

# **Developing future scenarios of demographic, migratory and labour market processes in Bulgaria:**

## **Foresight findings**

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## Executive Summary

The foresight exercise is work package 5 of the SEEMIG project “Managing Migration and its Effects in SEE – Transnational Actions towards Evidence Based Strategies”. Its main goal is to provide an understanding of people’s projections of the future in terms of migration and its relation and effect on demographic and labour market processes. For this purpose, the exercise has involved focus groups with participants from three different groups – experts, public officials, and migrants – who identified the main drivers for migration, and drafted future scenarios for the country and its population based on these drivers.

The Bulgarian foresight exercise took place in December 2013 and consisted of three workshops with groups of experts, public officials, and migrants, and a plenary workshop with all participants. The experts’ group comprised an anthropologist, an economist, a demographer, sociologists, statisticians, and migration scholars. The policy makers’ group consisted of public officials from the Ministry of the Interior, the State Agency for Refugees, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Agency of Employment, the Ministry of Defence, and the municipality of Montana (which is also the regional partner of the National Statistical Institute within the SEEMIG project). The migrants’ group was composed of long-term immigrants from Russia and Ukraine, a Bulgarian return migrant and a representative of the civil society (working with refugees) who was also a return migrant.

After identifying a list of drivers and prioritizing them during the individual workshop, all participants reunited in a common plenary session where they clustered the previously identified drivers into four main themes. The four clusters were: economic development, education, political situation and welfare system, and cultural factors. The needs and the structure of the labour market, the level of unemployment, and regional development were the sub-drivers under the category of economic development. The system and content of secondary and tertiary education were identified as second general drivers. Here, the focus was on the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge, and their relation to the labour market. Political factors and the type of welfare system were clustered under one general driver referring to the situation in the destination countries as enabling or constraining migration integration. The fourth general driver involved cultural specifics of different ethnic and religious groups as well as social and community cohesion as push factors for emigration.

The four thematic clusters were used as a basis for developing a positive and a negative scenario and individual hero’s stories within these scenarios. The two scenarios were devised as to present extreme versions of the fears or hopes of the participants for the future. Both groups chose the economic development of the country as the major driver conditioning future migration trends. The positive scenario drafted a flourishing national economy, accompanied by excellent employment opportunities and an overall better quality of life. Secondary education was envisioned reformed enough so as to provide enough skills to directly enter the labour market as specialists. International drivers like EU free labour mobility and flows of capital were deemed working as to encourage local entrepreneurs to sustain trade connections with other EU countries. These resulted in a low long-term emigration stock, but heightened mobility. Immigration numbers are on the rise, because of the country’s need of additional labour force following economic development. Regional development is

balanced and state supported, leading to less internal migration with people having enough opportunities in their places of origin.

The negative scenario is the exact opposite of the positive one. A dire economic situation of the country, lack of regional development, no additional EU funds, decaying agriculture and industry are among the main results of negative economic development which result in very high unemployment rates and poverty. The state is not able to support welfare policies, thus cutting many social benefits which leave many people without any resources and support. In this context, institutional corruption is on the rise. The scenario and the hero story were drafted taking as an example the region of Montana. Migration trends following the worsening economic situation of the country include high outmigration rates from the region (with 80 per cent emigration and 20 per cent internal migration towards the capital). By 2025 Bulgaria is not able to offer any job opportunities for immigrants, hence becomes exclusively a transit country for migrants aiming to settle in richer EU countries.

The scenarios revealed that migration is conceived as depending mainly on internal factors like economic development of the country and the educational system. The state is thought of as a capsulated unit, independent of global development, and internal development becomes the sole driver both for inward and for outward migration. Moreover, both scenarios, as well as the previous discussions, revealed a general conceptualization of migration as a negative phenomenon. Emigration was labelled a brain drain of highly skilled workers who have to be attracted back to the country, or as a survival strategy for the low-skilled who are left with no other options. Immigration, on the other hand, was conceived mostly through the issue of security and control of asylum seekers or illegally entering migrants. Considering migration as a purely negative phenomenon in the context of increased mobility worldwide, and within the EU in particular, makes it difficult for policy makers to adjust to fast emerging new forms of mobility and to formulate and implement the respective policies required.

The main fields that involve further policy implications, based on the way migration trends and migration drivers have been conceptualized are: regional development, educational system, understanding of emigration as a strictly negative phenomenon, importance of the family as a migration unit, and the overarching attitudes of intolerance against ethnic and cultural diversity. More even regional development, supported by the state, which would secure jobs and general economic improvement, was seen as crucial for limiting outmigration and for attracting foreign labour. The reform of the educational system suggests a better balance between theory and practice, and more sustainable interconnections with the labour market as well as accommodation of new forms of educational mobility and reintegration of mobile students through recognition of credits, diplomas, and qualifications. Conceiving the family as the main unit of migration has revealed the need to expand policies as to include other agents of the migration process which are not always involved in regular work (such as carers, children, older relatives).

Finally, three concrete points of the discussions reveal the need of further work in relation to tolerance towards diversity. The conceptualization of the current refugee crisis, the adoption of the notions of 'welfare tourism', and the concept of 'ethnic balance' were all loaded with negative attitudes towards the Roma and the immigrants, reproducing myths of crime, laziness, and the undeserving classes, and expressing fears of diversity, and ethnic and cultural difference. A more

inclusive and tolerant approach towards issues of diversity is critical, especially at the level of policy makers.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Foresight as a method

Part of the SEEMIG project, the foresight exercise aims to provide mainstream population projections based on drafting main drivers for migration, and on producing future scenarios for migration, demography, and labour market processes. The foresight exercise is a qualitative approach which aims to complement the analysis of statistical data and historical materials. It is oriented towards narratives, experiences and perspectives of the people who are directly affected by migration processes. Moreover, the foresight exercise seeks to understand the perceptions, expectations and fears of citizens concerning the future. Through group discussions with participants with different profiles, the exercise assembles the various drivers and factors that influence migration processes. Based on the identified drivers participants develop together future scenarios. While these scenarios are in no way predictions, they offer alternative possible futures (CEEHPN 2012). By taking these possible future maps seriously, the foresight exercise introduces a qualitative perspective in analyzing social processes not only oriented towards what has already happened but towards what can be still planned. The SEEMIG approached three types of participants - experts, public officials, and migrants. By putting these differently profiled groups together and making them discuss and formulate future projections, SEEMIG aims to contribute to introduction of local and regional expertise and experience in national policymaking, to connecting personal experience of migrants with the analysis of experts and public officials, and finally, to bringing evidence based strategies to the fore in migration planning. It is important to emphasize that this is the first foresight study in the field of migration and the labour market conducted in Bulgaria.

### 1.2. Main findings of SEEMIG foresight exercise

The Bulgarian foresight exercise was conducted in December 2013. It consisted of three individual workshops with experts, public officials, and migrants, and a plenary workshop with all participants. During the individual workshops participants identified the main drivers for emigration and immigration. In the last joint workshop, participants prioritized drivers in terms of influence and clustered them in four main themes. The four clusters were then used to develop two opposing scenarios for the future – a positive and a negative one. The two mixed groups had to assess how the changes in the drivers will affect migration, the labour market, and the demographic processes in the country. Due to the low immigration stock in Bulgaria, the topic of immigration was largely discussed through the lens of return migration, rather than from the point of view of immigrants and asylum seekers. The presence of experts and policy makers from the municipality of Montana which is the regional partner of NSI in the SEEMIG, grounded workshop discussions and scenarios drafting in a concrete regional context. With Montana being one of the poorest and less developed regions in the country with very high rates of unemployment and very intense emigration trends, the representatives from Montana provided a valuable understanding of the uneven development of the country and the varying experience of the different regions.

The four clusters identified were: economic development, education, political situation and welfare system, and cultural factors. The most important factors in the sphere of economic development were the needs and the structure of the labour market, the level of unemployment, and the regional development. Education was a main theme in all individual groups, both at the level of secondary and at the level of tertiary education, in terms of balance between theoretical and practical knowledge, and in terms of relation to the labour market. Political factors and the type of welfare system were discussed particularly in the context of the destination countries as enabling or constraining migration integration. Finally, cultural specifics of different ethnic and religious groups as well as social and community cohesion were regarded as important factors for emigration.

Two scenarios were drafted in the plenary session where participants were divided in two groups: a negative and a positive scenario. Both scenarios present an extreme version of the fears or hopes of the participants for the future. The two groups focused on the economic development of the country as the main most important driver which defines migration trends. In the positive scenario and the subsequent hero story economic development is advancing, leading to better employment opportunities and higher quality of life. Education (especially secondary) provides people with enough skills to enter the labour market at good positions. The EU remains open for labour mobility and flows of capital, allowing local entrepreneurs to maintain trade connections with other EU countries. As a consequence, emigration is low, since Bulgarian citizens do not have the economic need to migrate elsewhere. The immigration stock is higher because the country offers job opportunities and needs additional labour force due to good economic development. There is an emphasis on regional development which is state supported and leads to less internal migration with people having enough opportunities in their places of origin.

The negative scenario is a mirror of the positive one. It is grounded in a dire economic situation of the country, lack of regional development, no additional EU funds, dying agriculture and industry, which subsequently leads to extremely high unemployment rates and poverty. The overall impoverishment of the state leads to a decline in welfare and social policies resulting in the cut of many social benefits, leaving people with even less resources for survival. In addition, corruption is on the rise, with almost 100 per cent corrupt public officials by 2025. Both the scenario and the hero story were drafted for the region of Montana, as an example of the worst case in such future development. The migration trends conditioned by this dire situation include extremely high outmigration rates from the regions (with 80 per cent emigration and 20 per cent internal migration towards the capital). By 2025 Bulgaria is exclusively a transit country for migrants coming from outside the EU aiming for better developed EU member states. No immigrants remain in the country due to lack of any job opportunities.

During the individual workshops, participants highlighted important international factors such as the needs of the destination countries' labour markets or the international political situation in the Middle East. However, during the development of scenarios the main factors discussed were solely related to the situation within Bulgaria. To give an example: good economic development providing more and better paid jobs in Bulgaria will serve as a driver both for attracting immigrants and for limiting Bulgarian emigration. In this sense, the focus and projections of the participants was strongly tied to a view of an independently functioning nation-state which creates its own conditions for pulling immigrants or creating conditions for a brain-drain. Another underlying assumption in

both the negative and the positive scenario was that emigration and mobility are inherently a negative trend caused by desperation and used as a survival strategy, rather than an opportunity for experience and exchange.

The way future migration trends and the drivers influencing these trends are conceptualized has further policy implications for several fields of social and economic life. The most important points are regional development, the educational system, the understanding of emigration as a strictly negative phenomenon, the importance of the family as a migration unit, and the overarching attitudes of intolerance against ethnic and cultural diversity. More attention to regional development and securing job opportunities and overall economic improvement of the most impoverished regions in the country is a critical factor influencing migration trends. Thus, investment in regional development will both decrease the outmigration of specialists, and will attract foreign labour.

The second point is the educational system as a whole – with a special attention on the structure and content of secondary and higher education in Bulgaria, and on new forms of educational mobility. Secondary and higher education should be restructured in a way as to provide more practical knowledge and experience and thus create a better and more attuned connection with the labour market. New forms of educational mobility like short term exchange or internship programs should be incorporated better into the existing educational system, encouraging students to return. This includes an easier process for credits, diplomas, and qualifications recognition that will affect not only Bulgarian students, but also prospective immigrants.

Conceptualizing both emigration and immigration as predominantly negative phenomena triggers difficulties in a highly mobile world and especially within the EU. A critical appraisal of the costs and benefits of emigration and immigration has to be the basis for formulating future policies. Public officials and experts alike have to be encouraged to incorporate a more nuanced assessment of these processes. Next, thinking the heroes' stories through the lens of families reveals the importance of conceptualizing migration policies with a view beyond the individual worker, so as to include carers from different generations who play a crucial role in the reproduction of the family and are not necessarily engaged in regular paid work, thus excluded from policies focused predominantly on the mobility of labour.

Finally, three concrete points of the discussion reveal the need of further work in relation to tolerance towards diversity. The understanding of the current refugee crisis, the adoption of the notions of 'welfare tourism', and the concept of 'ethnic balance' were all loaded with negative attitudes towards the Roma, and the immigrants, reproducing myths of crime, laziness, and the undeserving classes, and expressing fear of diversity and ethnic and cultural difference. A more inclusive and tolerant approach towards issues of diversity is critical, especially at the level of policy makers.

### **1.3. Structure of the report**

The report is divided into three main parts, preceded by a context and background of the migration processes and the labour market tendencies in the last decade. Part 2 is devoted to the methodological aspects of the implementation of the foresight exercise. It traces in details the organization of the workshops, the choice of participants, and the profile of the participants in each

group. Then, it discusses the process by which participants arrived at the main drivers. The general atmosphere and the main difficulties are also addressed in this part. Part 3 presents the content of the foresight exercise. First, we present the drivers as identified by the three groups both in relation to emigration and to immigration. Then we systematize the main differences and overlaps between the three groups. This is followed by a discussion of the clustering of the drivers into main categories, and the subsequent scenario and hero development. The final part contains the main threats and opportunities that participants identified explicitly or implicitly. This part also sets the foundation for taking seriously population projections and identification of problematic areas as a basis for developing more comprehensive evidence based policies which are attuned towards the people.

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

### 1.4. Political and Socio-economic Overview

Over the last two decades since the political change in 1989 Bulgaria has experienced a volatile economic development. After a series of political and economic instability during the 1990s, the country experienced a steady growth of the GDP until 2008, reaching 34,791 million dollars<sup>1</sup>. The global economic crisis had an impact on Bulgaria with a decrease of GDP with 5.5 % in 2009 as compared to the peak in the previous year. In the following years, GDP has grown slowly with 0.8 per cent in 2012 in comparison to 2011<sup>2</sup>. GDP per capita, however, has grown more rapidly in fact due to the decrease of the population. Industries and the services have developed at a faster pace at the expense of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Since 2000 there has been a stable tendency of increase of the household nominal income, with a slight decrease of 0.5 % in 2011 compared to 2010. The poverty line has increased during the period 2005-2009 reaching 295 BGN (about 150 euro). The share of persons living below the poverty line in 2010 was 22.3 % of the population. The share of the poor was the highest among the unemployed and the retired.<sup>3</sup>

Labour force participation (aged 15-64) and employment rate (aged 15 and over) had increased in the period 2003-2008 with a respective drop of unemployment rate. Employment growth<sup>4</sup> has been negative since reaching -4.3 in 2012, with male employment decreasing double than female.<sup>5</sup> Employment rate has risen to 70.7 per cent total in 2008 and has steadily dropped since to 63 per cent in 2012, with men having slightly higher rate than women.<sup>6</sup> The unemployment rate has been steadily growing since 2008 when it was 5.6 per cent, going up to 12.3 for 2012, with 10.8 female, and 13.5 male<sup>7</sup>. Across age groups, unemployment has affected most significantly young people under 25 (28.1 per cent for 2012 with a steady growth from 11.9 per cent in 2008).<sup>8</sup> Long-term unemployed reached 6.38 per cent in 2012, with male unemployment slightly higher than female.<sup>9</sup>

Sector-wise the highest drop in jobs in the last four years was in construction with 25 per cent decrease, followed by industry, and trade and retail.<sup>10</sup> These are also the sectors that employ the highest number of people. The sector of services witnessed a relative stability in the early 2000's, followed by a slight increase in 2010 and 2011.<sup>11</sup> The general tendency of contraction of low-skilled jobs has left large shares of the population in a vulnerable position with little access to alternative

<sup>1</sup> Pacheva et al, 2013:20

<sup>2</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>

<sup>3</sup> Pacheva et al. 2013:23-25

<sup>4</sup> All employment data is from eurostat for the persons aged 20 to 64. Same data is available in Bulgarian from the National Statistical Institute at: <http://www.nsi.bg/otrasal.php?otr=26>

<sup>5</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00180&plugin=1>

<sup>6</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsdec420&language=en>

<sup>7</sup> Numbers are for persons aged 15 to 74:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdec450&plugin=1>

<sup>8</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdec460&plugin=1>

<sup>9</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc330&plugin=1>

<sup>10</sup> National Statistical Institute data for 2012: <http://www.nsi.bg/otrasal.php?otr=26>

<sup>11</sup> Pacheva et al 2013:39

forms of employment and little chance for re-qualification. This is one of the major drivers which leads to out-migration of low-skilled labourers discussed in all the workshops.<sup>12</sup>

The social and economic challenges over the last decades include ageing of the population, depopulation of the rural areas, and increasing youth unemployment.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, official statistical data on unemployment and/or precarious labour is much lower than actual numbers due to substantial number of people who do not register as unemployed, or who work in the informal economy in highly insecure conditions. Another aspect is the uneven development of regions, and the large economic differences between bigger cities and small towns and rural areas which leads both to internal migration and concentration of the population in a few big cities as well as to intensified international labour migration.

This is particularly relevant for the region of Montana which was represented by local experts and public officials in the foresight exercise. The region faced process of outmigration and ageing of the population which led to a decrease in the share of people in active age. At the same time, the levels of unemployment are higher than the average for the country, the average income of the population is low and the share of the poor is higher than the average. There are few investments in the region, and the general quality of the infrastructure is low.<sup>14</sup> All these factors contribute to outmigration – both internal towards the capital city, and international. These characteristics of the region are exemplary for the discussion of uneven development within the country. Participants in the workshops provided numerous examples of the relations between the difficult economic conditions and the demographic and migratory processes taking place in the region.

### **1.5. Development of international migration**

Over the last twenty years Bulgaria has been predominantly country of emigration and a transit country for immigrants aiming to reach Western European countries. While emigration numbers are slowly decreasing but are still significantly higher than immigration numbers. Drawing on comparative census numbers and representative migration studies, the NSI concludes that in the period between the last censuses (1992 -2001, and 2001-2011) there was a decrease in the population due to negative migration growth. Between 1992 and 2001 the negative migration growth accounted for 36.4 per cent of the total decrease, or 203,000 (or about 2,5 per cent of the total population for the period). For the period between 2001 and 2011, the respective per cent of negative migration growth is 31.1 per cent of the total decrease of population, or 175,244 (about 2.3 per cent of the total population for the period).<sup>15</sup> The actual migration trends, however, are difficult to account for only based on census numbers and official statistical data. Especially after 2001, when the first mobility restrictions within the Schengen area have been lifted, mobility of Bulgarian citizens became more short-term and circular, difficult to be accounted for through statistical data. At the same time, since 2007 the NSI started gathering additional data on migration. For the period 2007-2011 the number of emigrants was 61,334, with a slight prevalence of women (55 per cent). Half of

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<sup>12</sup> Pacheva et al (2013:40) also suggest that high rates of unemployment during the crisis are a particularly strong driver for emigration discussing the correlation between unemployment and outmigration.

<sup>13</sup> Pacheva et al (2013:34)

<sup>14</sup> Pacheva et al (2013:42-43)

<sup>15</sup> Pacheva et al. (2013:16)

these were in the age group of the active working (20-39 years). The age group and the prevalence of women in fertile age might result in a deepening demographic crisis for the country.<sup>16</sup> Drawing on Eurostat data, the main countries of destination for Bulgarian citizens in 2012 are Spain – 174,388, followed by Germany – 100,302, Italy – 55,378, and the Netherlands – 16,760.

NSI additionally studied attitudes and intentions to emigrate. A survey from 2011 shows that about 10 per cent of those over 15-year-old have expressed intentions to reside permanently in a different country. Almost half of them indicated financial matters as the main motivation, another close to 20 per cent indicated career development, and 6.5 per cent – better education. The most preferred destinations were the UK, Germany, the US, Spain and Italy. The reasons indicated on the surveys on intentions and attitudes towards migration were well represented in the discussions in all three workshops.

Compared to emigration, the magnitude of immigration is relatively low as is the case in most new member states. However, immigration numbers are growing at a steady pace. This demonstrates a trend that Bulgaria is slowly becoming a final destination for some immigrants, especially after the country's EU accession in 2007. As previous studies have repeatedly stated there is no systematic statistical data collection for migration trends in Bulgaria (Krasteva et al. 2011, Trifonova 2008). Data is collected by a number of institutions, and it is not freely available. Therefore, statistical numbers of different categories of migrants are difficult to gather and compile in a comprehensive dataset. The 2011 census by the National Statistical Institute is the first census to provide any migration statistics, therefore there is no basis for comparison with previous census data. According to the 2011 census, the number of foreign citizens residing in Bulgaria is 36,723 in total including EU citizens (less than 0.5 per cent of the total population of Bulgaria), out of which women have a slightly higher share (55 per cent) which is 0.5 per cent of the population of the country. After 2007 NSI started gathering data on immigration. For the period 2007 – 2011, the number of immigrants was 13,347. These numbers include both return migrants and foreign residents who settled in the country with a residence permit. The largest share of the total number of foreign residents is from Turkey with 32.6 per cent, followed by countries from the EU (the UK – 30.9 per cent; Greece – 14 per cent, Germany – 10 per cent). The still low numbers of immigration and the lack of wide public debate on the issue were also reflected in the workshop discussions which paid more attention to the idea of return migration rather than to immigration proper.

While the number of asylum seekers has been decreasing significantly over the last decade from the record high of almost 2900 in 2002, the crisis in Syria led to an unforeseen increase in the number of asylum requests and granted refugee statuses in 2013. The number of asylum requests in 2013 was roughly 7,000 (out of 30,000 requests for the whole period since 1993). The number of granted statuses for 2013 was nearly 2,500, which is a record high. The influx of asylum seekers pressed the country to open new reception centres and to rethink its actions in terms of border security. These events which were widely reflected in the media and became the topic of public discussions influenced largely the discussions in the workshops and the inclusion of the 'refugee' topic as an issue of concern. At the same time, the novelty of the phenomenon was felt in the final discussion in

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<sup>16</sup> Pacheva et al. (2013: 28)

which it disappeared from the attention of the participants. The topic of security was particularly actively discussed in the workshop with public officials.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Workshops

#### 2.1.1. Dates and place

The Bulgarian foresight exercise consisted of three brainstorming/brainmapping sessions organized with each group of stakeholders separately and a joint plenary workshop where all participants gathered. All workshops were conducted in December 2013 in Sofia on separate days at the premises of the National Statistical Institute. The preparations for the workshops started in early November 2013. The three individual brainstorming and brainmapping workshops were scheduled with a length of an hour and a half. The last plenary session workshop was scheduled for up two hours. All four sessions were scheduled for the early afternoon within working hours, as this was indicated as the preferred time by all three groups. In practice, all sessions took longer than initially planned since participants have engaged in lively discussions. The first three sessions lasted about two hours each. The final meeting lasted slightly longer than two hours.

#### 2.1.2. Structure

The first three workshops followed the same introduction script of presentation by the moderator of the SEEMIG project and the foresight exercise's idea and structure<sup>17</sup>, followed by short presentations of each participant. The group discussions had a very loose structure opened by the broad question on the links between migration and the labour market and the main drivers, and followed the ideas and concerns of the participants.

In the first two groups, the participants started off immediately with suggesting various connections and factors, starting from more general ones, and slowly arriving at more concrete drivers. Each participant started with a factor from his/her own expertise and sphere of knowledge, and later on discussed other interrelated aspects. In the last group of the migrants, the discussion started more slowly. Therefore the moderator turned the focus on more personal stories in the beginning which made participants feel comfortable in their experience and opinions. Later the discussion moved to a more general level involving discussion of drivers going beyond personal reasons.

#### 3.1.3.1 Workshops 1-3: Brainstorming and brain-mapping sessions – arriving at key drivers of migration

The introduction given to all three groups were followed by minimal instructions on the topic of migration and the labour market and the aim to identify key drivers and factors influencing migration movements. Due to the different profile of the participants in the three workshops and due to the varying number of participants in each workshop, the sessions evolved in relatively different ways and atmosphere. In the first three individual workshops, the moderator was writing all mentioned drivers on flipchart sheets divided in two sections – emigration and immigration – in order for the

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<sup>17</sup> At this point, the moderator explained that sessions will be recorded with a voice-recording device and asked the participants to sign the consent form. The moderator guaranteed that anonymity in quoting opinions will be kept.

participants to see and be able to reflect on the indicators and drivers mentioned throughout the sessions. These sheets were then used again at the plenary session for the presentations of each group.

The first group of experts consisted of ten participants. This conditioned a more formal atmosphere, especially in the beginning. Everyone started by presenting themselves, their area of work, the institution and the positions that they take in it. The larger group made the first part of the discussion more formal and the moderator had to initiate interventions by posing open questions to which the participants presented a highly specific point of view rooted in their field of expertise. Advancing in the session, the separate interventions attuned into a discussion and more free exchange of opinions.

Both the public official group and the migrant group consisted of 5 participants each which significantly changed the tone and the type of discussions that took place, allowing for a more relaxed atmosphere straight away and for a conversational style of the discussion. The public officials' workshop was well balanced in terms of participation. All participants got engaged in the discussion and entered into an active dialogue while maintaining some of their differences at the same time. The only concern some of the participants had was in regard to anonymity. The moderator explicitly guaranteed that all recording will be only used for the analysis and names will not be mentioned in the final report. While all of the participants were present as representatives of the institutions that sent them, they shifted between official institutional positions and personal opinions. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that some of the factors, the issues and the problems identified in this group are not necessarily stemming from an official institutional position. In addition, while we tried to involve higher positioned decision makers (like head of units in Ministries for example), the public officials who agreed to participate were lower ranking and hence with less influence in the actual decision making process. The discussions in this group went smoothly with equal interventions from all participants.

The group of migrants was most diverse. While it was a small group as well which allowed for a more informal discussion, the background of the participants was diverging. At times this might have impeded understanding between the participants. However, this diversity of profiles, reasons for migration and age groups provided a valuable spectrum of opinions and issues raised. As a whole, the discussion in this group remained at the level of personal experiences and the formulations of factors and drivers tended to be based on individual stories, rather than on more general conclusions. Nevertheless, in the plenary workshop, participants in this group integrated well with the rest of the participants. They prioritized and clustered drivers, and developed scenarios and heroes on an equal basis with the rest of the participants.

#### **3.1.3.2 Workshop 4: Synthesizing (Selection of main drivers, Development of matrix, Formation of mixed groups, Development of scenarios )**

The three groups were already given directions about the general idea of the synthesizing workshop. The moderator explained the main direction of the plenary workshop at the end of each individual workshop and repeated how important and valuable the presence of each participant will be. In the final meeting, we first did a quick participants' presentation across groups. Then, representatives of each group presented the drivers that were identified during the individual workshops, using the flipchart sheets from the previous sessions. The whole list of enumerated drivers was put on a new sheet by the moderator. After all the groups presented their drivers which already resulted formulating the drivers in more generic terms, all the drivers were displayed (ten sheets) for the participants to look at. During a general discussion, the groups clustered the most important drivers in 4 main themes, specifying sub-drivers under each theme. The flipchart with the four selected main drivers (and sub-drivers) remained in a visible place for both groups to see, after they were separated to work on the scenarios.

Both groups insisted on continuing the scenarios development into drafting the heroes, instead of going back into a plenary to present the scenarios in-between. Due to the time constraint and the strong insistence of participants, we agreed to change the protocol. Fifteen minutes before the announced end time of the session, participants joined together for the presentation of scenarios and heroes. One representative of each group presented and the results were listed on the flipchart.

## **2.2. Participants**

The selection of participants started in early November by the NSI team and the moderator. The participants in the three groups were selected through different channels. We agreed on a list of experts, combining prior personal and institutional contact (both through NSI and through the moderator professional networks). The experts were selected in a way as to represent different topics and approaches. We aimed at having economists, demographers, labour market, and migration experts, and to cover both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The list included statisticians, sociologists, anthropologists, economists from the three universities in Sofia, the Bulgarian Academy of Science, and a more applied and policy oriented expert from a think-tank, and in addition three participants from the local administration of the partner in Montana. Due to the personal connections, the response rate was very high.

In terms of participation and dynamic the experts' workshop had two downsides. One of the participants was dominating and non-dialogical, slightly more senior than the others and with a different background who had the tendency of attempting to high-jack the discussion into very general reflections, which required interruptions by the moderator. However, she had to leave early and did not come for the plenary session. At the other end were three participants from the local administration of the partner municipality of Montana who rarely expressed opinions even when invited to address the local specifics of Montana. They also did not reappear for plenary session.

The decision makers represented ministries and state agencies working on issue of migration and labour: several units in the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, The State Agency for Refugees, and the Agency of Employment as well as the regional partner – the municipality of Montana. Institutions were contacted through official letters. Heads of

units suggested the particular employees which would participate. Out of 8 confirmations, we had 3 people drop out in the last moment.

The migrants were the most complex group in terms of recruitment. The initial idea of mixing migrants and civil society members did not work out due to cancellation of two of the NGO workers. The group consisted of 3 immigrants from Russia and Ukraine, a return migrant (from Luxemburg) and a representative of the civil society (working with refugees) who was also a return migrant from France. Two of the other recruited immigrants dropped out in the last moment. All participants spoke Bulgarian well. The main difficulty with recruiting a more diverse group of more recent migrants coming from different countries and background was the language limitation. While we considered inviting recent beneficiaries of international protection or economic migrants who have lived in the country for a few years, we finally decided against it given the difficulties of participating in a discussion through translation. In this sense, the discussion was taking place between Bulgarian return migrants and immigrants who are very well incorporated into the Bulgarian society which conditioned a specific type of themes and discussions. The outcomes might have been different, if the groups consisted of migrants with a different profile.

The dropout rate in the plenary session was 6 out of 20 (5 from the expert group and 1 from the migrants group) which left us with 14 participants who were divided in groups of 7. Anonymity of names when direct quotes and opinions are to be used was given to the participants. Thus, any quotes and opinions will be referred to the respective group and the position of the participant.

### **2.3. Approach to analyzing material**

All workshops were recorded with a voice recorder. The sessions were lead by one external moderator in the presence of two assistants from NSI. The assistants were responsible for taking notes. Occasionally, the moderator also took notes, especially of moods, directions of the discussion or points to be revisited later. The moderator was leading the discussions and writing suggested drivers on the flipchart for the participants to see and approve, both during the individual workshops and in the plenary workshop, including the presentations of scenarios and heroes stories. The analysis is based on re-visiting the notes of the moderator and the assistants, reading through the flipchart sheets and listening to the voice-recordings.

### **2.4. Problems and difficulties**

There were two types of difficulties in organizing the workshops. First – the timeframe of the exercise, and second – the type of participants for the group of migrants/NGO workers. As mentioned earlier, longer sessions of 3 hours were not feasible due to working hours and other work-related engagements. Keeping all sessions at about 2 hours might have affected the type of details and the depth of the discussions. To avoid missing steps and remaining at a superficial level in the discussions, the moderator kept the discussions focused and discouraged major divergences.

The group of the migrants, as already mentioned in the previous section, was with a specific profile of return migrants and of well integrated immigrants who have lived in Bulgaria for more than 10 years each. We did not have recent beneficiaries of international protection or more recent migrants for the reasons listed above. Thus, the viewpoints and opinions of this group are limited and specific to their profile. At the same time, it was this specific profile of the migrant group that contributed for their active participation in the general discussion, expressing their opinions firmly and having their voice heard in the plenary discussion and in the scenario groups.

### 3. RESULTS OF THE FORESIGHT EXERCISE

#### 3.1. Key drivers of migration

In all three individual workshops, the participants were invited to reflect on the drivers that influence migration in the present and then to project which of those drivers will continue to influence migration in the future. The main dividing line that all three groups kept to was a very general distinction between emigration and immigration which was also reflected on the flipcharts that the moderator divided in two columns for writing the discussed drivers. Emigration included all forms of short or long term migration patterns of Bulgarian citizens abroad. However, the emphasis in all three groups remained on migration mostly oriented towards the European Union (with a few exceptions like the US, and Israel appearing through personal examples). Among the types of immigration participants referred to: short-term types of seasonal, circular or sporadic work-related migration; study-oriented migration, such as degree-oriented and exchange programs (Erasmus etc.), short-term professional migration (high-skilled internships); long-term labour migration; family triggered migration (marriage to a foreigner or care migration for a member of the extended family, or family reunification).

Immigration was also a significant topic with several sub-topics. The two main directions of discussion were: asylum seekers and refugees (with an emphasis on Syria) and return migration. While return migration is not strictly emigration as such, in all three groups it was put under the column of emigration because it was thought of as generally an inflow of workers (when though through a labour market perspective), experience and human capital.

The theme of asylum seekers was still very strongly discussed in the media and the public space as well as at the level of different institutions because of the recent Syrian crisis and the larger waves of asylum seekers that entered Bulgaria, especially since August 2013. Thus, the particular timing of the foresight exercise was in a period in which the 'refugee topic' was widely discussed in the media and public debates, it triggered voluntary groups for support as well as extreme right racist discourse and violent attacks. Therefore, this was a hot topic for experts, policy makers and for ordinary citizens alike in all three groups at this particular moment in time. This might have skewed the discussion into placing more emphasis on drivers related to refugee waves and security management.

While the moderator attempted to keep the focus on the connections between the labour market and migration flows, the discussion often included overlaps and connections or overflows between different types of migration. For example, study-migration can lead to finding a job in the country of destination and staying on as a labour migrant. Equally so, students are often engaged in part-time work and sometimes even send remittances back to Bulgaria which can be considered as a driver in itself. All these aspects were discussed and written down as possible drivers for migration and as factors influencing the labour market. However, some were only mentioned *en passant*, and participants never came back to them.

Table 1: Comparison of key drivers

<b>Drivers</b>	<b>Experts</b>	<b>Public Officials/Decision-makers</b>	<b>Migrants</b>
<b>Driver 1</b>	Economic conditions in Bulgaria (growth, unemployment, level of salaries) as a push factor for emigration or a pull factor for immigration into the country	Economic conditions in Bulgaria (growth, unemployment, level of salaries) as a push factor for emigration	Economic conditions – both as push and pull factor
<b>Driver 2</b>	Rigid labour market in Bulgaria as a push factor for emigration	The needs of the destination countries' labour market as a pull factor for emigration	Labour market for high-skilled in the EU as a pull factor for emigration
<b>Driver 3</b>	Labour market niches in the West	Regional development	Labour market in Bulgaria offering new types of jobs (call centres)
<b>Driver 4</b>	Structure of the higher education (and links to the labour market) in Bulgaria as a push factor for emigration	Bad secondary and high-school education system as a push factor for emigration	Education (exchange and internships) as a pull factor for student emigration and mobility
<b>Driver 5</b>	Regulations (encouraging policies attract high-skilled migration or 'welfare migration'; restrictive policies have no effect on limiting the flow) as a pull factor for emigration from Bulgaria	International regulations: more restrictive measures can limit the inflow of migrants into EU – with an emphasis on the role for immigration into Bulgaria	Welfare system in the destination country (poverty migration) – as a pull factor for emigration from Bulgaria
<b>Driver 6</b>	Cultural drivers – ethnic/religious specifics, lack of social cohesion – push factors for emigration	National restrictive policies and higher border control can limit the inflow of immigrants into Bulgaria – affects immigration	Cultural reasons (mentality) – emigration driver for Bulgarians
<b>Driver 7</b>	International factors – economic and political conditions in other countries define immigration waves into Bulgaria	International political situation (e.g. crisis in the Middle East) – as a push factor for immigration into the EU through Bulgaria	Issue oriented short-term sporadic migration – as a driver for emigration

The factors in the table above are ordered according to the importance attached to them by the participants in the discussions. As the table above demonstrates, the participants in the three workshops had fairly similar opinions on the main influential drivers both for immigration and for emigration. Economic factors (such as growth, unemployment rates, poverty, inflation, and level of

salaries) were identified as the main most important driver, i.e. push factor, for emigration from Bulgaria. Respectively, the better economic conditions in old EU member states or other Western countries like the US and Canada were identified as pull factors.

The labour market was another shared driver across all groups, albeit in different aspects and in different details. The needs of the destination country's labour market, i.e. the niches for migrant labour, were identified as an important pull factor. In addition, the experts emphasized the characteristics of the domestic labour market and its relation to the educational system, as a push factor for emigration. The implications of the changing domestic labour market accommodating more transnational companies offering new types of jobs (i.e. outsourcing companies) were also shared by two of the groups (experts and migrants).

Education is the third general driver that came up in all workshops but the focus varied in each group – no link between higher education and the labour market as a push factor for the experts; the condition of the secondary education system as a push factor, and the structure of exchange programs in higher education as both push and pull factor for the migrants' group.

Regulations and policies were also a commonly discussed general driver but addressed through a different lens in the three groups. In general, the experts' opinion was that restrictive policies do not influence migration flows, but encouraging or facilitating policies do work as pull factors. For the migrants, open welfare systems were identified as a pull factor. While the policy makers argued restrictive regulations limit the inflow of immigrants (in Bulgaria).

Additional drivers mentioned in some of the groups, but not all, are cultural factors, international factors, and situational factors (both political and personal). Below all drivers and factors are presented separately for each group and are divided into sections of immigration and emigration, as they were discussed during the workshops

### **3.1.1. Experts**

The experts started with identifying very diverse drivers, depending on their area of expertise, gradually moving to a dialogue and a more general discussion of various drivers across disciplines. They addressed both emigration and immigration drivers at different points in the discussion. As mentioned above, there was a strong tendency of including return migration as immigration and discussing reasons and drivers that make Bulgarian citizens return permanently. Participants only grouped drivers by emigration/immigration axis. They did not group them in thematic clusters during the individual workshops. Drivers were grouped in four general themes during the plenary session by the participants. The general drivers presented for each individual group have been divided into categories by the moderator after the exercise solely for the purposes of the report, and were not presented to the participants. The analysis allowed dividing all the enumerated drivers in several thematic fields and across several axes: push and pull, domestic and international; individual and group or structural; negative and positive drivers. The general drivers contain sub-drivers which form oppositional pairs:

*Emigration drivers:*

A: Economic drivers

The economic drivers were the most prevalent and discussed at length both as push and as pull factors. Push factors in Bulgaria are considered to be the negative structural conditions, while better opportunities, better pay and more options for finding a job abroad were enumerated as positive pull factors. By abroad here, as in the other groups, participants referred to Western European countries, and occasionally to the US. The importance of the economic conditions which includes high levels of unemployment, poverty, and the structure of the labour market, has been highlighted by numerous studies on emigration from Bulgaria. In this sense the experts' emphasis on this aspect was not surprising.

- High level of poverty and unemployment results in Bulgarian citizens not being able to find a job in Bulgaria (or a job providing enough money to support a family), and hence migrating for work. Destinations discussed for this type of migration were mainly Western Europe and the US. Bad economic conditions are a negative driver, a push factor and part of the structural conditions.
- General economic conditions: e.g. the economic crisis in Bulgaria in the early 1990s, and the one in 1997-1998 led to more intensified waves of outmigration.
- The specifics of the labour market: low-paid jobs in Bulgaria in almost all sectors push both specialists and workers with lower qualification to leave the country. There is a brain-drain of specialists like doctors (especially from small towns and villages)
- The specifics of the labour market: rigidity of the employers. The Bulgarian labour market is regarded as very 'rigid'. Employers are not flexible in hiring people beyond their immediate education or sphere of expertise. The requirements for low-income positions are very high (e.g. an office assistant add asks for minimum two foreign languages and a higher education diploma)
- The needs of the 'Western' labour market: better paid positions in all spheres attract migrant labour. The labour market in the destination countries is open and flexible with niches for both low- and high-skilled labour which is cheaper than the domestic labour in both cases. Western Europe and the US allow for more flexible adjustments between education and qualification and the job position. Experience and the ability to learn are valued more. This works as a pull factor for dissatisfied workers from Bulgaria.

#### B: Education and professional experience drivers

While the moderator attempted to keep the focus on labour migration, the discussion kept going in the direction of study migration and education. This theme was recurring in the other workshops as well and has been assessed as tightly related to the subsequent passing into labour migration state.

- Educational system in Bulgaria: higher education does not correspond to the needs of the labour market and it is not flexible enough. There is no connection between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. There is neither enough emphasis on connections with future employers nor enough numbers of internships. All this works as a driver for education related mobility which often leads to subsequent labour migration.

- The prestige of having a diploma from a higher education in the 'West' as a type of stereotype and perceived higher quality is a driving force behind some of the educational mobility.
- Educational mobility is not unidirectional. Sometimes it might be circular; sometimes it is short term and does not lead to future settlement in the destination country. In other cases, students migrate for shorter periods to various countries, before they settle back. Educational mobility as a dynamic field of multiple directions of mobility should be further explored as a positive factor. Mobility can be thought of as a positive factor in this field of gaining new and different experience.

### C: Regulations and policies

Regulations and policies were not a major part of the discussion, phrased as a general driver. When the moderator asked directly what is the role of EU migration regulations (e.g. lifting of restrictions for access to the labour market, freedom of mobility, open welfare systems), several participants expressed a strong opinion that regulations play little role in migration flows. Labour migrants move despite more restrictive regulations. At the same time, if the labour market does not have an open niche for migrant workers of particular profession, no enabling policies will affect the migration flow. However, regulations and policies were discussed as important drivers through concrete examples by several of the participants, taken up by the rest, even if at first the more general label was dismissed as insignificant. Even the expert who was most critical of the role of regulations and policies mentioned concrete drivers related to regulations which affect both emigration and return migration.

- The EU Blue card system: encourages high-skilled migrants to transfer their knowledge and qualification in a better paid country. It works as a pull factor by creating favourable conditions for mobility. The result is brain-drain for Bulgaria.
- Open welfare systems of rich states (Western European states implied) which easily incorporate migrants within the healthcare and the social benefits system are considered as an attracting driver as well.

### D: Cultural drivers

The role of various cultural and moral characteristics came up several times from different participants. The characteristics of ethnic and religious minorities with a higher tendency for migration or the lack of general social cohesion in society in the last 20 years of 'transition' were highlighted as drivers for migration per se. While these drivers neither relate directly to the labour market, nor provide a straightforward causal relation as drivers for migration, they are soft factors considered as significant both based on experts' own expertise (e.g. research on religious and ethnic minorities) and on commonly shared tropes in the public discourse (e.g. the 'national character') . This issue recurred in the migrants' workshop as well as an important factor.

- Specifics of ethnic and religious groups trigger different migration patterns and intensity: e.g. rural mountain population which has a history of seasonal migration (*gourbet*) is more prone to revive the tradition of labour migration.
- The lack of tolerance in Bulgaria and the perceived and experienced discrimination against certain minorities like the Roma, the Bulgarian Turks and the Bulgarian Muslims makes whole groups more prone to emigration as a strategy for circumventing discrimination and a path towards incorporation into a society.
- Curiosity and desire for self-fulfilment as a typical trait for the Bulgarian national character trigger an intensive dynamic of mobility.
- Lack of social cohesion, dysfunctional community life: 'how we function as a community' was raised as a major problem which drives many Bulgarians into migration. Lack of solidarity and cohesive communal life are drivers for migration. The individualized society limits people of being connected both morally and strategically to family, kin, friendship or colleagues circle and the wider society. This makes the decision to migrate much easier.

#### E: Other drivers

- Marriage to a foreigner: This is an example of the personal reasons that a participant gave to demonstrate that not every migration is structurally defined or collectively triggered. Marriage is a clearly individual driver which does not affect and it is not affected by the larger society.
- The future of the children/The family as a unit: A point that came from one participant working on children of migrant parents, and which resonated later on in the other workshops is related to the family as a unit of analysis. People often migrate not to improve their own lives but to create a safer and better future for their children. The family is the unit which is a micro-driver for migration. Some people migrate to make some money for a special event like a wedding or school graduation. Others migrate together with their whole families to give their children the opportunity for better education and more chances for integration abroad. While the other drivers like economic downturn, low quality of education and the structure of the labour market are inherent here, the emphasis is on the future wellbeing of the next generation. This would explain higher tolerance to not well paid jobs, exploitation, discrimination against migrants etc.
- Migration and mobility of labour are different issues: While emigration of skilled and unskilled workers is undoubtedly very intense, there is another type of 'mobility of labour' which was dubbed as 'mobility without migration' by one of the participants, referring to workers who remain on the territory of Bulgaria but work for foreign companies, in some cases avoiding tax, and transferring their skills outside the borders of the country. Examples are outsourcing companies like call-centres, and more importantly – doctors who work as consultants for overseas companies and hospitals, while residing in Bulgaria. This is a type of brain-drain that does not involve physical migration. The driver for this new type of mobility of labour is a general transnationalization of capital and labour, digitalization of work, rise of technology etc.

Among the effects of emigration discussed by participants the most often recurring ones were related to demography and to brain drain of specialists. The experts in statistics pointed out that the intensive female migration in active age (20-39) might cause a decrease in birth-rates which will have long-term effects on the demographic structure of the population. The concern with brain drain was

discussed in view of doctors and engineers. The representatives of the Montana municipality pointed out that the effects of specialists outmigration is already experienced in the region. If this tendency continues at a steady pace the effects on Bulgaria as a whole will be dire. Such gaps, however, might turn into a driver for immigration of specialists.

### *Immigration drivers*

As already mentioned above, return migration was discussed as immigration. Thus, the drivers triggering return migration were identified as fitting under the immigration column. Return migration remained the main topic discussed throughout the workshop. Refugees and asylum seekers were mentioned to the extent that the current at this time asylum seekers influx from Syria was still a popular topic for media and public discourses. However, all participants discarded immigration, both of asylum seekers and of labour migrants, as a viable steady tendency.

#### A: International political factors

- External political factors (like the Middle East crisis, the war in Syria, Somalia etc): International political development lead to waves of asylum seekers crossing the border. However, Bulgaria was and will remain a transit country; all experts were unanimous, until its economy does not improve. Since Bulgaria cannot offer well-paid jobs, the prospective refugees move on towards other EU countries (even if this means working irregularly there). In addition, integration policies for refugees and asylum procedures are very rigid and unhelpful at present which further discourages people to even apply for asylum (instead trying to pass through the country without being caught). In this sense, the external factors are 'cancelled' by the internal ones, as one of the experts formulated it.

#### B: Policies and regulations

- Policies on immigration are events-based, rather than coherent. An unexpected event, like the influx of Syrian refugees triggers reaction from the government, which might as a result change certain policies for integration and status recognition. Improved policies (in the sense of better opportunities for integration and faster, easier and more transparent status procedures) might then in turn attract more asylum seekers and refugees to remain in the country, thus creating an immigration stock instead of transit migrants. This was all discussed in the sphere of potential effects in the future.
- There is an entanglement between security and migration management (especially in the sphere of refugees and asylum). The military dictates management of asylum seekers' waves. The national military takes on a transnational role ('we'll go to Turkey and tell them how to control the flows, and we'll explain these asylum seekers that Bulgaria is not Europe,' the expert quoted the position of the Bulgarian Defence ministry)

#### C: Economic conditions

- The economic situation in Bulgaria is the major driver for the type and stock of immigrants that come into Bulgaria. Before the economic crisis of 2008 Bulgaria needed foreign labour and was

attracting migrant workers through bilateral agreements – with Vietnam or Ukraine. After 2008 these agreements have been stopped and the number of working visas has decreased significantly.

- The rigidity of the labour market (as discussed above) in the case of return migration. High-skilled return migrants are often regarded as overqualified, and at the same time as un-qualified for the positions on offer which are tightly linked with the Bulgarian educational profiles. The rigid definitions of qualifications of Bulgarian employers are a hindrance to return migrants to re-incorporate in the labour market.

#### D: Other factors

- Defensive and xenophobic attitudes both on policy level and at the level of public discourses and actions, media works as a negative factor, discouraging migrants and refugees to stay in Bulgaria.

Overall, the theme of immigration was discussed through the lens of explaining the low numbers of immigrants, asylum seekers and the problems that return migrants face. The issue of return migration was discussed at length in much more details than the question of foreign workers and refugees coming into Bulgaria. This demonstrated that the pre-occupation of the experts is in line with the main concerns at policy level of the Bulgarian state, as expressed in the National Migration strategies of the last years<sup>18</sup>.

The effects of immigration were only discussed in view of the consequences that an influx of refugees and asylum seekers might have on the welfare system. Some of the participants expressed the fear that a larger and steady wave into the country might overburden the healthcare system and the basic social benefits.

Due to the lack of time the group did not cluster the drivers into thematic field, neither did they prioritize them in terms of importance and probability. However, at the common workshop, the representative clustered them along the lines above.

#### 3.1.2. Public officials

The group of the public officials was smaller than the expert group, and an informal discussion started very soon after the initial presentation. According to some participants in this group, regulations and policies played a more important role. Their positions as public officials made them more prone to analysing the effects of the institutional and policy framework. In terms of immigration, unlike in the experts' group, return migration of Bulgarians was hardly discussed. Based on the profile of the participants, the emphasis was placed on refugee and asylum management and the effects of the Syrian refugee's wave. Important aspect of the discussion was the relation between security and immigration control. Immigrants were regarded as a threat and as a target to be controlled.

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<sup>18</sup> *National Strategy for Migration, Asylum and Integration 2011-2020 and National Strategy for Migration and Integration, 2008-2015*, Bulgarian Ministry of Interior

*Emigration drivers:*

## A: Economic conditions

- Unemployment: Results in two stages of outmigration. First stage, internal migration from villages and small towns to bigger towns. Second stage, so called 'welfare tourism' (as one of the participants called it) towards Western European countries, which was identified as a negative tendency, and participants expressed disapproval. Both stages were mostly discussed by the representative from the local administration in Montana, describing the situation in the region with an emphasis on the poor rural regions, and the predominantly Roma-population which relies on low-skilled labour migration as a survival strategy. This was additionally framed by the ongoing intense media attention (by Western media and reproduced in the Bulgarian media) towards poor Bulgarian migrants 'storming' the welfare systems in countries like the UK and the Netherlands. The Western media was particularly active at the time of the foresight exercise, just before 2014 when all existing restrictions for Bulgarians for access to the labour market across EU were lifted. The combination of the dominant anti-Roma public and media discourse, and the EU attention towards what was dubbed as 'poverty migration' offered a favouring context for using formulations such as 'welfare tourism' and for highlighting the aspect of welfare frauds as a driver for migration.
- The needs of the destination countries' labour markets: The needs were identified in two levels – high skilled and low skilled (and cheap) workers. Germany, Belgium, Denmark need *highly-qualified* specialists like doctors, IT specialists. Germany and France need *cheap low-skilled labour force* which is still much better paid than in Bulgaria. Hence, the needs of the labour market of Western European countries are a pull factor for both high-skilled and low-skilled migrants.
- Regional and local strategies for regional development. Policies and well implemented national strategies for regional development can be a driver for limiting outmigration. The representative of Montana developed a strong argument about the vicious circle of lack of local specialists in the region which leads to lack of foreign investments of larger companies moving to the regions. This lack in turn drives any potential local specialists in migration. The outcome for the regions is poverty and unemployment which leads to outmigration of both high-skilled and low-skilled.
- Regional differences define the level of outmigration. There are differences between regions in terms of economic development, and differences within each region between towns and rural areas. The rural areas are most strongly affected by the bad economic conditions, hence the outmigration is the strongest. Any attempt to change this tendency should start from regional, local development attempts (this point was highlighted by the local representative from Montana, and taken further by the other experts).

## B: Education

Education was discussed at length. The topic was initiated by the representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs but was taken up by everyone. The local representative of Montana municipality was particularly active in focusing the discussion on secondary education by giving concrete examples from his region.

- Secondary education in Bulgaria as a push factor: Lack of good high-school specialized education in Bulgaria, especially outside the bigger cities, is a push factor for internal migration and subsequently for outmigration. During the discussion there was a big emphasis on this factor. The general situation with secondary education across the country was discussed as critical for the production of specialists who would make the different regions viable for development.
- Higher education abroad was mentioned as a pull factor, but only marginally.

#### C: Regulations and policy framework

In general, the discussion on regulations was ambivalent. On the one hand, the representatives of the ministries and institutions were more familiar with the policy framework. On the other hand, their opinion on the role of regulations and policies was conflicting. For example, while one of the Ministry of Interior representatives argued that regulations are no drivers or restricting force for migration, another participant from the same Ministry insisted regulations and restrictive policies play an important role in migration flows.

- Schengen regulations and EU regulations have no substantial influence on intra-EU migration. The needs of the destination countries' labour markets are all that matters. If there are niches for migrant labour from Bulgaria, emigration will continue irrelevant of restrictions to the labour market (argued by one of the representatives of the Ministry of Interior).
- Regulations of the destination country can limit the inflow of immigrants. The more restrictive the measures, the less immigrants. This is relevant both for emigration from Bulgaria and for immigration into Bulgaria (argued by a different representative of the Ministry of Interior, and supported by the representative of the State Agency for Refugees).
- Political interests of the different parties of the destination country affect migration policies which might become more restrictive or open, depending on which party is in power. Xenophobic, right wing parties in Western European countries can influence policy towards migrants from Bulgaria and Romania.

#### *Immigration drivers*

##### A: International factors

The presence of two representatives of the Ministry of Interior and one representative of the State Agency for Refugees led the discussion often in a direction of analysing the international situation. The drivers that we have clustered in this category are much more detailed and concrete than any international political factors mentioned in the other groups (with the exception of one example in the experts' group).

- The situation in the Middle East as a driver for influx of asylum seekers and immigrants: The ongoing political instability, and especially the civil war in Syria, has already triggered an influx. If this continues, or it is repeated in another country, Bulgaria can expect more waves of asylum seekers.
- Inter-state relations with neighbouring countries: for example, the readmission agreements of asylum seekers and immigrants with Turkey will result in decrease of immigration numbers

- Afghanistan (withdrawing NATO forces) – indirect factors which might lead to an internal conflict that will cause waves of asylum seekers

#### B: Economic conditions

- Economic situation in other countries (countries of origins) as a push factor for economic migration towards Bulgaria.

#### C: Regulations and policy framework

The role of regulations and the policy framework were much more clearly discussed as important for immigration, mostly through the lens of security and limiting inward migration. Encouraging measures which might be taken for filling the gaps in the labour market (e.g. doctors or engineers mentioned in the context of brain drain) were not found relevant at this stage of the discussion.

- Policy framework and regulations (changes in the procedure for asylum seekers or regulations for labour migrants – e.g. slow procedure prevents some people from applying)
- Bulgaria as an external EU border has become the first country of entry for asylum seekers which according to the Dublin II (now III) agreement means they should in principle remain within Bulgaria, if granted a refugee status. Such regulations might start changing the position of Bulgaria from a transit country to a country of immigration.
- Regulations at national level affect the inflow – reinforced border control results in lower numbers of illegal immigration, and thus in the overall numbers.
- Mechanical security measures decrease immigration: for example, planning to build a wall along the border with Turkey, and currently guarding it with men force of border police as well as better video surveillance, has decreased the numbers of people crossing the border illegally. (example given by the representative of Border Police)

#### *Emigration and Immigration effects for Bulgaria*

As a whole, the group regarded both emigration and immigration as negative processes at this stage. Immigration of high-skilled workers was dubbed as serious brain-drain and the measures discussed aimed at trying to keep specialists within the country, and more particularly evenly spread within regions. Low-skilled migration is also a negative process resulting from bad economic conditions and inappropriate chances of education. Thus, the consensual point was that if economic conditions improve so that the labour market offers enough and well-paid jobs, and regions are equally well developed, emigration will slow down.

Immigration was also considered a negative process which has to be controlled and limited. Effects of immigration at this stage were discussed along similar lines. Small towns and villages have developed a strong negative attitude of non-acceptance (of refugees) because of the few cases of opening reception and detention centres in old military bases around the country. Higher criminal records in certain parts of the country around refugee camps were noted as a dangerous outcome. Intensified numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Sofia have led to changes in the city structure with some neighbourhood becoming predominantly immigrant (e.g. Lions' Bridge area) which is considered as dangerous and negative trend by the representative of the Ministry of Interior. Among the reasons for the strong negative public reaction were the financial crisis which is

affecting the labour market in Bulgaria, and immigrants are considered as a threat for local workers. In addition, the media proliferate only negative images which contribute to the moral panic in the wider society as well.

### 3.1.3. Migrants

The overall discussion with the migrants went along the lines of personal experiences, the experience of friends and acquaintances, colleagues etc. and general points, picked up from media report. Many of the points mentioned in the previous two workshops were covered here as well. While some of the issues remained very general, other points on which a participant had a personal experience were described in details. As it will be seen below, a lot of attention was paid to cultural and symbolic drivers. This was an aspect that differentiates this group from the other two most clearly.

#### *Emigration drivers*

##### A: Education and qualification

- Professional experience and exchange short-term mobility (within the EU): This is not labour mobility as such but rather internship based or professional exchange based mobility. Gaining experience in a different environment is a strong driver for this type of short-term migration.
- Education (higher) – depending on the type and sphere - attracts with its better quality and secures better status, because a foreign diploma has a higher symbolic value

##### B: The labour market of the destination countries

- Need of high-skilled specialists in other EU countries triggers emigration: Such intra-EU labour mobility of high-skilled of high-ranked specialists (banks, EU institutions) is defined by the labour market needs

##### C: Low-skilled and welfare dependent migrants

- Lower-skilled migration is meaningless due to low payment, high rents and utilities. Migrants often spend all their earnings for covering their expenses.
- Welfare migration – if one is to be unemployed, then better to be unemployed in France (where you can survive on welfare) than in Bulgaria (where you cannot live without a job).

##### D: Regulations and the role of EU

- EU facilitates labour mobility and 'welfare mobility': Freedom of movement, free access to other EU countries' labour market and access to the welfare system results in intensified migration flows of all types of migrants. The discussion on this issue remained at a very general level but it was also based on personal experience of the facilitated procedures for working and living in another EU country.

##### E: Cultural drivers

- Psychological factors/Mentality: One of the participants (young male who has lived for two years abroad making an internship) insisted throughout the discussion that the main reason for Bulgarians to migrate is their 'mentality' to be constantly unhappy and not- confident with what they have. The question of mentality resonated with some of the other participants who continued this discussion. Idealizing the 'other life' is the main reason for Bulgarians to migrate today. This was described as a 'mentality' inherited from the period of state socialism before 1989 when everything related to the West was conceptualized as ideal, as heaven, and at the same time as forbidden and inaccessible. Migration to the West now is an outcome of this idealization.
- Migration for the sake of the children. Future oriented for the next generation in order to give them better opportunities. While this reverberates the argument in the expert group, the main emphasis here is on the idea of 'prestige', the idealization of Western educational systems and diplomas, and an inferiority complex. One of the participants, a migrant from Russia whose daughter is studying in the UK right now, insisted that studying abroad will allow her daughter to have better chances at finding a job (whether in the country of origin, or in the country of destination). This was further conceptualized as a driver for many families to migrate together to secure the education of the children. On the other hand, another two participants (one of them a return migrant who studied in France, the other one a return migrant after extended professional qualification in Luxemburg) took the opposite position that this is a myth. A diploma from a foreign university means nothing. The reason is that people believe in the magical powers of the West. Thus, migrating for the sake of children's education and insisting on children receiving education abroad and trying to establish themselves abroad remained a bone of contention in this group. The dispute highlighted an interesting tension, on the one hand between two generations, and on the other hand between the return migrants who took a conscious decision to return and the mothers (two of them) whose children are yet to establish themselves as labour migrants after university graduation. These mothers were still able to justify their choice for sending their children abroad with the hope for a bright future.

#### D: Other

- Issue-oriented short-term migration for earning money for a particular need (repaying a loan, organizing a wedding, a student in the last year of high school). One of the women has lived in Israel for 8 months, working irregularly as a cleaning lady, without plans to settle or stay there longer. She needed a certain amount of money and came back after she had earned it. This example goes back to the point from the experts' workshop – migration is not unidirectional, and not necessarily long term one. There are a lot of different types of mechanisms.

#### *Immigration drivers*

##### A: Economic conditions

- Economic conditions in Western Europe: The financial crisis in Western Europe since 2008 is considered as a major driver for return migration.

- Economic conditions in certain regions of the world drive immigrants into the EU who might pass through Bulgaria but will not stay here. Bulgaria is firmly thought of as a transit country since it cannot offer good conditions of work and pay. Therefore, while the international economic conditions in poorer countries might push out some migrants, Bulgaria lacks the necessary pull factors to attract migrants on its territory.

#### B: The domestic labour market

- Return migration: The labour market started offering certain types of employment which attracts emigrant back to Bulgaria. For example, call centres attract back to Bulgaria people with language competency irrelevant of their professional experience
- Needs of the local labour market – low-skilled workers and very high-skilled persons (engineers and doctors) can be provided by the refugees flowing in, which might further attract other third country-nationals as a niche in the labour market

#### C: Cultural reasons

- Return migration is defined by cultural and religious comfort. Return migrants move back to Bulgaria because of the familiar context
- Calm life, not too many immigrants: Smaller towns and the profile of Bulgaria as a non-immigration country can be considered as pull factors, as the Russian immigrant in the group pointed out. This was given both as a driver for return migration and for immigration.
- Quality of life and social status beyond money (culture, friends) keeps people to stay, or causes return migration.

#### D: Other

- Family reasons (marriage)
- Retirement return migration (earning a pension abroad and spending it in Bulgaria, where people have support networks and the costs of living are lower)
- The demographic crisis in Bulgaria might be a factor for attracting immigrants, i.e. there will be not enough workers in active age.
- Refugees and asylum seekers as a natural disaster: The issue with the Syrian refugees is discussed as a natural disaster that comes unexpected and that has to be dealt with ad hoc. (this is the closest example of wild cards)

### 3.2. Matrix of key drivers

At the plenary workshop, participants first presented the main drivers and factors that were identified in the previous sessions, and the moderator listed everything mentioned at this point on the flipchart. Below is the list of all the drivers identified at the plenary session by the different groups, in the order mentioned by the three groups, before they prioritized them.

- *List of drivers identified by everyone:*

- Political situation (global and EU)
- Labour market in the destination country
- Policies of security and integration (of refugees) of Bulgaria
- Xenophobia and media
- Regional development (economic)
- The future of the children
- Mentalities and attitudes
- Quality of life
- Welfare system in Bulgaria and in the EU
- Professional experience and exchange
- Education (secondary and higher)
- Economic conditions in Bulgaria – poverty, unemployment, lack of investments
- Labour conditions for the high-skilled labour in Bulgaria
- Labour market – the types of employers and their expectations. Rigidity of the labour market
- Tolerance of the destination country
- Culture and social life
- Community life and social cohesion

Then, the participants were asked to choose four main drivers to be used in the positive and in the negative scenario. The four drivers that the groups discussed were prioritized and put into categories. The categories were defined as more appropriate than single more specific factors. Thus, each category is more general and contains sub-drivers in it, as enlisted in the matrix. The method of deciding was through general discussion, rather than voting. The main drivers identified as most important and the subsequent scenarios are summarized in the matrix below:

### **3.3. Development of scenarios (macro-level analysis)**

While the drivers identified as important were on display on the flipchart, during the development of scenarios in both groups, Bulgaria and its internal structural conditions took the central place. Interestingly enough, in both groups, the scenarios focused mainly on the economic factors (decline or growth, regional development or lack of it, proper match between education and labour market, good education). International factors like the needs of the destination country labour markets, or the political situation in other countries were avoided as a whole. Policy regulations also were omitted from the discussions. Cultural life and practices, social cohesion etc. remained in the background and were not considered important enough to be involved. Finally, in both cases, the ethnic distribution of the population was seen as an important aspect of the scenarios. In the process of discussion of the negative scenario, for example, prevalence of immigrants and Roma was initially of a very high share and was regarded as undoubtedly negative outcome. This had references to

earlier mentioned demographic effect of outmigration which would lead to birth rates declining (but only among the non-Roma population, according to some of the participants), and this decline will be then counter balanced by high fertility rates among Roma and immigrants. Upon insistence of other participants, this tendency was softened in the final version of the scenario, and was not discussed in details with the other group.

In the common presentations of the final versions of the scenarios, both groups provided a scenario which only focused on the situation in Bulgaria, both as a push and as a pull factor. Thus, the improvement of economic conditions meant higher level of immigration into the country and lower levels of outmigration, and vice versa, worsening economic conditions would result in very high emigration and almost no immigration (instead Bulgaria would become a transit country). The pull factors of the economic situation in the EU, for example, were not exemplified as significant in the development of scenarios, even if they were mentioned as important in the general discussion. Thus, in both groups, the emphasis was put only on the internal situation as defining, rather than on a discussion of global or EU level factors. This was an interesting and surprising outcome, given the fact that in the earlier discussions participants did include external factors like the importance of the labour markets of the destination countries, or the world political situation (including concrete examples with the Middle East or Turkey, for example). However, in the discussion of the scenarios, these external factors did not have any weight. The focus on internal factors only also shows that Bulgaria is seen as an independently existing unit which has its own development, irrespectively of the situation around it.

Another important point, stemming from what was said above, is that for both groups emigration was perceived as a negative issue, while immigration was considered as a sign for the good situation in the country. If conditions are favourable, Bulgarians would not emigrate, and at the same time there will be additional need of immigrant labour force. Refugees and asylum seekers disappeared from both scenarios as an important issue. At the same time, if conditions in the country deteriorate, this will push people out of the country which will worsen the situation even more. Immigration will be close to zero, with the country being used only as a transit route because there will be no work or good conditions to welcome migrants.

A final note on the two time periods: While participants did attempt to divide the scenarios (and subsequently the heroes' stories) into two-step time frame, the final presentations employed a more gradual and unidirectional change. In the positive scenario, the two periods were not taken into consideration, since participants insisted it is crucial to focus on the long-term processes. In the negative scenario, the deterioration of the economic conditions and the migration processes linked to this, as well as the life of the heroes, were following a steady line of decline.

### **3.3.1. Scenario 1: Positive Scenario**

In the positive scenario, the group decided that the time frame will be merged into one period and that the differences between 2020 and 2025 will be minimal. The economic situation will improve substantively by 2025. The minimum salary for the country will be 400 euro (at present it is 150 euro). Income of people will be generally higher. Unemployment will be less than 5 per cent. There

will be almost no informal economy. Regional development will be balanced, and even with no desolated regions.

Education will be free (or accessible). This was a bone of contention during the discussion, hence the participants left it open. More important, education will be at high level – it will provide well prepared specialists already at the level of secondary (high school). There will be a balance between theory and practice at the level of higher education. The labour market will become more flexible and the education more adjustable to the needs of the labour market, creating a ‘perfect match’.

There will be better strategies for demographic development, especially for increasing the birth rate. Healthcare will be free and better developed.

There will be an ethnic balance between the different ethnic groups in society. What ‘ethnic balance’ means, however, was another point of disagreement in the group, so they chose not to present to the rest of the participants the ideal ratio. The only reference made was of keeping the ratio between ethnic Bulgarians and other ethnic groups at the territory of the country as it is for the moment. The underlying assumption here was the fear that the ratio of the Roma and immigrant population in relation to the ethnic Bulgarians will be ‘unbalanced’, meaning exceeding the present distribution. This rests on wide spread and reinforced by the media myths that the Roma and the newly arrived refugees from Syria will soon outnumber even ‘melt’ ‘real’ Bulgarians. The enumerated conditions will lead to a sharp decrease of emigration, close to zero. Labour migration, migration for the future of the children or education migration will disappear because there will be no push factors.

Bulgaria will become a country of immigration because of the improved economic conditions. Increase in immigration of workers in active age attracted by the well working economy will contribute to a well functioning welfare system with enough contributions. Low-skilled migrants will arrive from countries from Africa and will take jobs that the local citizens are not longer willing to take.

Another factor which will attract immigrants will be the change in regulations on buying property and land in Bulgaria by foreigner. Chinese businessmen and investors will start buying land and developing their business in Bulgaria. This in turn will open new jobs and attract low-skilled immigrants.

External factors like climate change will drive immigrants/refugees from African countries. Another external factor will be the politics of Turkey for stimulating emigration which will drive Turkish migrants into Bulgaria, as a neighbouring country. This might be a double edged sword because if the number of Turkish immigrants increases, other Bulgarians might chose to emigrate. This last point was rather contentious but was nevertheless presented as a special opinion.

### **3.3.2. Scenario 2: Negative scenario**

The negative scenario was developed as scenario for one region (rather than the whole country). This was the region of Montana, where the local administration representative, who was also in the

group, was from. The explanation for choosing this region was that it is already in a very bad economic and demographic situation, hence it will be the first one to suffer even more in an upcoming deepening crisis. The picture drawn in the negative scenario took into account the two stages time frame, pointing out steady deterioration in the second period for each driver and factor.

First, the economy will be stagnating. Large enterprises will be closed down. From ten in 2013, there will be 7 in 2020, and only 2 in 2025. The deindustrialization will lead to a decrease of jobs, hence unemployment will go up which in turn will lead to worse poverty for more people. The minimum wage will be 225 euro, and most people in the region will be living on the minimum wage. At the same time, there will be strong inflation – by 2020 70 per cent, by 2025 – 100 percent inflation, while salaries will not be rising accordingly.

There will be a demographic crisis. From 150,000 people population in the municipality at present, in 2020 only 80,000 will be left, and their number will go down to 30,000 in 2025. An additional demographic aspect will be the ageing of the population. Thus, by 2025 only 8,000 people will be in active working age.

Second, in terms of education, schools will be closing down due to the demographic crisis and lack of children. Out of 30 schools (until 8<sup>th</sup> grade) at present, there will be 10 in 2020, and 5 in 2025 for the whole region (1 high school, and 4 secondary schools until 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

Third, regional development is in crisis. National strategies are not being implemented. All EU funded operational programs come to an end which affects particularly badly the agricultural sector. Hence, both industry and agriculture are on the decline. There is no additional state support for the region.

Fourth, welfare and social policies are shrinking. By 2025, all additional social benefits are cut. Homes for the elderly people, for the mentally ill and for children without parental care are closed down due to lack of funding.

Corruption is rising. If in 2013 it was observed in every 5 out of 10 officials (or doctors, politicians etc), by 2020 the number is 7 out of 10, and by 2025 – 10 out of 10.

Fifth, there is sharp decline in the ritual life both at individual and communal level, which leads to 'moral decay'. Tolerance towards different ethnic and religious groups and towards foreigners is declining as well. If in 2013 70 per cent of the population was tolerant to difference, this number falls to 40 per cent in 2020, and to 10 per cent in 2025. Thus, nationalistic and extreme right parties are on the rise which has further implications on restrictive regulations and policies for immigrants and minorities.

The results in emigration rates from the region will be as follows: 100,000 people will have emigrated by 2025 of the current population of about 150,000 for the whole municipality. Of them 20,000 to Sofia, the capital, and 80,000 abroad, mostly to EU countries, of which Spain and Germany will be the main destination (the group did not take into account the current crisis in Spain but instead argued that Spain has become a traditional destination country for Bulgarians)<sup>19</sup>. It will be mostly young

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<sup>19</sup> The active population in the region in 2013 has been almost 58,000 people. The numbers presented for this scenario are based on the total population, rather than on active labour force at present or in the future. The goal was to come up with

people leaving the country and the region since they do not see any future for themselves or for their future children if staying.

In the meantime, immigration rates will be lower than ever because the internal economic conditions will not be offering any opportunities for immigrant labour. By 2025 Bulgaria will be predominantly a transit country. Immigrants will have no chance for finding a job or getting any state support if they stayed in the country.

The negative scenario focuses exclusively on internal factors. Part of this might be explained by the charismatic and dominating figure of the local administration representative from Montana who was drawing the discussion in this direction, framing the issues in a regional perspective. Partly, however, this was the tendency of all participants in this group.

### **3.4. Development of personal life histories within scenarios (“heroes”, micro-level analysis)**

Both groups presented families with several members. Thus, there were no individual heroes but family members connected and depending on each other. This was well in line with earlier discussions in the individual workshops on the importance of the family unit in migration processes. Children play a crucial role in the heroes’ life stories. In both scenarios, the families are patriarchal, based on marriage and with children. Both groups chose to work with families because this was the ‘most typical unit’ for the country, as one of the participants pointed out.

#### **3.4.1. Negative scenario**

The group has chosen to describe a family in the region of Montana (the local regional partner in the project which had representatives in the exercise). The man is a 37-year-old farmer with higher education in engineering; the wife is a 35-year-old teacher. They have one child who is 10. The family lives in a village in the region of Montana, and has about 500 euro income in total per month. By 2020, there shall be no more EU funds, agriculture shall be shrinking and shall not provide enough resources. The school in the village has been closed down. Hence, the woman is unemployed and has exhausted her unemployment benefits already. By 2022 the family sells their house and moves to Sofia where he tries to work as a day labourer, while she works in a shop. They earn about 450 euro per month but have to pay rent, so they hardly manage to get by with the money they make. By 2025 they have given up trying to make a living in Bulgaria, and emigrate to Spain (or Germany), depending on the situation in these countries, the local labour market and the restrictions on work there. The son discontinues his studies, without finishing secondary school and goes back to Sofia without his parents. They are involved in low-skilled work in migration but are better off than in Bulgaria.

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extreme numbers for drawing a very pessimistic picture of the future. Thus, the numbers are relative aiming to produce an effect.

### 3.4.2. Positive scenario

The hero in the positive scenario is a man with only secondary education and a family of 3 children. His secondary education provided him with enough technical skills and managerial profile to be able to start his own business for furniture production. The firm has 10-12 workers, including immigrant from the Middle East. They all work regularly with contracts and social benefits. He pays an extra salary at the end of the year. He speaks English and German. He exports furniture for Germany where he goes once a month. His income is 5000 euro a month. In 2020 he participates in a World design fair. He pays all his taxes and social security. His children go to a state kindergarten. His family has a maid who helps with the household. The wife works part time in the local branch of the Social services to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Their migration is for tourism and business but without plans for settling or trying to work anywhere. Moreover, they have no plans to send the children for education abroad since the quality and type of education they can have in Bulgaria is good enough.

## 4. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The discussions of drivers and the development of scenarios simultaneously confirmed existing assumptions and raised fresh and surprising aspects. Several aspects of the discussions and the results from the workshops will be elaborated on and placed into context in this section, along with overall policy implications based on the results.

There was a clear discrepancy between the variety of drivers identified as important and highly influential during the individual workshops and the drivers used to develop future scenarios and individual heroes' stories. While during the workshops participants identified a variety of drivers and identified interrelations between internal and international/external factors, the only drivers in the scenarios that were regarded as significant were internal ones, with the nation-state as an independently existing unit, rather than a part of larger processes. Thus according to the scenario, good economic development, education and political stability will lead to less emigration and higher immigration. Weak economic development, combined with corruption, no foreign investments and underperforming educational system will respectively lead to out-migration and to no immigration. For example, the EU was not recognized as an influential factor for regulating frameworks which might produce certain drivers. This shows a tendency of conceptualizing Bulgaria as a separate unit and thinking of solutions limited to the level of the nation-state.

Economic factors have been considered as the main most important driver in both groups during the drafting of future scenarios. The emphasis was placed inward, on the economic development of the country, which in itself was considered by both groups as independent from global processes. Bulgaria remains in an in-between position between the prosperity of the West and the poorer countries outside the EU. Thus, deteriorating economic conditions in Bulgaria will not necessarily mean similar processes taking place across EU and Western countries, which are traditional destination countries for labour migrants at present. This is one of the examples that demonstrate that Bulgaria's development is thought of as separate from the rest of the world, locked within the idea of the contained nation state. The state is conceptualized as a capsulated whole with internal processes which happen by themselves and regulate exclusively both inward and outward mobility. There is no thinking at the level of the EU or in more global terms. While these issues remained implicit during the foresight exercise, I suggest that such thinking patterns are crucial for the type of policies that policy makers would be drafting and implementing in the future.

Emigration is clearly regarded as a negative process, labelled as brain-drain or as a survival strategy for the low-skilled who have no other chance. While during the individual workshops there were voices emphasizing new forms of mobility, especially in terms of gaining educational and professional experience which is then brought back to Bulgaria, these voices were suppressed in the general discussions. Immigration, on the other hand, was discussed in both a negative and a positive light. There were no serious worries that the current number of immigrants and asylum seekers might be a threat to the welfare system, but the emphasis on security and control was dominating. At the same time, the future expectations in relation to immigration regarded it as a possibly positive phenomenon to meet the labour market needs and to improve the demographic picture of the country.

Conceptualizing emigration as a purely negative phenomenon in the context of increasing worldwide mobility and within the EU in particular might hamper the development and support of policies that aim to facilitate migrants' incorporation, re-integration into society or their short-term forms of migration. If migration, especially emigration, continues to be thought of only as brain drain, it will be difficult to adjust to the new, fast emerging, forms of labour mobility. This is critical in the case of the decision makers from public institutions who participate in formulating and implementing policies affecting migrants' lives.

New forms of labour mobility set forth another aspect which was touched upon during the individual workshops with the experts, and with the migrants. Such forms include outsourcing, as call centres or high-skilled specialists based in Bulgaria while their work is targets foreign markets. These new forms of being in the labour market open a wide field of questions about social security and benefits, relations between the state and transnational companies, regulations and implementation of the national labour code. However, such concerns were not raised by the group of the public officials. Thus, the new issues identified along these new forms of labour mobility, have to be brought with priority to the attention of policy makers and incorporated into national regulations.

The next point that emerged at the level of heroes' stories is that the smallest meaningful unit of analysis was the family, rather than the individual. While in the individual workshops discussions were often focused on individual decisions for migration, in the development of the heroes' stories it became evident that migration is thought of as a family strategy. This has further implications for formulating new, more inclusive, policies that affect family members who are not necessarily actively engaged in the labour market. This is important both at the level of national policies, and at the level of EU policies. While the foresight discussions did not specify anything concrete in this direction, conceptualizing the heroes as families points out the importance of this issue. Such outcome confirms existing EU-wide research which shows that migration often affects the family with all its members (sometimes the extended family which includes the generation of grandparents as well). However, policies are yet to adjust to such needs.

Beyond the emphasis on economic factors, the two main points independently identified both in the positive and in the negative scenario are related to regional development and to the system of education and its relations to the labour market. These two fields were discussed in great details and with a strong emphasis both during the individual workshops and in the scenario development, and demonstrated a strong preoccupation of the participants with different profiles. These two aspects provide a solid ground for analysing the policy implications that the foresight exercise helps us to understand.

In terms of regional development, the biggest fear in all groups was related to regional inequalities and economic and social decline in certain regions which in turn would lead to a perpetuation of depopulation, lack of good educational institutions and lack of industries coming into these regions. The partner – the municipality of Montana – which had representatives in two of the groups, is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in Bulgaria, with a high share of outmigration both from the rural areas and from the urban centres. This makes the region a crucial example of relations between migration and the labour market. The participants provided more details of the tendencies

and practices in the region, and thus focused the discussions into more concrete examples and suggestions. The negative scenario and the hero's story takes place in this region and provides a very bleak future by drawing deepening negative tendencies that are already in place. The more general implications following this concern are related to a development of policies which pay more attention to regional development, to attracting investments, to streamlining EU funds into local development. This is tightly related to a strategy of de-centralized policy that takes into account local specifics, while at the same time enough state funds are made available for the regions in dire need.

Education was identified as an important sphere of policy intervention. However, as a driver for migration it was discussed from different perspectives and afforded different assessments. According to the participants in the sessions, the present educational system and its link (or rather lack thereof) with the labour market serves as a push factor and creates conditions for emigration<sup>20</sup> The first reason is the rigidity of the labour market in Bulgaria and its requirements for specialists from a narrow educational field that are an exact match for the available positions, as pointed out in the experts' group. Moreover, the incapacity of the educational system to adjust to the needs of the labour market and to prepare the numbers of workers and specialists required in each sphere. Attention should be paid both to the level of secondary education, and to the level of higher education. Schools have to be equally spread throughout the country, both in towns and in rural areas. Secondary education should provide the necessary skills and qualification for further professional development. This was particularly emphasized by the representatives of the local administration in Montana. At the same time, higher education should strike a balance between theory and applied approaches. In addition, it has to be more dynamic and flexible, encouraging more intense mobility and exchange. Related to this is the negative evaluation of rigidity of the Bulgarian labour market and the requirement of the employers. Policy implications then involve not only the reorganization of education, but also the encouragement of employers for a more open approach.

Nonetheless, education abroad as a pull factor was a contentious issue assessed differently by the different participants (within the same group – with the migrants, and across groups). Some argued that the educational system in the destination countries (mostly Western Europe and the US) offers, in terms of flexibility, more practical knowledge and better connections with the needs of the labour market, which is a clear pull factor for emigration. Others contended that what is worth about Western education is the symbolic capital that comes with the diploma. Yet another opinion was that education abroad is highly diversified, but not necessarily better in all disciplines or universities. Thus, on the one hand there was the opposition between experiences (practice) versus diploma (symbolic capital) that turned education into a driver. On the other hand, there was the opposition

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<sup>20</sup> In December 2013 at a roundtable on the topic of education and the labour market, representative of the Bulgarian Industrial Chamber, the Chancellor's Council for Higher Education, and the Open Society Foundation in Bulgaria, emphasized the connection between fewer graduates in certain spheres and the expected gaps for specialists for entire industrial and other labour market branches. The lack of high-skilled workers as engineers, medical personnel, and teachers was also attributed to the free labour mobility within the EU and the unequal pay between older EU member states and Bulgaria. (see <http://www.schoolofpolitics.org/~schoolof/eng/index.php/news/296-bulgarias-long-term-strategies-education-and-labour-market>)

between those who valued foreign education and those who regarded it as a myth. In all cases, however, education was assessed as a strong migration driver.

Another important aspect in the discussions on education was the acknowledgement of new forms of educational mobility, which are not necessarily related to permanent migration patterns. Exchange programs like Erasmus or short-term internships open a new field of opportunities but also create difficulties with recognition of semesters abroad, experience, credits, length of service etc. First, there is a need to work on the harmonization of the systems of recognition. The experts' group hinted into this direction. In addition, these shorter forms of mobility also create new forms of connecting to the labour market of the destination countries. Students working part-time, interns or volunteers often have length-of-service and paid social contributions in another state which are difficult to transfer and often remain unrecognized. A coherent system is needed for incorporating such forms of work into a person's institutionalized work history.

While most of these aspects were not discussed in detail, the occurrence of the educational system, either as a push or as a pull factor, and the disagreements triggered by this topic, only demonstrate the need for looking closer into a number of questions. The recognition of diplomas of return migrants, the recognition of short term study visits (credits), the transferability of skills, are one important set of issues that the respective institutions – schools, universities and recognition agencies – should look closer into. Another question of concern for some of the participants is the incorporation of foreign educated students into the Bulgarian market beyond the scope of institutional recognition of a diploma. There is an evident need to change the assumptions of many employers (especially about high skilled migrants) in a way that they become more willing to hire persons educated abroad. This would include both Bulgarian citizens returning back and immigrants with foreign diplomas. The ever increasing educational mobility requires an urgent response to these problems.

The influence of media and of public discourses (including political parties' campaigning) was visible throughout the discussions and significantly affected the framing of several issues related to fear of diversity and to ethnic intolerance. One is the reaction to the crisis in Syria and the wave of asylum seekers. The other is related to the conceptualization of 'ethnic balance' in the scenarios. The third is adopting the term 'welfare tourism' when referring to Bulgarian migrants in the EU using social benefits in the destination country.

The first issue is the discussion of asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria. At the time of the foresight exercise, the 'refugee topic' was widely discussed by public officials (like the Minister of Interior, State Agency for Refugees director, political parties leaders, etc) and in the media. The increased wave of asylum seekers crossing the border between Turkey and Bulgaria was discussed extensively in the framework of threats to the national security, threats to the security of the external border of the EU and threats to the Bulgarian society. Participants in all three workshops took up such formulations in one way or another by developing concrete examples of the possible effects on Bulgaria that such a wave of asylum seekers and prospective refugees can have now and in the future. While until the summer of 2013 the refugee topic in Bulgaria was almost invisible and not discussed outside the domains of people working in this sphere, the crisis in Syria and the

subsequent refugee wave triggered a much wider public attention. The foresight exercise demonstrated how the conceptualization of migration drivers and migration effects on Bulgaria is framed through such events. Securitization, rather than human rights, was the main key of interpretation during the discussion (even though there were individual voices concerned with other aspects, too). Guarding the border of the state from 'invaders' and protecting the local population from dangerous foreigners was a preoccupation in the discussions. The policy implications of the way this issue was tackled are in the field of diversifying this type of negative discourse and introducing more information and awareness rising of the status and rights of beneficiaries of international protection, of cultural diversity and of general questions of tolerance. In the case of decision makers, it is crucial to influence a more open approach which moves beyond security and focuses on integration of refugees into Bulgarian society.

The other point that showed a relation between negative public discourses and the suggestions of the participants is the issue of 'ethnic balance' that came up in the development of the scenarios. Media discourses, reinforced by extreme right nationalistic parties, popularize anti-Roma and anti-immigrant sentiments which were subtly taken up by some of the participants in the foresight. 'Ethnic balance' is framed in this context of fear and intolerance. In the negative scenario, the particular fear was against the Roma, as the poorest and at the same time most reproductively active, who might 'soon outnumber ethnic Bulgarians'. Such fears are not based on actual numbers or research but are rather a 'moral panic' ignited by racist and in-tolerant parties and media platforms. The fact that these sentiments reverberate in diverse groups like the ones in the foresight exercise only proves that there is a need of counteracting such discourses with more policies and public campaigns encouraging tolerance and diversity as positive values.

The third similar issue, framed by public discourses and media, is the so called 'welfare tourism'. The concept was mentioned by one of the participants from Montana concerning Roma migration from the region to countries like Germany and the Netherlands. It referred to welfare abuse and to the general use of welfare benefits of poor Bulgarian migrants in these countries. The term was taken up by other participants in the discussion. The issue of having access to welfare benefits across the EU is a widely discussed topic in the destination countries' media which trickled into the Bulgarian media as well. Yet, there is a switch that happened in the workshop discussion (and in the wider society) which replaces the more generic discussion of poor Bulgarian or Romanian migrants, with an accusation against the more narrow group of Roma. Such replacement of one category with a narrower one allows for distancing from the accusations of the Western European states and blaming an internal, yet different, culprit in the face of the Roma. The issues of poverty and class are not present in such interpretations. Ethnicity takes over as a reason for the 'shameful' image of Bulgaria. Indeed, the workshop discussion did not go into more details, but it still demonstrates the danger of going deeper into the rhetoric of intolerance and ethnic discrimination. The fact that this issue was taken up by one of the policy makers proves a need of much deeper work in the sphere of de-coupling of ethnicity and crime, and of encouraging institutional work against poverty, rather than against ethnicity.

The policy implications enumerated below are based on the identified problems and the ideas that participants expressed during the individual workshops and the scenarios development. While there

was discussion of various drivers, participants had most clear ideas on problems and opportunities within Bulgaria. Based on this, the policy implications refer to the national and regional level. Table 3 below summarizes the main opportunities, threats and the policy implications for both scenarios:

Table 3: Opportunities, Threats, Policy Implications

	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>	<b>Policy implications</b>
<b>Scenario 1 Positive scenario</b>	Decrease of brain-drain	Less exchange of experience	Educational and professional mobility programs and reintegration programs for returning professionals
	Balancing the demographic crisis by limiting emigration and through immigration of labour migrants	Ethnic tension possible due to higher immigration  Racism	Need of policies and campaigns for tolerance, pro-diversity, and against racism  Awareness raising of migration benefits
	Regional development will limit internal migration		Policies for regional development
	Small business will flourish		Encouraging small business policy framework
	Informal economy will be limited		Well working welfare and trust in the state
	Secondary education will provide enough qualification for successful career	Decrease of higher education students and less emphasis on theoretical and abstract knowledge	Efficient secondary education system  Equally spread good schools across the country
<b>Scenario 2 Negative scenario</b>	EU mobility is free. Access to welfare and low-skilled jobs continues to provide a survival strategy	Unemployment leading to life in poverty or to emigration	Encouraging policies for regional development and investment.  Freedom of movement and access to welfare across the EU
		Education – people will continue their education with university degrees	Reform of the educational system by linking theoretical

		less often, because the knowledge or the diploma provided by the universities won't be sufficient to find work.	and applied approaches. More even distribution of schools outside the big cities is crucial.
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