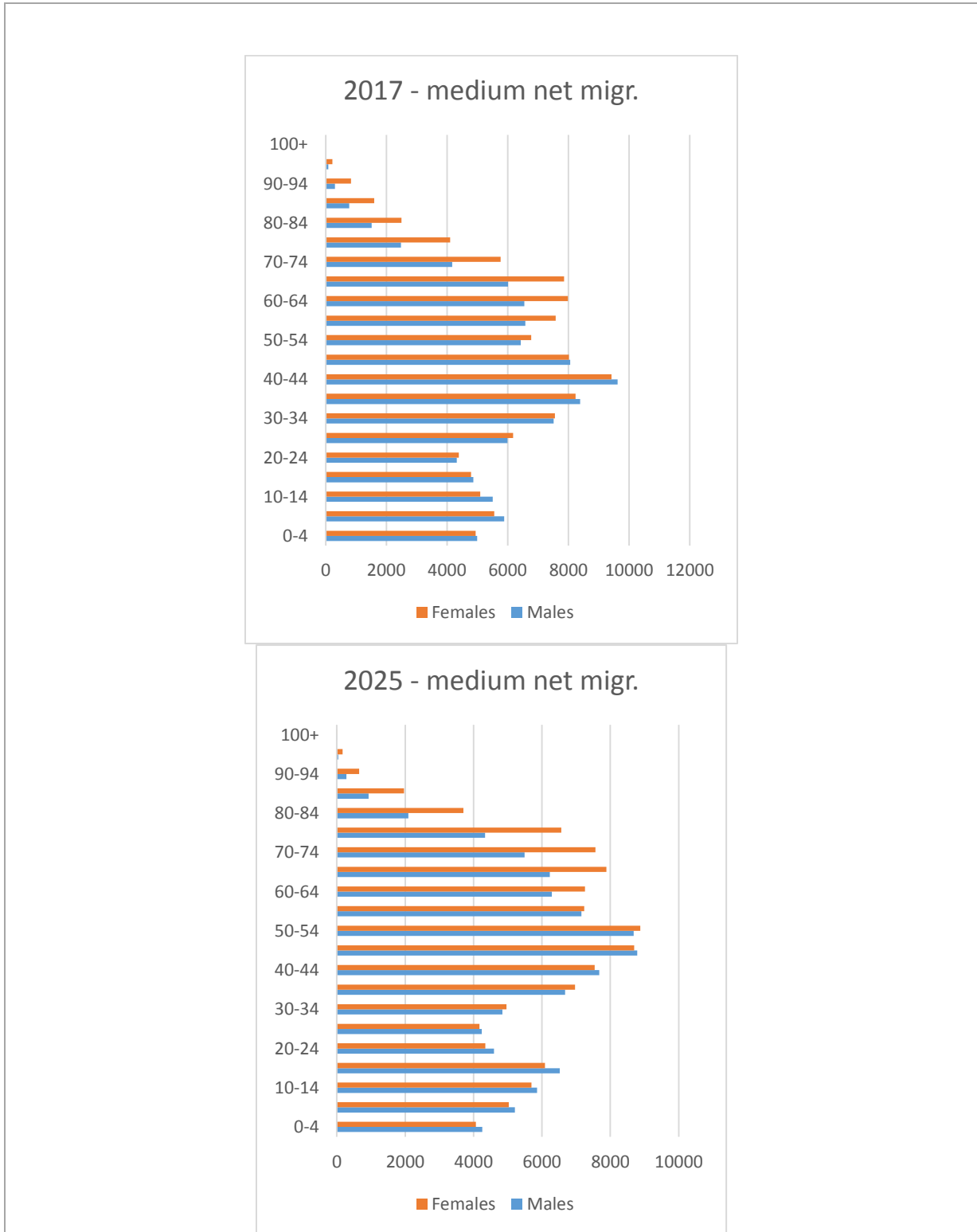


Figure 13. Population pyramids in 2017, 2025, 2030 and 2035 in case of medium net migration



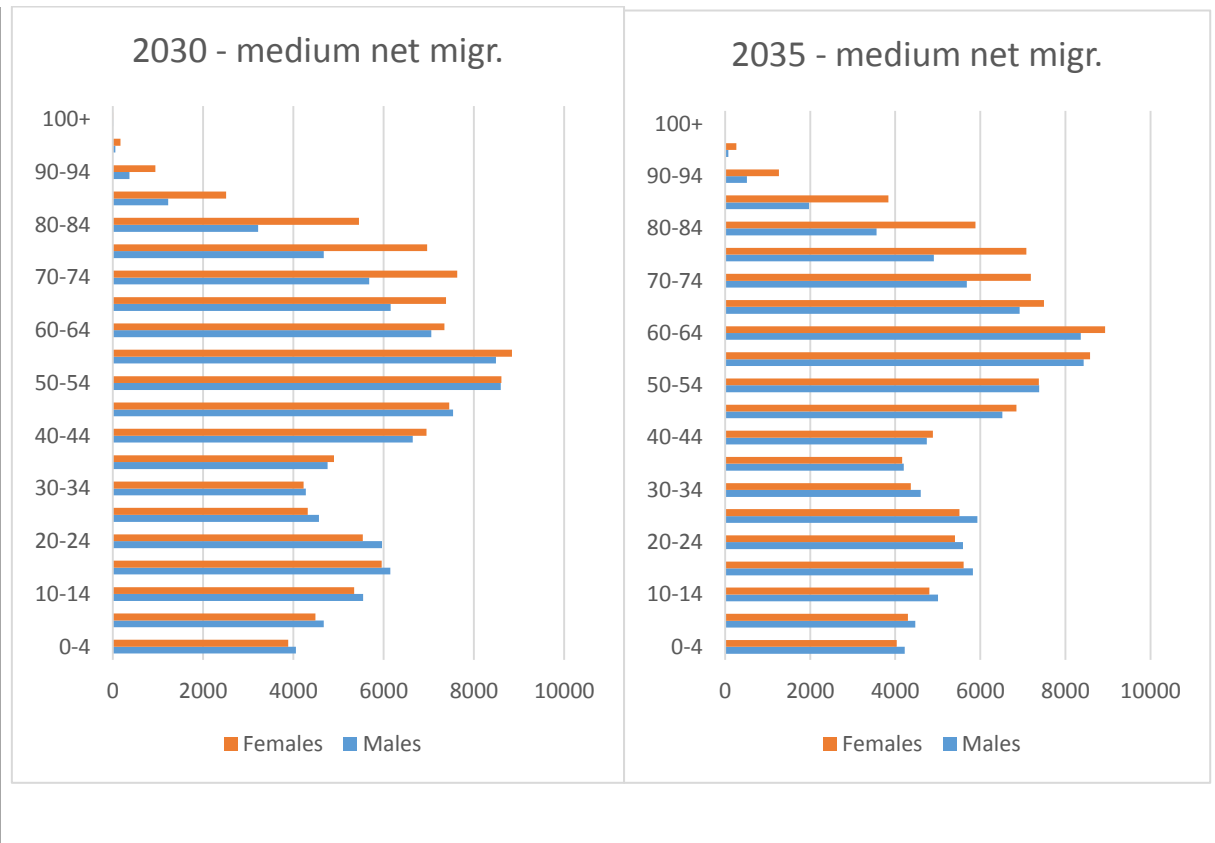
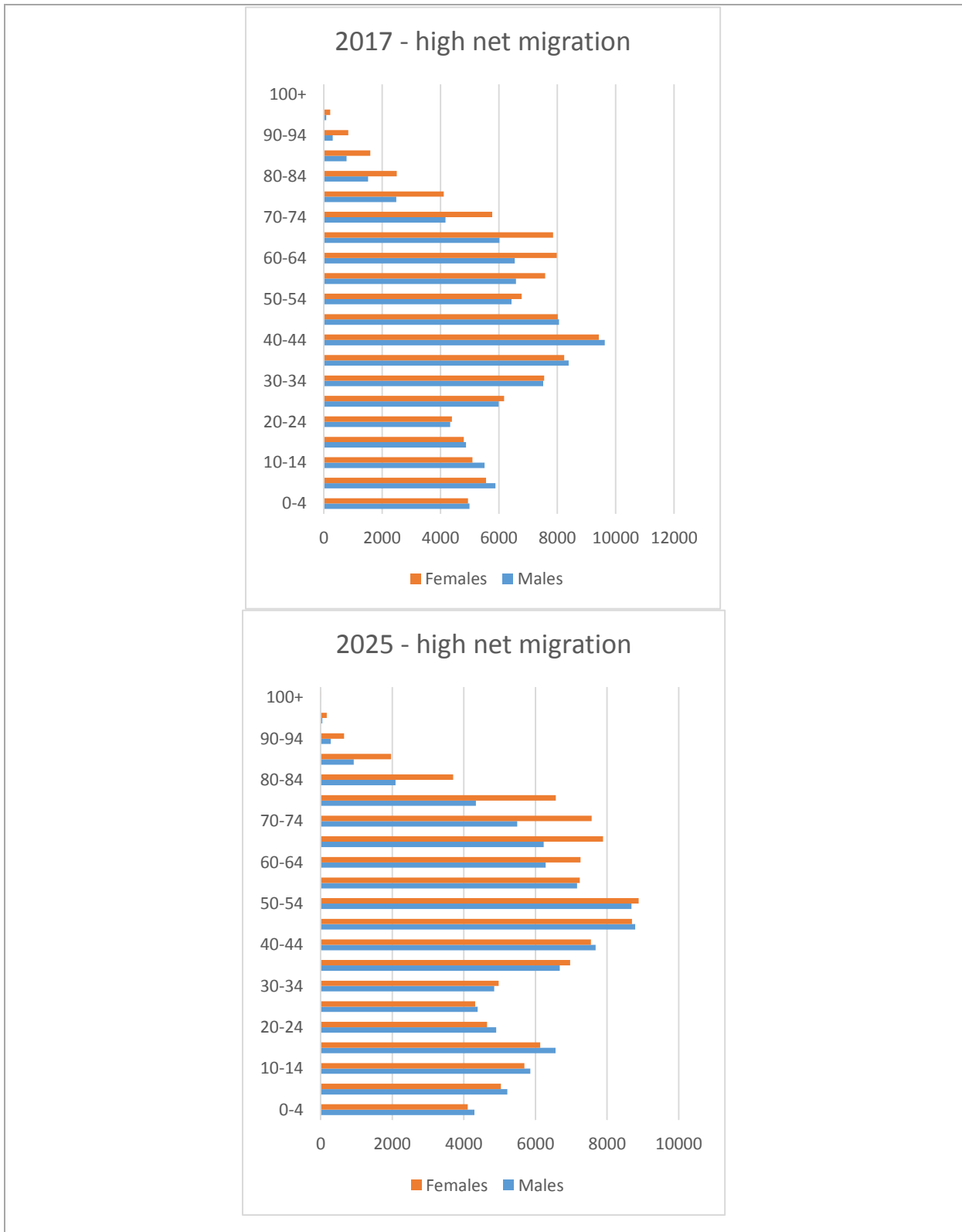
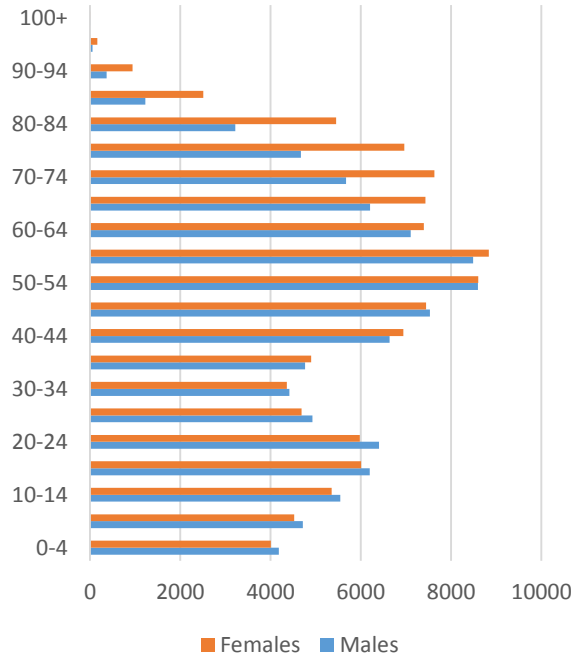


Figure 14. Population pyramids in 2017, 2025, 2030 and 2035 in case of high net migration



2030 - high net migration



2035 - high net migration

