Migration policy in Bulgaria

BACKGROUND

Migration is a major feature of today's globalised world. In broad terms, migration is the movement of people from one place of residence to another. While the term migration covers population movement internal to a country – rural to urban or from one locality to another in a different jurisdiction – the MIND project addresses international migration. International migration is a distinct legal, political and social category, as people move from a nation-state in which they are citizens, with the rights and protections citizenship normally confers, to other countries where rights and protections of nationality, of access to social protection and of common identity often do not apply, and where social and cultural paradigms may be significantly different.

While there is no international normative definition for migration, international conventions provide definitions for refugees and migrant workers and members of their families; the latter applicable to nearly all international migrants. The definition of a refugee in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees is: "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." All EU member States have ratified both the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) states that: "The term 'migrant worker' refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national." That convention recognises frontier workers, seasonal workers, seafarers, offshore workers, itinerant workers and other specific categories of migrant workers as covered under its provisions. The ICRMW iterates that all basic human rights cover family members present with and dependent on migrant workers. Data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows that nearly all international migrants, whatever their reasons for migration or admission, end up economically active – employed, self-employed or otherwise engaged in a remunerative activity.

Specific definition and statistical standards to obtain reliable and comparable data on international migrants have been agreed under UN auspices and are used by most governments. For statistical purposes, an international migrant is defined as "a person who has resided in a country other than that of birth or citizenship for one year or more, irrespective of the causes

or motivations for movement and of legal status in the country of residence." There are an estimated 260 million foreign-born people residing today in countries other than where they were born or held original citizenship. However, this figure does not include persons visiting a country for short periods such as tourists, nor commercial or transport workers who have not changed their place of established residence. Many other persons in temporary, short-term or seasonal employment and/or residence situations are not counted in UN and other statistics on migrants when their sojourn is less than a year and/or if they retain formal residency in their home or another country – even though they may fit the definition of a migrant worker. For an accurate analysis of the interconnectedness of migration and development, Caritas uses a broad understanding of migration, inclusive of all those who are refugees and asylum seekers as well as migrant workers and members of their families.

Asylum Procedure

In some states the rights and freedoms of the people living on their territory are violated or restricted by the authorities. Such restrictions may be imposed for reasons of race, religion, political opinion or other particular features.

These restrictions may have the form of physical violence, psychological harassment, detention or other police measures, lawsuits, convictions or prohibition to carry out a specific activity, for example: holding public office, going to school, being a member of a certain party, organizing rallies, and others – by and large, the restrictions can be any actions of coercion, discrimination or arbitrariness.

The authority of no country has the right to violate the rights of ordinary people and to restrict their rights outside the scope of the law. Whoever it be – men, women or children, everybody have the right to live freely and in accordance with their mentality and conscience, as long as they do not interfere with other people's ability to do so.

It sometimes happens that the violations and restrictions are not imposed by the state but by organizations or groupings which the state is not able or does not wish to counter in order to protect those who are their victims.

Some states are affected by wars which threaten the life and security of the civil population. The war could be an armed conflict with another state or an internal conflict among various groupings, sometimes a combination of both.

When a person's life, security or rights are not protected by the state or the state itself violates them, such a person has the possibility to seek security in another country by applying for the permission of the foreign state to reside in it for these reasons

This possibility is called “asylum”. In Europe asylum is called “international protection”.

The persons fleeing their country and seeking asylum in a foreign state are called “refugees”.

A person who wishes to settle in a foreign state on his own will for the purpose of employment, education or reunification with his family who is already in that state, is called an “immigrant”.

However, the law does not oblige the states to admit into their territory all foreigners who wish to do so. The states have this obligation only with respect to their own citizens.

This is why the states are entitled to deny admission into their territory to a foreigner who does not hold a valid ID/passport, an entry visa or a residence permit.

Therefore, those who wish to settle in a foreign state for the purpose of employment, education or the exercise of family life, before leaving their country, must apply for and receive a visa from this state. This is the only way for them to travel to the state, enter it legally and receive a residence permit.

When, however, a person enters a foreign state illegally and without a passport or a visa pretending to be a refugee, he will most probably be refused asylum by the authorities of that state.

In such a case this person will be forcefully returned to his country of origin by means of a procedure which is called “deportation” and whose enforcement may require that the person is detained by the police for up to several months.

Under these circumstances this person will also be imposed prohibition on entry (“a black stamp”) which is valid for all the EU Member States, Switzerland and Norway, and usually has a 5-year term of validity.

This prohibition is entered into a special European electronic system, called EURODAC, together with the person’s fingerprints.

This system allows the European states to check by means of the foreigner’s fingerprints at any point in time if prohibition was imposed on that foreigner by another European state and, if so, to refuse him entry and settlement on their territory till the term of the prohibition expires.

Unlike immigrants, refuges do not leave their country voluntarily and on their own will for economic, family or education reasons. Refugees flee wars, violations of human rights and risks to their life or security.

It is not possible, however, for the Bulgarian state to tell whether a person is an immigrant or a refugee right away.

This is why, similar to the other European states, Bulgaria has introduced a procedure by means of which it examines each individual case and assesses if the person concerned tells the truth and if he has the right to settle in the state as a refugee or does not have this right, as the reasons indicated do not conform to the law.

While a decision is being made on this issue, those who have applied for recognition as refugees in Bulgaria have the right to remain on its territory without being returned either to the neighbouring country from which they entered Bulgaria or to their own country.

Meanwhile and pending the final decision on their issue, these persons are called "asylum-seekers", as it is not known yet if they will be recognized as refugees in Bulgaria and Europe.

Who can seek for Asylum in Bulgaria?

The law allows any foreigner to lodge an application for asylum in Bulgaria and to request protection and status in order to settle in Europe.

This can be done irrespective of whether the person entered Bulgaria legally or illegally, and of whether he has a valid identity document on himself. If, however, the foreigner possesses any documents, he should immediately present them to the authorities, as this will help speed up the decision on his case.

An application for asylum can be lodged in Bulgaria by any person – a man, a woman or a child. In Europe women have equal rights with men, and have to lodge the application on their own behalf even if they are married.

When children have entered Bulgaria with either or both of their parents, it is the parents that will lodge an application for asylum on behalf of their children but only if the children are aged under 14.

If any of the children has turned 14 years of age, the authorities may require that this child signs its own application, and one of the parents confirms the application by also signing it.

Children who have turned 18 years of age always lodge their own application without the need for one of the parents to sign it.

Children who have entered Bulgaria without a parent or other relatives are called "unaccompanied children", and have special rights. These children can lodge an application

for asylum and status before the Bulgarian authorities independently only by means of their signature.

Asylum Procedure Steps

Asylum can be requested before the Bulgarian authorities in an oral or written form. An oral application may be made by persons who are illiterate and cannot write.

If you are illiterate, you can ask the police officers with whom you are talking to write your oral application for asylum in Bulgaria. The police officers are obliged to write your oral application, and after that an interpreter speaking your language will read the text of the application for you; if you agree that the written text is the same as what you expressed orally, then you will be given the application to sign it.

As the police, however, rarely have interpreters available on the spot, in most cases assistance is provided by the free-of charge lawyers of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee who ensure interpreters. The lawyers of the Helsinki Committee work for the United Nations, and regularly visit the police detention facilities at the border and inland.

If you are illiterate, and you are already standing in front of an officer of the Agency for Refugees, you will not have any problems with the writing of your application, as the Agency will always use an interpreter when talking with you.

If, however, you are literate, you had better write yourself in your language the application for asylum. This will allow you to indicate in details the reasons why you left your country, and to describe your experiences and all the events that made you take this decision.

If you have any identity documents or other documents related to your refugee story, you should show them to the police officers or the officers of the Agency for Refugees.

If, when lodging the application for asylum you also submit original documents, the state officer receiving these documents must give you a written record signed by him which precisely lists the documents which you submitted. You must keep this record, as later on you will use it in order to get back your documents, unless the Bulgarian authorities have legal reasons to keep them.

The application for asylum, protection and status in Bulgaria can be lodged before any state authority.

Such applications are most often lodged before the police authorities of Border Police or the Migration Directorate. The reason is that most foreigners enter Bulgaria not via the border points for legal entry, without visas or with irregular documents, as a result of which they are detained by the border or immigration police.

The borders in Bulgaria are guarded by Border Police. Border police officers wear green police uniforms with the insignia in Bulgarian: “Гранична Полиция” and in English: “Border Police”.

In Bulgaria, any entry of a foreigner into the national territory without documents, a visa and via the border strip is illegal and is punished as a crime. When, however, the foreigner is an asylum-seeker, the law exempts him from liability and prosecution. This is why it is important for such a foreigner to declare, immediately after crossing the border, that he seeks asylum before the first state officer whom he encounters – in most cases this is a border police officer.

The border police officers conduct an interview with all the foreigners whom they have detained. The interview is recorded in a written transcript. The transcript will be read out to you by the interpreter and will be signed by you, the interpreter and the police office conducting the interview.

If you did not state that you seek asylum during this interview, you may be taken to court for illegal entry; however, you can still declare your application later on before the prosecutor or before the court.

If, however, after being detained at the border you did not declare that you seek asylum in Bulgaria before the Border Police, the prosecutor or the court, you will be treated by the Bulgarian authorities as an illegal immigrant who must be returned either to the state from which you entered Bulgaria (readmission procedure) or directly to the country of origin (deportation procedure).

In Bulgaria, these procedures are carried out by the immigration police called Migration Directorate. Immigration police officers wear grey police uniforms with an insignia in Bulgarian: “Миграция” and in English: “Migration”.

The immigration police have the right to detain foreigners who do not have regular documents and a residence permit in the special detention centres for irregular immigrants while their readmission or deportation is being organized.

Bulgaria has two detention centres for irregular immigrants – Lyubimetz (near the town of Svilengrad at the Bulgarian-Turkish border), and Busmantzi (near the capital city of Sofia).

Such detention can last up to 6 months, but, in individual cases, it can be extended up to a maximum of 18 months based on permission from the court. After the 18-month term expires, the foreigner will be released, if during his detention the Bulgarian authorities have not made the necessary arrangements for deportation back to the country of origin. While being

in detention, you may also be interviewed by the Bulgarian security services called the State Agency for National Security.

If you seek asylum, but you did not manage to declare your asylum application at the border before being transferred to the detention centre, you have the right to file an application before the staff of the immigration police at the detention centre where you are accommodated.

As the immigration police, however, do not have interpreters available on the spot, in most cases assistance for writing the application is provided by the free-of charge lawyers of the Helsinki Committee who also ensure interpreters. The lawyers of the Helsinki Committee work for the United Nations, and regularly visit the police detention facilities at Busmantzi and Lyubimetz, usually on Monday.

After you lodge your application for asylum before the border or immigration police, you will be released within 6 working days.

If your release is delayed, you have the right to file a complaint before the court. You can seek assistance from the free-of-charge lawyers of the Helsinki Committee in relation to the filing of the complaint.

If, however, everything goes well and there is no delay, you will be transferred to an open-type refugee camp.

The STATE AGENCY FOR REFUGEES is the Bulgarian state authority which is competent to examine your case and make a decision on whether you will be granted asylum and status in order to stay in Bulgaria and Europe.

If you entered Bulgaria leally or you entered illegally but were not detained by the police, you can lodge an application directly at any of the refugee camps with this Agency.

When you are already in the camp of the Agency for Refugees, the Agency will officially register you as a foreigner seeking asylum and protection in Bulgaria.

Before being accommodated in a refugee camp, you will be searched for weapons or illegal items. This procedure is called a body search. You are entitled to have the body search carried out by an officer of the same sex, namely men are searched by male officers, and women by female officers.

After that, all your documents will be taken from you and kept in custody at the Agency till the completion of your asylum procedure with a final decision. The officer receiving your documents will give you a written record signed by him which precisely lists the documents which you submitted. Keep this record, as later on you will use it in order to get back your documents, unless the Bulgarian authorities have legal reasons to keep them.

Afterwards you will have your photograph and fingerprints taken.After that you will be asked, if you are literate, to write yourself, and, if you are illiterate, to orally tell your names and date of birth, as well as the names of your parents and brothers and sisters, husband, wife and children, if you have any. It is important that this data should be absolutely precise and complete. The incorrect writing of the names may cause problems after a status has been granted in relation to the issuance of the permanent documents or the issuance of permission for reuniting with family members residing outside Bulgaria.

Declaring false names has very serious consequences and may become the reason for the refusal of asylum and status!

Upon registration the Agency officers will interview you with the help of an interpreter. The data will be entered into a registration sheet which will be signed by the applicant, the interpreter, and the officer.

Afterwards you will be referred to the medical doctor at the camp for medical screening and analyses. While awaiting the results from the various laboratory tests, the applicant may be placed under quarantine in an isolated room, if there are signs that he may be suffering from a contagious disease.

At the end you will be issued a note indicating the date and time when you will receive your temporary document for residence in Bulgaria, called “registration card”.

Such a note may be issued to you even if the registration cannot be done due the lack of an interpreter.

Please, observe strictly the date and time indicated on the note!

After all the registration actions have been completed, you will be accommodated at a refugee camp. Where possible, families are accommodated together in one room.

Rights and Obligations during the Asylum Procedure

While your application for asylum in Bulgaria (asylum procedure) is being examined by the Bulgarian authorities you have the right to stay in the country, irrespective of whether you entered legally or illegally and whether you have regular national documents for travelling abroad.

This means that the Bulgarian authorities do not have the right to return you to the neighbouring country from which you entered Bulgaria (readmission procedure) or to the country of origin (deportation procedure).

The law stipulates that these procedures shall be automatically suspended till your asylum procedure is completed with a final decision on your case. If you received a decision

refusing to grant you asylum and status, but you did not appeal it before the court or you appealed it but the court upheld the refusal of the Agency, such a decision will become final.

If you are lodging an application for asylum in Bulgaria for the first time, you have the right to be accommodated in a camp with the Agency for Refugees.

Families have the right to request that they are accommodated together.

Brothers and sisters also have the right to be accommodated together, irrespective of whether they are children or adults.

Unaccompanied children who are in Bulgaria without their parents or other relatives have the right to ask for accommodation in separate rooms which are only for children or families, as well as the right not to be accommodated with unknown adults in the same room.

If, however, you already have an application which was examined and a decision was made by the Bulgarian authorities, and you lodged a second or another repeated application, you will not be entitled to accommodation by the Agency for Refugees and will have to ensure accommodation by yourself. If, however, you are a person belonging to a vulnerable group or with special needs, you may receive accommodation and food even if you lodged a repeated application. The law defines as vulnerable persons children, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single parents with children aged under 18, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious health problems, mental disorders or survivors of torture, rape or other forms of mental, physical or sexual violence.

Several days after being registered as an asylum-seeker you will receive your registration card. The card contains the following data:

- name and a photograph
- date of birth
- sex (man or woman)
- place of birth
- nationality (citizenship)
- accompanying children aged under 14
- your personal number in Bulgaria
- the address of your accommodation in Bulgaria – a refugee camp or accommodation outside the camps
- the area surrounding the camp in which you are allowed to move without the explicit permission of the Agency for Refugees

This card serves to certify before the Bulgarian authorities that you are an asylum-seeker and are entitled to stay in Bulgaria till your procedure is completed with a decision on your case.

The registration card is a temporary document. The card usually has a 3-month term of validity which can be renewed without any problems while the procedure is still underway and till the decision on your case becomes final. This means that the registration card can also be renewed during court procedures.

You have to regularly renew the validity of your registration card at the Agency for Refugees, as when it expires the card is no longer valid and the police has the right to detain you.

If you lose your card, the Agency for Refugees will sanction you for your negligence with a fine in the amount of 50 up to 200 BGN before issuing a new registration card.

If, however, you have already lodged an application which was examined and a decision was issued by the Bulgarian authorities, and you lodge a second or another repeated application, you will not be entitled to a registration card unless the Agency for Refugees makes a decision to open a new procedure for you.

Refugee or Humanitarian Status

Rights resulting from refugee status:

If you receive refugee status, you will have the right to:

- work without special permission;
- receive education in state schools and universities;
- be reunited with your family reunited on the territory of Bulgaria;
- be granted Bulgarian citizenship 3 years after receiving the status;
- travel abroad under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian citizens (without a visa and with the right to reside in the other EU Member States up to 90 days within half a year).

If you receive humanitarian status, you will have the right to:

- work without special permission;
- receive education in state schools and universities;
- have your family reunited on the territory of Bulgaria;
- be granted Bulgarian citizenship 5 years after receiving the status;
- travel abroad under the terms and following the procedure for foreigners holding a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria (when they have received a visa from the

embassy of the relevant state in Sofia and the right to stay within the term of validity of the visa).

Residence

The residence of foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria is carried out on the basis of: issued visa; International Contracts for visa-free or facilitated visas; Administrative control services of foreigners. The residence of third-country nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria is short-term, long-term and permanent.

• Deadlines

Time limits for residence permits: short-term residence – for transit with a allowed period of up to 2 days or a planned stay of up to three months within every 6-month period from the date of entry into the country; A short-term stay on the basis of a visa issued may be extended once by the administrative control services of foreigners on humanitarian grounds or for reasons of extraordinary circumstances or for serious personal reasons; Prolonged residence – with a allowed period of up to one year; Long-term residence with an authorised initial term of 5 years and possibility of renewal following an application; Permanent residence-with an authorised indefinite period.

• Competent Authority

To request permission for long, long-term or permanent residence, please contact the Migration Directorate or the relevant migration unit to the regional departments of the Ministry of the Interior. You can also apply for a permanent residence permit through diplomatic and consular representations.

Prolonged

To obtain a long-stay permit, you should have housing, compulsory health insurance and insurance, sufficient means of subsistence, without resorting to the social assistance system, amounting to no less than the minimum monthly salary, the minimum scholarship or the minimum pension under the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria for the duration of the stay. For the initial application for a residence permit, persons over the age of 18, with the exception of stateless persons, shall also present a criminal record issued by the state of which they are nationals or by the State of their habitual residence.

Upon dissolution of the marriage of the family members of a long-term or permanent resident foreigner, a self-permit for prolonged residence may be issued once. In the case of divorce, a self-permit for prolonged residence may be issued if the marriage lasted no less than two years in the territory of the country. If you wish to reside continuously on the territory of

the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of conducting a freelance activity, you can obtain a long-stay visa or a long-stay permit if you meet the statutory requirements for entry and residence in the country and present to the diplomatic and consular representations, respectively, the administrative control of foreigners an application form and an authorisation to carry out a freelance activity Issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social policy.

Residence permits may also be granted to foreigners who hold visas and are researchers with a signed admission agreement with a research organisation based in the Republic of Bulgaria for the development of a research project included in the national list of research organisations within the meaning of Council Directive 2005/71/EC on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research.

A residence permit may also be granted to foreigners who hold the abovementioned visa and are admitted for regular training at a higher school, students admitted to the territory of the country for training in the average degree of education within an exchange programme or as non-remunerated trainees. Long-term residency the long-term residency status is granted to a foreigner who has resided lawfully and without interruption on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria within 5 years prior to lodging the application for long-term residence authorisation. Periods of absence from the territory of Bulgaria do not interrupt the required period of 5 years and are counted in the calculation when they are less than 6 consecutive months and do not exceed 10 months in total for the 5-year period.

Since its acquisition, the long-term residence status has been permanent insofar as no grounds for its withdrawal have arisen. In order to grant long-term residence status, the foreigner must provide evidence that he has for himself and his family members with sufficient means of subsistence, without resorting to the social assistance system, in the amount not less than the minimum wage and the minimum pension, and that he has compulsory health insurance or insurance for the period of residence under the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria. An alien who has been granted long-term resident status is granted a residence permit to a long-term resident of the European Union. This authorisation shall be valid for a period of five years and shall be renewed on expiry of an application. The expiration of a long-term resident residence permit in the European Union does not constitute grounds for withdrawing or losing that status. Residence permit and Work Type "single residence and work permit" may receive foreigners, who are eligible for a work permit within the meaning of the Employment Promotion Act and who hold a visa or residence permit on another basis in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1030/2002 of 13 June 2002 laying down a uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals.

The residence and work permit type "single authorisation for residence and employment" shall be issued following a decision by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for a period of one year, renewable on grounds of re-issuance. If the duration of the contract of employment is less than one year, the authorisation shall be granted for the duration of the contract.

Constantly

You may obtain a permanent residence permit in the following cases:

1. When you have Bulgarian origin;
2. Five years after the conclusion of a civil marriage with a permanent resident of the alien country and you have resided legally and continuously for a period of 5 years on the territory of the country;
3. Minor children of a permanent resident of the alien country who are not interveners in marriage;
4. The parents of a Bulgarian citizen, when they provide the statutory maintenance and have resided legally and continuously for a period of 3 years on the territory of the country;
5. Stay legally and without interruption on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria within the last 5 years before the application for permanent residence was submitted and for this period is not absent more than 30 months;
6. Investment over 1 000 000 lv. or increase of the investment of this size by acquiring: (a) Shares of Bulgarian trading companies traded on a Bulgarian regulated market; (b) Bonds and Treasury bills as well as derivative instruments issued by the State or by municipalities with a residual maturity of not less than 6 months; (c) The right of ownership over a separate part of the property of a Bulgarian trading company with more than 50 per cent state or municipal participation in the capital under the privatization and post-Privatization Control Act; (d) units or shares owned by the state or municipalities of the Bulgarian Trading Company under the privatization and post-Privatization Control Act; e) Bulgarian intellectual property-objects of copyright and related rights, patent-protected inventions, utility models, trademarks, service marks and industrial design; (f) Rights under concession contracts on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria;
7. Investment of the amount under item 6 in a licensed credit institution in Bulgaria under a trust contract with a term of not less than 5 years, and for the same period the deposit is not used to secure other money credits from a credit institution in Bulgaria;
8. Investment in the capital of the Bulgarian trading Company, whose shares are not traded on a regulated market, an amount of not less than 6 000 000 BGN;

9. Persons who are not persons of Bulgarian origin, born in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, lost their Bulgarian citizenship by uprooteric settlements or by their own volition and wish to settle permanently on the territory of the country;
10. Persons who, until 27 December 1998, entered, reside or were born in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and whose parent has concluded a civil marriage with a Bulgarian citizen;
11. Family members of a Bulgarian citizen if they have resided continuously on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria during the last five years;
12. Persons who, until 27 December 1998, entered, reside and have not left the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria or were born on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and are not recognized as nationals of the former Soviet republics/no visa required/;
13. Persons who operate and are certified in accordance with the Law on Investment Promotion, certified by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and tourism;
14. Minors, born and abandoned by a parent (s)-foreign (or national) in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, who are accommodated in an institution or other alternative social services of the resident type as a protection measure;
15. Persons who made an investment in the country by depositing in the capital of the Bulgarian trading Company at least 500 000 BGN, the foreigner being a partner or shareholder with registered shares and holding not less than 50 per cent of the capital of the company and as a result of the investment were acquired new tangible and intangible assets with a value of not less than 500 000 BGN. And there are at least 10 jobs for Bulgarian citizens, maintained for the duration of residence, attested by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and tourism;
16. Persons who have been granted a long-stay permit due to an investment under art. 24, para. 1, item 19 and 20 and maintained the investment for 5 years. You may also obtain a permanent residence permit if you are performing and/or maintaining an investment that has received a Class B certificate or a priority investment project under the Investment Promotion Act.

Short term

If you are a third-country national and wish to go in transit or visit Bulgaria for a maximum of 90 days within 6 months you must have a short-stay visa (type "C"), which entitles you to the following rights:-right of transit through the Republic of Bulgaria with a period of validity up to 2 days or-right of planned residence with validity up to 90 days Long stay If you are logged in to Bulgaria with regular travel documents and have a long-stay visa (type "D"), you can request a long-stay permit if you meet one of the following conditions:
1. You want to do work on employment relationship after authorization by the authorities of the Ministry of Labor and Social policy;

2. You do business in the country in the legal order, as a result of this activity are revealed at least 10 jobs for Bulgarian citizens, maintained for the duration of residence, except when agreed otherwise in an international treaty, ratified, promulgated and entered into force for the Republic of Bulgaria;
3. You are foreign professionals residing in the country by virtue of international treaties, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party;
4. You have reason to be allowed permanent residence;
5. You are representatives of foreign trade companies registered in the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
6. You are financially insured parents of foreigners or of a Bulgarian citizen residing in the country;
7. You have received a long treatment in a medical institution and have financial means for treatment and maintenance;
8. You are a correspondent of foreign media and you have accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria;
9. You have been entitled to a pension under the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria, your country of origin or another country and you have sufficient means of subsistence in the country;
10. You are members of the family of a foreigner who has been granted permanent residence or residency;
11. You are the parents of a foreigner or a non-marital cohabitation with a foreigner who has been granted long-term residency permit;
12. You want to perform a freelance activity after www.buy-trusted-tablets.com permission from the authorities of the Ministry of Labor and Social policy;
13. You wish to perform a non-profit activity after authorization by the Ministry of Justice;
14. You have received special protection status under the Act against Trafficking in human beings/No visa is required in this case/;
15. You are members of the family of a Bulgarian citizen;
16. You have invested an amount of not less than 600 000 BGN. -For any foreigner acquiring the right of ownership of immovable property in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria or the foreigner owns more than 50 percent of the capital of the Bulgarian commercial Company, the put is the same amount in the capital of the company and as a result the company has acquired the right of ownership of real estate in the country of this value; At the date of submission of the application for a long-stay permit, the foreigner or the legal person must have fully paid the

amount that has been received into an account with a Bulgarian authorised credit institution, and if the property is acquired with borrowed funds, the outstanding part of the loan must not exceed 25%;

17. You have made an investment in economically disadvantaged regions within the meaning of the Investment Promotion Act by depositing in the capital of the Bulgarian trading Company at least 250 000 BGN, the foreigner being a partner or shareholder with registered shares and holding not less than 50 per cent of the company's capital and as a result of the investment acquired new tangible and intangible assets with a value not less than 250 000 BGN. and have uncovered at least 5 jobs for Bulgarian citizens, maintained for the duration of residence, attested by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and tourism.

Identity Documents

Civil registration

The civil registration of beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is carried out on the grounds of Art. 3 (2) of the Civil Registration Act.

The categories entered into the population register are: c) beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status or persons who have been granted asylum in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Electronic Personal Registration Card and Uniform Civil Number

The issuing of Electronic Personal Registration Card and UCN (EGN) to beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is done on the grounds of Art. 26 (3) of the Civil Registration Act on the basis of the following documents:

- a decision on granting refugee or humanitarian status
- a birth certificate of a child born on the territory of the country from parents who are beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status
- an application for permanent address and an address card for current address in the relevant municipality

Address registration

Pursuant to Art. 92 (2) of the Civil Registration Act, for the purpose of address registration, the submission of the following documents is required: the rental contract with the owner of the property; the written consent of the owner of the property by means of a model declaration.

The service is free-of-charge and is provided within seven days from filing the application.

The procedures are conducted by the ESGRAON office at the relevant municipality or mayoralty in conformity with Ordinance No Рд-02-20-9 of 21 May 2012 on the Functioning of the Uniform Civil Registration System.

Identity documents

The issuing of identity documents to beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is done on the grounds of Art. 14 and Art. 59 of the Bulgarian Identity Documents Act. The request for issuance of identity documents is filed at the Migration Directorate in Sofia and in the Regional Directorates of MoI with jurisdiction over the persons' permanent address.

The identity documents of beneficiaries of international protection are:

- Identity document of a beneficiary of refugee status (term of validity up to 5 years)
- Identity document of a beneficiary of humanitarian status (term of validity up to 3 years)

Documents needed for issuing the ID:

- an application
- a copy of an official document for granting refugee or humanitarian status or asylum
- a certificate for registration in the population register by the permanent address
- a document for the payment of the state fee

For more information, see the website of MOI's Bulgarian Identity Documents Directorate.

For one-time financial assistance for the issuing of an ID see the Social Assistance Chapter.

Motor Vehicle Driver's License/Driving License

The acquisition of a driving license by beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is subject to the terms and conditions for Bulgarian citizens and applicants must not hold another driving license of the same category acquired in an EU member state.

To certify that applicants have established their habitual residence in the Republic of Bulgaria and have no other driving license issued (by another EU Member State) for the category they are applying for, they sign a declaration under Art. 16, Para. 4 of Ordinance No 37 on the conditions and the order for training applicants for a driving license and the terms and procedure for issuing the permit for their training or Art. 18, item 3 of Ordinance No 38 on the conditions and procedure for conducting the examinations of applicants for a driving license and the order for conducting the examinations.

The necessary documents for enrollment for a driving course pursuant to Ordinance No 37 on the conditions and the order for training applicants for a driving license and the terms and procedure for issuing the permit for their training are as follows:

- Copy of an ID card

- Copy of the diploma for completed primary, secondary or higher education
- 1 photo – passport format
- Medical certificate for Motor Vehicle Driver cat. B issued by the GP or a protocol from the District Transport Medical Expert Committee or the Central Transport Medical Expert Committee

During the driving training it is also necessary for the candidates to undergo first-aid training which is held by the Bulgarian Red Cross.

The issuing of a driving license after driving training and examinations is carried out at the Traffic Police Department after the payment of a fee and the submission of the following documents:

- Identity document under Art. 14 of the Bulgarian Personal Documents Act
- Document for paid fees
- Driver's Medical Examination Report Form or a protocol from the District Transport Medical Expert Committee or the Central Transport Medical Expert Committee
- Two certificates for a completed theoretical and practical driving course
- Diploma for a completed primary, secondary or higher education (original and copy)
- First aid course completion certificate (BRC)

Validity of a driving license acquired in a non-EU country

The validity of a driving license acquired in a non-EU country owned by beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is determined pursuant to Art. 161 of the Road Traffic Act.The license should be replaced by a district Traffic Police Department by permanent address after providing the following documents:

- Application form by the respective Traffic Police Department
- Applicant driver's physical fitness assessment report form
- Copy of a certificate of psychological fitness for issuance of a Motor Vehicle Driver's License cat. C1, C, D1, D and TC /Tram Carriage/
- Statement that the habitual residence is not in another EU Member State and that the person does not hold a valid Driving License issued by an EU Member State
- Copy of a certificate of completed at least primary education and if the education is completed in a foreign country, a copy of the certificate of recognition of at least primary education issued under Ordinance No 2/2003 for recognition of completed stages of school education or degrees of education and professional qualification based on documents issued by schools of foreign countries

Birth Certificate

A Birth Certificate of children of parents with refugee or humanitarian status is issued under the terms and conditions for the Bulgarian citizens on the basis of Section II of the Civil Registration Act.

The name of a non-Bulgarian citizen born on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be entered as stated by his / her parents.

Substitute documents

The documents issued by the State Agency for Refugees on the basis of which Bulgarian documents are issued shall substitute the official documents of the authorities of the countries of origin pursuant to Art. 54 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Pursuant to Para. (2) where for objective reasons foreigners seeking or having received international protection cannot be provided with the documents necessary for them to exercise their rights, the State Agency for Refugees, on the basis of the data established by them and a declaration signed by the foreigner, organizes the issuance of a certificate. On the basis of this certificate the competent authorities issue a Bulgarian document enabling them to exercise these rights.

Pursuant to Para. (3) the documents issued on the grounds of Para. (2) shall substitute the official documents issued to foreigners by or through the authorities of their respective countries.

Civil marriage certificate

When the persons contracting a marriage are beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status, they certify their marital status by means of a declaration certified by a notary on the grounds of Art. 52 of the Civil Registration Act.

A civil marriage certificate is issued on the grounds of Art. 51 of the Civil Registration Act under the terms and procedure applicable to Bulgarian citizens.

Travel documents

The issuing of travel documents to beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status is done on the grounds of Art. 59 of the Bulgarian Identity Documents Act. The request for issuance of identity documents is filed at the Migration Directorate in Sofia or at the District Directorate of the Ministry of Interior according the permanent address registration of the applicant.

The travel documents of beneficiaries of international protection are:

- **Travel document of a beneficiary of refugee status** with a term of validity of 5 years, but no longer than the expiration date of the Refugee Card

- **Travel document of a beneficiary of humanitarian status** with a term of validity of 3 years, but no longer than the validity of the Identity card of a humanitarian status holder

For more information, see the website of the Bulgarian Identity Documents Directorate of the Ministry of Interior.

Family reunification

Right to family reunification

Individuals with a refugee or humanitarian status have the right to family reunification pursuant to Art. 34 Para. 1 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees:

"A foreigner granted international protection has the right to ask for family reunification on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria."

Family reunification procedure

Beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status who wish to reunite with their family members shall submit documents to the State Agency for Refugees proving marriage or kinship. According to the Law on Asylum and Refugees, only the individuals listed in § 1 (3) of the Additional Provisions of the Law on Asylum and Refugees are considered members of the family:

- A husband or wife, or a person with whom he / she is in a stable and lasting relationship
- Minors and unmarried children
- Parents of each of the spouses who due to their old age or severe illness are not able to take care of themselves and have to live in the same household with their children

In the absence of documents certifying marriage or kinship of beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status, marriage or kinship shall be certified by a declaration or other documents pursuant to Art. 34 (5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees: "When a foreigner cannot produce official documents proving marriage or kinship, they shall be established by a declaration signed by them or otherwise."

If necessary, a conversation (interview) might be conducted to specify the details. After examining the application, the State Agency for Refugees has the right to allow or refuse family reunification.

Family reunification in the case of unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors shall have the right of reunification with their parents or another adult family member or person responsible for them pursuant to Art. 34 (4) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees: "The Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees shall permit the reunification of unaccompanied minors or minor foreigners who are beneficiaries of

international protection with their parents or with another adult family member or with a person responsible for them by the rule of law or custom when their parents have died or are missing".

Lodge an appeal

In case the status holder is refused family reunification, he/she has the right to lodge an appeal before the court and request that the court overturns the refusal and orders the State Agency for Refugees to issue permission for reunification.

The appeal must be lodged before the local Administrative court within 14 days from the day on which the status holder received the refusal decision and certified the receipt by signing.

The appeal is heard at two levels: if the decision of the Administrative court at the first level is negative, a second, last appeal can be lodged before the Supreme Administrative Court of Bulgaria. The Supreme Administrative Court's decision is final.

After receiving a decision on family reunification in Bulgaria

A copy of the decision is sent by the beneficiary of international protection to the family members who will travel to Bulgaria. It is necessary that they have a regular international passport.

Family members must appear at a Bulgarian consular service for the issuing of a type D visa for long-term residence. If there is no such service in the country of origin, they will have to specify through the MFA in which close country it is operating (Syrian citizens should submit visa documents at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Beirut, Lebanon).

The following documents are needed for issuing a visa type D:

- Copy of the decision on family reunification
- Application for a visa
- Regular travel document
- A current color photo
- Medical insurance
- A paid fee receipt (about 150 dollars)

Issuing the visa takes approximately 40 days.

The purchase of Travel tickets is at the expense of the persons themselves.

Citizenship

The terms and the procedure for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship by beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status are laid down in Art. 13 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act.

A person who was granted refugee status not less than three years before applying for naturalization may acquire Bulgarian citizenship if he/she meets the conditions laid down in Art. 12 (1), items 1, 3, 4, and 5.

A person who was granted humanitarian status not less than five years before applying for naturalization may acquire Bulgarian citizenship if he/she meets the conditions laid down in Art. 12 (1), items 1, 3, 4, and 5.

The conditions for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship are laid down in Art. 12 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act

Art. 12. (1) A person who is not a Bulgarian national may acquire Bulgarian citizenship, if as of the date of applying for naturalization he/she:

1. has become of age;
2. has not been convicted for premeditated crime of general nature by a Bulgarian court and no criminal prosecution has been instituted against him/her for such crime, unless rehabilitated;
3. has income or occupation which enables his/her subsistence in the Republic of Bulgaria;
4. has a level of knowledge of the Bulgarian language which shall be ascertained following a procedure set out in an Ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science.

The procedure for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship starts with filing an Application for Acquiring Bulgarian Citizenship. The applicant must first save a specific date for the filing of the documents in the online system on the website of the Ministry of Justice.

The following shall be attached to the application:

- Birth certificate (if not available, a certificate with the data of a birth certificate issued by the State Agency for Refugees in accordance with Art. 54(2) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees is attached);
- A certificate by the State Agency for Refugees for the refugee of humanitarian status granted, with an indication of the date when it was granted;
- Official documents certifying changes in the names, and
- a Document for the identity of persons with different names (if any);
- A clean criminal record (persons born abroad file applications – download the template here – and receive the record in Directorate ‘Registers’, Unit ‘Central Criminal and Apostille Bureau’ of Ministry of Justice, located at 5 Aksakov Str. (working hours: Monday to Friday, 9h-11h and 14h-16h) http://www.srs.justice.bg/219;

- A document of the prosecutor's office certifying the absence of criminal prosecution instituted (issued by the prosecutor's office);
- A document certifying an employment or a service contract issued by an employer or a document certifying data declared and taxes paid for the last year, issued by the tax administration;
- Documents from the National Revenue Agency certifying the payment of health insurance contributions;
- A document certifying Bulgarian language competence issued by the Ministry of Education and Science or a copy of a diploma for completed education degrees in the Republic of Bulgaria, certified by a notary. The procedure for ascertaining the Bulgarian language competence is laid down in Ordinance No 5 of 3 September 1999 on the Procedure for Ascertaining Bulgarian Language Competence in Relation to Acquiring Bulgarian Citizenship in a Naturalization Process. The examination for ascertaining Bulgarian language competence is conducted by the Center for Evaluation of Pre-school and School Education under the terms and following the procedure of the Center. Free of charge exams are carried out every last Friday of the month. Application for participation should be filed three days before the date of the exam, at the latest. If an applicant fails the examination, he/she has the right to register for a new one after 3 months. Sample tests, address, working hours and contact details of the Centre could be found here: http://www.ckoko.bg/page.php?c=24&d=19
- Medical documents certifying that the person does not have acute contagious and infectious diseases or mental illness (a list of the diseases: the Health Act Art. 61 (1) and Art. 146 (1), item 1);
- A copy of the identity card issued by Ministry of Interior;
- Detailed CV signed by the person;
- Current photograph – passport format;
- Document for the fee paid to the account of the Ministry of Justice.

The documents are submitted in person before the Administrative Services and Secretariat of the Ministry of Justice Directorate.

After the registration of the application an interview is scheduled to be conducted with the person in Bulgarian language at the Directorate Bulgarian Citizenship of the Ministry of Justice.

Time limit for examining the application

Inquiries in relation to the application can be made either at the Directorate or online.

Within 18 months from opening the file, the Minister of Justice shall submit a proposal to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria about issuing a decree for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship. In the event of a positive decision, a state fee shall be paid for the issuing of a certificate of Bulgarian citizenship.

In the event of a negative decision (refusal), the decision shall not be subject to appeal.

In the event of refusal, the person shall have the right to lodge a subsequent application.

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is a program that helps people who want to return to their country of origin. The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** runs this program.

Who can apply

Not everyone can return to their home countries. You can apply for Assisted Voluntary Return if:

- You are living in Bulgaria with no documents or expired documents
- You no longer want to stay in Bulgaria — even if you were granted international protection
- Your asylum request is pending
- Your asylum request has been rejected
- You have voluntarily withdrawn your asylum application
- You haven't received an expulsion or removal order yet
- You are fit/healthy enough to travel

Important note: Once you withdraw your asylum application, you **cannot** reapply for asylum. If you cancel your asylum application, and you decide not to go home through the AVRR program after all, the police can detain you and deport you.

It's also worth noting that you can use the AVRR service **only once**.

People under 14 traveling without an adult family member

If you are under 14 and you want to go back to your country, IOM first needs to ask your parents or close relatives in your home country for permission to return you.

You need to give IOM the name and contact details of your parents or close relatives.

If your family agrees, IOM will organize your travel and accompany you. Unfortunately, if your family doesn’t give permission for you to return, IOM **cannot** include you in the program.

How to apply and use AVRR

Step 1: Approaching IOM

To apply for assisted voluntary return, approach IOM officers at your location. IOM employees regularly visit the registration and reception centers, and the accommodation centers.

If you are currently situated in one of the centers, you can ask the social workers for assistance.

The program will only assist returns to your country of origin and to a country that is determined by IOM to be safe. You **cannot** return to your home through AVRR if there is a war there. IOM's list of unsafe countries changes each month. However, Syria remains on the list.

Contact IOM:

Step 2: Counseling

The IOM team will gather your personal details, talk with you to understand your situation and make sure that it is your final decision to return to your home country.

If you have any questions related to your return, this is the time when you can ask them.

Step 3: Getting your travel document

If you don't have a passport, IOM can contact the relevant embassy and assist with issuing travel documents for you and your family.

This can take some time, depending on your case and which country are you from. Not every country has an embassy in Bulgaria. Sometimes, IOM has to reach out to embassies in other countries, and this can prolong the procedure by a few months.

However, after your travel documents are ready, you should wait between 1 week and 10 days to be able to return to your home country. This period depends on available international flights.

Step 4: Buying your plane tickets

IOM will purchase your plane tickets. They will try to find the safest way to return you to your home country, taking into consideration your language and religion.

You will probably need to change planes a few times to get home.

Step 5: Traveling

IOM employees will escort you to the international airport in Sofia and help you with check-in and passport control.

After passport control, you will travel alone as any other passenger, unless you are under 14 traveling without an adult family member. In this case, an IOM employee will escort you from Bulgaria to your family or relatives at home.

If you have health issues or other limitations, IOM staff can also accompany you through your entire journey.

Otherwise, you will receive a bag with the IOM logo that you need to keep with yourself. This shows airport staff that you are a beneficiary of the AVRR program.

A day before your travel, IOM will give you instructions. You will also receive some money for the journey.

Reintegration

Some people who return to their countries can get financial and other support with reintegrating into their home countries.

In some cases, IOM can help you fund training courses or studies, psychological and medical support, repairs for your house, or new business activities.

This integration support is available only to the most vulnerable people, including people under 18 traveling alone, single parents, and those with chronic medical conditions.

In Bulgaria, about 20 percent of all AVRR beneficiaries are considered vulnerable according to IOM.

The services provided by IOM are free of charge.

Development

The pledge to leave no one behind and to ensure human rights for all is a cornerstone of the Resolution by the UN General Assembly 70/1 "Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" that contains the Declaration and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 119 sustainable development targets, adopted on 25 September 2015. This document, endorsed by all 193 UN Member States, expresses their shared vision of and commitment to a "world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met."

The 2030 Agenda has led to paradigm shifts in the perception of development. Development and sustainable development concern all countries on the planet; environmental protection and tackling inequalities are considered among key development goals; peace and social justice are seen as integral components of the universal development agenda; and the need for the commitment and participation of all groups within all societies and states is emphasised in order to achieve development for all. The new worldwide consensus on development is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all human rights

treaties; therefore, if states do not make progress on the actual realization of human rights for all, the SDGs cannot be reached.

The term development encapsulates the elaboration of productive means, forces, capacities, organisation and output of goods, services, technology and knowledge to meet human needs for sustenance and well-being. It comprises building the means for: the extraction and transformation of resources; the production of goods, services and knowledge; constructing infrastructure for production, transportation and distribution; reproducing capital as well as skills and labour; and providing for human welfare/well-being in terms of housing, nutrition, healthcare, education, social protection and culture in its broad sense.

Caritas uses the concept of integral human development, which places the human person at the centre of the development process. It may be defined as an all-embracing approach that takes into consideration the well-being of the person and of all people, in seven different dimensions. First, the social dimension, which focuses on quality of life in terms of nutrition, health, education, employment, social protection and social participation, as well as equality of treatment and non-discrimination on any grounds. Second, the work and economic activity dimension as the main means of self and family sustenance, of socio-economic engagement and of direct contribution to development for most adults in all populations. Third, the ecological dimension which refers to respect for the goods of creation and to ensuring the quality of life for future generations without ignoring this generation's cry for justice. Fourth, the political dimension, which includes issues such as: the existence of the rule of law; respect for civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights; democracy, in particular, as a representative and above all participatory tool. Fifth, the economic dimension which relates to the level of GDP and the distribution of income and wealth, the sustainability of economic growth, the structure of the economy and employment, the degree of industrialisation, the level of high-tech ICT, and the state's capacity to obtain revenue for human services and social protection, among other considerations. Sixth, the cultural dimension which addresses the identity and cultural expression of communities and peoples, as well as the capacity for intercultural dialogue and respectful engagement between cultures and identities, and seventh, the spiritual dimension. Together, these dimensions underpin an integral approach to development. According to Catholic Social Teaching (CST), social inequalities demand coordinated action from all people, the whole of society, and the whole of government in all countries for the sake of humanity, based on two premises: 1) social questions are global, and 2) socio-economic inequalities are a danger for peace and social cohesion. In this sense,

development of our own country and that of others must be a concern for us all – the human community.

Migration and development

How development is linked to migration is a centuries old legal, political and practical question. Vast forced and voluntary population movements from the 17th century onwards populated both North and South America, as well as emerging European nation states. Since the end of World War II, migration and development has been the subject of intense discussions among policy-makers, academics, civil society and the public. Pope Pius XII dedicated an encyclical on "migrants, aliens and refugees of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land", reaffirming that migrants and refugees have a right to a life with dignity, and therefore a right to migrate.

Migration has become a fundamental pillar of development across several regions under regional integration and development projects, notably the European Economic Community succeeded by the European Union. Since the 1970s, migration has been essential to development through regional free movement systems in Central, East and West Africa. From the 1920s, large population movements – some forced – in the (former) Soviet Union underpinned industrial and agricultural development across the twelve USSR republics.
Spurred by geopolitical events that have greatly affected human mobility on a global scale, the relationship between migration and development has become central to contemporary political, economic and social policy debates. The first global development framework to recognize the role of migration and its immense contribution to sustainable development worldwide was the Declaration and Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo in 1994. The overarching contemporary framework is the above-mentioned 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals. While explicit reference to migration and development is laid out in SDG target 10.7 on "safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility," more than 44 SDG targets across 16 of the 17 SDGs apply to migrants, refugees, migration and/or migration-compelling situations. The New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito in October 2015 provides even more explicit attention to migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons in its global development and governance framework for cities – where most migrants and refugees reside.

In 2016, in the wake of severe and protracted conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia and the collapse of effective protection for refugees in neighbouring countries, UN Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, calling for

improved global governance of migration and for the recognition of international migration as a driver for development both in countries of origin and countries of destination. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), adopted at an inter-governmental conference in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2018. The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) elaborated on those principles and proposed ways of implementing them through political dialogue and non-binding commitments. Both compacts were adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

Bulgarian migration paradox

The Bulgarian migration experience is highly interesting from the perspective of the relationship between migration and development. This relationship is associated with three paradoxes. First and foremost, is that Bulgaria has experienced extremely high emigration rates over the last three decades, which – coupled with very low fertility and very low rates of immigration – , has deprived the country of the skills and labour force needed to sustain the economy and further the development of the country. The second paradox is that in postcommunist Bulgaria, a country with little experience of migration and absolutely no experience in democratic migration policy, there are high levels of immigrant integration in terms of labour market participation, and linguistic, cultural, and social integration, among others. The third paradox is that in European Bulgaria, which did not experience a significant increase in migrant numbers stocks during and after the so called "migration crisis," there is an increase in securitarian and restrictive discourses and policies which create negative attitudes towards migrants and impede necessary needed immigration and integration. These two paradoxes will be examined and argued in the course of this study, the first mainly in the section titled "How migrants and migration contribute to development," and the second in "Obstacles." Migration is a highly politicised topic that is directly related to national security and national identity, as well as economic growth. The quantity and quality of the workforce and emigration of a young and highly productive workforce from the country has a direct impact on economic growth. In Bulgaria, three different groups of migrants support and facilitate, in a specific way, the migration & development nexus: immigrants, who are few in number and well-(self)integrated; Bulgarian emigrants abroad, who are many in number and selflessly help their home country; and, a small number of refugees, who require integration support from institutions and NGOs. This positive picture is distorted by a xenophobic anti-immigrant political discourse and hostile actions that have been intensifying in recent years. In other

European countries, the migration & development nexus is associated more closely with high levels of immigration.

From (post)communism to (post)crisis – periods and trends of migration policy

The construction of the Bulgarian migration phenomenon will be analysed through the periodisation of the main stages in its formation after the Second World War, as well as through an analysis of the Bulgarian migration profile. Five periods can be identified in the formation of the contemporary Bulgarian migration phenomenon: communist, postcommunist, European, migrant/refugee crisis, and post-crisis.

• Communist period: the post-war period to 1989. This period is characterised by strong politicisation of migration policy and very strong control over both emigration and immigration. The communist regime called emigrants "defectors," deprived them of the right to return, and confiscated their property. This policy of closeness had several exceptions: students from the so-called Third World; citizens of the Soviet Union, above all of Russia and Ukraine, some of whom came to Bulgaria to work as specialists in industry and education, and others – the majority – came as spouses of Bulgarian citizens; and Vietnamese migrant workers – 15,000 worked at construction sites and in various enterprises (Krasteva 2014a: 369).

• Postcommunist period: the 1990s to the early 2010s. The transition from a closed to an open society was marked by massive emigration. The state retreated from its hypertrophied role as the alpha and omega of migration, thus providing space for the formation of the postcommunist citizen as a migrant. This "shrinking" of the state began on the eve of the democratic change with an amendment to the Foreign Travel Passports Act passed in 1989, which read: "Every citizen of the People's Republic of Bulgaria shall have the right to leave the country and to return to it with a Bulgarian foreign-travel passport or a substitute document."( ) The second significant change was the abolition of exit visas. Immigration was freed of the dominant political logic and became driven by markets and globalisation. Then, in 1993, Bulgaria signed the Geneva Convention and began to accept refugees.

• European period: the mid-2010s to the migrant/refugee crisis. Bulgaria's accession to the EU ensured Bulgarian nationals visa-free travel to some 150 countries in the world in 2007, and free access to the EU labour market as of 2014 (Angelov and Lessenski 2017: 1). With regard to emigration, the European period was characterised by four trends. The most motivated migrants had already left Bulgaria, and the first trend was associated with legalising the status of those who were residing irregularly in EU countries. Second was the passage of Bulgarian nationals who had chosen to live and work in other EU countries, into a new migration category

– they were entitled to free movement of persons as EU citizens. The dynamics of emigration flows followed, above all, an economic logic, which was especially manifest in a situation of economic crisis. The third trend was that of emigrants returning to Bulgaria. The last trend has started in the previous period: the increased number of applications for Bulgarian citizenship related to the growing attractiveness of Bulgarian passports because of Bulgaria's EU membership.

• Period of migrant/refugee crisis: 2014–2016. This period was characterised by a migrational change and a political change. First of all, because of the huge migration pressure towards Europe, Bulgaria became more clearly aware of its role as an external border of the EU, situated at one of the entry points of migration from Syria and the Near/Middle East to the EU, and part of the Balkan migration route. More significantly, there was the change in political discourse, which formulated the refugees not as a humanitarian but as a securitarian issue.

• Period of post-migrant crisis: 2017–present. Paradoxically, this period has not changed the political trends of the previous period, but it has deepened them. The most profound change, which has invariably continued and is intensifying, regardless of the significant decrease in migration flows, is populist securitisation and its adoption by mainstream parties.

Asymmetrical tripolar migration profile – numerous emigration, much less numerous immigration and very low number of refugees

Bulgaria is a typical emigration country. The number of emigrants is almost ten times (8.6 times) that of immigrants: in 2017, 1,290,000 people born in Bulgaria were living in other countries and 150,000 people living in Bulgaria were born abroad.

The dynamics of the present migration flows show the same picture as in the case of stocks: in 2017, the number of emigrants, 31,586, exceeded that of immigrants, 25,597, and net migration was negative, –5,989.

Mass emigration has had a strong impact on the demographic dynamics of Bulgaria's population. This impact is negative; the population is ageing and decreasing. This demographic effect has placed emigration at the centre of debates about the future of the nation in demographic, generational and social terms, and regarding its links to national sovereignty and national security.

Contrary to widespread opinion and misperception that emigration has been growing constantly. The largest number of emigrants – 465,000 or a 5.2% decrease in the population – was in the years immediately before and after the beginning of the democratic changes in Bulgaria. This was due to two opposite reasons: the involuntary departure of one-third of the

community of Bulgarian Turks under pressure from the communist regime, and the first wave of emigration as an expression of post-communist freedom and a desire for self-realisation in terms of employment, career and education.

Nevertheless, emigration as well as depopulation remain issues of concern in the case of Bulgaria. Between 1985 and 2016, Bulgaria's population declined by 1.85 million. According to the National Statistical Institute (NSI), more than half (over 52%) of this decline was due to negative natural increase (the difference between birth and death rates), while almost 48% was due to net emigration. Almost half of the net emigration was due to the expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks at the end of communism. Those two factors carried different weight in different periods. Between 1985 and 1992 the population declined entirely because of emigration, while in the next periods it did so mostly because of the negative natural increase. The share of net migration in the population decline decreased to 39% in the period between 1992 and 2001, 31% in the period between 2001 and 2011, and under 10% in the period between 2011 and 2016.

Bulgarian emigration is directed towards several clusters of countries. Germany is a powerful pole of attraction because of its strong economy and demand for both low-skilled and high-skilled workers. Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy are also very attractive for Bulgarian emigrants. The classic immigration countries – the US and Canada – are still magnets today, too. The case of Turkey is more specific. The large Bulgarian immigrant community in Turkey formed primarily because of the expulsion of more than 350,000 Bulgarian Turks by the communist regime in the summer of 1989. Part of this flow returned to Bulgaria after the establishment of democracy there, but Bulgarian Turks have continued to migrate to Turkey for economic reasons throughout the democratic period.

The economic crisis of 2008 intensified emigration and led to the vast gap between emigration and immigration in 2010. The small difference between emigration and immigration flows, –1,108 in 2013, made Bulgaria closer to, but still different from, the Mediterranean migration model.

The analysis from a gender perspective reveals interesting similarities and differences between immigration and emigration. In the 2010–2017 period, men outnumbered women in both migration flows. The difference between the two genders, 2,709, was comparatively small in the case of emigration, where men numbered 98,290 and women numbered 95,581. The difference between the two genders reached almost 10,000 (9,625) in the case of immigration, where men and women numbered 74,607 and 64,982, respectively.

In the case of emigration, men outnumbered women throughout the period 2010–2017, but in some years they were almost equal in number – for example, in 2013, 9,841 of Bulgarian emigrants were men and 9,837 were women. The Bulgarian case illustrates the global trend towards feminisation of migrations in both quantitative and qualitative terms: regarding migration flows, where the number of female migrants is growing and has become almost equal to that of male migrants; and regarding agency and authorship of the migration project. Some women accompany their husbands, parents or relatives, but many women plan and realise their migration project on their own.

The largest immigrant community is from the former Soviet Union and it is represented by the citizens of Russia and Ukraine. The Russian community is one of the oldest immigrant communities in Bulgaria. The second largest immigrant community is from the Near and Middle East. Unlike the educational mobility during the communist period, after the democratic changes most of the new immigrants from the Near and Middle East come to Bulgaria with plans to start a business. The Syrian community was the largest Arab community in Bulgaria even before the military conflict in Syria, which led to an increase in the number of Syrian refugees. Bulgaria and Turkey are a migration pair formed as a result of historical ties and geographic proximity. The British represent the latest wave. The latter consists of citizens of EU member states and comprises two main groups: experts of different nationalities who work in Sofia and the big cities; and Britons who settle mostly in villages and small towns. The Chinese are not statistically significant, but they are interesting as a new group that began migrating to Bulgaria in the postcommunist period, which illustrates Bulgaria's inclusion in the global labour migration flows.

Another interesting group consists of immigrants who have been granted Bulgarian citizenship. In the period from 2012 to June 2018, more than 60,000 people were granted Bulgarian passports: more than half of them, 37,133, on the basis of Bulgarian origin. The largest number of new Bulgarian citizens, 26,108, is from Macedonia, followed by Albania and Kosovo.

Bulgaria has a historical track record of accepting refugees. The two most significant instances of humanitarian hospitality in Bulgarian history were towards the Armenians seeking to escape the genocide in Turkey, and towards the White Guard Russians fleeing the Bolshevik revolution. Those two waves of refugees date from the period between the two World Wars. In the postcommunist period, Bulgaria signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol in May 1993 and institutionalised, in the same year, an asylum-management policy by

establishing the State Agency for Refugees (SAR). There are four periods of refugee flows to Bulgaria in the last quarter of a century:

• Period I: 1993–1998. Initial period with a low number of asylum applications – under 1,000 a year.

• Period II: 1999–2012. Period of fluctuations, with small peaks of 2,428 asylum applications in 2001 and 2,888 in 2002, followed by a decrease in number to around or under 1,000 a year.

• Period III: 2014–2016. Refugee crisis, with an unprecedented 20,391 asylum applications in 2015 and 19,418 in 2016.

• Period IV: 2017 – present. Post-crisis period, with a sharp decline in the number of asylum applications – down to 3,700 in 2017 and 1,906 in 2018 (until 30 November 2018).

The total number of applications for international protection submitted in Bulgaria in the period from 1 January 1993 to 30 November 2018 was 85,256. Of them, 25,075 were approved – 13,454 to be granted refugee status and 11,671 for humanitarian status.

To sum up, Bulgaria remains an emigration country, but emigration has not increased since the country's EU accession and the increasing recognition of Bulgarian passports, which now can provide visa-free access to some 150 countries. The gap between emigration and immigration is narrowing, but immigration remains at low levels – under 2% of Bulgaria's population.

Immigrants' strategies for integration

The title summarizes two main messages: immigrants in Bulgaria are well integrated, and this integration is the result not so much of government integration policies but rather of their own integration projects and practices. There are no marginalized groups of immigrants, no ghettos – immigrants are relatively well included in the labor market and social life.

1. Entrepreneurial and labor integration

Labor market integration will be analyzed from three perspectives: the specificities of individual national groups as well as the different categories of migrants – third-country nationals, nationals of other EU Member States, refugees; main areas of employment and ethnic niches.

Migrant integration strategies have national specificities. On the basis of long-standing research, the characteristics and differences in the labour integration of the most characteristic immigrant communities in Bulgaria can be sketched: Russians, immigrants from the Near and Middle East, Chinese, Africans, Britons, and skilled managers, professionals and technical workers from EU member countries. A more detailed and in-depth analysis would identify

specific characteristics also in the separate waves of migration of the respective communities, but this is beyond the goals and scope of this study.

Ethnic niches – a practice of migrant inclusion in employment throughout the world – exist in Bulgaria, too. They attract, above all, migrants from the Near and Middle East, and China. The ethnic niches themselves are in the restaurant industry – Chinese, Lebanese, Indian and other restaurants, and many Arab kebab shops – and in retail: the large Ilientsi market in Sofia, which provides jobs for many migrants and employees, is typical in this regard.

It is particularly important to note that the majority of immigrants in Bulgaria are self-employed and own small, medium-sized or large businesses. A second significant characteristic is that the number of Bulgarians who work in migrant-owned companies is larger than that of migrants working in Bulgarian-owned companies. A Chinese businessman who has recently invested BGN 3 million in the vine and wine business said that he is ready and willing to employ more people but there is an insufficient labour supply. A businessman from Afghanistan pointed out in an interview that not all migrant businesspersons had successfully weathered the economic crisis: the crisis hit migrant-owned small and medium-sized businesses especially hard, which was reflected in two changes: shrinking of the business from middle to small or re-emigration, most often to Western Europe or the US.

The labour integration of Russians is the most varied and diversified. Unlike most other immigrant communities in Bulgaria – who are employed primarily in the private sector – first, second and third-generation Russian immigrants are employed in public administration, media, and education at all levels. There is also a new wave of Russians who have invested in property on the Black Sea coast which they use for holidays and rent out, without settling permanently in Bulgaria.

The African community in Bulgaria is very small. In the last decade, call centres – where fluency in French and English is highly appreciated – have provided the chance and impetus for their labour integration.

EU nationals work as managers, experts or technical workers in companies of their countries, which invest in Bulgaria, and as advisors to institutions and organisations. Britons illustrate another category whose migration project is not necessarily aimed at labour integration, insofar as some of them are retirees and settle in spa and small villages and towns. Some of them start small businesses – for example, as real estate brokers for compatriots interested in buying houses in Bulgaria, intermediaries or investors in health/dental tourism, etc.

The gender specificities of labour integration in the different immigrant communities are also interesting. Skilled immigrant women from Russia, China, and other EU-member states have a labour profile that is similar to that of Bulgarian women – they work for a large part of their lives. Arab and Afghan women more often devote themselves primarily to their family and children. When they go into employment, it is usually in the family business.

Migration and integration strategies

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on Migration and Integration (2008–2015) is the first comprehensive document in which the Bulgarian state formulated its vision about an optimal migration profile. A central focus was the permanent return of new emigrants and attraction of foreign citizens of Bulgarian origin. The document defined two strategic goals:

• To attract persons with Bulgarian citizenship living on the territory of other countries, as well as of persons of Bulgarian origin with foreign citizenship – for permanent return and settlement in the Republic of Bulgaria.

• Elaboration and implementation of an adequate policy on acceptance and integration of foreigners, and exercise of efficient control of migration processes.

The Strategy also defined the key economic migrant groups which it prioritised: workforce from other Member States of the EU, EEA and Switzerland; foreigners of Bulgarian origin; students, researchers and highly qualified specialists who have been educated and have graduated in Bulgaria.

The latest National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015–2020) formulates a priority in the spirit of the MIND Project: "transforming migration and mobility into positive factors for development in demographic and economic terms," which it expounds in the section on "Policies in the field of migration, development, integration." In line with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, the Strategy envisages cooperation with countries of origin and transit, and promotion of Mobility Partnerships: "Until now, Bulgaria has placed the main emphasis in these policies on the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy and, accordingly, we have identified as our partners the Eastern Partnership countries. Considering, however, the events in recent years and the significant diversification of the migration flows connected to the Middle East and the Mediterranean region and along the Silk Road, Bulgaria ought to take steps to identify possible areas of higher cooperation with potential partners identified among countries with which the EU is conducting dialogue and applying some of the instruments of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility."

The Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015–2020), adopted in 2018, articulates through activities and implementation indicators 44 strategic goals, of which 10 are related to beneficiaries of international protection. This Action Plan has been discussed in various relevant places in this study.

The National Strategy for the Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in the Republic of Bulgaria (2014–2020) replaced the refugee integration policy conducted until 2013 on the basis of three-year national programmes. In the pre-2013 integration policy, the central role was played by the State Agency for Refugees, which covered a comparatively limited number of refugees, some 60 per year. The new Strategy has introduced a decentralised approach, in which the leading role is assigned to municipalities. The arguments for this are that in the event of a growing flow of refugees, the SAR will not have sufficient capacity, and that European good policies and practices mobilise local government in refugee integration. This Strategy has been almost ineffective to date, the reasons for which are analysed in "Obstacles."

Civil society – the most committed actor of the migration/integration & development nexus

The purpose of this part of the report is to supplement the analysis of grassroots/CSOs/diaspora organisations in order to enrich the top-down institutional perspective with the bottom-up perspective. The scope of this report does not allow an exhaustive analysis of the entire civic sector engaged in integration. Nevertheless, a few positive examples affirming the nexus between migration and development will be presented across several categories: organisations for intercultural dialogue, migrant and refugee integration and rights; international organisations for international standards in humanitarian and integration activities; good grassroots practices of integration.

1. Organisations for intercultural dialogue, migrant and refugee integration and rights

It is important to note that all organisations engaged in integration contribute to the intercultural dialogue. The diverse and rich activities of several different organisations are briefly summarised here. The criteria for selecting them are three: they have a track record of about ten years or more; they have many and different projects and activities; they are recognisable to Bulgarian and international partners. It must be noted that they have been founded and are headed by outstanding, well-known and recognised leaders.

• **The Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria** (crw-bg.org) is among the best-known organisations; it was founded and is managed by refugee women. The Council helps refugees and asylum seekers in the process of adapting and integrating into Bulgarian society. The Council is a respected partner of Bulgarian institutions and international organisations, and an active participant in humanitarian, international and intercultural forums and initiatives.

• **MultiKulti** (multikulti.bg) has realised the original idea of a map of ethnic restaurants in Sofia as a symbolic connection of the loci of culinary intercultural dialogue. It organises a large number of multicultural events, monitors integration policies.

• **CERMES** (cermes-bg.com) is the first and only academic centre in Bulgaria specialised exclusively in migration studies. Founded and headed by this author, it has rich experience in European and national projects. Together with the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, CERMES has organised the first intercultural festivals in Bulgaria; during the refugee crisis, it realised several initiatives with refugee children; in 2018, during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, it co-organised with the Center for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria a large migration forum with the participation of Mrs Iliyana Yotova, Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and representatives of institutions, international organisations, NGOs and academic centres.

• **The Center for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria** (www.centerforlegalaid.com) is one of the few organisations in Bulgaria offering free legal aid to migrants and refugees. The work of the Center involves direct administrative representation and litigation of individual cases of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in front of administrative authorities and courts on the territory of Bulgaria and Europe. The CLA is very active in advocacy and awareness-rising.

• **The Foundation for Access to Rights** – FAR (http://www.farbg.eu) provides legal aid to asylum seekers and migrants in line with its mission of establishing effective mechanisms to guarantee access to rights in practice and effective protection against arbitrary deprivation of rights. Another highly valued activity of FAR are its training courses in refugee law for representatives of the judiciary – for example, a training course for lawyers in conducting proceedings in immigrant detention cases.

• **Marginalia** (www.marginalia.bg) is a human rights online media outlet that covers the topic of migrants and refugees, offering a variety of positive analytical perspectives: of experts, integration actors and migrants.

International organisations for international standards in humanitarian and integration activities

The Bulgarian branches of Caritas, the IOM and the UNHCR are very active. Their activities are publicly visible, appreciated and respected. Numerous representatives of institutions engaged in refugee, migration and integration policies have stressed their participation in various forums and training courses organised by the Bulgarian branches of these three international organisations, as well as the positive impact of their newly acquired knowledge on their work.

Good grassroots practices of integration

The examples in this section are not meant to be exhaustive, but to outline various areas in which effective initiatives and new practices have been undertaken.

• Business community engagement in refugee integration. Business initiatives on refugee integration are still few in number, but it is important to note three types of business actors engaged in this field: Bulgarian companies, companies of migrant entrepreneurs, and innovative forms of social entrepreneurship.

– TELUS International Europe (a business process outsourcing and information technology outsourcing provider) is an interesting example of a Bulgarian company that employs 100 refugees and humanitarian status holders. In addition to work, the company offers a wide range of social services as well as cultural, sporting and other events for its employees.

– Among migrant businesspersons, the best known for his humanitarian and integration activities is the Syrian-born entrepreneur Aladin. Representatives of his company, Aladin Foods, visit the RRC-Harmanli every two or three months and offer employment to men and women, as well as free-of-charge accommodation in a well-furnished house. Most of the refugees and humanitarian status holders stay in the house for five to seven months and leave Bulgaria, heading for Western Europe. Aladin has also funded the higher education of one of his refugee employees.

– MultiKulti develops innovative practices of social entrepreneurship, such as multicultural catering and culinary courses and events, in which it engages small migrant food and restaurant companies. It operates in Sofia and six other big cities in Bulgaria.

– Another interesting form of social entrepreneurship is a social project in Sofia which trains refugees and offers them an opportunity to work in the IT field.

• Consolidation of the stakeholder community is an important condition for successful integration policies. A recent example is the two-day workshop organised by UNHCR Bulgaria in November 2018 with representatives of responsible institutions, NGOs and the academic sector. The results of this forum, as well as of many other similar ones, can be summarised in

three groups: getting to know one another, building trust and consolidating networks of stakeholders; sharing new examples of good practices; brainstorming and collective efforts to find innovative solutions.

• Labour exchanges and other forms are used by Caritas Bulgaria to facilitate access to the labour market by preparing profiles of job seekers, contacting companies offering jobs, etc. Interviews with representatives of Caritas Bulgaria point to intensive activity: the Career Centre has offered advice to 231 people and found jobs for 128. Caritas Bulgaria maintains contacts with 45 employers in different spheres – call centres, restaurants, hair salons, factories, and auto repair shops. A curious fact is the demand for barbers/hairdressers from the Near and Middle East, who know techniques that are in line with recent fashion trends in Europe.

• Studying the needs of refugees with a view to adapting integration policies. A good example in this regard is the last study of the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria, conducted by UNHCR Bulgaria in 2018 on the basis of rich fieldwork of 33 focus groups. One of the results of the study is directly relevant to the subject of the Common Home Project: 40% are working or want to work.

• Activities for empowerment of children. With the efforts of volunteers, NGOs and refugees themselves, an Afghan school has been set up at the refugee centre in Harmanli. Another form of empowerment of children is the membership of a refugee child in the National Council of Children, established by the State Agency for Child Protection.

• Art for intercultural dialogue. November 2018, "Refugee Month," featured a rich programme of many different events at various locations in Sofia. Especially interesting were the initiatives that gave refugees/migrants a "face" – the opportunity for people to sit down and talk with a refugee about his or her migration route, plans, wishes.

The good initiatives and practices enabling better integration of and contribution by refugees and migrants can be summarised in several points:

• Affirming a positive understanding of migration as a development factor. At the above-mentioned UNHCR Bulgaria workshop, special attention was paid to the Recommendations of the Global Summit of Refugees in Geneva

• Realising innovative initiatives with multiple participants. An example of this is the "Meeting in the Park" (16 June 2018): a celebration of World Refugee Day at a central Sofia park, organised by UNHCR Bulgaria, with the participation of refugees, NGOs, stakeholders and volunteers.

• Diversifying the forms of intercultural dialogue and getting to know one another, which is especially necessary in the era of hate speech in political discourse. Thanks to the IOM,

Bulgaria was included in the Global Migration Film Festival. The festival is not confined only to traditional cinema; it sets out to connect with various audiences. For a second year in a row, CERMES was a partner of the festival, and each time the debates with students and professors were intense and interesting. Among the multiplying excellent examples of art forums about and with migrants, the performance around the wonderful Bulgarian-language edition of Khaled Hosseini's Sea Prayer with the participation of refugee musicians and singers at the (inter)cultural club Knigata (The Book) in Sofia is notable.

CONCLUSION

Bulgaria has been a country of migration – both emigration and immigration – for centuries. However, today, migration underpins huge challenges to Bulgaria's economy and society. Bulgaria's relatively small population size of just over 7 million in 2018, its working age population (15-64 years old) of 4.8 million (in the country), and its high emigration contrasted with very low immigration undermine the viability of Bulgaria's economy and its capacity to provide for the welfare of its population. More than ten times as many Bulgarians reside abroad, about 1.3 million, as immigrants in Bulgaria, about 150,000.

The exodus of skilled persons combined with very low fertility rates and rapidly ageing population paint a bleak picture for current and future economic prospects, in particular starting and maintaining viable enterprises in productive sectors. Businesses face increasing difficulties sourcing suitable labour within Bulgaria as consequences of emigration and the ageing labour force becoming less productive in the absence of significant immigration. The relatively small and ageing pool of potential employees is deterring investors in labour intensive industries. Trends of increased anti-migrant and anti-refugee public discourse and open xenophobic hostility against migrants and migration are seriously undermining the immediate solution for sustaining the country's economic and social viability: immigration. The data on refugee-asylum seekers indicates that refugees and some immigrants are fleeing the country instead of arriving and staying.

Major challenges include absence of an informed, coherent and strategic government response. Instead, the existing response is piecemeal policy statements. The government appears to be ignoring the dangers to the economic future of the country of high emigration contrasted with relatively small immigration and is not doing enough towards the encouraging immigration of people at all skills levels. Rather, the discourse by government and political parties identifies that solution as, instead, a big problem for the country.

Bulgarians have a historical memory of a hospitable refugee policy and protection of minorities and they are proud of having saved their Jewish community during the Second World War and of having accepted White Guard Russians and Armenian refugees. Paradoxically, today, when Bulgaria is much more developed and has a small refugee community, the levels of negative attitudes are high. Bulgaria's refugee dilemma is punctuated by the reality that very few refugees who received refugee status stay in Bulgaria. The refugee community is characterised by a huge difference between the number of those who received international protection status, 25.075, and the number of those who have settled in Bulgaria, which is estimated at no more than 2.000. For refugees, Bulgaria is and will continue to be a transit country. The reasons are complex, but two reasons are economic and political. In 2017, Bulgaria was the Member State with the lowest GDP per capita, at 51 % below the EU average. Also, there is no effective and efficient policy of refugee integration nor a clear, consistent political will for its implementation.

Concerning immigrants and migrants from the EU and neighbouring European countries, integration is relatively easy. Immigrants remain few in number – approximately 150,000 or 2% of Bulgaria's population. They are well-integrated in terms of labour market participation and linguistic, cultural and social integration. An important sub-group are emigrant returnees. Their reintegration is, nonetheless, largely the result of their own efforts as well as of the activity of organisations of returnees, and significantly less a result of state policies. The return from emigration is not always final and is not infrequently followed by re-emigration. The politico-governmental paradox is between high levels of integration – for most immigrants – on the one hand, and the lack of efficient integration policy. The first governmental strategy on migration and integration was adopted only in 2008, two decades after the transition starting in 1989.