

EU-Accession of Bulgaria and Romania: Migration issues

Briefing Document

Present Situation

Previous accession generated great excitement – short of a gold rush mentality – namely in Poland and Lithuania. Considerable proportions of a whole generation of school leavers in these countries, before taking up university studies or employment, spent some time abroad, mainly in the UK. This had been facilitated by a significant Polish Diaspora in the UK, two decades of preceding irregular migration (thus some tradition in Polish migration to UK), and last, but not least, because most other EU countries suspended freedom of movement for A8 nationals. As a consequence, migrants from these countries had little choice other than moving to UK (and Ireland and Sweden), thus they were distributed unequally across 15 EU countries. It is too early to say whether this is of only temporary nature: It is not known for sure how many migrants came only once and then returned and how many reside for longer, and it is as yet unclear to what extent a growing Polish economy will bring about enough incentives for people either to stay or to return.

With respect to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the most urgent question seems to be whether large scale migration from A8 countries is going to be repeated with these two new member states or whether they represent a different case. As yet, neither the UK, nor another northern European country, except Germany, has been a first choice for migrants from these countries. Instead, migrants from A2 countries concentrate in southern European countries. Only recently, small-scale on-migration from Spain and France (the main destination countries of Romanian migrants) to the north, namely Ireland, has been observed.

Immigration in Numbers

Bulgaria and Romania both display negative population growth and negative net migration and thus a decrease in total population. Up to three million Romanians (6 per cent of the total population, 21.7 mil. in 2006) and 800,000 Bulgarians (8 per cent of the total population, 7.9 mil. in 2006) have emigrated since 1989ⁱ, of which 500,000 to 2 million Romanians and 340,000 to 500,000 Bulgariansⁱⁱ moved to other European countriesⁱⁱⁱ. Ten per cent of all Romanian households had a member working abroad in 2006, and one third had a household member working abroad since 1989^{iv}. No increase has been reported by Romanian border police in 2007. The prime destinations for Bulgarians are Greece, Italy and Spain, whilst for Romanians they are Italy, Spain, Hungary, Germany, France, Greece and Austria^v.

Only a very small proportion legally resides in the UK; around 7,500 Romanians and 5,350 Bulgarians were recorded in the 2001 census. Meanwhile 2,965 Bulgarians and 2,470 Romanians have been granted settlement, additionally, around two hundred residence documentations annually were issued^{vi}. Besides, there were an unknown number of irregular migrants. Their figure, however, does not seem to be high; only rarely, research comes across irregular (labour) migrants from both countries.

Conversely, each year around 400,000 British citizens visit Bulgaria^{vii} and another 75,000 Romania^{viii}. The number of UK immigrants in both countries is impossible to establish due to a lack of data, but may comprise a few thousand individuals. One source mentions up to 10,000 Britons in Bulgaria^{ix} which also has become one of the top destinations for investments of British nationals in property^x and the UK was the third largest foreign investor in 2005^{xi}. [See addendum for figures.]

Future Flows

There is no reliable methodology for forecasting size of migration flows. Calculations are based on comparisons with previous EU8 accession countries, as for example, provided by Open Europe^{xii}, who come up with 450,000 expected Romanian and 170,000 Bulgarian migrants, or MigrationWatch who predict about 210,000 Romanian and 80,000 Bulgarian immigrants^{xiii}. These figures are anything but plausible. This is mainly because the cases of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, and the cases of Bulgaria and Romania, are partially different. It is insufficient to compare them along economic characteristics only (purchase power, unemployment, GDP per capita). Instead, further aspects must be taken into account. A contrasting figure is presented by the Bulgarian Minister for Labour who believes that only around 40,000 would move to the UK^{xiv}. According to World Bank figures, the vast majority prefers temporary migration and soon return^{xv}. Another survey shows that average duration of stay of those Bulgarians who did eventually return was 15.6 months^{xvi}.

Economic modelling – popular and most frequently used – only reflects part of the picture. Simple economic differences, e.g. in wages, employment rates, etc., may be able to explain *propensity* but not actual migration *outcome*. Instead, migration research also refers to *migration network effect*, including social and human capital of prospective migrants, and to *migration system effects*, including the relevance of historical links, political and trade relations, transportation and migration industries.

Some forecasting factors include the following:

- Existing Bulgarian and Romanian communities could cause a migration network effect, hence chain migration. But these communities are very small and few sending regions are integrated in migration networks. Also, research has shown that (highly) skilled migrants – as is the case with Romanians and Bulgarians – cause less of a network effect than low-skilled migrants. In sum, network effect is expected to be diminutive.
- In Romanian and Bulgarian media, the UK, and in particular migration to the UK, is a blind spot; there are also no advertisements of agencies for journeys or jobs and no reports on life in the UK. Instead, it is Italy which is on top of the agenda.
- Language is another barrier. In Romania, French is the first foreign language, followed by German and English; in Bulgaria it is English and French. According to Romanian experts only post-graduates and English-speaking people would consider the UK a possible destination.
- There are very few recruitment agencies for labour migrants, and these are mostly serving nurses and social workers.
- As yet there is only one low-budget flight (Wizzair) from Bucharest to London and none from Sofia. However, this is going to change as Easyjet considers regular flights, not least to serve British customers. Meanwhile, economy flights to London are more than an average monthly salary. There are few alternatives, and whilst most Polish towns – even villages – have bus links to the UK this is not the case for Romania and Bulgaria.

Considering that present numbers of Bulgarian and Romanian migrants are low; that language is a barrier and rather suggests migration to southern European countries; that there are specific regional migration systems, e.g. from Romania to Italy or Hungary; that there are no specific links between Bulgaria, Romania and the UK (thus no tradition of migration to the UK); that the overwhelming majority of Bulgarians and Romanians migrate to southern European countries where there are established migration systems and networks; and that there is an increasing demand for labour within the country, large scale migration to the UK is unlikely.

Issues

Research shows that Bulgarian and Romanian immigrants in the UK tend to be well educated, often have English language skills, and are often employed in skilled employment. It also shows significant engagement in self-employment under ECA agreements. The lower educated rather move to southern European countries. What one might see is a trickling-through process of the more ambitious and better educated to the north.

Those who are already in the UK, namely those who are residing here, working or running a business without permission, have been frustrated in their hopes to see their employment situation regularised, as has been the case with A10 nationals. In order to get their affairs in order they have to return first and apply for appropriate status from abroad. But because success is not guaranteed most will abstain from this and remain working irregular.

Border controls, including combating irregular (transit) migration, have improved coinciding with improved controls in non-EU neighbouring countries, namely Ukraine and Moldova, whose borders are considered by migrants and smugglers too risky to cross. On the other hand, increasing demand for (migrant) labour is likely to absorb some (irregular) immigration to Romania and Bulgaria.

Finally, prioritisation of citizens of the new member states can have an adverse impact on would-be migrants from non-member states. Discontinuation of previous legal migration channels for third country nationals, as for example, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS), might instead provoke extra irregular flows, namely from Ukraine or Moldova.

Summary and Recommendations

- Net balance of flows of visitors between the UK and Bulgaria is negative, between the UK and Romania it is zero, and even net migration between the UK and Bulgaria seems to be zero because of UK emigration to that country. Present immigration from Bulgaria and Romania to the UK is low – only around one per cent of all emigration from both countries, and no sudden influx from these two countries, can be predicted. Instead, future influx would rather reflect a trend toward a more equal distribution of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants across Europe.
- In order to avoid concentration in only a few EU-15 countries and to enable equal distribution across all potential destination countries EU member states should simultaneously introduce the right to free movement to Bulgarians and Romanians. Free movement of workers is essential for a dynamic and competitive European Union.
- Present suspension of free movement, which create more problems than it is aiming to solve should first be eased and as soon as possible be lifted. Because sudden influx is rather unlikely, it occurs as if Romania and Bulgaria are now punished for the influx related to the previous A 8 accession.
- There are reasons to believe that Romanian and Bulgarian migration would be circular rather than permanent; suitable policy initiatives could provide according incentives for return.
- Those who are already in the UK for a significant period, and who have employment or a business, should be offered opportunities for favourable and fast track in-country applications for legal employment or businesses. It needs to be noted, however, that with the latest EU accession another two countries can be taken off the list of countries sending illegal migrants.
- The asylum panic of the 1990s, associated with Roma, and with welfare fraud, is definitely over.
- Conditions for immigrants and refugees in other EU member states should be improved to remove push factors for secondary movements.

Addendum

Bulgaria^{xvii}

- Passenger admittance 2005: 74,100 (19,700 business visa and 13,300 ordinary visitors; 805 students; 100 au pairs; 2,040 Work Permit holders plus 390 dependants; 230 wives, husbands and fiancées; 25 refugees).
- Leave to Remain and Residence: 2,460 extensions of LR (1,085 Work Permit holders, 780 business visa), 475 refusals.
- Grant of settlement 1,225, up from 150 in 1995 and 625 in 2004 (575 dependants, 390 Work Permit and business visa holders).
- Between 1990 and 2005 4,915 Bulgarians have been granted settlement.

Romania^{xviii}

- Passenger admittance 2005: 80,700 (up 22 per cent) (26,100 business visa and 17,200 ordinary visitors; 960 students; 1,400 au pairs; 1,980 Work Permit holders plus 385 dependants; 665 wives, husbands and fiancées; 35 refugees, down from 2,160 in 2000).
- Leave to Remain and Residence: 1,836 extensions of LR (630 Work Permit holders, 425 business visa), 475 refusals.
- Grant of settlement: 955, up from 190 in 1995 and 560 in 2004 (560 dependants, 180 Work Permit and business visa holders).
- Between 1990 and 2005, 4,330 Romanians have been granted settlement.

Both

- Between 2005 and 2006, 886 ECAA business visa were granted but 5,929 either refused or withdrawn.

Enforcement in Numbers^{xix}

- **Bulgaria:** 145 refused entry, < 5 in detention
- **Romania:** 890 refused entry, 5 in detention

ⁱ Mansoor, Ali; Quillin, Bryce (eds). 2006. *Migration and remittances. Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Washington: World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECA/Resources/257896-1167856389505/Migration_FullReport.pdf, p. 33.

ⁱⁱ According to EuroStat 'the largest Bulgarian communities are found mainly in Greece (200 000), Italy (60 000) and Spain (80 000), emigration to other EU countries being marginal. Destinations chosen by Bulgarians are most often located outside Europe: USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa, see Mlady, Michal. 2006. *Regional unemployment in the European Union, Bulgaria and Romania in 2005*. Strasbourg: EuroStat, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-DN-06-001/EN/KS-DN-06-001-EN.PDF, p. 9; other sources only mention 106.000 Bulgarians and 246.000 Romanians in EU-15 countries, see Dietz, Barbara; Knogler, Michael; Vincentz Volkhart. 2004. *Labour Market Issues in Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey*. Munich: Osteuropa Institut, http://www.oei-muenchen.de/ext_dateien/wp254.pdf, p. 11 and 18.

ⁱⁱⁱ The difference is mainly due to those who are registered as legal immigrants and those who are irregular migrants. Other major destination countries are the US and Canada.

^{iv} Sandu, Dumitru (ed). 2006. *Temporary Leaving Abroad. Economic Migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. Bucharest: Fundatia Pentru o Societate Deschisa, http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii_program.php?id_prog=34 (in Romanian).

^v Since 1990, 40 per cent of Romanian migrants went to Italy, 18 per cent to Spain, 5 per cent each to Germany and Hungary, and less than one per cent to UK, see Sandu, Dumitru, p. 28.

^{vi} In 2004, about 10 times (680), respectively 20 times (1.480) more residence documentations have been issued to Latvians, resp. Poles illustrating a much higher level of immigration from both these countries.

^{vii} Bulgarian Post. 2006. *Bulgaria and Romania Angry at British Clampdown*, 28/10/06, http://bulgaria.thebulgarianpost.com/story-read_bulgaria_and_romania_angry_at_british_clampdown-263.php.

^{viii} According to the British embassy in Bucharest, see

<http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1048078509132>

^{ix} IPPR. 2006. *EU enlargement: Bulgaria and Romania – migration implications for the UK*. Factfile. London: IPPR, p. 26.

^x Sofia Echo. 2006. *British property seekers see Bulgaria as fourth most attractive destination*, 22/11/06, http://www.sofiaecho.com/article/british-property-seekers-see-bulgaria-as-fourth-most-attractive-destination/id_18839/catid_74

^{xi} According to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, see <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019233782337>

^{xii} Open Europe. 2005. Briefing note, <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/bulgariaromania.pdf>.

^{xiii} MigrationWatch. 2006. Potential immigration from Romania and Bulgaria, Briefing paper 4.7,

http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/Briefingpapers/european_union/4_7_Potential_immigratio_%20from_Romania_and_Bulgaria.asp, quoting from Mervyn Stone, 2006, SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME OFFICE PREDICTION OF BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN WORK REGISTRATIONS <http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/BulgariaRomania.pdf>

^{xiv} Bulgarian Post. 2006.

^{xv} Mansoor and Quillin, *Migration and remittances*, p. 18.

^{xvi} Mintchev, Vesselin; Boshnakov, Venelin. 2006. The economics of Bulgarian emigration – empirical assessment, *Икономическа мисъл* [Economic Thought], 7: 134-61, <http://www.ceool.com/asp/getdocument.aspx?logid=5&id=8918852d-82d4-4808-bfb0-73af02e5460e>.

^{xvii} Home Office. 2006. *Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2005*. London: Home Office; Home Office. 2001. *Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2000*. London: Home Office.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Ibid.